

I.

MILITARY ROADS AND FORTIFICATIONS IN THE HIGHLANDS, WITH BRIDGES AND MILESTONES. BY THOMAS WALLACE, F.S.A. Scot.

Nothing contributed more to the peace and prosperity of the Highlands than the roads that were constructed by General Wade and his successors. The "old ways," according to Burt, consisted of stony moors, bogs, rugged, rapid fords, declivities of hills, entangling woods, and giddy precipices. Although Wade was responsible for a comparatively small portion of the work, yet he was undoubtedly the originator of the scheme which was completed by his successors. These roads, which followed pretty much the old tracks (which have been continued by the railways), were commenced in 1725 and carried on till 1814. The width of the first roads was 16 feet, and as they were for military purposes they proceeded in as straight a line as possible, to shorten the journey.

On account of the peculiar circumstances which followed the Disarming Act after 1715, and after representations made by Lord Lovat and others, General Wade was commanded by George I. to proceed to the Highlands in 1724 and report upon the state of affairs as he found them, and to suggest remedies for the same. A copy of his instructions will be found in the Record Office, vol. xiv. p. 60. Among other things he was to keep the roads in good repair communicating between the barracks already established, and to build a galley to be employed in conveying troops, etc., on Loch Ness. Wade's report will be found as an appendix to Jamieson's edition of Burt's Letters.

Wade arrived at Inverness in 1724, August 10th, and on the 27th October of the same year he reported that he had made progress with the roads, and that the vessel for navigation on Loch Ness would be finished in a fortnight after that date. The "Highland galley," as it was called, was 25 to 30 tons burden, and was to cost not more than £400. This vessel was built at Inverness and carried overland to Loch Ness under the direction of Captain Pestle, captain of the *Satisfaction*, by some of his seamen, and almost all the soldiers and officers of Colonel Fitch's regiment.

We have already stated that there were no roads in the Highlands before General Wade's time. A glimpse at the tracks usually followed by the Highlanders when moving from place to place will more than justify this statement.

During the rising in 1653 under Glencairn, when General Monk marched from Kintail to Inverness by Glen Strath Farrar, he said: "The way for nearly five miles was so boggy that 100 baggage horses were left behind, and many other horses bogged or tired." "Never any horsemen, much less an army, were observed to march that way before."

When Dundee left Inverness in 1689, he says that his horses scrambled over pathless mountains, white with perpetual frosts, to Glegarry Castle, which was surrounded by gloomy marshes. On his return journey from Perth to the moor of Rannoch he said he led his troops through mountains, forcing his way by plain and cliff, by sweltering bog and gully, and that many of the wearied horses sunk in the marshes and were lost. He further notes that he reached Loch Treig by stream and marsh and quaking bog, by forests blocked with uprooted trees, by precipices and mountain heights.

Nothing could better show the state of the roads than the following description by Lord Lovat of the "45" of a journey from the "Aird" to the south by Slochmuick and Drumouchdar:—

"I brought my wheelwright with me as far as Aviemore in case of

accidents, and there I parted with him because he declared that my chariot would go safe enough to London, but I was not eight miles from the place when on the plain road the axle-tree of the hind wheel broke in two, so that my girls were forced to go on bare horses behind footmen, and I was obliged to ride myself. I came with that equipage to Ruthven late at night, and my chariot was pulled there by force of men, where I got a wheelwright and a smith, who wrought two days mending my chariot, and after paying very dear for their work and for my quarters two nights, I was not gone four miles from Ruthven when it broke again, so that I was in a miserable condition till I came to Dalnacardach. At the hill of Drummond the fore axle gave way, and again smith and wrights and carts had to be called to assistance."

The following are a few notes on the roads constructed by Wade and his successors.

Road from Perth to Inverness.—This road proceeded by Scone, Murtly, Dunkeld, Dalguise, Blair of Athol, Struan, Dalwhinnie, Kingussie, Aviemore, Carrbridge; crossed the Dulnan by a bridge at Sluggan,¹—from here to Slochmuick by Torbreck. The Findhorn was crossed by a bridge at Raigbeg, which was carried away by the "Moray floods" 1759. From here the road continued by Dalmagerrie to Moy and Aulnaslanach, through the pass of Moy (Starsach-nan-Gael), crossed the Nairn at Failie, and entered Inverness by what is known as "Edinburgh Road." This road was constructed between 1725 and 1733.

