The Devil's Causeway
The Continuation in Berwickshire

by **Walter Elliot**

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DEDICATION

Only about one person in a thousand has the slightest interest in whether the Romans built a road up the Berwickshire coast or not. This booklet is for that person.

Second thoughts. It is not so much a booklet, rather a very long letter.

Introduction

Berwickshire has always been a neglected area in the Roman history of Scotland. Because there are no acknowledged outstanding remains and few concentrations of Roman finds in the county, it has been accepted that the local tribe, the Votadini, were Roman-friendly and thus did not need to have an occupying force billeted within their territory. Of course this was total nonsense because the Merse was a fertile area with a numerous population and the Roman Empire would not have left it unexploited.

Although the Votadinian explanation is accepted by many, there are a few enquiring souls who are prepared to question that theory. From experience in tracing Dere Street through the Borders (see *Divining Archaeology*), I realised that if you locate a Roman road, corresponding sites will fall into place along its route. Dere Street is a recognised Roman road with Trimontium as the central hub of a road system throughout the Borders. It is one of the two main routes through the Southern Uplands with known forts/fortlets and temporary camps strung along its length. But it is not a convenient roadway being uphill and down-dale for much of its length and it would have been a logistical nightmare to supply the thousands of troops who were marching along it. Not impossible but very difficult.

Several Roman archaeologists have speculated that there must have been a third major Roman road into Scotland running along the coastal plains of Berwickshire. Further logical suggestions based on sparse finds, places a Roman fort/harbour at Tweedmouth as the known Roman road, the Devil's Causeway heads straight for that area. So far, so positive.

It makes sense that the Roman legions, like later armies, would prefer to march along the flat coastal ground while being supplied from ships moving up the coast in conjunction with the land forces.

As an interested person, I thought it would be fun to trace the extended Devil's Causeway through Berwickshire, especially as I knew that an old road from Ayton NT 9261 running north-west to Haud Yauds NT 8368, was likely to have been of Roman construction initially. In looking to join this with the known Devil's Causeway which stretches from Hadrian's Wall to the mouth of the Tweed, I had a legitimate excuse to wander across a part of the Borderland with which I am not very familiar. That cannot be a bad thing.

Romans and Roads

The Roman presence in southern Scotland is well known but is still capable of producing new information to confound previously held knowledge. This is good – when new facts come to light it is quite permissible to change an opinion but opinions don't change very often, especially in the archaeological world.

On present knowledge it is largely accepted that Roman forces had occupied a line of forts between the Solway and Tyne by 72 AD. It would have been negligent if no reconnaissance in strength had been made north of that line. Within the last year, a large temporary camp has been noted as lying under the first permanent fort at Trimontium. This discovery places a Roman military presence in the Borders a few years earlier than was first thought.

When the Romans 'acquired' new territory, one of the first tasks was to establish a road system. This was not for the convenience of the native population but rather it was a military installation for the swift movement of troops to quell dissent and act as a division between competing tribes.

With skilled surveyors and a workforce of several thousands, the roads were made to such a high standard that they remained the main thoroughfares through the Scottish Borders during the Middle Ages and continued to be the main routes for armies moving into and out of the country for centuries. In 1314, Edward II of England took 16,000 men and a twenty-mile-long baggage/supply train along Dere Street to Bannockburn. Even though it was fewer, shorter and lighter on its way southwards, this is a convincing proof of the durability of the Roman road system over a thousand years after it was built.

Although Dere Street seemed to be the most popular route for armies invading Scotland/

England, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that there was another route along the coastal lands of Northumberland and Berwickshire.

So the first step in looking for the route of a potential Roman road along the east coast, is to see who has used it in the post-Roman period. An army on the move presented some logistical problems. If it was composed of marching troops or cavalry, it could move over open ground but large numbers needed a definite path; if it was relying on wheeled traffic for supplies, it required a hard ie stone-based road.

In 1054, Siward, Earl of Northumbria went north 'by land and sea' to invade the territory of Macbeth, King of Scotland 1040 -57. They fought an indecisive battle near Scone.

On 30 March 1296, Edward I of England attacked the Scots town of Berwick with his fleet and army and massacred most of the inhabitants. His army then proceeded to Dunbar where they defeated the Scots again.

In 1503 when Margaret Tudor came north for her wedding to James IV, it was along an established road and her official reception into Scotland was at Lamberton Kirk.

In 1544, the Earl of Hertford returned to England via the coastal road after sacking and burning Edinburgh but he reported that it took three hours for his army to cross the defile at the Pease Burn.

In 1547, an English army 'supported by a large fleet' advanced up the East Coast as part of the Rough Wooing to persuade the Scots to allow their infant princess to marry Edward VIII's son. At Pinkie Cleuch, they met and, with the aid of the fleet's guns, defeated the Scots army; but did not press their advantage to retake Edinburgh.

In 1596, the newly appointed English Ambassador was able to travel along this road 'in his carriage' to the Scottish Court. So it was obviously able to be used by wheeled traffic.

In 1603 the route that Robert Carey rode to carry the news to James VI of Scotland that he was now King of England, was up the East Coast. Carey took 60 hours to cover nearly 400 miles.

On 5 April 1603, James left Edinburgh amid the firing of guns and arrived in Berwick the next day to 'the shooting of artilllerie', a sermon from the Bishop of Durham and a purse of £2,000 sterling 'for expenses'.

Shortly after taking up residence in London, James VI and I established an official postal service between his two capitals. It was literally 'The Royal Mail' because it was only supposed to carry the King's letters between his two kingdoms.

With posting stations at Edinburgh, Haddington and Cockburnspath charged with keeping *'twa abill and sufficient hors with furniture convenient for the service of His Majesteis pakattis onlie als bie nicht and day* [as well as] *ane fair pepper buik to enter the pakattis in, with the monethe, day and hour that thay ar brocht into his handis, twa baggis of ledder weill lynit to carry and put the pacquettis in and twa hornes to sound as oft as he mettis companie, or at least thrie tymes in everie myle'*. Sounding the horn was to get anyone on the road to move aside to allow the Royal Mail to pass unhindered as the demanded speed of delivery was six miles per hour in summer and five miles per hour in winter. To achieve this speed, saddled and bridled horses were tied to a post in preparation for a quick change round.

