



Society of Antiquaries  
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# Bearsden

A Roman Fort on the Antonine Wall

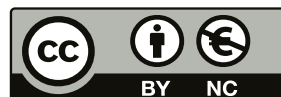
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## Chapter 15

# DENDROCHRONOLOGY

MIKE BAILLIE AND ANNE CRONE

Four timbers were submitted in 1988: QUB Palaeoecology Centre numbers Q7549, Q7550, Q7551 and Q7552. When measured the samples produced 115, 80, 92 and 72 annual growth rings. Sample Q7549 had 24 sapwood rings (possibly complete). The other three samples were roundwood and had in all cases their heartwood/sapwood boundary present. One of the samples, Q7552, had sapwood present but this proved to be unmeasurable.

The three roundwood samples, Q7550, Q7551 and Q7552, matched each other forming a Bearsden mean master of 94 rings. Sample Q7549 did not match this short master or any of the individual samples. Exhaustive attempts were made to date the Bearsden mean master and the single sample Q7549 against the existing standard British and Irish chronologies. As the Scottish chronology goes back only to AD 946 and the samples are considered to be Roman in date, there was effectively no local chronology against which to compare this material. As a result, attempts were made to date the samples against the Roman material from Carlisle. Again this was unsuccessful. The short 94-ring pattern of the Bearsden master and the unavailability of local chronologies are probably the main limiting factors.

## POSTSCRIPT

ANNE CRONE

Despite over two decades of dendrochronological work in Scotland since this report was written the situation as regards Roman dendrochronology has not changed at all. Some medieval chronologies now extend back into the late ninth century AD (Crone forthcoming) and there are Early Historic chronologies from south-west Scotland which cover the period 250 to 752 (Crone 1998). In pre-Roman Scotland chronologies covering the latter half of the first millennium BC have been developed, again only in south-west Scotland (Crone 2012), but few Roman sites have produced timbers suitable for dendrochronology. A single oak timber was recovered from Elginhaugh but could not be dated (Crone 2007). There are now more chronologies from Roman sites in northern England, ie Carlisle, Vindolanda and Papcastle (ibid for summary) and the Bearsden chronology was compared against these new datasets as well as against new Iron Age chronologies from Ireland (David Brown, pers comm) but this has not yielded any results.