

others. Buchan wrote the introduction to the 1911 edition of Poe's *Tales of Mystery and the Imagination*. But my favourite, though sadly ineligible candidate, since he published in 1957, is Frederick Rainsford Hannay, with his instructive book on *Dry Stone Walling*, an occupation not very far removed from the mending of roads.

But since Ironside, whose adventures seem to have contributed to much of the Buchan output, was an officer serving in the Boer War in South Africa, whence came so much to influence Buchan, I stick by my choice for the donor of Richard Hannay's name, Lt. Col. O. C. Hannay, of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.

## The Thirty Nine Steps

### Thoughts and suggestions on Richard Hannay's travels through Southern Scotland. By J. A. Paterson and W. M. Russell Paterson.

**T**he *Thirty Nine Steps* is John Buchan's best known — and probably most popular — work. Like many of his subsequent romances it contains a mixture of real and imaginary place names, and so, while the general areas in which Richard Hannay's adventures take place can be located on the map of South West Scotland, his detailed wanderings are open to conjecture. This article attempts to trace the movements of Hannay from the point where he leaves the "slow Galloway train" (at New Galloway station) in Chapter III until he eventually boards the "night express for the South" at Beattock Junction in Chapter VII.

Our researches have been carried out over the actual terrain, making use of Ordnance Survey maps to fill in the detail. References in the notes that follow are to the National Grid Kilometre squares (not thought of in 1914!) using the 1:50,000 Landranger sheets numbers 72, 77, 78, 83, 84. The larger scale 1:25,000 Pathfinder Series has also been consulted, as have earlier one inch to one mile sheets, particularly those showing the Dumfries-Newton Stewart railway and its branches as still existing (up to the mid-sixties).

The fruits of our researches as set out below may be open to dispute in certain respects, and we will be happy to enter into correspondence with any members who may have contrary views!

#### CHAPTER III

Richard Hannay travels North from London by train, which he leaves at Dumfries, and joins the slow Galloway train.

*About 5 o'clock the carriage emptied . . . I got out at the next station . . . set right in the heart of a bog. . . . I emerged on a white road that straggled over the brown moor.*

This station is New Galloway at a wee place called Mossdale (6670) where the old railway line crosses the middle of Loch Ken (which did not exist pre-1914). Hannay travels North and swings round to the West between Cairnsmore or Black Craig (5876) and Cairnsmore of Fleet (4968-5164). He makes his way South to the station at Loch Skerrow (6068), see quote below.

*The station . . . proved to be ideal for my purpose. The moor surged up around it. . . . There seemed to be no road to it from anywhere, and to increase the desolation the waves of a tarn lapped on their grey granite beach half a mile away.*

Hannay boards the train with a ticket for Dumfries.

*I found that we were approaching the station at which I had got out yesterday. Three men were asking the Station Master questions . . . they looked out across the moor where the white road departed . . . As we moved away from that station my companion woke up. . . . My plan had been to get out at some station down the line, but the train suddenly gave me a better chance, for it came to a standstill at the end of a culvert which spanned a brawling porter-coloured river.*

The train had crossed Loch Ken bridge and turned South to Perton station, 3½ miles further on. The old 1" Ordnance Survey map shows the old railway line crossing a river at "Waterside" (7267) on an embankment, with no habitation around it at that point.

*I was in a wide semicircle of moorland, with the brown river as radius, and the high hills forming the northern circumference. There was not a sign or sound of a human being. . . . From my vantage point I could scan the whole moor right away to the railway line and to the South of it where green fields took the place of heather . . . East beyond the ridge . . . shallow green valleys with plentiful plantations . . . where I must find a different kind of sanctuary . . . About six in the evening . . . moorland . . . white ribbon of road which wound up the narrow vale of a lowland stream . . . the glen became a plateau . . . reached a kind of pass where there was a solitary house . . . the road swung over a bridge . . . leaning on the parapet was a young man.*

Hannay reaches the B794 (7671) and turns North. He joins the A712 (7675) turning left for a mile before turning right on to a minor road (7576) — still following the valley of the Urr Water. To the West of Loch Urr (7584) is Fell Rig (marked on the old 1" map), a building with a bridge over the Fell Burn to the North of it. From this point on the map it is possible for a motor-bike to travel West on minor roads to the A712, through New Galloway to Newton Stewart, where the Poet notifies the Police.

