

IV.

ANCIENT BORDER HIGHWAYS: THE MINCHMOOR (CATRAIL) ROAD,
THE WHEEL CAUSEWAY, THE ANNANDALE FOREST ROAD,
THE WELL PATH, AND THE ENTERKIN. BY HARRY R. G.
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Owing to their irregular formation, the Border hills offer only a limited number of direct passes through which roads can be taken, and, to understand their bearing on history, it is necessary to recognise that while there are perhaps a dozen open passes between north and south, there is only one really accessible highway between the east and the west—the Tweed valley. The twenty-mile-broad belt of hill and moorland which, starting at St Abbs, stretches down the centre of the Lowlands almost to Carlisle, forms a barrier across Scotland of such a character that in winter these hills effectually cut off the Lothians from Berwickshire, and Roxburgh from Lanarkshire, as well as from Northumberland and Cumberland.

It is obvious that with a barrier of hills almost 100 miles in length, and only one practicable route through them between east and west, the natural division of the country in early times must have been an eastern and a western kingdom. It was apparently the Roman legions who first created an artificial barrier, when they drew their military

boundary from sea to sea. When we find that with the withdrawal of the legions the wall was battered down, and the country soon reshaped itself into the eastern kingdom of Northumbria and the western kingdom of Cumbria (or Strathclyde), we realise that at one period these passes must have been the chief means of internal communication, while at another these same roads were the highways used for invading an adjoining country. Undoubtedly the fine Roman road which passed up the centre of Northumbria must have greatly strengthened and consolidated that kingdom, just as the Roman road to Carlisle must have aided Cumberland. But we have no similar relics of a road through Strathclyde to Dumbarton, and it is this possible line of road that is so difficult to locate.

The break-up of these rival kingdoms of Northumbria and Strathclyde prior to the Norman conquest, and the subsequent pushing southward of the Scots, coupled with the moving northward of the English, caused much strife through many centuries before the political boundary was finally drawn between Tweed and Solway, but it left the Scots with Berwickshire, Roxburgh, and Dumfriesshire cut off from the Scottish capital by a range of hills, and easily open to an English invader. Therefore the building of Roxburgh Castle, Jedburgh Castle, and Lauder Fort necessitated the keeping open of a road over Soutra to these places, and without doubt the "Malcolms Rode" of ancient charters, joining the Roman road at Newstead, may have had a military rather than an ecclesiastical origin.

Examination of the leading Border roads shows us that on Dere Street (the Roman road) there is no trace left of military defence (other than Roman camps) between Edinburgh and Woden Law, where a long breastwork cuts across the road and guards it against an invader from the south. On the Wheel Causeway, excepting a low turf dyke near Wheel, there are no defensive relics; yet a mile below, in the Liddell valley, a great embankment down the hillside points to an effort to bar this road against an invader from Carlisle. On the Teviot valley, between Langholm and Hawick, there do not appear to be any signs of defensive works on the hills about Moss-paul, nor are there any on the Annandale Forest road on the hills above Moffat, though there is the curious square enclosure at Little Clyde called "the Roman Camp." But on the Well Path above Durrisddeer, a massive square defensive fort, with a traverse on the north side, guards this pass from an invader coming from the south; while on the Enterkin, what appears to be a rifle pit overlooks and guards the pass against someone coming up.

But it is on the Minchmoor road that we see the strongest military

defences, for, guarding this road from an eastern invader, a strong breastwork, with the ditch in some places cut out of the rock, forms a long defence not only on each side of the road, but is carried across the river Tweed to Torwoodlee, clearly barring a large force from attempting to make headway into the west. Five miles to the west, along this same road, another strong breastwork, in some places double, defends it this time against an invader from the west, and though it is unlikely the two have any connection, it shows that formidable barriers were necessary on two occasions on this route.

THE MINCHMOOR (CATRAIL) ROAD.

On the range of hills between Traquair and Selkirk, the name "Catrail" has been marked on the Ordnance Survey Maps as a track passing along the ridge from east to west, and at the same time it is shown as turning north and south. It is unfortunate that this great mistake has ever got into print, for the two have no connection with each other. The Catrail runs north and south, while the east and west track is the ancient Minchmoor road (fig. 1), which is cut *through* the embankment of the true Catrail. This ancient road was the main highway between the east and west of Scotland *via* Peebles, used by Edward I. and mentioned in his *Itinerary*, as well as referred to in the State Documents in 1505, when a man was appointed to keep the road through Minchmoor from robbers for eight days each year at Roxburgh Fair (5th August). Its antiquity is also testified by the existence of a bridge over the Ettrick, in a line with it at Lindean, so far back as 1234, when the Justice Eyre met there; and it is quite possible that this may be part of the wagon road referred to in the Charters as leading between Kelso Abbey and Lesmahagow.

Starting from Lindean, every vestige of the road has disappeared on the grassy hillside, and it is only when we reach the hilltop at Linglee that we find the clear track of a road cutting through the earthen rampart of the Catrail. Looking to the right, we see the earthwork stretching down the hillside till it enters a marshy pond. To the left we can follow it up the hill—a strong defensive barrier actually cut deeply out of the rock, and forming a breast-high trench. Here is evidence of a strong force having been posted to keep an invader from the east from using this road; and as a similar earthwork lies across the valley of the Tweed and continues almost to the Gala, we have what appears to be a defensive barrier against every possible way of obtaining a passage to Peebles and the west. On the opposite side of the river Ettrick similar earthworks are visible descending from

Coldshiels Hill, so that this part of the countryside appears to have been at one time an important battle-ground in connection with this ancient highway.

