



Society of Antiquaries  
of **Scotland**

# Bearsden

A Roman Fort on the Antonine Wall

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## Chapter 20

# RECONSTRUCTION DRAWINGS

MICHAEL J MOORE

All reconstruction drawings are based on a combination of verifiable information and educated guesses, and the examples in this book are no different. There is, however, a further aspect: how to treat the blank spaces, the areas which have not been excavated. Should they be left empty or filled with buildings which might reasonably be presumed to have stood there? The two crucial areas at Bearsden in this respect are the southern part of the annexe and the area to the west of the fort where it is presumed lay the civil settlement. In the annexe we have included some token features, but also imagined a large, fenced paddock for exercising the cavalry mounts. The presumed civilian buildings have been expanded from a possible two to four and the drawing cut tight to these. The building which occupied the west end of the central range of the fort is also unknown, but a case has been made for it being the commander's house, so we have placed that there (with an adjacent vegetable garden). Problems abound in the southern part of the fort so buildings have not been conjectured, but shown as being built with their materials (timber stacks, stone heaps and carts) ready for use.

Decisions have to be taken. There is a sound argument for the causeways to the north and south of the fort being in the centre of the large enclosure and they have been placed there, with the gates elsewhere. A different interpretation is possible, but the space available for the drawings is limited. Similarly, the headquarters building has been left without a forehall in spite of the argument in favour of one. However, two other interpretations of the headquarters have been provided elsewhere in the report.

In general, in relation to the buildings in the fort and annexe, we have offered reconstructions which are based as

closely as possible on the available evidence. Sometimes this could prove confusing. For example, it is likely that the walls of the stone buildings were rendered and then painted with red lines to simulate rather finer dressed stone work. This would be difficult to depict in small-scale monochrome illustrations. In keeping with the generally poor quality of most of the buildings (as indicated by their irregular setting-out), all but the commander's house have been shown as single storied, usually with a reed-thatched roof for which there is some evidence. The barracks and stables are shown as they might have appeared within a month or so of completion when cracks in the covering daub would have begun to show. In comparison to the timber building, the stone granaries were well set out and well built.

In some instances (illus 21.19 and 21.20) the buildings, for which there is little or no evidence for the position of doors and windows, have been shown in unadorned form to illustrate more clearly their relationship to each other and the steeply sloping site. The inclusion of figures in many drawings adds a sense of scale.

Reconstruction drawings, like any other illustrations, have great capacity to stimulate the imagination. One important aspect of the report is the discussion of the supply of the soldiers. An intangible element in that discussion is the grain and fodder for the horses. The illustrations of these requirements – and of the amount of dung which these animals would create – graphically bring home the scale of this aspect of life on the frontier.

It should be noted that at times the illustrator, approaching the evidence of excavation from a different viewpoint to that of the excavator, suggests alternative interpretations.