
FIRST CONTACT

ROME AND NORTHERN BRITAIN

Edited by
David J Breeze
Lisbeth M Thoms
and
Derek W Hall

TAYSIDE AND FIFE ARCHAEOLOGICAL COMMITTEE
PERTH
2009

MONOGRAPH SEVEN

This monograph is the seventh in an occasional series and is available by post from John Sherrieff, Hon Treasurer TAFAC, 21 Burleigh Crescent, Inverkeithing Fife KY11 1DQ.

TAFAC Editorial board 2009

Lisbeth Thoms (Editor), Derek Hall (Assistant Editor), Mark Hall, Paula Martin, John Sherrieff (TAFAC Treasurer), Ann MacSween and Alex Woolf

Monograph One

Excavations in St Andrews 1980–89 A decade of archaeology in a historic Scottish Burgh

Monograph Two

The Salt and Coal Industries at St Monans, Fife in the 18th and 19th centuries

Monograph Three

Perth: the archaeology and development of a Scottish burgh

Monograph Four

Dundee Rediscovered: the archaeology of Dundee reconsidered

Monograph Five

Excavations at Brown Catherthun and White Catherthun hillforts, Angus, 1995–1997

Monograph Six

Excavations at St Ethernan's Monastery, Isle of May, Fife 1992–7

Submission of potential monographs

Notes for contributors are printed at the rear of this volume. Offers of monographs are welcomed, and intending contributors should first contact the Editor, 34 Glenfarg Terrace, Perth PH2 0AP.

Front cover The Roman fort of Ardoch, Perth and Kinross in the snow

(© RCAHMS)

Back cover Roman Imperial gold aurei of (left to right) the emperors Nero (AD 64–68), Vespasian (AD 70), Titus (AD 79) and Domitian (AD 90–91)

(© Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, University of Glasgow)

Editors note

Unless stated all dates quoted in these papers are AD.

TAFAC would like to acknowledge the support of Historic Scotland, RCAHMS, Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust, the Marc Fitch Fund and the Jennie S Memorial Foundation in aiding the publication of this monograph.

2009

© Historic Scotland. *The moral right of the authors has been asserted.*

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher.

ISBN ?

Typeset by Christina Unwin *e-mail* christina@wave.demon.co.uk

Printed and bound by Farquhar and Son Ltd, Perth

Contents

Contributors	v
Roseanna Cunningham Foreword	vi
Mark Hall Preface	vii
David J Breeze Introduction	1
Peter Wilson Holding the line? The Humber frontier and the expansion into Yorkshire reconsidered	9
David Shotter When did the Romans invade Scotland?	15
Rebecca Jones Chasing the army: the problems of dating temporary camps	21
Birgitta Hoffmann Cardean: the changing face of a Flavian fort in Scotland	29
David Woolliscroft 79 AD and all that: when did the Romans reach Perthshire?	33
Erik Dobat The Gask system in Perthshire: the first artificial frontier line of the Roman Empire?	39
William S Hanson The fort at Elginhaugh and its implications for Agricola's role in the conquest of Scotland	49
David J Breeze Conclusions	59
Notes for contributors	63
Index	67

[p iv / blank]

Contributors

David J Breeze	36 Granby Road, Edinburgh EH16 5NL
Peter Wilson	English Heritage, Centre for Archaeology, Fort Cumberland, Portsmouth PO4 9LD
David Shotter	Department of History, Lancaster University, Lancaster LA1 4YG
Rebecca Jones	RCAHMS, John Sinclair House, 16 Bernard Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 9NX
Birgitta Hoffmann	School of Archaeology, Classics and Egyptology, University of Liverpool, Liverpool L69 3BX
David J Woolliscroft	School of Archaeology, Classics and Egyptology, University of Liverpool, Liverpool L69 3BX
Erik Dobat	Neunergarten 5, D-82061 Neuried, Germany
William S Hanson	Department of Archaeology, University of Glasgow, Glasgow G12 8QQ

Foreword

I was pleased to be asked to write the foreword to this interesting collection of contributions extending the knowledge base of what we know about the Romans in Scotland.

I have the great good fortune to represent a constituency replete with sites and buildings of historical importance and significance from every era of Scottish history. Sites and buildings that track the development of Scottish culture and society: from pagan standing stones to Celtic crosses; from St John's Kirk where John Knox fuelled the fire of the Reformation to the ecumenical St Mary's Monastery; from Roman forts to General Wade's roads; from the bloody memories of Sheriffmuir to Innerpeffer and the calm of the oldest existing lending library in the country; from the round tower of Abernethy in the east to the remains of the Pictish fort of Dundurn at St Fillan's in the west. Scotland's history is painted in bold colours across the land and architecture of my constituency. Perth is one of Scotland's ancient cities and the historic environment plays a huge role in the economic life of the whole of the county.