After passing through the Catrail, the road continues uphill in an unmistakable line, the hard-beaten track being very evident as one proceeds; but three-quarters of a mile on, when crossing the shoulder of Peat Law, not only is the beaten track unmistakable, but alternative trails are visible on the surface. A quarter of a mile further, just over

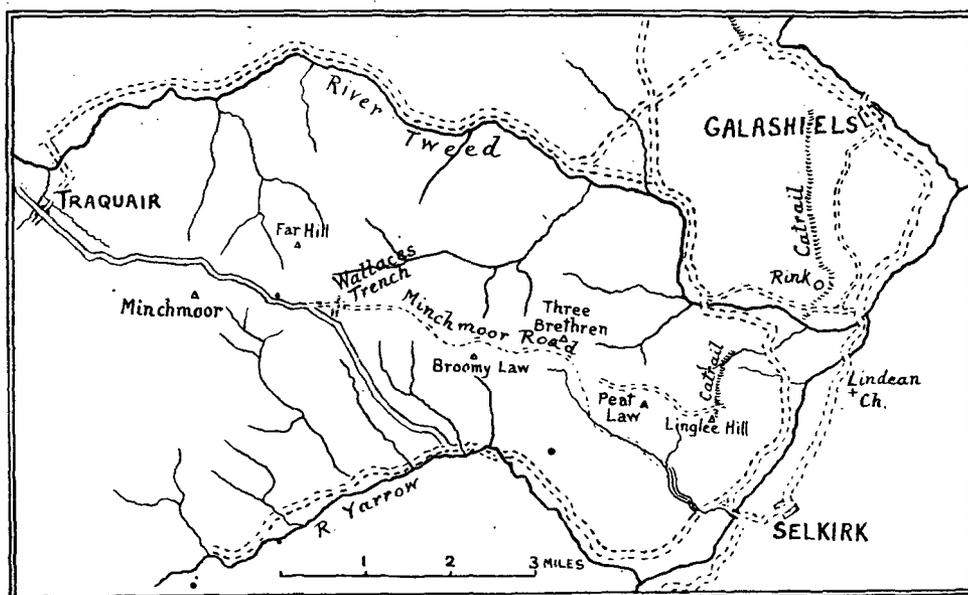


Fig. 1. The Minchmoor Road.

the highest point, are two stony pits on the hillside, so utterly different from anything met with along the track, that one could readily believe that at this point we are looking at the site of an ancient watch-tower, for the exposed position commands a view of the road for a great distance in both directions. A quarter of a mile further on the remains of a cairn stand close to the road on the right. On descending the hill to Red Nick, the road disappears altogether in the heather. Continuing blindly on, along the southern slope of Three Brethren, an almost obliterated track coming up from Philiphaugh is struck, and we are now on what appears to be the later road coming from Selkirk, which would come into use after the disappearance of the bridge at Lindean, when the Linglee road was abandoned. The three miles of road from

this point onwards to Wallace's Trench are all much of the same character, and it is quite remarkable that the line of road is seen clearly on the hillside, although one is not walking on what appears to be anything like a road. The grass seems to be of a different colour, yet the difference is only visible at a distance. As there are gates in the fences, it is comparatively easy to pick out the line of road when it disappears.

But it is on reaching Brown Knowe that the remarkable feature known as "Wallace's Trench" (fig. 2) becomes visible; for here is a fine breastwork 4 feet to 6 feet high right across the road. It is quite

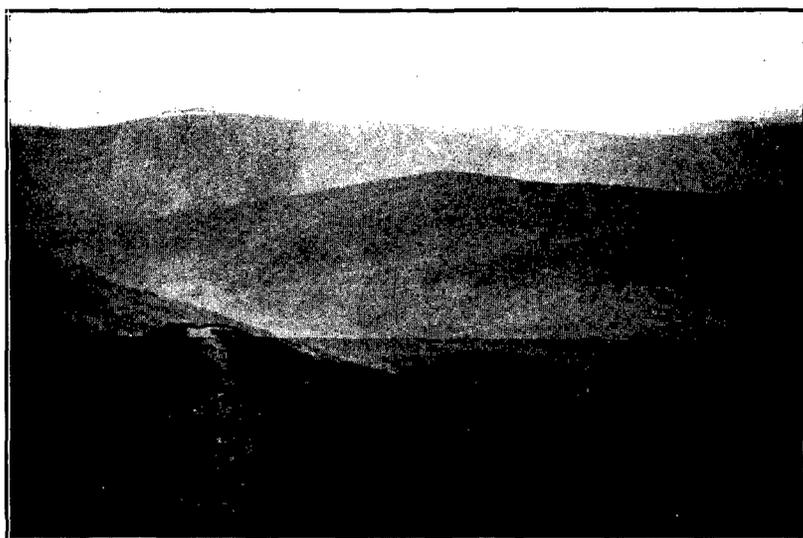


Fig. 2. Wallace's Trench.

evident that at some period of history someone has had to defend this highway against an invader from the west, for the north end of the trench has apparently rested on a marsh, while the southern end of the earthwork has a second protecting breastwork of considerable dimensions on the steep slope of the hill to the left hand. That it was a defence against the west is shown by the presence of a shallow trench 65 feet back from the breastwork on its eastern side, only deep enough to drain away water. It would therefore appear that at some rainy season there was a regular encampment to bar the road. Whether it had any connection with the Catrail ($4\frac{1}{2}$ miles away to the east) is hard to say, but unquestionably the latter faced an eastern invader, this one a western foe.

Half a mile further on, the old road from Selkirk to Peebles (about 12 feet wide and only abandoned about 100 years ago) is reached, and the ancient road is covered up in this old grass-grown turnpike which, for the next $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles to Traquair, seems to follow its course. From this point it appears to have followed the valley of the Tweed to Peebles, probably on the south side of the river.

