

III.

THE EARLY CASTLES OF MAR. (FIRST PAPER.)

BY W. DOUGLAS SIMPSON, M.A., D.LITT., F.S.A. SCOT.

I. INTRODUCTORY.

The ancient Province of Mar comprised the district between the rivers Dee and Don, with the upper and middle basins of both these streams,¹ including the north bank of the Don as far eastward as the western boundary of the parish of Inverurie, and the south bank of the Dee down to the Water of Feugh.² In upper Deeside the watershed of the Tanner and the Esk divided Mar from Angus;³ in middle Deeside, from very early times the parish of Banchory-Ternan, bounded westward by the Water of Canny and to the east by the parish of Drumoak, formed a broad salient of Mearns on the north bank of the river. In upper Donside, where a sweep of open country extends northward from Kildrummy into "fair Strathbogie land," the march separating Mar from Strathbogie appears to have been usually, and finally, drawn on the parochial boundary between Clova and Auchindoir, but in certain early writs Auchindoir is included in the parish of Kildrummy. Further east, the parishes of Kearn and Clatt, with the strong castle of Drumminor, are variously described as belonging to Mar and to the Garioch, but seem more frequently to have been counted in the latter.⁴ In this connection the name Marchmar, borne by a farm on the western underslope of Badingair Hill, in the now combined parish of Auchindoir and Kearn, appears to be suggestive.⁵ One old authority, however, tells us specifically how it was considered by some that the Garioch "was bounded to the west by the small burn that runs hard by Castle Forbes [Drumminor], making Castle

¹ "*Marræ pars inferior, quæ oceano propinquior, Dona et Dea fluminibus coerctur; in superioribus, extra illa exspatiatur, longitudine insignis, latitudine impar*"—Robert Gordon of Straloch, *Præfecturarum Aberdonensis et Banfiensis Nova Descriptio* (A.D. 1654), in *Collections on the Shires of Aberdeen and Banff*, p. 24. "'Tis bounded at first with rivers (Dee and Don) for about fifteen miles upward, and after that with mountains"—"View of the Diocese of Aberdeen," by A. Keith (1732), *ibid.*, p. 83.

² "*Hic primum Marræ Deam litem trahet*"—Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

³ "*Post hanc, Tanerus amnis Deam subit, ortus e iugis montium qui Angusiæ et Marræ limites faciunt*"—*ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴ "*Hic loci Marræ, catenam montium supergressa, parochiam Clat, arcemque Drumminor, cum latifundiis Baronis Parliamentarii de Forbes, subtrahere videtur Gariochiæ et Strath-Bogiæ*"—*ibid.*, p. 27.

⁵ See A. Jervise, *Epitaphs and Inscriptions from Old Burial Grounds and Old Buildings in the North-East of Scotland*, vol. ii. p. 211.

Forbes and all above it a part of Marr, and not of the Garioch."¹ The sea-coast of Mar was limited to the two miles of sandy beach between the mouths of the Dee and the Don,² containing the royal burgh of Aberdeen, with its castle and harbour—"bone chastelle et bone ville sur la meer,"³ as it is described in Edward Ist's itinerary of 1296. Mar, says one old writer, "is reckoned the chief district in all Aberdeenshire, both as it is the largest, as it contains the seat both of the ecclesiastic and civil judge, and as the people in it are reckoned the most ingenious, excelling both in arts and arms. Hence it is said by one of our poets (John Barclay):

‘*Marria sic amata Musis*
‘Mar by all the Muses loved’;

and again in a common rhyme:

‘The brave bowmen of Mar.’

And on these accounts it is that even the whole shire is sometimes called the shire of Mar."⁴

The dimensions of the Province are thus given: "It is reckoned sixty miles long, though inhabited but about forty miles upwards; and in the lower parts, while it is bounded with the two rivers, eight, in the upper parts almost sixteen broad."⁵ This enormous area of country was administratively divided in medieval times into five great lordships, each with its capital messuage. The Lordship of Braemar included the Dee valley west of the Gairn, and its capital messuage was the important castle of Kindrochit. The Lordship of Cromar⁶ comprised the remarkable basin of flat country, known as the Howe of Cromar,

¹ "Description of the Garioch," by Mr Gordon, Minister at Alford, 1724, and Mr William Robertson, in *Macfarlane's Geographical Collections*, ed. Sir A. Mitchell, vol. i. p. 12.

² "Marr, lying between the rivers Dee and Don, hath about two miles of sea-coast"—"Description of Aberdeenshire," by Sir Samuel Forbes of Foveran, *Collections on the Shires of Aberdeen and Banff*, p. 34.

³ *Historical Documents Relating to Scotland*, ed. J. Stevenson, vol. ii. p. 29.

⁴ "View of the Diocese of Aberdeen" in *Collections, ut supra*, pp. 81-2. The poem quoted is by William Barclay, M.D. (circa 1570-circa 1630), not by John Barclay.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 83-4.

⁶ Mr F. C. Diack, M.A., Aberdeen, has kindly supplied the following note on the name Cromar. "The Gaelic original of English 'Cromar' is still available in living speech in Braemar and Strathspey, the form I heard being *Crò-Mharr*, literally '(sheep) fold of Mar.' The point of applying 'sheepfold' in a metaphorical way to the district is readily apparent; the reference is to the resemblance which the area, a more or less level plain almost entirely surrounded by hills, bears to the object. A similar case is the *Crò* of Kintail in West Ross. Mar itself is in Gaelic *Marr*, often written and pronounced *Màrr*; the long vowel however is not original, but is due to the long liquid. In Braemar and Strathspey the pronunciation with short vowel and long liquid is heard. The origin of the word is obscure; presumably it is a tribal name, and, in view of the genitive *Mair* in the *Annals of Ulster*, 1014, originally a divinity name. The stem *mar*—, 'last, endure,' is to be thought of."

centering on Tarland and Migvie: it also extended across the Morven-Culblean ridge as far as Glengairn.¹ Its capital messuage was Migvie Castle. The Lordship of Midmar was rather more vaguely defined, but included the district between the Don and the Dee in their middle courses, around Skene and Echt and behind the Hill of Fare, with its capital messuage at Midmar Castle. In the Lordship of Strathdon was included upper Donside west of the Den of Kildrummy; its capital messuage was the Doune of Invernochty. The Lordship of Strathdee, based on Aboyne Castle, was formed by the upper middle reach of the Dee, east of Braemar and south of Cromar. All these five pivotal castles, together with the main castle of the Earldom at Kildrummy, are known to have been in existence in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

In early Celtic times Mar formed one of the Seven Provinces of Alba;² and its Mormaeors are on record from 1014, in which year Domnall, son of Emhin, son of Cainnech, Mormaeor of Mar, fell at the battle of Clontarf.³ In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries these Mormaeors appear to have cordially espoused the Normanising policy carried out in Church and State with such prevision, vigour, tenacity, and fruitful success by the powerful and large-minded kings of the House of Canmore: and, in so far as we can judge, the process of converting the ancient Province of Mar into a feudal earldom, with all that this involved in local administrative and ecclesiastical readjustments, was accomplished, if not altogether smoothly, yet without any fierce or sustained resistance on the part of the Celtic inhabitants. The sole documentary hint of trouble which has reached us appears to be a note by Hector Boece to the effect that Gilbert de Sterling, Bishop of Aberdeen from 1228 to 1239, had to recover Birse and Clova from "wicked Highlanders"; and that a later bishop, Richard Poiton or de Pottocht (1256-70), had similar trouble with the "Highlanders of Cloueth and Murthlac."⁴ Here we may guess that the special cause of irritation lay in the status of the ancient Celtic monasteries of Mortlach and Clova, founded in the sixth century by St Moluag from Lismore. By the year 1150 the monastery of Mortlach had been suppressed, and its property applied for the use of the newly established see of Aberdeen.⁵ Early in the next century the subordinate monastery of Clova also

¹ "Post Gardini amnis ostia tractus est Cromarr dictus"—Gordon, *ut supra*, p. 25. Cf. Sir Robert Douglas, *Baronage of Scotland*, 1798, p. 555: "Culblein, which hill is the boundary, and divides Cromar from Braemar."

² See W. F. Skene, *Celtic Scotland*, bk. iii. chap. 2.

³ *Annals of Ulster*, ed. W. M. Hennessy, vol. i. pp. 534-5.

⁴ *Hectoris Boetii Murthilacensium et Aberdonensium Episcoporum Vitæ*, ed. J. Moir, pp. 11, 14.

⁵ *Registrum Episcopatus Aberdonensis*, vol. i. p. xix.

appears to have been suppressed, and its revenues doubtless were made available to organise a parish of Clova, the church of which was dedicated to St Luke, probably chosen deliberately because of the resemblance of his name to that of Mo-luag, particularly when the honorific prefix is omitted—the form which is Latinised as Luanus or Lugadius. It would seem that the inhabitants of Mortlach and Clova resented these changes: certain it is that at the latter place they resisted all efforts to obliterate the memory of their ancient patron, and right down into the eighteenth century they and “all the northern Parishes” frequented “Sommiluaks Chappel,” and drew near with veneration to “Simmerluaks Well.”¹

At Kildrummy Castle itself there is, as I pointed out last year,² some evidence that the ditch outside was dug before the stone curtain walls and towers were begun. Such a procedure may well have been due, as I suggested then, to the immediate need of securing a defensive enclosure for the workmen and materials; and this may perhaps be taken as another hint of local opposition. But on a broad view it seems clear that Mar under its Mormaeors, henceforward to be styled Earls, aligned itself, quickly and easily enough, with the new regime; and took its position as the northern bastion of royal power against the implacably hostile Pictish Province of Moravia—the district beyond the Spey whose strident discord was to form a main preoccupation of Scottish monarchs, from the reign of Malcolm I. onwards,³ until decisive measures for its reduction (leading incidentally to the building of the present castle of Kildrummy) were taken by Bishop Gilbert de Moravia on behalf of King Alexander II. The building of Kildrummy Castle, in my opinion, is not so much the opening of a chapter of history as the culminating point in a long period of previous historical development, of which the great fortress itself is at once the outcome and the climax.⁴ And what is true of the capital message is true also of the lesser strongholds in the Earldom: for it is in the peculiar strategic position of Mar, straddling the approaches from Strathmore into the hostile district of Moravia, that I believe we must seek the key to the distribution of its early castles which form the subject of this paper.

Topographically considered, the infeudation of Mar wears a three-fold aspect. First of all there was the subdivision of the Province into parishes, each served by a parochial church sustained by tithes.

¹ See my paper on “A Forgotten Aberdeenshire Monastery” in *Aberdeen University Review*, March 1922.

² *Proceedings*, vol. lxii. pp. 45–6.

³ It is recorded of this king (943–54) that he “invaded Moravia and slew Cellach”—*Chronicles of the Picts and Scots*, ed. W. F. Skene, p. 10. This would appear to be the first recorded instance of the High King interfering with decision in Moravia. Eventually the “Men of Moray” killed him by treachery at Blervie—*ibid.*, p. 151.

⁴ See a discussion of this whole question in *Proceedings*, vol. lxii. pp. 36–42.

Secondly, there was the foundation of monastic houses, of which one only (Monymusk) was ever established in the Province. Thirdly, there was the planting of feudal castles, each the *caput* of its fief; and in some cases—as at Migvie, Lumphanan, the earlier site at Kildrummy, and Midmar—closely associated with the parish church. All these processes were fully operative during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and their interactions can be studied in the charters. Thus the Augustinian Priory of Monymusk was founded by Gilchrist, Earl of Mar, about 1200, and was endowed with the revenues of five impropriated parish churches.¹ Others of the newly formed parishes were impropriated to monastic foundations outwith the boundaries of Mar. Tarland, for example, was thus made over by Earl Morgund to the canons of St Andrews.² In one case a parish—Logie—originally gifted to Monymusk Priory, was subsequently bestowed upon the Cathedral Church of Aberdeen, the priory being compensated by the revenues of the parish of Kindrochit in Braemar.³ Of ecclesiastical remains belonging to this period—apart from the chapel at Kildrummy Castle—there still exists the ancient and much hashed-about parish church of Monymusk, in a good late Norman style; and one or two possibly First Pointed details in the parish church of Dyce. Fragments of the same period have been recovered from the site of the ancient church at Clova; and, just beyond the usual boundary of Mar, a Transitional doorway of exceeding richness, and other First Pointed details, have survived in the old church of Auchindoir (fig. 1). The detail in the churches of Tullich⁴ and Kincardine O'Neil does not appear to me to be older than the fourteenth century: the former seems late in the century, the latter near its beginning.