By association of ideas, the term 'post' was transferred to the system of conveying letters at speed and could be used as a noun or verb. This led to a variety of 'post' words including 'posting' on horseback, a rising/falling movement which takes jarring out of riding a trotting horse. This harks back to the early post who would have to trot the whole way to maintain their delivery times.

Through Berwickshire, this well-defined route was and is known as 'The Post Road'. The line of this road is fairly well known through early maps and written reports.

In July 1650, Oliver Cromwell led an army up the East Coast as part of the Civil War. As the Scots had pursued a scorched earth policy, the English troops had to be supplied by sea. Bad judgement, bad luck and interfering Kirk ministers led to another humiliating defeat at Dunbar.

So there is enough evidence to convince me that there was a major road up the East Coast. Whether I can persuade the archaeological professionals, present and future that it was originally a Roman extension of the Devil's Causeway is another matter.

A final word. When the Turnpike Acts were passed in 1751, this meant an improvement on the roads through the county. Although no turnpikes were set up for this line, £3000 had been spent on repairs by 1794. But not everyone along the East Coast appreciated having to pay tolls where they had previously travelled free.

In the Statistical Account of 1791-94, the Ayton report was '*The post road is now made and supported by two new turnpikes which were recently erected… when first proposed, they were met with keen opposition.*'

In the Mordington Parish. '*In 1792 when the most atrocious riots prevailed in this county on account of the institution of turnpikes, not one inhabitant of this parish was carried before a magistrate*'.

Divining, Dere Street and The Devil's Causeway

DIVINING

Being brought up on farms and working as a fencing contractor throughout the Borders for thirty-three years, I was aware of that divining rods could be used to find drains and pipes, and where posts had once been. It was only when I used them to pinpoint archaeological sites that my methods were queried as being unbelievable by the archaeological Establishment. My argument that the laws of the cosmos do not require human acceptance before they became functional ie gravity worked as well before Newton formulated his gravitational laws as they did after. Despite many people being able to divine/dowse, this method will never be acknowledge as useful to archaeology until an acceptable scientific explanation can be found. But it works for me and many others.

The recent discovery of Richard III's grave under a car park in Leicester was made by Phillipa Langley 'with my divining rods' (58 minutes and 40 seconds into the BBC 4 programme *The King in the Carpark.)* This discovery was not just a lucky guess.

DERE STREET/DEVIL'S CAUSEWAY

While doing preliminary surveying along the known Devil's Causeway in Northumberland before tackling the most likely route through Berwickshire, I was not surprised to find the settlement patterns in Northumberland were almost identical to those that I found along Dere Street.

In *Divining Archaeology,* I noted 39 wooden-palisaded fortlets along the line of Dere Street, each with its own latrine and small bathhouse within an annexe. As the fortlets on both Dere Street and on my postulated Devil's Causeway extension through Berwickshire

turned out to be the same size and shape, it is worth giving an illustration of this to avoid future duplication.
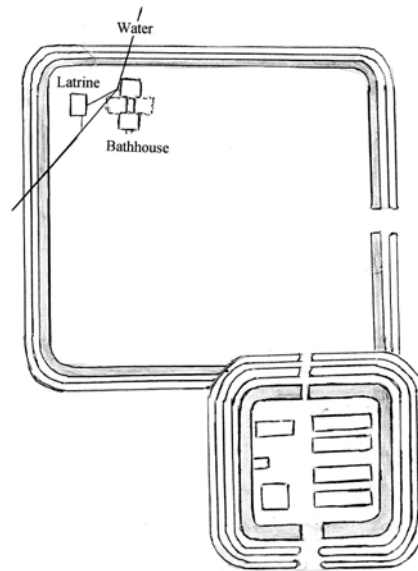
Standard Plan of Fortlet and Annexe

An earth rampart and double ditch encloses a square fortlet which measures about 20m by 20m* This is a stepped measurement and likely to vary a little but it is the same approximate size as the milecastles on Hadrian's Wall and the fortlets on the Gask Ridge. I do not think this is a co-incidence.

*As my steps are a bit shorter than a metre, the correct internal measurement is probably a Roman semi-actus which is 17.75m. This was proved to be correct by more concentrated work in Berwickshire.

Inside each fortlet there were two or four small buildings which are likely to have been barrack blocks, and one square 4m free-standing one. There is one gateway about 2.5m facing the road and a narrow doorway leading into the adjoining annexe which was often about 30m by 30m (probably an actus) but could vary in size to double that.

Externally the outer ditch is about 1m across, the inner about 1.5m and the wall/rampart base is about 1.5m. These measurements would not make for a defensible structure as

both ditches would be jumpable and the wall-mound could not have been more than 1m high if built with the excavated ditch spoil alone. Looking for a more reasonable explanation, I found a slot on the outside of the rampart which would have held a post-wall. If the wall was around 2m high, the excavated spoil would have provided a raised walkway on the inside.

Inside the annexe and as far from the main buildings as possible, were the bathhouse and latrine. These were fed from the same drain which gathered water from the slope above the complex. Some of these drains must still filter water to the bathhouse/latrine site because I observed that the ground is often wetter than the surrounding land and this had encouraged moisture-seeking plants.

There was a complication on the Dere Street route as two types of bathhouse were noted. The acceptable Roman bathhouse which comprised three 8m square rooms with thick walls joined end to end making a building 26m by 10m can be found outside the larger Roman forts. As this prototype can be found in some Antonine Wall excavation reports, I called them 'Legionary' bathhouses to distinguish them from the smaller 'Century' bathhouses beside the fortlets.

