

## II.

NOTICE OF AN ANCIENT FORT AT GREENFORD, NEAR ARBROATH.  
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So far as I have been able to consult authorities on the subject, none of them has mentioned the existence of an ancient fort situated on the farm of Greenford, in the parish of Arbirlot, Forfarshire, nor has its site been noted on the Ordnance Survey Sheets. But local tradition has kept alive the belief that the entrenched piece of ground was in the remote past a defensive construction.

Fully a year ago an old man mentioned to an antiquarian friend that when, as a lad, he herded cows on the farm of Greenford, he and his playmates had been accustomed to speak of the entrenched ground as a British fort. This having been repeated to the writer, he forthwith proceeded to inspect the locality. About the same time a paragraph appeared in a local newspaper, drawing attention to the discovery, and stating that the works bore evidence of vitrification. This, however, is quite a mistake; the defences have been composed entirely of earthwork, and there is no indication that stones have been used in their construction.

For no other conceivable purpose than that of strengthening the position would such great entrenchments have been undertaken. No works of the kind could possibly be required in connection with the cultivation of the soil or the enclosing of cattle or sheep, and the only satisfactory explanation of their existence is that which regards them as an early defensive work.

As already mentioned, the site is on the farm of Greenford, about six miles to the south-west of Arbroath. Like many other similar relics of early times, it would no doubt have suffered extinction but for the situation which it occupies. Lying on the edge of a moor, which has been gradually encroached upon by cultivation, it is evident that the deep trench on the eastern side has proved practically an impassable

barrier in the way of further reclamation of the moorland at its south-eastern corner. The consequence of this is that the fort has come to occupy a somewhat singular position in relation to the cultivated and uncultivated land; for while the divisional fence between the arable land and the moor keeps the two distinct until the fort is reached, it thereafter proceeds right through the middle of it, instead of accommodating itself to the curved line of the trench which bounds the arable land, the result being that one half of the circular piece of ground (the whole of which lies waste) projects into the cultivated field, and is reckoned on the Ordnance Survey Sheet as part of its area. The singularity of the position is so evident that it is difficult to understand how the Ordnance Surveyors should have failed to note the remains of the fort when making their detailed measurements.

Excluding the trenches, the superficial extent of the fort (fig. 1) is fully two acres. It is an incomplete oval in shape, measuring 370 feet in width at its widest part, and narrowing to 326 feet across in a line with the ends of the ditch, at the part where the enclosure is now incomplete. The ditch varies in width at the surface from 20 feet to about 12 feet, is still nearly 5 feet deep at the deepest parts, and has sloping sides.

Having regard to the modes of warfare practised in early times, the position must have been a very advantageous one. Situated on the north side of a little valley down which a tiny stream flows, the fort lies partly on the level and partly on the slope, as the sections appended to the plan show. At the bottom of the slope, for a distance of forty yards or thereby, the trench appears to have become quite obliterated. It is possible, however, that here it may never have existed, in which case its absence may be accounted for by the supposition that in earlier times the water, having no definite channel, may have been diffused over the whole surface of the hollow, thus forming a morass similar to that a little way up the valley. With such a natural defence no artificial works on that side would be necessary. On the north side of the fort (as is indicated on the plan) a somewhat similar state of matters exists. Here,