Richard Hannay "hi-jacks" the enemy car.

*. . . and stole gently out onto the plateau. Almost at once the road dipped so that I lost sight of the inn.*

## CHAPTER IV

*. . . driving over crisp moor roads . . . to a broad haugh of a river . . . I entered a long straggling village . . . stood the postmistress and a policeman . . . I saw that main roads were no place for me, and turned into byways . . . to get to the loneliest roads . . . struck up a tributary of the river into a glen with steep hills all about me, and a corkscrew road . . . climbed over the pass . . . taking me too far North, so I slewed East along a bad track and finally struck a big double-line railway.*

Hannay runs down to the A702 (7487) from the inn, turns right, through Moniaive (7891) to Penpont (8594), which could be the "long straggling village" with the policeman outside the Post Office, where he turns left up the valley of the Penpont Burn bearing right at Auchenbainzie (8397). He continues due North across the pass to the Marr Burn valley and crosses the River Nith at Eliock Wood (8305). He joins the A76 and turns left for Mennock (8107) where he turns right onto the B797 which runs up the valley of the Mennock Water, a tributary of the River Nith. This valley is very steep sided and twisty and is called the Mennock Pass. At Leadhills (8815) he turns right on to the B7040 travelling East towards Elvanfoot (9517) where it is possible to see the mainline railway for at least a mile before reaching it. The old B7040 crosses the A702 and continues down to the old village where there is now a pedestrian suspension bridge built on top of old abutments for a single track road bridge over the River Clyde. The road continues on the East side of the river to join the old A74, now a lay-by.

*I had the sense to remember that on a bare moor I was at the aeroplane's mercy . . . Down the hill I went like blue lightning . . . soon I was on a road between hedges, and dripping to the deep cut glen of a stream . . .*

*Suddenly on my left I heard the hoot of another car, and realised . . . I was almost upon a couple of gate posts . . . and there before me a car was sliding athwart my course . . . I ran slap into the hedge on the right . . . and then dropped . . . 50 feet to the bed of the stream.*

Pre-1914 there was very little re-afforestation so the hills were bare. After crossing the River Clyde, Hannay turned right on to the A74 and belted over Beattock Summit (9915) to the narrow upper valley of the Evan Water. The old A74 swings East towards the railway — now a lay-by (0212), turns sharp left under the railway and immediately the private road to "Nether Howcleugh" (0312) is on the East side of the railway. Because of the new dual-carriageway any gate posts that might have been there have vanished. A photograph of the construction of the dual-carriageway shows how deep the river is below the road and how much in-filling had to be done East and West of the railway bridge.

"Brattleburn" (0106) is actually the name of a farm at the head of the Cloffin Burn to the West of the A74 almost due South of Nether Howcleugh. Lockerbie (1381) is most likely the town where the "Liberal" meeting was held.

*The map told me where the main railway to the South could be joined and what were the wildest districts near at hand. . . . At 2 a.m. Sir Harry woke me from my slumbers . . .*

*First turn to the right up the long fir wood, by daybreak you'll be well into the hills . . . found myself in a wide green world with glens falling on every side and a far away blue horizon.*

At the end of the private road (0313) there is a gateway leading to the lodge with the road deteriorating into a track climbing on to the moor. In May the dawn comes about 3-4 a.m. so he only had about one hour of darkness. Refer to the Pathfinder map of White Coomb where the tracks of the Roman Road and the old drove roads are shown.

## CHAPTER V

*I was on the central boss of a huge upland country and could see everything moving for miles . . . My enemies had located me . . . so I turned to the North.*

The "central boss" could be Clyde Law (0217). Hannay starts to travel North but sees several men advancing like a row of beaters. So he turns South — same again! There follows a gap in the description of his route and we are plunged straight in to the "Roadman" sequence.