A feature in the process of Normanisation, considered on its ecclesiastical side, is its continuity. It is clear that no violent and irritating break with previous arrangements was contemplated by the guiding brains in Church and State. Thus at first the episcopal seat of the diocese was fixed at Mortlach, the most important old Celtic monastic centre between the Dee and the Spey, a foundation of St Moluag. So also the new parish of Clova was formed out of the patrimony of St Moluag's monastery there. Again, the Priory of Monymusk represented not a new establishment, but merely the transformation, more or less brusque, of an ancient College of *Keledei*. To this day in the Province

¹ See my paper in *Proceedings*, vol. lix, pp. 34-71.

² *Antiquities of the Shires of Aberdeen and Banff*, vol. ii, pp. 14-18.

³ *Registrum Prioratus Sancti Andreae*, p. 367; *Registrum Episcopatus Aberdonensis*, vol. i, p. 16.

⁴ See my paper on this church in *The Deeside Field*, 1922, pp. 16-18. The door, with the early symbol stones now assembled around it, is shown in *Proceedings*, vol. xlv, p. 351.

the face of the country yields abundant proof that the parochial places of worship were again and again planted on spots sacred to the old Celtic Church. Very often, as at Dalmaik (Drumoak), Dyce, Midmar Tarland, and Tullich, the name of the Celtic founder was preserved in the medieval dedication; or, as at Clova, and at Lumphanan—where



[Photo W. Norrie.]

Fig. 1. Transitional Doorway, Auchindoir Church.

an effort was made to transform St Finan into St Vincent—it resisted every scheme to supplant it. Very often, too, as at Dyce, Tullich, and many other places, visible monuments of the primitive Church survive in the early Christian Pictish sculptured stones still to be found in the medieval graveyards. There is a good deal of evidence that a similar continuity was preserved in the case of the castles. Kindrochit Castle, for example, the headquarters of the Lordship of Braemar, occupies a site of great strategical and tactical importance, which is noticed as

such so far back as the reign of Angus I. Macfergus (729-62).¹ At Kildrummy itself the early *motte* castle, with the parish church closely

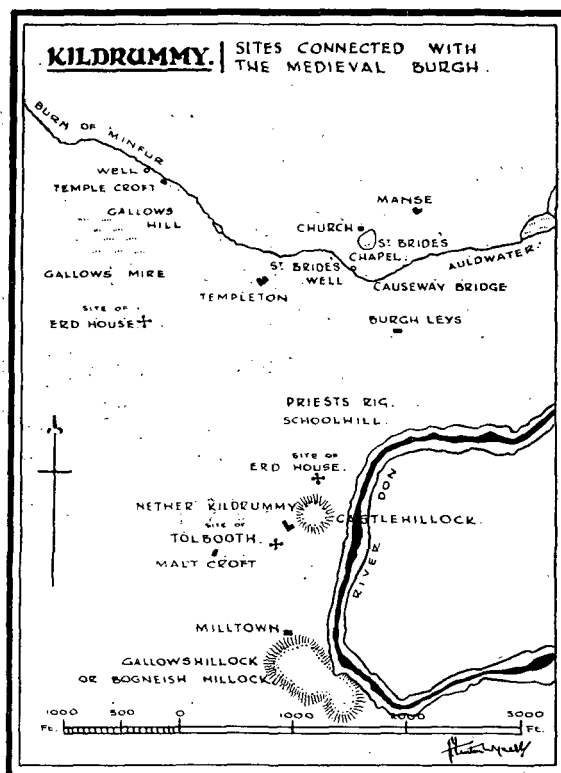


Fig. 2. Map of Kildrummy.

adjoining, stands in the midst of a very ancient centre of population;² and the church still bears its Celtic invocation of St. Bride. At Kintore,

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. lvii. pp. 86-7.

² I am glad to obtain so early an opportunity of correcting an error in my account and map (published in last year's *Proceedings*, pp. 40-1) of the *motte*-castle site near Kildrummy Church. I then described, in quite correct terms, the position, about half a mile south of the church, which is known as Castlehillock among older residents in Kildrummy—a well-marked mound whose profile, despite long-continued ploughing, still retains so distinctly *motte*-like an outline as seen from across the Don at Westside. But both in last year's paper, and in my book on Kildrummy Castle, published in 1923, I have unaccountably confused this Castlehillock, which is on Nether Kildrummy, with the site marked Gallowshillock in the 6-inch O.S. Map, ed. 1870 (Aberdeenshire, Sheet 61), which is about 300 yards further south, and on Milltown of Kildrummy. The revised sketch-map submitted herewith (fig. 2) will make the whole position clear: and I now also add a drawing (fig. 3) taken from near Westside, which shows the ancient church on its mound to the right, and the well-defined Castlehillock in the centre; while to the left is seen Gallowshillock at

church and castle stood side by side, the castle *motte* having been piled on top of a prehistoric stone circle, while in the churchyard some early sculptured symbol-stones still remain.¹ Just beyond the limit of Mar an even more striking example of this continuity, extending from remote prehistoric times, exists at the Bass of Inverurie, the headquarters of the adjoining and associated Earldom of the Garioch. I have elsewhere discussed this important example.²

Milltown. It lies immediately south of Milltown steading, and overhangs on the right side of the road to Knowehead, which here closely hugs the left bank of the Don. The Milltown Gallowshillock is a morainic mass, densely covered with broom and shrubbery: it has never been cultivated, and bears no hint of artificiality in outline, or anything in any way distinctive about its appearance.

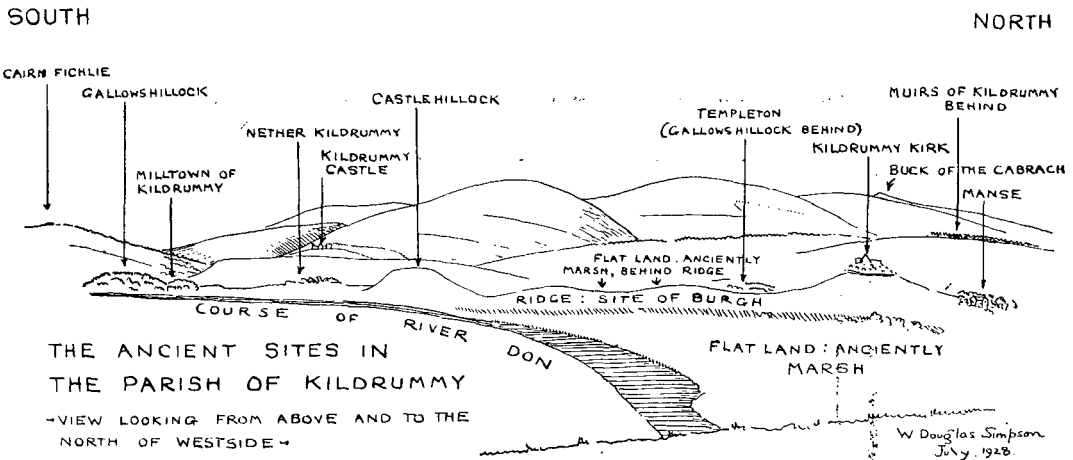


Fig. 3. View of the Kildrummy Basin, looking west.

The name applied to it on the earlier addition of the O.S. Map has been changed to Bogneish-hillock in the revised issue (1902): but it is amply warranted, as I have ascertained by inquiry locally. Mr John Robertson in Malt Croft, who is perfectly familiar with the name Castlehillock as applied to the site at Nether Kildrummy, also knows the Milltown site under the name of Gallowshillock. Mr William Watt in Drumnahive is familiar with Castlehillock and also with both Gallowshillocks, that at Milltown and that at Templeton (the position of the latter is seen to the right in fig. 3). Both these informants have a long life-time's residence in Kildrummy behind their authority. The O.S. terminology in the earlier edition must therefore be regarded as vindicated, and we have the suggestive fact that there are two Gallowshillocks in Kildrummy. Even for Michael Dunbar's parish the allowance seems liberal! Probably the Milltown site, in close proximity to the early *motte* castle, was the original one; and after the abandonment of the *motte* the gibbet was transferred to the more central site at Templeton.

¹ The Castle hill of Kintore appears to have been in substance a natural mound upon which had been erected a stone circle, and in which were numerous prehistoric interments. The stone circle was overthrown and the hill heightened about 10 feet to make a *motte*. The entire hill was removed when the railway line was built in 1854. See A. Watt, *The Early History of Kintore*, pp. 140-3.

² "The Bass of Inverurie and its Embedded History," *Scottish Notes and Queries*, March 1924. In addition to the relics of prehistoric ages therein described, there has recently been dug up, in the churchyard which encloses the Bass, a very fine perforated adze-hammer of a Bronze-Age

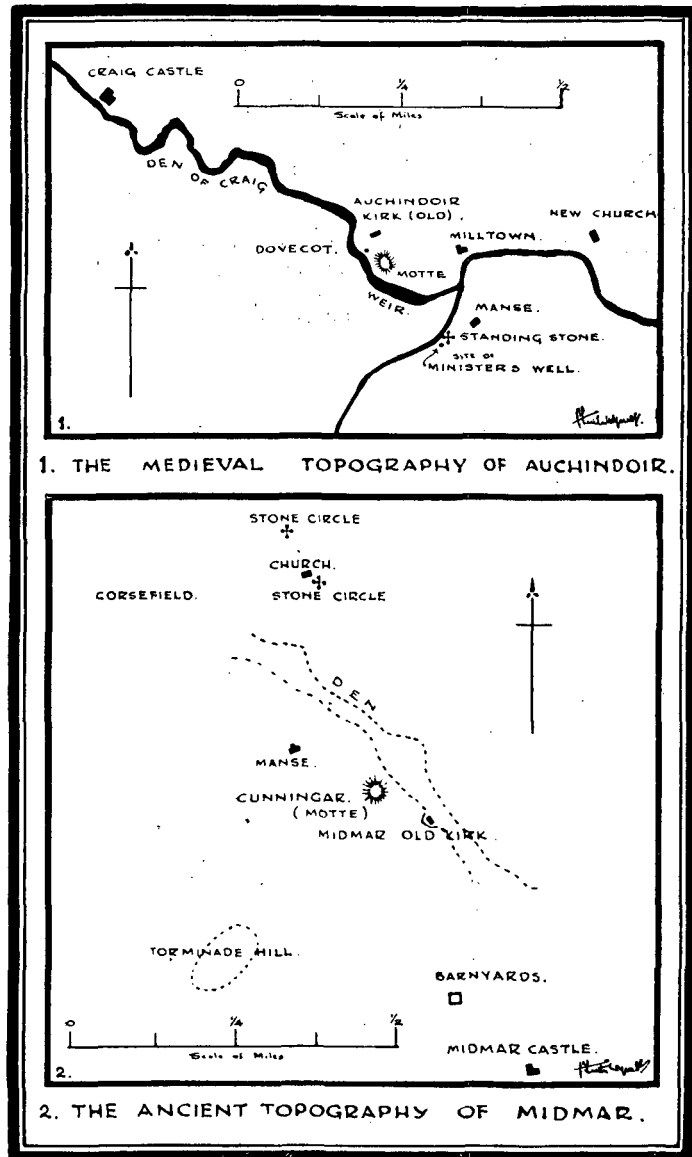


Fig. 4. Maps illustrating the early Topography of Auchindoir and Midmar.

type. It is in greenish-grey clay-slate, and is oval in shape, with somewhat squared ends, both of which have been damaged. The length is $5\frac{7}{8}$ inches; greatest breadth, $1\frac{1}{8}$ inch; greatest thickness, $1\frac{3}{16}$ inch. The hole, set transversely to the cutting edge, is $\frac{1}{16}$ inch in diameter. The implement is now preserved in the Inverurie Museum.

