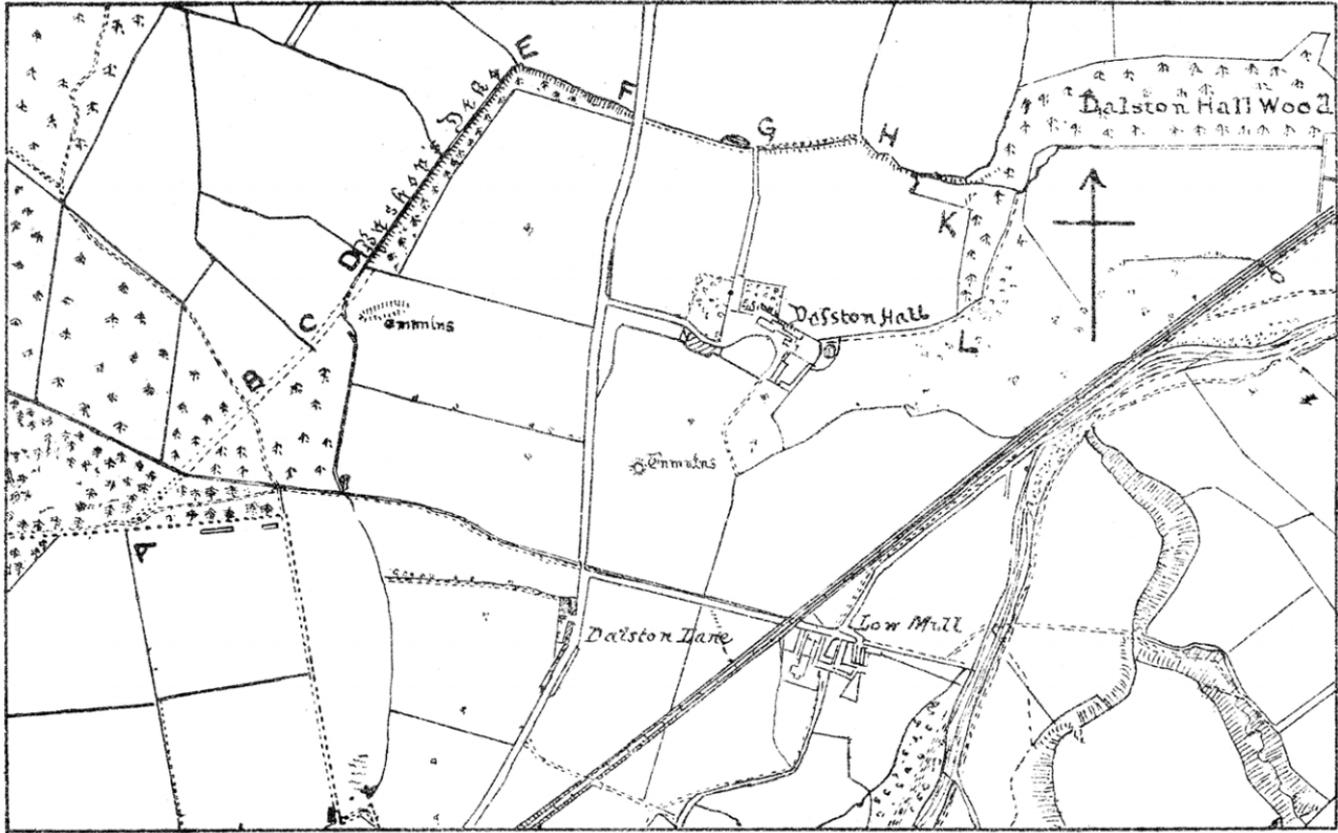


THE BISHOP'S DYKE.

From the Ordnance Map.



1000 FEET 500 1000

ART. XXII.—*The Bishop's Dyke, Dalston; Barras Gate, Dalston; the Bishop's Dyke, Crosby.* By R. S. FERGUSON.
Read at the first of those places, August 22, 1883.

