

EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S RECORD OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

MONUMENT: Bainbridge Roman fort and annexe

PARISH: BAINBRIDGE

DISTRICT: RICHMONDSHIRE

COUNTY: NORTH YORKSHIRE

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 28407

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): SD93759018

DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

The monument includes Bainbridge Roman fort, known to the Romans as 'Virosidum', which is located on the summit of Brough Hill above the confluence of the River Bain and the River Ure. Remains of a contemporary field system outside the fort are also included in the scheduling. The fort occupies a strategically strong position, with extensive views up and down Wensleydale and controls the principal pass through the Pennines between Stainmore and the Ilkley/Aire gap. The fort, which is defined by the area on the top of Brough Hill, measures 91m north to south and 111m east to west between the crests of the rampart, enclosing an area of 1.01ha. The defences consisted of a clay rampart which was revetted at the rear and had a wall of sandstone blocks added to its exterior later. The early clay rampart on the north side was laced with birch willow and moss. The visible remains of the fort are of a late Flavian date, AD 90-105, although slightly earlier occupation is probable. The first phase of the defences included an earth and timber rampart to which was added the later Antonine (approximately AD 190) stone wall. The rebuilding of the interior of the fort during the 3rd century was accompanied by the demolition of the east wall and the construction of an annexe. A building inscription identifies the annexe as 'bracchium caementicium' (stone built outwork) built under Alfenus Senecio. Rebuilding across the whole site took place in the late fourth century. Pottery evidence also suggests that the desertion of the fort was unusually late. Although robbing has left almost no stonework visible, the rampart survives to a maximum height of 3.9m at the north west corner. The western section of the northern rampart survives as an unbroken stony scarp with a maximum height of 2.9m. To the east of this the rampart is less defined, the result of excavation trial trenching in the late 1920s. On the south side the rampart has a maximum height of 3.4m and 3.1m at the south west angle. The course of the fort wall at the north rampart is represented on the surface by a narrow terrace, 1m to 1.7m wide, breaking the principal external scarp of the rampart. On the east and south sides it survives as a break of slope, with a more discernible unbroken terrace, 1.2m wide on the west side. The ditches of the fort are generally not visible to any great depth but their course is still recognisable on the ground. To the north and south the number of potential ditches has been limited by the width of the hill. The northern defences included two ditches, an inner ditch 5.2m wide and an outer ditch 3m wide. The outer ditch was short lived and was later filled in and a metalled road built over it. Part of the inner ditch is now covered by a collapsed

rampart. The southern defences included a single ditch with a width of between 3.5m and 5.6m from the base of the rampart to the counterscarp. The east ditch has a width of 4.5m with a well defined external counterscarp 0.75m high. On the west side of the fort are the remains of five ditches, constructed because of the restricted view beyond this part of the hill. The four outer ditches were relatively shallow, between 0.9m and 1m deep. These ditches had not been long in use before they were backfilled with clay and stones. The inner 'V'-shaped ditch, which was 5.5m wide and 2.1m deep, had a drainage channel cut into the bottom. Two oblong mounds overlie the western ditches. The larger, a grassy flat topped mound 12.8m by 4m, is surrounded by a ditch 1.5m wide and is situated near the edge of the natural slope. The other, smaller mound lies beside the west gate in the inner ditch, itself surrounded by a ditch cut into the base of the rampart. The nature of these mounds is uncertain, but it is believed that they might be medieval rabbit warrens, known as pillow mounds. The four entranceways are opposite each other on a parallel to the ramparts. The east gate is represented by a break in the rampart 4.9m wide. This was a fourth century insertion. However, the location of the previous gate is uncertain. The west gate is marked by a small break in the rampart, although it has been largely obscured by the building of the mounds. The north and south gates linked by the via principalis are both clearly defined. The north gate measures 3.3m internally and the south gate 4.2m, accompanied by a causeway across the ditch.

The annexe, which dates from the period of Severan rebuilding in approximately AD 205, has been built on the east side of the monument with dimensions of 99m north to south by 73m east to west. Excavation here has revealed a granary, a building with a hypocaust system, (identified as either a mansio or a bath house) and the line of the rampart with a gate at the north west corner.

The roads from the east and south gates are still traceable. From the east gate, via the annexe, the road, with a width of 5m, bends slightly as it crosses the causeway and then continues in an easterly direction to the field wall. The road from the south gate extends in a south westerly direction forming a terrace on average 1.5m wide. Towards the base of the hill it forms a hollow way. On the north facing slopes of Brough Hill are a series of strip lynchets. These are narrow as the result of the steepness of the hill and are unevenly spaced and irregular. They extend across the hillside throughout the full east-west extent of the monument. On the south side of the hill are a number of low banks and lynchets forming the remains of a field system with a possible droveway or track.

One of the earliest references to Bainbridge Fort is Camden in his 'Britannia', first published in 1586. He states that "there are groundworks of an old fortification about five acres in compass; and under it to the east, the signs of many houses are yet apparent." Since 1925 Bainbridge Fort has been subjected to a series of excavations. In 1925 and 1926 R G Collingwood excavated areas of the fort, including the southern half of the praetoria (headquarters building), and sacellum (chapel), for the Yorkshire Archaeological Society. In 1928 J P Droop of Liverpool University trial trenched the north east angle of the rampart and a section of the road outside the south gate. The following year he excavated the barracks, parts of the annexe and a section of the via praetoria (the road running east to west across the fort) beside the east gate. From 1950 until 1953 excavations inside the main fort and the northern defences were directed by W V Wade of Leeds University. The excavations were taken over by B R Hartley in 1956 expanding the area of excavation to the south east corner of the fort. More of the annexe was investigated and the headquarters building was excavated. The excavations were concluded in 1969.

All modern fences and field boundaries are excluded from the scheduling, although the ground beneath these features is included.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Roman forts served as permanent bases for auxiliary units of the Roman Army. In outline they were straight sided rectangular enclosures with rounded corners, defined by a single rampart of turf, puddled clay or earth with one or more outer ditches. Some forts had separately defended, subsidiary enclosures or annexes, allowing additional storage space or for the accommodation of troops and convoys in transit. Although built and used throughout the Roman period, the majority of forts were constructed between the mid first and mid second centuries AD. Some were only used for short periods of time but others were occupied for extended periods on a more or less permanent basis. In the earlier forts, timber was used for gateways, towers and breastworks. From the beginning of the second century AD there was a gradual replacement of timber with stone.

Roman forts are rare nationally and are extremely rare south of the Severn Trent line. As one of a small group of Roman military monuments, which are important in representing army strategy and therefore government policy, forts are of particular significance to our understanding of the period. All Roman forts with surviving archaeological potential are considered to be nationally important.

Bainbridge Roman fort and its annexe survive well and will retain significant archaeological remains. Excavations have provided important information on the history and use of the site, confirming that it was an important military centre for over 300 years. Remains of a broadly contemporary field system survive well on the northern and southern sides of the fort and information on their relationship to the fort will be preserved.

SCHEDULING HISTORY

Monument included in the Schedule on 25th February 1935 as:

COUNTY/NUMBER: Yorkshire 219

NAME: Roman Camp (Bracchium)

Scheduling amended on 1st April 1974 to:

COUNTY/NUMBER: North Yorkshire 219

NAME: Roman Camp (Bracchium)

The reference of this monument is now:

NATIONAL MONUMENT NUMBER: 28407

NAME: Bainbridge Roman fort and annexe

SCHEDULING REVISED ON 02nd December 1998