Specially interesting and symptomatic in this respect is the topography of the parish of Midmar (fig. 4). The early religious centre here was a stone circle, in the position now occupied by the present parish church, on the north side of the picturesque hollow through which the turnpike road now winds. During the Norman penetration in the twelfth or thirteenth century Midmar was organised as a parish, and its church was built in the hollow, half a mile south of the old stone circle, and immediately to the eastward of the *motte* thrown up by the new Norman or Normanised lord of the manor. Amid these changes the underlying continuity with past ages is shown by the fact that the medieval church still bore the name of the early Britonic saint who first preached the Gospel in these parts: St Nidan, a member—it would seem—of St Kentigern's mission from Glasgow to the Picts beyond the Mounth in the latter half of the sixth century.¹ Towards the end of the sixteenth century the association of church and castle was severed from the lay side. The old timbered *motte* was now abandoned—if, indeed, it had not previously fallen into disuse; and a new stone castle was erected, within a mile to the south, on the under-slopes of the Hill of Fare. Lastly, in 1787, the old church also was given up and a new one built—returning, by a curious chance, to the earliest religious centre in the parish, for the present church stands on the very site of the ancient stone circle, which apparently was plundered to afford material for its building.² Thus the medieval church and castle, both deserted, stand side by side in the hollow, while the later castellated mansion and the modern church have sought the higher slopes on either hand.

Exactly similar phenomena, in an even more complete fashion, are displayed on the northern border of Mar, in the parish of Auchindoir (fig. 4). Here we have the *motte* of the early Norman castle—the *castrum Auchindoriæ* of Hector Boece—standing close beside the ruined Transitional parish church, on a commanding position overlooking the Burn of Craig, in the Den of which, beneath the *motte*, the old rectangular baronial doocot still remains, now in a sadly decayed condition. As at Midmar, the early association of church and castle here has been severed on both sides. The later and still inhabited castle of Craig, which dates from 1548, occupies a site about a mile farther up the Den; while the old church was abandoned and the present building erected to the north of it in the year 1811.³

¹ See my *Origins of Christianity in Aberdeenshire*, pp. 23-4.

² F. R. Coles in *Proceedings*, vol. xxxiv. pp. 179-80; Bishop G. F. Browne, *Antiquities in the Neighbourhood of Dunecht*, pp. 60-3.

³ I hope on a future occasion to deal more fully with the medieval archaeology of Craig—a most interesting area, which has the further distinction of having yielded the only restorable Neolithic urn so far recorded from Aberdeenshire. See Mr Callander's paper in this volume, p. 59.

In the realm of administration similar evidence of continuity can be traced. Here institutional survivals from pre-Norman times are met with until late into the Middle Ages. For example, we have the three Thanages of Aberdeen, Kintore, and Aboyne, together with a fourth, Onele, of which more hereafter. The most recent view is that such thanages—which were akin to the later baronies, are always associated with a place, not a district, and seem in all cases to depend administratively upon a fortified centre—are relics of an English or pre-Norman stage of incipient feudalisation. Such a theory, however, would seem a trifle hard of acceptance in regard to places so remote, and so thoroughly within the Celtic area, as are Aboyne and Kincardine O'Neil. But it seems on the whole fairly clear that the old view, equating the thane with the Celtic *toshach*, can scarcely be sustained: in spite of the fact that in one or two early documents such an identification is actually made.¹ The *toshach* or *toshachdera* is definitely a Celtic survival: he is usually expressed as “coroner,” and occasionally translated *sergeant* in early writs. So in 1410 we have the smith and sergeant, *fabrisdera* and *tosachdera*, of the demesne lands of Davachindore (Auchindoir).² The *toschederach* or *toyseachderach* of Mar is on record as late as 1453-4.³ Another Celtic officer who survived until this late period was the *Maeor*, or *Mair*.⁴ He appears to have been the early royal representative within the Province, a kind of pre-feudal sheriff in fact: after the establishment of sheriffdoms he degenerated into a subordinate executive officer of the sheriff, and finally sank to become merely a suitor of court.⁵

While these various processes of feudalism within the Earldom of Mar were in full swing, the unity of the Earldom was successfully challenged from without. Shortly before 1228, the position of Duncan, Earl of Mar, was contested by Thomas de Lundin, the Durward of Scotland, in right of his mother, a daughter of Orabila, Countess of Mar, and her first husband, Earl Gilchrist. At or before this time the succession in the Earldom is very obscure, and two rival sets of Earls may be traced in the records, sometimes simultaneously. This would appear to be an instance of the phenomenon, familiar otherwise in Pictland, of the heads of two houses or families supplying alternatively a ruling chief to the Province; and of each house endeavouring, as occasion

¹ See on the whole subject Dr W. L. Dickinson, *The Sheriff Court Book of Fife*, pp. 375-8.

² *Ant. Aberdeen and Banff*, vol. iv. p. 453.

³ *Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, vol. v. pp. 601, 658.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 59, 599, 600, 657.

⁵ Dickinson, *op. cit.*, Introduction, pp. lxii-lxvi. In the records of the Kincardineshire Sheriff Courts the mair appears as late as 1691: see J. B. Burnett, *The Kirks of Cowie and Fetteresso*, pp. 31, 35.

offered, to make good an exclusive right. Apparently out of such troublous conditions arose the Durward claim;¹ it was settled, in or about 1228, by a compromise, as a result of which Thomas the Durward obtained a generous slice of the Earldom of Mar, including the southern half of Cromar, and stretching down the Dee valley as far as Invercanny,² and northward into Donside at Alford.³ To secure their grip on these extensive territories the Durwards appear to have constructed two strong castles: a great central stone fortress at Coull, and a *motte* on a large scale to guard their eastern flank at Lumphanan. The ancient Thanage of Onele was absorbed in this new lordship of the Durwards, which thereafter is spoken of as the Barony of Onele. After the extinction of the Durwards, about the year 1275, the barony reverted to the Crown, and throughout its subsequent history it seems to have been kept distinct from the Earldom of Mar.

By the early castles of Mar, for the purposes of this paper, are understood those castles which were already in existence at the opening of the fifteenth century. This dividing line has been chosen for sufficient reasons. In the first place, in 1374 the male line of the old Celtic Mormaors failed; and after the death (about 1407) of Isabella, Countess of Mar in her own right, certain questionable transactions were set afoot by her husband, Sir Alexander Stewart, with a view to the perpetuation of the Earldom in favour of a natural son of his own, but having the unexpected result, on Sir Alexander's death (1435), that the Earldom was annexed by the Crown.⁴ Thereafter to a very considerable extent it was broken up, numerous portions being granted out to vassals, each of whom established himself in a castle or fortified house on his new estate. It is largely owing to this process of subdivision, continued throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, that the district of Mar to-day is one of the richest in minor castellated ruins to be found anywhere in Scotland. These later castles form an exceedingly interesting group from all points of view, but they do not fall within our present survey. From an archæological standpoint, the beginning of the fifteenth century affords an equally convenient halting place. The long struggle with the Plantagenets exerted a profound influence on the art of castle building in Scotland. The old timbered *mottes*, like those of Invernochty and Lumphanan, for the most part fell into disuse, or at all events new ones ceased to be constructed. Equally the great stone castles of *enceinte*, such as Kildrummy and

¹ See letter by the Hon. R. Erskine of Marr in *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 27th February 1924.

² For the boundary here see my *On Certain Saints and Professor Watson*, p. 11.

³ For the whole circumstances see my paper on "The Excavation of Coull Castle," in *Proceedings*, vol. lviii. pp. 47-8; also C. Innes, *The Thanages of Cawdor*, Preface, pp. 1, 2.

⁴ See my *The Castle of Kildrummy*, pp. 203-14.

Coull, pass out of the realm of current design; and the rectangular tower-house, of which our district shows two very early specimens in Drum and Hallforest, and one example on a grand scale at Kindrochit, becomes the normal type of fortified dwelling. With the fifteenth century also, as Mr Mackay Mackenzie has recently shown us,¹ appears a new type of castle, the "palace plan"; and at Kindrochit probably the earliest authenticated example of this class of building is preserved alongside of the powerful tower-house later introduced on its flank.² Thus, alike on the historical and the archæological side, the beginning of the fifteenth century appears to provide a suitable *terminus ad quem* for our study.

II. GEOGRAPHICAL SURVEY.

I may perhaps be allowed to commence this section by reproducing certain sentences which I have written elsewhere with regard to the historical influence of the permanent features in Scottish topography.³

"Throughout its history two dominating features have asserted their influence in determining the course alike of military, political, and ecclesiastical events. The first and by far the more important of these features is the great mountain backbone known as Drumalban, the *Dorsum Britannicæ* of Adamnan and other early writers—the central watershed of Alba, running northwards from Ben Lomond to Ben Hope. All through the past of Scotland, from remotest prehistoric times, this majestic barrier of splintered ben and wine-dark moorland has been a dividing line no less cultural than political. The second dominant feature is the transverse line known as the Mounth, the upland ridge flanking the southern bank of the Dee, between Girdleness and Lochnagar (properly called the White Mounth). Although its influence on mediæval strategy and local administrative arrangements was considerable, the Mounth seems never to have been a political and still less a cultural barrier of major importance at any period in Scottish history.⁴ It is often stated to have formed the boundary line between the northern and the southern Picts, but this is quite an unwarranted inference; and in any case it is more than doubtful whether the division into northern and southern Picts, as used by Bede, connoted anything more than a convenient geo-

¹ *The Mediæval Castle in Scotland*, chap. v.

² See my paper in *The Antiquaries' Journal*, January 1928, pp. 69-75.

³ *The Historical Saint Columba*, 2nd ed., pp. xv-xvii. I have made some slight verbal improvements.

⁴ Under the political arrangements of William the Lion, no account was taken of the Mounth; the districts on both sides of it were lumped together as one administrative area bounded by the Forth, the Spey, and Drumalban, and contrasted with Moravia, Ross, Katanes, Ergadia, and Kintyre—*Act. Parl. Scot.*, vol. i. p. 50. The first positive indication of the Mounth as forming anything more than a geographical line seems to occur in 1305, when under the organisation of Edward I. we find that in the lands beyond the Scotswater (Firth of Forth) two justices are appointed for the district "between the river of Forth and the Mounth," and two justices for the district "beyond the Mounth"—*ibid.*, p. 120. (A late instance of the Scots water serving as an administrative boundary is seen in the plan propounded by the Committee of Estates for "encantoning the country" in the summer of 1640, at the outbreak of the Second Bishops' War. See Napier, *Life of Montrose*, vol. i. pp. 255-6.)

graphical expression. No clear evidence of a political division along any such line can be found in the later period of Pictish history.¹ At all events, the reason for the comparative unimportance of the Mounth barrier is apparent on a glance at the map. While its west end is securely buttressed by the great central *massif* of Drumalban, its eastern termination on the North Sea lies open, and is capable of being turned from the central Scottish plain *via* Strathmore and the Cairnamounth, Cryne Corse Mounth, Elsieck Mounth, and Cowie Mounth passes. Along these lines, accordingly, the northern districts of Scotland have always been pierced by invading armies, from Roman times onward. The approach to the central plain is easier and quicker from the west, from Carlisle (the Roman *Luguwallium*) *via* Annandale and Clydesdale; or from the centre by Melrose (*Trimontium*, the fort at Newstead) and Lauderdale to Channelkirk and Inveresk; than from the east over the long bleak inhospitable Northumbrian moors. Both the western and the central routes were used by Agricola in his various campaigns (A.D. 80-4); but the central route was the more in favour of the two, and it was only in the Antonine period, after the building of the northern wall (A.D. 143) that the Annandale and Clydesdale highway was occupied in force, and became of great importance as the approach to the western end of the wall. In 208-11, the Emperor Severus adopted the eastward access, but outflanked the Northumbrian moorlands by disembarking his troops at Cramond. By whatever route the central plain was reached, the advance thereafter, by the gap of Stirling, Perth, the valley of the Isla, and Strathmore, was straightforward and relatively unimpeded. It is marked to this day by the line of Roman entrenched posts through Strathmore, at Ardoch, Strageath, Inchtuthil, and Raedykes, turning the Mounth at Normandykes in the valley of the lower Dee, and so on to Glenmailen in Auchterless, the most northerly identified camp of the legionaries."

So far as I am aware, the first person to make any systematic study of the Mounth passes, with special reference to the geographical conditions governing the access from Strathmore into Mar, was the late Mr J. Crabb Watt, K.C., in his book, *The Mearns of Old*.² More recently, the whole subject has been exhaustively discussed and illuminated by Mr G. M. Fraser in his invaluable work on *The Old Deeside Road*.³ Only the briefest enumeration and treatment are therefore necessary here (see Map, fig. 14, at end).