Representing an area which includes Ardoch Fort and the Gask Ridge – and several possible sites for Mons Graupius – I could hardly fail to be aware of some of the important archaeological and historical links between Perthshire and the furthest extents of the great Roman empire. The Romans may perhaps have won the battle of Mons Graupius, but in Perthshire the might of the Roman army certainly learned that they were not, indeed, all-conquering, destined to sweep

all before them in an unstoppable wave of imperial expansion. Perthshire did not just repel the Roman empire, of course. It also played a part in it. Local legend strongly asserts that Pontius Pilate was born at Fortingall, the son of a Roman soldier and a local woman. Though whether the product of such a union could really have gone on to become the Governor of Judaea is, shall we say, a matter for debate.

Heritage and history are not just important for their own sakes, all the statistics show that Scotland's historic sites and monuments play an important part in the tourism industry, one of the key parts of our economy. In the Gask Ridge, Perthshire has a reminder of the past that is of real historical and archaeological significance. However, there are real concerns about the extent to which some of the sites are under threat through lack of care and maintenance. While official classifications do not in themselves secure the future of historic sites, I believe that the Gask Ridge and other associated sites are of such importance that they really should be added to the World Heritage Site which includes the Antonine Wall and other elements of the Roman frontier. That is a position I have stated in the past and will continue to press for in the future. We cannot afford, in either academic or economic terms, to lose the connection these sites give us to the past.

In the words ascribed to Calgacus by Tacitus, 'Think, therefore, as you advance to battle, at once of your ancestors and of your posterity'

Roseanna Cunningham
Member of the Scottish Parliament for Perth

Preface

It gives me great pleasure to welcome readers to this volume of conference proceedings, much as I welcomed delegates to the conference, and to briefly set the stage for the delights to follow.

When the ancients called Rome the eternal city they must have known that its eternity lay in the idea(s) it represented, ideas that extended beyond the space of the city out across the known world and down through time and succeeding civilisations. This enduring fascination has fuelled both a rich vein of imagination (in a recent episode of television's *Doctor Who*, the Doctor caused the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, destroying Pompeii to save the planet from alien destruction). The conference trod much safer ground but was no less a testament, with its sell-out international audience, to the enduring appeal of Rome.

Fascination with Rome and its empire, now, as then stretches far beyond its nominal frontiers and is in part a glamour that germinated the idea of the conference. There was also the desire to see communicated more widely some of the latest results on the archaeology of Roman North Britain and to share reflections with some of the speakers on the veracity of Tacitus' *Agricola* as a source for precisely what happened. All the speakers were more than willing to take part and provoked fierce but friendly debate, particularly with respect to Perthshire's own piece of 'Romanitas', the

line of Roman towers along the Gask Ridge and their associated features. Consequently we have included here a paper, by Erik Dobat, not given on the day but stemming from the discussion on the nature and purpose of frontiers.

As I did at conference let me finish by sharing three quotes that, in pivotal ways, fuelled my planning of and enthusiasm for the conference. The first from Tacitus himself, demonstrates both his perceptive powers and his desire to persuade, 'By the eagerness of the human mind, things which are obscure are more easily believed' (*Histories* 1. 22). When he wrote those words he could almost have had in mind local historian Peter Baxter's whacky notion (1906, 70) that, 'Perth seems to have taken early to golf. Whether the Romans played the game when in occupation of the fair city is not known. Every great Roman colony in Scotland was a little Rome, encompassed with strong walls, adorned with temples, palaces, courts, halls, basilicas, baths, markets, aqueducts and other public buildings.' Finally, and perhaps most significantly for both the conference and these proceedings, as long ago as the turn of the 17th century, Danish antiquarian A A Rhode (1682–1724) wrote, 'Archaeological experience is worth more than the authority of Tacitus'. You can decide for yourselves whether Rhode was right after reading these stimulating papers.

Mark A Hall

History Officer, Perth Museum and Art Gallery

Baxter, P 1906 'Recreations and Sports of Perth', in Dr Urquhart (ed) *Auld Perth*, (Perth), 68–84.



Illus 1 Map of the Roman empire in the second century, showing places mentioned in the text.