

New archaeological discoveries are constantly being made in the Falkirk Council area by the Museums' Service and members of the public. Here you will find brief descriptions of the latest finds. More detailed reports have been lodged with the Museum at Callendar House.

KINNEIL VILLAGE FINDS, BO'NESS

Pottery and a coin.

Trial excavation by CFA in 1998 found the heavily paved main street of the medieval village. The street was set in a hollow and diverged from the course of the Antonine Wall in order to cross the Gil Burn well to the south of Kinneil House at a point noted by the Ordnance Survey officers in the 1850s as a "Roman Bridge". There was evidence of timber structures to either side of the street as well as later stone buildings. The stone buildings may be associated with the landscaping of the area by Duchess Anne in the years leading up to 1700. For example, it is known that there was a bowling alley and tennis court for the house. The finds include white gritty ware of the 13th/14th centuries and a silver long cross penny of Alexander III (1280-6). There is also part of a local copy of a Scarborough Knight jug. (See Glendinning, B. 2000 'Investigations of the Antonine Wall and medieval settlement at Kinneil House, Bo'ness, Falkirk', Proc Soc Antiq Scot, 130 (2000), 509-524.) All the finds have been allocated to Falkirk Museums by the Finds Disposal Panel.

CROSS WELL, FALKIRK

1817 well head

In 1988 a lorry backed into the Cross Well and for the safety of the public it was subsequently dismantled and removed.

LOCHLANDS

Roman temporary camps

Construction work at Unit 3 on the Lochlands industrial estate removed all traces of the Roman camps over a large area. Rescue survey by Falkirk Museum recorded two Roman temporary camp ditches belonging to camps of the first and second centuries AD and a field oven on the remaining edges of the site. The latter was typical of the Roman ovens previously found in this complex, consisting of a large oval pit interconnected with a smaller circular pit. Smaller V-shaped gullies may have been part of further defensive enclosures, but the absence of a plan make them difficult to interpret.

WESTER CARMUIRS

Early Iron Age enclosure

The Roads Department of Falkirk Council commissioned Falkirk Museum to undertake the archaeological investigation of the area to be developed for a car park to the Falkirk Wheel at NS 8539 8056. It was known that the sand & gravel ridge between Camelon and Bonnybridge was densely occupied in the late Iron Age. In the event a new site, believed to be early Iron Age was found, confirming the early agricultural use of these light soils.

A series of three sub-circular enclosures, roughly 10m in diameter, had been sequentially placed at the top of the slope overlooking the Lightwater Burn and the line of the main Falkirk to Glasgow road. Each enclosure was left open on its western side. The ditches and gullies making up these enclosures were from 2cm to 40cm in depth. In front of the open end were numerous post-holes. Emanating from the enclosure were several linear ditches, probably contemporary field boundaries. One of these ditches carefully avoided a large pit containing burnt clay and large chunks of charcoal. This may have been an oven. The charcoal is now at Glasgow University and will be identified to the tree species before being sent off to obtain a radiocarbon date. The whole area was crossed by post-medieval ridge and furrow and had been badly truncated by recent ploughing. No artefacts were found.

CARRIDEN, BO'NESS

Roman annexe

Excavation by the Falkirk Local History Society (with help from the Edinburgh Field Society) at Carriden (NT 0237 8078) located the west ditch of the annexe to the Roman fort north of the stable block of 1818. There was only one ditch on this side of the annexe, though it was larger than the two found on the south side in 1996. It still acted as a drain for the higher ground to the south and had to be bailed out throughout the excavation. Finds from the ditch include two samian stamps and two mortaria stamps, the latter two from the same vessel. The lower fill of the ditch was grey silt showing that there had been stagnant water in it for a considerable period.

The blockage in drainage was found to be due to a large dump of stones at the northern end of the ditch. Just north of the main concentration of stones the ditch was cut by a wide flat-bottomed feature whose base was lined with small cobbles and pebbles. This gave the appearance of a road surface and the feature cut the ditch at approximately 60 degrees. This road was traced back into the annexe, where it still lay in a cutting. This gave it a gentle gradient and was presumably a deliberate attempt to grade the road into Carriden Glen to ease access to the beach. Carriden lies on the south shore of the Forth Estuary and there would have been landing facilities here in the Roman and medieval periods. Although the road was evidently later than the annexe ditch, the silting at the base of the ditch suggests that it may have been a secondary Roman feature - though a medieval date is also possible. Throughout the area of the excavation it was evident that the Roman ground surface had been heavily truncated by early 19th century landscaping. The quality of surviving remains in the annexe is therefore unlikely to be high.