Reckoning from the west eastward, there were nine major crossings over the Mounth: (1) the Cairnwell Pass, from Glenshee to Braemar; (2) the Tolmounth, from Glenclova to Glencallater; (3) the Capel Mounth, from Clova to Glenmuick; (4) the Fir Mounth, from Tarfside at the head of Glen Esk to Glen Tanner; (5) the Forest of Birse Mounth, from Tarfside to Aboyne; (6) the Cairnamounth, from Fettercairn to

¹ In 782 the Ulster Annals have this entry: *Dubhtolargg rex Pictorum citra Monoth perit*, which is rendered by Skene (*Celtic Scotland*, vol. i. p. 302): "the death of Dubhtolargg, king of the Transmontane Picts." But surely the translation is: "Dubhtolargg, King of the Picts, was slain beyond the Mounth": presumably in an expedition into Mar or Moravia.

² Pp. 154-6.

³ Chaps. vi. and vii. There is also a useful summary in *The Cairngorms*, by H. Alexander, pp. 31-5, etc.

Kincardine O'Neil; (7) the Cryne Corse Mounth, from Glenbervie to Durris; (8) the Elswick Mounth, from Netherley to Culter; and (9) the Cowie Mounth, along the coast from Stonehaven to Aberdeen.

The positions of the early castles in the Dee valley may be demonstrated, in the most conclusive manner, to have been selected so as to control the debouchures of these various passes.

Thus at the very head of the valley we find the important and powerful castle of Kindrochit in Mar, a favourite summer residence of Robert II. Its position, viewed in regard to the river basin, is a complete and meaningless *cul-de-sac*: but considered in relation to the Mounth passes, its significance becomes immediately apparent.¹ I have already fully discussed the strategic position of this castle in our *Proceedings*,² and I content myself here with reproducing the map (fig. 5), which clearly brings out its relation to the Cairnwell and Tolmouth passes, and to the crossing of the Dee. There is charter evidence that the Cairnwell pass was used by Robert II. on his journeys to the castle.³ It was a well-known route throughout the Middle Ages, and was used by Montrose in June 1645, on his march from Glenshee to Corgarff Castle, before the opening of the Alford campaign.⁴ After his disaster at Philiphaugh, Montrose crossed the Mounth from Comrie (2nd October 1645) to Drimminor (7th), the evidence indicating that he had probably marched by the Cairnwell. On the 23rd of the same month he again used this pass in the opposite direction.⁵ In June 1690 General Mackay, coming from Perth by the western route up Strathardle (23rd June), crossed the Cairnwell to Braemar (24th), and thence marched by Strathdon and Strathavon into the valley of the Spey.⁶

The Capel Mounth road appears to have crossed the Dee by a bridge near Invermuick;⁷ it was a well-known route in early times, and is shown in the fourteenth-century map which I reproduced in last year's *Proceedings*.⁸ The Capel Mounth pass was twice used by

¹ See my remarks on this subject in *Proceedings*, vol. lxii. p. 37, note 5.

² Vol. lvii. pp. 82-8.

³ Charter granted at "Glenshee," 27th June 1376, *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, 1306-1424, No. 575.

⁴ Wishart, *Deeds of Montrose*, ed. Murdoch and Simpson, p. 106.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 150, note 2.

⁶ Mackay, *Memoirs of the Scots War*, pp. 327-9.

⁷ The evidence for a possible medieval bridge at Invermuick rests upon a footnote by Dr George Grub in *Antiquities of the Shires of Aberdeen and Banff*, vol. ii. p. 398 (published in 1847). Mentioning the early bridges at Aberdeen (the precursor of Bishop Dunbar's bridge now extant) and Kincardine O'Neil (see *infra*, p. 119), he proceeds: "The remains of a third bridge over the same river, probably of the same age, were lately brought to light near the mouth of Glenmuick." This statement was accepted by Cosmo Innes and Patrick Chalmers (*Registrum Vetus de Aberbrothoc*, Preface, p. xxviii), but I have not been able to find any other account of the discovery of early bridge remains at Invermuick.

⁸ *Proceedings*, vol. lxii. p. 38. For the military use of the Capel Mounth pass during the Forty-Five, see Fraser, *op. cit.*, p. 87, footnote.

Montrose during his *annus mirabilis*: in April 1645, when he marched from Atholl into Glenmuick and Strathdee; and in the reverse direction after his defeat of Hurry at Auldearn (9th May 1645).¹ In the campaign of 1689 it was used by General Cannon, marching from Clova to the neighbourhood of Abergeldie.²

The Fir Mounth and Forest of Birse Mounth passes converged on

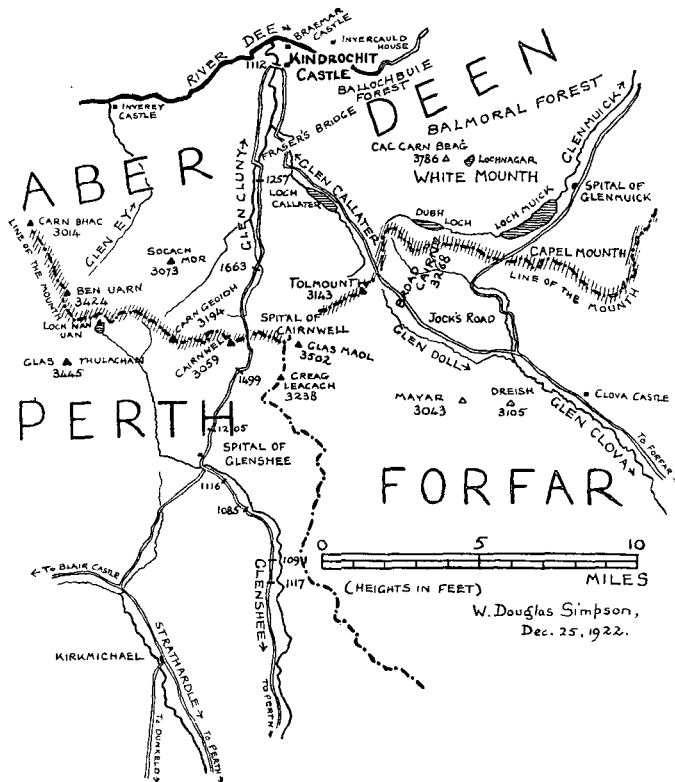


Fig. 5. Map illustrating the strategic position of Kindrochit Castle.

the river at the important ford of Dinnet and the ferry at Bontie, near Aboyne, where there was a royal castle from the days of Alexander II. onwards.³ Previous to and during the Wars of Independence,

¹ Wishart, *op. cit.*, pp. 98, 105.

² Mackay, *Memoirs of the Scots War*, p. 65.

³ "The roads on both sides of the Dee converging upon Aboyne led to the ferry at Bontie, probably the one most used for the traffic over the Grampians from the rich lands of Morayshire, Banffshire, and Aberdeenshire to the southern portions of Scotland; three important highways near the Mounth through Kincardineshire and Forfarshire pointed northward to Aboyne, and in some states of the Dee it would only here have been possible, during this early

Aboyne Castle was the most important stronghold on Deeside, as may be gathered from the following brief summary of its history during this period. At the beginning of the thirteenth century the Thanage of Aboyne was held by the Norman family of De Bisset; but after their downfall, under tragic circumstances, in 1242, it lapsed to the Crown. Aboyne Castle thereafter appears as a favourite royal residence, no doubt owing to its convenient proximity to the king's forest of Birse. Alexander III. was several times there, and a letter is extant, written by him from Aboyne to Edward I., under date 1st April 1285.¹ In June 1291, under the provisions of the Treaty of Brightham, twenty-three Scottish castles opened their gates to English garrisons: Aboyne was one of the number, Richard de Swethope being appointed governor. Payments to the garrison are minuted in the English records.² In 1304, Sir Alexander Comyn of Buchan, Sheriff of Aberdeen, obtained an order from King Edward placing him in possession of Aboyne Castle: but John de Strathbogie, Earl of Atholl, who at that time was in charge of the castles of Aboyne and Aberdeen, with garrisons of forty foot and forty sergeants on foot in each, protested vigorously at being required to give up the former post. The county round Aboyne, he said, was savage and full of evildoers, and the King had no other fortress where his servants might be in safety to keep the peace. Comyn already possessed two of the strongest castles in the country, Urquhart and Tarradale (Red Castle in Ross), and as sheriff could commit his prisoners to Aberdeen Castle if he wished; it was therefore undesirable that the castle of Aboyne should be made over to him.³ Elsewhere we learn that Atholl had expended £540 in repairing Aboyne and Aberdeen Castles.⁴ After Bruce's rising, Edward I., on 18th March 1307, sent instructions to his Chamberlain in Scotland to repair and fortify the castles of Dundee, Forfar, Aberdeen, and Aboyne.⁵ No further record of Aboyne Castle appears to exist, and it was doubtless destroyed during the renewed intense struggle against the English which now began under Bruce's leadership. There-

period, to have crossed the river. For the same reason, the roads from the north by Kildrummy, Donside, Strathbogie, and Alford, and from the Garioch through Lumphanan, were directed southwards to this spot, meeting the roads on both sides of the Dee from Aberdeen and the east coast to the Western Highlands. To cover these important routes, it was essential that a place well adapted for defence should be found, and this qualification Aboyne possessed in the fullest degree"—*Records of Aboyne*, ed. Charles, 11th Marquis of Huntly, p. viii.

¹ Bain, *Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland*, vol. ii., No. 267.

² Bain, *ut supra*, Nos. 541, 547, 603. Stevenson, *Historical Documents Illustrative of the History of Scotland*, vol. i. pp. 207, 253-4, 262, 318.

³ J. Bain, *Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland*, vol. ii., No. 1633, see *Proceedings* vol. lviii. pp. 50 and 98.

⁴ Bain, *ut supra*, No. 1682.

⁵ *Calendar of Close Rolls*, Edw. I., 1302-7, p. 490.

after the island castle on Loch Kinnord—more directly in line with the ford at Dinnet, and better placed to control the entry into Mar from the Capel Mounth pass—appears to have become the military centre of the Aboyne lands. About 1638 we again hear of a “house” at Aboyne, which was capable of defence.¹ What seems to be the oldest portion of the present structure is dated 1671.

The Cairnamounth road from Fettercairn to Kincardine O’Neil, crossing the Dee at Inchbare, near Potarch Bridge, was the most important of all the Mounth passes. Those to the west of it were too far up in the Highland area for ordinary convenience, and involved a long and dangerous mountain journey: those to the east of it, while suitable for Aberdeen and the eastern lowlands, did not offer so short and direct an access into Moray and the North. Thus the importance of Kincardine O’Neil, as the *tête du pont* of the Cairnamounth pass, was always very considerable, and is testified to this day by the superior architecture of its ruined medieval parish church. Gordon of Straloch describes the fair at Kincardine O’Neil as “of all the most famous and most numerously attended, for here all those who journey across the Grampians towards Moray and the North must pass the river.”² Here, accordingly, Colin Durward, before 1233, had constructed a bridge,³ which was probably destroyed during the Wars of Independence, as it does not seem to be on record in the fourteenth century or later: Sir Samuel Forbes of Foveran, writing before 1715, says that “the river had need of a bridge”: “travellers,” he adds, “are numerous, by reason of the great highrode south and north.”⁴ The headquarters of the barony of Kincardine O’Neil was the Peel of Lumphanan, three miles north of the village and the crossing of the river.

There is a long chain of recorded evidence for the military use of the Cairnamounth road from the eleventh century onwards. By this

¹ Father Blackhall’s *Brieffe Narration*, pp. 55, 68, 79–86. From the last of these passages it would seem that the “Peel of Aboyne,” which figures prominently in Lord Huntly’s Preface to the Records, is nothing more than a misunderstanding of the “Peit Hil,” which at p. 79 Father Blackhall writes “Peithil”!

² “*Kincardin, pagus cum ecclesia, ad viam regiam qua transmittuntur Grampii Montes, annuis nundinis ad Divi Bartholomæi celebris*”—Gordon of Straloch, *Descriptio, ut supra*, in *Collections on the Shires of Aberdeen and Banff*, p. 26. “*Succedunt omnium celeberrimæ et frequentissimæ [nundinæ] ad Kincarnium ecclesiam Marriæ parochialem ad Deae fluminis ripam, per quam iter facientibus trans Grampios montes in Moraviam aut ulterius in septentriones transeundum est*”—*Macfarlane’s Geographical Collections*, ed. Sir A. Mitchell, vol. ii. p. 266.