Legionary   Century
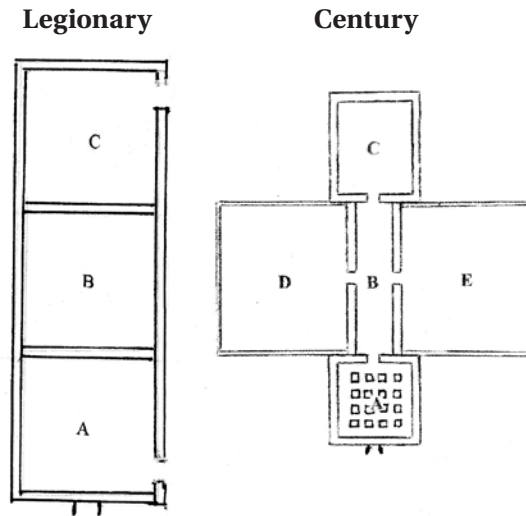
In the annexes of the fortlets, there were smaller variations of the above with A the heat room, B a passage with a heat vent under the floor and C the washroom. Two larger rooms on the sides seemed to be designed to draw heating from B. This type was standard in each fortlet and I hypothesised that it was the domain of a century, nominally a hundred men but usually around eighty. So I named them 'Century' baths.

One thing that I did notice was that the Legionary bathhouses were always beside a stream indicating that they needed a good supply of water. They were mostly in multiples of five to seven. The Century bathhouse was often single and served a fortlet. Without fail it was located at the bottom of a long gentle slope with a herringbone of drains to collect water for its needs. On larger fortlets there could be as many as three Century bathhouses. In both types of bathhouse, Room A was always lower since heat rises while water was led into room C from an outside drain, the same drain which provided water to the latrine.

Latrines were 4/5m across and varied in length from 5m to 16m depending on the size of the fort.

On a suitable high piece of ground nearby, there was a watch tower about 3.0m* square with a large post in each corner. This stood around 6m high within a 10m/12m diameter circular enclosure of sharpened posts; identical towers are depicted on Trajan's column in Rome.

   *Probably a pertica (2.96m) in Roman measurement.

As all structures within the fort, annexe and watchtower were made of wood, there is very little to show where they once stood. So it is understandable that they remained undiscovered by air photographers and field-walkers.

Armed with the knowledge of what to look for, there just remained the task of plodding across the countryside to seek the most likely route that the Roman surveyors would have chosen through Berwickshire.

By looking at the land first, comparing early references and maps, and speaking to

farmers or anybody else interested, I decided that, with some variations, the line of the Post Road was the most likely to have been the un-named Roman Road up the East Coast.

In P.S.A.S. 1962-63, Angus Graham had a paper on 'The Archaeology on the Great Post Road'. In it he describes the route and notes that it *'must have carried traffic since a very distant past and that little is known about its earliest history need be ascribed to nothing but dearth of detailed records. Facilities for contact with shipping, at Berwick, Dunbar and elsewhere, must always have made it attractive to invading armies, but traces of Roman roadwork was notably conspicuous by their absence'*.

As I had found this paper only after I had walked, divined, GPS-ed and drawn the maps for the route, I was pleased to discover that my plans of the road mostly always agreed with his; but my conclusions did not. Although all traces of Roman road-building are likely to have been covered under medieval and Jacobean reconstructions, divining rods could locate any Roman forts/fortlets and quarry pits along the fringes of the road. In long-cultivated ground, quarry pits would soon be filled in and only showed in air-photographs during periods of drought, but are easily located with divining rods.

South of The Tweed

Before trying to trace The Devil's Causeway through Berwickshire, I thought it sensible to see what my divining rods could find in the section of the known road south of the Tweed.

The Devil's Causeway is approximately 80kms (50 miles) of traceable Roman road between Corbridge and the mouth of the Tweed. Many archaeologists have sensibly deduced that there must have been a harbour and fort in Tweedmouth or nearby 'but this was as yet undiscovered'. A few have even suggested that the road might have crossed the Tweed and proceeded along the coastal route through Berwickshire.

In the 80kms of the Causeway there are only two acknowledged forts/fortlets (and another doubtful), but it seemed be highly unlikely that there were no other settlements or fortifications along this length, so I set out to see what I could find along the verges of the road.

I decided to start at Lowick which has a well-defined section of road passing through the township and work my way north with divining rods. Just outside the housing, I found a fortlet at 01452 39837 which was approximately 18m by 18m with an annexe containing a bathhouse and latrine.

About 600m north along the road line, there was a similar one at 01231 40552 and a further 600m along the Roman road-line at 01154 41236, another of the same.

The next two fields were in uncut crop but where Roman road crosses the modern road into Berrington Farm, there was another, 18m square with annexe containing bathhouse and latrine and a watch tower about 150m uphill. This is at 01193 42820.

Now I was satisfied that the Devils' Causeway road was of the same construction as the Borders section of Dere Street. I did confirm this in other places along the route.

The Devils' Causeway can be traced as far as Springhill, about 2 kms from the mouth of The Tweed. There is an earthwork there which was thought to be Roman, mainly on the evidence of two 3rd century Roman coins being found there but this has now been discounted as 3rd/5th Roman coins are fairly frequent finds in the Borders thanks to the efforts of metal detectorists.

Medieval and modern construction in and around the town of Tweedmouth has eradicated any existing traces of the line of Roman road but in several old maps a line denoting the 'Parliamentary and Municipal Boundary' extends into the middle of the river. It also marks property divisions of land on the south side of the river. This is likely to have been the Roman road line, so I walked the river bank and found a mound running down to the river at 98605 53026.
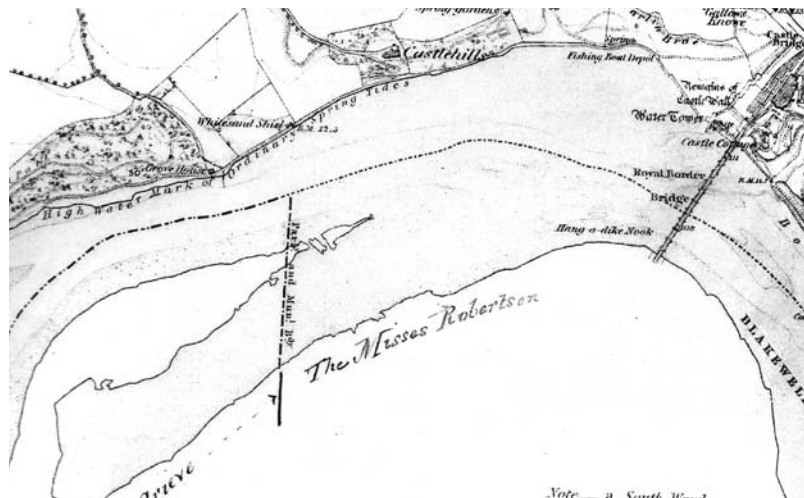
There are also interesting marks on Mill Farm and a number of buildings on the southern edge of Yarrow Slake, the partially enclosed pool on the south side of the river which fills up at high tide. If the river hasn't changed much since Roman times, this area would be a

good candidate for the elusive harbour, being sheltered from the river current and tidal waves. This has long been sought as it was the supply base for the Roman forces in the Tweed basin. There is enough evidence to confirm that the fort at Trimontium, 50kms upstream, was provisioned by boat from there.