I N Whelan's History of Cumberland is the following confused statement, which does not appear in the earlier histories, and which has long excited my curiosity:—

In the rich vale of Dalston there was a large earthen embankment, called a bar, or barrow, extending from Dalston Hall to Cumdevoek, a distance of three miles, raised for the purpose of protection against the moss troopers. Near this embankment several 'bar houses' were erected, and occupied by people, whose duty it was, on the approach of the enemy, to give an alarm by the ringing of bells and blowing of trumpets, on the sound of which the inhabitants drove their cattle, &c., behind for safety.

The ordnance map marks, near Dalston Hall, but on the opposite side of the Dalston and Carlisle road, an elbow-shaped earthwork, to which it gives the name of the Bishop's Dyke. On the map are the suggestive names of Barras Lane, Barras Gate, and Barras Brow, all near Dalston Station; and there is Barras Oak near Hawksdale Lodge. Until this spring, I had always taken Whelan's "bar" or "barrow" and the Bishop's Dyke to be the same thing, or, at least, one the continuance of the other; but I could never connect on the map the Bishop's Dyke, the places I have named, and Cumdevoek into anything like a line of defence against moss troopers, or anybody else; nor could I find out that this "bar" or "barrow" was the line of demarcation between any estates, townships, manors, or parishes. With a view to solving the problems thus raised in my mind, I paid two or three visits to the Bishop's Dyke, and, assisted by Mr. W. Nanson, I succeeded in tracing it at either end for a considerable distance beyond what is marked in the ordnance map. I also discovered that, misled by Whelan, I had fallen into his error of
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confounding together two distinct things, though they do happen to coincide in some way—namely, the Bishop's Dyke, and Whelan's "bar" or "barrow."

As we are now assembled on the Bishop's Dyke,* I will, for convenience, deal with it first.

Except on the ordnance map, no printed mention exists, to my knowledge, of the Bishop's Dyke; but Miss Kuper has kindly furnished the following extract from the Dalston registers, which proves the name not to be modern:—

"1576 December 19, John Smith, of the age of 10 years was found dead upon ye Bishop's Dike."

This earthwork, as marked in the ordnance map, runs along the west and north sides of a field [DEF on the map], whose east side is bounded by the Carlisle and Dalston road, and whose gate is opposite to the entrance gate to Dalston Hall. The dyke or earthwork consists of a *terre plein*—i.e., a platform, or level ground, on either side of which is a mound of earth, and outside of each mound is a deep ditch. I shall call the mound and ditch nearest to Dalston Hall the inner mound and ditch; the other mound and ditch the outer. The *terre plein*, where the earthwork crosses the Dalston and Carlisle road [at F], is about thirty-one feet in breadth; at the opposite corner of the field, the south-west corner [at D], it is eighty feet. Trees and brushwood cover the *terre plein*, and here and there are the roots of huge oaks—old monarchs of the Forest of Cumberland. The outer mound is about four feet high, and ten feet broad at the base, and rises very steeply from its ditch; the inner mound is about two feet high, by four broad at the base. These mounds have been much reduced by age and denudation.

Mr. Nanson and I first sought for the continuation of this work on the east side of the Dalston and Carlisle road. In the field next to the road we found the outer ditch and

* A small portion of the ordnance map, shewing the Bishop's Dyke is given with this page.

mound .

mound had become the ditch and hedge of the field [F to G], and in the hedge were the stumps of very old oaks. The inner ditch and mound have been levelled, and with the *terre plein* taken into cultivation; but old trees in the cross hedges mark the breadth of the work. This same condition continued across half of the top of the second field from the road [G to H]; then we got both mounds and ditches in a plantation. At the corner of this field the work turns at a right angle to the south. Shortly after this angle, the outer mound and ditch disappear, and are replaced by a noble row of beech trees on a terrace [K to L] overlooking the valley of the Caldew. The *terre plein* in the plantation and along the beech trees is about fifteen feet broad. At the end of the row of beech trees all trace ceases. The earthwork cannot have descended the hill to the river; it probably turned at right angles, and run up to the east end of Dalston Hall.

