

Property in Care (PIC) ID: PIC061

Designations: Scheduled Monument (SM12757)

Taken into State care: 1984 (Leased)

Last reviewed: 2012

**HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

DOUNE ROMAN CAMP



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.

DOUNE ROMAN CAMP

SYNOPSIS

Doone Roman Fort, situated on the southern outskirts of the burgh of Doone and lying about 150m NNW of **Doone Castle** (see separate Statement of Cultural Significance), was built and briefly occupied during the later 1st century AD. It was discovered from the air by RCAHMS in 1983.

The fort had a non-standard, triple ditch system, with 'parrot's-beak' entrance breaks. The full defensive circuit has never been traced, but is estimated to be around 2.5ha (6 acres) over the ramparts. The promontory on which it lay gave strong natural protection, the ground on the SW falling precipitously to the left bank of the River Teith, with gullies formed by two tributaries impeding access on the flanks.

CHARACTER OF THE MONUMENT

Historical Overview:

- AD 43 – Emperor Claudius invades and conquers southern Britain.
- c.72 – Emperor Vespasian (69-79), founder of the Flavian dynasty, orders his governors of Britain, Petilius Cerealis, and his successor, Julius Frontinus, to overrun all the land west of the River Severn and northwards as far as the fringes of Caledonia.
- c.77 – Gnaeus Julius Agricola replaces Frontinus as governor. He remains in post for seven years, during which time he embarks on the conquest of northern Britain. In one of his campaigning seasons, Agricola establishes a frontier system along the Gask Ridge, NNE from the fort at Doone, on the River Teith, via forts at Ardoch and Strageath, to Bertha on the River Tay north of Perth. The fort at Doone has been identified with *Tamia*, on Ptolemy's map. The Gask Ridge frontier may have been part of a defensive system for holding Fife.
- 86/7 - The Gask Ridge frontier is abandoned, including the fort at Doone. Quite when Doone is vacated is unclear, but the lack of evidence for rebuilding, or phasing, indicates a very short existence. Unlike some of the other Gask Ridge sites, Doone is never re-occupied.
- 1983 - the Roman fort is discovered by RCAHMS during aerial survey, and a small excavation is subsequently carried out.
- 1984 – the area of the fort is taken into state care, together with **Doone Castle**.
- 1999 - excavations are conducted in advance of constructing a nursery building at Doone Primary School.

Archaeological Overview:

- Strong support for a Flavian date for the fort was provided by the discovery some years ago of a coin of Vespasian in the garden of a house on the south side of Doune, possibly within an annexe of the fort.
- In 1983 the fort was discovered from the air. A limited excavation followed.
- In 1999, excavations by Headland Archaeology in advance of building a nursery building in the grounds of Doune Primary School located three parallel ditches defending the fort's NW side, and exposed an area of the fort's interior adjacent to the NW rampart, into the back of which were set five bread ovens. Beyond the gravel mound of the *inter-vallum* road, the complete ground-plans of two timber-framed buildings were revealed, interpreted as possibly belonging to the fort's hospital block. Modern service trenches cut across several other timber buildings on the same alignment. A number of pits located may be associated with demolition and abandonment of the fort. Finds, including Samian ware, confirmed the expected Flavian dating for the site.

Architectural/Artistic Overview:

- The fort was quadrangular, with a non-standard, triple-ditch system. The 'parrot's-beak' entrance breaks are similar to those found at several forts in Strathmore – Cardean, Cargill and possibly Stracathro. The only structures discovered were two timber buildings, probably sheds, beside the *intervallum* road.
- Several characteristics clearly point to occupation and abandonment in the Flavian (late 1st century AD) period, including (a) the form of the ditch terminals at the SE entrance, (b) the evidence of a single period of construction in the timber buildings of the interior, and (c) the deliberate slighting of the defences, indicated by the packing of the innermost ditch.

Social Overview:

- Doune Primary School children (P3) sometimes do a project on Roman Britain, which includes Doune's own Roman fort, thus fostering an awareness of the site locally. However, the difficulty with the Roman fort, which the school experiences, is the lack of visibility and tangibility.
- The local community, through the Kilmadock Development Trust, has recently created a walk over the site of the Roman fort, and erected interpretation panels to help visitors appreciate what lies beneath the grass. Much of the site of the fort is used as a cricket pitch.

Spiritual Overview:

- Though the fort was only occupied for a brief period, it would have served the spiritual needs of the Roman troops deployed there. All imperial units observed imperial anniversaries, and there is evidence for universally popular private cults in Roman Britain.
- The Roman armies in Britain were predominantly composed of auxiliaries, who came from across the empire, and would have continued their own local faiths,

as well as subscribing to some elements of the imperial religion. The main spiritual trend was towards syncretism, which involved the unifying in devotion different religious systems, including local religions.

- Roman military religion is not well understood by the general public, and thus the religious associations of the historical fort do not carry into the present. The fort does not have any other known spiritual association or meaning.

Aesthetic Overview:

- Doune Roman Fort is a buried site, with no above-ground features. It is invisible and intangible, and thus has no aesthetic quality. The site of the fort is overlain partly by a school, housing and a cricket pitch.
- The site of the fort is a flat promontory overlooking the River Teith from its north bank. Despite the fringe of trees that mask the view, the naturally strong location, with a steep bank running down towards the river, helps to convey the impression of defensive strength.
- Doune itself is a pleasing small town. However, nothing that now exists there is empathetic towards its Roman heritage.

What are the major gaps in understanding of the property?

- When exactly was the fort built – before or during Agricola's governorship?
- What was the purpose of the two buildings found in 1999?
- What other buildings were in the fort and its annexes?
- What troops garrisoned the fort?
- When was the fort abandoned?

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Key Points

- The fort is associated with the first Roman invasion of the Scottish Highlands, led by the Roman governor of Britain, Gnaeus Julius Agricola, the victor of the battle of Mons Graupius (AD 83).
- The fort formed a vital part of the Gask Ridge defensive line, a 'frontier' that pre-dates both Hadrian's Wall and the **Antonine Wall**.
- The fort has some unusual features, including triple ditches and 'parrot's-beak' entrance breaks, which it shares with only a handful of other Flavian-era forts.
- The fort, though partially built on, has high archaeological potential.

Associated Properties:

(*other Gask Ridge sites*): **Ardoch** fort and **camps**; **Ardunie Signal Station**; Bertha fort; **Kirkhill Signal Station**; **Muir o' Gask Signal Station**; Strageath fort.
(*other large-scale Flavian forts in the area*): Bochastle; Cardean; Cargill; Malling.
(*other Roman defensive systems*): **Antonine Wall**; Hadrian's Wall.

Keywords:

fort, ditch, Samian ware, Flavian, Vespasian, Agricola

Selected Bibliography:

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