

Reports and Transactions

MR. GEORGE MACDONALD read a paper (Jan. 21) on the excavations recently carried out by Mr. Whitelaw of Gartshore at the Roman station on the line of the Vallum of Antonine at Bar Hill, near Croy. After indicating the obvious strategic importance of the position to troops holding the line of the Forth and Clyde isthmus, he referred briefly to the appearance presented by the fort when visited and described by Gordon nearly two centuries

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ago. Gordon spoke of the vestiges of old buildings as being more conspicuous here than in any other Roman camp he had seen in Scotland. Before Roy's time these vestiges had largely disappeared, and for many years practically nothing at all was visible above the surface. Until Mr. Whitelaw took the matter in hand, our knowledge of the station was limited to the little that could be gleaned from Roy. Fourteen months ago digging operations were commenced, under the direction of Mr. Alexander Park, with Mr. J. M'Intosh as master of works. The explorers began by opening up the centre of the camp, and on the first day were rewarded by striking the well, of which the diameter at the mouth was four feet. But it proved to be 43 feet in depth, and was carefully built round from top to bottom with dressed stones. Its main interest lay in the fact that, possibly when the camp was abandoned, it had been made the receptacle for articles too substantial to be speedily destroyed, and too heavy to be easily carried off.

It thus yielded finds which would have sufficed to give the excavations a unique place among recorded explorations of Roman sites in Scotland. To clear it thoroughly was a work of difficulty, and thereafter the general plan of the station and its defences was laid bare. As a rule, the forts on this line abut directly on the Antonine Vallum, which serves as their northern rampart. The station on the Bar Hill is an exception. It lies some 30 or 40 yards to the south, while the Military Way runs in front of it. In shape it is almost a perfect square, the dimensions being 399 feet by 393 feet. It is defended by a single rampart, built of sods resting on a stone base, like the great vallum itself, and showing no traces of the massive masonry found at Castlecary. It has the normal four gates. Outside of the rampart is the usual line of ditches, double on every side save the north. The praetorium had been a substantial structure of stone, and among others whose remains were revealed were the latrines, which lay (as at Castlecary) close to the north rampart, and a group provided with a heating system, apparently baths. Rows of post-holes

probably indicated the soldiers' quarters, and a remarkable feature was that here, as at the gateways, the remains of the wooden posts were in many cases found *in situ*. Beneath and within the camp of Lollius Urbicus, which dates from the second century A.D., there has come to light the outline of an earlier camp, which measures 191 feet by 160 feet, and is thus considerably smaller than its successor. It is rectangular in shape, with a small annexe towards the west, and it appears to have had only a single gate, which opened towards the east. This discovery was due to the insight of Mr. Haverfield, who has throughout been in close touch with the excavators.

The obvious suggestion is that here we are face to face with the handiwork of Agricola, who, according to Tacitus, built a line of forts between the Forth and Clyde in 81 A.D. If this be so, it is a striking testimony to the sound military judgment of Roy, who drew from the detached position of the Bar Hill fort the inference that it was probably one of those previously erected by Agricola. The collection of objects recovered is remarkable. There are many iron implements, masons' chisels, and the like, including a complete bag of workmen's tools, held together in its original shape by corrosion. Two inscribed stones tell that at one time the fort was garrisoned by the First Cohort of the Baetasii, auxiliaries from Lower Germany, who must have been moved up from Maryport, in Cumberland, where we know from lapidary evidence that they were stationed. Hitherto the only regiment associated with Bar Hill was the First Cohort of the Hamii, Syrian bowmen, mentioned on the altar found in 1895. The usual debris of a Roman camp, from ballista balls to children's playthings, is present in abundance. Pottery and leather shoes are specially plentiful. The bones have been examined by Dr. T. H. Bryce, who identified many relics of the shorthorned Celtic ox (*bos longifrons*). Miscellaneous articles include a copper pot, a bell, the leg of a compass, oyster shells, walnuts and hazel-nuts, and four stone busts of singularly rude workmanship. Coins are not numerous, and in date entirely bear out the view that the vallum was abandoned in the reign of Commodus. They present one very curious feature. When the sludge at the bottom of the well was riddled it was found to contain 13 denarii. At first sight these resembled genuine pieces, but proved to be all of pure tin but one. Probably they were shams expressly manufactured for devotional purposes, the custom of throwing money into wells from superstitious motives being in ancient times a very ordinary practice. In conclusion, Mr. Macdonald emphasised the importance of the service Mr. Whitelaw has rendered to early history by these fruitful excavations.

The Historical and Philological Section of the Royal Philosophical Society of Glasgow shews its vitality by its contributions to the *Proceedings*, vol. xxxiv. for 1902-03. Mr. Richard Brown *Philosophical Society of Glasgow* has made a useful study of the early Scottish joint-stock companies, beginning with the incorporation authorised in 1579 of Scotsmen trading in the Low Countries, and particularising the many companies formed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries