

## XIII.

THE DEIL'S DYKE IN DUMFRIESSHIRE AND  
AYRSHIRE.

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## I. INTRODUCTORY.

As has been stated in a previous paper,<sup>1</sup> the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland decided, in 1949, to re-examine the Deil's Dyke in Galloway for comparison with the Roxburghshire Catrail,<sup>2</sup> the Commissioners who prepared the Inventories of Wigtownshire (1912), Kirkcudbrightshire (1914) and Dumfriesshire (1920)<sup>3</sup> having treated the remains that were considered to be parts of the Dyke as individual monuments, and not having made a comprehensive study of the supposed monument as a whole. As is well known, the Deil's Dyke had been believed, on what seems to have been the sole authority of the Galloway antiquary Joseph Train,<sup>4</sup> to have run from the shore of Loch Ryan through Galloway and Dumfriesshire to the Solway Firth near Annan, following the course indicated in fig. 1 and throwing off an unexplained branch AA into upper Nithsdale. However, the survey made in 1949 showed that, in Wigtownshire and Kirkcudbrightshire at least, the Deil's Dyke had no existence as a unitary work; that the various lengths of it that were marked on the O.S. map were simply march dykes, agricultural divisions or disused trackways; and that Train's conception of an earthwork or wall stretching from sea to sea had consequently got to be abandoned. At the same time, a preliminary examination suggested that the "branch" just mentioned, on the S. side of upper Nithsdale, might well be a running earthwork in its own right, probably of considerable length; and in view of the potential interest of this suggestion, if it could be verified, the Commissioners decided to have the subject studied further and the results published in the *Proceedings*. This paper is accordingly presented to give the results of a survey made, on the Commissioners' instructions, between 1950 and 1954; it covers the "Celtic or Deil's Dike" (*sic*) in Dumfriesshire, as marked on the 6-inch O.S. map,

<sup>1</sup> P.S.A.S., LXXXIII, 174 ff.

<sup>2</sup> R.C.A.M., *Inventory of Roxburghshire*, App. D.

<sup>3</sup> These are dates of publication. The field-work in these counties was done between 1911 and 1915.

<sup>4</sup> Chalmers, *Caledonia* (ed. 1824), v, 237, note 1, cites Train as his authority; Mackenzie, *The History of Galloway* (1841), I, Appendix, p. 3, prints a report by Train himself; and *New Stat. Acc.*, iv (Wigton) (1845), 232-4, reproduces this report *verbatim*.

together with some unmarked lengths of dyke in Ayrshire which have sometimes been thought to project the line of the same work westwards. Topographical details are given in terms of the 6-inch O.S. maps of Dumfriesshire, 2nd edition (1900), Sheets v NW., v SW., v SE., vi SW., XIII NW.,

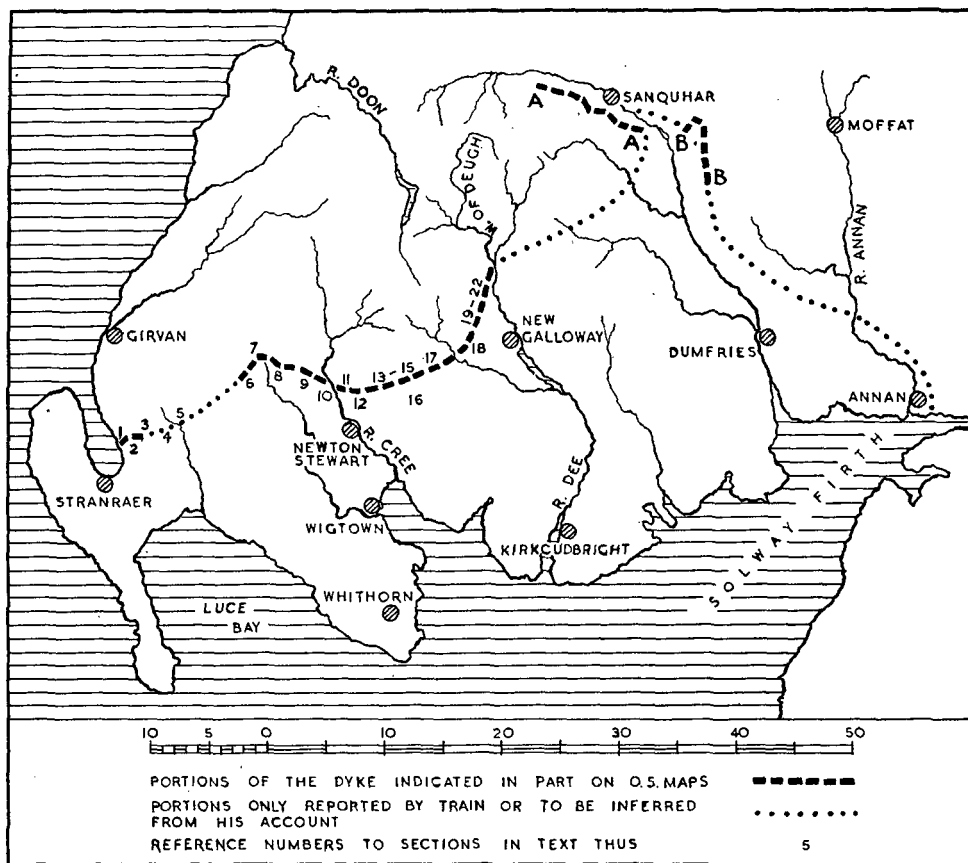


Fig. 1. The Deil's Dyke as described by Joseph Train.

XIII NE., XIII SE., XIV SW., XIV NW., XIV NE., XIV SE., XXII NE., XXII SE., XXIII SW., XXXII N.W., XXXII SW.; and of Ayrshire, 2nd edition (1897) XLI SE., XLII SE., XLII SW., XLVI SE., XLVII NE., XLVII NW., XLVII SW., L NE, L SE.<sup>1</sup> Localities are also identified by National Grid references as shown on Sheets 83, 84 and 88 of the 1-inch O.S. map of Scotland, "Popular" edition, all such references being to the 100-kilometre square NS (26 in the current edition) unless otherwise stated.

The authors desire to thank Mr R. C. Reid, for making available notes

<sup>1</sup> All references in the text are to Dumfriesshire unless Ayrshire is specified.