The main depot would be at Arbeia (the fort of the Arabs) 100kms to the south, where a unit of the Barcariorum Tigrisiensium (boatmen from the Tigris) were stationed. It is presumed that they were responsible for supplying the whole East Coast of Scotland.

This is a fascinating area that has still a lot to tell us but further exploration will have to wait for another time.

Air photography has given us a number of Roman temporary camps on the south side of the Tweed; Norham, Carham and East Learmouth in Northumberland and Wooden House Farm in Roxburghshire and there are likely to be more as yet undiscovered. Added to these are a number of sites which have produced Roman coins from the 1st to 5th centuries – Springwood Park site produced 300 plus, Sprouston 21 and some Samian pottery and at Yetholm some minimissimi of the 5th century have recently been found.

With this in mind, I decided to search for the Roman road which must have linked them and found a fairly convincing route from the English Border to Wooden Home Farm just east of Kelso. I have to re-appraise this before reaching any conclusions but there is enough evidence to say that a Roman road once ran along the south bank of the Tweed.

While wandering around the Tweedmouth/Berwick area, a potentially interesting site caught my eye at Middle Ord where a high bank stood over The Tweed; and Romans tended to build their permanent forts in the Borders in such places.

Despite the fact that the ground had retained its 17th/18th century plough ridges, I found a Roman fort shape measuring about 100m by 80m. This was the usual bank and double ditch with gateways in the centre of each side. Bank and single ditch annexes were on the south, east and west sides and a bathhouse and latrine were in the south-east corner of the south annexe.

Internal co-ordinates of the fort were S.W. corner 97053 51440, N.W. corner 97033 51505, N.E. corner 97122 51524, S.W. corner 97145.

A road was traced south from the fort. This joined the minor modern road south of Middle Ord Farm and follows a straight line to Unthank Moor where there is a Roman watch-tower/signal station.

From Tweed to Eye, 11 Kms

THE ROAD

Norh of the Tweed, the extended Devil's Causeway, if such it be, is harder to trace as much of it lies under the Post Road which is visible on the ground and in some air photographs. So it is easier to trace the joint Post Road/Roman Road from Berwick to Ayton to see if anything Roman in the shape of fortlets, watch towers or quarry pits can be found beside what on the surface is ostensibly a Jacobean road system. On the accompanying map, I have used double lines to indicate the line of the Roman road or the line of a joint Roman/Post Road and a thick black line to indicate the Post Road alone.

Early maps show the Post Road leaving Berwick by the Scots Gate, veering NW to meet another section of road going northwards. From this meeting southwards, another divined road line goes diagonally down to the Tweed at Whitesands Shiel. There might be a Roman bridge in this area but I could find no definite trace of it.

Moving northwards, trunk road improvements in Victorian and modern times have wiped out convincing traces of the joint road for several kilometres but divining rods, farm tracks and field divisions show a road line running parallel to the A1. Like most early roads, the joint line sticks to the high ground and it is easily
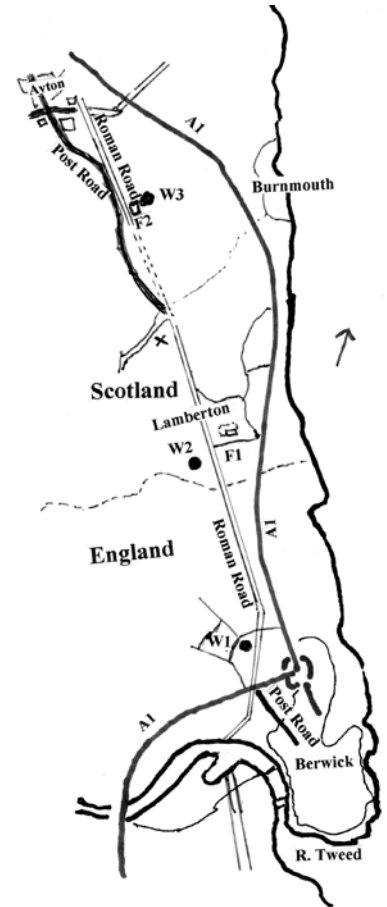
defined at the two farms above Lamberton Kirk. Then it climbs upwards until it merges with the modern road at Lamberton Moor where a hoard of Roman objects were found in a moss in 1845.

From this point where the joint roads meets the minor road to Mordington, they split up with the Roman Road proceeding in a more or less straight line to Ayton hill and onwards to cross the Eye Water at a point immediately downstream of the old church and graveyard. This is reckoned to be the site of *'the ruinous bridge over the Eye which formed part of the very old road to London'.* I found where two postholes had been at the end of the road line, indicating that the bridge was likely to have been a wooden one.

The Armstrong Map of 1771 shows the road lies downstream from the church while the Blackadder map of 1797 show it upstream of the church. The new road crosses the present bridge which was built in the 1790s at the time when there was a major re-routing of the roads of Berwickshire through the Turnpike Acts. The Post Road itself followed the line of minor modern roads between the Mordington junction and Ayton Bridge.

N.B. The river which I am calling Eye, is written 'Ale', 'Aye' and 'Eye' in various parts of its journey to the sea.

ROMAN REMAINS

In this section of road, I found Roman structures in the shape of three watch/signal towers, two fortlets and a complex of three forts on the south bank of the Eye at Ayton.

