

Immediately south-east of a sharp bend in the Forth and Clyde Canal at Cadder is the site of a Roman fort on the Antonine Wall. Extensive sand quarrying in the 1940s destroyed both the Roman fort and the remains of a medieval motte which had probably used the Antonine Wall Ditch as part of its defences. No remains are visible on the ground today.

HISTORY OF DISCOVERY AND EXCAVATION:

The fort at Cadder was recognised as early as the mid-seventeenth century, but the medieval settlement and the extensive ploughing of fields had made it difficult to discern the fort's true location. The eighteenth-century antiquaries were uncertain if a fort had even been located here, and there was some confusion around the identification of a later medieval (probably twelfth-century) motte which was located to the west of the fort, across from the present-day Forth and Clyde Canal.

In the late 1700s, the Forth and Clyde Canal was constructed around the site of the fort, skirting both its north and western sides. To the north of the fort, the Canal was partially dug over the Antonine Wall Ditch, while just outside the fort's north-west corner it cut across the Ditch and Rampart, as the Canal turned sharply south. A few Roman finds were uncovered during this work, including part of an altar and some quernstones. Further discoveries were made in 1852-53 near the south of the fort, including four unfinished altars, part of the fort's south rampart base, a wide range of pottery fragments, and large iron nails.

The first modern excavations were very small in scale, conducted by Sir George Macdonald in 1913. At the time, Macdonald was primarily

concerned with tracing the line of the Antonine Wall and Rampart, and at Cadder he located the fort's east and south ditches, part of the east rampart, a hearth, and fragments of coarse pottery, including an amphora handle. Macdonald also confirmed the medieval date of the Cadder motte. The Roman fort was later extensively excavated between 1929-31 by John Clarke for the Glasgow Archaeological Society. These excavations revealed the fort's full outline and most of the internal buildings, though these were in a poor state of preservation. Following these excavations, the site was used as a sand quarry during the Second World War, and by the 1950s both the Roman fort and medieval motte had been completely destroyed.

The most recent excavations at Cadder occurred over four days in May 2008, about 80m east of the Roman fort, in the vicinity of the external bath-house that had been identified but unexcavated in the 1929-31 excavations. It was hoped that this work would locate the bath-house and clarify its relationship to the Antonine Wall. No signs of the Antonine Wall Rampart or the expected bath-house were identified, and the excavators have suggested that future geophysical survey may help to identify this structure.

DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION:

Excavations have revealed that the fort at Cadder had an internal area of about 1.12ha (2.8 acres), with turf ramparts of about 4.7m wide on stone bases. It appears as if the fort was built at the same time as the Antonine Wall Rampart, with two ditches on the east and south, and one ditch on the west. The fort had a strong position within the landscape, but its weakest area was on the east. Perhaps for this reason, the fort faced the east, an interpretation based on the position of the central range of buildings within its interior. Internal buildings included a stone headquarters building (principia) and two granaries (horrea), along with timber barrack-blocks and commanding officer's house (praetorium). There were two bath-houses, one located within the fort in its north-east corner, and the other located outside of the fort, against the south face of the Antonine Wall Rampart about 75-80m to the east of the fort; the external bath-house was identified, but not excavated. There was evidence within the fort for at least one renovation of the fort's interior. This included a reconstruction of the principia, reconstruction of a possible timber workshop area just south of the north gate, and major modifications to the praetorium.

Clear evidence for an annexe was not located, but the presence of the unexcavated external bath-house to the east of the fort may indicate that an annexe was attached to the fort's eastern side. Many other Antonine Wall forts contained bath-houses within their annexes. Other evidence

included a long ditch on the fort's western side, which extended more than 100m to the south of the fort and then curved eastward for about 110m, where a second parallel ditch was located near a possible palisade trench. These outlying ditches and the palisade trench, however, appear to have no direct connection to the Antonine fort; Macdonald suggested that they may have been the remains of a Flavian fort built by Agricola around AD 80, but they may also represent an early phase of activity in the Antonine period, perhaps as part of a temporary camp used during the construction of the Wall.

A building inscription of the Second Legion (RIB 2188) indicates that this legion may have been responsible for building the fort, but there is no clear evidence for which unit garrisoned the fort during its functional operation.

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