

Marginal Land

NAIRN

Raitcastle

Castle Finlay

Dun Evan

Dunearn

NAIRN.

10 15064

PARISH OF CAWDOR.

FORT, DUN EVAN. This fort occupies a rocky eminence which rises from the high ground between the Allt Dearg and the River Nairn to attain a height of 678 feet O. D. It commands a wide view in all directions, including the lower part of the valley of the River Nairn to its mouth at Nairn seven miles to the NE. The oval summit of the rock is comparatively level and measures about 280 feet in length from NE. to SW. by about 95 feet in width. The ruins of a stone wall (I) lie upon it but do not coincide exactly with the whole of its margin, for although the NW. and SE. sections of the two coincide the NE. and SW. arcs of the wall run across the surface of the plateau at a maximum distance of 35 feet from its edges. The wall, which thus encloses an area measuring 195 feet in length by 85 feet in breadth, consists of a grass-grown mound of stones and boulders rising to a height of 4 feet from the ground outside and spreading to between 15 feet and 25 feet in width. No facing-stones could be distinguished in this substantial ruin. The entrance is in the E.

The two almost semi-circular arcs of the margin of the summit plateau which protrude beyond each end of the enclosure formed by wall I are also bordered with enough stones and boulders to show that they were once defended by a stone wall. The remains of this are very slight, particularly along the NE. arc, but are sufficient to show that the ruin of wall I overlies them at the points of contact. It is thus demonstrated that the two arcs, now separated by wall I, originally formed parts of a wall (II) which ran right round the margin of the summit plateau to enclose the whole of this. Wall II was probably never so stout as wall I, and was doubtless robbed of many of its stones to help in the construction of the latter.

The/

The entrance to the enclosure formed by wall II was probably in the E. where the present track comes over the crest on its way to the entrance to the enclosure formed by wall I.

The various elements which comprise the outer defences occur at places lower down the flanks of the rock. On the date of visit, while the upper part of the rock was covered by coarse grass and annual weeds, the lower slopes were to a great extent clothed in scrub, trees and fallen timber, and it was thus not always possible to gain a clear sight of the remains of outer works. Three principal elements however fall to be described. The first is an arc of ruined walling (III), represented by a scatter of stones along a partly artificial crest-line which traverses the NE. flank of the knoll in an arc 130 feet in length. To the NW. the wall and the crest die out on the flank, while to the S. they end at the side of the entrance roadway.

Beyond the road to SE. and S. the flanks of the rock increase in steepness so that for a space of nearly 200 feet no defence was necessary. As the steepness begins to decrease again along the SSE. flank, however, a wall (IV) of similar appearance and situation to all three begins to appear. It runs S. and SW. for about 180 feet, at the end of which it reaches the level of the base of the rock, although the ground continues to fall, albeit less steeply, to the SSW.

While to the N. and NW. the rock rises somewhat abruptly from more gradual sloping ground, to the W. the land below falls for some distance almost as steeply as do the flanks of the rock. Likewise, while the land immediately S. of the rock falls away only gradually, the steep descent to the W. is carried S. in the form of a low cliff. The next element of outer defences of the fort to be considered is another ruinous wall (V) which originates in the thick scrub which/

which covers the crest of the low cliff referred to at a point about 60 feet SW. of the S. apex of the rock. The wall appears as a stoney, often grass-grown, mound which runs N. along the crest of the low cliff and, where this merges with the W. flank of the rock, along an artificial crest formed by an internal quarry ditch to the NW. and N., where the ground beyond the rock begins to slope less and less steeply away, the ruin of the wall becomes more and more substantial until, towards its termination near the side of the access road, an immense quantity of blocks and slabs of stone occurs. This part of the structure ^{was covered} in particularly dense scrub, dead timber and living trees; but it was possible to measure the height of the tumbled debris near the NE. end of the wall V as 14 feet from the lowest courses of some laid facing stones which appear at the base of the mass.

As can be seen on the plan, the NE. end of wall V is connected to the NE. arc of wall III by two parallel lines of ruined walling (VI and VII). One of these (VI) flanks the entrance roadway and the other (VII) lies from 25 feet to 35 feet NW. of it. Both of these consist of **great tumbled masses** of stones and boulders, and there is a corresponding additional weight of debris along the course of wall III between the SW. ends of VI and VII.

The exact nature and identity of the structure or structures represented by the complex made up of the walls VI and VII and the adjacent stretches of V and III is not at once obvious. Although at first sight the almost rectangular complex might, on plan, suggest a ~~round~~ building, this is rendered unlikely by the fact that between walls VI and VII there is a rise of 22 feet between walls III and V. It is possible that walls VI and VII merely represent cross walls designed to strengthen the defences. The great weight of the ruins, and especially the huge mound of wall V as it runs between the NE. ends of VI and VII, gives the observer the impression that the complex was built on/

on a larger scale than were the rest of the walls. The weight of the debris of wall V only attains normal proportions until quite near the end when it rather suddenly increases to the size already remarked. However, an adequate examination of the surface remains must wait until the enveloping living and dead vegetation is cleared from the ruins.