The only other point that one has to mention in connection with this road is, that $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles beyond Peebles is the Roman camp at Lyne, set at the junction of two valleys in such a position that its strategical purpose is not very clear. But unquestionably it looks as if the Roman camp at Newstead stood guard at one end of the hill-barrier, while Lyne camp looks as if it had been erected by a force approaching from the north in an attempt to break the barrier by attacking it from the rear. The distance by road from Newstead to Lyne is 30 miles, but it is only 24 miles in a direct line.

THE WHEEL CAUSEWAY.

How the Wheel Causeway (fig. 3) came to get this name is not clear, for not a trace of causeway is to be found in any part of this old highway. Its position, indeed, would have been more or less problematical were it not for the discovery of an interesting old map of the Scottish Borders drawn in 1590, which shows Wheel Causeway as a stretch of road somewhere near the ancient church and village of Wheel, close to the boundary between England and Scotland. A further reference to it appears in the Border Papers in 1585, where it is described as a mile within Scotland.

In 1917, the late Mr Adam Laing of Hawick and myself started out to follow the course of this road. Starting at Deadwater Station, near the headwaters of the North Tyne, we found a grass-track about 9 feet wide at the back of the adjoining farmhouse. Digging into it, nothing but virgin soil was exposed on the English side of the Border; it was no more than a beaten track. In a quarter of a mile it had faded away, and the only indication of continuation was at a right angle in the wall erected by the Duke of Northumberland (to define the real boundary between England and Scotland), where the signs of what looked like an opening in the wall having been built up, suggested that the road must have passed through it at one time. For the next half-mile Mr Laing and I traversed the gently sloping hillside at the foot of Peel Fell, in parallel lines, in the hope of striking some signs of a track such as was shown on the Ordnance Survey; but nothing whatever was visible. But as we neared Peel Burn a definite road became

visible (in a position nowhere near that of the road marked on the Ordnance Survey), and passed between a row of pits from 1 foot to 8 feet in depth, and from a few feet to about 14 feet in length. Coming upon these so suddenly on the hillside, one felt a sense of mystery as to their origin, heightened by the fact that they recalled in a slight degree the pits found beside Dere Street, as well as on the Annandale Forest road; but as they had no regularity or uniformity, there was every room for conjecture as to their origin. Subsequent inquiry, however, led to abandoning any theorising, for similar pits exist over the adjoining farm of Peel, and the limestone formation suggests they are caused by water. At the same time, it is remarkable that it is in this one place beside the road that they appear on the hillside.

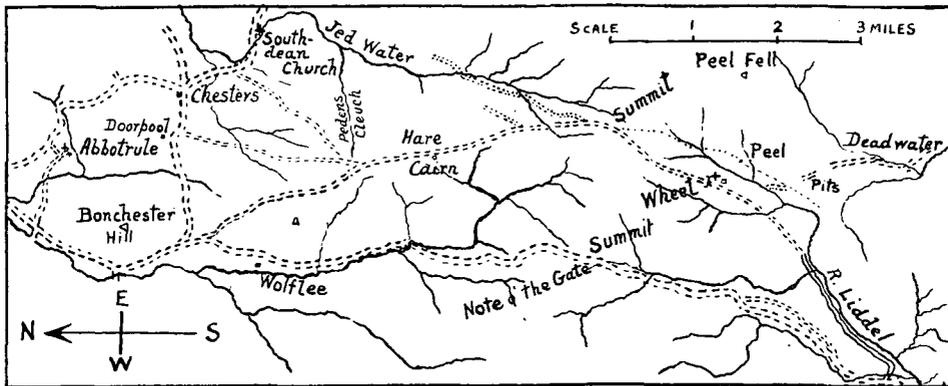


Fig. 3. The Wheel Causeway.

A little further on over the moor the road faded away, and was not again observable until we saw a perfectly definite line of descent to the little burn at the spot called "Bagraw Ford." Here the track was accentuated by its having been to some extent a watercourse in heavy rains, and it had just about enough width to take a cart. The burn at this point is quite small, and one can jump across without difficulty. On the ascent of the slight hill on the opposite side, after a few yards, nothing was visible of the road, and the only thing that might indicate its course was a faint depression on the ridge 50 feet above, which one might assume as being its probable course.

From this point onwards to Wheel there is little depth of soil on the hillside, and there is hard, firm ground at any point along the crown of the low ridge, so that on this land the road again faded away, though one naturally shaped a course to the present sheepfold, built out of the stones taken from the village and church of Wheel.

It is just at this point that a perfectly clear embankment—the only one on the whole road—becomes visible. It stands only $1\frac{1}{2}$ foot to 2 feet above the surrounding soil, but it is quite well defined, carrying the road across part of the hill that had no natural drainage. This, I think, is unquestionably the real "Wheel Causeway" referred to in 1585 and 1590, which antiquaries have given as the name of the whole road, but which from the documents referred to seems to have been little more than a definite place beside Wheel village.

The situation of this hamlet demands particular attention. Looking northwards, on the right are irregular mounds which cover all that remains of the almost forgotten village and church. Situated on the backbone of a low ridge just 1000 feet above sea-level, the ground falls away gently to a tiny rivulet on each side: to the east, Peel Fell stretches upwards, 1000 feet of steep, grassy slope; to the west, Dod Fell, about a mile away, is only 500 feet above; to the north, the grassy slope steadily rises in an easy gradient to the watershed at Wheelrighead, carrying the ancient road almost to the level of the surrounding hills. Southward the ground slopes easily downward to the Liddell Water, a little over a mile away. The land is not fertile, and its high altitude renders it useful only for grazing. There is nothing here to support any population, and the village has likely never been more than a place of call. The one remarkable feature is the wonderful spring of almost ice-cold water close by the church, which no doubt has been the primary cause of the existence of the chapel, and the village has risen in proximity. We shall notice again the existence of chapels by the way-side on the Annandale Forest road, as well as on the Well Path.

