

ABERDEENSHIRE.

PARISH OF LOGIE COLDSTONE.

FORT, KNOCKARGEY HILL. This fort is situated at a height of 850 feet O. D. 400 yards N. of Upper Ruthven farmhouse on the broad rounded summit of an isolated hill. At the date of visit the hill was included in the conifer plantation of Knockargey Wood and although it was comparatively clear of scrub the surface of the ground was clothed with long grass, blueberry bushes and patches of heather. The fort is a regular oval on plan measuring about 800 feet from E. to W. by about 390 feet transversely; it is defined by a line which consists in part of a ditch and in part of a scarp. The E. and W. arcs, which run across the summit ridge, appear as ditches up to one foot in depth at the W. and 3 feet at the E. Causeways 15 feet in width cross both these stretches of ditch, and for a short distance on either side of them stretches of low stone banks run along the inner lips of the ditches. As the defences are followed S. from the entrances the banks soon die out and the ditches fade more gradually until the whole of the central portion of the S. stretch is formed only by a scarp, a continuation of the inner scarp of the ditch with a terrace at its foot. Likewise, the N. stretch of the ditch is formed partly by short stretches of ditch and partly by lengths of scarp; at several places fragmentary low mounds are visible on the outside of the excavations forming the N. sector.

The degrees of slope of the N. and S. flanks of the hill are not enough to support the suggestion that a once complete inner mound could have rolled away down them and left so few traces; nor are they so steep as to disallow the digging of a ditch and the construction of a rampart along their contours. The state of the remains is explained, therefore, as representing an incomplete state of work. The ditch and scarp, the former mostly very shallow, may thus represent an early stage in the construction of a quarry from which material for a rampart could be obtained/

be obtained. As both became deeper so the rampart would grow, but only at a point N. of the E. entrance is any part of the ditch as yet as deep as 3 feet. As has been noted elsewhere (of Dunideer) work appears to have started on a second phase of construction in the vicinity of the entrances. No sign of other defensive lines could be seen, but it is possible that a marker trench might exist among the trees and coarse pasture either within or outside the existing remains. No support could be found for Ogston's suggestion that boulders inside the defences formed an inner ring¹.

1. Ogston, A. The Prehistoric Antiquities of the Howe of Cromar (1931), 102.

455032. lxxxi. NE. ("Remains of Supposed Camp").

17th July 1957.

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ABERDEENSHIRE.

PARISH OF OYNE.

FORT, MAIDEN CASTLE, PITTODRIE. This fort stands at a height of 690 feet O. D. 550 yards NW. ^{of} Pittodrie House on a broad, level tongue to N. and E. of which irregular rocky slopes fall away to the easier ground 70 feet or 80 feet below, while to the W. uneven wooded land descends more gently towards Boghead farmhouse. The structure consists of a stone wall within a rampart and ditch, the wall enclosing an oval area which measures 80 feet in length from SE. to NW. by 65 feet trans-:versely. Only a low mound of stones about 12 feet in width now represents the wall, and no facing stones could be seen. The entrance is in the S., a modern break occurring some 10 yards W. of it. The wall was built on a slight elevation and the rampart and ditch lie at the foot of this. The former consists of a low rubble mound which, where best preserved, in the W., attains to a height of 1 foot 7 inches above the level of the base of the elevation upon which the wall stands and to 5 feet 6 inches above the bottom of the ditch which here lies 3 feet below the surface of the ground outside. The rampart and ditch each measure 12 feet in width.

The bay in the crest of the steep E. flank of the site interrupts the line of the rampart and ditch, and there is nothing to show whether this was originally the case or whether the gap is due to land slip. There is, however, also a gap 60 feet in length in the NE. arc of the rampart although the ditch is continuous. The entrance in the outer works conforms to that of the wall. The interior is planted with trees and contains no recognizable features.

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15th August 1956.

ABERDEENSHIRE.

BARROCH INSCH.

FORTS, HILL OF DUNNIDEER. The Hill of Dunnideer, one mile W. of Insch, rises only 400 feet. from the valley of The Shevock to attain a height of 876 feet. O. D. but its situation relative to the country in the vicinity is such that it commands an extensive view in all directions, especially to the E. To the observer on Barra Hill, twelve miles to the E. and halfway to the coast, the Hill of Dunnideer, despite its comparatively small size, takes its place among the conspicuous group that includes the Tap o' Noth and the Mither Tap of Bennachie. The remains of five separate lines of defence can be observed on the hill ^(Fig.) it will be convenient to describe each separately before an attempt is made to determine the nature of the structure or structures of which they form part. The innermost, crowning the oval summit of the hill, ^(A on the plan) is a highly vitrified wall which encloses a subrectangular area measuring 220 feet. in length from E. to W. by 90 feet. in breadth. The construction of a stone tower and its appendages within the fort in mediæval times has added a further degree of mutilation to the ravages of time, so that no detail of the ~~characteristics of the~~ wall can be observed. It is possible that the depression about 10 feet. in diameter that lies immediately E. of the tower might have been the well of the fort. There are no surface indications that suggest where the entrance through the vitrified wall originally lay. The next line of defence ^(B) lies at distances which vary between 80 feet. and 20 feet. from the vitrified wall. Surrounding an area 360 feet. in length and 150 feet. in breadth, it consists of a ruinous stone wall most of which is now represented by a stony scarp 12 or 15 feet. in width and about 4 feet. in height. The S. section, which lies along the steeper flank of the hill, is represented by a mere crest-line. The SW. arc is breached by a gap some 20 feet. wide, the/

the S. side of which is bordered and covered by a short continuation to the W. ^{from} ~~and~~ the S. section of the rampart. It is possible that this entrance was used, if indeed not made, in the mediæval period. In the space between the E. arcs of this rampart and the vitrified wall is a stoney mound 60 feet in length, up to 12 feet in breadth and ² ~~two~~ feet in height, immediately E. of which are two broad quarry ditches. Nothing exists to show what relation, if any, this complex bears to the other remains.