Starting at Berwick, I found a watch/signal tower at Camphill. **W1 is at 98140 54737**. This is the usual four posts in a 3m square, within a circle of posts, doorway to east. The Roman road, complete with quarry pits on the upper side is a few metres away at 98220 54774. Usually a watch tower has an associated fortlet but I couldn't find one.

The Roman Road can be traced across Berwick Bounds into Scotland by following the sequence of quarry pits along its edge. Two fields into Scotland, there is a watch tower **W2 at 96598 56835.**

About 100m below the joint road stands Lamberton Kirk where Mary Tudor received her

official welcome into Scotland while en route for her marriage to James IV of Scotland in 1503. This is on a promontory at the foot of a long slope and looked a suitable place where there might be a Roman fortlet in the vicinity. In fact the Kirk, first recorded in 1199, stands within a Roman fortlet 19m by 19m, with an annexe containing century bathhouse and latrine to the north and west. The gate of the fortlet is at **96825 57389** and the bathhouse at **96797 57385.**

Fortlet at Lamberton Kirk.
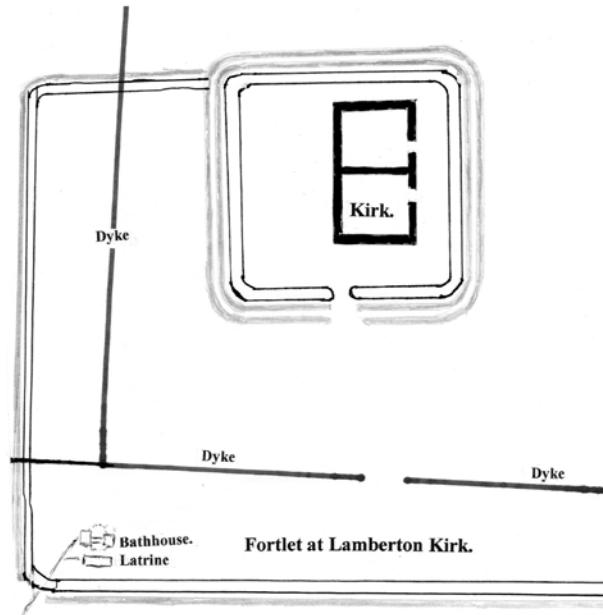
It is not uncommon to find monastic buildings or graveyards placed within earlier Roman structures. In places where the Roman fort was built of stone, the same stones have been used for building the church but it is less obvious where the Roman fort was of wood and turf.

On the top of Lamberton Moor, **X** marks the spot at 954 584 where a hoard of Roman objects were found by a drainer who was digging in the moss in 1845. This is likely to have been a votive offering and there could be others in the vicinity.

On the top of Ayton Hill at **94643 59692**, there is an enclosure which was noted in 1776 but not found in *The Archaeological Sites and Monuments of the Berwickshire District 1980.* It is a large enclosure with the ditch on the inside suggesting it was for keeping stock in rather than anything out. There is a square enclosure beside it which has the size and shape of a Roman fortlet **(F2)** and watch tower/signal station **(W3)** 50m to the east. From this tower, it is possible to see at least 15kms in all directions and even the shore of Fife on a clear day.

Some of these structures may not be Roman but they would fit nicely into the road pattern.

From Ayton Hill, the joint Roman/Post road went down to a bridge on the downstream side of the old Ayton Church until a period between 1771 and 1794. After that the Post Road was re-routed to the new bridge upstream of the Church.

On the flat haughs before the bridges, there is a complex of three Roman forts. From the edge of the road, there is a side road which leads to Eyemouth suggesting that there was a Roman harbour.

The Ayton Complex

There are three Roman forts on the land south of the Eye Water. The site is ideal but there are no obvious signs of Roman occupation and the site has still to be proved by more conventional methods.

In the interest of gathering evidence, I have asked Richard Strathie and his amazing flying camera to keep an eye on the site and maybe a friendly metal detectorist can get permission to detect on the two fields when the crops are cut.
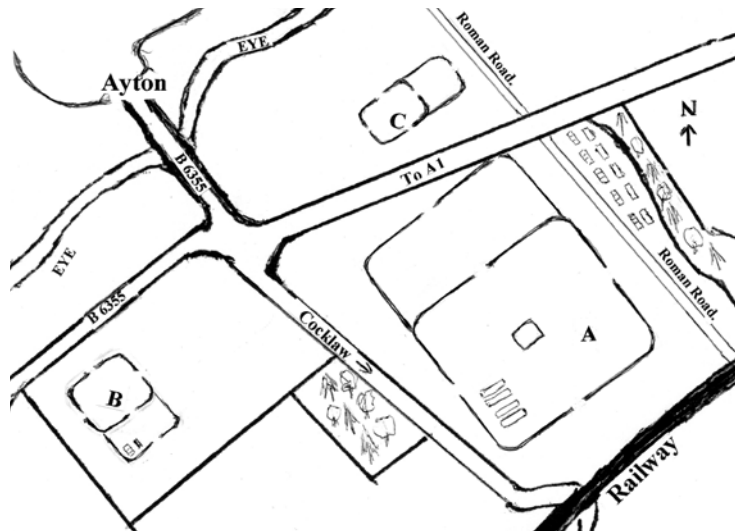
The above plan shows the three forts with the original Roman Road which was also the Post Road until the 1790s. After that date, the road was through the present township of Ayton and south via Cocklaw.