In 1728 Wade reported as follows:—

"I am now with all possible diligence carrying on the new road between Dunkeld and Inverness, of about 80 English measured miles in length, and that no time may be lost in a work so essential to his Majesty's service I have employed 300 men in different parts of the road that the work may be done during the favourable season of the year." (*Inverness Field Club Trans.*, vol. v. p. 157.)

¹ See the illustration, p. 326.

In 1729 Wade was at Dalnacardach, and in September of that same year he rode over this road as far as Inverness.

Road from Perth to Fort George.—This road extended from Perth to Blairgowrie, Spittal of Glen Shee, to Braemar, down the Dee to Balmoral, Bridge of Gairn, Cock Bridge, Corgarff Castle, Tomintoul,



Fig. 1. Record Stone near Tomintoul.

Grantown, Dava, Dulsie Bridge, Calder (Cawdor), Croy, Balspardeen, Campbelltown, Fort George.

In 1757 mention is made of bridges on this road, and of painting and figuring the milestones. Two of these milestones are still standing: one is about 5 miles from Tomintoul, on the road over the Lecht Hill to Donside, of which an illustration is given in fig. 1. It

measures 34 inches by 20 inches by 4 inches, and is now fixed into the wall of a roadside well, and bears the following inscription :—

A.-D. 1754.
 Five Companies
 the 33 Regiment
 Right Hon^{bl} Lord
 Cha^s Hay Colonel
 made this road from
 here to the
 Spey.

The other stands at the east end of the bridge over the Spey at Grantown. It is in a mutilated condition, and bears the following inscription :—

A.-D. 1754.
 Five Companies
 33 Regiment
 Honourable Lord
 Charles Hay
 Colonel Finished.

As this road was completed shortly after 1757, and as Fort George (at Campbelltown) was not completed till about 1763, it is evident that the road was made before the fort was ready for occupation. As Wade died in 1748, this road must have been completed by his successor. I may mention here that there is another milestone at Dalnacardach, but I have not been able to find out the inscription.

Road between Inverness and Fort William.—In 1725 Wade reported to the king that he had made good progress with the road between Kilhuimen (Fort Augustus) and Fort William. In 1726 he completed it and extended it to Inverness. In 1727 he reported to Lord Townshend that “the great military road through the centre of the Highlands, extending from Fort William to Inverness, 50 miles in length, is now about finished, and made practicable for the march of troops, cannon, or wheeled carriages, and may be continued to

Perth at a very moderate expense by the regiments quartered in those parts.”

The road from Fort Augustus to Inverness was on the east side of Loch Ness, and passed through Stratherrick and Foyers.

Road from Fort George to Failie Bridge.—After Wade completed his roads, it was necessary to keep them in repair, and for this purpose Major Caulfield was appointed, with an allowance of £500. During his time some additional roads were made, and this road was one of them.

This road extended from Fort George, through Petty, past Cradlehall and Muckovie, to join the road already described from Inverness to Failie Bridge.

Caulfield had his headquarters at Cradlehall, near Inverness, where the soldiers' barracks are still standing.

In 1755 Caulfield had repaired nearly all the old roads and erected some small bridges.

Road from Aberdeen to Inverness.—This road led from Aberdeen, by Old Meldrum and Turriff, to Banff, and thence along the south shore of the Moray Firth, by Cullen, Fochabers, Elgin, Forres, and Nairn, to Inverness.

In 1798 there were no bridges on the Spey at Fochabers, on the Findhorn at Forres, or on the Nairn at Nairn.

In 1784, according to Lord Cockburn in his “Memorials,” when Hope and Braxfield were on a North circuit, because of the Findhorn being in flood at Forres, they were obliged to go up its banks about 28 miles, to the bridge at Dulsie, before they could cross.

At this time there were no bridges on the rivers north of Inverness, although roads were projected and partly made to the Pentland Firth.

Road from Fort Augustus to Bernera in Glenelg.—This road may be looked upon as a continuation of the road from Dalwhinnie to Fort Augustus. It went by Cluny, down Glenshiel, and crossed the Mam

Rattachan to Bernera, where the ruins of extensive barracks still stand. Two of the milestones on this road have already appeared in the Society's *Proceedings*, vol. xxxii., and are here repeated.

