

III.

NOTICES OF AN ANCIENT FORT AND A STONE CIRCLE AT WESTER TORRIE, NEAR CALLANDER, PERTHSHIRE. BY DAVID CHRISTISON, M.D., Secretary.

The remains now to be described, and hitherto unrecorded, are situated in the parish of Kilmadock, close to the south bank of the river Teith,

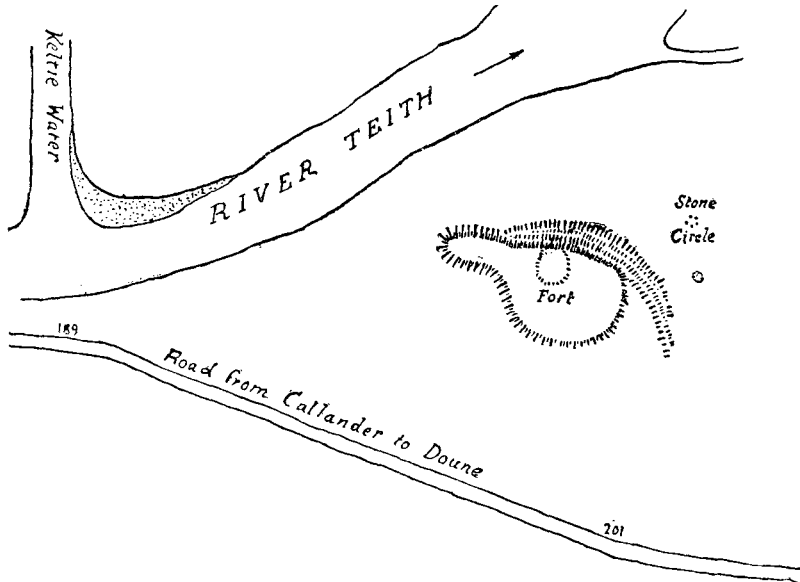


Fig. 1. Sketch map showing position of Fort and Stone Circle at Wester Torrie.

immediately below the junction with it of the Keltie Water, in a bend of the river (fig. 1), $\frac{1}{3}$ of a mile north of Wester Torrie farm-house, and $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles S.E. of Callander Bridge. The ground rises gently from the river to the farm, and from this basis a little eminence, about 40 feet high, rises abruptly to a nearly level oval summit, measuring about 60 by 50 feet. The descent towards the stream is uniformly steep, but on the opposite or south side the decline is gentler, and soon merges in a

