

County Louth Archaeological and History Society

Louthiana: Ancient and Modern

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Fig. 1.

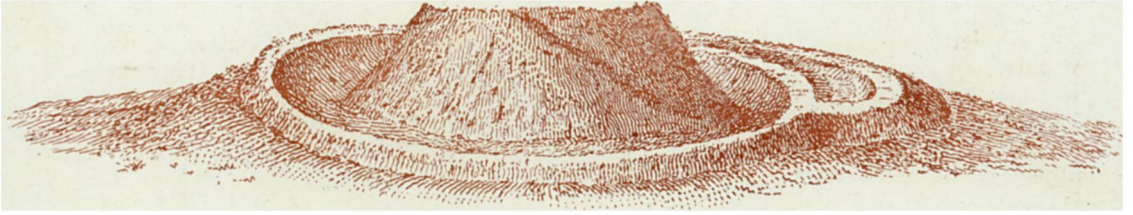
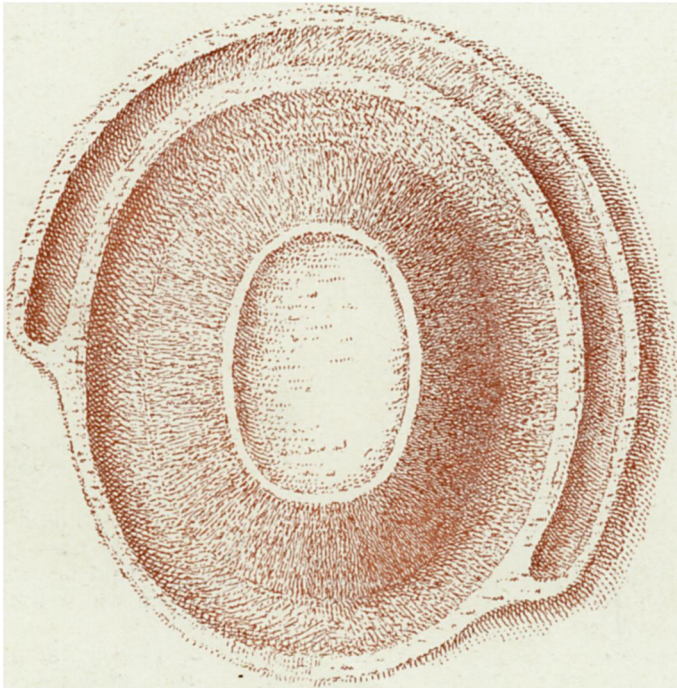


Fig. 2



MOUNT ASH IN 1748.

(Fig. 1—View. Fig. 2—Ichnography.)

Wright's Louthiana, Book I., plate VI.

Louthiana: Ancient and Modern.

MOUNT ASH.

No letterpress description of this Rath is given in Wright's *Louthiana*. It is situated on a high hill ten minutes' walk from the road leading from Dundalk to Castlering, and is best reached from that road by leaving it at Carrickmullen Dispensary and walking over two fields to the right. The rath stands very high and is now covered with trees, but can easily be found, as it forms a conspicuous object in the landscape. The view from the high hill on which Mount Ash stands is the finest in our county, embracing as it does the whole plain of Muirthemhne, the mountains which run out into the Cooley peninsula and the hills of Armagh and Cavan. The rath, when sketched by Wright, was bare of trees and quite perfect in shape, as the illustration shows. Now it is thickly planted and quite overgrown with brushwood and briars, which renders it rather difficult to accurately observe or describe it. It seems to me that at some period subsequent to Wright's survey a considerable part of the top of the rath towards the eastern side had been removed, as the western side is much higher, and towards the east the surface is somewhat broken both on the top and side. A depression also exists in the top surface towards the centre, as if an attempt to dig it out had been made, but abandoned at a few feet in depth. As I have said, the west side is in a much better state of preservation, seems about 30 feet high on this side and the encircling fosse or moat is also much deeper here, while the outer ditch is higher than towards the east. The small outer ditch of half moon shape, shown on Wright's plan, is not now to be seen; it was probably levelled long ago in process of tilling the field. I was told that another rath was situated at Little Ash, quite a short way from Mount Ash, but the late hour prevented my visiting it. I find a theory amongst the country people that a chain of these raths stretches along this part of the county at exact intervals of $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles apart. Can there be any foundation for this idea?