All three forts have a rampart and two ditches which would indicate that they were expected to be for long-term occupation but the different sizes and locations suggest an in/out pattern which would mirror the phases of Trimontium. We need further information from the sites.
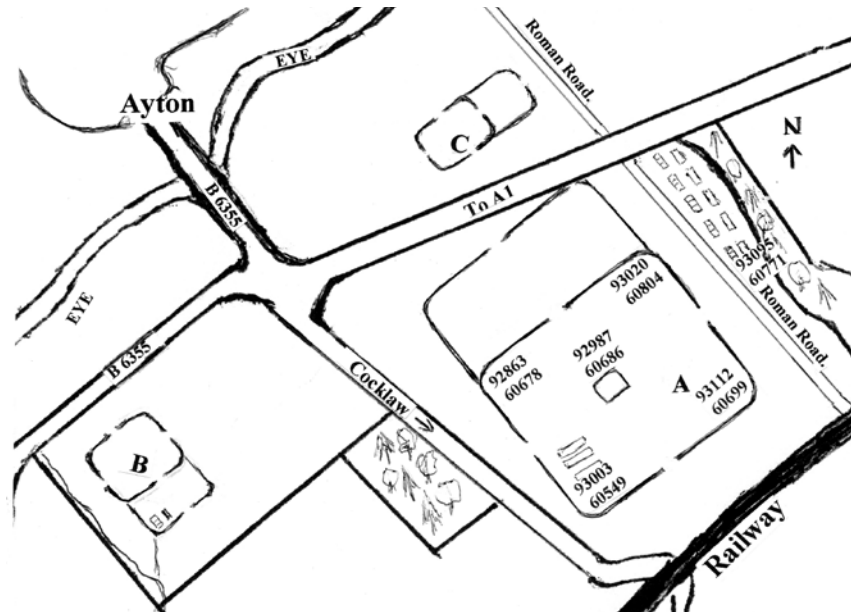

FORT A

The fort is approximately 220m by 180m. The ramparts are 6m wide and the double ditches 5 and 3m respectively. An annexe on the north side is single ditched and measures 220m by 120m. I paced eight barrack blocks which were located in pairs, each measured 25m by 5m. There was a 25m square shape in the centre of the fort which is almost certainly the principia.

There are indications that this fort has been reconstructed at least once.

The Roman road (Devil's Causeway?) ran down the east side of the fort and beyond it were five Legionary bathhouses and five latrines 16m by 5m.

FORT B
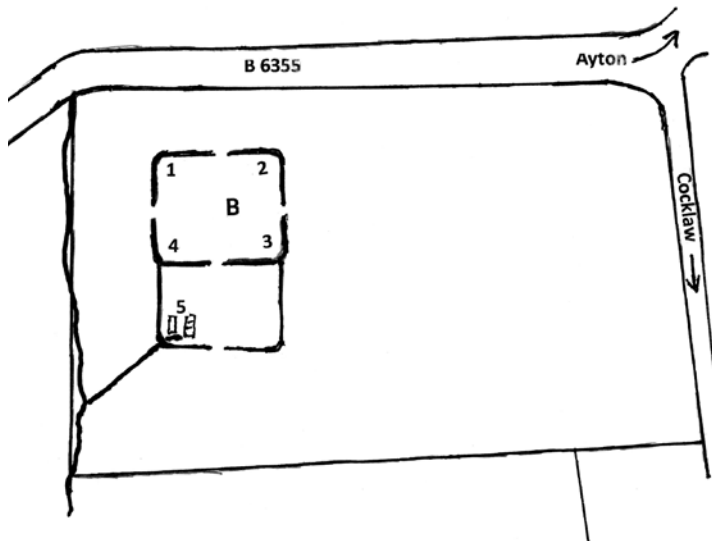
This fort is double ditched as above and measures 60m by 48m internally. There is a single ditched annexe measuring 60m by 36m on the south side which has a Legionary bathhouse and a latrine 8m by 4m in the south-west corner.

The internal corners of the fort are: 1. 92553 60634 2. 92511 60630 3. 92541 60605 4. 92562 60609.
The bathhouse and latrine are at 92560 60534.

FORT C

At 92816 60844, Fort C is the smallest of the complex, measuring c55m by c36m with an annexe 36m by 36m. This is another example of the Christian use of a Roman site. Between 1089 and 1107 King Edgar settled a colony of monks here and the associated graveyard respects the line of the Roman /Post Road. On the opposite side of the road a small detached enclosure contains the bathhouse and latrine. The former village of Nether Ayton can be found on the east side of the road.
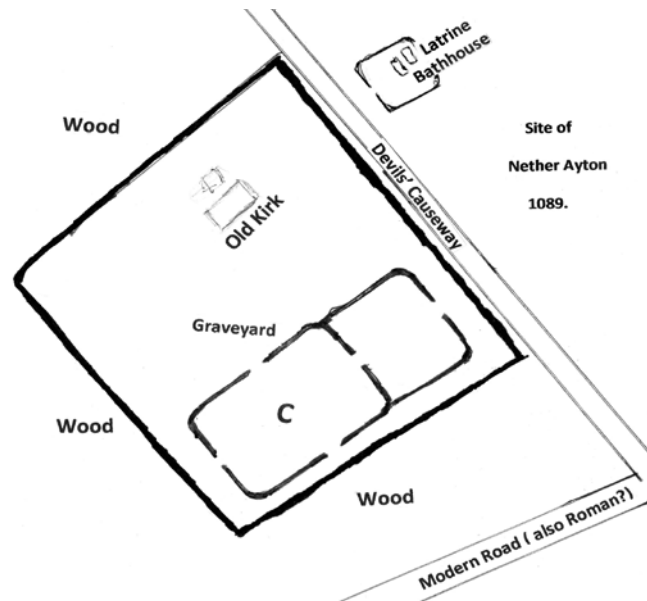
While divining the forts, I put some time into plotting the roads around. The Roman/Post Road which I was now looking on as the extension to Northumberland's Devil's Causeway was easy but there was another road going east/west. This split at 93543 61013, one branch going north and the other veering south-east. By following both I was able to trace one to the outskirts of Eyemouth and the other going towards Burnmouth. My conclusion was that these had been ports at some period of history but probably Roman to supply the forts over the various phases of occupation.