As we continue up the hill from Wheel in a long, easy gradient on the dry backbone of the ridge, after a very short distance the unmistakable signs of a turf dyke cross the road. Whether the embanked area is the remains of something permanent or is merely some old temporary erection is difficult to say, but it has all the appearance of being nothing more than a casual fence.

As the road at this point has crossed the 1000-foot level, cultivation has ceased, and the rank grass and boggy soil make the course of the road difficult to follow. It is quite evident that the road has been so frequently washed out that tracks have been made parallel to, crossing, and rejoining it all the way up, and even at present the true course is very indefinite. In this locality the soil has been so frequently washed away in sections across the road, that one can see that there has never been any paving, nor even an under-structure of heavy stones. The road at every point shows no signs of anything but being a beaten track over virgin soil.

As the road approached Wheelrighead it lay over an open moor. Wheelrighead on the right is little more than 100 feet above the road, while Neides Law, half a mile on the left, is about the same. This is only important as showing that this passage through the hills is so open that it could neither be blocked, nor could an ambush of any kind be laid, and therefore would be safer than the adjoining narrow pass of Note of the Gate.

Up to this point the road has been following a well-defined ridge, and has reached the watershed. Looking forward among the rounded grassy hills, one looks in vain for a definite objective. Ruberslaw—9 miles away—is visible, and the road seems to bend in that direction, keeping to the dry ground of the ridge. For the next mile the road descends across loose bogs, and is more or less visionary, but after crossing a burn it is more distinct on dry ground, and keeps fairly near the ridge for about 2 miles, passing a tumulus a mile on. Most of the way the road is quite well defined, and one has no difficulty in following it; yet occasionally it disappears, but is easily picked up. On reaching a wall at the neck between Pedens Cleuch and the Wolfhopeburn, the Ordnance Survey make a curious omission. The road is shown on the map as following the wall to the right, then bending sharply to the left to the summit of the hill at 1124 feet; but when one looks at the hill-slope, a perfectly clear and well-marked track goes straight up the hillside to the summit at 1124 feet. From this point the road continues on, making for Bonchester, joining the main road by Note of the Gate at Cleuchhead. The distance from the Scottish boundary at Deadwater to Cleuchhead is just 8 miles.

Having thus described the road as it exists to-day, one cannot fail to remark that the Ordnance Survey have planned this road on their map as coming up the valley in a straight line, like a first-class highway, curving round in a fine sweep that would suit a main line of railway. It is this mistake that has led antiquaries astray in regard to the real purpose of the road, for attention has been diverted from the perfectly plain facts by this fanciful line. For, when one reverses the route, and descends from Wheel Church along the obvious line of road down the ridge in a southerly direction, a perfectly well-defined road goes on, not to the left to Deadwater, but to the right, and without any difficulty whatever one finds oneself walking along a well-worn track, which, unhappily, the surveyors have marked "Catrail" or "Picts work ditch," and so misled a few generations.

What we have here in the Wheel Causeway is the main and ancient road from Carlisle to Berwick, referred to twice in the *Itinerary* of Edward the First. The route is a simple one. Going

from Carlisle up Liddesdale, no stream of any size is crossed after Kershope Burn, and the Liddell Water is crossed near its source. At Wheel the road keeps on the dry ridge, and, by following the line by Abbotrule, Jedburgh is reached without ever crossing a river. This, indeed, is practically the only possible way of reaching the at one time important seaport of Berwick from Carlisle, as the Northumbrian Hills lie so much across any route on the English side, and necessitate so many rivers to cross, that, perforce, the Jedburgh route is the only one possible. In this way, Jedburgh Castle and Roxburgh Castle lay associated as the barriers to Berwick, for they guarded this highway. With these two castles in English hands, soldiers could march freely from one town to the other. Were both in Scottish hands advance from either base was futile.

The true course of the highway known as the Wheel Causeway is therefore the well-defined track coming up from Newcastleton, leading to Wheel Church. The one leading to Deadwater and Tynedale is merely a branch road. Wheel Church would therefore appear to have had the same relation to Wheel Causeway as the chapel on the Annandale Forest road, above Moffat, had to that lonely highway, or the chapel near Crawford had to the Well Path.

As to the course of the road from the summit of Wheelrig to Jedburgh, one cannot help thinking that the present route by Bonchester was not the ancient road, for it is neither direct nor likely. But from the point mentioned at the neck between Pedens Cleuch and Wolfhopeburn the road divides, and one can follow a perfectly well-defined track *via* Lustruther and Abbotrule, which carries one forward without crossing any stream of size *via* Easter Fodderlee to Jedburgh.

Mr Laing and I, however, followed a faint but quite definite track to Doorpool, and one could imagine no difficulty in the road continuing on past Abbotrule Church to East Fodderlee, as this makes an almost direct and dry road to Jedburgh.

The Wheel Causeway therefore appears to be a portion of the ancient road from Carlisle to Jedburgh. At what date it was abandoned, and the road through the narrow neck by Note of the Gate was brought into use, I am unable to trace, for the earliest authority—Ogilby's *Itinerary* (1665)—gives us no detail of the route between Castleton and Jedburgh, and "Woolie," mentioned in it, is so near to both roads that it may be either route. As in 1604 the Wheel Church was united with that of Castleton, one would think that the road fell into disuse a little earlier than that period, for with the abandoning of the road or village the necessity for the chapel would cease.

THE ANNANDALE FOREST ROAD.¹

The golf-course above Moffat is intersected by what is locally called the "Roman Road," and while in the locality no doubt exists about its origin, the evidence is much more slender than is imagined. The late Dr James Macdonald, in the *Proceedings of the Society*, vol. xxviii., 1894, deals with this road in detail, so far as it is shown on the Ordnance Survey, and I propose to describe the road beyond the point at which he stops (fig. 4).

