

II.

THE DEUCHNY HILL FORT—THE CHALMERS-JERVISE PRIZE
ESSAY. By R. R. BOOG WATSON.

The site to be considered forms the highest point of what is rather vaguely marked on Ordnance Survey Maps as Deuchny Wood, and lies to the north-east of Kinnoull Hill and about 2 miles from the Cross of Perth. The Survey sheets give no details of height above the contour-line of 700 feet, but actual levels have been taken and the highest point is 760 feet above Ordnance datum.

Kinnoull Hill (728 feet) and Deuchny Hill form the west end of the range of hills which form the Braes of the Carse, among which are such fortified hilltops as at Pole Hill and Evelick.

Viewed from the west, Deuchny Hill has the appearance of a truncated cone, but from south or north it is elongated, and consists of three well-defined heights rising in level from the west end.

Both to the north and south are swampy hollows, beyond which the ground again rises, but nowhere attains the height of the eastmost top. This height commands a very extensive outlook: eastwards, the Carse of Gowrie and as far as the Bell Rock light; southwards, from St Andrews Bay and over Fifeshire; westwards, Strathearn and to about Tyndrum; northwards, the valley of the Tay, Strathmore, and the Grampians. Only to the north-east is the view cut off by Murrayshall Hill. So prominent is the site that it was selected for the Peace Celebrations bonfire, and it was this circumstance which redirected my attention to it. I had at an earlier time noticed what seemed to be traces of a wall, but having examined the Ordnance Survey Maps and finding no indication of any site, I had concluded that either I was mistaken or the remains were quite modern. When, however, a small stone mortar was brought to the Perth Museum as having been found on the site of the bonfire, I was led to re-examine the site. Through the kindness of the Right Hon. The Earl of Moray permission was obtained to examine and survey the ground, and to him I have to express my thanks both for the permission and continued interest. From Mr Wilson, factor on the Kinfauns Estate, I learned that the hill had been planted out some eighty years ago. This may account for the highest part of the ground not being indicated on the Ordnance Survey Map; a young plantation is often difficult to survey on account of the closely planted trees. Mr Wilson informed me that this hill bore on the estate records the name of Grassy Law.

His Lordship mentioned that he remembered its being called "The Seven Airts" from the fact that from it seven counties can be seen. Some years ago the timber on this hill was removed when its prominence was emphasised, while the burning of the surface soil due to the bonfire resulted in the bringing of several artifacts to the surface as well as showing up the lines of walling. Examination of the highest part shows that though the natural formation is almost entirely rock,

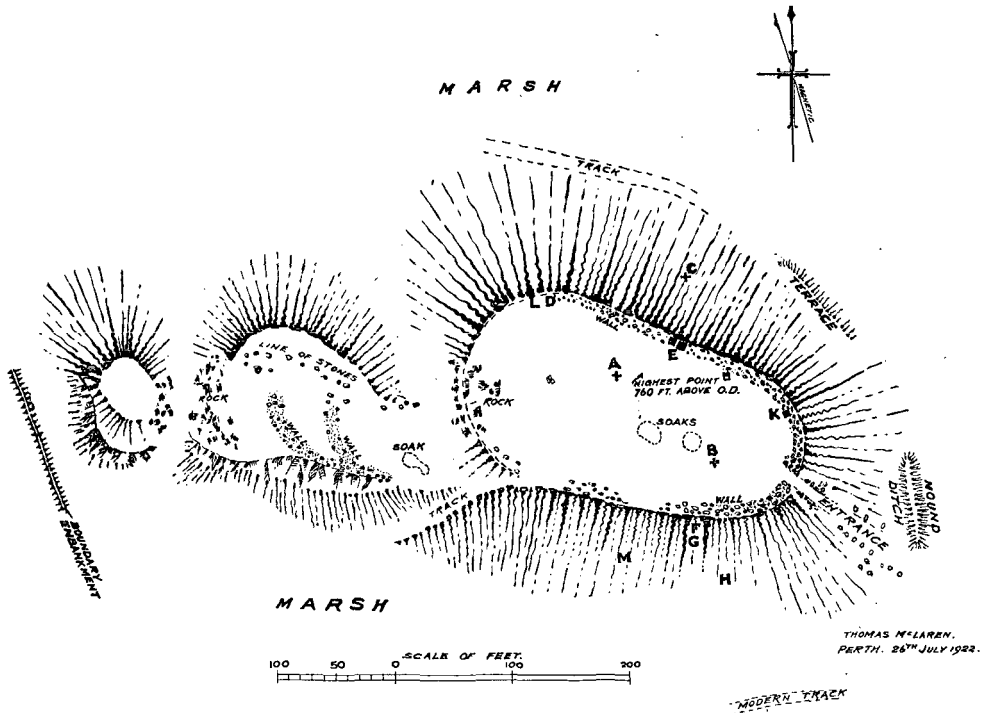


Fig. 1. Plan of Fort on Deuchny Hill.

there is evidence of a more or less continuous rampart or wall along the edge of the plateau on the top of the hill. Most of the stones are water-worn or glaciated, and it is evident that when they were placed in position not only the larger stones but also the gravel must have been carried up. Among this gravel are so large a number of rounded white stones as to suggest they had been specially selected. At the points where the wall cannot be traced the rock is bare, and stones which may at one time have been in the rampart are now lying on the hill-slope.

The fort (figs. 1 and 2) is pear-shaped on plan, with its main axis west-

north-west and east-south-east, and measures 96 yards in length and 44 yards in width about the centre. The entrance or gateway is at the south-east end; here the foundations of the rampart are more distinct. The wall on the north side seems to have been returned for a short distance inwards. The approach to the entrance is well marked by large stones at irregular intervals. Some 10 feet from the entrance is the only sign of the rock having been worked into, as on both sides of the path it has been removed either to smooth the approach or possibly to form a step as a trap for an enemy. Towards the foot of the slope and about the end of the ditch or protected way are fairly large stones which seem as if placed to break up any concerted rush against the entrance.