There are three plausible suggestions as to the name:

(a) The townland in which both the duns are situated is very plentifully wooded with ash groves. Hence the name; but this would make the present name of purely English origin, and very modern at that.

(b) $\mu\omicron\tau\alpha \Delta\iota\pi\epsilon$ —"the moat of the hill." One would think that this is the true explanation of the name, for mote ash (Big) and mote ash (Little) are the modern names.

(c) The third is more fanciful, yet rests on the authority of a native Irish speaker, who was born in the district. Mote Ash, she said, meant " $\mu\omicron\tau\alpha \Delta\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota\rho$," and the proper English equivalent was "Mountjoy." Asked why was it so called, she said that $\mu\omicron\tau\alpha \Delta\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota\rho$ was the principal of nine great forts, all of which lay around, and that, because of this prospect pleasing alike to the chieftain's heart and Eire, he called his dun $\mu\omicron\tau\alpha \Delta\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota\rho$.

Its Souterrain.—There is a souterrain in Mount Ash, which runs due west and east. The entrance was discovered only a few years ago, but the passage was found to have fallen in. Doubtless this partly accounts for the subsidence noted on top of the mound; but there were also excavations made there which were rewarded by the finding of a golden spur.

Its present condition.—The removal of the embankments noted above was done at the order of the then proprietor, a Mr. P. Kieran, some fifty years ago. Misfortunes followed thick and fast, if we are to credit local stories.

M. W.

M

RATHDRUMIN OR RATHDRUMMOND.

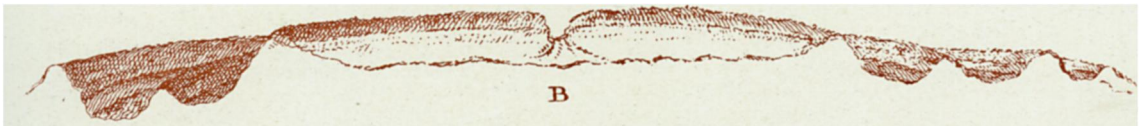
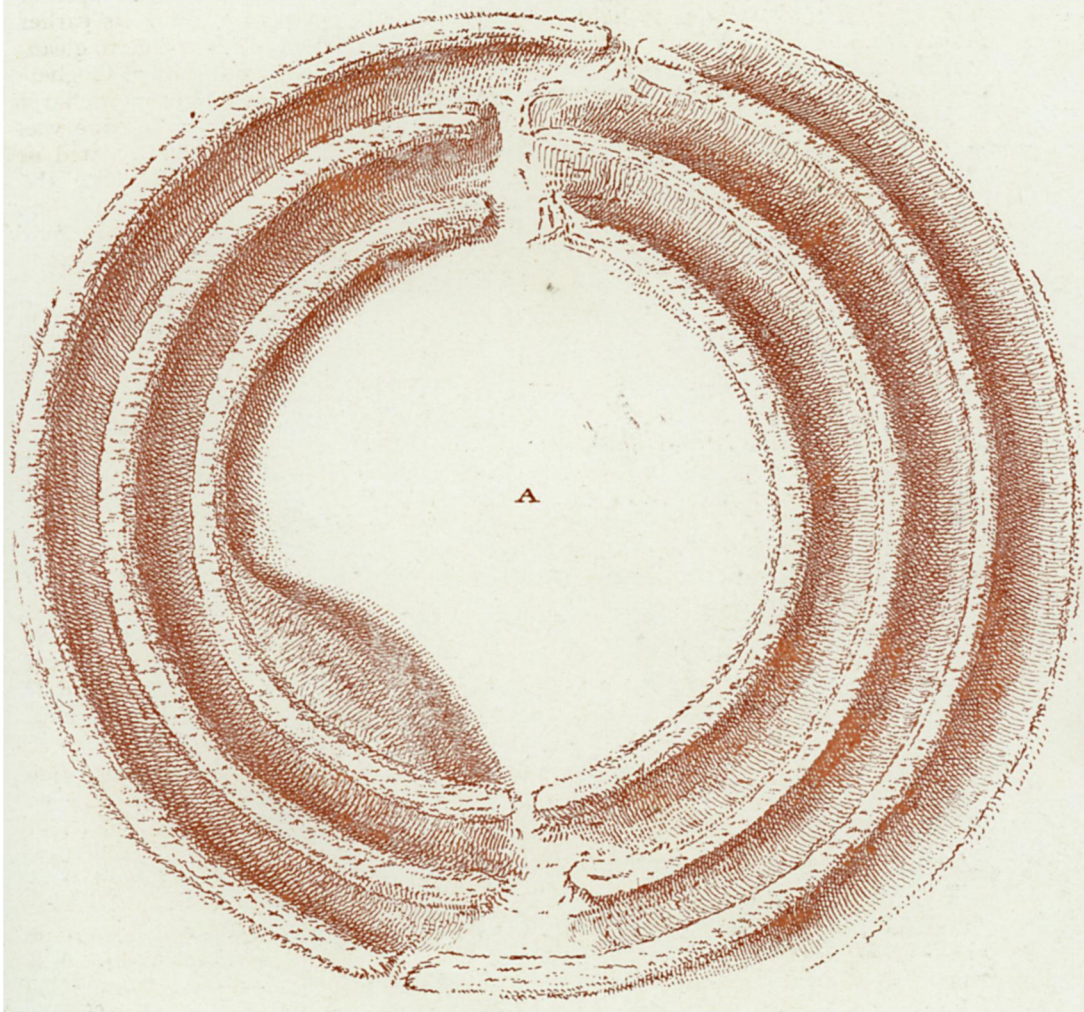
When Mr. Wright made his sketch (vid. plate) of this fort, apparently he was unable to associate it with a legend, much less a history. He dismisses it with the very brief notice "A Danish Fort between Dunleer and the sea." The lapse of 160 years has not brought to light much further information regarding its earlier period nor added anything to its history since. This much only I was able to glean, that there was a cave in it which was used as a cache by a successful band of Clogherhead smugglers; as this was about three centuries back, I suppose there is no harm in "giving away" the secret. My informant was of opinion that the cave was made by the smugglers themselves, and was not a souterrain. It was located in the second embankment, and so must have run underneath it like a cave; the entrance was from the top, and was somewhere on the south side (vid. plate). The rath, or mote, as it is variously called, is pleasantly situated on the eastern spur of a long low-ridge which runs east and west and comprises the present townlands of Rathdrummond and Ardboles in the parish of Walshestown. Rathdrummond means the "rath of the ridge"—*Ráð ríumáin*—hence the origin of the name is pretty evident. Locally the townland is known simply as Rath, and the fort is referred to as "the mote o' rath:" perhaps one could infer from this reduplicate form that the word mote—*móta*—is of a comparatively modern age.

