OUT LOOKING

for

Posts and Palisades
in
The Scottish Borders.

Posts and Palisades.

The Prologue**.**

I was born in Selkirk in 1934 and raised on various farms in the Borders. At eighteen, it was time to serve two years National Service with the local regiment, the K.O.S.B. and at the age of twenty I returned home to work as a fencing contractor and wood-cutter for the next thirty-three years. As we were working in many parts of the area in varying seasons, I was seeing the countryside in its many lights and seasons and was noting places where successive generations had altered the countryside to fit their own use and protection.

This blended in nicely with what had become my hobbies – the archaeology and history of the Borders. Being a naturally inquisitive person, I had to find out why certain un-natural shapes appeared on the landscape – the low circular mark or well-graded road which started nowhere and finished nowhere, obviously needed explanation. Fortunately many of the folk on the farms where we worked had hidden stores of knowledge passed down in the oral traditions of the countryside and which had never been written down or recorded. Knowing I was interested in the stories of the land and its people, they were usually willing to share.

While fencing along the edges of a ploughed field, I would keep an eye open for the discards or losses from previous phases of human occupation of the Borders; flint tools, broken pottery and lost coins all told stories of sites which have never reached the history books. In this way, I acquired a sound basic knowledge of the area without the preconception of an academic education.

This way of life had to change when I got a fractured skull in 1987. Rather than selling the family silver, I got various jobs as a museum assistant, a broadcaster with the BBC and writing articles, booklets and three large doorstopper books – no best sellers but these intermittent earners suited me fine as they allowed me time to be out looking at the landscape and field-walking the ploughed land for lost or discarded relics.

I have always believed that the sites, objects, stories and songs that I have picked up during my travels should be shared around as widely as possible. So at 84, I am still out looking as much as possible, searching when I can, writing and recording when I can't.

But one lifetime is not nearly enough.

Walter Elliot.

Posts and Palisades.

By Definition.
A post is a section of tree which been cut down and placed in a hole in the ground. Individual posts can be used as part of a stock fence with branches woven in between, spaced in a circle to support the roof of a hut or in concentric rings to form a henge, a prehistoric gathering place or place of worship.
A palisade is a line of posts joined together to form a defensive wall or tower.

Reconstruction of the Limes Germanicus palisade, the 353 mile long barrier protecting the Roman Western Empire in Europe (with Caledonian as an optional extra.)

In The Borders.
During the thousands of years of human occupation in the Borders, the most common building material has been wood but it is the least recognised in archaeological studies. As long as there was an abundant supply on hand, wood was the quickly-erected construction material of choice. It was used by the Neolithic settlers, through the Roman period and Dark Ages. When David the Earl (later David I of Scotland) brought his Anglo-Norman followers into the Borders in the early 12th century, they were not coming to a friendly area. They needed a quick-build defensive structure, so they erected the motte and bailey with posts bound together. It was only in the 13th/14th centuries when the population increasing and usable timber was scarce that stone was used for general building needs. This long period of timber use should have produced a great number of sites for investigation.

But there was one drawback. In time, the first 12/15 inches of a wooden post decays at ground level within 40 to 100 years depending on species used but below that, under-ground anaerobic conditions can preserve the post stumps as fresh as the day they were put in the ground. However with nothing showing on the surface and modern ploughing turning over the top soil, this makes life is very difficult for the archaeologist to determine if there had ever been any structures there but out of sight does not necessarily mean 'nothing there'.
In the upper hill areas of The Cheviots and the Peeblesshire hills, faint hollows of decayed former palisades can be convincingly claimed as defensive structures round settlements. On ground which has been cultivated at any period, we have to rely on air photographs and on lines of different plant colouring but even here it takes an experienced eye to discriminate between those and field drains, sheep tracks or end-rig ploughing. I use divining rods to confirm my judgement but it would take a series of cross-trench excavations to provide satisfactory proof.

Mesolithic.
It is a guesstimate when the first Mesolithic hunter/gatherers came to our area but it was probably around 8,000 BC. For the next four millennia or so they wandered round hunting and gathering, leaving no trace of their settlements other than vast quantities of stone, chert, flint waste chippings and tools at selected sites.
These numbers are sometimes used as a map of population centres during the Mesolithic Age; in fact they are more likely to indicate the places where field-walkers picked up scatters of flint/chert tools and waste chips; and recorded their finds.
At The Rink where the Tweed and Ettrick rivers meet, over 50,000 fragments of tools and waste chippings have been found since the 1920s – I picked up 9,600 specimens over a ten year period. However no post-holes or traces of building were found during a 25 square-metre excavation by the Selkirkshire Antiquarians in 1966. The general belief is that for shelter, pliable saplings were tied down to make a canopy which was then covered with branches, reeds and skins.

Neolithic To Bronze Age.
Somewhere around 4,000 B.C, finds of stone spinning whorls and Langdale tuff axes from Cumbria indicate that woodland was being cleared for ground to cultivate crops and that sheep, goats and small cattle were domesticated for food and clothing. In time, this led to settled farming communities living in permanent timber-post huts. Finds of a wide range of finer tools of flint, Arran pitchstone, jasper and agate are evidence of an established trading route throughout the Borders.
East of The Rink site at Cascade NT48611 32887, there are three glacial mounds with evidence of hut circles on their flat tops. Round the bottom of the mounds are marks of several potential palisades which show up on APs and can be located by divining rods.

This was a deliberate housing/enclosure plan. There was no problem with drainage on a sandy mound and with cattle kept in the outer rings of the circles of the house, their rising body-heat would provide a warm if smelly atmosphere for the human living quarters during the winter. This technique was used through the centuries at least until the Roman era: vide the homestead at Broadmeadows (NT 417 305) which had a Roman brooch on the floor.
I investigated many glacial mounds across the Borders. Not all have been built on but enough had been to convince myself that I was on the right track. I could be wrong of course. They may be wood henges which appears many parts of Britain but these are largely unknown until

comparatively recent times because they leave little trace of the previous existence in the ground. See below.

Increasing numbers of people lived together in communities. The spectacular 'hillforts' were not so much forts as enclosed communities with ditches and banks topped with wooden palisades for protection. Not all had ditches but were enclosed by palisades. These sites are difficult to spot being now a slight groove in the turf caused by the decomposition of the timber posts and the settling of the packing stones. A second or third palisade may be found outside the first and these could be for stock enclosure or tell of an increasing population.
Palisades do not show up well in arable ground so most of the known settlements in the Borders are in the hill areas but there are many still to be located in the lower land as well by experience, observation, deduction, drone and a lot of luck. They can be confirmed by divining rods initially but can only be proved by spade and trowel. Until this can be done, the only thing I can do is to record what I have seen and what can be guessed at by deduction; and keep hoping.

Oakwoodmill Brae, Ettrick.
In the mid-1960s, I was involved in doing archaeological air surveying in the Borders. It was a fun venture, John Usher was the pilot, Jack Cruickshank took the pictures and I provided the sites which I knew were there but could not otherwise prove. The following photo was taken in 1969 to record the cultivation terraces on Oakwoodmill Brae (NT444 267). A 2016 look at the picture revealed a complex system of palisaded enclosures on the flat above terraces and a trip with divining rods shows at least twenty-five round houses within.
This settlement is the reason why the cultivation terraces were there in the first place.

Oakwoodmill Brae cultivation terraces and enclosures above

Another 4.5kms up the valley where the Inventory of Selkirkshire notes that *'Apart from a dubious example at Huntly Burn (No142) no such palisaded homesteads or settlements have so far been detected in Selkirkshire, but this negative evidence cannot be taken at its face value as any superficial traces of these lightly built habitations that remained once the timberwork had perished, would be completely effaced by later ploughing. The National*

Survey air-photographs are not normally a sufficiently sensitive medium to register crop-markings of palisade-trenches'
However a divining rod survey indicates that there is nothing dubious about the Huntly Burn site which is an oval settlement of two phases with a bank and ditches and an extension with an outer palisade. These have been largely ploughed out and datable surface finds are scarce. There is the cropmark of another enclosure 95m to the NW of the above which *'is bounded by a narrow ditch or palisaded trench'* and this is a more visible.