³ *Hospitali . . . sito iuxta pontem quem pater meus fecit construi super Dee—Confirmatio Alani Hostiarii data hospitali de Kyncardyn, 3rd March 1233 (Registrum Episcopatus Aberdonensis, vol. ii. pp. 268–9).*

⁴ *Collections, ut supra*, p. 38: cf. *Macfarlane’s Geographical Collections*, ed. Sir A. Mitchell, vol. i. p. 101.

route Macbeth fled northwards to make his last stand at Lumphanan (15th August 1057):—

“Oure the Mounth thai chast him than
Rycht to the wod of Lumfanan.”
“Thus Makbeth slew thai than
In to the wode of Lunfannan.”¹

By this same route, in the reverse direction, the Men of Moray, heirs of Macbeth's quarrel, *invaded Scotland*—so it could still be said in the year 1130—and were met and turned at Stracathro by the High Constable Edward, a cousin of King David I.:² their leader Angus, whom the Irish chroniclers style *King of Moray*,³ was left behind on the field. At Stracathro also, near the throat of the mountain pass that offered him the last refuge which he despaired to take, John Balliol, the luckless “Toom Tabard,” on 7th July 1296, “in the cemetery of Stronkatherach, at the hour of vespers,” gave in his abject submission to the representatives of English Edward.⁴ Thereafter Edward himself in punitive array advanced into the north of Scotland as far as Elgin. On his way north, as we shall see, he traversed the Mounth by the Cryne Corse pass, making for Aberdeen; but coming back he chose the Cairnamounth, marching from Kildrummy Castle to Kincardine O'Neil (Wednesday, 1st August 1296), and from thence on Thursday to Kincardine Castle in the Mearns, at the southern outlet of the pass. In 1303, on the return march after his second invasion of the north, Edward adopted the same route: he left Kildrummy on Wednesday, 9th October, and was at Fettercairn on Sunday, 13th.⁵ By the Cairnamounth probably, in 1395, Sir James Lindsay of Crawford hastened north to relieve his wife, besieged in Fyvie Castle by her ungallant nephew, Robert Keith, whom Lindsay put to flight in a skirmish at the kirk of Bourtie.⁶ More than two centuries later, it was used by Montrose in his early Covenanting days, when in February 1639 he hurried north from Forfar, at the head of “about nynescoir weill horsit weill armed gallantis, haueing buffill cotis, carrabins, suordis, pistollis, and the

¹ Wyntoun, *Original Chronicle*, ed. F. J. Amours, vol. iv. pp. 298-9, 300-1.

² *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, etc.*, ed. R. Howlett (Rolls Series), vol. iv. p. 118.

³ *Annals of Ulster*, ed. W. A. Hennessey, vol. ii. p. 124: the battle, we are told, was fought “between the men of Scotland and the men of Moray.”

⁴ Bain's *Calendar*, vol. ii., No. 821: see also p. 194.

⁵ For these details see Bain's *Calendar*, vol. ii., Nos. 822-3; *Ragman Rolls* (Bannatyne Club), pp. 110-1, 179, 183.

⁶ *Wyntoun*, ed. Amours, vol. vi. p. 376:—

“He gadrit of his freyndis then
Thre or nere four hundyr men;
And our the Monythe than allssa fast
As he til Fiwe walde haf past.”

like armes." The object of the expedition was to safeguard the formation of a Covenanting Committee at Turriff, menaced by a gathering of the Gordons under the Royalist Marquis of Huntly. Montrose, says Parson Gordon, "flies over the Grangebean hills with all speed possible, scarce ever sleeping or resting till he got to Turreffe."¹ Spalding adds the information that he marched *via* Muchals in Mar (Castle Fraser), where he lodged during the night 13th-14th February²: from which circumstance it would appear that the Cairnamounth was the pass used. In March 1645 it was again traversed by Montrose, this time in the reverse direction, and at the head of a Royalist army.³ In May 1645 it was used by the Covenanting General Baillie. "Haueing brynt wp and distroyit this fair and fertill countrie of Atholl for the loyaltie of the inhabitantis to thair dreid soueraigne," so records the Royalist chronicler, Spalding, he "syne merchis fra Atholl in throw the heidis to Kirremvre, to Fettercarn, and vpon Setterday, 10th of May, he cums and campis in the Birss, still plundering the countrie quhair euer he gois, eiting the grein growing cornes, scarss cum to the blaid, with thair horssis. He wes estimat above 2000 foot and sexscoir trovperis. Vpone Sunday, the 11th of May, he marchis to Cromar, and campis betuixt the kirkis of Coull and Tarlan."⁴ In December 1645 it was probably by the Cairnamounth pass that Montrose, in bitter winter weather—"montium iuga præruptasque rupes et altissimas nives elucatus"—crossed the Mounth from Angus to Strathbogie in a last vain effort to win over the petulant Huntly to more energetic support of the now tottering Royal cause.⁵ In April 1689, the Cairnamounth Pass figured prominently in Claverhouse's fiery campaign, recorded in the classic metre of his admirer, John Philip of Almericlose:—

*"Iamque alacres omnes, Gramo duce et auspice Gramo
Ieiuna sterilem Kerymore invisimus urbem.
Et simul Arctoi pontem transmittimus Escæ;
Ardua præruptis hinc per iuga Carneæ saxis
Scandimus, et rapidum Deicæ tranavimus amnem.
Inde per Oneali villam, quo nomine dicta est
Carneæ iam Regis, traiecto flumine Donæ,"*⁶ etc.

Later, in the same campaign of baffling marches and counter marches, Dundee awaited General Mackay (29th-30th April) on the brink of the Cairnamounth: but when his antagonist reached Fettercairn the astute

¹ James Gordon, *History of Scots Affairs*, vol. ii. p. 212.

² Spalding, *Memorials of the Troubles*, vol. i. p. 136.

³ Wishart, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

⁴ Spalding, *op. cit.*, vol. ii. p. 472.

⁵ Wishart, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

⁶ *The Grameid*, ed. A. D. Murdoch, p. 50. The etymology offered for Kincardine is a remarkable effort.

Jacobite commander retired, and, instead of crossing the Dee at Kincardine O'Neil, like Baillie forty-four years before he turned up the valley to Birse, as if proposing to descend upon the Lowlands by one of the higher passes. In the event, however, he forded the Dee at Aboyne and marched north *viâ* Kildrummy and Strathbogie to Gordon Castle.¹ On the 30th, Mackay, crossing the pass from Fettercairn, forded the Dee at Kincardine O'Neil, and marched directly northward to Strathbogie.² The importance of the Cairnamounth Pass as the main

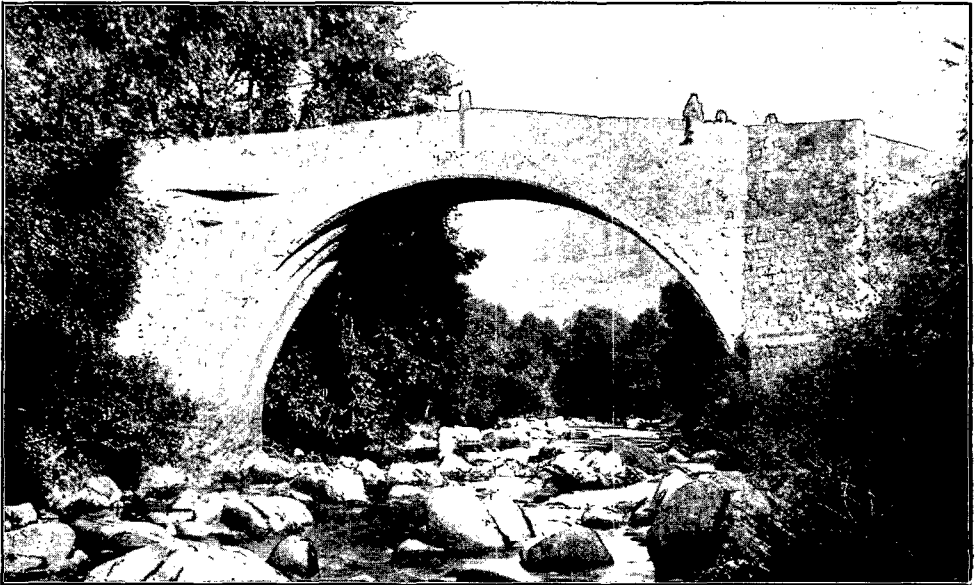


Fig. 6. Bridge of Dye.

highway to the north was signalled, in or before 1681, by the building of the present stone bridge (fig. 6) where the road crosses the Dye.³

It may be remarked, in regard to the Forest of Birse Mounth and Cairnamounth passes, that each before descending on the main valley of the Dee has to cross the lateral glen of its tributary, the Feugh; and in both cases the crossing was sentinelled by a castle. The lonely little tower of Birse, a late structure, dating from about 1600, watches the upper crossing, while the lower is guarded by the *motte* at Strachan (fig. 7), which is said to have been a castle of the Durwards,

¹ *The Grameid*, ed. A. D. Murdoch, pp. 51-2.

² *Memoirs of the Scots War*, p. 13.

³ *Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland*, vol. viii. p. 364.

and in 1351 was held by Sir William Keith, Marischal of Scotland, who in that year grants a charter "*apud mansum capitale nostrum de Strathekin.*"¹

The Cryne Corse Mounth from Fordoun to Durris has been eclipsed in modern motoring times by the diagonal Slug Mounth road from Stonehaven over Cairnmonearn to Banchory;² but in the Middle Ages the Cryne Corse was a very important route, so important, in fact, that in the thirteenth century the Dee was spanned by a bridge at Durris.³ It was the main road over the Mounth from the north-eastern



Fig. 7. The Castlehill of Strachan.

part of the Mearns. The Cryne Corse was adopted by Edward I. in his northward progress in 1296, his stages being: Wednesday, 11th July, Montrose to Kincardine Castle; Thursday, 12th, to Glenbervie; Friday, 13th, to Durris; "a manor among the mountains"; and Saturday, 14th July, to Aberdeen.⁴ Those who used this route crossed the Dee by a

¹ See A. Jervise, *Memorials of Angus and the Mearns*, ed. J. Gammack, vol. ii. p. 171: ref. to Nisbet's *Heraldry*, 2nd ed., vol. ii. Appendix, p. 238.

² The Slug road crosses the Cryne Corse west of Cairn-mon-earn. In the Middle Ages there was no direct road from Stonehaven to Durris, nor to Banchory, which was not on a main north highway. For the origin of the Slug Road, see Crab Watt, *Mearns of Old*, p. 156, note 2.

³ *Exchequer Rolls*, vol. i. p. 12.

⁴ For the authorities, see *supra*, p. 120, note 5.

well-known ford and ferry at the Mills of Drum. In 1644, previous to the battle of Aberdeen, Montrose came over the Mounth by the Cryne Corse pass, and on 11th September forded the Dee at Mills of Drum: on 17th October of the same year he also used this route.¹ It was also traversed by him in the reverse direction, coming from Craigton on the Hill of Fare to Fordoun in the Mearns, in July 1645, after the victory of Alford.² And it was by the Cryne Corse that he was taken south from Pitcaple Castle to Fordoun and Kinnaird Castle, on the 13th, 14th, and 15th May 1650, on his last sad journey to the scaffold at the Mercat Cross of Edinburgh.³ The Cryne Corse Mounth, and the ford at Mills of Drum, explain the positions of the *motte* at Durriss and the Tower of Drum, opposite each other on either side of the river.