No. 1 (fig. 2) still stands on an old road in Glenshiel, about 2 miles from Shiel inn. It bears the inscription "XXIV Reg. ended." It measures 2 feet 6 inches high, breadth at the top 14 inches, at the



Fig. 2. Record Stone on one of General Wade's roads in Glenshiel.

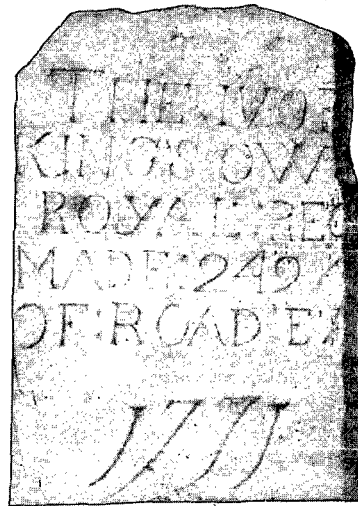


Fig. 3. Record Stone on shore of Loch Duich.

middle $16\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and at the bottom 22 inches, and is 4 inches thick. No. 2 (fig. 3) is unfortunately not in its original position, but lies in front of the house, in the wall of which it was discovered some years ago, on the shores of Loch Duich, about 2 miles from Shiel inn. Its dimensions are similar to No. 1 (though reproduced on a slightly larger scale in the illustration), and the inscription runs—"The IV or King's Own Royal Reg. made 249 (yards ?) of Road Ea[st] 1771."

Road between Ruthven and Fort Augustus.—This road went over Corryarrick, and was begun in 1731 and finished shortly afterwards. There is a slight difference of opinion about the position of the eastern portion of this road. Burt takes it off the main road at Dalwhinnie. Wildey's road map shows a cross road from Ruthven to a place called "Cateleuch" or "Cross-in-hand," on the way to Corryarrick, in the direct line from Ruthven to Fort Augustus inn. It is not at all unlikely that Wade took this shorter road.

There were exceptional difficulties on this road, on which 500 men were employed.

Road from Stirling to Crieff.—In 1729 a road from Dalnacardach to Crieff was projected. The military milestone south of Garry Bridge bears the date 1729, but the rest of the inscription is now illegible.

In 1742, £941, 2s. was spent in repairing the road from Stirling to Crieff, according to Burt. This road originally connected Crieff with Aberfeldy, and thence with Dalnacardach. Whether originally one of Wade's roads, it ultimately was regarded as part of the scheme.

The inscription above the door of the house of Dalnacardach reads as follows :—

Hospitium Hoc
In Publicum Commodum
Georgius III. Rex.
Construi Iussit
A.D. 1774.
Rest a little while.
Gabhaid fois car tinwill Bhig.

THE BRIDGES.

In order to make the roads serviceable, it was necessary that he should construct bridges. In connection with the system forty bridges were built on 250 miles of road.

In 1732, £600 was provided to build a bridge over the Tay at Weem,

and £150 for one over the Faragaig near Foyers, and £55 for another at Aberhalder.

The bridge over the Tay at Aberfeldy was the largest one, and the only one over the Tay. It consisted of five arches, the middle one being 50 feet span. The foundation-stone was laid on 23rd April 1733, and it was finished the same year. It bears two inscriptions,

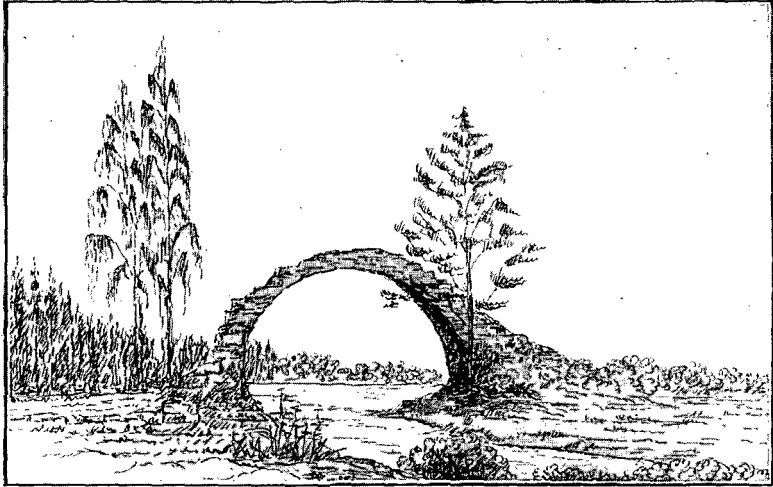


Fig. 4. General Wade's Bridge at Sluggan, 1902.

one in English and the other in Latin. The Latin one not only commemorates Wade's connection with this bridge, but with the whole system of road-making in the Highlands.

