



Society of Antiquaries
of Scotland

The Antiquarian Rediscovery of the Antonine Wall

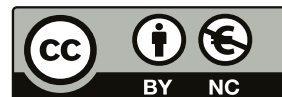
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Epilogue

Both the Glasgow Archaeological Society and the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland were subsequently to maintain their close association with the Roman frontier from Forth to Clyde. At the end of his *Roman Wall in Scotland* (1911) Macdonald had urged the need for further work.¹ Major excavations began in 1912 at Balmuildy under the direction of S N Miller, lecturer at Glasgow University,² but the work was brought to an end on the outbreak of the First World War (1914–18). George Macdonald himself settled to the task of defining the line of the Wall more precisely by observation of surface traces and by small-scale excavation.³ On Boxing Day 1913 his workmen conclusively located the hitherto missing fort at Old Kilpatrick.⁴ Between the Wars the forts at Old Kilpatrick (1923–4), Mumrills (1923–8) and at Cawder (1929–31) were explored.⁵ During the Second World War (1939–45), the Wall suffered damage from aerial bombing between Duntocher and Old Kilpatrick; at the Peel Park, Kirkintilloch, air-raid shelters were dug in the fort's interior.⁶ In the early 1940s, at the height of the war, the fort at Cawder, beyond modern Bishopbriggs, was quarried away all but unnoticed. After the return of peace in 1945 excavation resumed, at Duntocher (1947–51), Kirkintilloch (1953–61), Rough Castle (1957–61) and Mumrills (1958–60).⁷ In 1969 the OS published a valuable map of the Wall's course, at a scale of 1:25,000 (2½ inches to the mile). More recently comprehensive investigation of New Kilpatrick fort (1973–82) preceded redevelopment in Bearsden of the villas which had occupied the site since the 1880s (see p. 117). Elsewhere, work took place in the South Camp at Camelon (1975–9) in advance of factory redevelopment,⁸ on Croy Hill (1975–8) in expectation of quarrying, at Bar Hill (1979–82) with a view to public display, and outside the fort at Westerwood (1986–8) prior to the laying out of a golf course. Two gaps in the sequence of forts were filled, with the discovery of a small fort on low ground at Inveravon beside the River Avon, and of the ditches defending a fort in Falkirk at the Pleasance, an area long since built over.⁹ From the late 1940s onwards

aerial photography provided valuable information on forts, fortlets and minor installations. The sites of several other fortlets were identified by fieldwork. Much was learnt too from small-scale excavation in advance of road- or house-building.

There are currently two forms of protection accorded to the Wall, under the *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979*.¹⁰ Many of the best preserved lengths of Wall and Ditch and parts or all of five forts are in the 'guardianship' of the Scottish Government, which means that no development is permitted. Information plaques have been erected, agricultural activity is controlled, and Historic Scotland sees to their maintenance. Lengths of the Wall and other fort-sites are owned by Falkirk Council, North Lanarkshire Council, East Dunbartonshire Council, Glasgow City Council, West Dunbartonshire Council, the National Trust for Scotland, the Forestry Commission and many private organisations and individuals.¹¹ Almost all the lengths of the Wall unencumbered by buildings or in open countryside, and many forts, are 'scheduled' under the same *Act*; proposed developments have to be submitted for approval to Historic Scotland, which may impose conditions or reject the proposal outright. Any approved development is likely to be preceded by an archaeological evaluation, possibly followed by an excavation, undertaken at the developer's expense. Even in areas not 'scheduled' in this way, any application affecting the Wall is likely to be closely scrutinised by the appropriate local authority, in line with planning legislation, to ensure compliance with the regulations and with the policies for protecting the Wall and its setting.¹²

As the Wall traverses Scotland from coast to coast, roads and pipelines heading north–south have to cross it somewhere. A long stretch was lost to the M9 motorway at Polmont in the 1960s. More positively the lanes of the newly completed M80 motorway at Castlecary have been aligned to pass neatly through the arches of the railway viaduct of 1841, with minimal disturbance to any archaeology. On very rare occasions, pipelines have been directed below

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Illustration 98

The Wall crossing Croy Hill, seen from the east. The trees (centre left) mark the site of the fort. Croy village and a modern quarry lie beyond (© Crown copyright. Reproduced by courtesy of Historic Scotland).



Illustration 99

The fort at Rough Castle, seen from the north-west. The *lilia* pits are at the bottom left (© Crown copyright. Reproduced by courtesy of Historic Scotland).

the Roman frontier line, thus avoiding any loss to its constituent elements.