Little need be said here of the Elsick Mounth, used by the Romans in their march from Raedykes to Normandykes, or of the Cowie Mounth, the direct coastal road to Aberdeen. Probably because of the long and dreary moorland waste which it traverses, this route does not seem to have been so much in use as we should expect: for example, it was neglected in favour of the Cryne Corse by Edward I. in 1296. It is marked, however, in the fourteenth-century map already mentioned. In July 1242, David de Bernham, Bishop of St Andrews, in the course of an episcopal progress through the Mearns, went from Strachan over the Cairnamounth to the Dee Valley and thence to Aberdeen, returning by Nigg and the Cowie Mounth, as appears from the churches which he dedicated *en route*.⁴ At Cowie the early *motte* castle of the Thaness of Cowie closely adjoins the beautiful little thirteenth-century church.⁵ The Dee was spanned by a bridge near Aberdeen at least as early as 1384.⁶

Our survey has thus, I submit, made it clearly evident that the early castles of the Dee valley are sited with reference to the débouchures of the Mounth passes. Their strategical significance in relation to these passages is, to my mind, unmistakable. I do not, of course, contend that the whole scheme of these castles was laid down on one occasion and by a single master mind: I postulate no medieval Vauban in Mar. The castles arose naturally and inevitably out of the political and geographical

¹ Spalding, *op. cit.*, vol. ii. pp. 405, 423. Colonel John Buchan, in his magnificent biography of Montrose, very truly remarks (p. 391): "As a strategist he showed an extraordinary eye for country. The tangled passes of the Grampians, little known except in patches to the different clans, were grasped by him as a geographical whole, and he arranged his marches accordingly."

² Wishart, *op. cit.*, pp. 113-4.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 318, note 40.

⁴ *Statuta Ecclesie Scoticanæ*, ed. J. Robertson, Preface, p. ccxcix.

⁵ About 25 feet of the lowest member of a heavy splayed base-course, in large freestone blocks high in the course, is still visible on the landward side of the *motte*.

⁶ G. M. Fraser, *The Story of the Bridge of Dee*, p. 5.

circumstances. None the less I contend that the use of the word "strategy" is fully justified in discussing the matter. I may be allowed in this connection to refer again to remarks which I made in my communication to the Society, read last year.¹

We have now to consider the routes northward from the Dee valley through the interior of Mar, and to inquire how far the principle of a strategic siting of castles may be applied to these.

From the western group of Mounth passes the roads through Mar towards Moravia were all controlled by one dominating feature: the bottle-neck of open country² leading through from upper Donside to Strathbogie, between the mountain bastions of the Cabrach on the west and the Correen-Bennachie range on the east. Through that gap lies the only level and convenient access to the north: towards it, accordingly, all the roads from the western Mounth passes inevitably converged. This fact, and this fact alone, explains the position of Kildrummy Castle. It is the strategic centre of Mar. On any other view, as I remarked last year, so powerful a fortress, placed near the head of a narrowing river valley in a remote district, would be utterly meaningless, and indeed absurd. We need not doubt that it was in view of the strategic situation as I have explained it, that Bishop Gilbert de Moravia, during the final pacification of the recalcitrant district beyond the Spey, replaced the little *motte* castle which was the early local administrative centre at Kildrummy by the great stone castle on a new and more advantageous site—a castle which would be the capital residence of the Normanised Mormaer of Mar who had thrown in his lot with the new order, and an imposing citadel of the royal power benorth the Mounth. The rightness of Bishop Gilbert's choice was vindicated by the important part which Kildrummy Castle played in the Wars of Independence. It may further be remarked that Kildrummy is exactly half way between the ancient episcopal city of Brechin, at the southern outlet of the Fir Mounth, Forest of Birse Mounth, and Cairnamounth passes, and the royal burgh of Elgin, which with its cathedral and its castle was the outpost of the central authority and of Anglo-Norman civilisation in the middle of the

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. lxii. p. 37, note 5.

² This remarkable gap appears to be mainly due to the inferior weathering resistance of a long outlier patch of Old Red Sandstone deposits, extending from Strathbogie southward as far as Glaschuil Hill, between Kildrummy and Towie; bounded to the eastward by the andalusite mica-schists of the Correens, and on the western side faulted down against the metamorphic complex of the Cabrach. In these Old Red deposits occur the beds of fine-quality freestone—grey, yellow, and red—out of which Kildrummy Castle is built. This stone was used for superior architectural work throughout Mar in medieval times: it is found, for example, at the churches of Monymusk, Auchindoir, Kincardine O'Neil, and Tullich, in the castles of Coull and Kindrochit, at the Peel of Fichlie, and on the castle island in Loch Kinnord.

Lesmoir¹ the name at all events suggests an equally early origin. This was evidently the route by which the army of Malcolm Canmore, after the defeat and death of Macbeth at Lumphanan in 1057, next year continued their advance against Moray, a movement which led to the fight at Essie (17th March 1058), in which Macbeth's stepson, Lulach the Fatuous, was slain.² By this route, also, in the reverse direction, probably came the main army of Edward I. from Inverharach — "*Ynterkerache, ou il out troys mesons sanz plus en une valeie entre deux mountayns*"—to Kildrummy, on his return march in 1296; but Bishop Anthony Bek's detachment appears to have gone by the more usual road through Strathbogie.³

Let us now retrace our steps and study the convergence of roads from the western Mounth passes towards Kildrummy Castle. From the Cairnwell and Kindrochit Castle the route to Kildrummy is well ascertained (fig. 9). It was that afterwards adopted by the Hanoverian military engineers when they laid out this section of the great north road in 1753. Down to a point opposite Balmoral Castle the road hugged the north bank of the Dee, then it struck off to the right up into the hills in a north-easterly direction, crossed the Gairn at Bridge of Gairn, and made its way over the moorland watershed to the headwaters of the Don at Corgarff Castle, from which an easy descent was available

date. My view has since been challenged by Mr W. Mackay Mackenzie, who writes (*The Medieval Castle in Scotland*, pp. 155-6) that James Douglas of Balvenie, *circa* 1420, "we may confidently infer, was the first builder of Balvenie Castle."

I am now able, however, to bring forward proof that there was a castle at Balvenie at all events at the very beginning of the fourteenth century, and that, as various old writers have said, it belonged to the Comyns. The proof exists in a docket of restitution granted by Edward I. at Stirling, 4th May 1304, printed in *Documents and Records illustrating the History of Scotland*, ed. Sir Francis Palgrave, vol. i. p. 288—restoring to John Comyn, Earl of Buchan, the castles of Glamis and Morthelagh. Balvenie Castle is in the parish of Mortlach, and is undoubtedly the castle referred to. For Comyn's intromissions with the revenues of Mortlach see *Proceedings*, vol. lviii. p. 46.

In view of this evidence I must adhere the more strongly to my view, based on architectural evidence, that the curtain wall at Balvenie dates probably from the thirteenth century. I cannot accept Mr Mackenzie's contention that "the place shows a lay-out of not earlier than the fifteenth century." The addition of *circa* 1550 is doubtless to be taken into the category of Mr Mackenzie's "palace plan," but it is the merest special pleading to assert that it "is probably a reconstruction on the old lines." For such an idea there is not one shred of evidence. If therefore the addition be left aside, we have a simple castle of *enceinte* of quite thirteenth-century type. The texture of the masonry and the style of the plinths also seem to me to point to this date.

¹ *Lesmoir* means the great enclosure or fort. The name may well bear reference to the large oval ditch which surrounds the castle site, and which has an early look. Auchindoun Castle is a fifteenth-century tower, having been built by Thomas Cochran, the favourite of James III, whom the barons hanged over Lauder Bridge in 1482 (see Parson Gordon's *Scots Affairs*, vol. ii. p. 216): but it stands within the banks and ditches of a remarkable prehistoric hill-fort.

² See *Proceedings*, vol. lx. p. 274.

³ If this is the meaning to be assigned to the entry in the journal of Edward's movements:— "*et levesque de Duresme ou sa gent renvoia outre les mountz par un outra chemyn que il mesmes ne ala*"—Stevenson, *Documents*, vol. ii. pp. 29-30.

down the strath to Kildrummy; while, for those who wished to make their way directly northward, the Lecht road opened an arduous

SKETCH MAP TO ILLUSTRATE THE HANOVERIAN OCCUPATION OF WESTERN ABERDEENSHIRE CIRCA 1750.

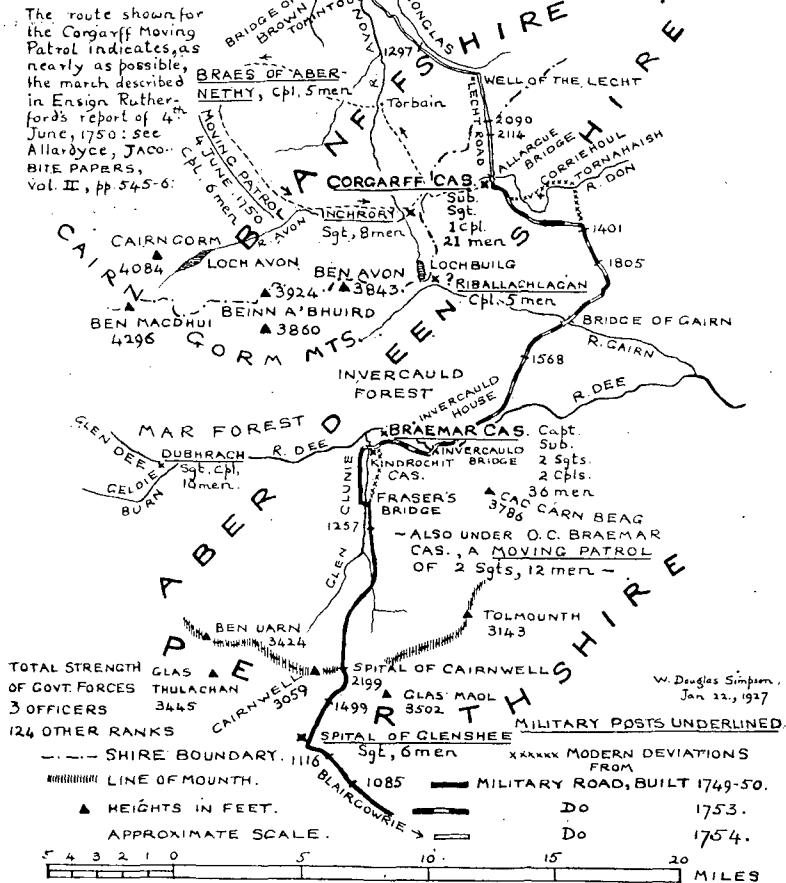


Fig. 9. Map showing the old route through western Mar from the Cairnwell to Strathspye.

access to Tomintoul and Strathavon. This latter route was used by Robert II. in 1384¹ and (as we saw) by General Mackay in June 1690. The present Bridge of Gairn is a Hanoverian structure, but there was

¹ Household expenses incurred in Glenconglas, *Exchequer Rolls*, vol. iii. p. 113.

a previous bridge, as appears from a minute of the Privy Council, 23rd January 1662, which certainly hits upon an original idea for raising money towards the cost of works of public utility. A supplication had been received from the Earl of Mar setting forth "how necessar it was for the good of the whole leidges and people duelling and resorting in these parts of the countrey that the Bridge of Gardin, which is the passag betuixt the Brae of Marr and Kildrumie, should be repaired and rebuilded." The justices of the peace had accordingly

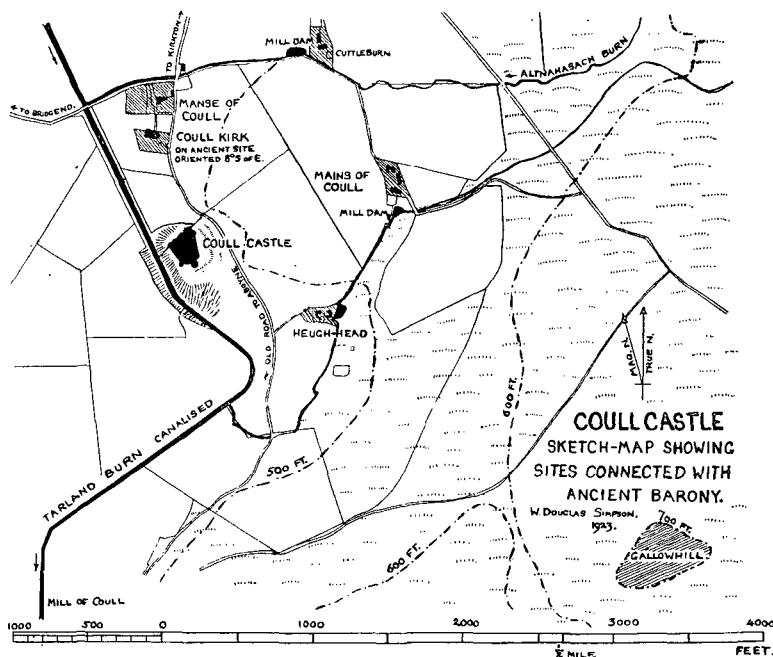


Fig. 10. Map showing the ancient Topography of Coull.

