

READING THE WRITING ON THE WALL: DISCOVERING NEW DIMENSIONS TO THE ANTONINE WALL DISTANCE SCULPTURES

Abstract: This paper explores new approaches to epigraphic evidence from the Antonine Wall that, in some respects, depart significantly from perceived wisdom. Addressing the inscriptions from alternative perspectives and incorporating attribute analysis, material mapping and a review of historical sources has revealed previously unexplored dimensions to a significant category of inscriptions here referred to as Distance Stones. The results cast new light onto these enigmatic ancient artefacts, exposing potential inconsistencies relating to units of measure and challenging hypotheses that have endured for more than two centuries. Critical review has uncovered patterns of difference and similarities that alter our perception of these unique frontier sculptures and lend credence to the proposal that they may have originally been placed, not along the Wall as has been traditionally accepted, but along the Military Way where passers-by could more meaningfully engage with them.

Keywords: Roman Epigraphy, Antonine Wall, Northern Britain, Frontiers, Material Culture.

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INTRODUCING THE ANTONINE WALL DISTANCE STONES

The Antonine Wall (Fig. 1) was commissioned around AD 142 by the Emperor Antoninus Pius to define Rome's north-west frontier¹. The mural barrier is a turf rampart set on a stone base that stretches across central Scotland through the Forth-Clyde isthmus for 37 miles. It separated the Roman-controlled region to the south from the non-Roman north, although there were outpost and advance forts to the north of the Wall. Monumental inscriptions, traditionally referred to as distance slabs, were recovered from the environs of the Wall² and many combine inscribed text and sculptural relief.

Carved from local sandstone, these monumental inscriptions are a rich textual and iconographic resource that provide a graphic account of the frontier³, commemorating and memorialising actions and reputations of the Emperor and dedicators in perpetuity⁴. The phrase 'distance slabs' was originally applied to this particular category of inscriptions⁵ because they record measurements of sections of the mural barrier constructed by three Roman Legions commemorated in the text (*Legio II Augusta*, *Legio VI*

¹ HANSON/MAXWELL 1983; BREEZE 2015; ROBERTSON 2015

² KEPPIE 1979; KEPPIE 1998.

³ FERRIS 2000, 111-13; BREEZE/FERRIS 2016.

⁴ WOOLF 1996, 26.

⁵ BATES 1898.



Fig. 1. Map of the Antonine Wall (© D J Breeze, reproduced with permission).

Victrix and *Legio XX Valeria Victrix*). They have also been referred to as ‘Legionary tablets’ and described as “so special a character as to demand separate treatment. Nothing exactly corresponding to it has been found anywhere else in the Roman world”⁶. It has been argued that traditional terminologies do not adequately reflect the cultural significance of these artefacts⁷ and they will instead be referred to here as Distance Stones, sculptures, monuments, monumental texts or inscriptions.

Building on the invaluable foundations laid down by Antiquarian scholars⁸, Sir George Macdonald⁹ produced a comprehensive survey of these sculptures of which 20 were then known. This number has increased only marginally in the intervening period with 21 currently recorded, two of which are now lost and one perished in a fire in Chicago, though a plaster cast of it survives. Of the remaining 19 known Distance Stones, 16 and the plaster cast are in the collections of the Hunterian Museum, University of Glasgow, one is in the Glasgow Museums store in Kelvin Hall and another is with the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh. More than a century on from Macdonald’s declaration of their significance they remain the most impressive and impactful body of epigraphic evidence recovered from any Roman frontier¹⁰.

The monuments contain dedications to the Emperor, Antoninus Pius, who commissioned the construction of Rome’s most north-westerly frontier under the governorship of Quintus Lollius Urbicus. The dedications are in stereotypically abbreviated Latin and incorporate variations of the Emperor’s names, ‘*Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius*’¹¹. Relief sculpted decorative features and iconography on some depict legionary emblems, subjugation of indigenous peoples as well as religious practice and favoured deities. They promote Rome’s domination over the region¹² and the precision of recorded measurements appears to confirm the army’s concern for

accuracy in ensuring that each Legion’s contribution to construction of the frontier is properly commemorated along with their allegiance to the Emperor, a practice characteristic of honorific dedications on inscriptions of this period¹³.

It is the incorporation of measurements that sets this category of inscriptions apart from others and the reason for their nomenclature. The absence of the governor’s name on any examples is notable¹⁴ and hinders our ability to pinpoint construction dates with precision. The inclusion of the Emperor’s name on all but two does, however, provide a relatively tight chronology for this body of evidence since the frontier was occupied for only a brief period of c. 20 years. Most of the Distance Stones were donated to the University of Glasgow and Hunterian Museum by Antiquarians and landowners with other inscribed stones recovered by the Canal Commission during construction of the Forth and Clyde Canal¹⁵.