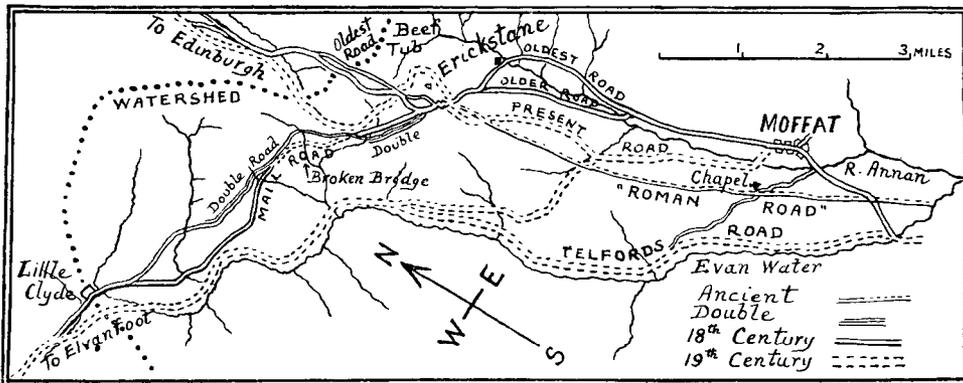


Fig. 4. The Annandale Forest Road.

At the road between Beattock and Moffat, passing between Lochhouse Tower on the left and the Standing Stones close to it on the right, the road takes a straight course up the dry ridge, passing a small quarry, and then, between fences, to the golf-course. Here its line on the hard-beaten soil is unmistakable, and it continues steadily upwards with the ridge on the left, but on dry ground, to chapel. Here again, as in the Wheel Causeway, and a good many other old roads, we find an ancient chapel beside the road, built by the Knights of St John of Jerusalem. The road continues onward, well marked, on the grassy slopes, for a mile and a quarter, then bends to the right, crossing the Holehouse Burn exactly at the point where the moorland course of the stream ends and the rocky glen begins. Continuing onwards on a perfectly straight and decided course over Archies Hill, it now keeps on the ridge, uniformly 15 feet wide, and with pits at the side at regular intervals. Local information says that these pits were dug to obtain stones for the repair of the road; but as these pits are

¹ *Charter of Annandale Forest*, Nat. MSS., Scotland, vol. i. xx, "I forbid . . . that anyone go through the aforesaid forest unless by a straight road appointed" (A.D. 1124-53).

visible along Dere Street at many points where the ground is hard, this explanation does not seem to be adequate. Be that as it may, these pits are quite regular along this part of the road, but there are none further on, though the circumstances are quite similar. At the Auldhouseshielmoss the present main road from Edinburgh to Moffat is crossed, and from this point onwards the Ordnance Survey ceases to be reliable, for the old road can be seen quite unmistakably descending to the burn and rising up on the other side, crossing the present road again a quarter of a mile further on.

It is here that we can observe that there have been no less than four roads of different dates leaving Erickstane. (a) The first and most ancient is the ridge road we have been describing as "the Roman Road." Next came a road (b) through Moffat up the Annan valley to Erickstane Farm, then straight up the steep hill to this point. To ease this hill, probably about 1770, (c) a long gradual ascent from Bridgend made an excellent and comparatively easy climb, and this was followed by the construction of the present road (d) about 1820. All these meet at this point.

Striking up the hill to the left, we find ourselves almost immediately in a maze of roads crossing, recrossing, and obliterating one another, and it is really impossible to disentangle the one from the other until we find the key a mile further on, where the different types and widths are visible side by side. This enables us to say quite definitely that the first road went in a fairly straight course almost to the top of Erickstane Hill, and then forward almost straight to the edge of the Beef Tub, so close as to make understandable the story of the Highlander who escaped from his guard by wrapping himself in his plaid, and rolled over the edge down the hill. Here the ancient road crosses into Lanarkshire, and continues a hard-beaten track, 8 to 10 feet wide, below the grassy moor, a very short distance to the east of the old road shown in the Ordnance Survey at Tweedcross.

The second road zigzagged across the first road for a very short distance, then kept round the neck to the left of Erickstane Hill, rejoined the first at the Beef Tub, and then continued on a course a little lower down the hill than the first road, mostly 15 feet wide. The two unite just beyond Tweedcross and go on to Tweedshaws. A short distance further on, where the two separate, the oldest road strikes over the dry ridge to Tweedhope, while the later road keeps down the side of the hill to the left, fairly close to the present line of road. From this point onwards the present road and the old road cross and recross each other, but the general line down the valley is much as at present. Whether the road was always on the west side

or ever passed down the east side is difficult to decide; but the presence of Tweedsmuir Church on the east side of the river, and what seem to be appearances of tracks on that side, make one inclined to leave the matter open, for unquestionably the west side used now has the smaller streams, and would be least troublesome in winter.

Reverting to the road at Erickstane, where we leave the present main road, it is here that the one great problem of the road is presented. For, on the maps the "Roman" road does not go down the Tweed valley, but crosses the hills to Elvanfoot and Crawford, and continues down the Clyde valley towards Lanark. One would have expected that examination of the surface would have shown in which direction the road originally went, and that it would be seen that one road went straight on and the other was a branch. But the fork was in the form of a Y, and no evidence could be obtained from it one way or other.

From an antiquary's point of view, the western road presents a remarkable series of problems, because although there are nominally two roads shown on the maps, in reality there are three. For one of them is a double road at many points, sometimes touching, but on a slightly different level, as if it had been made as a supplementary track for some purpose. But before going into the details of this part of the route, let us make a survey of the district, and the point to which a road might be expected to lead.