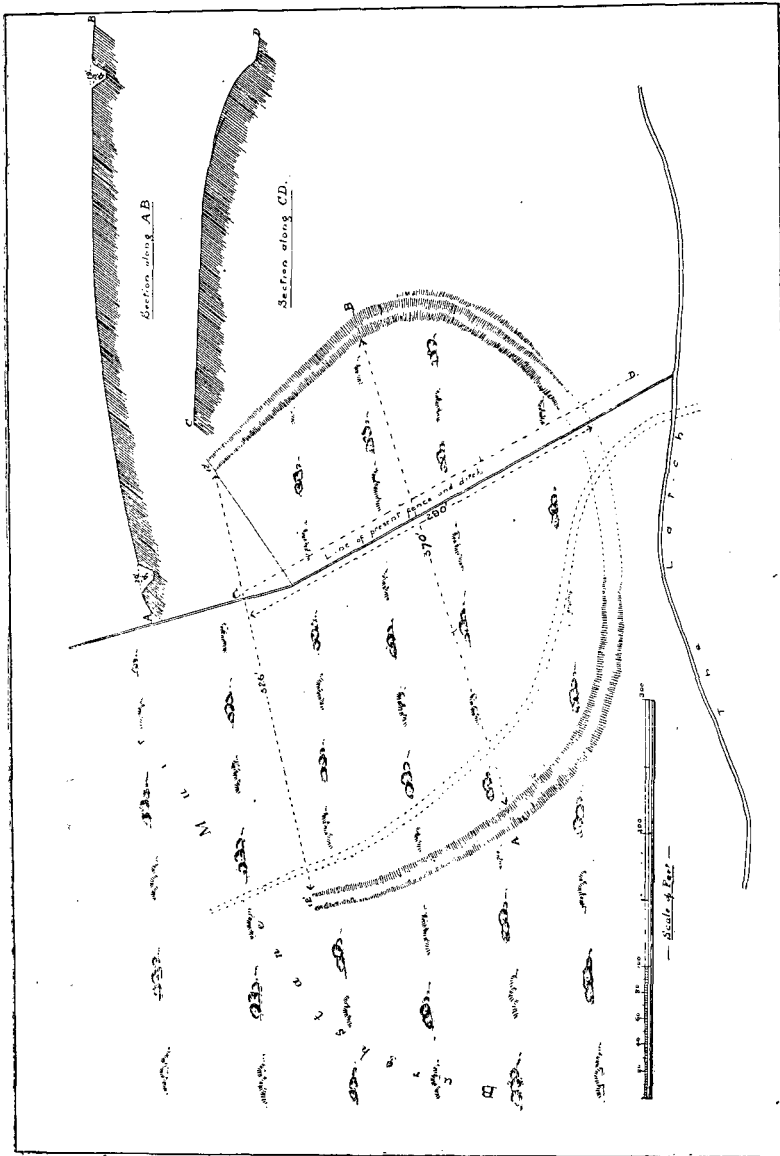


Fig. 1. Plan, with sections, of the Fort at Greenford, on the Burghstane Moor.

however, the appearance of the trenches, where they stop short at the north-east and north-west points, is such that one can say quite confidently that no trench had ever existed along the north side. On examining the ground to the north there is every indication that it was at one time a morass, from which, by the cultivation of the adjoining land, the water has been gradually drained off.

Assuming that there was on the north such a natural defence, and that the marsh on the south-west and south was formerly more extensive, the direction from which an attack had most to be provided against was from the east, and it is on this side that the entrenchments seem to have been most formidable. It is likely that both the scarp and counterscarp of the surrounding fosse were surmounted by earthen ramparts, although there is now scarcely any indication of these except on the counterscarp at the south-east, and slightly on the scarp of the south-western part. At these points the fosse, which is about 20 feet wide, is still about 5 feet deep, although agricultural operations have gradually been rendering it shallower. Besides the fosse and ramparts, the defences may have been strengthened by the addition of a wooden palisade. The almost entire absence of ramparts creates a difficulty in explaining how the enormous quantity of excavated earth was disposed of. The combined effects of the weather and the treading of cattle and sheep would not sufficiently account for its disappearance. Perhaps the greater part of it may have been utilised for levelling up inequalities of the surface within the enclosure.

For outlook purposes the situation of the fort is admirably adapted to prevent a surprise. On the opposite side of the hollow the ground gradually rises to the south for a distance of nearly half a mile, and then suddenly falls away towards the North Sea. On the top of this ridge a splendid view is to be had of the whole surrounding country, as well as of the sea and both shores of the Firth of Tay, continued on to Arbroath on the north and Fife Ness on the south.

The name of the moor in which the fort is situated possesses more than ordinary etymological interest. Locally it is known as Brochstane Moor. That this name has not originated in the theory of any modern

antiquary, is shown from a reference to it three hundred years ago in the titles of the Panmure property, where occurs the description, "*maresiam nuncupatam Dollomosse cum mora nuncupata Burghstan-mûre.*" In Dr Christison's *Early Fortifications in Scotland* there is a list of place-names which the author considered had probably originated from "burhs" or forts having at one time existed in the vicinity of the places so named, and in that list is included the name "Burghstane Moor."

When and by whom the fort was constructed are problems towards the solution of which history gives us very little help. Practically the most that can be said with any degree of confidence regarding the period of the fort is that the excavation of the trenches, long stretches of which have been cut through "pan" and stiff clay soil, could only have been accomplished with iron implements.

The district within a radius of a couple of miles of the camp is generally believed to be very deficient in historical associations. But this popular belief is hardly consistent with facts. The little stream running past it separates it from the farm of Balbinnie. These lands of Balbenie (as they were named in early times) were about the year 1200 given as a dowry by William de Valoniis, the then proprietor of Panmure (formerly Panmor), with his daughter Lora on her marriage with Henry de Balliol, High Chamberlain of Scotland, and grand-uncle of John Balliol, the hapless King of Scotland. Barely two miles to the west may be seen the recently excavated foundations of the great Castle of Panmure, demolished about the year 1336. About a mile to the north-west is the site of the old Castle of Carnegie, from which the noble family of Southesk took its name. What would we not have given to have saved those ancient edifices from the vandals who converted them into building material for farm-steadings and field dykes!

Relics of still earlier times, situated about two miles to the west and the same distance to the east respectively, are well known as the Camuston Cross and the Sculptured Stone of Arbirlot. These have fortunately escaped the hands of the destroyer. A mile to the north-east, in an angle formed by the meeting of two valleys in the Guynd

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Wood, are still visible the ramparts of another ancient fort. In the fields adjoining the Greenford camp, stone coffins have been found. How many volumes of history are locked up in those various relics of antiquity!