DIVERGENT DISTANCES

In reference to the Distance Stones, Macdonald¹⁶ notes a predecessor’s “not unnatural reluctance to traverse the very explicit assertion of the *Itinerarium*, almost a canonical book in the eyes of eighteenth-century antiquaries”. It is fair to say that Macdonald has himself become a canonical figure whose hypotheses continue to permeate scholarship relating to Roman Scotland in general and the Antonine Wall in particular. While recognising the tremendous contribution he and others have made to this field of study, this research suggests potential flaws in conventional interpretations relating to the Distance Stones that should be addressed. The intention here is not to minimise or invalidate these invaluable contributions, but rather it is to explore alternative interpretations and highlight some instances of selectivity in the use of historical sources as well as inconsistencies and incorrectly recorded findspots so that these can be set right for the record to ensure future researchers have accurate datasets to explore in the development of new interpretations.

⁶ MACDONALD 1911, 268.

⁷ CAMPBELL 2020.

⁸ c.f. CAMDEN 1722; HORSLEY 1732; MAITLAND 1757; STUART 1852; CADEL 1871; BUCHANAN 1883; MACDONALD 1897.

⁹ MACDONALD 1911; 1934.

¹⁰ FERRIS 2000, 110-3; BREEZE 2015, 69.

¹¹ KEPPIE 1979, 5.

¹² KEPPIE 1979, 4-5.

¹³ KOLB 2015, 658.

¹⁴ HANSON/MAXWELL 1983, 113.

¹⁵ *MONUMENTA ROMANI IMPERII* 1768; KEPPIE 2012, 93-96.

¹⁶ MACDONALD 1911, 292.

Rather than attempt to deconstruct longstanding interpretations of units of measure inscribed onto the Distance Stones as distinguished by *passus* and *pedes*¹⁷, or reconstruct dimensions of built sectors of the mural barrier through complex computational challenges¹⁸, this work originally set out to undertake a contextual analysis and consider the potential placement of these unique monumental inscriptions and their subsequent impact on Roman and non-Roman audiences. In practice, toward that end we must first grasp the nettle on the contentious matter of measurements since it is not possible to extrapolate material meanings in the absence of firm foundations. A survey of historical accounts and modern maps has revealed unanticipated inconsistencies that have stood the test of time and imposed deep-rooted biases onto interpretations of the inscriptions and the associated frontier infrastructure.

Bates¹⁹ first proposed the incorporation of *M P* on all examples east of Castlehill (nos 1-8) refers to paces (*Millia Passuum*) and *P P* or *P* on those to the west of Castlehill (nos 9-18) refers to feet (*Pedes*), (see Table 1 and Appendix I). This alteration, he suggested, explains their over-representation on the Wall's western sector since one Roman pace equates to five feet, therefore those inscribed with *M P* are thought to record longer distances constructed in the east. This explanation has persisted for more than a century, remaining current rationale for the proposed diverting of troops from constructing the Wall when it was near-complete at Castlehill to the task of building additional forts. They are thought thereafter to have returned in greater numbers to complete shorter sub-divided segments, explaining the more numerous examples recovered from the west and proposed pairings of some²⁰.

This is a complex explanation to fit what is otherwise widely recognised as a partial material record²¹ into a reconstruction of the *limes*. It leaves little room for additional Distance Stones that undoubtedly remain undiscovered to slot into the sequence. Macdonald²² recognises this strategy could be misleading, but it serves as a means of "obtaining even a rough approximation". For example, in order to extrapolate the measurement recorded on Distance Stone no. 8, one of a group of four inscriptions duplicating an oddly specific distance of 3666 ½ units of measures, he imposes the following actions:

1. Start from the corner of Castlehill fort, Bearsden;
2. Travel eastward for 18,028 English feet = 3666 ½ Roman paces;
3. Arrive 330 feet away from the Wall crossing the Balmore-Glasgow road passing Summerston Farm;
4. This spot is "some distance" beyond no. 7;
5. Extract "say" 2 ½ per cent to account for landscape undulations;
6. Retrace steps by "say" 450 feet;
7. This spot is 260 yards from the road and 600 yards from Summerston farm;

¹⁷ HORSLEY 1732; MACDONALD 1934, 361.