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and letters by the late Dr William Semple, and also Professor W. Croft Dickinson and Mr G. P. H. Watson for helpful suggestions and advice.

It will be convenient to describe first, in Part II, the remains of earthworks which can be followed along the southern side of the upper valley of the Nith from the farm of Burnmouth (839051) north-westwards, with reasons for believing them to be parts of a unitary work. This work is regarded as extending from Burnmouth, on the Burnsands Burn, to the Afton Water

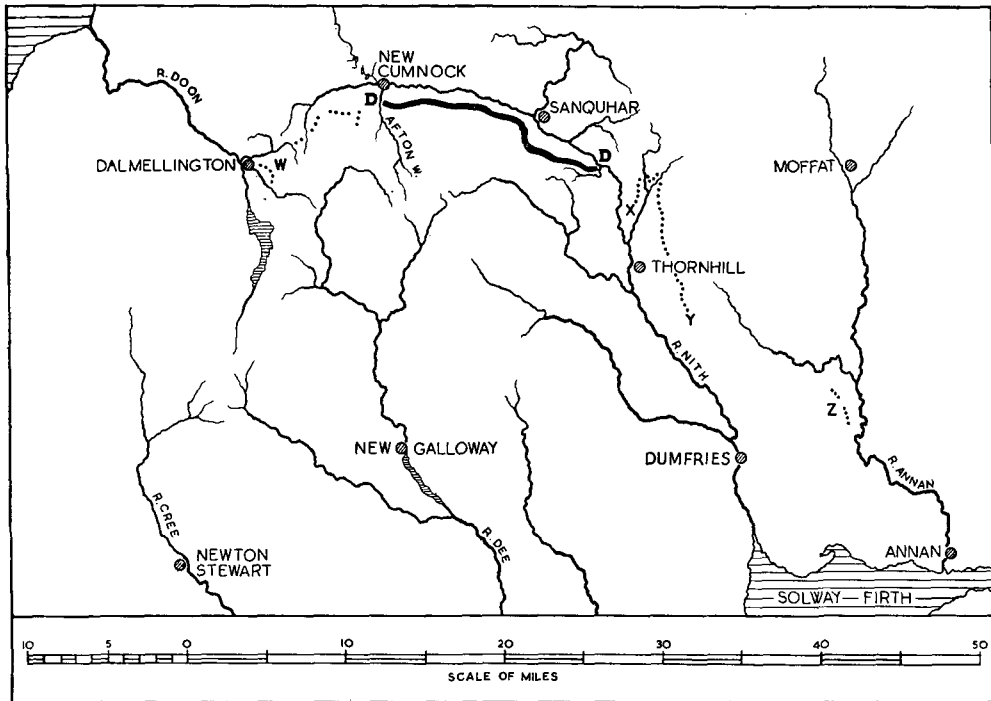


Fig. 2. Earthworks in Dumfriesshire and Ayrshire.

at the base of Dalhanna Hill, a distance of some sixteen miles (DD in fig. 2). The question will then arise as to why these particular points should be chosen as the ends of the work—why, that is to say, suggestions that it extended SE. of the Burnsands Burn, or W. of the Afton Water (DW in fig. 2),<sup>1</sup> should not be accepted, or why some stretches of earthwork on the Carron and Cample Waters and on the Claghrie Burn (XY in fig. 2), and also near Hightae (Z, fig. 2), which are also marked “Celtic or Deil’s Dike” on the O.S. map, should be placed in other categories. This will entail some discussion, in Part III, of the works in question, while such general conclusions as can be drawn from the whole inquiry will follow in Part IV.

<sup>1</sup> See letters from the late Dr W. Semple to Mr R. C. Reid, preserved by the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society.

## II. THE EARTHWORKS SOUTH OF THE NITH, OR DEIL'S DYKE PROPER.

1. **Burnmouth** (XIII SE., XIV SW.). The south-easternmost component of the work that the present authors regard as the Deil's Dyke proper first becomes visible at a point about 280 yds. SW. of Burnmouth farmhouse (837049), where it emerges from a piece of marshy ground in the form of a bank much damaged by the plough. It is here trending uphill in a direction somewhat S. of W.; its lower end has evidently been destroyed by cultivation, but there can be little doubt that it originated close by on the left bank of the Burnsands Burn at or near its confluence with the River Nith.<sup>1</sup> From the marshy spot it rises to and runs along the NE. edge of the felled plantation on Burnmouth Hill, and can be further traced from the head of a small sike tributary to Cubie's Cleuch (829053) to the slight angle in the parish boundary-wall (Sanquhar-Durisdere) just NE. of B.M. 889.7. On the moorland, NW. of the wall, its state of preservation improves, and it appears as a spread earthen bank without a ditch, irregular or sinuous in alignment and containing occasional stones; it is from 6 to 9 ft. thick and seldom more than 3 ft. high, and has nothing to do with the existing system of enclosures. No part of the Dyke SE. of the parish boundary is shown on the O.S. map, from which, in fact, a wrong idea of the remains on the ground would be obtained. It marks the "Celtic or Deil's Dike" as joining the parish boundary from the NW. at right angles, then as turning sharply south-westwards along the boundary and fading out at the end of some 230 yds.; while a disconnected piece is also shown as appearing 270 yds. NE. of the junction and following the parish boundary north-eastwards to the edge of Elioek Wood. Actually, however, this latter stretch cannot now be identified, whether or not it existed when the map was revised in 1898; the former certainly exists, as a bank without a ditch, and with it are associated some fragments of similar works which are not marked on the map, but all these are fairly straight and have a more or less recent appearance, and seem to be connected with an agricultural lay-out.

