

ART. XVIII.—*The Military Road in Cumberland.* By  
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*Read at Kirkby Stephen, August 29th, 1901.*

BY the kindness of our member Mr. Booker, F.S.A., I recently became possessed of a copy of the Act of 24. George II. for the construction of the road between Carlisle and Newcastle, commonly known as the "Military Road," or sometimes "Wade's Road." Perhaps a few notes on the subject may be of interest to our members, especially as the names of the Commissioners for both Northumberland and Cumberland are set out at length.

There must always have been a considerable traffic between the east and west coasts, which found its natural course by the low pass over the Pennine Chain near Thirlwall. It is the best of the very few practicable passes between the valley of the Tweed and the valley of the Trent, and is nearly at the narrowest part of the island. It is not, however, easy to make out, especially in Cumberland, precisely what line was followed by the traffic of early days. Almost certainly in Northumberland the traffic followed either the mural road which accompanies the Roman Wall, or the old Roman road known as the Stanegate or "Careigate." This may be traced in some parts of Northumberland, and in places it is still in use as a road; but, so far, we have failed to trace it in Cumberland. An ancient road leading from near Irthington to Crosby-on-Eden is marked on the maps as Roman; but this was examined in 1896, and did not seem to be of Roman construction. It appears to have gone on from Crosby by Parkbroom, Linstock, and Rickerby to Carlisle. Search was made in other places for the Roman road, but without success. (These *Transactions*, vol. xiv., pp. 423

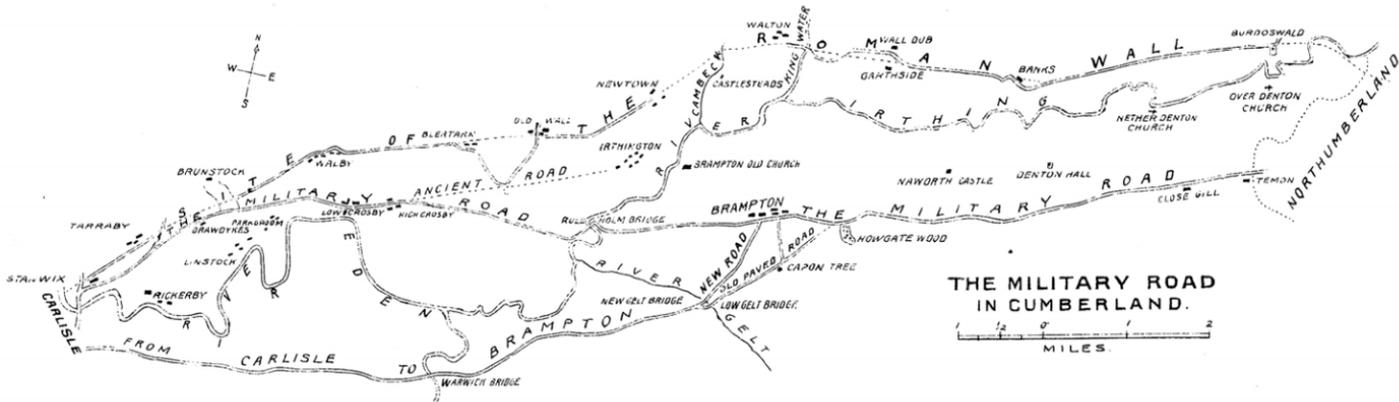
to 426.) It is said that this road was closed about 80 years ago, perhaps at the inclosure of Irthington Common. Lord Carlisle's estate map of 1780 shows the roads here as they now exist.

There was an old pack-horse road through Cumberland which closely followed the line of the Roman Wall, and much of it is still used as a cartway, bridleway, or footpath. From Birdoswald to Banks it is a cart road, for much of the way on the foundations of the Wall; from Banks to Walldub it is represented by a footpath, and from here to Walton either road or footpath closely follows the Wall. At Walton, however, the road diverges from the Wall, though a footpath follows it; and from Newtown-of-Irthington either footpath or bridle road is found as far as the hamlet of Old Wall. Hence to Bleatarn the road makes a considerable detour to the south, but a footpath is said to exist along the Wall; and from Bleatarn as far as the east side of Brunstock Park either cart road or bridle road occupies the site of the Wall, well-marked traces of the ditch being frequently visible just north of the road. From the east side of Brunstock Park to Tarraby the road has now ceased to exist, having been superseded by the "military road," which it would apparently join about Drawdykes, and probably followed the same course to Tarraby. The old road was met with in some excavations in Brunstock Park in 1894. (These *Transactions*, vol. xiii., pp. 456 and 459.) From Tarraby the road still exists as footpath or bridleway to Stanwix, and at Stanwix is probably represented by an old road which leads down the fields towards the Eden from nearly opposite Stanwix Church, apparently to the ancient ford which existed a little above the present bridge, and thus entered Carlisle by the Scotch Gate. This seems to be the road which was followed in early days by the pack-horse traffic.