AIRTH

18th century burgh

Trial trenching by Headland Archaeology beside the old well in the burgh of High Airth (NS 8981 8730) showed that 19th century landscaping of the area had been extensive. The only structure found was a slight stone foundation, circular in plan, a few metres south of the existing well structure. Re-examination of the well head shows that it contains numerous re-used stones suggesting that it was re-capped in the early 19th century. The steps and base, however, are considered to be significantly earlier.

CARRIDEN

Roman coin and later spindle whorl

A copper alloy dupondius of the late 1st century was found by a member of the Antonine Metal Detectorist Club in the fields adjacent to the dig. It lay some 4 inches below the surface. On the surface, nearby, was a stone spindle whorl. It is some 35mm in diameter with rounded edges that have been polished. Other finds include a cone-shaped lead plumb bob, biconical lead spindle whorl of c1600 and a pewter hawking whistle. These have all been donated to Falkirk Museum (subject to Treasure Trove).

MUMRILLS

Roman fort (aqueduct?)

Excavation by the Falkirk Local History Society at the point where the "annexe" ditch crosses the ditches at the south-west corner of the Roman fort located the excavation trenches of the 1920s. The "annexe" ditch appeared to curve at this point and not carry straight on across the fort ditches as shown on published plans. Previous work suggests that this may have been the south-east corner of an earlier fort.

The outer ditch at this point was much shallower than the rest, being only c45cm deep but slightly over 2m wide. In the bottom was a lining of clay up to 10cm thick, which extended part way up the sides. This is more likely to have been an open water channel or aqueduct than a defensive ditch. It would have taken water from the Westquarter Burn some distance away at Langton and was heading for the south gate of the fort.

CARRIDEN

Graveyard & Early Christian Cross

A survey by the Falkirk Local History Society recorded 136 gravestones (compared to the 64 noted by Mitchell & Mitchell). These include a series of ornate stones along the western wall dedicated to ministers from the parish. The foundations of the 13th century church are still visible, as a result of excavations here in the 1970s by the West Lothian History Group. It measures 19.8m long by 7.5m wide. The east gable had a chamfered plinth course and angle buttresses. One of the 17th century gravestones had been made from a reused stone. The reverse side appears to have an interlace pattern and may well be an early Christian Cross (to be confirmed).

GREENHILL HOARD, BONNYBRIDGE

14th century coin hoard

A dispersed hoard of 40 silver pennies of Edward I and Edward II of England were allocated to Falkirk Museum by the Treasure Trove Panel and are now in the collection. The site of the discovery (NS 817 786) is not noted for any other medieval finds or sites, the nearest of which would be Seabegs Motte on the line of the Antonine Wall.

WELLSFIELD FARM, DENNY

A huge boulder was removed from an old track to the north of Wellsfield Farm (NS 8086 8566). This track formed part of the main road between Denny and Stirling in the early 19th century. On the under side of the stone a number of

cup marks occur, without any accompanying rings. These marks are characteristic of similar stones found in the Stirling area and attributed to the Bronze Age. The stone has now been set beside the track and the area around it landscaped for visitors to see it.

HODGE STREET, FALKIRK

Roman fort cesspit.

At the end of April Falkirk Museum excavated a Roman cesspit in the grounds of a house in Hodge Street, Falkirk (NS 8860 7971). A sewer trench emerged from the south-west corner of the Roman fort and on the berm joined up with a timber-lined cesspit, some 2.8m in diameter and 0.8m deep. This would have allowed the solid waste to settle, whilst liquids were able to drain off near the top of the tank into a stone-lined sewer culvert. The culvert then rapidly passed down the hill and followed a shelf cut into the inner slope of the defensive ditch. It appears to have crossed the two fort ditches in wooden troughs before finally debouching into the Goat Burn (the line of which is followed by Hodge Street).