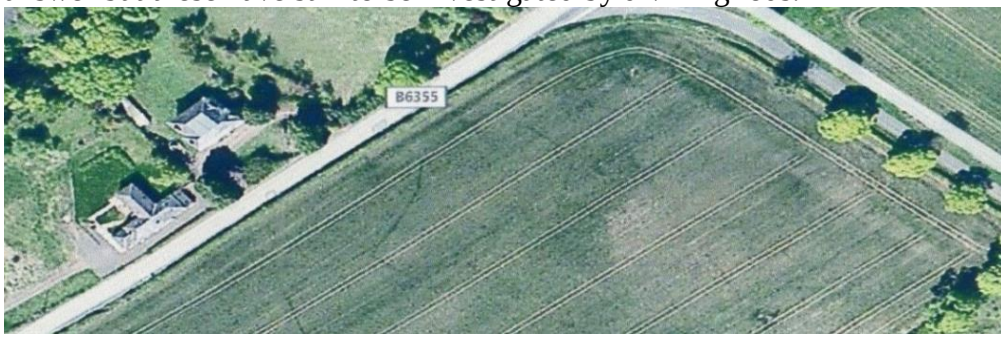
A further 2.5 km up valley at NT 383 238 there is a palisaded enclosure on the high plateau west of where the Baillie Burn joins the Ettrick. This is an ideal defensive site with a number of hut circles and a triple palisaded entrance on the lower south side.
(Additional information. The area at the mouth of the Baillie Burn is known as The Prison Linns where Claverhouse imprisoned and later executed a number of captured Covenanters in the 1680s. Several skulls and skeletons were washed out of the banks there during a flood in the 1840s.)

Eldinhope, Yarrow. At NT 296 240, there is a settlement approximately 220m by 100m within a low mounded palisade. Post circles from 6m to 12m diameter show a numerous population. This can only be seen in perfect conditions. It would account for the number of chambered cairns and tumuli NW of Eldinhope Farm and the cultivation terraces at Eldinhope Knowe, Sundhope and Bourhope.

Other palisaded enclosure which I have seen and tested are –
Sunnycroft, Lindean. Inventory of Selkirkshire No 149. NT487 309
In the field to the North-west of the farm is double palisaded/ditched enclosure c 80m by 50m which shows occasionally on the ground. Traces of palisading appear in several parts of the perimeter and individual post circles indicate early inhabitation. This does not seem to have a connection with the Selkirk Abbey (1113AD to 1126AD) which lies to the west.

Borthwickbrae Burnfoot.
At NT 413 127 there is a low spread mound called Castle Field on the left bank of the Borthwick Water. In the Inventory of Roxburghshire it is noted as an oval earthwork with a bank and external ditch which had been obliterated by cultivation and covered by a plantation with thick undergrowth. In the 1980s this wood had been cut and metal detectorists found several much degraded 3rd/4th century Roman coins there.
Divining rods revealed that it had been protected by a double palisade at some period.

Ayton, Berwickshire.
A recent AP of a field just south of Ayton at NT 927 606 show a peculiar ground pattern which can be neither drains nor tractor marks. This leaves palisades to be the most likely answer but these have still to be investigated by divining rods.



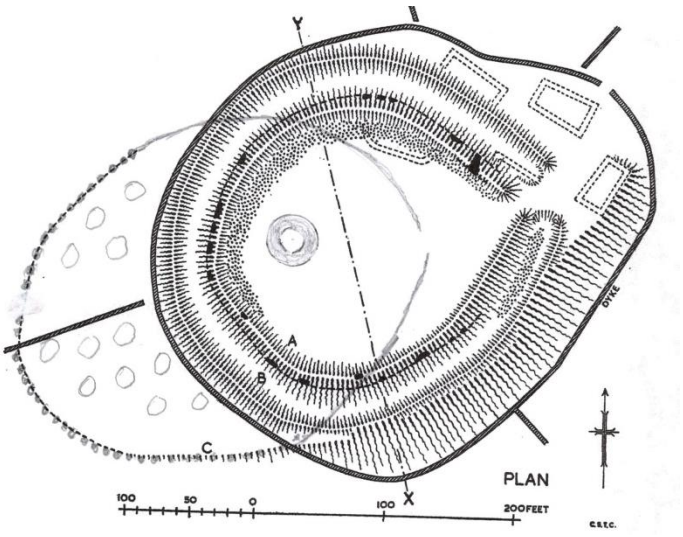
Synton Mossend.
At NT 484 127 there is a raised mound in the marshy ground to the west of the Synton Loch. Round the firm edges of the mound there are two palisades enclosing traces of number of large circular huts. Two smaller mounds nearby show single huts within palisades. These are well-secured sites with the marsh providing a natural moat.
There is a kil and some small houses on the eastern side of this loch.

Dryhope Farm, Yarrow.
At NT 27679 24400, there was a similar raised mound in marshy ground which has been enclosed by a palisade. On it was a large cairn called Herton's Hill which was demolished in the late 18th century to provide stone for dykes to make fields in the surrounding haughs. Inside were 'some urns' and a cist made from stone slabs and human ashes.

I have noticed that many of the hill lochans have similar settlements.
The Murder Moss at NT 503 287 has a central palisaded mound with circular huts varying from 6m diameter to 10m diameter
At Lindean Reservoir, a mound jutting into the modern reservoir has a large circular hut within a palisaded enclosure. There are two grave mounds there as well.

Forts.
It is also worth inspecting the area round known forts as many of those have started as habitations within palisades. In the upper hill country, the slots of a decayed palisade can be seen as a shallow enclosing ditch round the settlement and this acts as a terminus of the cord-rig strips of early cultivation.
This is not so obvious in the fields around lower-lying forts which have been ploughed in medieval to modern times and where shadow-marks or differences in grass colouring can be checked out with divining rods but can only be proven by trenching.

As one example out of many, I take The Rink Hill Fort where I have spent years sprauchling around in its impressive remains. This is not an easy site to investigate because it is usually covered with blown trees, nettles and willow-herb but divining rods and occasional finds indicate that it was an important settlement for a long period of time.



My reading of this site is that the first phase of occupation was a palisaded enclosure with a number of post-based circular houses (**C** on illustration). This was probably pre-Roman although the number of Roman objects found on site would indicate occupation during that period. With divining rods I found several phases of building within the main structure and enough of a large circular base to suggest that a broch once occupied the site. This would fit in with the line-of-sight known brochs of Bow Castle and Torwoodlee together with the potential one on Lee Pen, all of which stand on commanding hill-top sites.
Less commanding but equally important is a potential broch base at in a small circular wood on Crosslee at NT456 397. Here in the 1970s, the outer stones of a broad circular wall-base were clearly visible, the internal diameter of the circle being about 8m across and the wall 4.2m thick; the entrance was from the south, tapering in width from 1.2m to 1m in the interior. There was a single-ditch palisade enclosure in the fields to the east and south.

The imposing stone walls and ditches of the Rink Hill Fort are likely to date from the Early Historic period when Giric I, king of Scots from 878 to 889 AD, extended Scots rule in Bernicia and named it 'Lann Giric' the settlement/stronghold of Giric. The name was retained as 'Langrinck' in early 1500s documents and became 'The Rink' in the 17th/18th centuries. Craig Brown suggested that this was a corruption of 'The Rings' because the fort was round – not a good interpretation.

Henges.
When we think of a henge, we visualise a number of standing stones arranged in a circle to be a religious or ritual tribal meeting place in prehistoric times. This has been the conventional knowledge for centuries – what you see is what you believe, what you don't see isn't there. However in comparatively recent times, it was discovered that there were similar constructions with wooden posts taking the place of the standing stones and that these 'wood henges' were much more common than had been originally thought.
Of course being wood which decayed, they have passed largely un-noticed in the Borders.
I know of a recorded wood-henge at Overhowden near Lauder and had recognised two with double rings of internal posts in the flint-finds-rich Springwood Park near Kelso; these measured c 32m and 27m across respectively so that put them out-with the range of hut circles. Other potential henges have been claimed for Maxton, Sprouston and Ancrum and there will be many more to be discovered.

Old Melrose.

After the Roman site of Trimontium which I have now field-walked for sixty-two years, another favourite place to investigate is the Old Melrose peninsula site with its early monastic history, a brief synopsis of which can be found in the Inventory of Roxburghshire No 592, p 303/4.

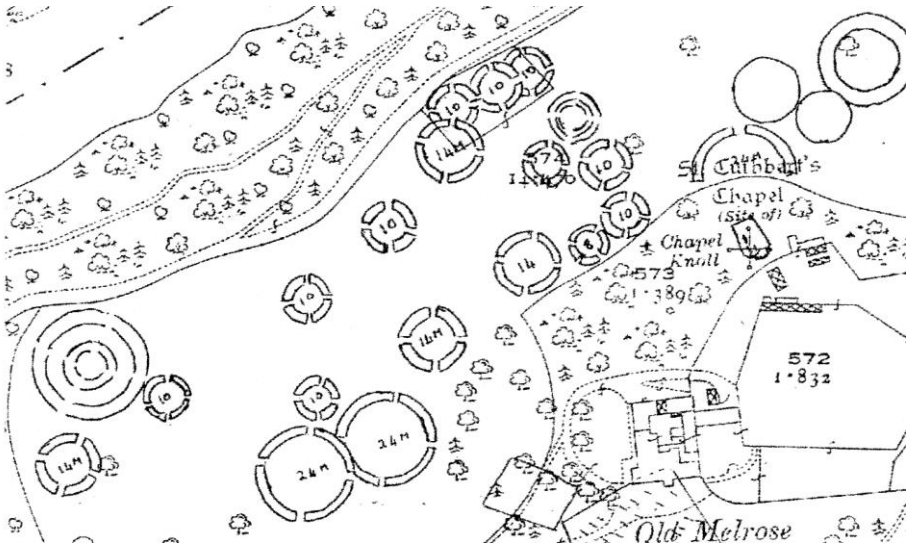
Although mentioned in early historical records, mainly for its association with the saints of the early Christian Church, there is little to be seen on the site other than a double ditch which has been taken to be the vallum that separated the Holy from the profane.