Being unable to trace it farther at this end, we returned to the field we first mentioned, and endeavoured to trace it from the south-west corner [D]. The inner mound and inner ditch cease in a cultivated field. An old tree seemed to indicate that they ran across the west end of what is marked on the map as a long barrow, but there all trace ceases. The outer mound and ditch become a hedge and ditch, and then cross a rough bit of low-lying ground, once a swamp, assuming the form of a broad low mound between two ditches [C to B]; the mound being very indistinct, but the ditches shewing as lines of rushes. It next enters Sowerby wood, and crosses an angle of the wood as a huge mound of earth with a ditch on each side [B to A], and in the arable land [at A] it vanishes, nor could we find further trace of it.

Roughly speaking, this earthwork may be said [see the map] to start from the east end of Dalston Hall, to run east for about three hundred yards; then to turn at a right angle and run north for the same distance; to turn again at a
right

right angle and to run westward in a not very straight line for about the third of a mile, and then to go off in a south-west direction for half a mile, and then to vanish. The inclosure map of Dalston shews that on the west and north sides [DEF] of the field we first mentioned the inner mound and ditch define the old Dalston enclosures. Along the west side of the field [DE] the outer mound and ditch define one side of another old enclosure, the Lingyclose Head enclosure, and so along the west side of the field the *terre plein* forms a mark between these two old enclosures. This seems to point to its being older than the enclosures.

What has been the use of this earthwork? I cannot see my way to any definite opinion. I can say what it is not. It is not the sod wall of the deer-park to Dalston Hall—a conjecture I have heard made. So elaborate a work was never made merely to keep deer within bounds. It is not the boundary of the manor of Little Dalston, another conjecture that is often made, for part of Little Dalston lies nearer Carlisle. It is too complicated a work for a mere manorial boundary. A friend suggests that it is a military work, and hints that Dalston has claims to be the scene of the battle of Dægsanton, where Ethelfrith and the Northumbrians defeated in 603 the Scots and Britons. Although I fain would prove Dalston to be Dægsa'stone, I cannot forget that great historians put Dægsa-stone at Dawson in Lid-desdale.

All the conclusion I can formulate is that the work is very old—older than anything else, except the tumuli near Dalston Hall. I cannot tell why it is called the Bishop's Dyke, for I think it is older than the bishopric.

I regret that our arrangements do not permit of taking the Society to Barras Gate, which is just on the other side of Dalston railway station. If you drive from here to Dalston station, and then went on, leaving the station to your right and crossing the line, you would go by Barras Lane to Barras Gate at the foot of Barras Brow, which is
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further from Dalston than the gate. On my visit this at once struck me as a very singular place. At the gate the lane, which up to this point is very narrow, suddenly, and without apparent reason, widens to forty feet. Buebank Lane runs into it from the south-west a few yards north of the widening, and at a very acute angle, and this angle is cut off from the field between the two lanes by an old hedge-row, thus forming an odd-shaped triangular little bit of land, whose *raison d'être* at first puzzled me very much. However I took the six-inch ordnance map to the Court Houses, Carlisle, and compared it with the map attached to the award made on the enclosure of Dalston Common in 1806. Then the thing became apparent; the old hedge is a bit of the hedge that contained the enclosed lands round the village of Dalston, and separated them from the wild common, which surrounded them on every side. The narrow lane, Barras Lane, leads from the village through the old enclosures, and was thence continued over the open common to Neilhouse Bar. At Barras Gate there would be a gate, or bar across the road, to keep the cattle on the common from straying into the village. This hedge is Whelan's "bar," though Whelan has transferred the name from the gate to the hedge, and magnified it into a "barrow." The widening at the gate or bar is accounted for by the fact that the surveyors, who laid out the roads across the common in 1806, laid them all out forty feet wide. The little triangular bit of common between the two lanes they assigned to the owner of the field between those lanes, who let the fence go down, though he did not stubb it up. The road over the common is described in the award as "from Dalston Bar to Neilhouse Bar," and there was, no doubt, a similar bar or gate at the point, where one left the open common to enter the enclosures round the hamlet of Neilhouse. Such a bar can now be seen at the entrance to Burgh Marsh from the village of Burgh, and again on leaving the Marsh at the hamlet of Drumburgh. Other instances exist near Askerton
Castle,

