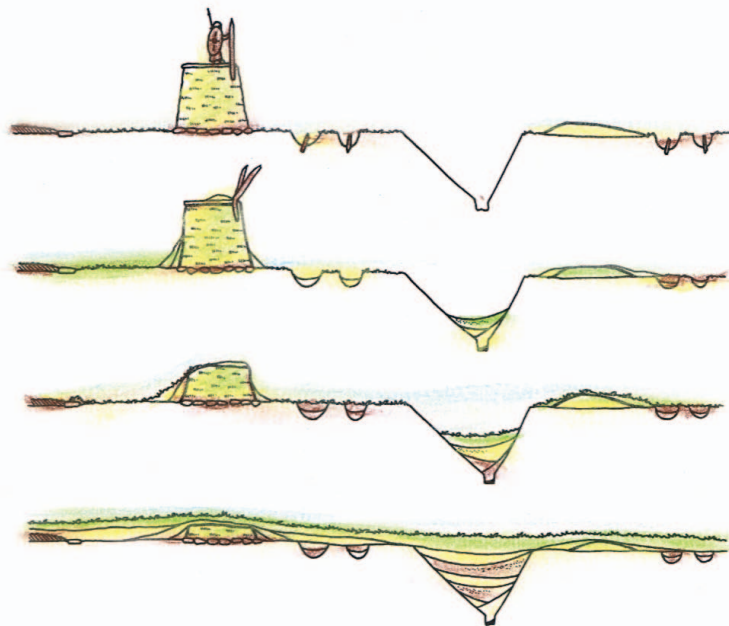# ROMAN
SCOTLAND

These section drawings show how the Antonine Wall disintegrated over time. The Wall was built of turves, on a stone base and the top probably had a wooden walkway with a wickerwork parapet. To the south of the Wall was the Military Way and in front was a steep-sided ditch the earth from which formed a low bank. Here and there to the north of the Wall were extra defences in the form of pits containing stakes set upright (the Romans called these lilia). Native tribesmen approaching the frontier from the north would first encounter the lilia, then the outer bank, then the ditch, more lilia perhaps and then the great Wall itself, patrolled by Roman soldiers. Once the Antonine Wall was abandoned the timber parts soon rotted and fell and the turf Wall began to collapse into a rounded bank. The ditch began to silt up and the pits filled in. Gradually the Wall became lower and the ditch more shallow, until it was possible to plough right up to the Wall and even over it, and in some places houses were built on top of it.

There was a Roman presence in Scotland intermittently over about 150 years from the 1st to the early 3rd centuries AD. Occupation by the Roman army was confined to three episodes totalling no more than 40 years, yet a remarkable amount of physical evidence survives, and some of the best-preserved monuments are among the finest Roman sites in western Europe.

Agricola's campaigns in Scotland began in AD 79 and culminated in the battle of Mons Graupius somewhere in north-east Scotland in AD 83, in which Roman might triumphed over native chiefs. This occupation lasted only seven or eight years before the army was withdrawn to southern Scotland and farther south. The great frontier of Hadrian's Wall was built in the 120s, but it was abandoned when the reconquest of lowland Scotland began in AD 139. Another frontier, the Antonine Wall, was built along the Forth-Clyde line soon after, with outpost forts as far north as the River Tay. This occupation was to last until the late 150s or 160s.

Once again the army withdrew, and the gains of the final campaign of 208-10 were lost to the Romans with the death of the Emperor Septimius Severus in 211, bringing Roman Scotland to an effective end. Some degree of contact between the Romans and the native tribes continued until the Romans finally withdrew from Britain in AD 410.

On campaign, the army protected itself by erecting temporary camps. These consisted of large rectangular enclosures surrounded by a stout rampart and ditch, within which rows of leather tents were erected. Between the military campaigns, the Roman hold on Scotland was strengthened by the building of major forts, small forts or fortlets, watch-towers and roads. The largest single monument was the Antonine Wall, so-called because it was built during the reign of the Emperor Antoninus Pius. It stretched across Central Scotland from Old Kilpatrick on the Clyde to Bo'ness on the Firth of Forth, a distance of about 60km, and it bristled with forts, fortlets and signalling platforms.

Although known as a Wall, this frontier was built not of stone but of turf or clay, but it was nonetheless an astounding sight, some 3m high and probably crowned with a wooden breastwork. Behind it, some 15-45m to the south, ran a metalled service road known today as the Military Way.

The Roman road network was a huge undertaking in terms of labour. Their straightness, standard width and cambered surface make Roman roads easy to recognise on air photographs and sometimes on the ground, especially where they are flanked by the pits from which the stone and gravel were quarried to build them.
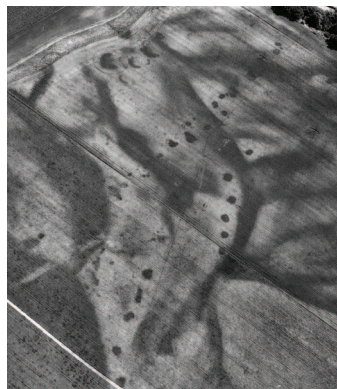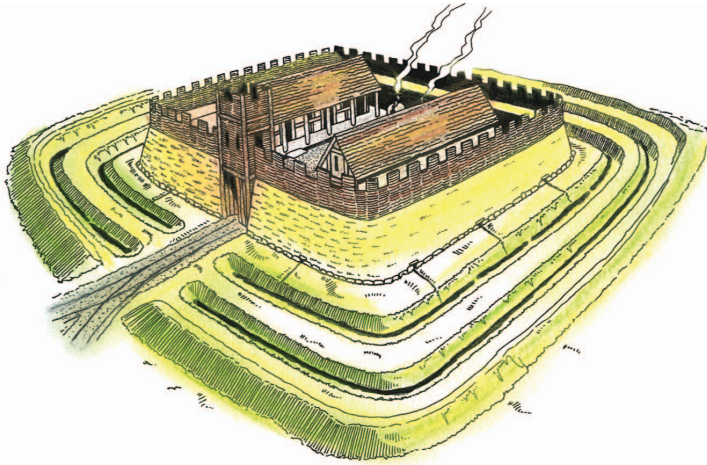
Evidence from excavations allows us to imagine the appearance of a Roman fort. This reconstruction shows a small fort, or fortlet, which would probably have housed a garrison of half a century (around 40 men). Its wall was built of turves with a wooden parapet walk and a wooden gateway, and it was surrounded by a double ditch and bank. Inside the fort were two timber barrack-blocks and perhaps an open-air oven.