Here is a range of hills nearly all 1500 feet high, and occasionally rising to 2000 feet, stretching across Scotland. There are only a small number of passes, and all ordinary traffic from Dumfriesshire must pass through one or other: Wheelrig, 1350 feet; Note of the Gate, 1238 feet; Limekilnedge, 1160 feet; Moss paul, 890 feet; Eskdalemuir, 1100 feet; Birkhill, 1120 feet; Erickstane, 1330 feet; Beattock, 1028 feet; Well Path, 1290 feet; Enterkin, 1890 feet; Leadhills, 1530 feet. Of these, Erickstane, Moss paul, and the Well Path are the only ones that give a fairly direct connection between northern and southern towns. Other passes are to be found without doubt, but none makes such a fairly direct and unmistakable highway as these three in which the traveller can go without fear of losing himself among the hills, and these passes must, from time immemorial, have been the highways between the north and the south.

It is the entire absence of this feature of directness that makes this road from Erickstane to the Clyde valley so perplexing, for one traverses it with a sense of complete bewilderment as to its direction. One feels lost among the hills. At one time it seems to be

making for the north, when it suddenly turns west, and one has to traverse five miles of track, sometimes on one side of a hill and sometimes on another, with no objective in view, crossing into different valleys, instead of keeping to one definite line. Contrast this with the simple route up Annandale, where the road follows an almost straight line to Erickstane, then goes straight forward into the next valley of the Tweed, and continues down it till Broughton is reached! I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that this western road to the Elvanfoot, from a topographical point of view, is an impossible main road, and from its position on the hills resembles no road of antiquity. Any traffic to Clydesdale and Lanark would go by the unmistakable and easy route down Tweedsmuir, and then by Broughton and Biggar to Lanark. I feel sure that this road is nothing more than a way to the lead mines at Elvanfoot and Leadhills from Annandale. Had this road primarily meant to reach the headwaters of the Clyde, it would never have taken such a winding course. It has clearly been an after-development, and one feels inclined to think that in the double road—which one can only conjecture may have been designed to keep apart the traffic going in different directions—some military hand has been at work at one time or another making for the Crawford district.

Reverting to the place where this road turns away from the Tweedsmuir road at Erickstane, the oldest part of the road strikes off in a north-westerly direction, and, on crossing the Lanarkshire boundary, at once becomes a twin road. This does not refer to the fact that the later road runs parallel to it, but that this particular road is double, and there are actually three roads side by side, consisting of the earliest road, 8 feet to 10 feet, its twin alongside, 8 feet to 10 feet, and lower down the mail road, 12 feet to 15 feet, abandoned in 1821 when Telford's road by Beattock was completed. At a small stream one mile on, the original road (8 feet wide) keeps up the hill, turning more northward, and descends to Rowantree Grain, where it turns direct westwards, merging shortly into the later mail road, whose separate course, curiously enough, is now almost entirely obliterated, while the ancient track is still quite clearly marked on the hillside. In fact, were it not for the remains of a broken bridge that can be seen a quarter of a mile lower down the burn, one could scarcely believe that the mail road had ever existed at this point. At the next burn—about half a mile further on—the roads separate, the mail road keeping lower down the hill, perfectly clearly marked, about 16 feet wide, and well engineered. The ancient road turns westwards, then north-west to the ridge, and it is upon this section that we see so plainly the two roads side by side—the lower of the two harder and with wheel marks, the other perhaps 6 inches higher, sometimes more, sometimes

less, but nevertheless two roads side by side (fig. 5). The distinctness of the two can best be seen on the ridge, where one goes straight through some muddy ground, whereas the twin road skirts the same spot.

Crossing the shoulder of Erickstane Hill, the road crosses into the Fopperbeck valley, and descends to the burn in a deeply-marked track. This is not its normal condition, but has been caused by having become more or less a watercourse, and each heavy rainstorm ploughs deeper into the soil. At the foot of the hill, on reaching the burn, there is no sign of a bridge or of anything of that nature of a river-crossing. On



Fig. 5. The double road—Moffat and Elvanfoot Road.

the ascent on the other side the road has been completely washed away for the first few hundred yards, and in the places where the washouts cross the track, there is no sign of paving or even bounding stones, such as were found on the Roman road; it is nothing more than a grassy, hard-beaten track. The road resumes its course up the shoulder of the hill, with signs at one place as if a second road had branched off uphill; but there is nothing to follow up, and there are no signs of any connection again further on.

A mile short of Little Clyde the ancient and the mail roads unite, the latter, 12 feet to 16 feet broad, well marked all the way from the last junction, and from this point onward all trace of the ancient track is covered up in its present width of 20 feet. This road is said to

continue on down the right bank of the Clyde to Lindsay Tower and Cold Chapel, and its course is quite visible; but here again, at every washout which crosses it, there are no signs of paving or stone foundation; nothing is to be found but firm, hard-beaten soil.

This course of the road down the Clyde valley is generally supposed to be one of the main routes in Scotland, but as it joins at Crawford the very ancient highway that led past Biggar and the Well Path to Durisdeer, Penpont, and on through St John's Town of Dalry to Minigaff and Whithorn, it is never likely to have been anything more than a connecting road between the two chief highways to Dumfriesshire.

There is one question, however, that will naturally be asked, What of the "Roman Camp" at Little Clyde, and what bearing has it on the road? In the absence of excavation one can say very little that is positive about it, but a cursory glance shows that two streams run through it. One of fair size, cutting off a small section and leaving it isolated from the rest, suggests that if it has ever been a camp, the choice of position has been amazing, for the dry ground lies to the south of the camp, and it looks much more like the protecting bank that had once been erected round a plantation to keep the cattle from the trees, such as can be seen in any part of the country. On the other hand, it may have been some hastily constructed rampart erected for a temporary purpose, and the break in the banks for the entrance and exits of both streams may not have mattered, but there seems to be on the north side signs of what might have been a traverse outside an opening in the rampart. This, however, may be accidental formation of the ground. Taken as a whole, one feels very sceptical about its having ever been a Roman camp.