*There, in a tiny bight of road, beside a heap of stones, I found the roadman.*

An old 1" Ordnance Survey map shows the old coaching road from Moffat to Edinburgh i.e. A701, more clearly than the modern map. Referring again to the Pathfinder, White Coombe map, the Bight of Road could be just south of Tweedhopefoot ((0517), and the quarry where Hannay was to get the stones about half a mile down the road at the next mile stone (0518).

*You live at Blackhopefoot, and have charge of the section from Laidlawbyres to the Riggs?*

For Blackhopefoot read Smidhopefoot (0517) — the Smid Hope Burn joins the River Tweed at this point and there is a cottage just by the burn, to which the roadman had pointed when Hannay took over his job. The Roadman's section most likely stretched from the county boundary (0414) to Nether Riggs (0823) a distance of about 6 miles.

Later in the day Mr. Jopley in his touring car arrived travelling from the Northern direction i.e. up the valley. Hannay takes over the car and Mr. J.

*My plan was to go back the road he had come, for the watchers having seen it before, would probably let it pass unremarked. . . . We ran 8 miles down the valley, through a village or two . . . turned up a side glen which led into the hills . . . came to a lonely moor.*

Hannay drove through Tweedsmuir (0924) and other clachans. 8 miles down the road would bring him to the Stanhope valley (1229), up which he turned and travelled about 1½ miles into the moors (1428). There he turned the car and returned it to Mr. Jopley.

## CHAPTER VI

*I spent the night on a shelf of the hillside.*

At the head of Stanhope Glen it divides into two — one valley bears left towards the North East and the main burn bears South East. The tongue of hill between is called "Lairdsie Knowe" (1627). From the lower slopes of the Knowe he could look down into the valley.

*I raised myself on my arms and looked down into the valley . . . there were men below, not more than a quarter of a mile off, . . . I crawled out of my shelf into the cover of a boulder, and gained a shallow trench which slanted up the mountain face. This led me presently into the narrow gully of a burn . . . scrambled to the top of the ridge. . . . Keeping behind the skyline I ran for maybe half a mile till I judged I was above the uttermost end of the glen. There I showed myself . . . saw that the line of search had changed direction . . . went back the way I had come . . . behind the ridge overlooking my sleeping place . . . satisfaction of seeing pursuit streaming up hill at the top of the glen on a hopelessly false scent.*

The "shallow trench" leading to "the narrow gully of a burn" could be Stone Graine (1528). From the top of which he ran South, behind the Knowe, to the head of the main Glen where he showed himself, returning to the Stone Graine Glen.

*I chose a ridge which made an angle with the one I was on and so would soon put a deep glen between me and my enemies . . . I saw in front of me a sea of hills, rising very high towards the South, but Northwards breaking down into broad ridges which separated wide and shallow dales. The ridge I had chosen seemed to sink . . . to a moor which lay like a pocket in the uplands . . . My lack of local knowledge might very well be my undoing, and I resolved to get . . . to the pocket of moor.*

The ridge that Hannay was on ran at an angle to the Dollar Law — Long Grain ridge (1728 to 1630), and to the North of the latter is a saddle of moor before the ridge rises to Pykestone Hill (1731).

*I got off my ridge and down into the moor before any figures appeared . . . I crossed a burn and came out on a high road which made a pass between two glens. . . . In the dyke by the roadside was a gate, from which a grassgrown track led over the first wave of the moor . . . it became a very respectable road . . . I did not follow the road, but the burnside which flanked it on the right . . . found a deserted cottage . . . plantation of windblown firs. From there I saw the chimneys of the house smoking a few hundred yards to my left.*

Hannay travels Eastwards towards the "Thief's Road" which is marked on the map as running North to South. On the Eastern side of this ridge are two farms marked on the map — Old Kirkhope (1830) to the North and Manorhead (1927) to the South. The Manor Water road has a cottage marked on it and also a plantation.

After Hannay had blown up the store room and reached the safety of the dovecot, he observed "a blue line which I know was the sea." From the hills around this area it is possible to see the Solway Firth.