The cesspit was inserted into an existing sewer that emptied all the contents of the fort's latrine into the burn. The use of a cesspit suggests some concern over the pollution of the natural water course - perhaps the Roman army was concerned that continued disruption to the lives of the local population might cause civil unrest, or perhaps they were concerned about fish stocks. Later still, the culvert and pit were dismantled and the pit was filled with turf. The cesspit must have been covered by some form of lid in order to keep the smell, number of flies and number of rodents down. The lid would have been of wood, of either plank or wicker construction. A large iron hook found in the pit may have been used to remove this heavy top for periodic emptying. A 1st century AD duty rosta from an Egyptian legion records one of the soldiers "as stercus", that is "on latrine duties".

WEEDINGSHALL, POLMONT

The site (NS 9248 7907) lies on a north-facing slope on the east side of the Westquarter Valley at a height of 35m OD. Here, near the mouth of the valley, there was a small dip between two hills on the estate of Weedingshall. This dip accumulated a large quantity of hill-wash, from the upper levels of which came a fragment of a Bronze Age corded beaker. A few fragments of Neolithic pottery were found in the lower levels of the hill-wash, the depth of which varied from nothing at the top of the site to 1.4m at the lower end. Below the hill-wash two curving gullies were found. Between them they formed about a quarter of the circumference of a circular enclosure, 7.5m in diameter. The upper gulley was irregular, having various swellings as if for post settings. A further post-hole was found on the opposite side of this circumference.

Attached to the west side of the circular feature was a semi-circular extension, composed of a large post-hole, stake holes and the cut back bank of natural. The interior of the circular enclosure had been levelled up by dumping material in the natural valley. This material incorporated a small amount of oyster shells and Neolithic pottery. Further levelling was achieved by cutting back the natural deposits of sand and gravel. This created a curving step into

which was set a midden of oyster shells. This midden incorporated smaller quantities of muscle and periwinkle (6 bin bags full).

13m SE of the enclosure, on the level ground above, a circular pit, 2.5m in diameter, had been cut into the natural gravel. The upper fill was mixed and clearly represented deliberate backfill. The lower fill contained charcoal and the natural nearby had been oxidised. Although there is no stratigraphic link to the circular Neolithic structure, the absence of any other features on the plateau is of note. The nearest shell midden lies only 725m to the north-west at Mumrills. Radiocarbon dates were obtained for this at the time of the construction of the Laurieston Bypass.

MUMRILLS, LAURIESTON

After the field at the site of the Roman fort at Laurieston had been ploughed the Falkirk Local History Society organised a walk over the site. A large quantity of box flue tile from a hypocaust was picked up from the area of the commanding officer's house. This tile is unusual in having rolled clay reinforcing bands inside the corners. Further work will now be done to see if this feature occurs elsewhere along the Antonine Wall, but research has shown the relative paucity of such tiles along this frontier. Stone slabs seem to have been used more often than had been expected. Other finds from the fieldwalking include a stamped amphora handle and a stamped mortarium rim. Various fabrics can be identified amongst the mortaria and these will be included in the Mortaria in Scotland Project being undertaken by Kay Hartley. Some 35 pieces of samian - the fine red glossy tableware of the Roman elite - were retrieved. More unusual were the finds of a coin of Trajan (c117AD), a colour coated flagon and a whetstone.

MUMRILLS, LAURIESTON

In May a watching brief at NS 9170 7945 showed that the house platforms of the 1960s had been terraced into the hillslope, but that very little of the garden areas had been disturbed. The field was cultivated until 1959 and this plough soil had been covered to a depth of up to 0.3m by material dug out of the house foundations. The land sloped down quite steeply to the north in the Roman period and so the further north you are in the annexe the deeper the Roman deposits are buried.

BRIGHTONS

A finely worked barbed and tanged arrowhead made of flint was found during gardening in Ercall Road, Brightons. The gardener noticed the unusual shape of the stone just as he was throwing it onto a concrete path. Unfortunately the impact with the path caused the tang to break. It was two days later, after the arrowhead had been identified at Callendar House as a Bronze Age artefact that the finder returned to the site and recovered the broken end of the tang.