2. **Glengenny Muir** (XIII SE., XIII NE.). From the point defined above on the parish-boundary wall (829053) the Dyke runs north-westwards as a well-marked bank without a ditch, as described above, keeping first at or above the 900-foot contour—*i.e.*, generally somewhat above the crest of the main slope that rises from the bank of the Nith. Thereafter it descends about 100 ft. to turn the northern shoulder of Glengenny Hill. This part of the Dyke was not followed beyond the head of the Brockholm Burn, but three points of interest were noted: (1) The work does not seem to be a head-dyke, as, apart from the fact that the quality of the ground—typical moorland—is the same on either side, an old head-dyke is present as well at a

<sup>1</sup> On this see p. 148 below.

rather lower elevation. This latter is of the more usual bank-and-ditch construction, though it must be noted that banks without ditches are considerably commoner in this district than in many part of the country. (2) About 100 yds. from the parish boundary the line of the Dyke forms a kind of pocket, measuring some 50 yds. in depth by 100 yds. along its chord. The ground in this pocket is of better quality than the surrounding moorland, but the improvement seems to have occurred since the Dyke assumed its present spread condition, as the fine grass extends to the turf on its surface. There are no signs of structure in the pocket, and the deflection of the Dyke is difficult to explain unless it is supposed to have been skirting the irregular edge of a wood. (3) About 600 yds. from the parish boundary a bank, generally similar to the Deil's Dyke, crosses it from W. to E., originating about 50 yds. to the W. and ending in the head of a branch of the Brockholm Burn. As this stream runs straight down to the Nith, the bank appears to have been intended to produce its line—presumably as a march—right up to the moor; but its relationship to the Dyke cannot now be determined, as both works have disappeared at what should have been their point of intersection, the ground being here very boggy. (See also § 3).

3. **Cowan Burn to Eliock Burn** (XIII NE.). The next stretch visited was that running from the Cowan Burn (809060) to the Eliock Burn (790064), its course being virtually from E. to W. The Dyke here lies between the 800- and 900-foot contours, for much of its length on moorland but in places—*e.g.* near the head of the Hawkcleuch Burn—probably somewhat below the cultivable limit. The end on the Eliock Burn has, in fact, been ploughed out, although the O.S. map marks it as reaching virtually to the burn-bank. In general this part of the work resembles that previously described, though W. of the Merk Burn, where it traverses an area of rocky outcrops, it contains a good deal of stone and at one point incorporates an outcrop. Its thickness in this stony stretch is from 7 to 8 ft.<sup>1</sup> From just east of trig. point 887 (804060) the Dyke has disappeared for some 230 yds., the ground being here considerably broken up by gullies; the O.S. map marks it as having formed a close loop round the knoll that bears the trig. point—on which also the soil seems to have been improved—and if this record is correct, this loop may be compared with the "pocket" described above in § 2. In that case, however, the diversion of the line was a salient, apparently enclosing something, whereas here it would have been a re-entrant, excluding the knoll. Where it reappears, just W. of the main gully at the head of the Hawkcleuch Burn, the Dyke is crossed by another similar work which comes up from the head-dyke of the modern enclosures and swings westwards, above the crossing, to end on the Minny E' Burn; its total length is about 400 yds., and it is clearly a head-dyke or boundary drawn between the Hawkcleuch and

<sup>1</sup> In 1913 the Commissioners recorded an exposed stony foundation 7 ft. wide in the section between the Twentyshilling and Eliock Burns (R.C.A.M., *Inventory of Dumfriesshire*, No. 566).

M inny E' Burns. Again nothing can be said as to its temporal relationship with the Dyke, as the actual junction of the two works has been washed out; as has been noted already, its construction as a plain bank, without a ditch, cannot in this region be regarded as a distinctive feature.

4. **Eliock Burn to Euchar Water** (XIII NE., XIII NW.). From its point of contact with the Eliock Burn (*supra*), the Dyke seems to have been replaced, for some 420 yds., first by the Burn itself and then by a tributary sike. It resumes as an earthwork at 786065, pursuing thence the course shown on the O.S. map across the Back Burn and its tributaries and up the north-eastern shoulder of Cairn Hill, where it reaches an elevation of about 1050 ft. O.D. This section is exactly similar to the ditchless bank already noted, though perhaps of rather heavier construction as, on Cairn Hill, it measures up to 12 ft. in thickness in its partially spread condition. As it descends the slope north-westwards from the top of the shoulder it begins to carry some drainage along its upper side and consequently acquires something of the aspect of a ditch-and-bank work, but this is probably no more than an accidental effect of erosion. Between the 1000- and 950-foot contours (768072) a long straight bank without a ditch, generally similar to the main work, runs up to it from below nearly at right angles, appearing out of the western lobe of Mains Plantation; the relationship of the two banks to one another cannot be determined as they just fail to touch, the lateral work ending a few yards short of the Deil's Dyke, while this latter is itself interrupted at what would have been the point of contact, as if to allow stock to pass through to the moorland above. The association of this lateral work with the Deil's Dyke does not, however, necessarily weaken the case for regarding the latter as something distinct from any recent system of agricultural subdivision; a farm boundary, for example, might well have been carried up to a convenient existing landmark, and the fact that both are banks without ditches probably means little.<sup>1</sup>

About 100 yds. below the point in question, however, a sike develops (767073) on the upper side of the Deil's Dyke, and runs down to the Whing Burn beside it; while the Dyke itself becomes somewhat slighter and shows more stones than it did higher up the hillside. It becomes necessary, in consequence, to ask whether the work—which is clearly a single whole from near Burnmouth to this point—should be held to terminate here or to form part of a larger unit in conjunction with the stretches of dyke that exist N. and NW. of Old Barr. These fragments, though now separated by numerous gaps, were once pretty certainly continuous, and in fact some of the gaps that exist to-day have evidently been made or enlarged since the O.S. map was revised in 1898. Moreover, the south-eastern end of the first of the

<sup>1</sup> In addition to the instances of this method of construction that have already been given, it may be mentioned that an area of ground, formerly improved, between Ulzieside Plantation and the Whing Burn was found to have been subdivided with banks built without ditches.

fragments in question, as now seen near Old Barr (761086), now rests on nothing and has clearly been cut off by cultivation. On a point of this kind positive proof is naturally impossible to obtain, but the work beyond Old Barr (*infra*) so closely resembles its counterpart SE. of the Whing Burn—in appearance, alignment and lay-out, apart from its closer approach to the bottom of the valley—that the balance of probability is strongly in favour of the functional unity of the two. The case is so strong that the subsidiary question of how, if at all, the space between them may have been bridged now deserves to be considered.

