5. The Defences of Craigluscar Fort.

During 1944–45 the writer carried out some excavations at the small fort at Craigluscar near Dunfermline. Circumstances made it impossible to complete the work, as intended, by the examination of the interior, and the finds were few and undatable, but the construction of the defences and the arrangements at the gateway were determined.[3]

The Site.—Three miles N.W. of Dunfermline an escarpment runs east and west for two miles. In parts its steep southern face rises in sheer cliffs. At one such place where the ridge forms a higher summit stands the small fort described in this paper.[4] The site is well adapted for defence and commands an extensive

[1] *P.S.A.S.*, IX, 357. [2] *Proc. Roy. Irish Academy*, LIII, c. 1, 156.

[3] The writer is indebted to Mr D. Thomson, the owner, for permission to excavate.

[4] The fort is No. 207 in the *Inventory* for Fife, Kinross and Clackmannan (Nat. Grid ref. NT 059910, 55° 06′ 10″ N., 3° 30′ 40″ W. Fife 6″ sheet 33 S.E.).

view in all directions. Water from springs is available nearby, though at a considerably lower level.

The only other ancient structures near the fort are some rectangular mounds

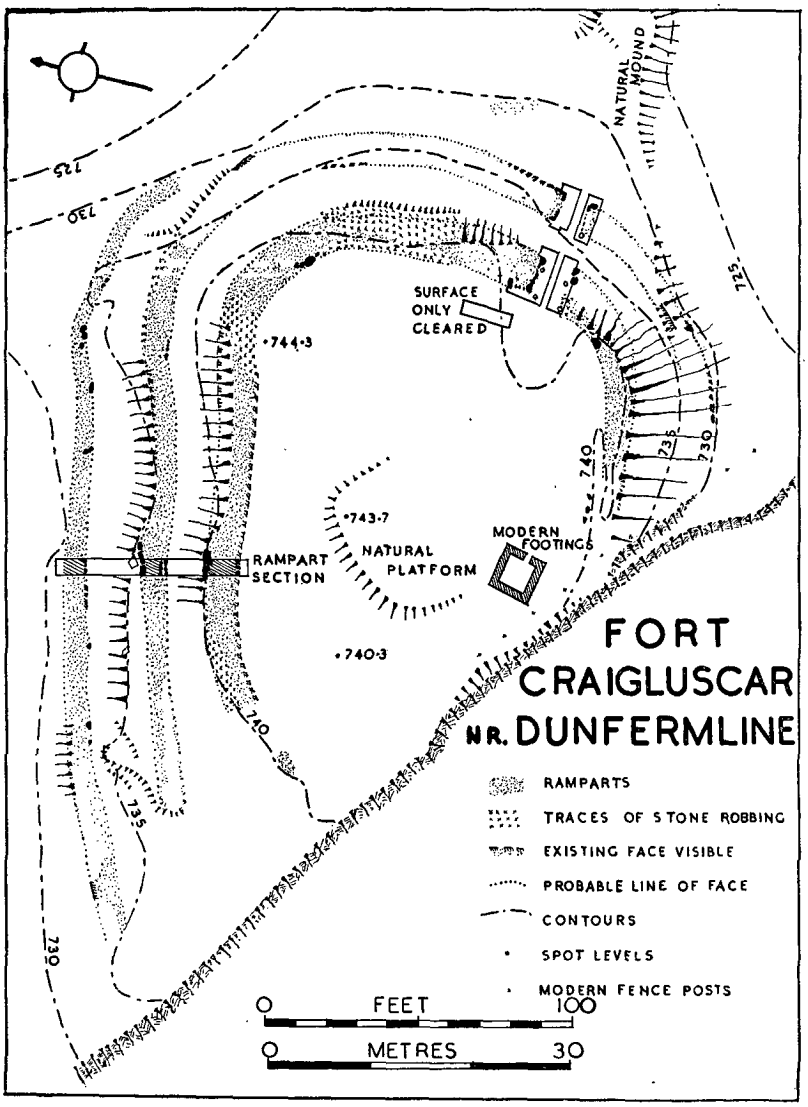

Fig. 5.

of earth on the ridge a short distance to the east. These do not seem to have been previously recorded, but it was not possible to examine them in detail. They may perhaps be an unusual type of cairn, or more probably the remains of huts built with thick walls of cob.