THE WELL PATH.

One of the great highways of olden times was the direct road from Edinburgh to Whithorn in Galloway, and it is remarkable how much of it is preserved to-day as a hard-beaten track alongside or parallel to the present road. It is a testimony to the heavy traffic along it in ages past, that its course has hardly ever been obliterated even though it has been out of use for hundreds of years. From Edinburgh to Carllops we are constantly observing its course beaten out on the shoulder of the Pentlands; above West Linton it is still in use as an old road, and two old bridges, one with an inscription, testify to its importance. As far as Biggar we are either on it or see its course beside us; at Lamington it is the same, and we only leave it when we cross the Clyde at Clydes-bridge on the way to Abington; but it is still the farm-road that runs

beside the railway to Cold Chapel, beyond which the Clyde was forded between there and the Kirkton of Crawford, a mile before the present village. From this point it went straight up the back of the hill over to Elvanfoot—more than one course being still visible on the hillside—and then up the valley of the Powtrail to the col between Well Hill and Durisdeer Hill; on by Penpont, Tynron, Moniaive, to St John's Town of Dalry, and thence to Bridge of Dee; then, 9 feet to 10 feet wide, in a valley parallel to the present road at the back of Murray's Monument, to Minigaff, near Newton Stewart, where Queen Mary's Bridge spans the little stream. Much of this route is recognisable in the *Itineraries*

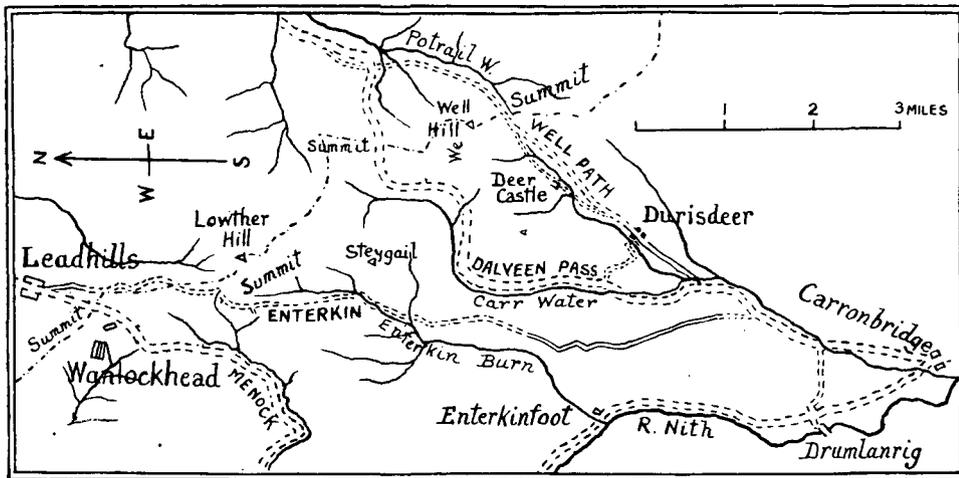


Fig. 6. The Well Path and Enterkin.

of James IV., and we find along it the record of ancient bridges erected at various dates, many of which have disappeared.

The chief point of interest in this road is undoubtedly the short length of road known as "the Well Path" between Durisdeer and Elvanfoot (fig. 6), where it crosses the watershed between Lanarkshire and Dumfriesshire at 1290 feet. Starting from the Durisdeer end, the present grass road makes a well-engineered ascent of the pass by an almost uniform gradient, and has all the appearance of a road made in the eighteenth century—probably one of the many benefactions of the Queensberry or Buccleuch families.

At the summit this excellent road ends, and we have here one of those unhappy transactions, where the splendid work accomplished by one proprietor was rendered almost futile by the adjoining landowner leaving the old road in its primitive state.

But it is in the ascent of this pass by the well-engineered road that we see below us on the other side of the valley the ancient track. It is a narrow way with diverging and converging subsidiary tracks, keeping to the dry ground on the west side of the burn. A couple of centuries have passed since it has been in use, yet its line is as clearly marked as it was in olden times. Looking across the valley, a curious phenomenon is observable, for the hills on the western side are green clad to the summit, while those on the eastern side are covered with heather. The old road kept to the clean, grassy side; the later road is cut through the heather.

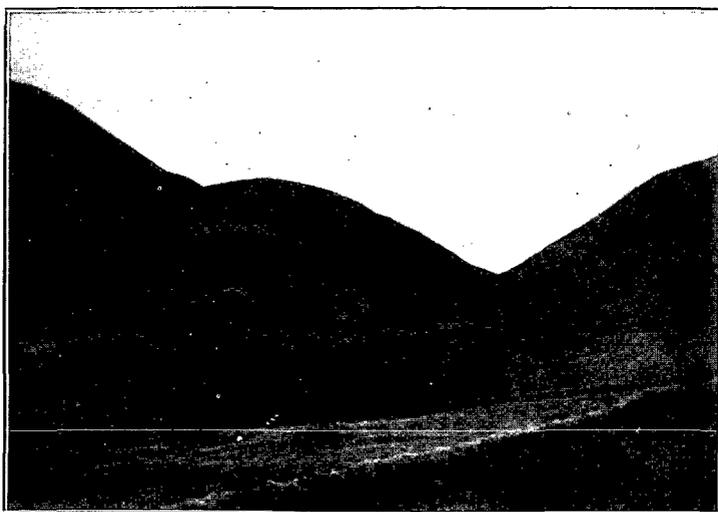


Fig. 7. The Well Path and Deer Castle.