The O.S. map has one explanation to offer, as it marks the Deil's Dyke as (1) descending without interruption to the Whing Burn (764074); (2) continuing across the haugh on its left bank to make contact after some 120 yds. with the lower, or eastern, end of a small sike ("Standard Gutter") the head of which has been extended westwards, as a main drain, into Ulzieside Plantation; (3) resuming in the plantation, now cut and replanted, and continuing the same E.-W. line as far as the right bank of Glenmaddie Burn (754075); (4) reappearing on the left bank of the Glenmaddie Burn, down which it immediately turns north.<sup>1</sup> It fades out, however, in less than 100 yds., after emerging obliquely from the plantation into improved ground. On this showing it would follow either that an earthwork ran down the Glenmaddie Burn to its junction with the Euchan Water (754080), and thence down the Euchan Water to join up with the broken end of the Dyke near Old Barr, or that the water-courses themselves did duty as a boundary, the Old Barr fragment having rested its end on the Euchan Water at some convenient point—perhaps about 760083. To this explanation the following objections may be raised: (1) The somewhat slighter construction of the O.S. "Deil's Dyke" below than above the point 767073, and the fact that from here to the Whing Burn it has at some time served as a head-dyke to subdivided and improved ground below, suggest a difference in construction and in purpose. (2) The short length on the left bank of the Whing Burn is now so much wasted as to be scarcely identifiable, and may never have been more than a small field-enclosure. (3) No signs of construction are to be seen along the "Standard Gutter" or the drain that feeds it, until the latter is well within Ulzieside Plantation—though this might well be due to former improvement of this area, and the bank that does survive in the western part of the Plantation is in fact very similar to the Deil's Dyke as seen elsewhere in either of the main sections.

Another possibility emerges from the analogy of the Roxburghshire Catrail. The frequency with which this latter makes use of streams suggests that the original Deil's Dyke may have stopped at 767073, and that its line was carried on to Old Barr first by the unnamed sike and then by the Whing

<sup>1</sup> This fragment is not to be confused with a slighter bank which runs down the burn-bank from the S. and coalesces with it where it turns.

Burn, which joins the Euchar Water just below the farmhouse and some 300 yds. from the existing end of the next section of the Dyke. This suggestion would explain away the apparent slight difference in the Dyke above and below 767073, but would not account for the normal appearance of the piece in Ulzieside Plantation, while the analogy with the Catrail may be illusory. If therefore it is held that the sections of the work lying respectively SE. and NE. of the Euchar Water basin do actually constitute parts of a single whole, it will be safest to regard the link between them as following the course shown by the O.S. map.

5. **Old Barr to Kello Water** (XIII NW., VI SW.). The truncated end of the next fragment of the Deil's Dyke, of which mention has already been made, is marked on the O.S. map as starting about 130 yds. NW. of Old Barr, though to-day it is shorter by at least 100 yds. than the map indicates. From here it runs generally northwards for some 470 yds., fading out on re-entering cultivated ground after passing Shiel Cleuch (762091). Its alignment varies to suit the requirements of the ground, a swampy strip, and later the hollow of the Barr Burn and Shiel Cleuch, being crossed by the shortest routes. It is also subject to the usual minor irregularities. It closely resembles the sections previously described, as it consists of a ditchless mound spread to a maximum breadth of about 14 ft. and only exceeding 2 ft. 6 ins. in height where measured downhill on a transverse slope. Near the burns it contains a good deal of stone. It had evidently been reduced and spread to its present condition before the stone dykes of the modern fields were built. The impression that it gives is not that of a head-dyke, as it does not appear to divide zones of land of markedly different qualities.

From Barr Quarry for some 1600 yds. north-westwards the O.S. map again marks "remains" or the "site" of the Deil's Dyke on or just above the 600-foot contour. Nothing can be seen to-day, but the record is certainly correct as the work resumes at the small burn that runs down to Little Connelbush at a point 70 yds. south of the highway (754105). From here it can be followed west-north-westwards for 530 yds.—mostly outside, but at the far end just inside, the plantation on Mains Knowe. This fragment is up to 12 ft. wide and shows numerous boulders in its construction; its alignment is so irregular as almost to suggest that it was driven through open woodland where large trees had to be avoided. Beyond the plantation it must again have been obliterated by ploughing in fairly recent years, as no traces of it now remain along the continuation of this line—actually a small sike—where the O.S. map marks it as running down to the plantation SE. of Drumbuie. This instance of the Dyke being actually built along the line of a watercourse, instead of handing over its function to the watercourse as the Catrail frequently does, is worth noting for comparison with some other instances previously noted, namely on the sike E. of the Whing Burn, in Ulzieside Plantation and on the Glenmaddie Burn; what may be described



as "Catrail practice" was, however, observed on the left bank of the Eliock Burn and on the lower part of Standard Gutter. Westwards of Drumbuie no remains of the Dyke can be seen in the stretch of uneven ground, about three-quarters of a mile in breadth, that is bounded on the NW. by the Kello Water.

6. **Kello Water to March Burn** (vi SW., v SE., v SW., v NW.). No trace of the Dyke can be seen in the field, measuring half a mile in width from SE. to NW., that lies on the left bank of the Kello Water on the presumed line of the Dyke. This field has been under the plough, but was in pasture at the date of visit. That the Dyke once crossed it, however, is very probable, as the wall that borders the NW. side of the field rises as it passes over the truncated end of the next surviving section (727110). From this point the Dyke can be followed across rough pasture for a distance of 700 yds. until it reaches a corner of Librymoor Plantation (722113), and thence it runs down through the wood to Cadgerhall Burn and thereafter continues westwards along the contour, at a height of about 740 ft. O.D., for half a mile to the Rig Burn. Another fairly straight stretch, a quarter of a mile in length, brings the Dyke to the Polmeur Burn. Thereafter, despite minor interruptions and the presence of numerous earthen field-boundaries in the vicinity, the Dyke can be distinguished as it runs over Rotton Sike on a straight course to Polneul Burn. It then runs up the left bank of a nameless sike for about 300 yds., for most of which distance it is broken and intermittent. Leaving the sike at a point where it attains a height of about 840 ft. O.D. (693118), the Dyke descends to the Polhote Burn, being breached on the way by a rectangular field 80 yds. in width.

The Dyke appears again at a point 120 yds. upstream on the left bank of the Polhote Burn, but fragments shown on the O.S. map (v SE.) suggest that the gap has been caused by erosion. It runs south-westwards uphill for 110 yds. to meet a small sike, follows the left bank of this for about 100 yds., and then leaves it to run on an uninterrupted course westwards across the hillside towards the Polmarloch Burn. In this stretch, which is half a mile in length, the Dyke nearly reaches the 1000-foot contour, but it drops to 900 ft. to cross the burn.

