HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

ANTONINE WALL - CROY HILL

Property in Care (PIC) no: PIC171
Designations: Scheduled Monument (SM90011)
Taken into State care: 1962 (Ownership)
Last reviewed: 2005

We continually revise our Statements of Significance, so they may vary in length, format and level of detail. While every effort is made to keep them up to date, they should not be considered a definitive or final assessment of our properties.
ANTONINE WALL - CROY HILL

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The property is part of the Antonine Wall and comprises a 1.5km long stretch of ditch, parts of the rampart with two turf-built ‘expansions’ (regarded as signal platforms) abutting the south face of the rampart with stretches of the Military Way. A fort and fortlet, abutting the south face of the rampart, occupy the highest part of this stretch on Croy Hill.

The Antonine Wall is a linear Roman frontier system of wall and ditch accompanied at stages by forts and fortlets, linked by a road system termed the Military Way, stretching 60km from Bo’ness on the Forth to Old Kilpatrick on the Clyde. It is one of only three linear barriers along the 2000km European frontier of the Roman Empire. These systems are unique to Britain and Germany.

CHARACTER OF THE MONUMENT

Historical Overview

- Antonine Wall construction initiated by Emperor Antoninus Pius (AD 138–161) after a successful campaign in AD 139/142 by the Governor of Britain, Lollius Urbicus

- Fort garrisoned by a detachment of soldiers of the Sixth Legion (legio VI Victrix) commanded by Fabius Liberalis

- Antonine Wall system abandoned, possibly after AD 165, and the line of frontier shifted again to Hadrian's Wall

- A settlement existed on the site of the fort in the eighteenth century

Archaeological Overview

1899: Excavations by Glasgow Archaeological Society demonstrated well-preserved sections of the Military Way, rampart and ‘expansions’.

1920, 1931, and 1935: Excavations by George Macdonald recovered much of the plan of the fort and also uncovered the rampart of the Antonine Wall. Confirmed an 80m break in the ditch owing to surface rock. He also found a earlier fortlet, with double ditches and annexe, underlying the fort, which he thought to be Flavian (AD 79–87/88).


1967: The ‘expansion’ and sections of 1899 excavations were re-excavated and recorded by A S Robertson.

1975, 1976, 1977 and 1978: Excavations by W Hanson found the remains of separate fortlet to the west of the larger fort, proved the underlying fortlet site was
of second century AD date and was a construction camp for the fortlet attached to the Wall, confirmed the line of the Military Way bypass and found extensive remains of a civil settlement with farming allotments.


This property has provided a wealth of information, and has the potential to provide more, on the design, function and organisation of the Roman military at the height of their Empire. Moreover, the evidence of finds such as dedicatory altars and the bathhouse, combined with small finds, provides much data on the cultural lifestyles of Roman soldiers. The property provides evidence of changes in the function of the Wall, with the upgrading from a fortlet to fort as well as the construction phase typified by the enclosure. However, while the colonial material culture of the Romans is most obvious, the impact on the surrounding peoples is not so obvious. Better investigation of the civil settlement would begin to address the wider cultural impact of the Romans on local life.

Artistic/Architectural Overview

The monument exhibits unique and well-preserved sections of the Antonine Wall. The combination of architectural features provides one of the best examples along the Antonine Wall of Roman defensive design and function. The forts are situated at the highest part of the whole system and the ditch is cut through solid rock, which necessitated alterations in the line of the ditch and south entrance to the fortlet.

The rock-cut ditch and upcast bank are well defined, as is a pronounced ridge on top of the counterscarp, which is a unique feature. The ditch is 8m wide and 1.5m deep. The rampart is partially extant as a much spread mound c. 1m high. The rampart is built of turf built on a stone platform.

To the west of the fort, abutting the south face of the rampart, are two turf platforms on stone bases, 15 x 18m and 1.2m high, which are thought to be signal stations.

The fort, of 0.60 hectare size, was built abutting the Antonine Wall, through which a gate was placed, with the remaining three sides built of a 6m-wide turf rampart on a stone platform with three ditches on the west and two on the south. Gates were also placed on the south, west and east sides. Within the fort are the remains of a granary and a stone headquarters building. The remains of a stone bathhouse were found outwith the fort to the north-east. Underlying the fort are the remains of a fort and annexe thought to be a construction camp for the fortlet.

The fortlet, c. 18.5 x 22m, built of a turf rampart on a stone platform, abutted the southern face of the Antonine Wall, through which a gate was placed. A further gate was placed in the south of the fortlet, slightly off centre due to the rocky outcrop. The fortlet was defended by single ditch.

Social Overview

The area is used by walkers heading for the high point of Croy Hill to enjoy the views.
In 2003 the Scottish Executive announced that the Antonine Wall (including this stretch) would be nominated as World Heritage Site. Such a designation will bring enhanced social significance to the monument and its setting.

**Spiritual Overview**

Three dedications to Roman gods have been found around Croy Hill. One is dedicated to Mars, the other to the Nymphs and the last to Jupiter Optimus Maximus. The site has also produced a tombstone showing a Roman legionary flanked by his two sons.

Currently the site has no known spiritual role.

**Aesthetic Overview**

The property has a dramatic stretch of the ditch. The surrounding area, being relatively open to the north, retains some of its original setting.

**What are the major gaps in understanding of the property?**

More investigation is needed into the plan and nature of the remainder of the fort.

We do not know the precise date and function of the enclosure underlying the fort.

The date, nature and function of the civil settlement needs to be understood better, as well as its relationship to the fort and surrounding landscape.

**ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

**Key Points**

- Clear evidence of major phases in the history of the Antonine Wall
- Unique features in the form of the Antonine Wall and ditch
- Part of second best preserved Roman frontier after Hadrian’s Wall

**Associated Properties**

Bar Hill; Hillhead; Bearsden Bathhouse; Castlecary; Rough Castle; Seabegs Wood; Tamfourhill; Westerwood; Cumbernauld Airfield–Wyndford Road; Wyndford Road

**Keywords**

Roman frontier; limes; Antonine Wall; Hadrian's Wall; World Heritage Site