There are bridges over the Garry and the Tummel of single spans of 50 feet.

St George's Bridge over the Spey at Garvamore has two spans of 40 feet each.

In 1736 the "High Bridge" over the Spean was built. There is an inscription on this bridge by Wade.

The chief object of these roads was to keep open communication between the south and the barracks at Fort William, Fort Augustus, Bernera, Ruthven, and Inverness. In order to keep the roads clear they had to establish camps along the routes and in the principal passes.

In 1725 companies of soldiers were established in Stratherrick and

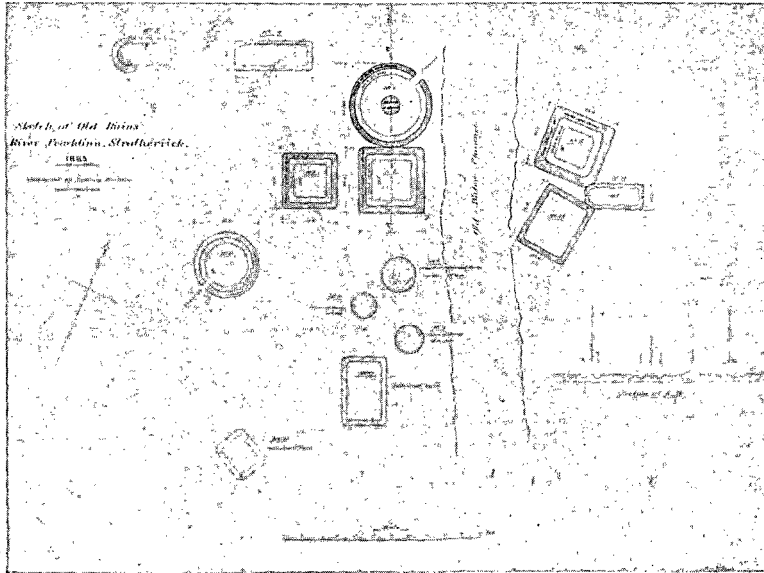


Fig. 5. Ruins in Stratherrick.

in the passes north and south of Inverness to report all robberies and depredations by the clans. The ruins of some of these sites are to be seen now in Stratherrick. One of them, of which No. 5 is an illustration, will be found in the birch wood opposite the Catholic Chapel. The remains consist of foundations of square, oblong, and circular forms. They show some curious combinations. Two square and one oblong one are conjoined without any apparent communication

between them. The largest circle and the largest square are conjoined. Several of them are surrounded by ditches, evidently with the intention of keeping the interior dry. Each of them has a path over the ditch, as shown in the illustration.

Note.—I may mention here that I have just visited a place near Whitebridge in the same locality, where an area of close on 60 acres is completely covered with foundations of buildings, of which I hope to report later on. It is difficult to say what they represent. They appear to be too extensive for sheilings, and too substantial for the remains of a temporary military encampment. They are more likely to be the remains of a crofter township.

THE FORTS.

We will now note one or two of the Forts or Castles that were used in connection with the roads and military operations.

Ruthven Castle in Badenoch was a seat of the Cumins. In the latter half of the fourteenth century it was the chief seat of the Wolf of Badenoch.

Queen Mary is said to have frequently visited it to enjoy the pleasures of the chase in the extensive forests. In 1415 it was seized by John, Earl of Ross, who had broken out in rebellion against James II. It was possessed also by the Earls of Huntly and the Dukes of Gordon, who held sway in Badenoch for four hundred years. Previous to the battle that was fought between Argyle and Huntly in 1594 at Glenlivet, Argyle laid siege to Ruthven Castle.