Westwards of the Polmarloch Burn the Dyke runs somewhat downhill to the marsh at the head of Gillie's Burn. Now in cultivated land, it appears as a slight mound which can only be traced intermittently. The final stretch from Gillie's Burn to the March Burn, a distance of a quarter of a mile, is only barely distinguishable, but a faint bank can be traced to a point about 80 yds. E. of the latter stream. Here it appears that the Dyke turned S. and SW. to reach the March Burn only a few yards below the point on a field-wall indicated by B.M. 868.0 on the 6-inch sheet v NW.

7. **March Burn to Afton Water** (Ayrshire, XLII SE., XLII SW.). The Dyke leaves the left bank of the March Burn to run westwards across the

Spout and Docken Burns. It is barely visible for much of this stretch, and fades out entirely upon entering the marsh that has formed at an angle in the Park Burn (666124). It appears again 200 yds. to the SW., where it is joined by a bank of very similar appearance which starts a quarter of a mile to the E. on the left bank of the Docken Burn. The Dyke now passes under a field-wall and soon crosses the 1000-foot contour as it runs WSW. towards the Garepool Burn, a distance of 800 yds. For much of this stretch the Dyke is accompanied along its higher side by a modern field-drain, but it can nevertheless be distinguished as an earthen bank, containing a few boulders, which measures from 9 to 12 ft. in width and stands 1 ft. or a little more in height. The Dyke has here been wasted and interrupted by cultivation, and it finally dies away about 100 yds. E. of the Garepool Burn.

Westwards of the burn, for about 700 yds., the Dyke runs WSW. and is largely overlain by a modern field-wall. But at a point 140 yds. E. of the Gatelochside Burn, where a nameless sike rises, the Dyke turns W. and the wall SW., the former now reappearing on a somewhat sinuous course at a level of about 1150 ft. above sea-level. It crosses the Gatelochside Burn and runs off across enclosed but coarse pasture to the W. for a quarter of a mile, and then to the SW. for about half that distance to the Rye Burn. Here it is seriously mutilated by drainage-ditches and field-walls for a distance of about a quarter of a mile, but finally emerges to run uninterrupted for nearly 700 yds. across the foot of Burnt Hill to reach the Polquhirter Burn at a point a quarter of a mile above the junction of that burn and the Redree Burn.

Westwards of the Polquhirter Burn the Dyke continues in the same line for a quarter of a mile, until it is lost in marshy ground a few yards NE. of B.M. 1044.1 beside the Redree Burn (6-inch sheet (Ayrshire) XLII SW.). The ground W. of the burn is called Black Moss, and the earthwork appears only on the north-western margin of the boggy ground at a point distant about 150 yds. W. of B.M. 1044.1. From here it increases steadily in size as it rises up the slopes of Dalhanna Hill on the course shown on the O.S. map as a thin black line, passing a few feet NE. of the summit of the hill. Here, at 1220 ft. above sea-level, the Dyke attains its highest altitude and appears as a ditchless bank standing up to 2 ft. in height and spread to a thickness of about 12 ft. Descending the north-western flank of the hill, and running under a field-wall, it is soon lost, at a height of about 900 ft. O.D., in the field that slopes down to the Afton Water more than 200 ft. below.

### III. EARTHWORKS NOT REGARDED AS PARTS OF THE DEIL'S DYKE.

1. **Earthworks West of Glen Afton.** The Afton Water, which flows northwards from its source on the western flank of Windy Standard to join the

River Nith at New Cumnock, forms a decided interruption to the hills that border the right or southern side of Upper Nithsdale. The Deil's Dyke, as has been shown in Part II, runs almost continuously and without significant gaps for the sixteen miles from Burnmouth to Glen Afton, but W. of that point, although the Nith extends for a further nine or ten miles to its source between Prickeny and Enoch Hills, there is no further trace of an earthwork of similar character. Some old land-boundaries certainly occur in the area in question, which resemble the Dyke in dimensions and method of construction, but they differ from it in consisting of short isolated lengths, separated from one another by wide and unexplained gaps, and in not holding to the contour as does the Dyke for so much of its length. A critical comparison rapidly reveals the distinction between them and component parts of the Dyke, and no confusion ought to arise between the two classes of work.

The following notes on some of the more conspicuous examples are given by way of illustration.

(i) *Ashmark Hill* (Ayrshire, XLVIII NW.). This is a length of ditchless earthen bank, running SW. for three-quarters of a mile from a sheepfold 170 yds. SSW. of the summit of Ashmark Hill along the ridge that rises to Lamb Hill. Here it comes to an end near the source of a narrow sike which runs down to the Connel Burn. (ii) *Knockburnie* (Ayrshire, XLVII NE.). Here a bank, similar to the last, starts at the head of a straight sike which descends the north-eastern slope of Peat Hill to pass beneath the road from New Cumnock to Dalmellington near Knockburnie Cottage. The bank runs for a distance of 700 yds. over the brow of Peat Hill, and comes to an end at the head of a tributary of the Polmath Burn. (iii) *Maneigh Hill and Meikle Hill* (Ayrshire, XLVII NE. and XLVII NW.). Another similar work begins near the left bank of the Polmath Burn, at a point about a quarter of a mile SSE. of Polmath Burn Bridge. It runs SSW. up the northern slope of Maneigh Hill until it reaches the 1250-foot contour, and then turns NNW. to run for 300 yds. to the head of a straight, unnamed sike which flows into the River Nith just above Nith Bridge. The line may be continued by a further stretch of bank which leaves the left bank of the sike 300 yds. lower down, and runs S. and SW. for a quarter of a mile to a sike which runs into the River Nith 230 yds. E. of Meiklehill farmhouse. A third stretch runs up from the left bank of the River Nith at a point 70 yds. upstream from the entry of the sike just mentioned. This stretch can be followed for about a quarter of a mile until it is lost on the north slope of Meikle Hill. There is no trace of it across the main part of Meikle Hill or on the neighbouring Clawfin Hill. (iv) "*Pickan's Dyke*," *Dalmellington* (Ayrshire, XLVI SE.). This bank runs E. from near the eastern edge of the graveyard at Dalmellington up to the crest of the ridge known as Mains Hill. It descends the hill again to near the confluence of the Parrie Burn with the

Muck Water, and thus encloses an area on the right bank of the latter which measures about half a mile in length by about a quarter of a mile in breadth. The bank stands to a height of about 2 ft. and is spread to a thickness of about 12 ft. It appears to have a slight ditch on its S. side.

