

## VI.

## NOTE ON THE ANTONINE WALL AND DITCH NEAR BONNYBRIDGE. BY SAMUEL SMITH, CORRESPONDING MEMBER.

In Bonnybridge district, as too often elsewhere, the remains of the Antonine Wall and Ditch have in some parts been entirely effaced as a result of agricultural and other industrial operations. In the sector extending from the stackyard at Broomhill farm eastward to the L. M. & S. Railway, the present surface shows little trace of either Wall or Ditch. But, in 1880, R. Gillespie, who at that time published a revised edition of Nimmo's *History of Stirlingshire*, in describing the course of the Wall, said of this part: "the ditch appears very prominent, with the vallum and military way again visible."<sup>1</sup> However, before the close of the century, the officers of the Ordnance Survey Department, engaged in a survey of the whole line, were, in this sector, only able to map the Ditch in the fields on the east side of the public road which intersects the Limes near Broomhill: superficial traces of the remains (upon which they were solely dependent) had been absent in the field on the west side of the road and a survey thereby made impracticable. Thus, a gap was left in their marking. Later, in the course of his long and devoted investigation of the remains, Sir George Macdonald had detected a hollow in the sloping ground on the west side of Broomhill garden, and, having identified this as representing the Ditch, connected it, in his recently published map,<sup>2</sup> with the Ordnance Survey markings on the east side of the road.

An opportunity to verify the position of the Ditch in the field on the west side of the road occurred during the present year when foundation trenches for five blocks of new houses, erected by the Stirling County Council, were being dug. Where these crossed the Ditch, the builder had difficulty in securing a firm foundation. The trenches revealed that at some time the Ditch had been filled with ashes,<sup>3</sup> 5 feet deep in the centre, and a layer of soil spread over these for tillage. Although in some parts the trenches were cut to a depth of over 7 feet, the forced soil in the Ditch still seemed unsatisfactory as a foundation bed and it was

<sup>1</sup> P. 37.

<sup>2</sup> *The Roman Wall in Scotland*, 2nd ed., pl. xix C.

<sup>3</sup> Mr Thos. Johnston, Standalane, Falkirk, who attended school at Bonnybridge from 1881 to 1887, remembers watching a great hollow in those fields being filled with ashes from the paper-mill which at that time flourished in the vicinity.

ultimately found necessary to reinforce the concrete foundations with iron rods.

The plan (fig. 1) shows the position of the Ditch where it is crossed by the row of houses. It turned out that the line assigned for the Ditch by

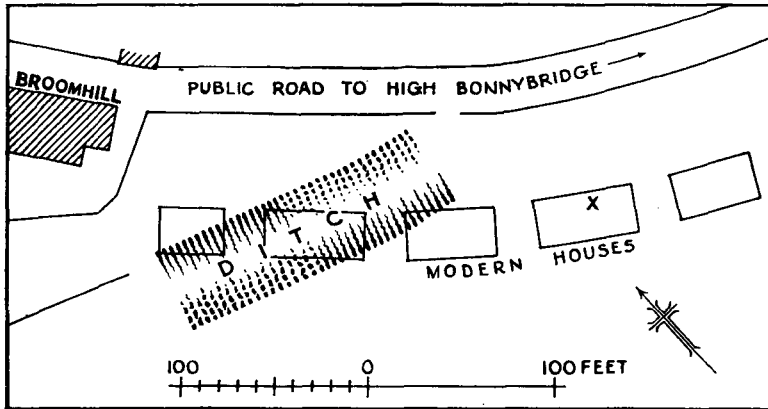


Fig. 1. Antonine Ditch near Bonnybridge—Plan.

Sir George Macdonald was correct. It will be seen that the three northerly blocks are all more or less over the Ditch. In the fourth block, where X is inserted in the plan, a portion of the stone base of the Rampart was exposed; but unfortunately both of the kerbs, as well as almost the whole of the stones between them had been dislodged by the plough. The precise position of the Rampart was, therefore, unobtainable.

I am indebted to Mr C. S. T. Calder, who has reproduced the drawing, and to the Rev. Thos. Miller, who drew my attention to the excavations and referred me to Mr Johnston for information regarding the filling of the Ditch.