In the field east of the ditches, the Royal Commission's 1983 air photographs show a number of faint circular markings which, when walked over with divining rods, revealed low banks and concentric rings of postholes varying in diameter from 9m to 24m. Outside the outer circle of posts, rings of graves pointed inwards to the centre.

Concentric rings of postholes are now recognised as wood-henges in many parts of Britain but when I first touted my rough plans of these structures in 1999, I got no takers and one reply dismissive of the whole idea.

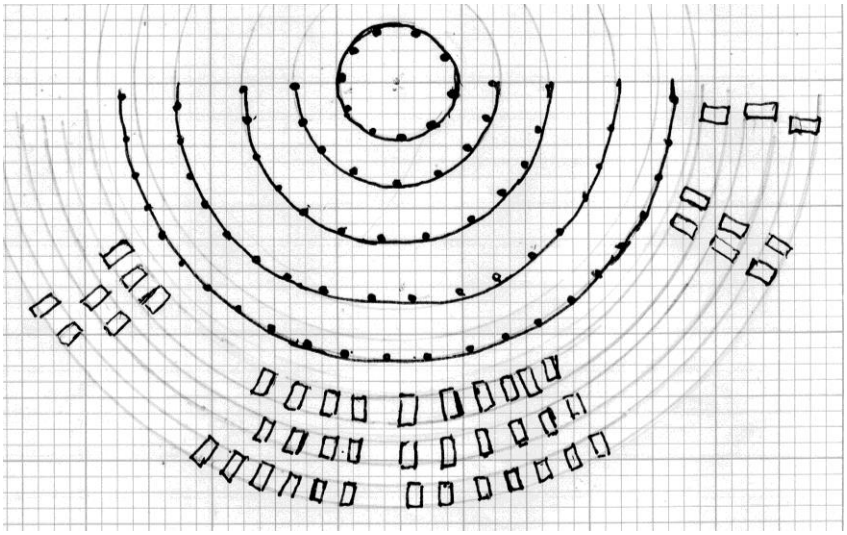
In the main, archaeologists tend to disregard any new theories such as the use of divining rods to detect differences in ground density. But since I had used them successfully for over thirty years as a fencing contractor, I never let such indifference has put me off if I thought that I was right; it was only the proving that was/is difficult.

In September 2011, I was taking a party of around fifty on a conducted tour of the site and persuaded them to stand individually on places that my divining rods indicated where a post once stood. These 'living posts' made a convincing pattern for a large circular building with five concentric rings of posts – so far so good except that a hut around 24m across was stretching the imagination a bit. It was then that I began to consider the possibility of a wood henge.



Rough Sketch plans of the Old Melrose Circles. 1999.

Further investigation on the site suggested that there were rings of graves out-with the wooden enclosures and that these were aligned towards the centre of the structure.



Half-drawn Plan of Circle A in Vallum Field, Old Melrose.
NT 58604 34034.
(These are not to scale either)

When I went over the site recently, I found the same pattern of postholes and graves and noted that the circles did not cross the vallum ditches. Also, that the double-ditched vallum had a palisade wall in the middle and a further two palisades, one on each side i.e. a triple palisade with ditches in between.

So now I suggest that the Old Melrose headland has been a Neolithic/Bronze/Iron Age holy place with at least one wood-henge and probably several more.
It is known that incoming Christians frequently planted their first kil or church on the site of pagan burial grounds and holy places (Pope Gregory the Great's instruction to St Augustine). So it is not unexpected that one of the first major Christian establishments in the Borders would be at Old Melrose

The field on the west of the double-ditch/three palisade vallum.
In the late 1980s, I field-walked this field whenever it was ploughed, which was seldom, and found noting dateable other than Victorian debris. This was a bit unusual because the prolific Roman Trimontium was about 1km to the west, the early Christian monastery 0.3km to the east and Earl David's '*dominium meum de Mailros'* noted in the Selkirk Abbey Charter (1119AD), on the knowe to the north-west. (See below)
To get round this, I explained to myself that the Old Melrose Farm was a dairy farm and the fields were for cattle grazing and seldom ploughed.

1992 was a very dry year which showed different plant patterns not usually seen in old pasture. On the south side of the field, five faint terraces appeared on the gentle slope and on these, rectangular patches about 7m by 4m appeared in regimented lines.
Using divining rods a regular series of hut shapes emerged. They were of a standard size, 5.5m by 3m with a post in each corner and a further two in the middle of the east side, the doorway. The wall widths were narrow suggesting a wattle construction. The huts were about 6m apart and there was a pit (a seep-well or rubbish pit?) beside each rectangle. The terraces were also 6m apart. These were within a palisade enclosure with three gates in it.
A concentrated search around the site showed that there were three similarly sized developments in the fields to the west of the monastery area. Wattle constructions have a

short life so it is unlikely that these four enclosures were contemporary as the people could move with ease from a polluted area to fresh ground. How long would this site be inhabited? It is clear that these are not agricultural developments but rather large settlements laid out to a master plan for a specific purpose and by an organisation with ample manpower. This narrowed it down to the Roman army from the Trimontium Fort; or the early church for the convenience of pilgrims; or Earl David's '*dominium meum'* which was large enough to be able to afford to give the area between '*the middle street and middle well as far as the fosse (ditch) and as the fosse marches falling into Tweed'* to the newly founded Selkirk Abbey which was chartered in 1119 A.D.

Leaving speculation aside, the first problem needing to be settled was to get convincing proof. For this the Trimontium Trust provided funds for geophysical survey in 2001. This produced 'ambiguous results' as did another in 2002. It was only after the second attempt that it was explained to me that post-holes did not show up on geo-physics – but they react very well to divining rods.

Disillusioned, I put further attempts on the back burner but went back occasionally to re-divine it and get my original plans confirmed. Since then Richard Strathie has overflown the site to take better photographs and Dr John Reid, Chairman of the Trimontium Trust has been metal detecting/field-walking this field which has produced Roman pottery, coins and a Roman cavalry spur. This adds a new dimension to the site for the Roman period and the Early Medieval. This requires a further re-think of the area but I will leave the details of Earl David's Mailros mote and bailey to a later page.

The Roman Period, c75 A.D. to c180 A.D.

The South of Scotland area was garrisoned in various forts and fortlets by a standing Roman army of professional troops for less than a century - roughly from c75 AD to c180 AD with a 35 year gap from c100 to c136. NB These dates intermittent and not necessarily correct.
Although the Roman forces left the area and retreated to the line of Hadrian's Wall around 180 A.D., they returned frequently to mount punitive expeditions to oppose invaders from the north of the Forth. These can be found in detail in any book which combines 'Roman' and 'Scotland' in its title so I will leave these alone. In the 2nd Century and later, irregular militia units probably recruited from local tribes as Numeri Exploratores (scouts) and Limitanei (border troops) kept an eye on the area to give advance warning of invaders. See below.

The first record of a Roman presence in Scotland was ***'de vita Agricolae'*** a book written by Publius Cornelius Tacitus, a Roman politician and historian to publicise the feats of his father-in-law, Gnaeus Julius Agricola who had been governor of the province of Brittannia from 77 (or 78) A.D. to 83 A.D. In this it was claimed that Agricola defeated the natives and brought the area north of the Province under Roman rule by establishing a network of roads and building forts on sites that he had personally chosen. As this was written for political prestige rather than historical record, it must be viewed with great caution.

But as it is the only written record we have, generations of archaeologists have accepted the information as the literal truth. This led to it being accepted that Agricola was the first governor to lead a Roman army into what is now Scotland.
A facetious comment is that Tacitus' claims that Agricola built and garrisoned so many forts on his way north meant that he and his batman must have been the only members of the Roman army at the Battle of Mons Graupius (if there ever was a battle there).

Agricola's claim is now being questioned and enough evidence has been gathered to convincingly postulate that the first forays into what is now Southern Scotland were in the governorship of Q. Petillius Cerialis between 71 and 74 A.D. Carlisle long claimed to be an Agricolan foundation, has been proved by dendrochronology to have been established in the late 72 A.D. period. With a string of forts established between the Tyne and Solway, it would be unusual if there was no reconnaissance in strength to the north and Newstead at a convenient natural crossroads would be ideal for a temporary or occasionally used camp.