Why Wright calls it a Danish Fort I cannot think. There was a time, of course, when all such structures were believed to be of Danish origin notwithstanding their obtrusively Celtic names of rath, dun, and lios; this was the time when speculation was unchecked by even a rudimentary knowledge of the Irish language, and when gentlemen in the name of archæology laboured in favour of absurd theories, and overlooked the obvious. Petrie had to set aside many fantastic notions regarding our round towers; Westropp, equally an authority, says of our forts, "We may well ask whether the Norsemen on principle adapted a style of fortification abundant in lands where the eagle of Ódin never preyed, and whether the invaders fortified districts in which they never settled, or, so far as our annals go, never overran, while *they erected no such works in their own country* or in Iceland."* Perhaps then, Wright called this a Danish fort in deference to the prevailing idea, or it may be, he merely sought an exception to prove the rule.

It would be difficult and perhaps unprofitable to give a minute description of this fort as it is at present. The middle embankment though much beaten down and at one place levelled to make a cartway to the enclosure, is still in existence; the outer one is partly removed, but where this is so it has been replaced by a hedge; the inner one which formed a border or breastwork to the enclosure is also yet to be seen though much worn away. Between the middle and outer rampart where the latter yet remains untouched there is a deep fosse; its sides are precipitous and contain a volume of water about six yards wide (now) from two to three feet deep; the floor of the inner trench was on a higher level by about six feet. The flat space of the enclosure is on a level with the ridge outside. It is worthy of note that on its eastern side the inner embankment develops a great thickness and considerable height, shewing apparently the remains of a mound not unlike what appears on the western side of Greenmount, near Kilsaran, and on the south-western side of Mount Bagnal in Cooley. Including embankments, fosses and the enclosure, this rath occupies almost an acre; formerly it must have been a place of extraordinary strength and importance; to-day it is a most interesting relic, of which its owner, Miss Levins, is very justly proud.