appointed the fines from fornicators within the parishes of Tullich, Glenmuick, Glengairn, Crathie, and Kindrochit to be applied for this purpose; and permission is now given to uplift the money in order to set the repair of the bridge in hand.¹

From the Capel Mounth, Fir Mounth, and Forest of Birse Mounth passes a direct access to Donside was opened by the Boltinstone road, so famous in the old droving days. Coming from the Capel Mounth, the traveller would gain the Boltinstone road *via* Culblean, passing the island castle on Loch Kinnord. If he came over by one of the two

¹ *Reg. Privy Council*, 3rd series, vol. i. pp. 146, 251.

lower passes, and descended on Deeside at Aboyne Castle, his route would be by the castle of Coull, Tarland, and Migvie Castle. (This, as we saw, was the route used by General Baillie in May 1645.) It thus appears that the important group of castles in the Howe of Cromar is quite obviously sited with reference to these northward accesses. The intimate association of Coull Castle and Church with the ancient north road from Aboyne is shown by the Map at fig. 10: the modern road has been transferred to the opposite side of the Tarland Burn. The same is true of Migvie, where church and castle are on either hand of the road. The western or Culblean road comes into prominence in the campaign of 1335, to which we may briefly direct our attention. The circumstances were as follows. David de Strathbogie, Earl of Atholl, acting in the interest of Edward Balliol and the English faction, was besieging Kildrummy Castle, staunchly held in the national cause by the Lady Christian Bruce, aunt of the young King David II. Sir Andrew de Moray, the gallant and capable Regent of Scotland, hastened over the Mounth to relieve the beleaguered fortress. His route is nowhere stated, but it is most probable, from all the facts available, that he crossed by the Capel Mounth. Hearing of his approach, Atholl raised the siege of Kildrummy and hurried southward to meet the Regent. On the evening of the 29th November 1335 he was encamped with his army on the rough hill slope of Culblean, "at the est end, rycht in the way." That same evening Sir Andrew de Moray, coming apparently along the old drove road from Tullich,¹ had established himself at the "Hall of Logy Rothwayne." Where this "hall of Logie Ruthven" was long remained a mystery: but I have no hesitation in accepting the view of Mr G. M. Fraser, who has identified it with the *motte* on the east shore of Loch Davan. "This ancient fort," writes Mr Fraser, "is situated in the old parish of Logie (conjoined in 1618 with the more northerly parish of Coldstone to form the existing parish of Logie Coldstone). The Mains of Logie and Mill of Logie are in the neighbourhood of the fortress, on the same side of the Dinnet-Strathdon road, while Ruthven (Nether and Upper) is also in the neighbourhood, on the opposite side of the road."² The evidence seems to me to be quite conclusive in favour of Mr Fraser's conjecture. In the battle next day Atholl was defeated and slain. The remnants of his army, under Sir Robert Menzies, found refuge in the castle on Loch Kinnord:—

"Thiddyr he went, and in a peil
He sauffit hym and his menyne weil."

¹ See G. M. Fraser on "An Old Drove Road over Culblean," in *Aberdeen Free Press*, 7th June 1921.

² "Loch Davan and its Moated Fort," in *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 9th September 1925.

Next day, however, he surrendered on terms, and took the oath of fealty to the Regent.¹

The same route was used in 1505 by James IV. on his progress northward to his favourite shrine of St Dubhthac at Tain, as appears by certain entries in the Lord High Treasurer's Accounts, dealing with the expenses of the royal pilgrimage:—"Item, the ix day of November [a mistake for October], to the botmen of Loch Canmor, be the Kingis command, xiiijs." And again, on 10th October, "payit to Schir Peter Crechtoun: he gaif, be the Kingis command, to ane blind man in Loch Canmor, vs." The next stage in the journey is revealed thus:—"Item, to ane man that provit the watir of Don befor the King, ixs."²

The later history of the castle on Loch Kinnord may be briefly summarised. It is noted as "the mansion of Lochcanmour" in a charter of Alexander, third Earl of Huntly, dated 27th July 1511.³ In 1646 it was restored and garrisoned in the royal interest by the Marquis of Huntly: but shortly thereafter it was besieged by General David Leslie's troops, and "captain agitant Gordon," who was in command of the garrison, after a few days surrendered upon "honorable conditiones."⁴ A Covenanting garrison was installed in place of the dispossessed Royalists: and the new occupants speedily made themselves cordially detested by the fines and exactions which they levied on the neighbouring loyal gentry and their tenants.⁵ Eventually, on 8th June 1648, an Act of Parliament was passed, at the instigation of the Marquis of Argyll, by which "the fortifications of Loch Kender" are ordered to be "slighted."⁶ No trace whatever now exists above ground of the castle, which stood on the larger island in the loch (fig. 11):⁷ the smaller island is a crannog.

We pass now to consider the northward accesses from the main crossing by the Cairnamounth. From the *tête-du-pont* at Kincardine O'Neil, the direct northward route led in olden times by Lumphanan to Cushnie, and thence by the left to Kildrummy, or directly ahead to Muggarthaugh, to the Don at Boat of Forbes (now Bridge of Alford),

¹ See Wyntoun, ed. *Amours*, vol. vi. pp. 62-70.

² *Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland*, vol. iii. p. 165.

³ *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, 1424-1513, No. 3599.

⁴ Patrick Gordon, *Britanes Distemper*, p. 199: cf. Sir Robert Gordon, *Genealogical History of the Earldom of Sutherland*, p. 537. (Gilbert Gordon's continuation.)

⁵ See *Misc. Spalding Club*, vol. iii. p. 200.

⁶ *Act. Parl. Scot.*, vol. vi. pt. ii. p. 98.

⁷ All the available information as to the structural remains of this castle is gathered together in J. G. Michie's *Loch Kinnord*, 2nd ed. pp. 92-3. A deed of 7th November 1519 is done "*apud lie Peir de Lochcanmor*," *Antiquities on the Shires of Aberdeen and Banff*, vol. iv. p. 344. Dr Kelly informs me that he has observed pieces of freestone on the castle island. The nearest freestone quarry was, of course, at Kildrummy.

and thence over the Suie Hill to Clatt, Kennethmont, and Huntly.¹ The importance and frequent use of this direct route are amply authenticated from the seventeenth century onwards: in 1689 General Mackay describes it as "the common road from the south to the north";² but whether it was such a favourite road in the Middle Ages is less clear, and the absence of any *mottes* or early castle-sites along its line rather



Fig. 11. View of Loch Kinnord, looking north from the Ord Hill. The castle island is seen to the left, the crannog to the right; Loch Davan is visible beyond. The distant hills are part of the watershed between Cromar and Strathdon.

points to the contrary. More probably the usual access held to the left from Kincardine O'Neil to Kildrummy, along the road followed backwards by Edward I. in August 1296. The exact course of Edward's march between the two stages is nowhere indicated: he may have come by Boltinstone, Migvie, and Tarland,³ or equally well by Cushnie, the Church of Leochel, and Lumphanan.

A switch road from the ford at Inchbare held eastward past Castle

¹ See G. M. Fraser, *The Old Deeside Road*, pp. 142-6.

² *Memoirs of the Scots War*, p. 34.

³ This was evidently the route followed outward by Lord Ancrum's column in their expedition against Corgarff Castle, 2nd March 1746—see *Proceedings*, vol. lxi. p. 70.

Maud to Craigmyle and Raemoir, and thence to Midmar and Skene. This road was in ancient days a cross-country route of some consequence, and it doubtless explains the position of Castle Maud in the midst of a moss which must always have been singularly desolate and uninviting for a residence.¹ It further explains the early importance of the ancient house or tower of Skene, which about 1770 is described as "being by all traditional accounts the first built stone house in Marr."²

From the Cryne Corse Mounth the old northward road, fording the Dee by the Mills of Drum, is still in use as the so-called Couper Road, which runs northward past the east end of the Loch of Drum (Park) to Cullerlie, Finnercy, Echt, Skene, Kintore, and Inverurie.³ In connection with this once important road and its switches, the strategic position of Drum Castle becomes of much interest. It has been worked out in detail by Mr William Kelly, LL.D., A.R.S.A., Aberdeen, whose researches are based on many years of close acquaintance with the district. Dr Kelly has kindly furnished me with the following note and annexed Map (fig. 12).

"The castles of Durriss and Drum commanded the fords at Mills of Drum, and Drum those at Dalmaik and Tilbouries. The north-going roads from both groups of fords converged to the Couper Road which skirted the east end of the Loch of Drum (now named the Loch of Park) and the west end of the Loch of Skene, and ran northwards past the castle of Skene to Kintore and Inverurie.

"This road avoided the swampy land north and west of the Loch of Drum, and the great basin of the Loch of Leys, behind which rises the Hill of Fare.

"It is clear that the two principal north-going roads through Mar were (1) the Fir Mounth, from Angus to Kildrummy, the capital of the Earldom of Mar, whence it led at length to Elgin; and (2) the Cairnamounth, from the Howe of the Mearns to Inverurie, the capital of the associated Lordship of the Garioch, whence it ran northwards by Kirktown of Bourtie and Fyvie to Kinedar (King Edward) and to Banff.

"The main line of the Kildrummy road crossed the Dee at Dinnet; the Inverurie road crossed it at Mills of Drum, while a branch from the south-east crossed at Tilbouries.

"It is noticeable that near all these fords, and also at Kincardine O'Neil, are found the remains of very old churches:—the churchyard of Glentanner on the right bank of the river near the fords of Dinnet; Kincardine O'Neil on the left bank; Durriss on the right bank; and Dalmaik (Drumoak) on the left bank. These churches were with intention placed close to the main lines of communication, at important points, and none were more important than the fords.

"I annex a sketch map of Drum and its neighbourhood, showing six miles square.

¹ For Castle Maud see my paper in *Scottish Notes and Queries*, 3rd series, vol. ii. pp. 86-7. No historical particulars of this mysterious ruin seem to be available.

² Sir Robert Douglas, *Baronage of Scotland*, 1798, p. 555; quoting from the Skene Family History, circa 1770—see *Memorials of the Family of Skene* of Skene, p. 4.

³ Fraser, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-100.

“The course of the Dee is shown, and the contour lines are marked at 100-foot intervals—the 100-foot line crossing the Dee below the Durris-Mills of Drum