It was purchased by the Government and converted into a castle in 1718. The fort stood on an isolated knoll, surrounded by extensive marshy land. The height of the mound was 20 feet, and the area on the top about 120 yards long by 60 broad. A double iron gate and a portcullis guarded an arched entry in the south wall. Two towers flanked the north end of the court. Shaw says that he saw this fort entire.

A barracks (fig. 6) was constructed on the site of this old castle in 1781. The mound is supposed to be artificial. The old people in Shaw's time said that in sinking the well within the barracks planks of wood were found laid across each other at equal distances from near the surface to the base.

It is quite possible that this mound may have been built over an old crannog.

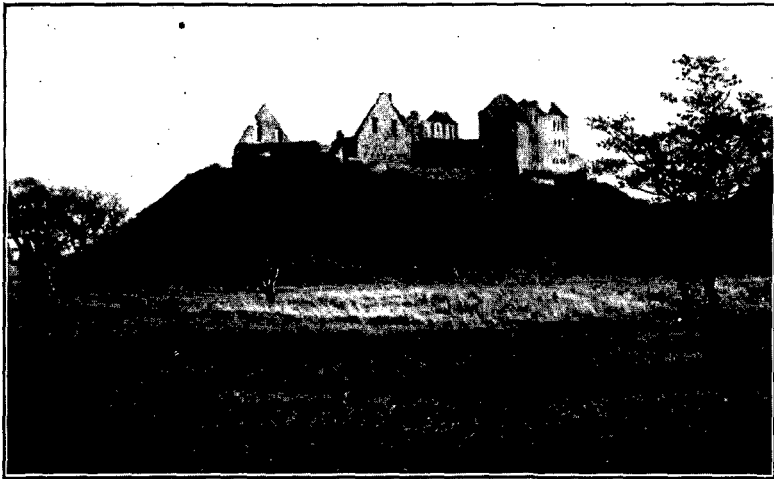


Fig. 6. Ruins of Ruthven Barracks.

The rebels set this fort on fire in 1746, after a siege of three days by General Gordon of Glenbucket with 300 men and some cannon. The walls still remain, as the illustration will show.

The last incident in connection with this fort was after Culloden, when 4000 or 5000 men assembled under the Duke of Athol, Lord George Murray, the Duke of Perth, Lord John Drummond, Lord Ogilvie, and others, to invite the Prince to meet them and lead them.

As the Prince did not respond, the chiefs burned the castle and took leave of each other, and sought their own safety.

Corgarff Castle (fig. 7) was a military station on the road from Fort George (Campbelltown), 21 miles from Castletown of Braemar. It was originally a castellated house, which was appropriated, and, after additions had been made to it, was converted into a fortress, and garrisoned by the Government to keep the rebellious Highlanders in subjection.

The Earls of Mar had anciently a hunting seat here, which was burned by the Gordons in 1571.

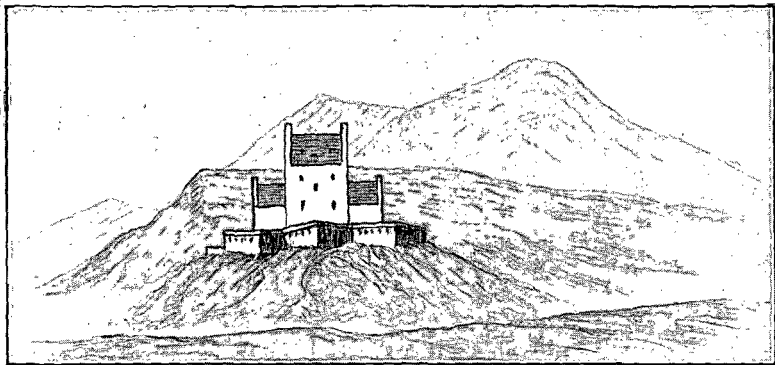


Fig. 7. Corgarff Castle.

Fort William.—Originally this fort was built by Cromwell, at Monk's suggestion, in 1653, and was called the "Garrison of Inverlochy," and was calculated to hold 2000 men. The ramparts were of earth, enclosed by turf walls.

It was rebuilt in 1690 on a smaller scale, but of stone and lime, by General Mackay of Scourie, and called Fort William after the king.

