

The Peel of Kirkintilloch

Roman Frontier Fort

The Antonine Wall

The Antonine Wall was built of turf across the central belt of Scotland during the AD140s, effectively replacing Hadrian's Wall for upwards of two decades. The full reason for its construction – for example the degree to which it was intended to quell the warlike intentions of northern tribes – is unknown, but it is thought to have been a calculated gesture of authority by an incoming emperor during the early years of his reign. Antoninus Pius seems to have been keen to confirm that in his hands the military power of the Roman legions was secure. This was achieved by the comparatively simple means of advancing his northern British frontier a hundred miles further on, where a barrier could readily be established across the narrow isthmus between the Forth and the Clyde.

Kirkintilloch Fort

The Antonine Wall was constructed in several stages. Firstly, six forts were constructed across Scotland, usually referred to as 'primary forts'. Then the wall itself was built, with small interval 'fortlets' to supplement the forts and a v-profile ditch in front, for extra protection. At a later stage additional forts were built, effectively superseding the 'fortlets', although at different intervals. Kirkintilloch was one of those 'secondary forts'. It does not seem to have been a particularly large fort, but nevertheless occupied a strategic position, quite close to the mid-point of the frontier.



Javelin point, recovered from a Roman ditch to the south of Kirkintilloch fort in 1979.



There have been few dramatic finds from the Peel over the years, but quite a number from round about. This attractive distance slab of the Twentieth Legion was found at Elsecrums Farm, east of Kirkintilloch, in 1789. It records Antonine Wall construction work extending to 3,000 paces and 3,300 feet. The wild boar was the emblem of the legion.



Roman shoe leather excavated from Union Street, Kirkintilloch, in 1979.



Page from a nineteenth century Lion Foundry catalogue, showing Roman coins discovered on the boundary of Kirkintilloch site in August 1893.



Manning the frontier.



Looking out from Kirkintilloch Fort in Roman times it might have been possible to see the fires from the Iron Age fort at Meikle Reive, in the foothills of the Campsiees.