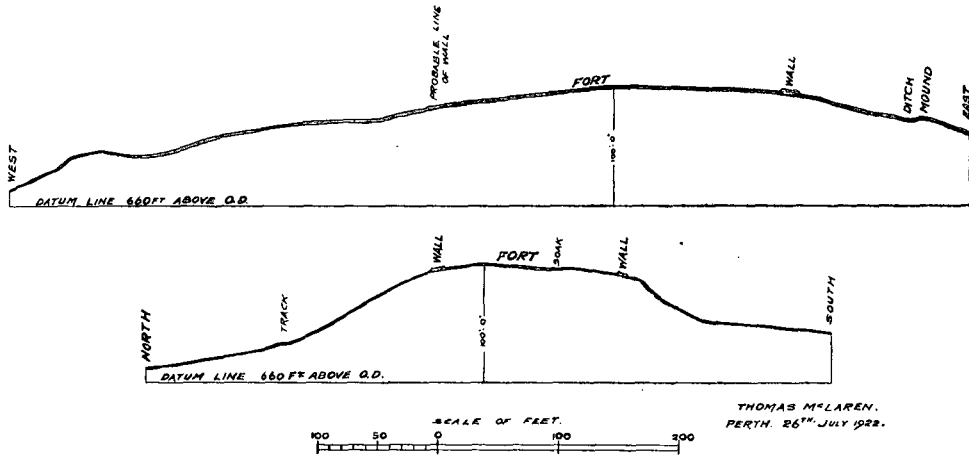


Fig. 2. Sections through Fort on Deuchny Hill.

The ditch or protected way runs below the east end of the fort and turns along the north face of the hill, but at one place (shown on the plan) the hill seems to have slipped and filled the ditch. At this point are a considerable number of water-worn boulders, which may either have been from the wall above or have been part of an additional fortification; while further along this north side there seems to be a track with stones on either side, but as this line was used for hauling the timber these may have been only recently moved.

On the south side is a somewhat similar track, which runs up the hill to one of the breaks in the line of rampart, and which certainly was used for the removal of timber.

The fort, as stated, occupies the plateau on the highest part of the hill.

The east end was protected as already described. On the north and

south the banks fall away very steeply, at some parts precipitously, and beyond these slopes are considerable swampy areas. The west end, however, where the two lower heights break the slope, seems to have had additional ramparts, as two lines of stones seem to curve across the middle hill and reach what may have been an access indicated by a double line of stones.

There is no indication of any water supply, unless it be one or two places where there seem to be earth-filled hollows; two of these are on the highest plateau and were untouched when the hill was burned. During wet weather I tried the depth with a walking-stick and was able to go down some 15 or 18 inches; on withdrawal of the stick the hole at once filled with water. Before the removal of the timber, about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile north-east and much lower down was a spring, which is marked on the Ordnance Survey map. Mr Wilson tells me that on the estate plans this spring is marked as the Butter Well, and was famous for its water. Since the cutting of the timber it has dried up. Below this spring was a bank covered with spruce firs, which was called, according to an old man of the district, the "Rostle Bank." I have the name only phonetically, and the present generation have lost it.

Further to the south lies what Mr Wilson informs me is given on the estate plans as the "Whisky Riggs March."

Besides such artifacts as I have found in or about this fort and the small stone mortar presented to the Museum by Mr J. Henderson, there was a flint lance-head found some 500 yards to the north-east, on the end slope of the rising ground over the northerly swamp.

I am indebted to the Right Hon. The Earl of Moray and his factor, Mr J. G. Wilson, for the valuable assistance they have given me, to Mr J. Ritchie, Curator of the Museum, Perth, for providing the photographs submitted, and to Mr Thomas M'Laren, Burgh Surveyor, Perth, for invaluable aid in surveying and plotting the plans and sites.

ARTICLES MARKED ON PLAN.

- A. Stone mortar made of andesite, found by Mr J. Henderson on site of bonfire. Size, 3 inches by $1\frac{3}{4}$ inch; hollow, $2\frac{1}{8}$ inches by 1 inch. Perth Museum No. 2164.
- B. Hammer-stone, white quartzite, cheese shape, 3 inches to $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches by 2 inches, No. 2219. Much battered on edge. Found to south-east between entrance and east soak.
- C. Hammer-stone, grey quartzite, pear shape. Battered on small end. Size, $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches by 4 inches by $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Found on north slope.
- D. There is another hammer-stone, granite, which has been split, and was found in two portions about 6 feet apart (but still fitting), which is

still on the hill. It is much the same as the large pear-shaped grey quartzite one.

- E. Jet fragment, seems to be piece of armlet. Outside curve $1\frac{3}{8}$ inch in length, inside $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch, width $\frac{3}{8}$ inch, thickness $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. The sweep of this fragment would indicate a ring of some $3\frac{7}{8}$ inches in diameter outside and $3\frac{3}{8}$ inches inside. Found beside a hearth on north wall. Perth Museum, No. 2294.
- F. and G. Flint and chalcedony, flaked, found on steep slope to south-east outside.
- H. Two crystals with seemingly worked ends, and a piece of seemingly worked reddish quartz found on talus below the last two.
- K. Piece of stone, seemingly semi-vitrified, from hearth at east end of fort. The upper surface shows fire action, while the lower, which was buried in earth, is untouched.
- L. Pieces of vitrified stone, almost slag, found 24 yards north-west by north from highest point.
- M. Four small pieces of calcined bone from slope on south.

All these are indicated on the plan prepared by Mr M'Laren.