

### III.

NOTICE OF THE FORT ON CAIRBY HILL, AND OTHER ANTIQUITIES IN LIDDLESDALE, IN A LETTER TO MR STUART, SEC. S.A. SCOT. BY THE REV. JOHN MAUGHAN, A.B., RECTOR OF BEWCASTLE, CUMB.

The remains, which occupy the site called Cairby Hill, cover a very high conical eminence, with a steep, and in some parts a rugged ascent. The site leads one at once to suppose that it had been selected by the original occupiers not only as a place of safety, but from aspirations to the home beyond the skies. The position is one of very great strength, and commands an extensive view on all sides. The conical high hill rises with a very steep incline of about 300 or 400 yards from the summit of a high ridge of ground formed by the junction of the rivers Liddle and Kershope—the latter river forming the present boundary between England and Scotland. The Kershope forms a deep narrow glen or gorge on the south side of Cairby Hill, and is one of the wildest passes of the Borders. On the north side of Cairby Hill is Liddesdale, so celebrated in Border history! The etymology of the word Cairby Hill is significant of its original purport. The word, “caer,” leads to the presumption that it was at first “a city” of the ancient Celto-British. This assumes a prehistoric occupation of the country. The word “by” leads to the inference that it was afterwards occupied by the Norsemen, of whom we find so many traces in this district. It may also be observed that the ancient name is

<sup>1</sup> Reg. de Arbroath, pp. 40, 162.

<sup>2</sup> Cronykil; vol. i. p. 174.

still retained in the word "Kershope," or "Kersop," the modern name of the farm in which it is situated. The remains now consist of an irregular circle of loose stones, most of them of small size. This circle is about 100 yards in diameter, from four to five yards broad, and has no appearance of mortar of any kind, although there is abundance of lime and other materials in the district, thus raising an hypothesis that our Celtic forefathers were ignorant of the use and importance of these materials in the construction of their fortresses and other dwellings. In this outer circle there are four gateways, each of them opposite to one of the four cardinal points of the compass; and within this curtain rampart we find twelve smaller circles of loose stones, the largest of them about 30 feet in diameter. These we may assume to have been the dwelling-houses of the principal families; in other words, the barracks of the fortress. This construction has a striking resemblance to the descriptions given by Diodorus Cæsar, and other early historians of the houses in Britain. In the smaller circles the ring is now perfect and unbroken, as if they had been originally without doors at the bottom, a hole higher up serving the purposes of chimney and window as well as a doorway. This peculiarity of configuration, I believe, closely corresponds with the accounts given by former historians of the want of all social comforts in these dark abodes of the ancient Celts. The site of this city is founded on a rock, as the crags rise above the surface in several parts of the interior, and sometimes form a floor to the house. Hundreds of cart-loads of stones were led away, about forty years ago, to build the stone walls of the adjacent fields, so that there is now nothing more than the mere debris of the rampart by which the city was surrounded and defended. The fortress in its general appearance resembles the British cities of Ingleborough, Carn-Engley, Birdhope, Wool-law, Carrock-fell, and the celebrated Arthur's Round Table. The works on Cairby Hill are supposed by many in the district to be Roman, but I can find no Roman vestige about them. Some even attribute them to Michael Scott and his satanic agent. In my opinion, everything bears a decided British impress, and hence I assume their British origin. The historians already mentioned, whose authority on such a question cannot be doubted, tell us that the cities of the ancient Britons were generally erected on some almost inaccessible hill or promontory, and a better site than Cairby Hill

could not have been selected in this district,—none which commands a more extensive prospect. On the slope of the hill, at the distance of about 400 yards, is a green flat eminence called the “battle-knowe,” where, it is said, a severe battle was fought in former times, but of which I can learn no particulars. At the foot of Cairby Hill lies the “dayholm of Kershope,” Mangerton, Stonegarthside, and Whithaugh Towers, and many other places of cherished memory in the border lore of Liddesdale and Kershope.