¹⁸ STRANG 2007; HANNON/ROHL/WILSON 2017.

¹⁹ BATES 1898, 107-109.

²⁰ KEPPIE 1974, 151-2; KEPPIE 1979, 7; KEPPIE 1998, 52; HANSON/MAXWELL 1983; HANNON/ROHL/WILSON 2017, 5.

²¹ STUART 1852, 346; HANSON/MAXWELL 1983, 123; KEPPIE 1998, 52.

²² MACDONALD 1934, 379.

8. According to Macdonald, "this will satisfy all the conditions" for no. 8 to mark the western end of a sector of the Wall recorded by nos 6 and 7.

He takes this several steps further to establish the placement of no. 5 which he posits should be assigned 3666 ½ paces east of nos 6 and 7 by the following actions:

1. Exclude the north rampart of Balmuilly fort (which he suggests were constructed by garrisons);
2. This spot is 494 feet short of the road between Bogton Farm and Easter Cawder;
3. Deduct "say" 215 feet from the dead-level total for undulations, "increasing the figure for the interval to 709";
4. This would be too far distant from Eastermains (the proposed location for no. 4) "to serve our purposes", so;
5. Extract the north rampart of Cadder fort and assume it was constructed by garrisons;
6. This will reduce the gap by 364 feet;
7. This provides a spot 345 feet west of the road and within easy reach of Cawder House (where no. 5 was installed).

His strategy is based upon rather elaborate speculation and estimations that do not measure the mural barrier with precision. While this attempt to see patterns and make sense of the Distance Stones in relation to the Wall's construction is laudable, it is reliant upon a complete material record that we do not possess. Later investigations largely followed this model and utilised Macdonald's interpretation of historical accounts of recovery contexts, some of which is demonstrably selective (see Appendix I). In order to undertake an exploration of alternative perspectives new approaches must be developed to address old problems, commencing with the application of a consistent methodology for extracting meaningful data from the Distance Stones.

Inclusion of the phrase *M P* on another class of inscriptions that record distance, e.g. Milestones, is universally accepted as an abbreviation of *Millia Passuum* = **1,000 paces = 1 mile**. Milestones from Roman Britain confirm the practice of inserting *M P* to record number of miles from the inscription's placement to a stated location²³. For instance, *RIB* 2299 from the Stanegate close to Vindolanda records a distance of *M P XIII* (14 miles) to Corbridge; *RIB* 2306 from the Military Way on Hadrian's Wall at Milecastle 42 records *M P XVIII* (18 miles) to Portgate at the junction of Dere Street; *RIB* 2274 from Castleford records *M P XXII* (22 miles) to York; and *RIB* 2244 from the Fosse Way near Thurmaston records *M P II* (2 miles) to Leicester. The practice is evident on other examples, including *RIB* 2283, 2243, 2265, 2272, 2235, 2241, 2312 and 3526 (see Table 2).

Thus, we are immediately presented with a previously undetected problem. There is a clear dichotomy in the way measurements are traditionally interpreted on distance markers elsewhere and the Antonine Wall Distance Stones where the full term is, uniquely, translated as defining only paces²⁴. In other words, established practice for the Antonine Wall Distance Stones unconsciously renders the first segment of the phrase (*Millia*) redundant in translations, despite it forming the linchpin of long accepted arguments

²³ COLLINGWOOD/WRIGHT 1965.

²⁴ BATES 1898, 107-109.

Table 1. The Antonine Wall Distance Stones.