The third line of defence ^(C) is a fragmentary rampart which runs round the E. and N. faces of the hill at distances varying between 50 feet and 10 feet from the rampart ^{B.} ~~just described.~~ The E. arc, 230 feet in length, appears as a slight scarp, while a similar length of the adjacent N. section takes the form of a narrow terrace, possibly originally a marker trench (see below). The NW. arc, 150 feet in length, shows as a mere crest, ^{at all} and no remains can be distinguished along the SW. or S. faces of the hill. If complete this rampart would have enclosed an area measuring about 470 feet in length by about 230 feet in breadth.

The fourth rampart ^(D) lies lower down the hill at distances varying from 130 feet to 40 feet from ^{C.} ~~the third.~~ It encloses an area measuring 700 feet in length and 430 feet in breadth but was clearly never completed. The remains show that the line of the rampart was first marked out as a shallow trench with the spoil on the outer lip; long stretches of work at this stage can be seen as terraces on the N. and S. sides of the hill. Work was then ^{begun} ~~started~~ on building up the rampart, starting on either side of the entrances represented by gaps in the E. and W. arcs (cf. Durnhill). This phase entailed digging a quarry ditch some 20 feet outside the marker trench and throwing the material thus provided up on to the natural hill slope between the/

the two trenches. At the same time the material quarried from the back of the marker trench was thrown forward and thus a rubble rampart began to take shape. The remains of the uncompleted rampart S. of the W. entrance now stands at best to a height of 12 feet above the bottom of the quarry ditch and to ~~one~~ ¹ foot above the bottom of the marker trench.

The fifth rampart ^(E) lies at distances varying from 150 to 50 feet from ~~the first~~ ^D, according to the disposition of the contour of the hillside, and encloses an area measuring 1,000 feet in length and 600 feet in breadth. This rampart is represented entirely by a marker trench, no trace of work of the second stage being visible. The W. entrance conforms to that of ~~the fourth~~ rampart ^D, but the E. one, together with stretches of the marker trench on either side of it, has been obliterated on the surface by rig and furrow ploughing.

It will be seen that the outer three ramparts ^A all include stretches of marker trenches, and that as far as can be detected work of the next structural phase was started on the median ~~one~~ ^D. The fact that the work was begun in this way shows that the builders of this one, and probably those of the other two, were starting to erect heavy rubble ramparts possibly faced or supported with wood or stone revetments and with external ditches. The other two defences, however, consist of the vitrified wall and the very ruinous but recognizable stone wall immediately outside it. Nowhere do the various lines of defence overlap nor are there any obvious points at which their relationship to each other is manifest. However, in view of the similarities in their present appearance, the likelihood exists that the outer three may represent an uncompleted fort of three ramparts and that the inner two were later than and independent of this. It is possible that the inner two represent two successive phases, the former consisting solely of the stone wall and the latter of the vitrified wall; but it is also possible that these two represent one

one phase in which the inner, vitrified, wall was covered by an outer one which may or may not have had timber reinforcements.

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Dummidon -

To Cosmos Gordon 9. XII. 63

These remains appear to represent (i) a complete but vitrified oblong fort, probably with an outwork (B), and (ii) an incomplete trivallate defensive system. The choice of two interpretations is clear. On the one hand, it could be supposed that the oblong fort was built on a hill already furrowed with abandoned, incomplete defences — these having been abandoned either as a result of the arrival of the builders of the oblong (vitrified) fort, or at a date prior to this. On the other hand, it could be supposed that the unfinished multivallate work (and other unfinished works in the general vicinity?), being of a sophisticated design embodying the principle of defence in depth, was part of a hasty scheme of resistance to an enemy who, in the ~~event~~^{event}, either forbade their completion in the light of his victory — or rendered it unnecessary in view of his defeat or withdrawal. In North Britain as in the South, multivallate defences have been shown to be a late pre-Roman feature, and there is no reason why these should be exceptional. At the same time, there is justification in saying that the timber-laced fort may have been constructed at an earlier date than that

Six of the seven unfinished forts referred to, of which Dunnideen is one, lie in the 80 miles between Central Strathmore and Spey Bay, in territory where hill forts are scarce although the land is good. They include the unfinished hill fort on Kinturney Hill, Angus, which with an area of $16\frac{1}{2}$ acres is by far the largest N. of the forth. This, and examples at Knockargetty Wood, Aberdeenshire, and on Durn Hill and Little Conval, Banffshire, occupy new sites; while the circumstances prevailing at Dunnideen (the apparent refortification of an occupied site) occur again at the White Cairn, Angus. It is possible that this great stone-walled (probably timber-laced) fort, and the smaller stronghold at Dunnideen, were selected to be further defended for the emergency by the potentates residing in them, or ruling from them, - and that other local rulers decided that defences were now required in places far from existing hill forts - as are the Banffshire sites and Knockargetty Wood. Whatever the truth may be, it is difficult not to equate the emergency with the advance of the Romans from Strathmore to the Spey; and the defeat at Mons Graupius for the abandonment of the works, which thereafter remained as memorials to a policy of too little and too late.