A local historian describes it as follows :—

"The fort contained a bomb-proof magazine and three blocks of houses fitted to accommodate 100 men. A fourth block was used as a store. It was defended on the land side by a ditch, glacis, and ravelin, and on the west side by ramparts faced with stone, upon

which were mounted fifteen twelve-pounder guns. The fort was entered by a bridge across the ditch, consisting of four or five arches, and sentries were placed at various parts upon this bridge. The guard-house was immediately inside the fort. Adjoining it were the officers' quarters, and in the opposite block of buildings was the general's house. The other buildings were occupied by the men. At the back of the fort, towards the river Nevis, was the sally-port."

"During the rebellion of 1715 an attempt was made to take the fort on behalf of the Old Pretender, but it was not successful."

"It was besieged in 1746 by the followers of Prince Charlie. It was dismantled in 1864 and sold to the late Mr Campbell of Monzie. Lastly, the West Highland Railway Company acquired it in 1889, by whom it was demolished."

Burt mentions that the town was erected into a barony in favour of the governor of the fort for the time being, and into a burgh in the name of Queen Mary.

Fort Augustus is situated at the south-west end of Loch Ness. It stands on a flat piece of land between the Tarff and the Oich, which flow into Loch Ness.

From being the burial-place of the family of the Cumins, it was anciently called "Kilcuminim."

The fort was built shortly after the Rebellion of 1715. Its form was square, with a bastion at each corner, on which could be mounted twelve guns. It was defended by a ditch, covered-way, and glacis.

The barracks were constructed for one field-officer, four captains, twelve subalterns, and 280 rank and file.

After peace was restored to the Highlands the magazines and stores stood empty, and the guns were removed to Fort George.

A few soldiers resided here for some time after it was dismantled.

Fort George (at Inverness).—This is not the place to enter upon a history of the castle at Inverness; suffice it to say that Inverness had

a castle, according to Adamnan, in King Brudi's time. We can with certainty trace a castle in Inverness from the time of William the Lion (1165-1214). It was several times destroyed and rebuilt, and for short periods inhabited by Scottish kings.

In 1715 it was held for a short time by Mar, but he was expelled by the royalists, led by Rose of Kilravock. It was thoroughly repaired

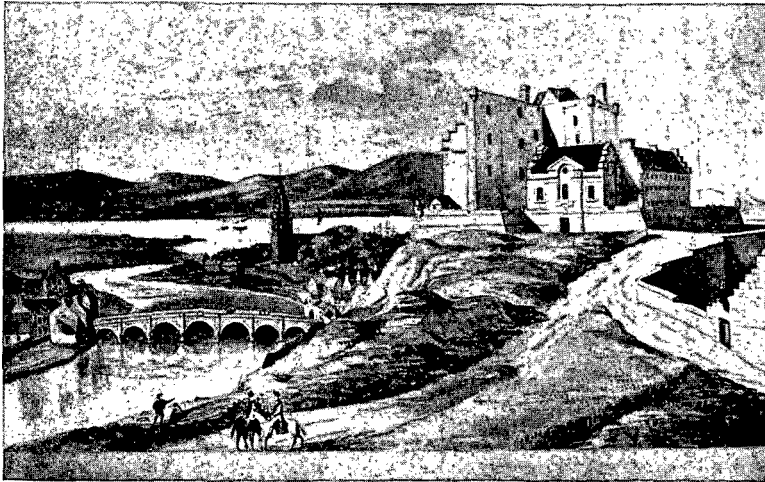


Fig. 8. Fort George (at Inverness), as rebuilt by General Wade, 1744.

in 1718, and made fit to hold 800 men, a governor's house, magazine, and chapel. It was completely destroyed by the troops of Prince Charlie on the 19th February 1746.

Berna in Glenelg is the only other fort to be mentioned in connection with the old roads, but I have failed to get any definite information regarding it.

In the compilation of these notes I have been indebted to information obtained from:—*The Home Office Military Entry Book*; *The Treasury Minute Book*; *Domestic State Papers*; *The King's Warrant*

Books ; Domestic Annals of Scotland ; House of Commons Journals ; Scots Magazine, by the late Sir Kenneth Mackenzie of Gairloch, and embodied in a paper by him to be found in the *Transactions of Inverness Scientific Society and Field Club ; Shaw's History of Moray ; The Survey of Moray ; Banff Field Club Transactions ; Inverness Field Club Transactions.*