But it is a mile north of Durisdeer that the most interesting feature of the pass is exhibited, viz. the great earthwork known as Deer Castle (fig. 7). Here on the open hillside just above the road, and commanding it, is a massive rampart, square in shape, with an entrance opening to the north, guarded by a traverse. It is not near the summit of the pass, and one can only conjecture that it has been erected at some period for the purpose of preventing some force from the south passing along this road into Lanarkshire. Lower down the valley and opposite Durisdeer, a Deil's Dyke is marked as leading along the base of the western hill, but the local information is that this was a water-lead in connection with the old castle, opposite the village.

At the summit of the pass the Well Path strikes into the heatherland, and the road goes forward between banks 8 feet to 10 feet wide,

crossing various burns without bridges. The road itself, which is beaten hard but apparently not paved, is only about 7 feet 6 inches wide. There is, however, a well-built little bridge with a span of about 6 feet over the Cleuch Burn, with a road width of 12 feet. From this point onward the old road crosses and recrosses the present main road, but none of the bridges are ancient, and the old wheel tracks on such portions as are visible seem 4 feet 6 inches and the road itself about 7 feet 6 inches broad. Wherever it has had a washout no signs of paving are visible; it is merely a track with stones trodden in.

It is to be noticed that the road passes Durisdeer Church, Kirkton beside Crawford, and Cold Chapel, a mile beyond Abington.

. THE ENTERKIN.

Since the opening of the road between Leadhills and Sanquhar by the Menock Pass, the Enterkin (fig. 6) has fallen into disuse, and at the present moment the eruptions of gravel on the sloping hillside are slowly covering up what at one time was an important highway in connection with the Lead Mines. Though little known to the general public, it has attained a fame far greater than almost any other valley, owing to the charming account of the Glen by Dr John Brown, in connection with the rescue of the Covenanting prisoners in 1684.

The path starts high up near the watershed from the bleak village of Leadhills with its clean, tidy houses, and passes the Smelting Mill. Although at points partly washed away, it is a firm, clearly-defined beaten gravel road 10 feet to 12 feet wide winding along the Moss, and overlooked by Green Lowther. In a mile and a half it becomes a grassy track, quite unmistakable on the hillside. At no point does the road coincide with the county or parish boundary which runs close beside it, and this in itself shows that the road has no antiquity, for had it been an old road, it would have been made use of as the boundary.

The levels at which the road proceeds make one realise that it must have been almost constantly in the mist, for, starting from the 1300-foot level at Leadhills, it climbs to 1750 feet at the county boundary, and at the summit below Lowther Hill it has reached 1890 feet. Here on a narrow col of grass-covered hillside overlooking the winding Menock Pass, the road suddenly bends over into the Enterkin, and we look down a steep, V-shaped, grass-clad valley, blocked at the end by a steep precipitous but green-covered hill—the “Stey Gail”—which seems to lie across the defile. The road can be seen steadily descending in an almost straight line, till it reaches the level of the burn at the foot a mile away.

The sides of the valley are not very steep, but the burn is about 300 feet below on the left, at the top of the pass, and if the grass is wet a slip might be serious.

The road at this point is 10 feet to 12 feet wide, but, further down, a hundred years of neglect has permitted the gravel of the shelving hillside gradually to slide over the highway, and at the scree—half-way down—the path is barely a foot wide, and at different points is scarcely passable, though one can easily scramble over the loose gravel. A mile down, on reaching almost the level of the stream which runs down the valley, a rocky bit of ground is encountered, and between two rocks, through which the road passes, it has never been more than 8 feet to 10 feet wide; it is here that tradition places the site of the rescue of the Covenanting prisoners.

On reaching the burn a little lower down, the road emerges from the narrow part of the Enterkin and goes forward along the flat bottom of the valley for nearly a mile, badly marked, and evidently crossing the burn several times, but on reaching Glen Valentine it strikes up the hillside again by a steep gradient to the ridge of the hill, and thereafter is a well-marked broad road again. Continuing along the ridge between the Enterkin and the Dalveen Pass, it soon merges into a modern road, and evidently has continued on towards Morton on the way to Dumfries.

Reviewing the appearance of the road and looking to its summit being 1890 feet above sea-level, its use in winter would be very limited, whilst its constant liability to mist and rain precludes it from ever having been an ancient highway in general use. Without doubt it has been a specially made road to carry the lead from the mines to Dumfries, or to the coast towns for shipment, and we may look on its age as being coincident with some effort to assist the disposal of the lead during one of the periods of activity, such as 1512. In a list of distances dated 1646, the road appears to have been the main highway between Douglas and Dumfries.

There is one historical note I should like to make in connection with this road in regard to the incident of the rescue of the Covenanters. At the summit of the pass and just where it turns into the Enterkin is a shallow trench or breastwork commanding the pass. Although nowhere near the spot where tradition assigns the rescue of the Covenanters to have taken place, it is in a remarkable situation for defence. Situated at the end of the mile-long one in six ascent, when the horses would be blown and the men spent (so that any sudden active movement would be almost impossible), the rifle pit is placed so that it would be invisible from the road until quite close, and retreat could easily be made in several

directions. The steepness of the hillside precluded any divergence from the road in the pass up which the soldiers would toil, and it would be almost impossible to spur a spent horse against the barrier, while there was no cover of any kind for a mile back to which the soldiers could retire. Looking to the position of the trench and breastwork, which fits in with the description of the actual events with far greater probability than the position of the traditional site, it would be interesting to find if by any chance tradition has fixed on the wrong spot for the scene of the rescue.

It is at the foot of the valley where the road passes between the rocks that tradition has stated the rescue took place; but one finds difficulty in reconciling the position chosen, for the horses would then be fresh to start the climb, retreat under cover was quite easy for the soldiers, while that of the rescuing party above would have been impossible, as they had no cover at their back. Indeed, at this point it would have been possible to send a detachment across the burn, and, ascending higher on the opposite hillside, render the rescuers' position untenable. At the top of the valley no such manœuvring was possible, and it is for this reason that the facts of the story are worth examining carefully.