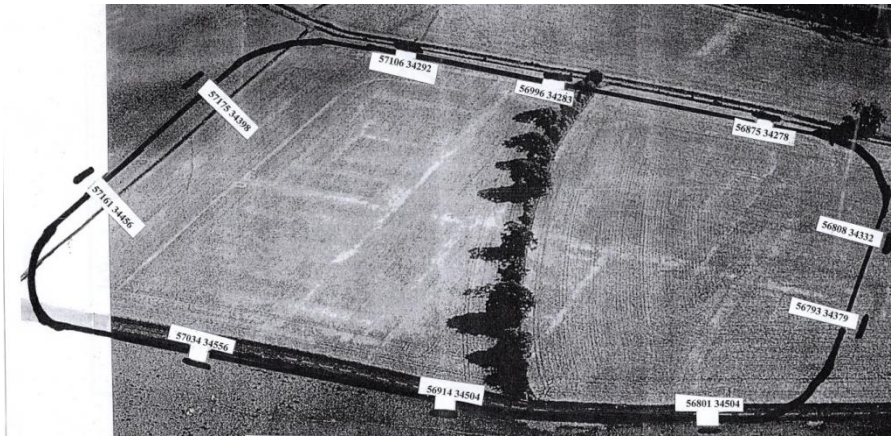
This brings us to the Newstead, the site of the great Roman Fort of Trimontium with its complex arrangement of annexes and temporary or semi-permanent Roman camps. The Fort had been excavated by James Curle, a Melrose lawyer on behalf of the Scottish Society of Antiquaries from 13 February 1905 to September 1910. The standard of excavation was far ahead of its time and the publication of the report in 1911 is an example seldom found now.

I started field-walking the site in March 1955 in company with Bruce and Walter Mason who had been searching there since the mid-1920s. Over the years they had accumulated large collections of Roman artefacts, intaglios, coins and glass. Unfortunately they never recorded these or their find-spots and what information that was given to me, I have passed on to 'the appropriate authorities' in publication or notes.

However we were finding and publishing enough to encourage interest in investigating the site further. The Department of Archaeological Sciences at Bradford University under Dr Ric Jones came to survey and excavate the Fort and annexes during the 1987 – 93 period. This was in conjunction with a survey and excavation of the contemporary settlements in the area.
The project was done by geophysical surveying to get the big picture of the complex and excavating the more promising areas which were found. This produced some excellent results but also some glaring omissions. The Curle Baths did not register on the survey, so it was reckoned to have been 'ploughed out'; the Great Pit in the South Annexe which had a surface diameter of 8ft 6inches and depth of 23 feet did not show either.
After gentle joshing over the two previous years' excavations, my divining rods came into their own by placing both the above in exactly the same place as Curle had mapped them. I have been looking forward to the Bradford publication of the site but it is now 24 years since the completion of the project so it is unlikely that I will see it.

Encouraged by that minor triumph, I started to carry divining rods while field-walking.
There are a large number of air photographs of the site at various periods and these mark the changing areas of the annexes, temporary/semi-permanent camps and fields. Using them as data for field-walking, I could note the locations most likely to produce finds.
In the APs, there was a ditch on the east side of the fort which didn't fit in with any other recognisable rampart or ditch. Inside this ditch was length of north/south ground-marking on the field about a metre wide. It could have been a drain except that it turned in a semicircle at the corners and there were two gaps in it with a short length of shallow ditch in front of them.

This I recognised as the eastern end of a Roman temporary camp within a palisade-faced wall and ditch. So I traced the palisade round the sides of what was a rectangle approximately 440m by 230m with rounded corners, three gates on the long sides and two on the short; the known Fort was completely enclosed. In my thinking, the temporary camp predated the Fort and so is likely to be pre-Agricolan.



I did try my theory on one archaeologist who told me that he did not believe the evidence of 'twitching twigs'. That hurt – they were pieces of fence wire which reacted much better to a phase of the invisible electro-magnetic force, the same force which can send sound and pictures to Australia in about a second. So for twenty odd years, the idea was put on the back burner but never forgotten.

When I published my conviction in '*Divining Archaeology'*, this may have encouraged a reappraisal of air photographs which confirmed that there was indeed a 'new' temporary camp underlying Trimontium Fort. This is added to the previously known seven and there are two more waiting to be 'discovered'.

I used the same technique on the Roman Fort at Oakwood and found that this too had a palisade wall around it. There is another camp similar in size and shape to the Newstead one at NT 6688 2392 on the eastern side of Dere Street near where it crosses the Jed and Teviot rivers but I have not been able to re-inspect the site.

Those who are familiar with Hadrian's Wall tend to think that the Romans were notably builders in stone but this is not so north of the Wall. Here they used wood for nearly everything. The forts are enclosed by a sod-based wall with a palisade on top; their barrack buildings were built on posts in sleeper trenches and their signal/watch towers and bridges were totally of wood.

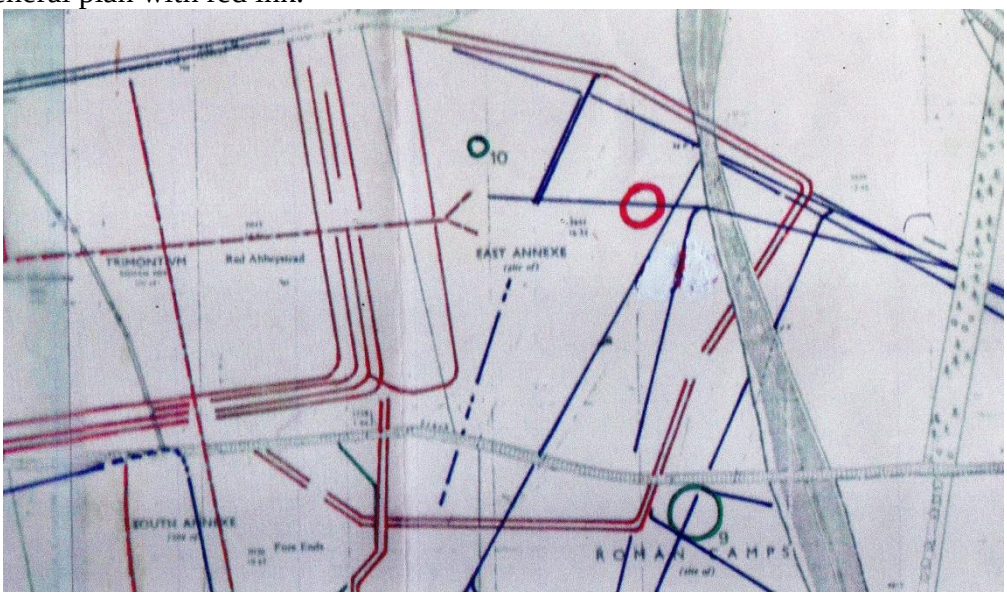
One part of the Trimontium Fort Complex at Newstead that was totally wooden, was the **'Gyrus' at NT 57328 34433.**

When the Department of Archaeological Studies from Bradford University came to excavate at Trimontium in 1987, one of the first tasks was to draw out a plan of the site using the Royal Commission's air photographs. It was fascinating to watch the story of the complex being built up from the marks left on the ground by the ramparts and ditches.

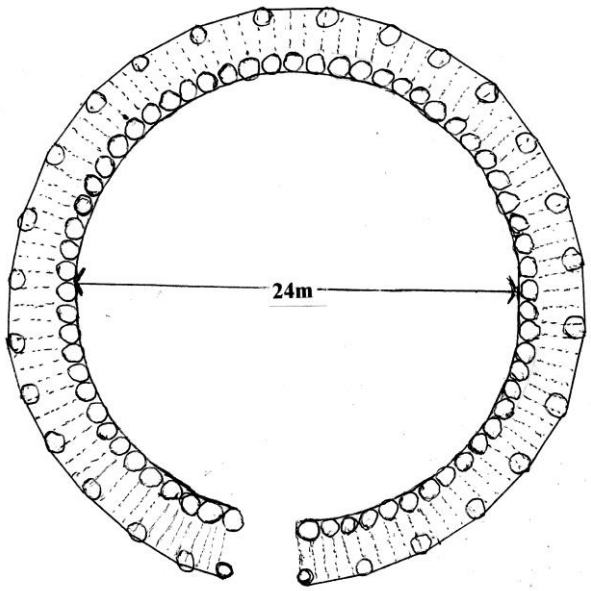
On some of the black and white photos, there was a large white circle to the east of the Main Fort which did not fit in with the right angles and rounded corners of Roman forts. As it was deemed to be 'something agricultural', it was kept out of the plans.

Being brought up on farms where the main motive source was the horse, I knew it was more likely to be 'something equine' but at this period, I thought that archaeologists were all-knowing and the new science of geophysics was all-showing, so I kept my views quiet.