2. **Earthworks SE. of the Burnsands Burn.** The belief that the Deil's Dyke crossed the Burnsands Burn, and ran on towards the S. and SW., was tied up with the theory of a dyke which ran from Loch Ryan to the Solway—Train having said<sup>1</sup> that it traversed the parishes of Penpont, Tynron and Glencairn and joined up with the rest of this supposed work on the Water of Deugh. Train's theory having now been shown to have no factual basis,<sup>2</sup> the evidence for any extension beyond the Burnsands Burn must be looked at very closely indeed, and when this is done it is found to be of very little weight. The possibility of this extension was carefully explored by Mr R. C. Reid and the late Dr W. Semple,<sup>3</sup> and although they found numerous lengths of dyke in more or less suggestive positions, these were not homogeneous in character, gaps were frequent and sometimes extremely wide, and no real case was made out for the existence here of a unitary work. Similarly, the present authors found that a slight bank, on the right bank of the Burnsands Burn opposite Burnmouth, which had been noted by Dr Semple as possible evidence for the extension,<sup>4</sup> was no more than an old field-division of a very usual kind. At the same time, the alignment of the Dyke on its descent towards Burnmouth suggests most strongly a terminus at the mouth of the Burnsands Burn. Further speculation about a southerly or south-westerly extension may therefore be safely abandoned.

3. **Earthworks East of Central Nithsdale.** The O.S. map gives the name "Celtic or Deil's Dike" to a number of earthworks E. of the valley of the Nith, in the Durisdeer and Thornhill districts, and it is necessary now to consider whether any of these are integrally connected with the work described in Part II.

(i) *Enterkin Burn* (xiv NW.). The first fragment is marked as mounting the steep eastern side of the gorge of the Enterkin Burn—a distance of over 250 yds. at a gradient of about 1 in 2·5—from the burn-bank (872054) to about 20 yds. below the drove-road that runs along the crest. It consists of a much spread ditchless bank, the upper extremity of which has been ploughed out; the whole has been superseded in modern times by a dry-stone dyke, which follows the same line and overrides the bank in more than one place. There is nothing on the ground to indicate its further course, but the O.S. map suggests that it turned N. along the drove-road and was continuous with the stretch described in the next section—the link between them having been destroyed, on this showing, by traffic and improvements

<sup>1</sup> Refer to note 4, p. 137.

<sup>2</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, LXXXIII, 174 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *T. Dumf. and Gall. A.S.*, 3 ser., xvii, 65 ff.

<sup>4</sup> *Cf.* note 1, p. 139.

on the drove-road. This may well be the true explanation, but it is equally possible that the earthwork topped the ridge just E. of the drove-road and held on its easterly course for a longer or shorter distance into the valley of the Carron Water, thus assuming the appearance of an ordinary cross-ridge dyke.

(ii) *Chapel Belt Plantation to Nether Dalveen* (xiv NW., xiv NE.). Some wasted remains of this section appear on the western margin of the drove-road where this emerges from Chapel Belt plantation, *i.e.* some 70 yds. NNE. of the upper end of the fragment just described. Within the plantation the drove-road has been improved, and all trace of the junction between the two lengths of earthwork has been destroyed. For more than 200 yds. to the N. of the wood the work, which here follows the drove-road along the lip of the steep valley of the Enterkin Burn, has been considerably damaged by traffic, but 330 yds. north of the gate it swings north-eastwards, out of the line of the road, and is shortly to be seen in very fair preservation where it crosses a dry hollow SE. of trig. point 947 (876057). It is here an earthen bank without a ditch, 12 ft. thick at the base by 4 ft. high. This general appearance it maintains for a further distance of 670 yds., being here on gently-sloping ground near the top of the ridge; but where the transverse gradient steepens, N. of the head of a sike at 878060, it assumes the form of a stout ditch-and-bank work—as is natural enough in view of the lie of the ground. Some 300 yds. further on the work turns sharply downhill for 100 yds. and then again straightens out on a northerly course about 100 ft. lower down. The sharpness of this deviation is probably due to the presence of small gullies which obstruct a more direct course. At 879064 the work coalesces with the modern head-dyke of the Nether Dalveen fields, and the two run on together for 900 yds.—first northwards, and then swinging north-eastwards as the valley curves—to the wood behind the farmhouse. The earthwork runs on into the wood for about 150 yds., being here used as a road, and then comes to an end after turning downhill along the right bank of Stem Cleuch (883070).

In view of the facts that the northern part of this work, seven-eighths of a mile in length, is largely in use as a head-dyke to-day, and also that this western slope of the Carron Water valley shows a very marked distinction, as does also its eastern counterpart, between low-lying farmlands and steep uncultivable hillsides, it might be held that the whole of this work had been a head-dyke from the beginning. This is, indeed, quite possible, and would provide a logical connection with the works to be described in the next section. On the other hand, there is no escape from the fact that the southernmost portion, where it crosses the neck between the Carron and the Enterkin valleys, is much more suggestive of a march—and this whatever interpretation is put on the short length described in § i. There is little, in respect of construction or of apparent intention, to differentiate this portion

of the work from the Deil's Dyke as described above in Part II, and, as has been said, the change from a simple bank to a bank with a ditch is easily explained by the steepness of the slope along which the ditched portion runs. On balance, it seems safest to assume that the work was intended to demarcate some ground, perhaps of better quality than the break-neck slopes and glens of the neighbouring hills, and that as such it may or may not be generally analogous to the Deil's Dyke. But that it actually formed part of the same system seems quite impossible to believe, and that for a number of reasons. For example, the terminal points of the two works (Burnmouth and Chapel Belt) are more than  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles apart in a direct line; the space between them is cut up by the wide and deep gorges of the Nith and the Enterkin Burn; no colourable links have been discovered on the intervening ground; and a short length of dyke on the E. side of Lime Cleuch and a longer one on the SW. face of Dalpeddar Hill might be put forward, with no greater degree of improbability, as evidence for an extension from Chapel Belt up the left bank of the Nith to the Mennock Water. Again, if it is supposed that the Nith and the Enterkin Burn themselves represented the boundary between the ends of the earthworks, it is hard to imagine what purpose a boundary of this kind could have served. Both earthworks no doubt represent the limit of property, influence or agricultural activity of the communities that lived below them, but on this showing the communities in question must have been distinct from one another—the one being settled in the upper Nith valley, and the other on the Carron Water and the adjoining foothills to the E. So far indeed from showing evidence of any common purpose, the two earthworks face in virtually opposite directions.