Another old road exists to the south of Brampton, which, if we can trust a well-known passage in Macaulay's

*History*, was followed by the Judges on circuit and their suite on their way from Newcastle to Carlisle. He says that "the spot where the cavalcade halted to dine, under an immense oak, is not yet forgotten." This was Capon Tree, a little to the south of Brampton; the tree has perished, but the name remains. This road does not seem now to exist east of the road from Brampton to Milton, but from the direction it takes it would seem to have crossed the line of the "military road" about Howgate Wood, a little to the east of Brampton. It probably followed the valley of the Irthing by the two Dentons to Thirlwall. From the Brampton and Milton Road to Low Gelt Bridge it is still paved with round cobbles. From Low Gelt Bridge it appears to have gone by Warwick Bridge to Carlisle, and this is the line shown on Cary's map published in 1818. Shortly after that date the turnpike road from Carlisle to Brampton by Warwick Bridge was made, at which time the New Gelt Bridge was built, and the road thence, which joins the "military road" at the west end of Brampton, was made; it is still called the "new road" by the people of Brampton. The present bridge at Warwick was built between 1833 and 1835, as appears from a tablet on the parapet, and this probably marks the date at which the "new road" was made.

Before the "military road" was made, Brampton appears to have been out of the line of traffic. The late Mr. Whitehead told me that the tradition in Brampton was that the Highlanders in 1745 came "down the lonning," by which is meant the lane which, leading north from the old paved road near Capon Tree, runs directly into Brampton. Evidently they followed the road from Carlisle by Warwick Bridge and Low Gelt Bridge, and it may be fairly presumed that this was the road which was generally used in the first half of the eighteenth century, or until it was superseded by the more convenient "military road."



**THE MILITARY ROAD  
IN CUMBERLAND.**

1 1/2 0 1 2  
MILES

(TO FACE P. 276.)

It is well known that in 1745 General Wade lay with his forces at Newcastle, expecting that the Pretender's army would enter England by the eastern road past Berwick. They, however, turned to the south-west along the Border, and, passing the Esk below Longtown, fell upon Carlisle. Wade was aware of this movement, but in consequence of the difficulty of the roads was unable to reach Carlisle in time to intercept them. After the suppression of the rebellion, in pursuance of the traditional British policy of locking the stable door after the steed is stolen, the Government of the day decided on the construction of the "military road," as it is still called.

The Act contains the usual provisions of Turnpike Acts as to powers, tolls, and penalties; but these do not call for notice. Doubtless many of us can remember the time when the regulations were placarded at all tollgates—in most cases till about 25 or 30 years ago, when Parliament decided to allow the then existing Turnpike Acts to expire. The tollgates on the road from Carlisle to Brampton by Warwick Bridge were, I think, the last remaining in this part of the country; but I believe that some remained later near Cockermouth.

The Act is entitled "An Act for laying out, making, and keeping in repair, a Road proper for the Passage of Troops and Carriages from the City of *Carlisle* to the Town of *Newcastle upon Tyne*."

The preamble recites that "Whereas the making and keeping a free and open communication between the City of Carlisle and the Town of Newcastle upon Tyne, by a Road proper for the passage of Troops, Horses, and Carriages at all times in the Year would be of great use and service to the Publick, and it hath been found by experience that the want of such Road, Passage, and Communication hath been attended with great inconvenience to this Kingdom; And Whereas such road cannot be laid out or the charge of making the same be defrayed otherwise than at the expense of the Publick and

by the Authority of Parliament, but it is apprehended that such Publick road when finished may be supported and kept in repair by proper Tolls and Duties to be raised and collected thereupon for that purpose . . . Be it enacted &c.”

Here follow the names of the Commissioners. Those for Cumberland are:—The Honourable Sir Charles Howard, Knight of the Bath; Sir Philip Musgrave, Sir George Dalston, Sir James Lowther, Sir Hedworth Williamson, Sir John Pennington, Sir Alfred Lawson, Sir Richard Hilton, baronets; the Dean and Chapter of Carlisle for the time being; the Mayor, Recorder, and Aldermen of Carlisle for the time being; Doctor John Waugh, Chancellor of Carlisle; Doctor Edmund Law, Archdeacon of Carlisle; Henry Aglionby (senior), Henry Aglionby (junior), John Brisco, John Brown of Mellguards, Joseph Dacre, Henry Fletcher, Montagu Farrer, William Greenville, Richard Gilpin, Edward Hassell, Wilfrid Lawson, William Milburn, Fletcher Partis, John Stanwix, William Tullie, esquires; Richard Baty, John Brisco, Robert Graham, John Story of Dalston, Charles Smallwood, Robert Wardale, clerks; Joseph Nicholson, William Nicholson Jackson, and Richard Routledge, gentlemen.