Alongside the road-system were watchtowers, from which signals could be relayed from fort to fort. They were solid square timber towers, housing probably eight soldiers, surrounded by one or two deep ditches. These silted-up ditches survive today.

Permanent forts ranged in size from the fortlets that housed a century of infantry (80 men) to the legionary forts for 5000 men. They were defended by ramparts and ditches and contained timber and sometimes stone buildings, not just barracks but storehouses, officers' quarters and stables. Many forts had annexes to provide extra space for horses, bath-houses and smithies. Sometimes civilian villages grew up outside the larger forts, where native British merchants and families of the soldiers lived. Through trade and diplomatic activities, Roman coins and other objects can turn up on native farms and settlements well beyond the area occupied by the Roman army. Buried remains of Roman sites are often indicated by objects brought to the surface by ploughing or ditch-digging. Metal detecting can discover coins and small metal objects but it is vital that the exact find-spot is recorded on an Ordnance Survey map and all finds reported to the nearest local museum. Remember that metal detecting is not permitted by law on scheduled monuments.

The Roman army used a huge amount of equipment. Typical finds from forts and civilian settlements are broken pots, metal pans, rotary querns for grinding grain and seeds of the cereals and vegetables that were eaten. This pottery was found during excavations of the fort at Bearsden. © Crown Copyright: Historic Scotland, www.historicscotland.gov.uk

TIME-LINE

End of the last Ice Age
Wildlife colonises land
Mesolithic hunting settlers

12,500

8500   Flint scatters
           Shell mounds, rock shelters

Neolithic farming settlers

4000   Chambered tombs and houses
           Cupmarked rocks

3000   Stone circles, henges, and
           standing stones

Metal technology
(gold, copper)

2000   Burial mounds and short cists
           Hut-circles

Climate deteriorating
Fortifications begin

1000   Burnt mounds
           Hillforts

Iron-working technology

500   Crannogs
200   Duns, brochs, wheelhouses, and
BC ▲   earth-houses

▼ AD

Roman army in Scotland
79

Waning of Roman influence
200   Roman camps, forts and
400   roads, Antonine Wall

Introduction of Christianity
Picts, Gaels, Britons and Anglians
Start of the Viking Age

600   Long cist graves

Early Christian and Pictish
800   carved stones, chapels
           Pagan Viking graves and

Emergence of Scottish nation

1000   settlements
1100

First burghs

           Stone-built churches

1200
1500   Mottes, abbeys, stone-built

Reformation of the Church
           castles
1600

Agricultural improvements &
Industrial Revolution

           Tower-houses
1800   Deserted villages and farms
1900   Coal mines and heavy

Two World Wars
           industries
2000   Gun batteries and airfields

FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH:
A section of the Antonine Wall at Rough Castle, with the rampart and ditch still clearly visible. Some parts of the Antonine Wall have escaped complete destruction and, although eroded, the banks and ditch are still visible and sometimes quite impressive even now almost 1900 years after it was built. The roots of trees and scrub cause considerable damage, encouraging further erosion. Other stretches of the Wall have not fared so well but, even where it has apparently been demolished, traces often survive below ground level. © Crown copyright: Historic Scotland

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Historic Scotland is an agency within the Scottish Government and is responsible for administering the legislation that protects ancient monuments (buildings, ruins, archaeological sites and landscapes). It provides general advice on the conservation and protection of Scotland's heritage.

Historic Scotland's Education Service encourages the use of the built heritage as a learning and teaching resource.

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Our data service website contains details of scheduled monuments and has GIS datasets available to download:
http://data.historic-scotland.gov.uk

The following leaflets are available from Historic Scotland:

Scheduled ancient monuments: a guide for owners, occupiers and land managers

Managing Scotland's archaeological heritage

Grants for Ancient Monuments: a guide to grants available for the preservation, maintenance and management of ancient monuments

Archaeology on farm and croft (produced jointly with Archaeology Scotland)

Scotland's listed buildings: a guide for owners and occupiers

The carved stones of Scotland: a guide to helping in their protection

Metal detecting - yes or no? Metal detecting, scheduled ancient monuments and the law

A leaflet on *Treasure Trove in Scotland* is available from the National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh

A number of *Historic Scotland Technical Advice Notes,* on topics such as the use of lime mortars, the conservation of thatching and stonecleaning, are available. Catalogue from and orders to:

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Tel: 0131 668 8638
e-mail:
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This information leaflet is one of a series produced by Historic Scotland.

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