S. UΔ C.

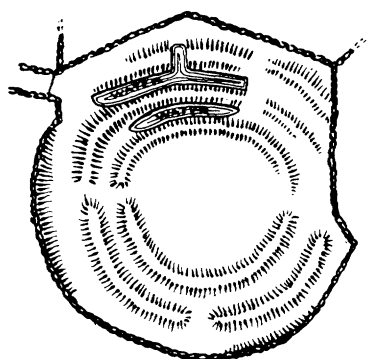
* *Ancient Forts of Ireland*, p. 636.



"A DANISH FORT NOT FAR FROM DUNLEER" IN 1748.

(PLAN AND SECTION)

Wright's Louthiana, Book I., plate VII.



Rathdrummin. (Ord. Sur. Map 18.)

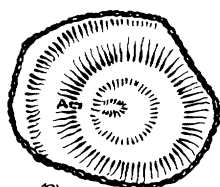
Louthiana in 1908.

Scale of Feet
0 50 100 150 200 250

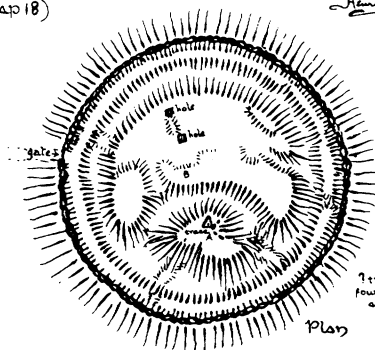
===== = hedges.

In the conventional shading the lines are thick at the top of a slope and become thinner as the ground falls.

Henry J. Sargent

Plan
Entrance to souterrain at A.

Mount Ash. (Ord. Sur. Map 6.)



Trace of foundations at A & B

Plan



Raskeagh. (Ord. Sur. Map 4.)

The above present-day plans were made with the assistance of tracings from the new 25-inch unpublished O.S. Maps, kindly supplied by Capt. Wolffe. They should be compared with Wright's plans of 1748 reproduced in facsimile.

H.G.T.

RASKEAGH.

This fine fort is in the centre of a field close to the road on the right hand side going from Dundalk to Carrickbroad, and is on the top of the rise immediately behind the house well-known as "Peter O'Hagan's" and in townland of Raskeagh. It is almost a perfect circle 300 feet in diameter.

Wright, in *Louthiana*, 1748, says :—

"ROSSKUGH, OR THE FORT OF CARICK-BRAUD.

"This evidently appears to have been a very considerable Danish Station, having formerly been surrounded with a double Ditch and a triple Vallum, one of which seems to have been of Stone, the rest of Earth. The Trenches are very deep and broad, and within the internal Area, still remains the ruinous Foundations, and part of the Walls of two Stone-buildings, the Area mark'd A, *Plate IV.* probably may have been the principal Dwelling; the other B, which is more elevated upon an eleptical Mount, is supposed to have been a Watch-tower, or Keep; which being render'd more difficult of Access, may probably have been design'd upon proper occasions to retire to, for greater Security in time of Danger.

