

CROY HILL: EAST AND WEST EXPANSIONS

On the western slope of Croy Hill, west of the Roman fort, are two semi-circular “expansions” on the line of the Antonine Wall.

These represent one pair of six known installations of this type (two other pairs are known to either side of the fort at Rough Castle; at Bonnyside East and West; and Tentfield East and West). The expansions are clearly visible on the ground, as small raised platforms attached to the south face of the Antonine Wall Rampart.

HISTORY OF DISCOVERY AND EXCAVATION:

The Croy Hill expansions appear to have escaped the notice of the eighteenth-century antiquaries, though they had recognised those at Bonnyside and Tentfield. In the 1890s, the Glasgow Archaeological Society’s Antonine Wall Committee explored the Croy Hill expansions by cutting trenches through them.

The results were published in 1899, as part of the Society’s The Antonine Wall Report, and later considered in some detail by Sir George Macdonald. In 1967, Professor Anne Robertson re-opened the Glasgow Archaeological Society’s original sections, providing detailed drawings and photographs.

DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION:

The Croy Hill expansions are variously described as “semi-circular” or “sub-rectangular”, and were measured at about 15 feet north-to-south by about 30 feet east-to-west, although measurements vary dramatically, and larger measurements may include subsided material from the collapse of turf from the expansions themselves or the Antonine Wall Rampart. The expansions were composed of turf, and were built abutting the south face of the Antonine Wall Rampart. Excavations have confirmed that the expansions were built later than the Rampart, and that one was constructed on top of a stone base while the other was built directly on top of natural rock. When the Antonine Wall Committee excavated, the original Roman turf structure was well preserved to a height of more than 1.5m, showing a sloped

profile as the turf narrowed from its wide base. Sir George Macdonald interpreted these expansions, as well as those at Bonnyside and Tentfield, as beacon or signalling platforms. One of the Bonnyside examples, Bonnyside East, was excavated in 1957, revealing traces of burnt material, lending support to the beacon platform interpretation.

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