The Fort.—The plan (fig. 5) makes a detailed description unnecessary. There

has been some robbing from the ramparts, but not much damage has been done except on the west near the cliff, where a short length has been completely cleared away. This makes it impossible to be sure whether the fort had one or two entrances, but as the track through the existing gateway is slightly hollowed, the absence of any hollowing on the west makes it probable that there was only one.

The raised platform in the centre is natural, but its sides have been steepened by quarrying, probably to provide material for the ramparts.

The Defences.—Where most strongly defended the fort is protected by three lines of walling. Of these, the inner and middle ramparts continue round the whole circuit except on the south, where the cliff provides a natural defence. The outer bank only exists on the north, where the slope is more gentle. At its east end it turns inwards at a right angle and terminates against the middle

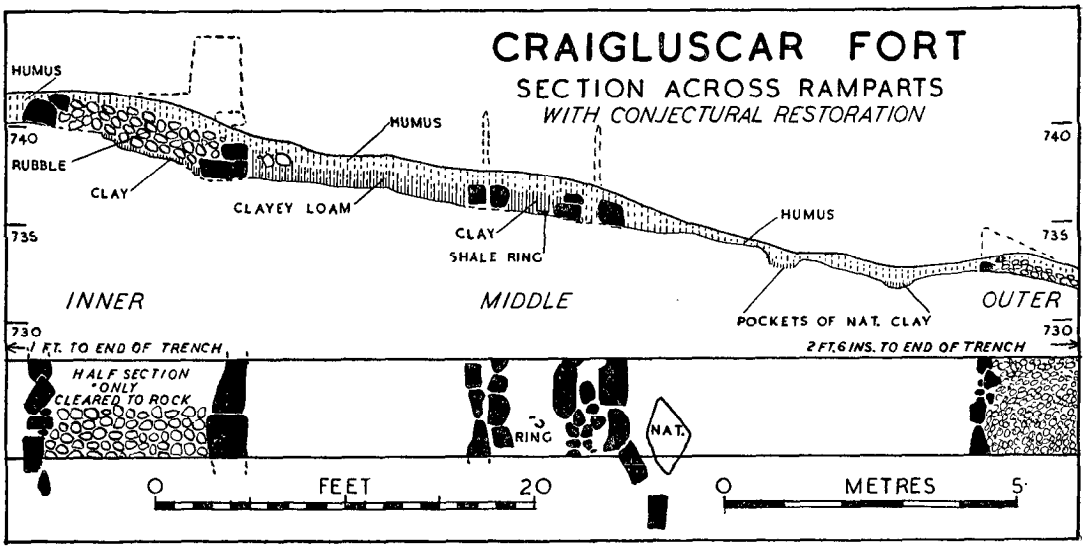

Fig. 6.

rampart. There is also a slight and doubtful trace of an outer bank near the entrance.

A section (fig. 6) was cut across the three ramparts where they seemed well preserved. Although there is no reason to suppose that the site includes work of more than one period, each bank was of different construction. At this point the outer bank was merely a low bank of small rubble with a doubtful kerb of small stones supporting its inner edge. Surface appearances elsewhere suggest that the bank was generally kerbed, but it was nowhere large. The middle bank was composed of two double rows of large stones separated by a space 3 feet wide, filled with clean yellow loam. On the rock surface beneath lay a rough shale ring, broken. The inner rampart had an outer face still standing about 2 feet high and well built of large slabs laid flat. This retained a firm mass of rubble with a fairly level surface. At the inner edge was a kerb of irregularly shaped stones of various sizes. There was no ditch.