No	Name	Date Found	Legion	Inscribed Distance	'Paces' to Feet	RIB	CIL VII	CSIR	Width (cm)	Height (cm)	NMRS No. and Canmore Link	Original Context	Suggested Findspot NGR
1	Bridgeness	1868	2nd	4652	23260	2139	1088		279	119	http://canmore.org.uk/site/49554	face-down 1-1.5 feet below surface on rocky promontory above harbour	NT 0137 8151
2	Unknown Provenance - Auchendavy?	pre 1607	Vex 20th	3000	15000	2173	1143	158	97	84	http://canmore.org.uk/site/45159	unrecorded	NS 6777 749
3	Eastermains	1740	Vex 6th	none	none	2185	1121	122	159	77	http://canmore.org.uk/site/45202	unrecorded	NS 66841 74772
4	Eastermains	1789	20th	3304	16520	2184	1122	123	59	44	http://canmore.org.uk/site/45202	Face-down three feet below surface in the 'Roman ditch'	NS 66841 74772
5	Bogton Farm, Cawder House OR nr Balmuldy	pre 1606	2nd	3666.5	18333	2186	1126	127	100	63	http://canmore.org.uk/site/45250	unrecorded	NS 59803 72120
6	Summerston Farm, nr Balmuldy	pre 1694	2nd	3666.5	18333	2193	1130	137	135	62	http://canmore.org.uk/site/44484	in foundation stones. Possibly from Military Way	NS 5742 7245
7	Balmuldy, East Milltichen	1803	Vex 6th	3666.5	18333	2194	1131		145	76	http://canmore.org.uk/site/44473	digging drain trench. Possibly from Military Way (Macdonald 1911, 299)	NS 5742 7245
8	Castlehill, Bearsden	1696	Vex 6th	3666.5	18333	2196	1132	145	149	76	http://canmore.org.uk/site/44511	unrecorded	NS 5246 7258
9	Castlehill, Bearsden	1847	Vex 20th	3000	3000	2197	1133	146	76	72	http://canmore.org.uk/site/44521	on edge in the clay a few yards south of the fort - assumed possible deliberate deposit in pit	NS 5246 7258
10	Hutcheson Hill, Bearsden (CAST)	1865	Vex 20th	3000	3000	2198	113a	148	85	67	http://canmore.org.uk/site/44512	lying flat, face-down on southern slope of Hutcheson Hill 3 foot below surface	NS 516 723
11	Hutcheson Hill, Bearsden	1969	Vex 20th	3000	3000	3507		149	95	74	http://canmore.org.uk/site/44548	face-down, 'Ploughman' thinks from possible pit	NS 5154 7234
12	Braidfield Farm, Duntocher	1812	Vex 6th	30240	30240	2200	1135	150	119	76	http://canmore.org.uk/site/44513	unrecorded	NS 5033 7221
13	Unknown Provenance - nr Duntocher?	pre 1826	2nd	4140	4140	2203	1138	152	71	50	http://canmore.org.uk/site/43306	unrecorded	NS 4931 7279
14	Carleith, Duntocher	pre 1720	2nd	3271	3271	2204	1136	154	63	53	http://canmore.org.uk/site/43267	unrecorded	NS 482 729

15	Old Kilpatrick, Dalnottar Burn	pre 1695	Vex 6th	40141	40141	2205	1140	82	53	http://canmore.org.uk/site/43272	ploughed at wall terminal, poss Old Kilpatrick	NS 4600 7315
16	Old Kilpatrick, Dalnottar Burn	pre 1695	Vex 20th	4411	4411	2206	1142	155	62	http://canmore.org.uk/site/43272	ploughed at wall terminal, poss Old Kilpatrick	NS 4600 7315
17	Old Kilpatrick, Ferrydyke	pre 1640	Vex 20th	4411	4411	2208	1141	156	73	http://canmore.org.uk/site/43266	unrecorded	NS 45902 73000
18	Duntocher, Cochno Estate	pre 1699	Vex 20th	none	none	2199	1137	157	75	http://canmore.org.uk/site/43291	unrecorded	NS 5246 7258
19	Arniebog, near Westerwood	pre 1872	20th?	n/a	n/a	n/a	84	84	86	http://canmore.org.uk/site/45813	lying face-down in a field bounded by the Wall on the line of the Military Way at Hag Knowe	NS 770 777
20	Old Kilpatrick, Ferrydyke	pre 1757	un-known	n/a	n/a	2207				http://canmore.org.uk/site/43292	unrecorded	NS 45902 73000
21	Bar Hill?	pre 1873	poss 20th	n/a	n/a	2312?	1110a	70	70	http://canmore.org.uk/site/45879	unrecorded	NS 70746 75926

for the Wall's construction sequence in the east referring to thousands of paces as opposed to feet in the west. To clarify, the Summerston Farm Distance Stone (no. 6) records "*M P IIIDCLXVIS*", customarily interpreted as 3666 $\frac{1}{2}$ **paces**²⁵, equal to 3 and 2/3 miles. However, if translated according to the actual inscription and consistent with widely accepted practice for other distance markers, the phrase ***M P*** in its entirety is equal to 1 mile (1000 paces), this measurement, in fact, translates to 3666 $\frac{1}{2}$ **miles**.