However I did make a sketch-plan of the circle using divining rods and marked it roughly on the general plan with red ink.



Although I have lost my original sketches, I remembered that the circle was over 20m in diameter with a gateway on the south side. I have some experience of horses by building paddocks and looking on while someone else trained the horse. With this, I decided that the circle had to be a horse enclosure or exercise yard.
As this is located in the field where a spread of Roman glass bangles, beads and melted glass, suggested a Roman glass-works (NT 57234 34443), I ran divining rods over the circle occasionally and eventually drew out the plan shown below.



The 'Gyrus' at Trimontium.
NT 57328 34433.

This piece of modern art represents the post-wall with a further series of individual posts set at regular intervals 2m from the wall. I visualise that these would be used to support an external platform for the convenience of onlookers.

During research over the years, I have found only one similar structure with a Roman connection. This was at the Lunt near Coventry where a circular stockade has been officially identified as a gyrus, a training ground for horses and cavalry recruits. It is claimed as being 'unparalleled in Britain' but this is an over-ambitious claim as there are bound to be more of these training schools not yet identified.

A good case can be made for the existence of a gyrus at Trimontium.
Trimontium is the centre and pivotal point of the Roman occupation of S.E. Scotland and well situated for an attached cavalry unit to nip trouble in the bud before it became a major uprising.
But it was also be good location for a cavalry training school. The country around the fort was ideal for training horses and men, with steep slopes, deep gullies, rivers to cross and enough arable ground in the river haughs to provide grazing, hay and grain to supply the horses.

From the number of pieces of horse harness and skulls found during the excavations at Trimontium, there has been a sizable contingent of cavalry in the garrison – more than would be expected on a fort of this size, even on a frontier post.

To explain the white circle which first drew my attention.
In black and white air photos, light does not penetrate sand as well as it does normal soil and so appears whiter on the photo. This phenomenon is not so apparent on colour photos.
Roman cavalry horses were never shod and so their training was done on a surface which did not damage their hooves; sand made an ideal surface and at Trimontium, this is what is likely to have made a circular shape which corresponds with the pattern traced by my divining rods.

In my search for information, I asked a friend, a skilled horseman, if the 24m diameter circle would be suitable for training horses. He said that it would ideal for a single horse but equally good for training the two horse team required for a chariot or wheeled vehicle; and there is plenty of evidence of these from the Curle excavations.

A final point for my proposition that the light circle is indeed a gyrus. In 1793 a Roman altar was ploughed up in the immediate vicinity. The altar was dedicated to the Campestres, the deities who presided over cavalry parades or training grounds and this was dedicated by Aelius Marcus, a decurion in a cavalry unit, the Ala Augusta Vocontiorum.
I don't think this was a purely coincidence and there could be more in the same area.

Roman Roads in the Borders.
There has been little professional examination of the Roman roads in the Borders since the publication of the Inventories of the counties, Roxburghshire 1956, Selkirkshire 1957 and Peeblesshire 1967 and further investigation is required. I am of the opinion that old assumptions, opinions and assertions should be re-examined every few years.

The 1956 Inventory of Roxburghshire gives a detailed report the Roman road of Dere Street from the Scottish/English border to the Tweed at Trimontium. The Inventory reckoned that Dere Street must have ran along the bottom of the valley north of the Tweed even although *'between the Tweed and the (*Lothian*) county border no trace of the road survives'*.

The year 1959 had a tremendously dry summer, grass was eaten down to the soil and the whole Borders turned beige. I was working on a three-mile fencing contact in the Cheviots mostly along the line of Dere Street so I had the opportunity to study its construction and also native settlements along its route; these showed up as linear green marks representing enclosures in the parched ground and small green dots indicating the postholes of circular hut bases. This was not unusual as the deeper postholes or palisades retain water long after the surface was burned bare.

Shortly after that I was working on the Mosshouses Moor NT 538 397 and saw exactly same method of construction and decided, unilaterally, that this 'Kingis Grate Rode' of medieval times, was based on the Roman Dere Street. Everything fitted perfectly – a long straight road with a central mound, ditches on either side and quarry pits where extra debris was required to make up the road surface.
But remembering that Roman roads are not always straight and straight roads are not necessarily Roman, I took Sherlock Holmes' advice that *'It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist the facts to suit theories instead of theories to suit facts'*. Although I was convinced that the Mosshouses road was Roman, it was only when Richard Strathie photographed the site from the air that I ventured into print.

Dere Street at Mosshouses Crossroads looking North.

Dere Street at Mosshouses Crossroads looking South to the Eildons.

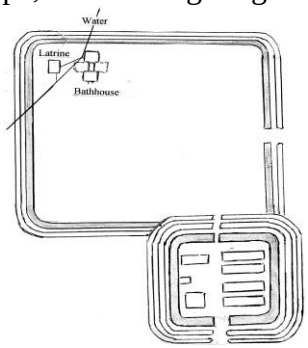
When the Romans conquered a new territory, one of the first tasks was to establish a road system. With skilled surveyors and a workforce of thousands, these roads were of such a high standard that they were and remained the main thoroughfares through the Scottish Borders. Cumbric Welsh and Early Anglian place-named settlements can be found along the line of a

suspected Roman road and the monks who recorded the abbey land holdings used the road as divisional markers.
Dere Street is the best known Roman road leading through the Southern Uplands from Hadrian's Wall to The Forth with permanent forts, semi-permanent forts, temporary camps and watch-tower fortlets strung along its length. Dere Street heads to and from Trimontium as the central hub of the road system. 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.

[I make a distinction between temporary camps and semi-permanent forts in that temporary camps are designed for a one/two night occupation whereas semi-permanent forts have a connected annexe containing a latrine and washhouse and are obviously intended to be conveniently re-usable for following marching troops.]

The Inventory of Roxburghshire gives a meticulous description of the route and construction method until it gets to Trimontium but often misses what lies beside the road. I have spent many years walking Dere Street from the English Border to Soutra Aisle and there was a lot more there than meets the casual eye. If you walk a Roman road long enough and often enough at different times of year, other features fall into place.

In *Divining Archaeology*, I noted 39 wooden-palisaded fortlets along the line of Dere Street, each with its own latrine and small washhouse within an annexe. As they are mainly a standard size and shape, it is worth giving an illustration of this.



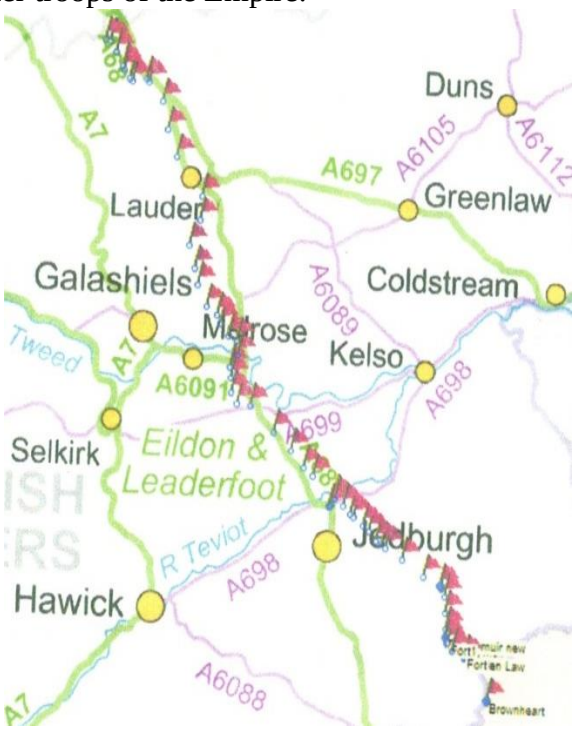
Standard Plan of Fortlet and Annexe.

A palisade-faced earth rampart and double ditch encloses a square fortlet which measures about a Roman semi-actus (17.75m) the same approximate size as the milecastles on Hadrian's Wall and the fortlets on the Gask Ridge.

Inside each fortlet there were two or four small buildings which are likely to have been mini 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 35m by 35m (probably an actus) but could vary in size to double that.
I put a trench through two of these fortlet ditches; the outer ditch is about 1m across, the inner about 1.5m, both about 0.8m deep while the wall/rampart base is about 1.5m wide. This 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 indicated an outside post-wall.

On a near-bye vantage point there was a four-post watch tower within a circular palisaded enclosure. These towers had the greatest view to the west and were in visual contact with

each other. It will take a lot more investigation to prove these sites and determine who manned them. It may be that this was the standard land allotment given to veterans after twenty-five years' service in the Roman army; or more likely, they could be the bases of the 'limitanei', the frontier troops of the Empire.



Each flag represents a Roman fortlet or fort between The English Border and Soutra Aisle.