Very little fallen stone was found in the section. The space between the

inner and middle ramparts was filled with clean yellow loam, but this was not so compact and clayey as that filling the middle rampart.

Any attempt at a reconstruction of the defences is made difficult by the lack of material, First considering the inner rampart, the absence of fallen stone cannot be accounted for by robbing, as the structure would have been much ruined before any robbing took place, and the smaller stones would have remained. It will also be shown when the gateway is described that the usual explanation of any difficulty, that the site was unfinished, cannot be used here. It seems therefore that the existing stonework remains almost to its original height. Perhaps another foot or so may be assumed. The yellow loam does not occur outside the middle rampart, and must therefore all be derived from the inner bank, but the most generous calculations will only allow a small breastwork along the front of the existing stone bank, giving a total height of about 7 ft. The loam is so clean that its bulk cannot have been increased by the presence of turf.

Even this slight defence leaves no material which can be derived from the middle rampart, and it seems probable that the double rows of large stones supported palisades, though it is difficult to see why this arrangement was preferred to the more usual palisade trench. No indication of a palisade was found in the outer bank, which can never have been a very effective obstacle.

Although this reconstruction is rather unconvincingly slight, anything more substantial would require much added material, and it seems impossible to escape the conclusion that the defences were in fact rather insignificant.

The Entrance (fig. 7).—The outer rampart is absent at the entrance, but the gaps in the middle and inner banks were almost all cleared to rock. That in the middle rampart was 6 ft. wide and 7 ft. long, with a single post-hole (No. 5) 12 in. in diameter and 18 in. deep from rock just inside the rampart on the south. The north wall survived as a single course of large stones standing about 15 in. high and resting on 2 in. of humus. The south wall was much robbed, but where it survived the stones rested on 9 in. of humus.

The inner gateway was more interesting. The north wall survived to a height of about a foot (two courses). Three upright slabs rested against it, apparently to prevent the top of the wall from slipping forward, as when they were removed it was found that the upper course was overhanging. The south wall had been completely robbed, but its position was shown by surface hollows. The passage through the rampart was 10 ft. long, with an overall width of 9 ft., but the clear width was reduced to 6 ft. by four posts (post-holes 1–4). On the bare rock between these posts was a layer of charcoal two or three inches thick resting immediately on the rock. The charcoal was derived from slow-growing oak.[1] The burnt earth did not extend beneath the three upright slabs set against the N. wall. The rock surface was slightly hollowed as though worn by traffic.

The inner post-holes 1 and 2 were both about 18 in. square, but not set with faces parallel to the line of rampart, and it is possible that their shape resulted simply from the natural lines of rock fracture. Their depths from rock surface were 10 and 6 in. respectively. Post-hole 1 was covered and filled with rubble. Post-hole 3 was 12 in. in diameter and 10 in. deep, and burnt material extended to a depth of 7 in. Post-hole 4 barely deserves the title, as it was merely a circle of burnt earth about 8 in. in diameter and sunk about 3 in. into the rock surface, but it was noted as the probable position of a post before holes 2 and 3 were excavated, and its position seems to confirm this attribution.

The interpretation of these structures is fairly clear. The single deep hole (5)

[1] I am indebted to Dr K. B. Blackburn for this identification.

in the outer gap must have held a gate-post. The four posts in the inner gateway must have supported a bridge of oak timbers, covered with a layer of earth. Such a structure seems to provide the only possible explanation for the spread of burnt earth, with charcoal beneath resting on bare rock. The original depth of