Ayton Fort Complex and Roman Roads
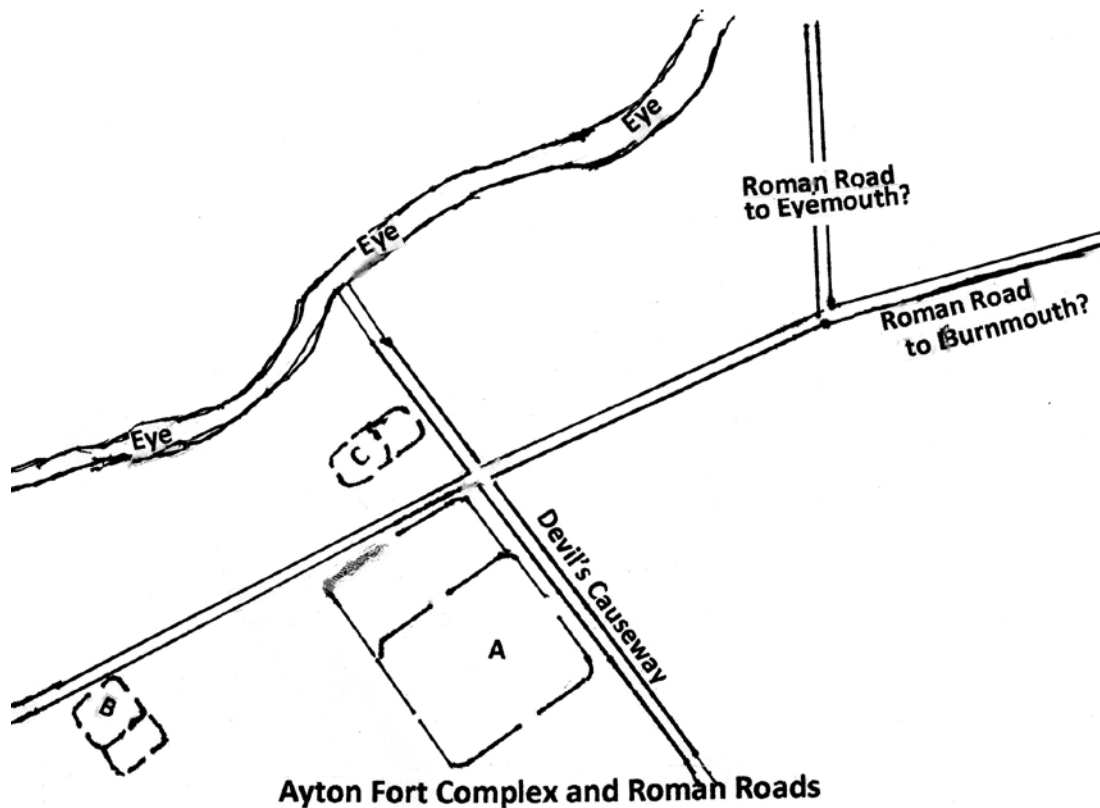
From Ayton to Haud Yauds, 19 Kms

The most obvious candidate to be a Roman road through Berwickshire was the twelve kilometre section between the Eye Water in front of Ayton Castle stretching to the top of the ridge known as Haud Yauds (hold horses). Long and straight with only four small directional changes, it was built along the top of slightly higher ground which avoided marshes and steep slopes. This route must have been looked at by archaeologists who were searching for the logical East Coast road but there are no known visible Roman remains and few artefacts along its line.

I walked this route twice with divining rods, finding nine fortlets with attendant annexes, bathhouses and latrines. These more or less duplicated the pattern which I found along Dere Street. On the second walk-over, I did notice that although the divining rods showed that everything was in the same place both times, the GPS could vary by as much as 20m. This I put down to satellite movement rather than my own incompetence.

The history of Ayton tells us that there were two *'Eitons'* in the 12th century, one being above the 'old town of the present village and the other *'situated to the east of the churchyard adjacent to the old Roman road which extended from the wall of Severus at Newcastle and terminated at the Roman camp in the vicinity of St Abb's Head'*.

On the north side of the Eye, there is a double line of ancient trees which were and still are known as The Avenue. This has been known in ancient writing and folklore as part of the Roman road and I would agree as it lines up with the divined road on the south side of the Eye with a wooden bridge joining the two. I could find no trace of a stone foundation which would suggest a stone-built bridge.
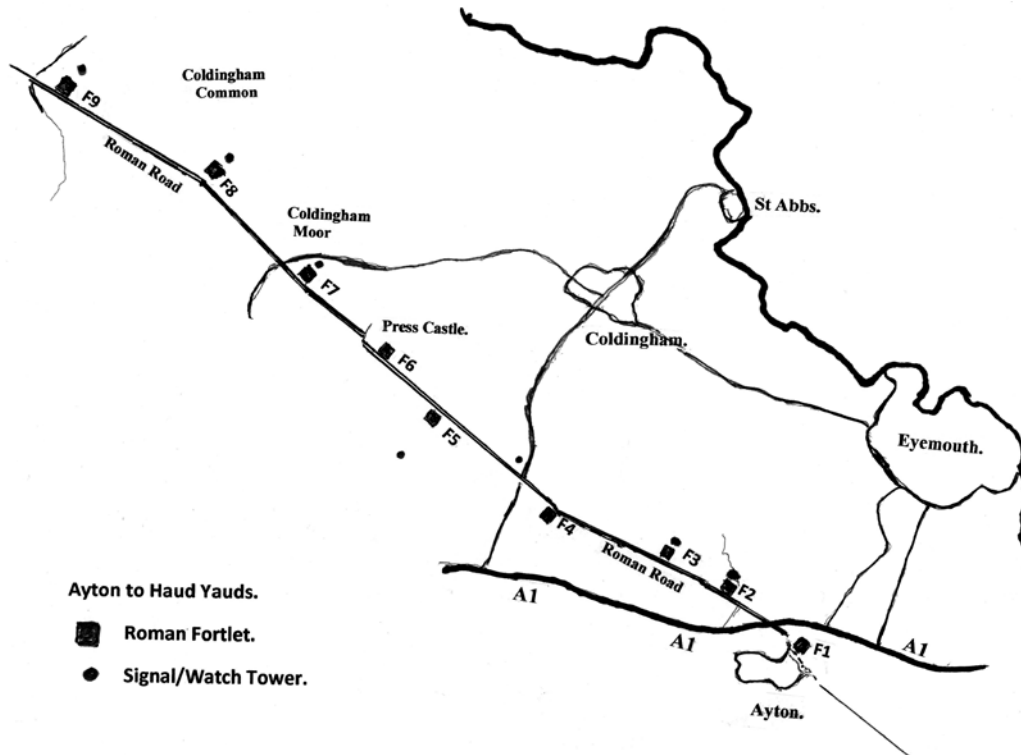
THE FORTLETS etc.