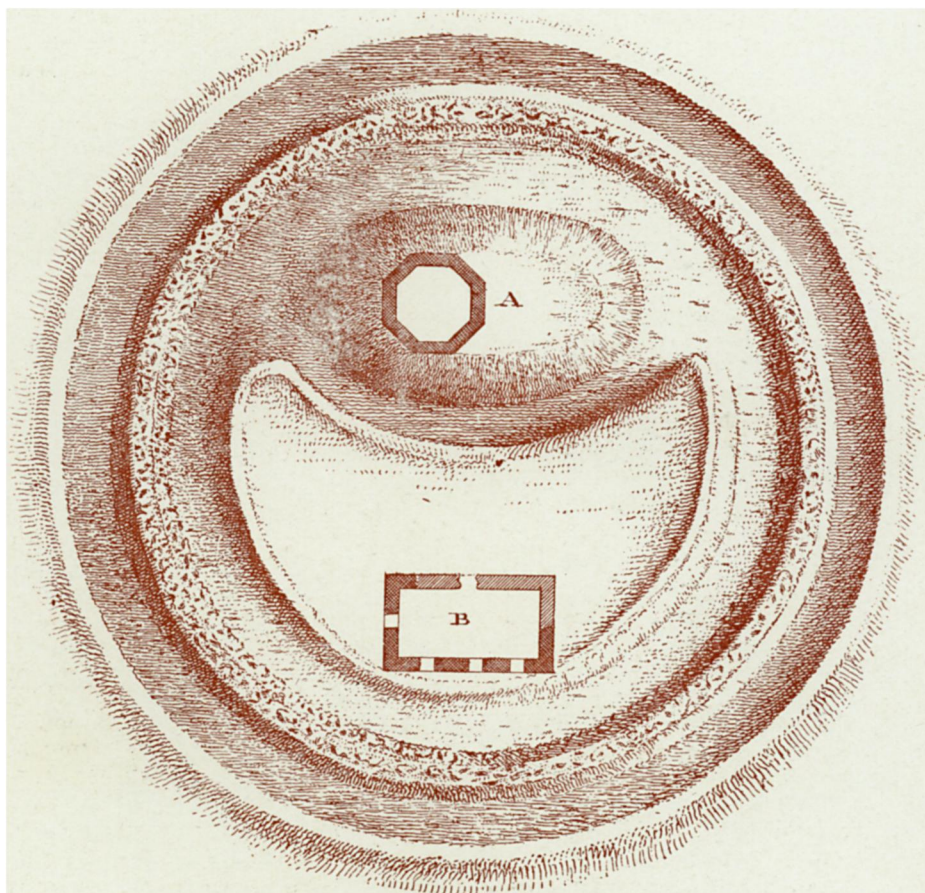
"Without this Fort are the visible Marks of other Camps, two in particular adjoining to it of no small capacity, able to contain at least 1,000 men each; and in one of them, rather the least of the two, is still to be seen the Ruins of an old Chaple cover'd with ivy: But whether this Building or the adjacent Camps, were originally design'd for the Use and Guard of the main Fort, can't easily be determined, though 'tis evident from the Situation of the Place, which is close to the Foot of the Mountains, and near a small pleasant River, full in view of the sea, it must have been a place of some Consequence, and of particular Note in the flourishing Days of that Province."

He gives a plan and sketch which are reproduced here and may be compared with the modern plan and sketch, made with the assistance of tracings of the unpublished 25 inch survey kindly supplied by Capt. Wolffe of the Ordnance Survey, during the year 1908.

In commenting on Wright's description, I shall not touch on the word "Danish." The origin of these forts is ably dealt with in this journal by two other pens, one of them an expert on the subject. Readers should also refer to the current number of the R.S.A.I. Journal for a special reference to this fort by Mr. Orpen. Wright says one vallum or ridge seems to have been of stone. I could not satisfy myself of this, but stone blocks or boulders are certainly in the banks of the middle vallum and in the fosse between it and the lune or half-moon mount.

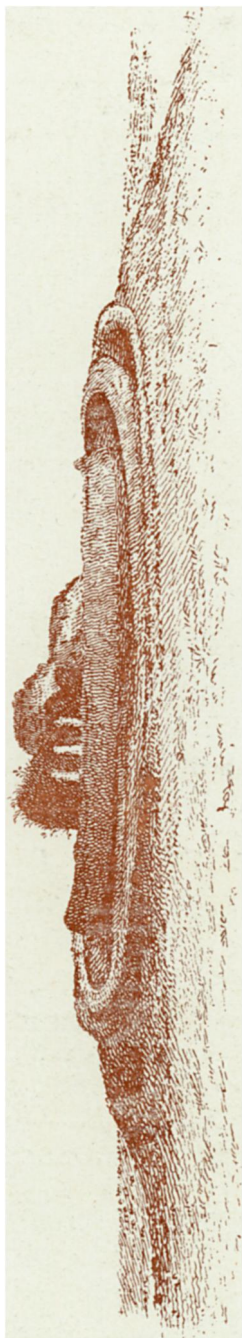
I could find a doubtful trace of two of the octagonal walls or tower-base marked by him at A. Had I never heard of the building I should have taken them for the edges of the depression caused by the undoubted quarrying or removal of the higher mound. From Wright's sketch view it can be gathered that there were even in his time no more than foundations. I could see no trace whatever of building B, the walls of which Wright shows so clearly in his sketch, which by the by is made from the north, while the modern one is drawn from the opposite point. I did find one narrow mound which might have been part of the walls, but at the exposed end it seemed composed of gravel and earth with a few smallish stones. At each end of it were rectangular holes in the surface of the ground about 5 feet by 4 feet by 1 foot deep. At B on the modern sketch were what looked much more like foundation remains, no signs of which are shown by Wright. A stick pushed into the ground was stopped by stone or rock at a fairly uniform depth of six or seven inches. The western-most horn of the lune was much higher than

