

Just west of Rough Castle fort, along a stretch of well-preserved Antonine Wall Rampart, Ditch, and Outer Mound, are two “expansions” attached to the south face of the Rampart.

A second pair of similar “expansions” is located to the east of Rough Castle fort at Tentfield, and both pairs are best visited in conjunction with a visit to Rough Castle, the best-preserved fort on the entire line of the Wall. The Bonnyside East “expansion” is located about 400m west of the fort, where it is visible as a low mound, while the better preserved Bonnyside West “expansion” is about 400m further west, just inside the private grounds of Bonnyside House.

HISTORY OF DISCOVERY AND EXCAVATION:

The remarkable preservation of the Antonine frontier around Rough Castle was very evident to the antiquarian writers, and both Alexander Gordon and the Rev John Horsley noted the presence of the Bonnyside “expansions”,

which they described as being very similar in size and shape to the “turrets” known from Hadrian’s Wall. The Bonnyside East “expansion” was excavated in 1957 by RCAHMS.

DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION:

The eighteenth-century antiquaries associated these “expansions” with the turrets on Hadrian’s Wall. In the 1930s, Sir George Macdonald interpreted them, along with those at Croy Hill and Tentfield, as beacon or signalling platforms. Excavation of Bonnyside East has provided the most detailed description of this class of installations, confirming that the “expansion” consisted of a turf platform on a stone base, square in shape, measuring about 5.2m on all sides. A gravel pit was located under the platform, probably

related to the Military Way, which must have been constructed before the “expansion”. Traces of burnt material were revealed around the “expansion”, lending support to the beacon platform interpretation. They may alternatively, however, have served a turret-like function, facilitating communication from east-to-west.

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