The works on Kirkhill occupy the summit of another high and conical eminence on the north side of the river Liddle, about three miles from Cairby Hill, and directly opposite to it. This relic is merely a dyke or rampart of earth and stone, and nearly circular—now covered with green turf. It has been formed by the materials thrown up in forming the deep ditch by which it is surrounded. There is also a smaller ditch within. The circle is about 100 yards in diameter, and in some places about 10 or 12 feet high. A modern stone wall runs through the centre of the enclosure from east to west, and the hill falls away from each side of the wall, giving the enclosure an oval appearance, although it is in reality very nearly, if not quite circular. There has been an entrance on the south side, and the ditches have been discontinued here. This circle probably belonged to the Druidical system of religion,—a circular temple of considerable size dedicated to the worship of Apollo, or the Sun. It resembles Maybrough, near Penrith; and they may have been two minor temples, connected with Long Meg, the mother church of the district. The modern name leads to the inference that the original design of these remains was a place of sepulture and religious worship. “Kirk” is probably a corruption of the words “cir” and “rock”—“a circle of stones”—denoting and referring to the form of construction adopted by the ancient Druids. On the slope of the hill, but considerably lower down, we find the groundworks of Ettleton Chapel, where there is a place of sepulture still generally used as a burial-place by the inhabitants of the district, who, becoming wiser in their generation, have chosen the more accessible place as the last home of their departed friends. In Ettleton kirkyard were deposited the remains of the Lord of Mangerton, whose murder was so foul a blot on the chivalry of *Hermitage*. The cross of Lord Mangerton is still standing at the foot of the

hill, a little way below the kirkyard of Ettlleton. On the south-western slope of Kirkhill are the groundworks of the dwelling-place of the notorious Jock o' the Side, whose exploits form so conspicuous a portion of Border history. Although neither the cromlech, nor the pedestal for the Deity, are now to be found in the circle at Kirkhill, yet I find a sort of ancient tradition that there was once a cromlech somewhere in this locality, although the precise site cannot now be pointed out. The ring of the circle is now much lower and smaller than it was, as a great quantity of its stones have been carted away to build the adjacent fences; and I think it not unlikely that for some such vile and inferior purpose the cromlech or gravestone, which was here originally raised to commemorate the burial-place of some distinguished Celtic chieftain, has been broken up and desecrated. From the accounts given us by Diodorus Siculus of the circular temples in which Apollo was worshipped by the ancient Druids, I am induced to suppose that the circle on Kirkhill was once not only a place of sepulture, but a temple in a complete state, associated with all the mysterious legends of a complicated mythology, and endowed with all the usual privileges of the sanctuary.

The Flight Camp is situated on a large flat moorland about three or four miles higher up the river Liddle than Kirkhill or Cairby Hill. The site is low, but commands an extensive prospect. It is probably the camp to which Stuart alludes in the "Caledonia Romana." The groundworks of the modern Border towers, called Flight Castle and Clintwood Castle, are a few hundred yards on the south-west and south-east of it—all in the parish of Castleton. The camp is a small square, strongly fortified, about 50 yards in the outside. It consists of a wide ditch, with a rampart on each side of it, the interior of the camp being about 40 yards square. Many of the later Border fortresses resemble it in form, and it may possibly have served as a model to succeeding builders. It is doubtful whether the exterior rampart has been anything more than a mound formed by the materials obtained in digging the fosse, but the interior rampart has evidently been formed of stone, and is now of an average height of 6 feet. The whole fortress is now covered with a thick deposit of green vegetation. The ditch and outer rampart are not very distinct on the north side, but the other sides still forcibly remind us of the strength of the Roman prætenture. This camp is frequently

called the "threshing-floor," and the tradition of the district says that the people of Liddlesdale used to bring all their corn here to be thrashed. From this tradition we may suppose that if a search were made, and the soil removed, a stone floor at least, if not some superior pavement, would still be found, a valuable record of the works of the Romans.

The other camp is situated to the north-west of the Flight Camp, on that part of the Dyke Row Farm, called Aislie Moor, and close upon the river Liddle. It is a short way above the old castle at Castleton, which I think has been the site of a large Roman station, to which these two minor camps have originally belonged. It is about 100 yards north of the turnpike-road leading from Castleton to Jedburgh, and close to a shepherd's cottage called Florida. This fort appears to have been similar in form and construction to the Flight Camp, and perhaps a little larger, but to what extent it is impossible now to ascertain, in consequence of the encroachments of the river. The fosse and ramparts have not been so broad as those at Flight, and its interior would in consequence be more commodious. It occupies a very commanding position, having the deep glen of the Liddle, with its rugged and precipitous banks on the north, and the deep glen of the Harden burn on the west. On the east and south sides the ground is nearly level, and on these sides the vestiges of the works are still distinct, but fast becoming obliterated by modern cultivation. In the centre and north side of the camp is a plantation, in which the traces of the fosse and ramparts are very visible and perfect. The north side has been washed away. In 1685, Claverhouse pitched his camp, it is said, on Aislie Moor during his residence in Liddlesdale, and very possibly his soldiers may have occupied the camp which previously was garrisoned by the Roman cohorts.