The Wall's course is nowadays overlain by schools, cemeteries, reservoirs, industrial premises and private homes. Golf courses, bowling greens, football pitches and garden centres, even a ski-slope are all linked to increasing recreational activity. Population growth, especially in the last half century, has seen the expansion of villages, affecting especially the areas east of Falkirk, east of Kirkintilloch, and at Duntocher. The northern suburbs of the 'new town' of Cumbernauld advance remorselessly towards the villages of Croy and Dullatur and seem likely in due course to engulf them. Parts of the forts at Duntocher and Kirkintilloch sit within public parks; Westerwood is hemmed in by the fairways of a golf course. Mumrills survives against the ever-encroaching eastern suburbs of Falkirk, though its western annexe was lost to private housing. The fort at Old Kilpatrick has long since been built over by housing and a bus garage.

Something can still be seen of the remains of the Wall over about half its length, usually in the form

of a hollow representing the Ditch; less commonly, a slight ridge marks the position of the turf rampart. At times the Ditch still presents a formidable obstacle, which can be followed on foot over considerable distances. The Military Way is particularly impressive as it passes through Seabegs Wood. The visitor can gain an excellent impression of the geographical setting over Bar Hill and Croy Hill, though the fort atop the latter has been at risk from the quarries which have eaten away the flanks of the hill on which it sits (illus 98). The modern visitor to most forts has to be content with grassy mounds, for example at Rough Castle (illus 99). However, Historic Scotland has consolidated stone buildings at Bar Hill, and the bath-house at New Kilpatrick (Bearsden), saved from housing development, was placed on permanent public view. The outlines of the fortlet at Kinneil have been marked out on the ground by Falkirk Council, following excavation, in what is a pleasant rural setting west of Kinneil House. The stone base itself is, at the time of writing, on view only at New Kilpatrick Cemetery, Bearsden, in Roman



Illustration 100

Plaque commemorating the 'inscription' of the Antonine Wall as a World Heritage Site, 2008, at the Roman bath-house in Roman Road, Bearsden (© L Keppie).

Park, Bearsden and on the western slope of Golden Hill, Duntocher. Even where nothing can now be seen, excavation has often confirmed the presence of the stone base of the Wall barely 0.4m below the modern surface. In cases where the turf rampart and its underlying stone base have been removed, the Ditch will generally endure, even if in a truncated form. The author's own experience in observing and excavating the Wall over a period of more than 40 years has been that its remains can survive tenaciously in the most unlikely circumstances and may all too quickly be adjudged lost.

In 2008 the Wall was 'inscribed' as a World Heritage Site under the auspices of Unesco, as one element in a trans-national 'Frontiers of the Roman Empire' Site.¹³ In conjunction with the bid for WHS

status, fresh mapping was undertaken by RCAHMS, resulting in the publication of a colourful new map at 1:25,000; the assembled data were made available digitally to local authorities and others. At much the same time an 'EU Culture 2000 Project' funded wide-ranging geophysical surveys, a DVD, and a website.¹⁴ The 'inscription' of the monument has raised awareness of it locally, nationally and internationally. Historic Scotland has appointed a coordinator to promote best practice in the management of the WHS, to liaise with local authorities and other stakeholders, and to increase awareness of it among the public. Commemorative signage has been erected (illus 100). A sandstone replica of the distance slab found at Bridgeness (see p. 119 and illus 8) will shortly be placed at the spot where the original was turned up in 1868. Buffer zones have

recently been designated, to define the immediate landscape setting of the Wall.¹⁵

We may look back on occasion at antiquarian accounts with some amusement, but it is important to remember that we too stand at an intermediate point along the road to knowledge, and that future generations will continue to add to it. We can make only interim statements, adjusting our assessments as more information comes to light, not only through planned archaeological investigations but also chance discovery. It will always be so.

Notes

1 Macdonald 1911: 402.

2 Miller 1922.

3 Macdonald 1915; Macdonald 1925.

4 Macdonald 1915: 102.

5 Miller 1928; Macdonald & Curle 1929; Clarke 1933.

6 *Kirkintilloch Herald* 5 October 1938.

7 For the results of these and more recent excavations, see Robertson 1960 and subsequent editions of this enduring handbook.

8 Further redevelopment, this time of disused commercial premises east of the South Camp, took place in 2011.

9 The outlines of the fort at Falkirk have been established through the endeavours over many years of G B Bailey, Falkirk Museum. See Bailey 1991 and reports in *Britannia* from 1992 onwards.

10 For earlier forms of protection see above p. 121.

11 Breeze 2007: 41.

12 Breeze 2007: 36.

13 Breeze 2007; Breeze & Jilek 2008. Hadrian's Wall had been 'inscribed' in 1987.

14 Stephens, Jones & Gater 2008; www.antoninewall.org.

15 Supplementary Planning Guidance in relation to the WHS is expected to be adopted shortly by local authorities.