*. . . all I had to do was to steer a point or two West of South West to come to the stream where I had met the roadman . . . I never knew the names of the places, but I believe this stream was . . . the upper waters of the River Tweed. I calculated I must be about eighteen miles distant . . .*

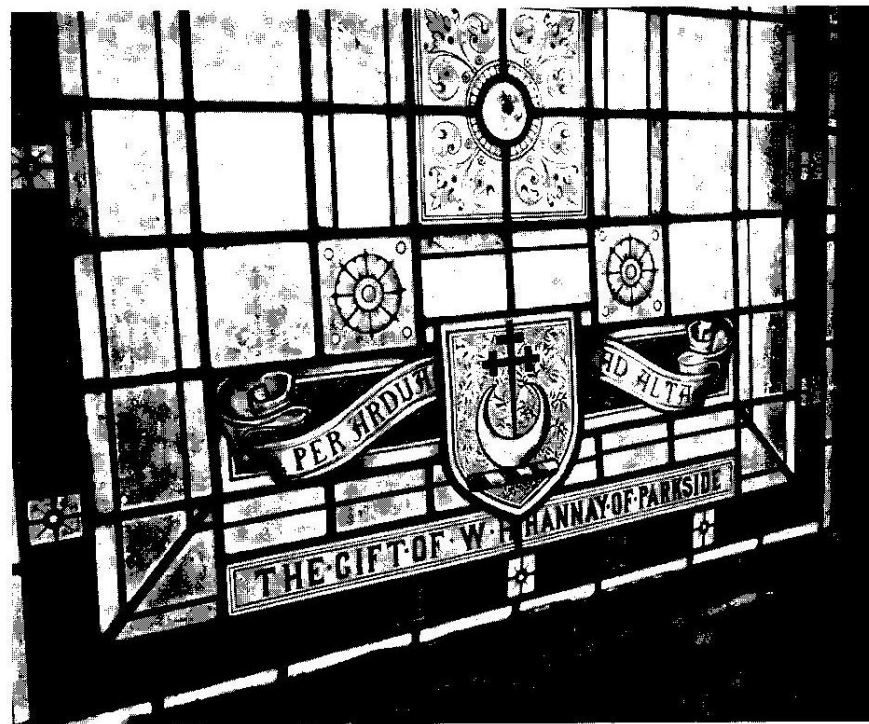
Hannay was trying to remember Sir Harry's map, so distances in the story do not necessarily transfer to distances on the Ordnance Survey map. Also John Buchan was writing this novel in Broadstairs (on the South coast of England), and most likely had well-known and well-remembered places in mind from his boyhood tramps over the countryside between Peebles and Tweedsmuir. Suffice it to say, Hannay returns over the moors to Turnbull's roadside cottage in thick mist.

*. . . Twelfth day of June . . . drover went past that morning taking some cattle to Moffat . . . Hislop was a cheery soul, who chattered all the way over the pass and down the sunny Vale of Annan . . . But driving cattle is a mortally slow job, and we took the better part of a day to cover a dozen miles . . . dinner in a humble Moffat Public House and walked the two miles to the junction on the main line.*

On the White Coomb Map the Old Road and the drove roads are marked running over the pass (0514 to 0512 to 1511) on the East side of the A701. Above the Devil's Beef Tub (0612) it crosses the "A" road and cuts off the corner, re-crossing the "A" road South of Ericstane Hill (0611 to 0711). The old Edinburgh Road then ran down the hillside to Ericstane where it crossed the River Annan, continuing down the valley to Moffat (0805). The track of the Old Road crossing the A701 is easily seen (0611). There is a gate on the West side with a "cart" track disappearing up the hillside. Opposite there is another track leading down to the Annan Valley.

The "Black Bull" Hotel in Moffat is an old coaching Inn. It has a framed map of old "Feus" — the oldest appears to be that of The Black Bull. It has the right atmosphere and one can imagine John Buchan absorbing it and listening to all the local chat.

The railway junction was Beattock where Hannay boarded the night express for the South.



Hannay Memorial Window, Broughton Free Kirk