The names of the Commissioners for Northumberland follows, but as they fill three folio pages, and are of less interest to us, it would be tedious to relate them. It may be sufficient to say that all, or nearly all, the names of note connected with the county may be found in the list.

After this the course to be followed by the road is set out. It is to be “from the West gate of the Town of Newcastle upon Tyne to East Denton, and from thence by Chapel Houses to Heddon on the Wall, Harlow Hill, Port Gate, Chollerford Bridge, Walwick, Carrawburgh, Whinshields, Clow Gill (Close Gill, in Cumberland), Brampton, High Crosby, Drawdikes, and Stanwix, to the Scotch Gate of the City of Carlisle.”

From this list it would appear that a bridge over the North Tyne already existed at Chollerford; and, no doubt, it was to take advantage of this bridge that the road here makes the remarkable deviation from the line of the Roman Wall, which otherwise it follows with unflinching pertinacity from Newcastle to near Sewingshields. In fact, for most of the distance the road actually covers the foundation of the Wall; the ditch of which may frequently be seen on the north of the road. Doubtless the material of the Wall was largely used in the construction of the road.

Rules for summoning and conducting the business of the meetings of the Commissioners follow, but they are pretty much "common form" and of little interest, except the last, which provided that "the said Commissioners and Trustees shall at all and every their meetings bear and pay their own charges and expenses." So that it appears that then, as now, the service of the public was rather more than gratuitous.

Then follow in detail the powers and duties of the Commissioners and Surveyor, the tolls authorised to be taken, and penalties for omission and evasion; but, as these do not differ greatly, if at all, from the provisions usual in Highway Acts, it is not necessary to notice them. The only point of interest is that, as the road was to be constructed out of moneys voted by Parliament, it is directed that copies of the accounts and of all contracts or agreements entered into by the Commissioners are to be delivered to each House of Parliament within thirty days after the opening of every Session.

It is not stated when the Act received the Royal assent, but the Session is stated to have begun on the 10th November, 1747, and to have been continued by several prorogations to the 17th January, 1750-1, "being the fourth Session of the present Parliament." The Act was printed in 1751.

Not much time was lost in putting the Act into

execution, as is shown by an inscription on Rule Holm Bridge over the Irthing, which records the date. The inscription is on a tablet in a recess of the parapet on the south side of the bridge, and reads as follows :—

THIS BRIDGE  
WAS  
BUILT AT THE  
CHARGE OF THE  
GOVERNMENT  
BEGUN IN 1753  
UNDERTAKERS  
WM. LOWDEN  
JOS. GREENHOW  
JAMES BOWMAN (or Bowes).

The road, which was doubtless planned by military engineers and chiefly with a view to military exigencies, does not appear to have met the requirements of commercial traffic. In Northumberland for much of its course it traverses a difficult and hilly, and very thinly populated country, and for a long distance is now little used and grass-grown. It was found necessary to supplement, or rather to supersede, it by the mail road, which, diverging from the "military road" at Heddon-on-the-Wall, passes by Corbridge, Hexham, and Haltwhistle to Glenwhelt, as it is called in the old road books. It is now more generally known as Greenhead, but the name Glenwhelt is still known, and appears to be applied to the houses which lie on the north-east side of the Tipalt Burn, and are so marked on the 25in. Ordnance map. Here it rejoins the "military road." At a later date the road above mentioned from Brampton to Carlisle by the New Gelt Bridge and Warwick Bridge was made, but to those who know the country it is difficult to see how this road is in any way more convenient than the older "military road."

It is much to be wished that someone would undertake the history of the ancient roads in these two counties.

The work would be of great interest, but it can only be undertaken by a man in the prime of life, as much walking would be necessary, many of the places being inaccessible to cyclists, or even to horsemen. The following may be suggested for examination :—

- 1.—Prehistoric roads.
- 2.—The Roman roads.
- 3.—The old pack-horse tracks.
- 4.—The tracks over the fells, said to have been jealously kept secret by the dalesmen.
- 5.—The drove roads.
- 6.—Smugglers' roads.
- 7.—Corpse roads, of which there are many instances.
- 8.—“ Batch roads ”—*i.e.*, the roads to the manorial mills by which batches of corn were taken to be ground.
- 9.—Tramp roads, perhaps not of least interest ; they seem to have existed almost from time immemorial, and to be still followed by the tramping fraternity.

In conclusion, I must express my obligations to Lord Carlisle for the permission kindly granted to examine his valuable and most interesting collection of old estate maps.

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