Since the distances recorded immediately after '*M P*' on the Antonine Wall inscriptions cannot reasonably be argued to record thousands of miles, an alternative explanation could be that *M P* translates to *Millia Passuum* (1000 paces) = 1 mile, but refer only to an original standard template of numbers inscribed on all Distance Stones ('*III*' or '*IIII*') with additional numbers added later relating to new practices of defining precise distances in feet. At first glance the inscriptions contain no indication of this practice, but the inclusion of a line above the initial *III* or *IIII* might support the hypothesis since this practice articulates 'thousands' in the measurements²⁶, except for no. 2 which also uniquely contains the entire phrase '*MIL P*'. Indeed, taking this point to a logical conclusion, the incorporation of both *M P* and the line above initial numerals achieve the same aim and therefore duplicate meaning and, ultimately, making the measurement thousands of thousands of paces – an entirely unreasonable proposition and a practice that is not evident on any of the other markers of distance noted above and in Table 2 which are all devoid of any line above.

M P on nos 1-8 may then alternatively refer to the same unit of measure (*P* for *pedes* - feet) as on all other examples, but stonemasons accustomed to inscribing *M P* on monumental texts marking distances elsewhere continued that habit when construction began on the eastern sector of the Wall. In other words, a manifestation of practice through repetitive action on the part of inscribers replicating familiar formulae²⁷. This offers a potentially plausible explanation since another known alternative to *M P* on distance markers elsewhere in the Empire is *L* for *Leuga* used in Germania²⁸. Introduction of new practices is bolstered through the incorporation of *P* or *P P* in the examples from no. 9 onward which are normally translated as *pedes*. Here an intriguing pattern emerges where the first *P* of the phrase *P P* on those with single digit distances appears to replace *Millia* for thousand which contain a standard measurement of *III* (nos 9-11). Others recording lengthier distances contain only a single *P* (nos 12-15) though both, again, contain the line above indicating 'thousand'. The exception to this is no. 17 which contains *P P* (no. 16 is incomplete), see Table 3, and note the proposals below relating to nos. 12 and 15.

A similar practice could then reasonably be extrapolated as the intention for those examples containing *M P*. For example, nos 1 (with a distance of 4652), 4 (with a distance of 3304) and 5-8 (with a distance of 3666 $\frac{1}{2}$) should merely have been inscribed with *P* to denote *Pedes* (feet), while no. 3, which is incomplete, should perhaps have been

²⁵ MACDONALD 373-6; KEPPIE 1998, 77-78.

²⁶ BRUUN/EDMONDSON 2014, 813.

²⁷ SAUER 2014, 261.

²⁸ KOLB 2019, 14; GREWE 2013, 2.

Table 2. Roman Milestones from Britain.

RIB	Found at	Distance from	Inscribed Distance (MP)	Distance (Miles)	Emperor	Date (AD)
RIB 2283	Kirkby	Carlisle	LIII	53	unknown	unknown
RIB 2299	Stanegate	Corbridge	XIII	14	Severus Alexander	222-3
RIB 2243	Silverlands	Brough-on-Noe	XI	11	unknown	unknown
RIB 2306	Milecastle 42	Portgate/Dere St	XVIII	18	Severus Alexander	222-3
RIB 2274	Castleford	York	XXII	22	Gallus & Volusian	251-3
RIB 2265	Caegwag	Caerhun	VIII	8	Hadrian	120-21
RIB 2272	Artie Beck	unknown	IIII	4	Hadrian	119-38
RIB 2244	Thurmaston	Leicester	II	2	Hadrian	119-20
RIB 2235	Castor	Castor	I	1	Florian	276
RIB 2241	Lincoln	Littleborough	XIII	14	Victorinus	268-70
RIB 2312	Ingliston	Newstead	unknown		Antoninus Pius	140-4
RIB 3526	Brougham Castle	Carlisle	XVIII	19	Severus Alexander	222-3

inscribed with *P P* (probably intended to have a distance of 3000, see discussion below), while no. 2 is the only example incorporating the longer abbreviation of ‘*MIL*’.

Addressing the issue from a purely statistical perspective may simplify the matter. When the proposal for paces (*passus*) as a unit of measure east of Castlehill (nos 1-8) is converted to equivalent Roman feet (*pedes*) as traditionally proposed for nos 9-18 (except for nos 12 and 15, for the reasons explained below), a disproportionate and potentially unrealistic allocation of labour emerges of proposed work-sectors between 3000 and 23,260 feet in length (Fig. 2). Conversely, assuming a consistent unit of measure draws out a pattern of relative uniformity and results in distances falling between 3000 and 4652 feet (Fig. 3), a manageable and relatively equally proportionate programme of work for troops assigned to construct the frontier infrastructure that Macdonald²⁹ accepts would have been normal practice.

