

On the east slope of Crow Hill near Summerston Farm is the site of a Roman fortlet and temporary camp on the Antonine Wall. No remains are visible on the ground today, though portions of both the camp and fortlet are visible on aerial photographs.

HISTORY OF DISCOVERY AND EXCAVATION:

Around 1700 the antiquary Sir Robert Sibbald described a possible Roman fort at Summerston. A distance slab of the Second Legion (RIB 2193, now in the Hunterian Museum) was found on Summerston Farm, near the fortlet, around 1694. The antiquary Alexander Gordon mistakenly placed this distance slab at Castlehill fort, but described it as “the noblest Roman Stone that ever was found in Scotland”. Despite Sibbald’s identification of a fort here, neither Gordon nor the Rev John Horsley thought that a Roman installation was located at Summerston.

Following the discovery of the first Antonine Wall fortlet at Duntocher in 1947, Prof Anne

Robertson began searching for others and later suggested that a fortlet likely stood on Summerston Farm. Excavations on the summit of Crow Hill in 1961 failed to locate the suspected fortlet, but did expose a section of the Antonine Wall’s stone base. In 1980, new aerial photography revealed the fortlet’s location on Crow Hill’s east slope. Aerial photography in 1977 also discovered a Roman temporary camp next to the site of the fortlet and immediately south of the line of the Antonine Wall. Small-scale excavations by Prof Bill Hanson and Gordon Maxwell in 1980 confirmed both these discoveries.

DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION:

The temporary camp at Summerston was the earliest Roman feature here, enclosing an area of about 2.3ha (5.9 acres), preceding both the fortlet and the line of the Antonine Wall. No clear entrances to the camp have been identified, but breaks within the east and south defences may be either actual entrances or just gaps caused by incomplete cropmarks. The camp appears to have had a single occupation phase in the Antonine period, probably as the temporary base for construction crews of the Second Legion during the building of this section of the Antonine Wall. The fortlet was

later than the camp, but it is unclear if it was earlier than or of one build with the line of the Antonine Wall Rampart. The fortlet measured about 34m square (35m east-to-west and 33m north-to-south), within its single ditch which measured 1.6m wide and 0.75m deep. No trace of the fortlet’s ramparts survived. The only internal feature identified was a single possible post-hole, perhaps from a barrack-block to house the soldiers stationed there.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

CANMORE Record: <http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/site/44482>

Grew, F.O. (1981) Roman Britain in 1980. I. Sites Explored. *Britannia*, 9: 314–368 [For excavation of the temporary camp and fortlet at Summerston, see page 320.]

Gordon, A. (1726) *Itinerarium Septentrionale*. London. <http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=40g1AQAAMAAJ> [Summerston is discussed on page 53, and the distance slab found here is described on page 52 (bust mistakenly located at Castlehill).]

Hanson, W.S. and Maxwell, G.S. (1983) *Rome's North West Frontier: The Antonine Wall*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. [Summerston is discussed on pages 94–95, 118–20, 122–24.]

Haverfield, F.J. (1910) Sir Robert Sibbald's "Directions for his honoured friend Mr Llwyd how to trace and remake the vestiges of the Roman Wall betwixt Forth and Clyde." *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 44: 319–27. http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/adsdata/arch-352-1/dissemination/pdf/vol_044/44_319_332.pdf [Summerston is noted on page 324.]

Horsley, J. (1732) *Britannia Romana*. London. [Summerston is discussed on page 167.]

Jones, R.H. (2011) *Roman Camps in Scotland*. Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. [For the Summerston camp, see page 307.]