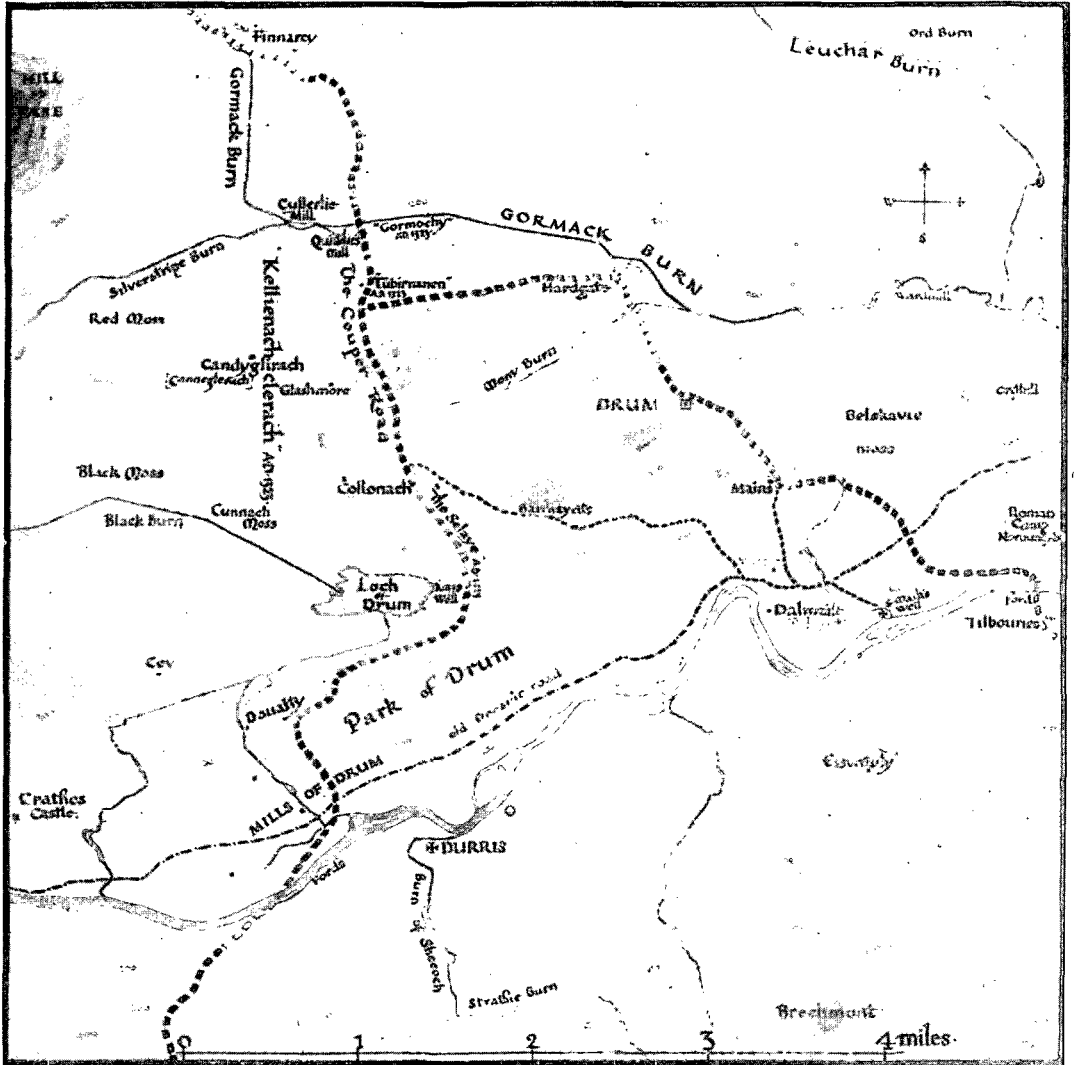


Fig. 12. Map of the Medieval Topography of Drum.

fords. The Loch of Drum is indicated, and the marshy land stretching towards the Hill of Fare. The burn feeding the loch is now known as the 'Black Burn,' but the Celtic equivalent is preserved in the name of the farm, *Doualty*, past

which a burn flows from the loch, supplying power to the Mills of Drum. (The O.S. map names them Mills of Crathes, but they were, and still are commonly, called the Mills of Drum.)

“Near the east end of the loch is the King’s Well—a name on record as far back as 1323.¹

“Skirting the east end of the loch is the ‘Couper Road,’ the drove road used by coupers on their way south, *e.g.* to Paldy Fair, near Fordoun. The road has all the appearance of an early road as far as the bend where it enters the straight stretch that connects it with the present North Deeside Road; but a map of 1784 shows that from the point referred to, it ran on to the fords as shown on my sketch-map. The line shown was formerly the parliamentary boundary between the two shires, and may represent part of the line of enclosure of the Park of Drum.

“Let us now look at the more easterly part of the map. Here lies the Roman Camp, called ‘Normandykes,’ commanding the ford at Tilbouries. Towards the north-west there still remains a stretch of roughly causewayed track (fig. 13), now almost disused, that led to rising ground (where there are tumuli) whence a fine prospect of Durris and Strachan is obtained; and thence down to a small stream from the old moss. The place-names, Bogton, Moss-side, and Mossend, indicate the nature of the low-lying ground: but there is no moss in this part of Drum now, although until so recently as about 1868 there was what to my recollection seemed an extensive peat moss, north of the railway, towards Belskavie.

“The line of the existing track and roadway is ancient as far as the Mains of Drum; from thence it led almost directly towards the castle. At the top of the ‘Cowie Hill,’ north-west of the castle, the old road appears again, and runs through the remains of the ancient Forest of Drum to the Hardgate, and on to the Couper Road.

“The Mony Burn, at the ‘back of Drum,’ is apparently the ‘moss’ burn: the ground through which it flows is boggy. The name ‘Drum’ is itself, of course, Gaelic: ‘*le drom*’ is a well-defined uplifted ‘back,’ especially as seen from the north and north-west.

“Retracing our steps to the ford, we find another old road—also but a track—passing from the old church by the ‘Cadgerfeerd’² to Moss-side, thence up the hill to the ridge behind the present church, then westward to ‘Barras Yetts,’ and so on to the Couper Road. This road is still traceable, practically all the way, from the old kirk of Dalmaik to the Couper Road: a part of it coincides with the old North Deeside Road, called the Braemar Road on the eighteenth-century map already referred to, broken fragments of which appear at Cults, Bielside, Culter, Drum, Park, and Crathes. Probably the name ‘Barras Yetts’ refers to a gate in the enclosure of the Park of Drum.

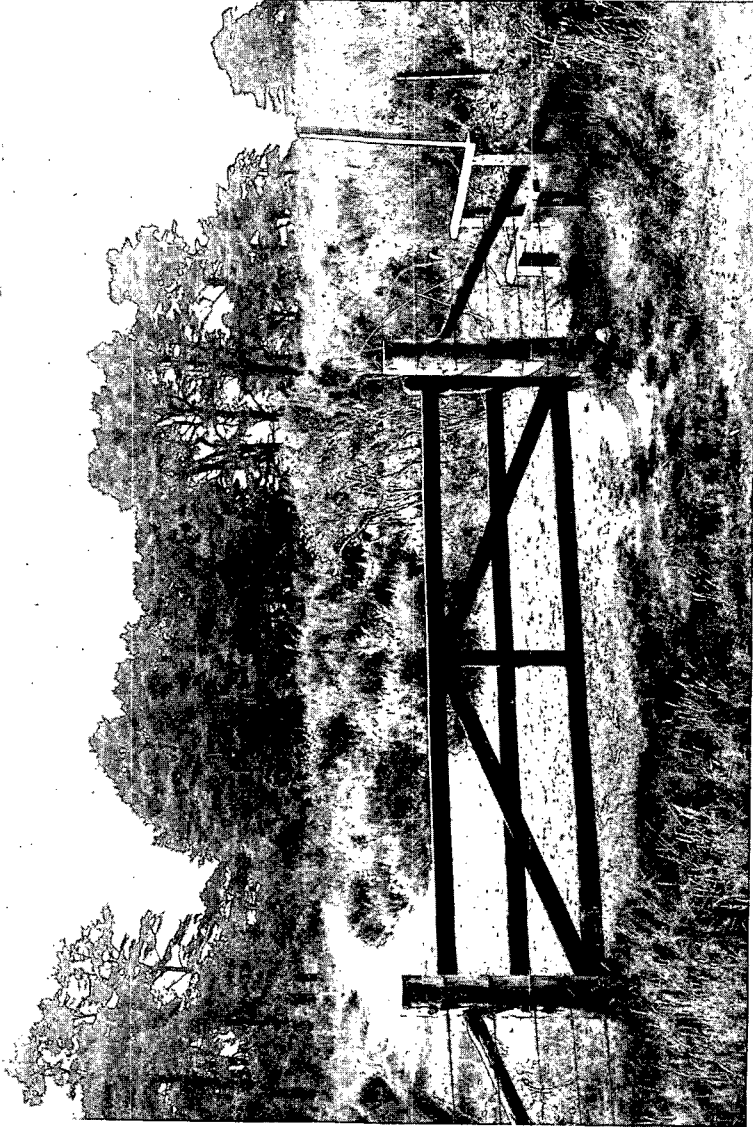
“We thus see that Drum Castle was placed to command the principal passages of the Dee on lower Deeside, on the north-going roads to Skene, Hallforest, Kintore, and Inverurie: for all the roads from the south-west converge to a ford south-west from the castle, while the roads from the south-east crossed the Dee to the south-east of the castle, which was placed in the middle of the area bounded by these roads on the north side of the river.

“The castle of Durris stood near the fords at Mills of Drum, on the south side of the river, to command the roads from the south-west, and the main line of the Couper Road.

¹ *Fons regius* in Bruce’s charter to Alexander Burnard; see *The Family of Burnett of Leys*, ed. J. Allardyce, p. 154.

² *The marefurde* in *Nota limites de Dulmayok*; see *Registrum Episcopatus Aberdonensis*, vol. i. p. 246.

“I have already referred to the proximity of the old churches to the fords. The kirk of Dalmaik is at the extreme south-east corner of the parish, where



[Photo J. B. Philp.

Fig. 13. The old road from Tilbourries ford. View looking north, taken from its junction (at the stile) with the Old Deeside Road.

four parishes meet—Maryculter, Durris, Peterculter, and Drumoak. It lies in a gushet of land jutting into Peterculter, and certainly was placed there without any reference to parish boundaries, probably centuries before there were

parishes. Another little point of interest is the location of the present smiddies. There is, or was recently, one at Hardgate, and another at the junction of the Couper Road with the North Deeside Road. I can imagine that their history goes far back.

“One word more on the locality. The antiquity of Kinnord as a settlement is well known: but the area that we have been considering may also have been peopled by a considerable tribe at as early a time as Dinnet-Kinnord was.

“When we think of the natural features, the fords, the peat mosses, the three lochs (Leys, Drum, Skene), the early fortifications at the Barmekin of Echt, the crannog on the Loch of Leys, the tumuli at Drum, the short cist burial at Balbridie, stone circles at Durriss and Midmar, the sculptured stone at Park, it is clear that we have here features and evidences of a kind similar to those found in the neighbourhood of Dinnet. And we may not forget that probably much has been gradually obliterated in the more cultivated district.

“But whether or not Drum can vie with Kinnord in antiquity, it was a place where men settled in very remote times; and it is remarkable that its importance, like that of the more westerly centre, should have continued throughout the Middle Ages—mainly, I believe, in both cases because of nearness to practicable fords, and because through each ran a great highway, the western one to the strength of Mar, the eastern to the capital of the Garioch.”

If our northward traveller chose to turn the eastward flank of the Mounth by the Cowie Mounth Pass and Aberdeen, his route thereafter was well defined and presented no obstacles. It was marked by a series of royal castles with their associated burghs, on the strategic disposition of which Mr Mackay Mackenzie has recently commented.¹ From Aberdeen the highroad led by the royal burghs of Kintore and Inverurie, each with its *motte* castle, thence alternatively by the Kirk of Bourtie and Fyvie Castle to the royal castle and burgh of Banff—the route followed by Edward I. in July 1296,² and by Sir James Lindsay a hundred years later; or, in a more westward direction, by the “back o’ Bennachie” to Inch and Dunnideer Castle—the upland capital message of the Earldom of the Garioch—and so to join at the castle of Gartly with the direct northward route from Kildrummy Castle, as described already.

Of the above-mentioned castles, only those of Aberdeen and Kintore were in Mar and so fall within our survey. Kintore Castle has already been dealt with;³ and it is unnecessary to say anything here about the castle of Aberdeen, as its history has been fully set forth by Mr G. M. Fraser.⁴ So early as 1264 there were stone buildings on the site, Richard the Mason being employed in that year at work upon them.⁵ The castle was destroyed after its recapture from the English in 1308.

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 21.

² Edward’s curious divergence to Lumphanan, on Saturday 21st July, was evidently for the purpose of receiving the submissions which are chronicled there.

³ See *supra*, p. 109, note 1.

⁴ *Historical Aberdeen—I: The Castle and the Castle Hill.*

⁵ *Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, vol. i. p. 12.

In a concluding instalment of this paper it is proposed to round off our inquiry by considering systematically the early castles of Mar from an archæological viewpoint. I have to acknowledge the courteous loan of blocks as follows: Fig. 6, from Aberdeen Newspapers, Ltd.; figs. 7 and 13, from the Aberdeen Natural History and Antiquarian Society; fig. 11, from Mr F. C. Diack, M.A. The sketch maps at figs. 2 and 4, and the general map at the end, fig. 14, were drawn for me by Mr J. Fenton Wyness, A.R.I.B.A., F.S.A.Scot. Fig. 1 is taken from my book upon Kildrummy Castle. The general map is, of course, in no way intended to supersede the detailed regional study with O.S. maps which is essential if my thesis and all its implications are to be fully understood. Only by such a close correlation of historical, archæological, and topographical data can we hope in time to work out the details of the Norman penetration of Scotland.