A contradiction then exists to be confronted. On

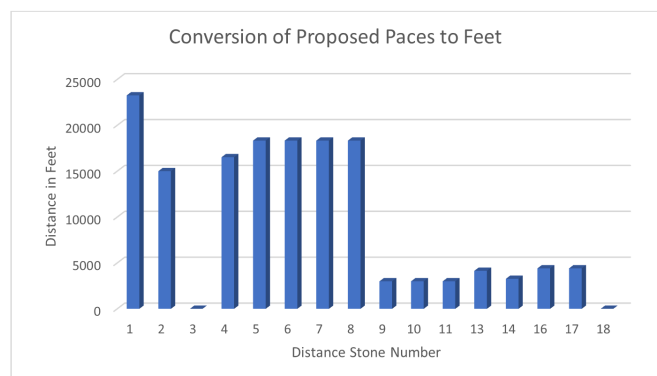


Fig. 2. Conversion of assumed paces (*passus*) east of Castlehill (nos 1-8) into feet (*pedes*).

the one hand, and on paper, it is proposed that subdivision into 15 work-sectors (Fig. 4) would have facilitated an easy distribution of construction between the three legions

tasked with building the frontier³⁰. On the other hand, deconstructing established terminology (paces and feet) and extrapolating these with precision into distances covered reveals an unrealistic partitioning of that labour. The coefficient variation of distances indicates a high variation (71.5%) in the lengths of Wall constructed if measurements are expressed in feet based on a multiple of five for nos 1-8 (Table 3). Conversely, the standard of measurement is ubiquitous if taken as the same unit of measure.

Macdonald³¹ inadvertently validates this proposal by

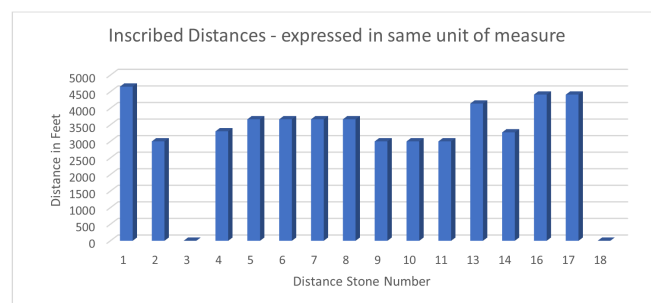


Fig. 3. Unit of measure in feet (*pedes*).

positing the absence of numerals after *MP* on no. 3 should be interpreted as recording “only a single mile”. That hypothesis allows him to slot this inscription into his sequence of the Wall’s construction, but it is very clearly an example of an unfinished inscription³². Critically, he recognises that the term *in its entirety* translates to one mile and confirms normal practice is to take all numerals following *MP* to signify number of miles.

Therefore, for the purposes of this paper and as a logical means for both the modern and ancient observer to meaningfully engage with them, the inscribed numerals on the Antonine Wall Distance Stones shall herein be taken to collectively refer to the same unit of measure (probably feet -

³⁰ KEPPIE 1976, 59.

³¹ MACDONALD 1934, 367.

³² KEPPIE 1974, 152.

²⁹ MACDONALD 1934, 380.

Table 3. Statistics and Coefficient Variation of Measured Distances.

Distance Stone No.	Roman Numerals	Inscribed Distance	Paces to Feet	
1	M P IIIIDCL II	4652	23260	
2	MIL P III	3000	15000	
4	M P III P IIICCCIV	3304	16520	
5	M P III DCLXVIS	3666.5	18332.5	
6	M P III DCLXVIS	3666.5	18332.5	
7	M P III DCLXVIS	3666.5	18332.5	
8	M P III DCLXVIS	3666.5	18332.5	
9	P P III	3000	3000	
10	P P III	3000	3000	
11	P P III	3000	3000	
13	P IIII CXL	4140	4140	
14	P III CCLXXI	3271	3271	
16	[P P IIII C]DXI	4411	4411	
17	P P IIII CDXI	4411	4411	
		4652	23260	Max
		3632.5	10953.071	Mean
		3000	3000	Min
		578.62599	7832.0656	Stdev
		15.929139	71.505656	Coefficient Variation (%)

pedes) without burdening interpretations with mathematical computations that have vexed scholars since the 17th century, Fig. 4. This is not an unreasonable proposition since inscriptions associated with other *limites* such as along the Tiber at Rome³³ and municipal aqueducts³⁴ refer to feet³⁵. This model has the benefit of creating ample space for any future discoveries to be slotted into the construction sequence.

