

Just east of Bo'ness, partially on the grounds of Carriden House and partially in adjacent farmland, lie the remains of the eastern-most fort associated with the Antonine Wall.

It remains uncertain if the line of the Antonine Wall extended to Carriden or terminated at nearby Bridgeness, but the site is important as the only Antonine Wall site to provide clear evidence for an associated civilian settlement (vicus), and is the only site for which the Roman period name (Velunia or Veluniate) is known. The fort is visible as cropmarks in aerial photos, but very little is visible on the ground.

HISTORY OF DISCOVERY AND EXCAVATION:

A fort had been long-suspected at Carriden, but was not confirmed until 1945, when aerial reconnaissance identified eastern defensive ditches to the east of Carriden House. Trial excavations were carried out in 1946, confirming the presence of the ditches on the ground, and providing artefacts which suggested occupation only in the Antonine period. In 1956, the chance discovery of an inscribed Roman altar during ploughing in the field to the east of the fort provided evidence for a civilian settlement (vicus), as well as the Roman name for the fort (Velunia or Veluniate). Carriden

remains the only Antonine Wall fort for which we know the Roman period name.

In 1991, in advance of works to replace overhead power lines, minor excavations were carried out in the field system to the east of the fort, and geophysical survey took place in the same area in 2006-07. Further excavations to the west of the fort in 1994 identified the fort's south-west corner and structures within an annexe attached to the fort's west side. Additional excavations within the annexe and nearby areas have taken place in 2002, 2008, and 2009.

DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION:

Examination of aerial photography and archaeological excavations have revealed that the Carriden fort had an internal area of about 1.6ha (4 acres), with an annexe attached to its west side. No ramparts have been uncovered, but the fort featured three ditches on its east and south sides, a single ditch between the fort and annexe, and two ditches on annexe's south side. It is uncertain how the fort and annexe were defended on the north, as this is marked

by the very steep ground of the Carriden Glen and Carriden Burn, heading down toward the Firth of Forth. The 2008 excavations revealed a bath-house, located to the south-west of the fort's annexe. This is unusual, as Antonine Wall bath-houses are almost all located within the fort or an annexe.

In 1956 an altar dedicated to Jupiter Optimus Maximus by the vikani (that is, the people who lived in the fort's attached civilian settlement)

of Veluniate was ploughed up in a field about 140m east of the fort. This not only provided clear evidence for the presence of a vicus near the fort, but also clarified the Roman period name of the fort as Velunia or Veluniate, known from the Ravenna Cosmography. This is the only Antonine Wall fort for which the Roman period name is known. From examination of later aerial photography, the altar's general find spot appears to be located within an ordered field or plot system outside the fort on its east side. The aerial images and geophysical survey suggest that the field system exceeds 6 hectares and featured a road junction, with the road issuing from the fort's east gate meeting

roads heading north-east and south-west at a distance of about 100m east of the gate. A number of identifiable rectangular plots (presumably for agricultural purposes) are all located to the east of this junction, with a heavier concentration on the northern side. The space between the fort's eastern defences and the road junction appears to be empty and it is likely that this area served as a parade-ground for the soldiers stationed within the fort. The precise location, size, nature, form, and extent of the Carriden vicus remain unclear, but it seems likely that it was located within the field system to the east of the fort.

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