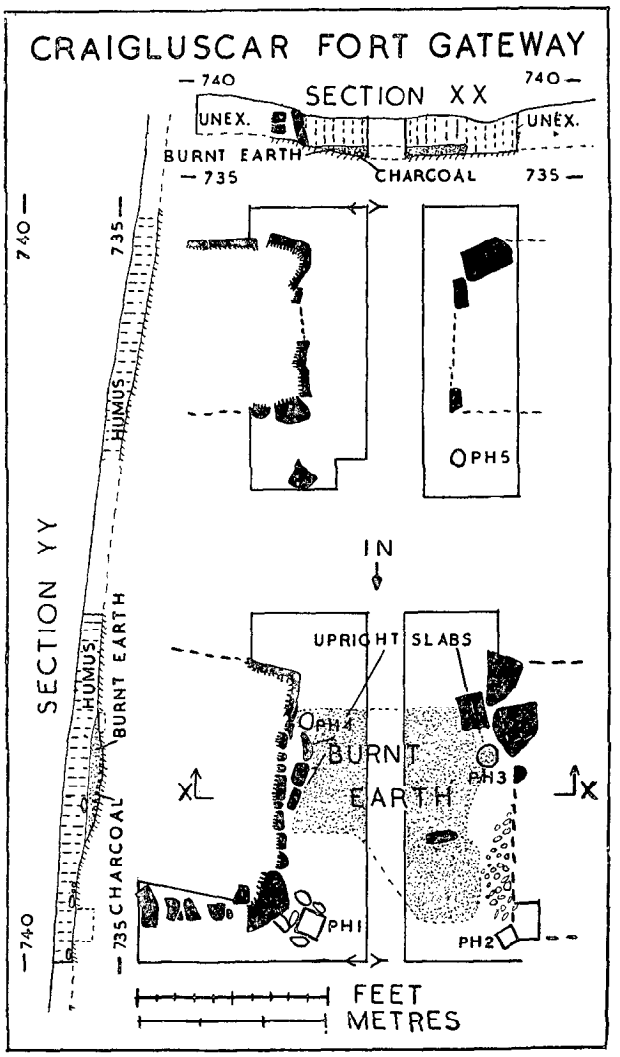

Fig. 7.

soil on the bridge must have been about a foot, as near post-hole 3, where a large slab resting on the surface of the burnt layer had protected it from erosion, it reached that thickness.

The gate must have been supported either on post 1 or on post 3, as 2 and 4 are not set deeply enough. Post 1 seems the more probable, as the upright slabs near post 4 leave no part clear to form a jamb. A gate hung from post 1 could

close against post 2, and when open would swing back into the space between 1 and 4. The mass of rubble found over the site of post-hole 1 also suggests that this post needed reinforcement.

Discussion.—Evidence for dating could hardly be expected from an examination devoted solely to the defences of the site. All that can be said is that the shale ring, and a rough stone disc found in the burnt material at the entrance (see below), would not be out of place in the earlier layers at Traprain Law, and that the multiple ramparts suggest a date not much before the beginning of our era.[1] Tentatively, therefore, the construction of the fort can probably be placed sometime within the 1st centuries B.C. and A.D. The type of site, with multiple ramparts enclosing a small area, is one that seems commoner south of the Forth.

In spite of its flimsy construction and generally rather poor design, it survived long enough for the gateway passage to be worn down to bare rock and slightly hollowed, and for the walls of the passage to require propping in places.

The burnt gateway indicates the end. Had the fire been accidental, traffic would have continued to use the gate passage even if the gate had not been repaired, and the wash of rain over the trodden ground would soon have cleared away the burnt soil. Its presence shows that the burning closed the occupation. It is impossible, at least without further excavation,[2] to decide whether the destruction was incidental to the Roman conquest or the result of native warfare.

Finds.—The only relics found were a rough shale ring, thickness $\frac{1}{4}$ in., internal and external diameters about $1\frac{1}{2}$ and $3\frac{1}{2}$ in., with edges chamfered from both sides, found under the clay fill of the middle rampart; and a stone disc of about 4 in. diameter roughly chipped to shape but with one side smoothed, found among the burnt earth in the inner gateway.

A. H. A. Hogg.