(iii) *Dalveen Cottage to Durisdeer Castle* (xiv NE. and xiv SE.). The O.S. map marks "Celtic or Deil's Dike" as running, at elevations of from 700 to 900 ft. O.D., between Dalveen Cottage (886064) and the site of Durisdeer Castle (892043), a distance of rather less than a mile and a half. The work is now interrupted from place to place, but was no doubt originally continuous. The work is a bank with a ditch, though the transverse slope is in places quite gentle enough to have permitted the construction of a simple bank if the Deil's Dyke technique had been in favour. The southernmost portion, above Foulds Wood, is up to 9 ft. thick and stands up to 3 ft. above the bottom of the ditch; its alignment is rather noticeably regular. The work follows virtually the same course as the modern dry-stone head-dykes and, where examined, was structurally indistinguishable from the turf dykes ordinarily built for agricultural purposes; moreover, like the head-dykes, it marks a natural dividing line between the steep hillsides and the lower-lying cultivable ground. There is thus no reason to regard this stretch of dyke as anything more than a local agricultural boundary, though the manner in which its northern end is aligned on the down-curving end of

the neighbouring work behind Nether Dalveen (*supra*), half a mile distant to the north, suggests that these works may originally have been continuous. They would thus have marked out the northern end of a tongue of cultivable ground, pushed up towards the narrowing head of the valley.

(iv) *Durisdeer Castle to the Kirk Burn* (xiv SE.). The broken-off end of this work appears at the edge of cultivation on the western flank of a knoll, represented by a closed 700-foot contour, just outside the south-eastern end of Oldtown Wood (893041). Traces of a much-wasted terrace inside the wood may or may not be a continuation of the same thing. It turns the southern end of the knoll in the form of a slight bank with a narrow ditch behind it, in places rock-cut, and then swings N. along the eastern side of the knoll and round the head and along the north-eastern flank of a small cleuch, all very much at one level. Its further course is as shown on the O.S. map—round the shoulder of the hill overlooking Durisdeer from the N., and then for 700 yds. up the right bank of the Kirk Burn, where it has been damaged by use as a footpath. Its total length is thus just 1000 yds. The comparative slightness of this work, the rock-cutting seen on the knoll, the care with which a level is maintained in the small cleuch and on the knoll, where a straight line would have saved much labour, combine to corroborate the local report<sup>1</sup> that this was not a dyke at all but an aqueduct to Durisdeer Castle. Whatever dam once existed in the Kirk Burn has naturally not survived, and the fact that the north-eastern end appears to rise slightly from the burn may well be due to soil-creep on the steep hillside.

(v) *Durisdeer to Shiel Burn* (xiv SE.). The lengths of dyke marked on the O.S. map NE. of Durrisdeer (898038), below Whiteside Shoulder (900030) and E. of Gateslack (898026) and to the SW., are clearly nothing but old field-enclosures and head-dykes. At the first of these sites the Ordnance surveyors seem to have been somewhat influenced by "Deil's Dyke theory," as it is only the selective omission of some associated lengths of wholly similar turf-dyke that gives the marked fragment such slight resemblance to a linear earthwork as it actually shows.

(vi) *Bellybought Hill* (xxii NE.). In this section an earthwork starts from a point near the left bank of the Kettleton Burn a few yards S. of the mouth of Tom's Cleuch, and runs across the W. face of Par Hill to the Routon Burn. It rises 600 ft. in a distance of three-quarters of a mile. From here it runs S. and SE. for half a mile across the W. and SW. faces of Bellybought Hill, descends steeply across the contours of Hass Head, and is finally lost after running on S. and W. into cultivated ground. The area enclosed by this earthwork is marked "Morton Park" on the 6-inch O.S. map, and it is consequently tempting to identify the enclosure with a park recorded by the Rev. William Black, Minister of Closeburn from 1647 to 1684,<sup>2</sup> as having been built, near the old castle of Morton, "on the face of a very great

<sup>1</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, LVIII, 220.

<sup>2</sup> *Fasti Ecclesie Scoticanæ*, II, 309.

and high hill," by Sir Thomas Randolph,<sup>1</sup> tutor of David II. On the facts given in this record, the construction of the park would fall into the period 1329-32.

(vii) *Townhead and Townfoot* (xxii SE.). Under this heading are included all the remains of what must once have been a continuous dyke extending from the Cample Water, at a point 700 yds. NNW. of Townhead (NX/908987),<sup>2</sup> for more than a mile and a half to the SSE. South of what is now its end in this direction (NX/919966)<sup>2</sup> has evidently been ploughed away, and it may well have continued originally for a further half-mile to the Linn Burn, or even beyond as suggested by the O.S. map.<sup>3</sup> A length of some 330 yds. has disappeared from the end on the Cample Water since the map was revised, but some slight traces can be seen along the stretch E. of Townhead where the map leaves a blank. Between Midtown and Townfoot it has been completely ploughed out. The work<sup>4</sup> is all of bank-and-ditch construction, though the transverse slope is by no means everywhere so steep as to preclude the building of a simple bank like that of the Deil's Dyke, if this had been desired. It is generally in poor preservation, being reduced in places to a mere terrace; it may measure up to 15 ft. over bank and ditch, and varying amounts of stone appear in the bank. Its alignment is not markedly irregular. The close correspondence of its course with that of a modern head-dyke, often along the crest or the face of a steep cliff-like bank which flanks much of this valley, strongly suggests that its original purpose was to enclose agricultural land; while additional evidence of an agricultural function may be seen in the remains of a subsidiary work which seems to have branched off downhill some 330 yds. SE. of Townfoot. The whole work thus seems, like those described in § v above, to be of local significance only.

(viii) *Linn Burn to Auchencairn* (xxii SE., xxiii SW., xxxii NW., xxxii SW.). All the earthworks in this section are agricultural enclosures of one kind or another, and may be ignored.