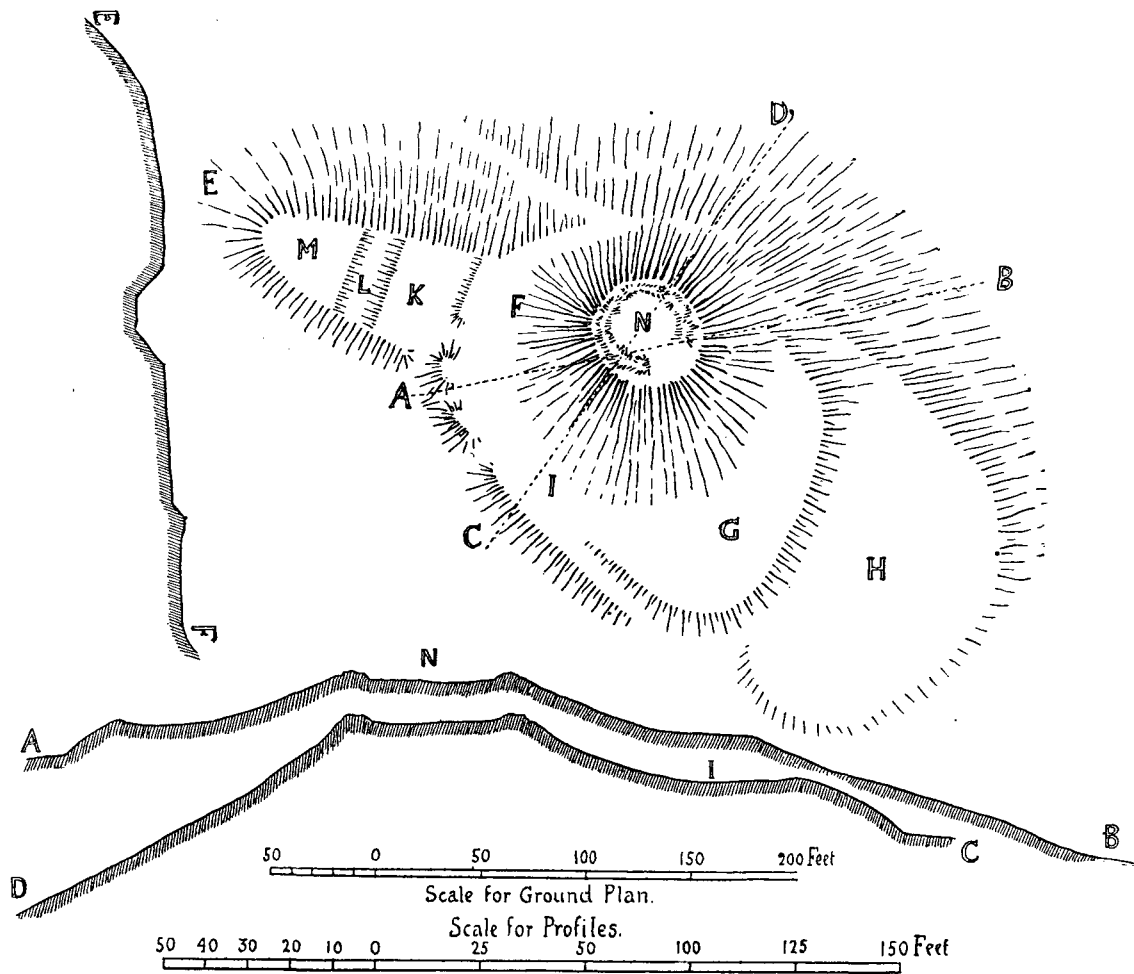


Fig. 2. Fort at Wester Torrie. Ground Plan and Sections.

terrace (I, Plan and Sections, fig. 2), about 30 feet wide, from which the fall to the nearly level ground is by a steep bank 10 feet in height. This terrace passes round to the west end at F, and thence a little slope, only 2 or 3 feet high, leads to a steep-sided tongue of land, K, E, which projects about 120 feet westward. The continuation of the north slope, E, D, round to the east, remains uniformly steep as far as B, but to the S.E. it is broken by two wide, gently sloping plateaux, G, H, one below the other.

This isolated eminence presents a striking aspect when seen end on by an observer approaching from the west (fig. 3), when it suddenly comes into view just as the road leaves the river side; and its appearance is perhaps still more remarkable when its south face opens up, as the traveller continues his route eastward (fig. 4). So conspicuous and artificial-looking an object could not escape the notice of the Ordnance Surveyors, who have delineated it, although in a somewhat meagre manner, as given in fig. 1, and have designated it as the supposed site of a Roman camp, with scarcely more reason than the name of Roman camp bestowed on a huge natural mound at Callander.

In reality, as I was informed by the farmer, the local name of the eminence is "The Auld Knowe," which must have been derived from a knowledge of the existence of ancient structures upon it.

The remains of fortification comprehend—

(1) A circular or oval work, N, on the summit, evidently of stone, but overgrown with turf, and so confused that it cannot be accurately measured. The wall appears to be 6 or 8 feet wide, but might come out more if the rubbish were cleared away, and the interior may be 35 to 40 feet in diameter.

(2) A steep slope, 8 or 10 feet high, banked up with stones, in front of the terrace, I, to the south. Possibly this may be the remains of a built revêtement from which the facing stones have been plundered, and it may have been continued upwards to form a stone breastwork for the terrace. The continuation of the terrace to the west end has merely a slight descent, 2 or 3 feet high, to the platform K on the projecting tongue.

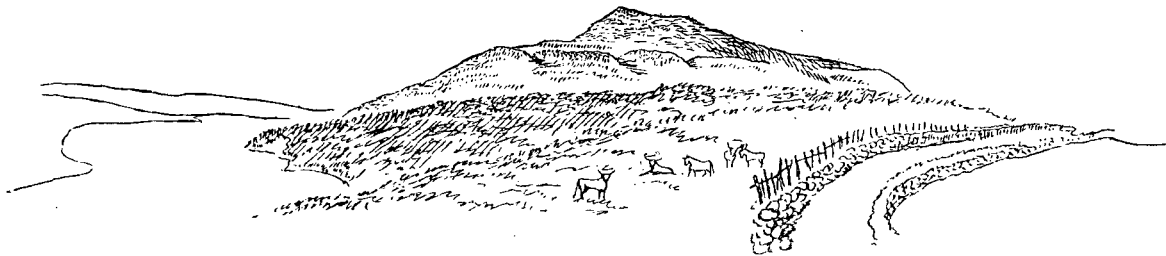


Fig. 3. Fort at Wester Torrie, from the west.

