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 – CASTLECARY FORT

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The property is part of the Antonine Wall and contains the remains of a Roman fort and annexe with a stretch of Antonine Wall to the north-east of the fort. The Edinburgh-Glasgow railway cuts across the south section of the fort while modern buildings disturb the north-east corner of the fort and ditch.

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, stretching for 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

Archaeological finds indicate the site was used during the Flavian period (AD 79-87/88).

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, or nearby Antonine Wall, was built by cohors VI of an unspecified legion and cohors I Tungrorum.

Fort garrisoned by several detachments of soldiers: vexillations of legiones II Augusta and VI Victorix from Italy and Noricum, cohors I Fida Vardullorum, commanded by a prefect, Trebius Verus.

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

Site used as quarry for building materials for nearby Forth & Clyde Canal; also cut by Edinburgh-Glasgow Railway in 1841.

Brought into Guardianship in 1961.

Archaeological Overview

1769 The bathhouse, exposed during the construction of the Forth & Clyde Canal, was drawn by General W. Roy.

1902 Excavations by D. Christison established the plan of the fort, but only partially recovered the layout of the fort. A fortified annexe was attached to the east side of the fort. The Military Way ran through this and along the main east-west road of the fort. Another main Roman road leads south from the fort. This forms part of main Roman road heading to the south.

1934 Line of Wall and Military Way surveyed by G. Macdonald.

1957 Line of Wall and Military Way surveyed by Ordnance Survey.
1980 Line of Wall and Military Way surveyed by Ordnance Survey.
1982 Excavations near house called Castra revealed the N face of Antonine Wall ditch
1995 Geophysical survey by Bradford University revealed double ditches defending the south, west and east sides of the fort, while the annexe was shown to have a single ditch.

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 the Empire. The method of construction of the fort demonstrates the history of construction of the Wall. Moreover, the evidence from the bathhouse, small finds and inscriptions provide much data on the cultural lifestyles of Roman soldiers. The presence of artefacts from the first century AD suggest an earlier Flavian base underlying the Antonine Fort.

Artistic/Architectural Overview

The fort, of 1.4 hectares area, is unique in the care of HES as it was constructed of stone with external stone walls, 2.4m wide, whose north corners were squared for a junction with the Antonine Wall turf rampart. The fort is of rectangular plan with gates placed on the north (through the Antonine Wall), south, east and west sides. The fort is ringed by two sets of ditches on the south and west sides but may contain three on the west side. The excavations found the headquarters building, the commander’s residence, barracks, a granary, a latrine and, unusually, an internal bathhouse. Traces of the outer walls of the fort can still be seen on the north, east, and west sides.

An annexe of 1.1 hectares area, built with a turf rampart, was added on the west side of the fort and ringed by single ditch. A gate was placed on its west side on alignment with the main east-west gates of the fort.

The Antonine Wall ditch shrinks from the normal 12m width to 4.4m to the north of the fort. The turf rampart of the wall abutted the stone wings of the fort.

Social Overview

The monument has a limited social role as the site is used for grazing and therefore has limited public access.

In 2003 the Scottish Executive announced that the Antonine Wall (including this stretch) would be nominated as a World Heritage Site. Such a designation brings enhanced social significance to the monument and its setting.

Spiritual Overview

Four religious dedications made by Roman soldiers to Roman Gods have been found on the site: to Fortuna, Matres, Mercury and Neptune. The inscription to Mercury is particularly important as it is perhaps the latest inscription from the Antonine Wall and records the construction of a temple.

The site currently fulfils no spiritual role
Aesthetic Overview

There are only traces of the fort surviving mostly in a set of trees, which while providing a pleasant spot, hinders the overall view of the site. The rest of the site has no extant features.

What are the major gaps in understanding of the property?

- Full plan of the layout of the fort as well as the annexe.
- Full understanding of methods of internal construction techniques, especially for barracks.
- Was there was an earlier Flavian period fort?

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Key points

- Part of second best preserved Roman frontier after Hadrian's Wall.
- Demonstrates key element of fort and rampart construction.
- Unique in being the only stone built fort in care.

Associated Properties

Bar Hill, Hillhead, Bearsden Bathhouse, Croy Hill, Rough Castle, Seabegs Wood, Tamfourhill, Westerwood, Croy Hill, Cumbernauld Airfield-Wyndford Road, Wyndford Road

Keywords

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