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HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

ANTONINE WALL – BANTASKIN

Property in Care (PIC) ID: PIC167
Designations: Scheduled Monument (SM8828)
Taken into State care: 2005 (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, BANTASKIN

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

This property is part of the Antonine Wall and comprises three sections of ditch, the largest of which is 217m long (the other two being 49m and 20m long). It is set mainly on a narrow ridge within residential housing in the Bantaskin area of Falkirk, 600m to the north-east of the Watling Lodge property.

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

Archaeological Overview

1916: Wall was sectioned by George Macdonald where south kerb was found and berm was not more than 4.5m wide.

1934: Line of Wall surveyed by George Macdonald.

1957: Line of Wall surveyed by Ordnance Survey.

1976: 45m length of Antonine Wall was excavated prior to development of B8080 (Westburn Avenue) and revealed the wall-base of 4.67m wide, the berm at 8.25m wide, the ditch 12m wide, and the upcast mound on the north bank was spread out to 11m.

1980: Line of Wall surveyed by Ordnance Survey.

The property has provided evidence of the line and construction of the Antonine Wall. The property has the potential to further inform on the construction techniques used in the building the wall and, through samples from the deposits in the ditch, on the palaeo-environmental development of this area.

Artistic/Architectural Overview

The ditch is very well preserved in the main section at Bantaskin, less so in the other smaller sections, and is over 12m wide and up to 3m deep. Part of the counterscarp or north bank of the main section of ditch has been terraced by housing, although part of the counterscarp survives between 0.50m to 1m in height. There is no trace of the turf rampart or Military Way.
Social Overview

This section of the Wall originally ran through the policies of the former house and gardens of Bantaskin. The property and an area to the north-east comprises a wooded zone that was much appreciated and used by local people. However, lack of care and maintenance over the last ten years has considerably reduced the use of this area as an amenity.

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

Spiritual Overview

The property has no current spiritual role.

Aesthetic Overview

The property is set on an narrow east–west ridge which has fine views to the north over Falkirk across to the Ochil Hills. This aspect coupled with the depth of ditch clearly demonstrates the impressive nature of the monument as a barrier.

Although covered by dense vegetation, a line of beech trees have been planted (probably part of the policies of Bantaskin House) along the north bank of the ditch which enhances the profile of the ridge and depth of the ditch.

What are the major gaps in understanding of the property?

The line of the Military Way is unknown.

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Key Points

- Fine views to the north over Falkirk and to the Ochil Hills
- One of the better preserved sections of ditch of the Antonine Wall
- Part of second best preserved Roman frontier in Europe after Hadrian’s Wall

Associated Properties

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

Keywords

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