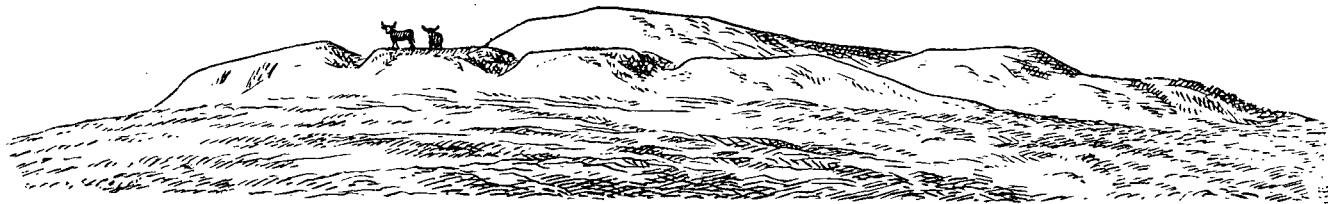


Fig. 4. Fort at Wester Torrie, from the south.

(3) A straight trench L, 24 feet wide, 6 feet deep, and flat-bottomed, cutting off the platform just mentioned from the point of the tongue M, which does not seem to have been fortified.

(4) A slope in front of the platform G, banked up with stones like that in front of the terrace I, but only about half its height. The lower platform H does not seem to have been fortified.

The dimensions of the fort, exclusive of the natural slope to the north, are about 250 by 150 feet.

Entrances.—Most of the embrasure-like breaks seen in the views (figs. 3, 4) are not original. Probably only one has been an entrance. It slopes down in a slanting direction from the east end of the terrace I, overlooked, as shown in fig. 4, all the way by the platform G. An exit also descends from the north end of the terrace F, eastward along the steep northern slope for about 20 yards, and then turns abruptly westward, reaching the foot of the eminence near its west end, where it is closest to the river, probably designed to secure a water supply. It is not easy on the spot to distinguish this roadway, as it has been much worn away, but it comes out most remarkably under a favourable light from a distance of even a mile, viewed from the north.

It struck me that there were indications of hut foundations, levelled in the slope of the platform G, and in some other parts, but I was not favoured with a sufficiently good light to make them out with certainty.

THE STONE CIRCLE.

This small circle is not marked on the O.M., and, as far as I know, has not been recorded. It is situated (fig. 1) in the low ground to the east of the fort, 24 yards from the foot of the eminence, and 75 from its top. It consists of five stones equably placed (fig. 5), but leaving an interspace for a sixth. That there was a sixth seems probable from the interspace being exactly double the length of the intervals between the existing stones, and it may have been broken up and entirely carried off, just as one of the remaining stones has been split in two (Nos. 3A, 3B) by blasting and partially removed. The contained space measures about

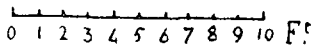


Fig. 5. Ground Plan of Stone Circle at Wester Torrie.

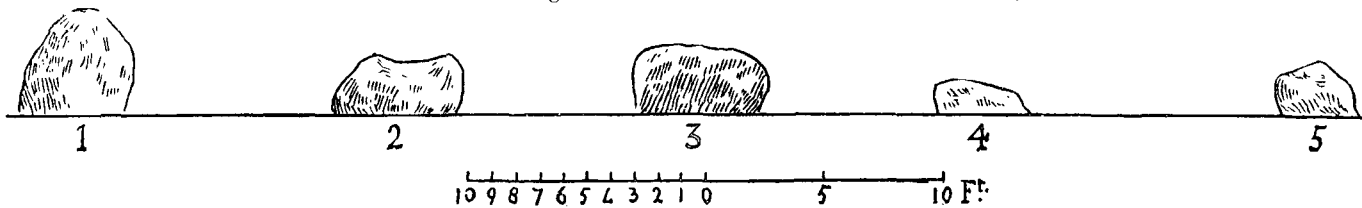


Fig. 6. Diagrammatic extension and elevation of Stone Circle at Wester Torrie.

22 feet from N. by W. to S. by E., and 18 feet in the opposite direction. The stones are boulders of a coarse-grained, dark bluish-grey trap, bulky and shapeless, so that it is hard to tell whether they are standing or overthrown. One of them, however, No. 1, certainly is in its original position, as it stands on a foundation of small flattish stones; and as the intervals between them all are tolerably regular, it is not likely that any are much out of place. The field is nearly free from stones of any kind, but a very few similar boulders lie about, far from the circle and from each other.

In their present positions, the highest stands only 3 feet 8 inches, and the lowest but 18 inches above the ground (fig. 6). In greatest length, Nos. 2 and 3 measure about 4 feet 2 inches; No. 1, about 3 feet 8 inches; No. 5, 3 feet 4 inches; and No. 4, 2 feet 6 inches. These dimensions are small, but the bulky form of the stones gives them some dignity. No. 3 would probably be the largest if the separated parts were put together, without allowing for a piece that seems to have been carried off.

In measuring the fort I had the assistance of Dr John Beddoe, F.R.S., and for the planning of the circle I am indebted to my colleague, Mr J. H. Cunningham, C.E.