

At the west end of Cumbernauld Airport runway is the site of a Roman fort on the former Westerwood farm. Very little is visible on the ground today, but portions of the fort's southern defensive ditches may be traced as subtle hollows within the field.

## HISTORY OF DISCOVERY AND EXCAVATION:

The Roman fort at Westerwood was first noted in the 1720s by Alexander Gordon, and subsequently described by the Rev. John Horsley, William Maitland, and General William Roy. The site was excavated in 1932, 1974-75, and between 1985-88. The area has been photographed from the air on numerous occasions since the 1940s. Four days of

geophysical survey were completed in March 2006, covering an area of about 3ha within the fort and outside of the fort's west and south defences. A number of inscribed stones were reported throughout the eighteenth century (but are now lost), and an altar to Silvanus (RIB 2157) was discovered during ploughing in 1963.

## DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION:

The fort at Westerwood is the fourth smallest known along the Antonine Wall, with an internal area of about 0.8ha (2 acres), situated on a steep decline toward the north. The existing farm buildings occupy the fort's north-east quadrant. The Antonine Wall Rampart and Ditch composed the fort's northern defences, while a turf rampart and double ditches marked the fort's east, south, and west sides (an additional short section of a third ditch is located north of the fort's west gate). The Antonine Wall Rampart had a stone base measuring 4.3m wide, while the Ditch measured about 12m wide. The fort's other ramparts were likewise constructed atop a stone base, about 4.8m wide everywhere except for on the south-east, where it measured only 4.3m. The fort featured four gates, with the east and west gates located approximately one-third of the

distance between the Antonine Wall Rampart and the fort's south rampart; the Military Way crossed the fort through these gates. Excavation has revealed that the Antonine Wall Rampart base was constructed before the fort's other ramparts, suggesting that the fort was secondary (not part of the original plan for the frontier), but it remains unclear if a gap in the Rampart's base at the fort's north gate was made during the Rampart's construction, or was made when the fort was added later.

Very little has been uncovered through excavation, but a stone bath-house was located within the fort's north-west corner, and a large collection of ballista balls were recovered. Stones that bear signs of Roman tooling can be observed in the fabric of the farm buildings, but it is unclear if these were from the bath-house alone, or if the fort featured additional stone buildings in the Roman period. Large quantities

of burnt grain were found in what was probably the area of the fort's granary during the construction of farm building foundations, but this area has remained unexcavated due to the current structures. The southern area of the fort has also remained unexcavated, leaving the fort's interior configuration unknown. It is almost certain that this space was primarily filled with barrack blocks, but the location of the headquarter's building (principia), commanding officer's house (praetorium), and granary (horreum) remain speculative. The altar to Silvanus is dedicated by Vibia Pacata and her husband Flavius

Verecundus, a centurion of the Sixth Legion. No other Roman military units are known from Westerwood, but it is likely that the fort was primarily garrisoned by auxiliary soldiers.

A small portion of ditch has been identified east of the fort in aerial photography, possibly representing an enclosed annexe, but an annexe has never been confirmed. A civilian settlement (vicus) was probably also located outside of the fort, but this has also not been located; excavations to the south and south-west of the fort in the 1970s failed to provide evidence for a vicus, but revealed medieval and modern features.

---

## BIBLIOGRAPHY:

CANMORE Record: <http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/site/45870/>

Gordon, A. (1726) *Itinerarium Septentrionale*. London. <http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=40g1AQAAAMAAJ> [Westerwood is discussed on pages 56-57.]

Horsley, J. (1732) *Britannia Romana*. London. [Westerwood is discussed on page 170.]

Keppie, L.J.F. (1978) Excavations of Roman Sites at Dullatur and Westerwood, 1974-6. *Glasgow Archaeological Journal*, 5: 9-18.

Keppie, L.J.F. (1996) Excavation at the Roman Fort of Westerwood on the Antonine Wall, 1985-88. *Glasgow Archaeological Journal*, 19: 83-99.

Macdonald, G. (1933) Notes on the Roman Forts at Rough Castle and Westerwood, with a Postscript. *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 67: 243-96. [For Westerwood, see pages 277-86.]

Macdonald, G. (1934) *The Roman Wall in Scotland*, second edition. Oxford. [Westerwood is discussed on pages 138-39, 253-58.]

Robertson, A.S., revised by Keppie, L. (2001) *The Antonine Wall: A Handbook to the Surviving Remains*. Glasgow. [Westerwood is discussed on pages 80-82.]

Roy, W. (1755) *Military Survey of Scotland*. [For the area around Westerwood, see: <http://maps.nls.uk/geo/roy/index.cfm#zoom=14&lat=55.99024&lon=-3.92877&layers=0B000000TTT>]

Wright, R.P. (1969) A Roman Altar from Westerwood on the Antonine Wall. *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 100: 192-93.