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ICHNOGRAPHY OF ROSSKEAGH IN 1748.

Wright's Louthiana, Book I., plate IV.



VIEW OF ROSSKEAGH IN 1748.
Wright's Louthiana, Book I., plate III.

the rest and nearly as high as smaller mount and the only remains of the raised edge or rampart to the half-moon may be seen on the north-easterly part in the modern plan.

I could neither see nor hear of any camps or enclosures outside the fort in this neighbourhood, nor of the ivy-covered chapel, but my enquiries were not exhaustive on the subject. The position is certainly a commanding one, and in full view of Faughart and Castletown.

There has been considerable damage done in carting away the earth for the land around, as may be seen by the hollows, old cart ways and gaps in the outer ramparts, which latter hardly bears out Wright's theory of the stone vallum. It is possible that the half-moon was all as high as the western horn and that it was carted away down the slope on the east, foundations and all, till the "improving" destroyers came to what may be bed-rock at B and elsewhere. The elliptical mount is now roughly triangular from similar depredations and was much higher, if the above theory be adopted.

The name of the fort is locally spoken as a trisyllable—Ros-ke-agh with the accent on the centre, and possibly signifies "The Wood of the Thorn Tree." Wright's "Rosskugh" looks as awkward as, no doubt, the sound seemed to his locally untutored ear.

H. G. T.

Notes and Queries.

Place Names in County Louth.—In reply to Mr. G. J. H. Evatt's query in last year's issue regarding the locality of a townland named Evettstown, it may interest him to know that the name is to be found in the Inquisition 2nd August, 13 James I. as printed in Archdall's *Monasticon Hibernicum*, pp. 478 and 812. In the record of that inquisition, the tithes which were appropriated to the Abbey of Louth are enumerated, and it will be observed that the different townlands are grouped under the headings of the parish to which they belonged. The name Evettstown occurs in the group under the heading the Parish of Louth. Thus: "In the parish of Louth Drimbaghill, and the Mary Gallons of the parish of Louth, 16s.; Lourath and Dromgollan, 1s.; Feraghes and Dromgawny, 2s.; Tullaghes, 4s.; The Tombes, 2s.; Channonrock, 2s.; Horeston and Rathory, 3s. 10d.; Rathbrist, 8s.; Cordirry, 6s.; Rathcassan and Mullaghosker, 1s.; *Evettston*, 4s.; Stephenston Rathed, Lisrowlan and Rathroly, 12s.; Kilknony, 10s.; Balloran, 2s. 10d.; Gibbeston palmer, 5s.; Carnanbrege, Ballenter, Babesland, Uragh, and Knocknegor, waste; Tanakersland and Cammaker, 3s.; Moreton, 4s.; Moyvalloutty, waste; The Quarter, 1s. 10d.; Leggeverely, *alias* Mullaghboneboys, waste; Shankill, 10s.; Carrossube, 3s.; Carricklea, 1s. 10d.; Carricklosty and Monavadder, waste; Caranrosse, Carrickvoolan and Aighe, 3s.; &c."

It will be remembered that until recent times the present parish of Knockbridge was united with and formed part of the parish of Louth. "*Evettston*" seems therefore to have been the name of a townland in either of these parishes. However, as it is bracketted amongst names that are certainly still to be found in Knockbridge parish it is more than probable that "*Evettston*" was situated in that parish. It would appear therefore a mistake to identify it with *Enotstown*.

T. GOGARTY.

Ballinlough.—Major-General Stubbs on page 33 refers to above place, and asks where the lake is now? It is situate in Millpark Farm, and though partially drained is still there (1908).