Although an invaluable schematic, Keppie's plan of proposed building sectors (Fig. 4) is based on extrapolation for the entire eastern section of the Wall as indicated by the incorporation of question marks for sectors 2-5. In fact, Bridgeness (no. 1) is the only Distance Stone known to have been recovered east of Cumbernauld since no. 21 is missing and no. 19 survives only as a fragment so neither can be definitively identified as a Distance Stone (Fig. 5). Therefore, alternative interpretations may now be offered that cast doubt upon long-established proposals for the work sectors. It could be argued that the recovery of almost all examples from west of the Wall's centre is serendipitous and relates to farm management practices to the south of the monument.

³³ CIL vi, pp. 3111.

³⁴ CIL vi, pp. 3123.

³⁵ MACDONALD 1911, 270.

There is not the space here to provide detailed descriptive accounts of the Distance Stones, a task that has been admirably achieved by Professor Lawrence Keppie³⁶. Instead, a brief overview of each sculpture summarising key points of note and discovery contexts is contained in Appendix I (see also Table 1 for annotated information). Fig. 6 provides digital images so that they can be considered holistically in their current condition in as much detail as possible. Numbering is assigned in line with Keppie³⁷ who conforms broadly with Macdonald's³⁸ system, except for nos. 11-14 which have necessarily altered due to the later discovery of no. 11³⁹ and the assignation of numbers to 19-21, previously discussed only in brief by Macdonald⁴⁰. References to "(the Wall)" in Keppie's translations of inscriptions have been removed unless the mural barrier is explicitly mentioned in the inscribed text⁴¹.

READING THE WRITING ON THE WALL: DECONSTRUCTING THE CONSTRUCTION

None of the Distance Stones have been recovered from their original contexts. Since most were found between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries historical records of their contexts of discovery lack precision, though descriptive accounts for several permit a reasonable extrapolation of findspot locations and contextual information. Cramp-holes on the sides and tops of most confirm they must have been embedded into a masonry frame or platform⁴² and they are thought to record sectors of the Antonine Wall constructed by the Legions commemorated in the inscribed texts. It is further assumed that detachments from the three named Legions were assigned to the construction work⁴³. In reality, all but one of those attributed to the 20th Legion and all those of the 6th Legion record a vexillation (detachment). None of the 2nd Legion inscriptions mention vexillations, leading Macdonald⁴⁴ to surmise that this was the only Legion stationed on the Wall at full strength, though this is disputed by Strang⁴⁵ and see comments relating to no. 4, below.

Duplication of recorded measurement on several examples is deeply enigmatic, especially when they refer to oddly specific distances⁴⁶ as this does not conform to normal Roman practice. For example, 3666 ½ inscribed on two from the 2nd Legion (no. 5, Cawder House, and no. 6, Summerston Farm) and two from detachments of the 6th Legion (no. 7, East Millichen near Balmuildy, and no. 8, Castlehill). It has been suggested that more than one inscription was commissioned to commemorate a single length⁴⁷.

More striking is a pattern of replication evident in the 20th Legion's inscriptions, including no. 2 of unknown

³⁶ KEPPIE 1979; 1998.

³⁷ KEPPIE 1979.

³⁸ MACDONALD 1934.

³⁹ STEER/CORMACK 1969.

⁴⁰ MACDONALD 1934, 392.

⁴¹ Only nos 12 and 15.

⁴² KEPPIE 1976, 63.

⁴³ KEPPIE 1998, 51.

⁴⁴ MACDONALD 1911, 295.

⁴⁵ STRANG 2007, 14.

⁴⁶ HASSALL 1983.

⁴⁷ GLASGOW ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY 1899, 9.

⁴⁸ after KEPPIE 1979, 6.