(ix) *Hightae* (L NE., L SE.). The mounds and ridges W. of Hightae and Heck in Lochmaben parish are simply glacial kames.<sup>5</sup>

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS.

The facts set forth in Parts II and III have served to narrow the problem. Evidence has been given for the real existence of an earthwork running from Burnmouth to the Afton Water, and suggestions that it ever extended to E. and W. of these limits have been disproved. In addition, it has been shown

<sup>1</sup> Symson, *A Large Description of Galloway* (ed. 1823), App. VII, 167.

<sup>2</sup> In the current edition of the 1-inch O.S. map square NX is number 25.

<sup>3</sup> R.C.A.M., *Inventory of Dumfriesshire*, No. 80, records an earthen bank between Benthead and Crichope Linn.

<sup>4</sup> For a further description see R.C.A.M., *Inventory of Dumfriesshire*, No. 80.

<sup>5</sup> R.C.A.M., *Inventory of Dumfriesshire*, p. lvi (n.).



that there is no long unitary earthwork in the valleys of the Carron and Cample Waters; one section has faded away under close analysis, and the rest of the remains in this area have been otherwise explained. In view of these results, any lingering belief in a Deil's Dyke that reached to the Solway must naturally go by the board.

The task that now remains is to consider the probable origin and purpose of the work described in Part II. Archæological evidence of date is wholly lacking, and the only conclusion to be drawn from the appearance and siting of the work is that it can have possessed no defensive function. The Commissioners made this clear in 1920,<sup>1</sup> regarding the Dyke as a mediæval march. The siting of the Dyke seems further to suggest that the march, whatever its period, was closely associated with the Nith above the Drumlanrig gorge,<sup>2</sup> and was designed to include the good land on the right bank of the upper reaches of the river with a property or political unit belonging mainly on the left bank in the same region. The problem is therefore to find an historical situation into which a boundary work of this character would logically fit.

A first consideration is that the work must almost certainly have been planned and executed by some single authority. It would, of course, be both possible and reasonable for the owners of two or more contiguous estates to combine in such an undertaking for the sake of some common advantage, but that they should have done so here, on so comparatively large a scale, seems rather improbable on the whole. This weighs against any attempt to connect the Dyke with the enclosures and agricultural "improvements" that began in the 18th century—an attempt which is difficult in any case in view of the Dyke's lack of resemblance to the ordinary head-dyke of an enclosure, and of the facts that its function is taken over in places by burns and that head-dykes have been built here and there in its close vicinity, as separate structures (*supra*). If then we are to look for a period when the ground through which the Dyke runs was unquestionably in one man's hands, that of the Douglas ascendancy immediately comes to mind—the "Emerald Charter" of 1369 having given to the third Earl of Douglas all the lands of Galloway extending from the Cree to the Nith,<sup>3</sup> while Nithsdale was subsequently granted to his son, Sir William Douglas.<sup>4</sup> But this suggestion, too, is unattractive when looked at closely. It is most difficult to imagine why anyone who already owned the whole right bank of the Nith, as did the beneficiaries of these charters, should have wished to mark off the comparatively small strip defined by the Dyke; the work itself seems, as has been said, to imply much rather a claim by some

<sup>1</sup> R.C.A.M., *Inventory of Dumfriesshire*, p. lvii.

<sup>2</sup> For about four miles below Burnmouth the sides of the valley are steep-to, leaving no cultivable belt along the banks of the river.

<sup>3</sup> *R.M.S.*, 1306-1424, No. 29.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, App. 2, No. 1950. See also R.C.A.M., *Inventory of Dumfriesshire*, p. xxvi.

left-bank proprietor to right-bank ground which might not, without some physical boundary, have been recognized as part of his domain. This same objection would be valid if the construction of the Dyke were attributed not to the Douglas overlords but to the Crichtons of Sanquhar, who appear to have held both Sanquhar and Eliock—the estates on which much, though not the whole, of the Dyke is found—from 1463 until 1593.<sup>1</sup> Nor, on this latter hypothesis, is it easy to account for the westernmost portion of the Dyke; it is true that the western limit of the Crichtons' Sanquhar property is not known, but even if this included the whole of Kirkconnel parish,<sup>2</sup> to the W. of Sanquhar itself, more than 3½ miles of the Dyke would still remain W. of the Ayrshire boundary. Objections like these seem to lie against any attempt to place the construction of the Dyke in the Middle Ages or later.

If, however, we push the inquiry back to before the days of feudal organisation, we find a situation into which a work of this kind would fit a good deal more plausibly. The wars and political tensions of Dark-Age Strathclyde and Galloway are highly obscure but, in so far as this period was one of racial pressures, recurrent warfare and general political instability, it provided conditions in which a chieftain or group might have had good reason to define physically a current territorial claim. It is possible, for example, to think of such a group as Strathclyde Britons, from Douglasdale or the upper Clyde, asserting rights in this region against Northumbrian invaders from southern Dumfriesshire or Galloway. The abrupt end of the Dyke on the Afton Water might further suggest that the claim was bounded on the W. by the lowermost stretch of this stream and, further to the N., by marshy and perhaps impassable ground where a series of lochs now extends north-westwards from New Cumnock. It is not necessary to suppose that such a boundary need have had more than a temporary significance. On this showing the Dyke would be functionally the counterpart though politically the converse of the Catrail, as this latter, the Commissioners have suggested, "may mark the line on which Anglian colonists, pushing up the Teviot from Bernicia, temporarily stabilised their position."<sup>3</sup>

The possible alternative that the Dyke originated at some still earlier period, and was the work of tribesmen of the Early Iron Age, cannot be discussed with profit. We lack the information required to support any theory whatever.

<sup>1</sup> Compare *R.M.S.*, 1306-1424, No. 27; 1424-1513, No. 815; 1593-1608, No. 18. Some part of the Eliock lands seems, however, to have been alienated by the Crichtons before 1574, as it was the subject of a transaction between other parties recorded in a charter of that date (*ibid.*, 1593-1608, No. 483). See also *R.C.A.M.*, *Inventory of Dumfriesshire*, p. 191.

<sup>2</sup> On which, for a much later period, see *Stat. Acc.*, x (1794), p. 453 (n).

<sup>3</sup> *R.C.A.M.*, *Inventory of Roxburghshire*, p. 483.