It must be noted that this was found by ground observation and only confirmed with dividing rods which led some doubts about my veracity/sanity. Granted the evidence is ephemeral and there is little to be seen on the surface unless by someone whose life has been on the land. The wooden palisades have rotted, nearly two thousand years of recurring vegetation has filled in most of the shallow ditches and the plough has destroyed any remaining traces except for variations in the plant life. But even if it can't be seen, it can still be there.

My theory is that during the fortlet period, Dere Street was a fortified road frontier as is known in other parts of the Roman Empire. It is not simply a road – there is a more convenient and flatter road up the East Coast through Berwickshire.
But what it does is to separate the flat fertile lands of the Merse and East Lothian from the rough grazing of the Southern Uplands ie friendly Votadini from hostile Selgovae. It is unlikely that the Roman state would ignore the corn-rich lands of the Merse when they had hungry legions to feed on the Continent and a convenient numerus of Tigris boatmen stationed at South Shields to get it there.

Further Roman Roads in the Borders.

I was convinced that sensible Roman surveyors would favour a main road along the flat East Coast of Northumberland, Berwickshire and East Lothian. It was easier to build and better for the Legions to march along with a fleet sailing along off shore to carry their equipment and provisions. So I investigated for several years and finally published a booklet '***The Devil's Causeway, the Continuation in Berwickshire'.***

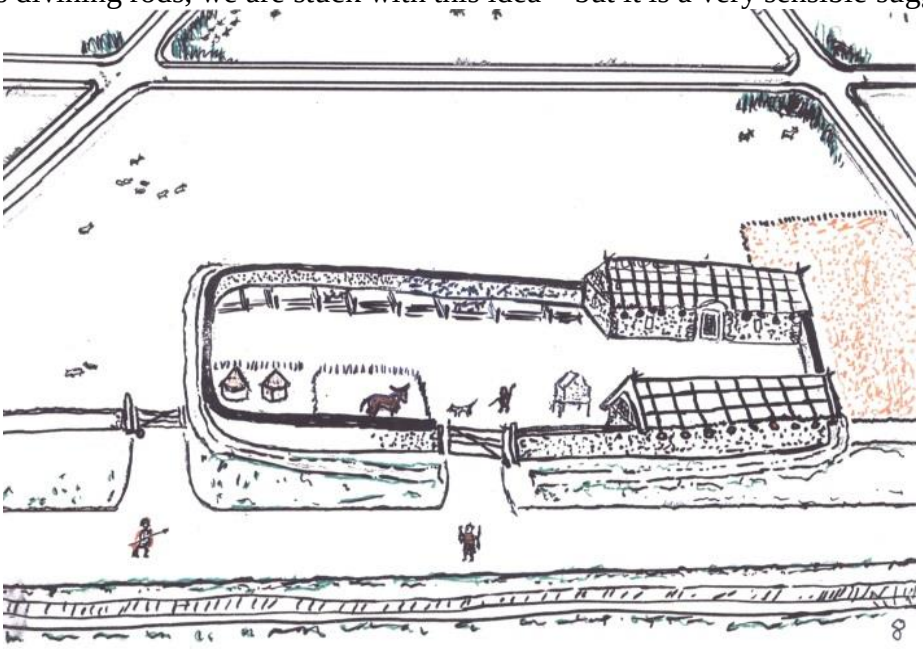
There is a Roman road running from Tweedmouth along the south side of the Tweed skirting Kelso and Springwood and passing forts at Kalemouth (NT 710 270) and Crailing (NT 685 243) to join Dere Street at Mounthooly (NT 661 243). There are a number of temporary camps on the flat-lands at Mounthooly and Jerdonfield but the soil is sandy and does not retain enough moisture in the trenches to show on APs. After crossing the River Jed, this road proceeds along the south bank of The Teviot to Ashybank where a number of temporary camps show on APs.

The Roman road between Trimontium and the Roman complex at Lynne and Easter Happrew is covered in 'Divining Archaeology' p99 -118. I traced a road north from the Lynne Fort which skirted the complex of temporary? camps at Lynne Farm and leads northwards on the 'Trace of Old Road' to above Eddleston.

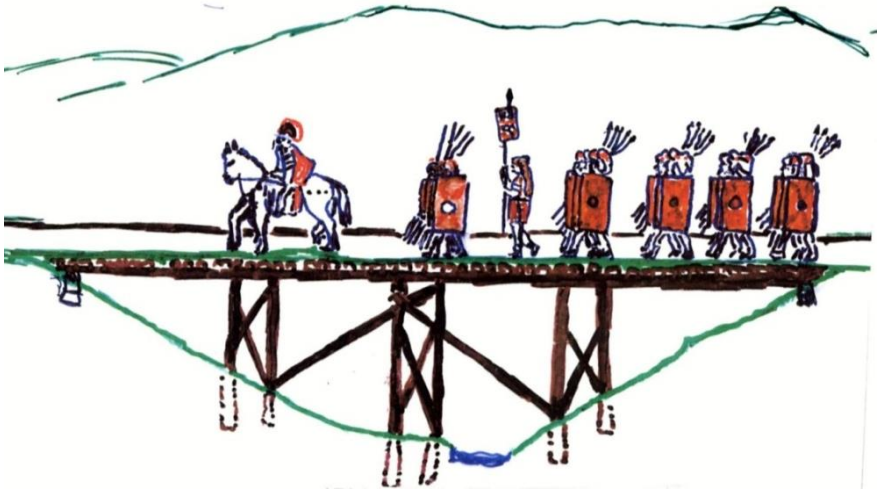
There is the acknowledged road from the Raeburnfoot fort to cross DereStreet at Wellrig Crossroads (NT 604 290) and eventually to Springwood and Tweedmouth.
There are other known minor roads eg south and east from Oakwood Roman fort and doubtless many more to be discovered.

Roadsides.
Roman roads may have been built to move troops quickly from fort to fort but also attract people to settle beside the road for ease of access and trading opportunities. In *Divining Archaeology*, I explain how I found a large number of faint rectangular land plots about five acres with a further internal enclosure c 30m by 20m facing the road. As these were fairly consistent measurements, I suggested a planned rural settlement.

Admittedly, this hypothesis was on observation and divining rod evidence alone. I found only one pottery sherd to suggest a Roman dating and one sherd does not form a conclusion but until science produces a machine to detect the same invisible electromagnetic force that motivates divining rods, we are stuck with this idea – but it is a very sensible suggestion.

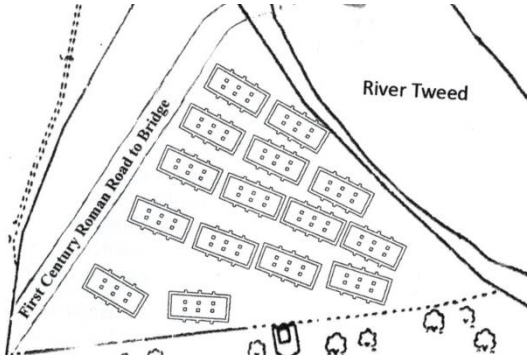


Bridges.
If you have roads, you must have bridges.
When Roman road-builders met with a river, burn or marsh they overcame this obstruction by building a fly-over with two parallel rows of wooden posts 3m apart with individual posts 3m apart in the row. The posts were driven into the ground, river-bed or marsh, then connected and cross-braced with beams which supported a roadbed of poles and turves. This formed a substantial flyover or bridge based on the standard Roman 'decempeda quadrata' or a 10 foot square.



Over the centuries this wooden construction has rotted away leaving no indication on the ground surface but the under-ground anaerobic conditions have left the posts as fresh as the day they were put there. Although as far as I know, no electrical machine has yet been developed to locate individual posts, a fencing contractor with 33 years of experience in using divining rods for that purpose can find them quite easily.
I have used this method to determine the site of the first Roman bridge over the Tweed west of Newstead and where Dere Street crosses the Kale at Towford. It would be interesting to dig up a few for carbon dating, dendrochronology and pollen analysis. In general terms, if I find this type of fly-over on a minor road, I am prepared to accept that it had been originally of Roman construction.

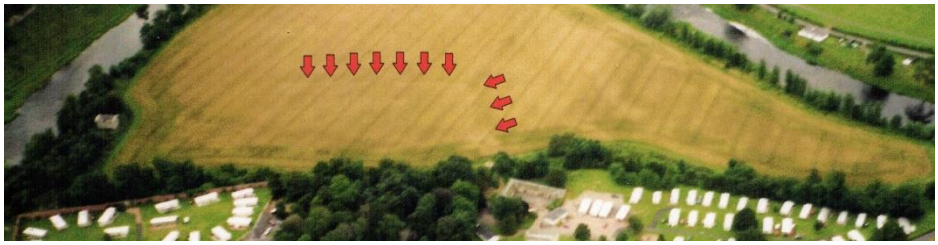
River Transport. (Not strictly post and palisade but interesting in context)
In Selkirkshire and The Borders, Book One. p147 – 149, I examined the logistics of supplying Roman troops in Trimontium. After discussing and largely dismissing the possibilities of overland transport, I asked '*Did the Romans use the river Tweed to move around 30-40 tonnes of supplies to Trimontium every day?*' and my conclusion was '*Probably'*.
With a steering oar and two boathooks found during the excavations at Trimontium, it is fairly certain that bulk supplies were brought up the Tweed from Tweedmouth in 'codicarae' the small flat-bottomed boats which could float on a 0.3m depth of water and carry 10 tonnes.
In the flat triangular field to the west of the Fort (NT 5627 3446), there are fifteen buildings measuring 16m by 5m internally with three pairs of supporting blocks at regular spacings and corresponding buttresses. The walls are c 0.8m thick. These are the shapes of Roman granary buildings or their 'ghost walls' which I am picking up with my divining rods.