Castle, and also near West Water. They must have been of very frequent occurrence before the general enclosure of commons at the end of the last century and the beginning of this. One called "Clemson's bar" was on the road from Carlisle to Dalston, where it entered on the Carlisle and Cummersdale Moor. There would be another where it left the moor for the Dalston enclosures. The Barras Oak probably marks the bar between the Hawksdale enclosures and Hawksdale Common. The ordnance map marks a "Barras Gate" at the north of the village of Orton, and the inhabitants point out the site of one called the "Fauld Gate" on the east side. The oak tree, to which the iron chain closing the "Fauld Gate" was hooked, was cut down in living memory. These two "Gates" at Orton mark the entrances from Orton Common to the enclosed lands.*

Whelan's account is one of confusion and ignorance. The writer was writing about what he had never seen, and certainly did not understand. He makes the "bar" or hedge a military work for a "protection against the incursions of the moss troopers." But a work intended for such a purpose would be put at the top of Barras Brow, not at the bottom. A watcher at Barras Gate could not see the moss troopers until they were actually on the top of him. I do not deny that the "bar" or hedge was a protection against moss troopers. A well-kept thorn hedge or ditch might possibly not turn a "stark moss-trooping Scot," but Will of Deloraine himself would find it no easy job to drive a dozen fat beasts out where he got in, through or over a stiff hedge. The moss troopers would have to come in and out at the bars, and at the bars good gates and iron chains, and a fellow with a bell would do good service.

The inclosure map of Dalston is a most suggestive docu-

* The village of Orton well merits the attention of anyone who is anxious about Teutonic settlements. The long narrow fields point to the land having been in "*rig and reann*," and that itself points to a time when the Teutonic inhabitants of Orton cultivated their land in common; when it was in fact the property of the village community, and not of individuals.

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ment. One can imagine in the "Old Inclosure" marked thereon round Dalston the "ton" of the early Teutonic settler, his assart, or clearing in the Forest of Cumberland, fenced in with a good hedge and ditch, sufficient no doubt to turn a wild beast. Beyond is the wild common, where lurked the wolf and wild boar, the red deer and the roe. The common is the Teutonic "mark" that parted the "ton" of Dalston from the "ton" of Orton, which "mark" our superstitious ancestors reckoned accursed and peopled with monsters and dragons, and wood spirits and fire-drakes. We see on the map the narrow slip of common, now curtailed to Buebank Lane, that was the "mark" between the Dalston and Cumdevoek enclosures, thus accounting for the notion that the "bar" ran to Cumdevoek. It would be no impossible thing to trace out from old maps and old hedges the "marks" between all the townships of Dalston parish. The inclosure map of Dalston is an epitome of English history. Looking at it one can imagine the original assarts, the "tons" swelling out until the lessening "marks" between them become mere strips of common; then the "tons" coalesce and become a parish; parishes coalesce into higher organisations, and the intermediate commons are enclosed, and the "marks" once reckoned "accursed" gleam with golden harvest.

On the other side of Carlisle is another Bishop's Dyke, which separates the parish of Irthington from the parish of Crosby, or, which is the same thing, separates the barony of Gilsland from the Bishop's Manor of Crosby. This is called the Bishop's Dyke in "The field book y^t explains all the Map Book for Gilsland Taken in 1603." It is also called the Baron's Dyke. In the Ordnance map it appears as Barras Dyke, and the country people call it Bar Dyke, and know it as separating the two parishes, between which, for the length of the dyke, there is no natural boundary. It seems to run from the Roman road, near Highfield Moor House, to Newby, a distance of
about

about two miles. It consisted of a trench with earth thrown out on either side, so as to form two parallel mounds. On the north side of the military road, from Carlisle to Newcastle, a hedge occupies the mound on the Irthington side, and the trench becomes a big ditch draining the White Moss, through which it runs. On the south side of the road, Mr. Little of Watch Cross has, during this year, brought under the plough, and obliterated a great length of the dyke on land he has recently bought. From his account and from a visit I found that the dyke, *i.e.*, the two mounds, the trench, covered about 14 feet in breadth. Mr. Little considered the trench was a road, though he knew its use and value as a boundary.