Starting at the south-east corner and moving north-westwards, they are –

F1 In the Ayton Castle policies, there is a Roman fortlet at **92646 61379.** It is double ditched and measures approximately 40m by 34m. There is an annexe to the west of the fort and to the west of that stood the Old Town of Ayton.

It is tempting to think that Ayton Old Town started as a settlement on the edge of the Roman fort while the troops were in still in occupation. The idea is not quite as fanciful as it might appear. The village of Newstead stands just outside the West Annexe of Trimontium and Bonjedward village is located beside the still un-recognised fort at Jedfoot.

A more likely explanation is that it grew up beside the medieval castle and continued as a stopping place for travellers on the Post Road before the 1790s.

F2 at NT 91627 62183 . I took the trouble to plan and measure this fortlet as well as I could on two occasions as it would serve as a pattern for similar sized fortlets on this stretch of the road.

It was 18m by 18 internally, had a rampart and was double ditched. It was on the north side of the Roman road and had two 35m annexes, one on each side along the road line. The east annexe contained the century bathhouse and latrine 5m by 4m; these were made noticeable by the number of water-seeking plants congregated there. The signal/ watch tower was 8m to the north of the fortlet.

Roman Road.
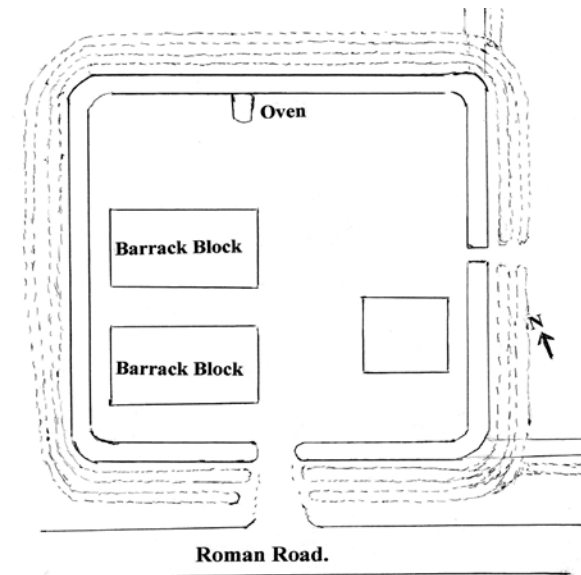
Internally the fortlet was a semi-actus square. On the western side were two barrack-blocks? 8m by 4m. A small shape 1.5 by 1m protruding from the north rampart is likely to be an oven. Against the east rampart there was a 4m by 4m building. This could house a decurion and ten soldiers in relative comfort.

NB That is my view of the fortlet. I would be quite willing to be proved wrong but I found this to be the standard size and interior of the smaller fortlets on this line of road.

F3 at NT 90483 62785. This is the same size and shape as F2 and stands on the north side of the Roman road. It has one annexe on the western side which contains the bathhouse and latrine. The watch tower is about 30m to the north-east.

F4 at NT 89615 63161. As this was in open ground, I took the opportunity to mark where the rods crossed and measure the distances between. The double-ditched fortlet itself was slightly under 18m square internally ie a semi-actus, and stood on the south side of the Roman road. It has two barrack blocks on the east side.

Unusually, a freestanding annexe stood on the north side of the road and takes advantage of the long northern slope to collect water for the bathhouse and latrine. This annexe measures 36m (actus) square and was single ditched with the bathhouse and latrine 5m by 4m at **NT 89630 63199.**

As this fortlet is at a slight turn in the road and lies in a hollow, the watch tower is on the higher ground beside Cairncross Farm steading at **NT 89207 63872.** The Berwickshire Inventory No 342 records an enclosure cropmark in the area. The present Cairncross Farmhouse was an inn and posting-house on the Post Road.

F5 at NT 88026 64460. The fortlet on the south side of the road is of F2 standard with a 36m annexe on the North/West. As this is low-lying, the watch tower is about 300m to the south at **87735 64438**. This field is known as The Gallows Law.

F6 at NT 87234 65135. This is a larger fortlet on the north side of the road near Press Castle. It measures 40m by 36m internally with three annexes each 36m square, one on the road line and one north of the fortlet. The other which contains the Century bathhouse and latrine is across the road at **87184 65174.** Press was a well-known inn and posting-house in the early days of coaching**.**

F7 at NT 86217 66056. This is a standard F2 fortlet on the north side of the road. The standard 36m annexe is to the north and contains the usual Century bathhouse and latrine.

F8 at NT 84998 67489. Another standard F2 fortlet with watch tower on the east beside it. The 35m annexe containing the Century bathhouse and latrine was on the other side of the road.

F9 at NT 83047 68673. Another standard F2 fortlet with 35m annexe to north-east. There is an extended quarry/pit? beside it which may not have any connection. Watch tower at 83021 68759 is on the edge of the ridge.

I stopped my investigations on top of the ridge through lack of time and energy but I am sure that further searches along the Post Road line would produce a similar pattern on the rest of Berwickshire and the Lothians.

A reasonable prediction would be that there would be a number of fortlets along the Post Road line, a 40m by 30m fort similar to those at F1 at Ayton and F6 at Press Castle, guarding the difficult passage at Pease Burn, probably near Cockburnspath or Cove where there was a natural harbour. It is likely that there was a Roman harbour at Dunbar with a larger fort nearby and another fort near Haddington before the Roman East Coast road went on to join up the two main roads through southern Scotland at Inveresk.

Final thought. The logistics of supply for the Roman Army in Scotland makes it almost impossible that there could NOT have been a Roman East Coast road through Berwickshire and the Lothians, especially during the first phases of invasion/occupation. It just needs proving.

Why has this never been seen before? Has anybody looked for it?

Walter Elliot
November 2013

Site of the Bathhouse and Latrine at Fortlet F2 on the road north of Ayton. This was found by divining rods but was made more noticeable in the stubble by the concentration of moisture-seeking plants.