As the centre of the Roman road system, it was essential that a large depot was kept at Trimontium to supply the garrison, neighbouring forts/fortlets and marching troops who were passing through.
A similar situation occurs at the junction of the Jed and Teviot just below Bonjedward where an enclosure about 80m by 60m holds twelve similar buildings with a uniform size of 20m by 5m. See Divining Archaeology p 76/7.

With two depots on the line of Dere Street potentially being supplied by river transport, it made sense to look for a central depot where the rivers met near Kelso which was about 8 miles from both the smaller depots.

The East/West Roman road crosses the river Teviot at NT 71354 33541 just west of Roxburgh Castle. On the other side of the crossing is Springwood Farm where the King's Haugh has produced around three hundred Roman coins ranging from 1st century BC to those of Honorius (394 – 403AD). These were found by eight detectorists at different times.
Divining rods and APs showed an elongated rectangle about 250m by 40m which ran along the side of the Roman road. As this was where ninety per cent of the coins came from, a quick dig down revealed a wall of post and woven wattle below the plough-disturbed soil.
The range of the mainly copper coins covers four centuries which did not fit in with the acceptable Roman presence in Scotland so I got weird suggestions that they were 'booty', 'bribery', 'collectors rejects' 'modern losses' and even been scattered for me to find. The simpler reason is that they are the small change of commerce still in use long after the legions left for the safety of Hadrian's Wall.



This is not part of a fort as it is overlooked by a high bank on the edge of the caravan park and is more likely to have been a trading settlement during the Roman period.

The Sub-Roman Period. c180 – 410 AD

What we know about the Roman occupation of southern Scotland is mainly through the spread of very worn Roman coins and artefacts in native sites. Other information of this Sub-Roman period can be gleaned from surviving Roman records or later accounts by early Christian priests.

Although the front-line troops were withdrawn from southern Scotland c 180 AD, they left a reasonably secure buffer zone north of Hadrian's Wall which was regularly patrolled by Wall detachments.

The Romans never totally lost interest in the area. There was one attempt to reclaim the province between the Walls and destroy the northern barbarians when the Emperor Severus brought his sons and the Imperial Court to York in 208 AD. The Fort of Trimontium must still have been in reasonable condition and was the gathering spot of the expedition. Early 3rd century Roman pottery was found on site and an intaglio of Caracalla the heir apparent, was picked up at the north gate of the fort.

After two and a half years without much success, Severus died in York on 4th February 211. Caracalla decided that it was not worth the bother and thought it easier to bribe the revolting natives with Roman silver to keep the peace while he went to Rome to be Emperor.

Caracalla

The three recently found hoards are likely to be products of that decision. One interesting point is that all three hoards were found in close proximity to Iron Age forts/settlements and were within the territory of the Selgovae, a tribal federation usually thought to be anti-Roman. So it is obvious that the Romans were bribing individual local leaders.

By the terminus dates of the coins this policy seems to have lasted for many years which was longer than Caracalla did as he was murdered by his Praetorians on 11th March 217.

Peeblesshire. A hoard of 290 denarii ranging from Mark Antony (killed 30 BC) to Elagabalus (Emperor 218 -222 AD) was found on Edston Farm near the remains of a hill-fort in 1994.

Roxburghshire. A scattered hoard of 80 denarii was found on Kippilaw Farm south of Maxton in June 2010. They range in date from Vespasian (69 to 79 AD when he'became a god') to Marcus Aurelius (161 -180). The find-spot was about 80m north of an unrecorded palisaded enclosure.

Selkirkshire**.** A hoard of 228 denarii was found on Synton Parkhead Farm near Ashkirk on 4th and 5th May 2011. They range in date from Vitellus (69) to Commodus (180 -192). The find-spot was at the side of a small palisaded enclosure with the Iron Age forts of Blackcastle hill on the north and Campknowe on the south-west.

The Synton Parkhead Roman Coin Hoard

The green patina on the coins shows that copper has been added to the mix to make the silver go further. At the period of the hoards the denarius was barely 40% silver and by the middle of the 3rd century, the Roman 'silver' coins had been degraded to copper discs with a silver wash and thus were useless for bribery. So more exotic items of Roman culture, rings, brooches, tableware, glass and pottery became suitable 'gifts' to local tribal leaders. These (hopefully) ensured that the auxiliary militia units recruited from friendly tribes as 'limitanei' (border guards) and 'exploratores' (scouts) would give advance warning of the frequent invasions from the north.

Philiphaugh.

Ian Girdwood was gamekeeper on Philiphaugh Estate near Selkirk, a keen metal detectorist, he usually detected on the site of the 1645 battle. One day in 1990, he approached me with an object in his hand and a 'what is that' query. I had no hesitation in identifying the gold ring with an engraved seal-stone of Ceres, the goddess of crops, as Roman. When I asked where he got it, he said 'On the field behind the cricket pitch – with a metal detector'. Although I had wrongly dated it as 1st/2nd century, it was quickly claimed by the National Museum as Treasure Trove and given a 4th century dating.

After consideration, I recalled the late Bruce Mason who died in 1963 showing me two distinctly Roman brooches which he had found while field-walking there.

At this period, Dr Ian Smith was searching for comparisons to the Early Anglian settlement at Sprouston and had noted a similarity on APs of the fields at Philiphaugh. I had been fencing there and found a graveyard while looking for the location of previously-dug fence posts with my divining rods. So we got together to compare notes and walk the Philiphaugh fields.

(Ian was one of the rare breed of archaeologists who looked on the use of divining roads, not as proof but as a good indication of what was under the ground even although nothing could be seen on the surface.)
As he would later write of the site *'Close by are at least three rectangular buildings, defined by continuous wall-trenches and a substantial square, ditched enclosure; a counterpart, perhaps for the remodelled enclosure of Sprouston Phase III. Philiphaugh clearly lies outwith the area of early Anglian settlement and thus the cemetery, buildings and enclosure are probably best seen as the components of a British site*.'

In the field nearest the cricket pavilion, four rows of divined post-holes indicated a building about 23m by 15m and this was where Ian Girdwood had found the ring.
Further investigation of the site was cut short by Ian Smith's tragic death in July 1994.

Using the premise that the site was 'British' pre-Anglian, it would have lain within the territory and period of the Selgovae, so the ring may be best looked on as part of a gift/bribe to the local tribal leader. This also infers that the flat fields at Philiphaugh were a major population centre in the 4th century, a not impossible suggestion as all the buildings would have been of wood which had decayed over the centuries

Bribery Failure.
The bribery policy was not totally successful as the 'barbarians' from the north continued to raid into the province of Britannia but Roman historians tend to down-play these events. Historians claim that the 3rd Century was an era of peace with no record of wars between the 208 -211campaign of Severus to that of Constantius Chlorus in 306. For this deduction we are reliant on the not unbiased opinions of a few pro-Roman writers.

The most devastating raid, the Barbarian Conspiracy of 367 AD resulted in Count Theodosius with a large Roman army being sent to Britannia to restore order. After defeating the insurgent barbarians in battle, he is reckoned to have placed Roman officers (usually Germans) each with a small detachment of cavalry, in charge of the native kingdoms in the lands between the Walls of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius. It is a reasonable if unproven deduction that they became the leaders of the communities and eventually their descendants became the kings of the post-Roman Dark Age kingdoms in the inter-wall areas.
In the sub-Roman period, there were two autonomous tribal confederations in the eastern part of the inter-wall area. The Votadini (later Gododdin) in Berwickshire, eastern Roxburghshire and north Northumberland who were reckoned to be Roman-friendly (or Roman frightened), while the Selgovae in the central hill-country of Selkirkshire and Peeblesshire were anti-Roman when it suited them.

The Post-Roman/Dark Age Period.

The collapse of the Roman Empire in 410 set up a chain reaction throughout western Europe. In Britannia this meant that responsibility for peace and order was passed down to family and kinship groups which in turn led to local leaders assuming command and society regrouped around them. It is one of the most interesting periods of Border history of which we know very little. This does not prevent a lot of speculation based on vague facts, a situation which I will leave for Academia to debate.

