

Callendar Park, just south-east of Falkirk town centre, features long open stretches of the Antonine Wall Ditch and an excellent museum located within Callendar House, an expansive country house with origins in the fourteenth century.

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## HISTORY OF DISCOVERY AND EXCAVATION:

The Antonine Wall has survived reasonably well throughout Callendar Park, and the Ditch was recognised by antiquaries in the eighteenth century. Excavations have been carried out in Callendar Park in 1912-13, and 1989-90, the latter revealing the presence of defensive pits on the Antonine Wall berm as well as a timber structure, located to the south

of the Wall on the line of the Military Way, that has been identified as the early medieval Thane's Hall of the Thaness of Callendar (Calatria). Excavations near the west end of the Park (on Kemper Avenue) took place in 1952 and 1980, identifying the stone base of the Antonine Wall Rampart, and a building with hypocausts.

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## DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION:

Excavations and examination on the ground have revealed substantial information regarding the Antonine Wall's linear features throughout Callendar Park. The Ditch has been fully sectioned, revealing that it was 8.2m wide and 4.3m deep, but surviving portions visible on the ground today range from 1.8m-3m in depth. The Rampart is of average width, measuring 4.3-4.5m on a stone base, with an earth filling kept in place by clay cheeks; this fits the evidence from elsewhere along the Wall, which suggests that there was a difference in Rampart building material to either side of Watling Lodge, with turf being used to the west and earth and/or clay being used to the east. The reason for this difference may have been a shortage of turf in the Wall's eastern-most sector, different working parties building the eastern portion of the Wall, or the eastern sector being a later addition to the Roman plan.

A number of small defensive pits, following the description of similar features by Julius Caesar, were located on the Berm, between the Antonine Wall Rampart and Ditch. These seem to have been deliberately filled in at some point during the Antonine Wall's functional life, with the pits filled by gravel and layers of turf placed over the Berm. It has been suggested that this change may have been the result of instability caused by the narrowness of the Berm in this area, with the newly laid turf serving to consolidate and strengthen the ground on which the Rampart was laid; similar layers of turf were also previously located on the Berm at Cadder. There is also evidence that parts of the Rampart itself were rebuilt after the pits were filled in (this must have happened later, as there is no evidence of Rampart material within the filled-in pits). It remains uncertain why this Rampart rebuilding

was necessary. The presence of defensive pits is now known at a number of sites along both the Antonine Wall and Hadrian's Wall, and it is likely that they were a regular feature along the entire length of both frontiers.

While structural evidence for a Roman fort or fortlet at Callendar Park has never been found, there is some evidence for Roman activities south of the Antonine Wall Rampart.

Excavations at the west end of the Park in 1980 discovered a hearth with pottery and bones, as well as a building with a hypocausted room, probably a bath-house. The Roman fort at Falkirk was discovered in the 1990s, but this is located a considerable distance further west. It is possible that these features relate to the occupation of the Falkirk fort, but the large distance is puzzling.

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