



On Agricola's Engagement with the Caledonians, under their Leader, Galgacus.

From R. Barclay, Esq; of Urie, to the Earl of Buchan.

MY LORD,

I HAD the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Lordship's letter. Since that time I have been at the camp at *Raedykes*, but could not take an exact measure of it, on account of the depth of the snow. As soon as the ground is clear, I will send to your Lordship an exact plan of it. I suppose, it contains about an hundred acres; but this is conjecture. At present, I transmit to your Lordship a rude sketch of the country near it, which, if it can be understood, will convey the ideas I have formed with respect to the progress of the army of some invader, who, I suppose was Roman, as the camp here described could not, I think, be Danish, English, or Scottish. I suppose the Roman army to have proceeded

eastward through *Strathmore*, and the hollow of the *Mearns* to the coast, by the dotted line A, which crosses the rivulet of Carron Q, which runs past *Fetteressoe* R *, till they arrived at a place called *Arduthy*, half a mile from *Stonehaven* O, where there is clearly the remains of a camp at the letter B. This camp was, in my memory, much more distinct than at present, great part of it having been destroyed by the agriculture of the country. It is situated upon an eminence, with a precipice to the north, and is about a quarter of a mile from the sea, which I mark P P P, and about half a mile from *Stonehaven*, which I mark O. From this camp at B, I suppose the Romans proceeded north-eastward, crossing the rivulet of *Cowie* X X, which runs past *Ury* at S †, still keeping the dotted line A, along a smooth bank and a plain heath to C, which is a point where *three morasses* nearly meet at V V V, and the only rout they could take in their progress northward by the coast, and not far from the present post-road at N N. At this pass, I suppose they were opposed by the *Caledonians*, upon the *Kempstonehill* at I, which is dotted with almost innumerable small heaps of stones, and likewise three very large ones at L L L, called *Cairns*. There is likewise, at the two crosses at K K, *two stones* standing on end, at the distance of about an hundred yards from each other, and about ten feet high, without any inscription. In each of these large cairns several stone coffins have been found, about four feet long; and in the inside small urns, containing a little earth. I have dug to the foundations of many of the small heaps, but never found either bones or urns. Their numbers and appearance with that of the large cairns, and the urns found in them, leave not the least room to doubt but a battle has been fought in that place; and, from the disposition of the tumuli, it appears clear, that they who made the attack must have come from the south, and prevailed. If we suppose the Roman army to have marched from the camp at B, by the dotted

* The ancient seat of the Earl Marischall.

† The seat of Mr Barclay.

ted line A, and that they were obliged to pass between the morasses at C, it is impossible the Caledonians could have occupied a more favourable spot to oppose them, than the south side of the *Kempstonehill*. By extending their flanks to the two morasses, they were absolutely secure every where, excepting in front. I suppose the Roman General to have prevailed, and the Caledonians to have been driven to the woods and bogs (now mosses) in the neighbourhood, which continue for miles, at V V V V V, and at that time is supposed to have been all woods. The Roman General might, for various reasons, have been unable to pursue the advantages he had gained, and chosen to encamp upon the *Garniobill*, or *Raedykis*, at D, which is about two miles from the former place, and an eminence which commands a prospect of the whole neighbourhood. There is a clear passage to it by the dotted line at the letter A. This camp, as I observed before, contains, as I suppose, about one hundred acres, has several gates, three of which are here described at F F F, and covered by three redoubts at G G G, with an advanced post at H. There is a *Druid temple* to the north-west, at E. The line of circumvallation is rather slight, excepting to the east, where the ditch is very deep, and the rampart formed by the earth high, and fronts the bogs, which have been woods, at V V V, where the enemy seem to have retired. There are many reasons to suppose this camp to have been Roman: It is situated in the east end of the Grampian Hills, which here continue to the sea, at U U U; it is the *easiest part* where these mountains could be *passed*; and appears to be the camp of an invader, who has proceeded eastward, through *Strathmore*, towards the sea, as, I am informed, three camps nearly of the same form have been discovered betwixt Perth and this place. It is not probable that a Danish army should have taken that rout; neither are these camps formed like those of the ancient Danes. It is not likely that Edward I. or Edward III. of England, made those camps; and we are pretty certain, they are not the work of any

invader since that time. It has, indeed, been suggested, that the camp at *Raedykes* was the station of a *Scottish* army, to oppose the landing of *Danes*, who afterwards encamped at B; and that they were attacked and defeated by the Scottish army. Of this there is a faint tradition in the country, but blended with so many incredible circumstances, as to render it very improbable. We have no historical account that an army of *Danes* landed in this neighbourhood. Their piratical excursions did not commence till the ninth century, when they were taught navigation by the fugitive Saxons, who were forced across the Weafer by Charlemagne. Indeed, one of our Kings, who, I think, was called *Indulph*, is said to have followed a Danish squadron northward, which afterwards landed near *Cullen*, in the country of Boyn, where a battle was fought; but no historians mention, that those *Danes* landed upon this part of the coast; and it is very unlikely, that *Indulph*, in his own dominions, should have taken the trouble to make entrenchments in his way north. Several Roman weapons have been found in this camp, particularly a *hasta* and *helmet*; the *hasta* my grandfather presented to the Faculty of Advocates at Edinburgh, in whose museum it now is. It can hardly be supposed, that a Scottish army who opposed the *Danes* could have had Roman weapons, which must have been kept more than four hundred years, as the last of the Romans left Britain in the fifth century; and there is no account of any landing of *Danes* before the ninth century.

Upon the whole, fairly stating all circumstances, particularly, that this camp at *Ardutby* is situated upon the north-east end of the *Grampian* Hills, where these mountains could be easily crossed, and likewise near the sea, where a land army could have communication with the fleet, and where the ground was so plain that chariots could have acted; I do suppose the *Kempstonehill* to have been the place where *Galgacus* was defeated by *Agricola*. It could not be at the camp at *Raedykes*, because there is not the least vestige of an engagement

agement at that place, nor upon the Hill of *Glithno*, at W W, nor the Hill of *Megray*, at T, which have no tumuli. Add to these circumstances, that Tacitus informs us, that, after the engagement, *Agricola* led his army into *Horestiam*, which, I think, every antiquarian supposes to be the county of *Angus*. It is likely, that the Romans, some time or other, extended their conquests as far north as the Murray Firth; but it is probable, they abandoned those advantages in the Winter, for reasons that appear perfectly clear. It does not seem to have been of importance sufficient for them to have defended, at a great expence, a narrow track of coast against the natives; and, to confirm this idea, I have not heard of any Roman military way that has been discovered so far north as this. These military ways seem to have been absolutely necessary where there were winter stations, because they formed a communication from one to another. Those I have seen are so raised above the common surface of the grounds, that they generally keep clearer of snow than any other place; and a small number of well armed and well disciplined men could, upon these ways, have easily defended themselves against very superior numbers of barbarians. I have the honour to be, MY LORD, your Lordship's, &c.