The access road, which runs obliquely up the SE. flank of the rock before turning up through wall II and into the enclosure formed by wall I is bordered along its outer or SE. side by a considerable tumble of stones and boulders. It is possible that these and the roadway represent the original entry and the ruin of a wall designed to cover it; but it is also possible that the stones have first fallen from the various ruins which lie above or NW. of the roadway and have then been cleared off the latter to form a scatter on the slopes immediately below it.

10 15203

NAIRN.

PARISH OF NAIRN.

FORT, CASTLE FINLAY. This fort stands on a knoll that rises ^{the} from 250 feet contour as this crosses the NW. flank of the Hill of Urchany. The knoll dominates the land in its immediate vicinity but the gentle slopes of the hill to E., S. and SW. soon obscure the view in these directions, and it is only to the NW. and N. that the fort commands an uninterrupted prospect, over the lower reaches of the River Nairn to the shore of the Moray Firth at Nairn, four miles distant.

The innermost structure is an enclosure measuring 120 feet in length by 60 feet in breadth which is formed on the summit of the knoll by the ruins of a stoney wall among which a few lumps of vitrified stones were observed. The mound of debris is overgrown with grass, heather and brambles, and no facing stones were distinguished. No clear point of entrance is visible; a modern track breaks into the N. arc of the ruined wall, however, and it is possible that this overlies at least in part the original way in. The summit of the knoll continues S. of the wall for a further 70 feet, but no defences could be seen round the rim of this area.

An outer line of defence encircles the knoll at a level of about 15 feet below that of the ruined wall. This skirts the base of the knoll to NNW., and continues at about the same level across the S. and W. flanks. It consists of a rampart formed from the upcast of a ditch which runs on its inner side (cf. Doune of Relugas). Its line is discontinuous, two gaps occurring in the S. arc and two in the E. The more southerly of the latter coincides with the presence of a vertical gully which runs down from the crest of the summit area to the base of the knoll at a point where there is a water hole. A fifth gap occurs in the NE. arc, and here the line of the bank is broken in/

in such a way that the free ends overlap each other. The ditch, however, is continuous at this point. No definite entrance can be identified, but the ditch and rampart are crossed by the modern track mentioned above.

A low narrow mound about 100 feet in length lies just outside the W. arc of the rampart. It is very slight, and may not belong to the system of defences. Another modern track which branches N. from the one already referred to runs just W. of this slight mound, and it is possible that the latter was made in connection with this.

15997

NAIRN.

PARISH OF DUNEARN.

FORT, DOUNE. This fort occupies a serpentine hill named Doune on the O. S. map which rises to a height of a little over 800 feet O. D. close to the right bank of the River Findhorn, half a mile S. of Bridge of Dulsie. It commands a fairly extensive view in all directions, including the lower part of that section of the valley of the River Findhorn which is known as Streens and which forms a pass to Strathdearn. To N., E. and S. the flanks of the hill are steep but not precipitous, but the approach from the W. is much easier. The summit of the hill must always have been comparatively level, but was doubtless made more so when it was under the plough. The farmer at Dunearn stated that cultivation had ceased in 1906 but until that date had been carried on for some considerable time. As a result of this, in addition to the normal processes of stone robbing and decay, the remains of the fort are slight. The level summit area is, as can be seen on the plan, S-shaped in form, and measures medially almost 900 feet in length from E. to W. by a maximum of 160 feet in breadth. This sinuous area was defended by two parallel walls, both of which are now very ruinous. The inner, built on the natural crest of the hill, reveals solid lumps and masses of vitrification at points towards the E. end of the SE. section (see plan), while over the rest of its length scattered stones and boulders occur in varying degrees of concentration. At certain places a very slight mound occurs along the course of the wall, but the slight nature of this suggests that it probably belonged to the phase of cultivation rather than to that of fortification. The outer wall is represented by a shallow scarp or by a mere crest-line, dotted rather sparsely with stones and boulders and lying about 20 feet outside the crest of the inner wall. The entrance to the fort lies in the SW. arc of the walls, and was/

was doubtless reused when the interior of the fort was cultivated and during the War of 1939/45 when an artillery base was established in the fort.

Among forts with vitrification this one falls into the group of the larger, more open, structures such as Craig Phadraig and the Ord Hill of Kessock rather than with the small, sometimes secondary, structures, such as the Doune of Relugas, Castle Finlay or Dun Evan, distant seven miles to the NE., seven and a half miles to the NNW. and eight miles to the WNW. respectively. While the small structures mentioned seem to represent elements in the easternmost spread of a structural type, the larger forts may rather be aligned with the type stretching SE. from Knockfarril in Strathpeffer into eastern Scotland. Tentatively at least, this structure at Dunearn can be fitted into this group.