My speciality is what is in or on the ground but I am interested in the various languages which make up Border Scots. Place-names are evidence of the various language-group invaders who came to settle in to what is now The Borders.
During the Roman and post-Roman period, the Votadini had merged with the Guotodin to become the Gododdin who spoke 'Cumbric' a form of Old Welsh which can still be recognised in the place-names of the upper valleys.
The historical Cumbrians were well organised with established 'maenors' the stone-built residences of the chief of the district; this makes the presumption that all other houses were made of wood. The maenor estate consists of seven 'trefs' or villages in fertile lands or thirteen in the hill country. Manor valley in Peeblesshire is a Cumbric maenor in almost perfect detail.

Without knowing the exact map details, we can make out the Gododdin occupied upper Tweeddale with a central base at Tinnis Castle in Peeblesshire; the lords of Calchvyndd (Kelso) and Merchidun would be based at what is now known as Roxburgh Castle while further to the east and south was the lords of Bernicia (parts of Berwickshire and Northumberland) occupied Guanroy (Bamburgh Castle).
By the mid-6th Century, Irish/Celtic Christianity had been spread through most of these areas by anchorites, the hermit priests *'who dwell in desert places and live on herbs, and water and alms and have nothing of their own'.*

The Anglians.
The collapse of the Roman Empire meant a power vacuum throughout Europe. This was filled by mass invasions from the East which in turn pushed out the Germanic tribes on the Western European seaboard from their lands. There had been German units of the Roman Army on the northern frontier of Brittania, so when displaced people from the Angeln area of north-west Germany and Denmark, it was not totally unexpected that they crossed the North Sea to settle on the coasts of Northumberland and Berwickshire in the late 6th/early 7th centuries.
An ever increasing number of immigrants soon began to extend their settlements up the fertile lower grounds of the Tweed and its tributaries; a progression can be traced up-river through the changing place-names, the Germanic Anglian (or 'Englis') replacing the Old Welsh/Cumbric of the native Votadini.

It was the Anglians who shaped the Borders landscape to what is recognisable today. The Cumbrians who were largely stock-breeders crops in small hand-dug square fields, were driven into the lighter upland soils while the Anglians claimed the lower more fertile valley bottoms.

The new people brought their own language, culture and land use with them. They lived in village farming communities or townships organised in a social hierarchy and recognised rules. The ground was held from a great lord who received rents and tenant-service in exchange for the use of the village land. A house and garden could be held by the individual but the surrounding field system was worked communally
The village itself was usually centred on a piece of open ground which provided a market/ meeting place and houses were built around or radiated from this. The village could be triangular like Bowden and Midlem or linear like Lauder, as they are today.

They lived in grubenhausen or pit-houses which were square or rectangular pits dug into the ground, internally lined with a palisade and then roofed over. This simple shelter developed

into a building with a ground floor, literally in the ground, and a wood-floored upper storey. In the winter, the ground floor could be used as a byre to keep cattle safe and provide heating to the upper chamber. These sites are very difficult to trace archaeologically except in the upper valleys where the fields have seldom been cultivated. I know of two in the Ettrick valley at Over Kirkhope and Kirkhope Farm near Ettrickbridgend. Coincidence?

Ploughing.
The Anglians brought their own methods of cultivation with them. Being accustomed to working a heavy clay soil, they used a large oak ploughshare, studded with white quartz pebbles to reduce soil wear. This required three or four pairs of oxen to pull and four men to handle the plough and goad the oxen. This heavy cumbersome plough and the draft oxen combined measured over 12 metres in length which made turning difficult at the beginning and end of each furrow ploughed. So the very distinctive Anglian rigs each a 'furrow long' (220 yards) had a curve at each end. This still shows up in air photographs and white quartz pebbles with faces striated by soil drag, can be found in ploughed fields.

Wooden plough with inset pebbles.
The Andbjerg Plough in the Dansk Folkmuseum.

How long it took for the Anglians to push their settlements up the valleys and when the pagan Anglians were gradually converted to Christianity is a matter for Academia to contemplate. How far they managed to reach up the valleys is more about ground observation.

The Catrail
The Catrail was a continuous earthwork extending across Selkirkshire and Roxburghshire from the Gala Water to Liddesdale and formed a Romano-Caledonian 'limes'.
(Gordon, 1728).
By the time that Craig-Brown had published his History of Selkirkshire in 1886, many learned gentlemen had given their varied opinions of why and for what purpose it had been built; was it was a single entity or a series of unconnected trenches, or roads or an agreed boundary between different communities.
In the Inventory of Roxburghshire (1956), the report concludes that *'Under the circumstances it is tempting that the Catrail may mark the line on which Anglian colonists, pushing up the Teviot from Bernicia, temporarily stabilised their position – an explanation which could equally apply to the Picts Work Ditch in Selkirkshire and the Black Dyke in Northumberland'.*

In Selkirkshire the supposed extension of the Roxburghshire Catrail (which was also known here as the Picts Work Ditch), ran across the lower Ettrick, Gala and Yarrow valleys. It too was proposed as the land division between the Old-Welsh-speaking Cumbrics and the Englisc-speaking Anglians. These conclusions are reasonable as Cumbric placenames appear on one side of the Catrail/Picts Work Dyke earthwork and Englisc on the other.

The line is marked out as ‘the Catrail or Picts Work Dyke’ in Craig Brown’s History of Selkirkshire is mostly ploughed out, filled in or flattened to oblivion. Only in the section from the Linglie Hill north to the Deilie’s Loch (NT 458306 to 460323) is there a well-defined earthwork with a gateway through the middle of the run.

The Deilie’s Loch top centre with line of earthworks

A side section shows a substantial earthwork while divining rods indicate a line of posts along the top of each bank; these are spaced every 2m/2.5m apart meaning a stock fence rather than a defensive palisade.

There is a gap in the middle of the section which has been an original gateway with two posts. A palisaded enclosure to the south of the line contains several posted hut circles. This is likely to have been a ‘customs post’ to control the through traffic.

Dating the Earthwork.
With the reasonable certainty that this earthwork is the land division between Cumbrians and Anglians, we have to look for dating evidence in the place-name studies of the Borders.

In Yarrow, Old Lewinshope (Leofwine's valley) on the east side of the Lewinshope Burn at NT 388 295 and Fastheugh (the Strong Height) at NT 392 290, are on the west side of a cluster of Anglian names in the lower valley. These are likely to mark the extent of the Anglian colonisation in Yarrow.

Within this concentration of Anglian place-names, there is an interesting flat-topped mound known in local lore and on Pont's 1608 map as Auld Wark. It appears in documents as Etybredscheles 1321, Etybredshiels 1388 and Edybredschele in 1416, so it is probably correct to attribute this to Eadberht, the expansionist King of Northumbria 737 -58 A.D.

The site of Etybredscheles (1321) NT 426 285 now known as Auld Wark.

Athough there is little to be seen on the ground, the use of divining rods indicate an enclosed settlement covering two to three hectares, surrounded by a triple palisade and a further two ditches on the south side where the ground does not fall away sharply. Although palisades leave only faint traces on much-ploughed ground, we live in hope of a very dry summer and a clearer air photograph.
Inside the palisade, one hall approximately 20m by 9m by the post location, sits on the top of the mound surrounded by a number of lesser structures, approximately 8/9m by 4/5m. There are smaller structures 3.5/4m square inside the palisade and between the ditches.
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When Sir James Douglas was granted the Forests of Selkirk, Ettrick and Traquair by a grateful Robert I of Scotland in 1321, he held the Forest Courts at Etybredscheles which was power centre but as the Douglas family became richer and more powerful, they built a new castle of stone about 1km further up the valley in 1423 and this became known the 'New Wark'. Newark quickly became the focal point and the old settlement was re-named the Auld Wark. Being built of wood, it was neglected and soon decayed leaving little trace of its former being – but it would still be worth investigating.

Further information.
Sundhope was the farm in the mid Yarrow valley where the Catrail crossed into Ettrick and 'sundered' or divided the 'hope'.

Sunderland Hall at the meeting of the Tweed and Ettrick was the land cut off (sundered) from the hill ground by the Catrail. Recent finds from this site include a carved stone from an Anglian church and a number of Christian graves.

Eadberht was King of Northumbria from 737 to 758 when he resigned his kingship to his son Oswulf, to become a monk at York. This was a wise move as Oswulf was murdered by his own household on the following year and Eadberht's second son Oswin was killed at the battle of Eildon in761. This seems to have ended the Northumberland Anglians desire to expand their landholdings.

By putting the above and other place-name evidence together, my opinion is that The Catrail is likely to have been constructed in the 740/60 A.D. the last period of Northumbrian conquest.

Early Christianity in the Borders might go in here but this is quite a large subject with quite a few 'kils, kirks, chapels and mount' sites still to be unrecorded.

The Anglo-Normans.