⁴⁹ Map kindly produced by N Hannon from data recorded on Canmore at

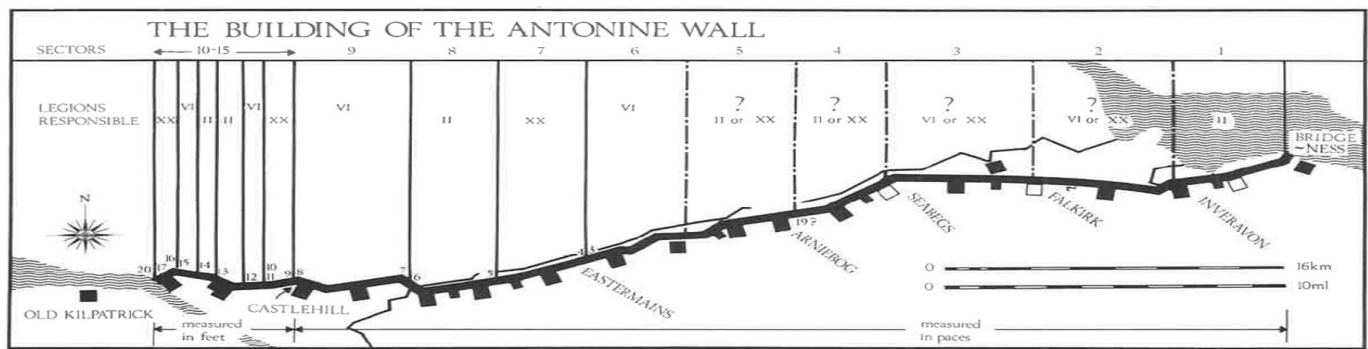


Fig. 4. Proposed building sectors of the Antonine Wall³³.

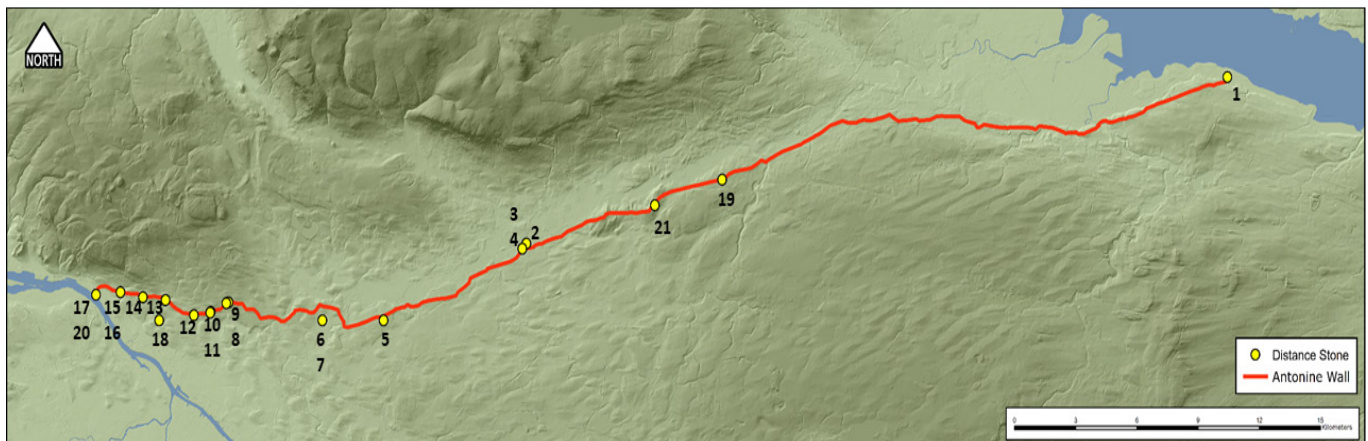


Fig. 5. Positions of Distance Stones findspots recorded on Canmore³⁴

provenance but widely considered to have originated from Auchendavy (though, based on the inscribed distance correlating with practice on other examples from the 20th Legion this may have originated from close to Castlehill fort), no. 9 from Castlehill and nos. 10 and 11 from Hutcheson Hill, all of which record a distance of 3000. Another pair from the 20th Legion recording a distance of 4411 were reportedly recovered from the vicinity of Old Kilpatrick at Dalnottar Burn (no. 16) and Ferrydyke (no. 17). On the surface, it appears only one foot separates the distances recorded on the 2nd Legion's no. 13 from Duntocher (4140 feet) and no. 15 from Old Kilpatrick (generally translated as 4141 feet⁵⁰) dedicated by a detachment of the 6th Legion. This led to a suggestion that the latter two could be a matched pair since the difference of just one foot may have been an erroneous omission on the inscribed distance by the stonemason⁵¹. However, this research suggests errors permeate traditional interpretations of the symbol (X) that appear only on these two examples, see below.

Another oddity is the 20th Legion's no. 4 from Eastermains recording a distance of 'M P III P IIICCCIV' taken to infer 3000 paces (**and**) 3304 feet, equating to 3660 4/5 paces which is close to the aforementioned measurement of 3666 1/2⁵². It is possible, however, that the first part of the measured distance on no. 4 (3000) was erroneously repeated by the inscriber tasked with updating the inscription with precise distance on completion of work-sectors. This means that this Distance Stone might correctly be grouped with

the 20th Legion's other inscriptions marking an original standard distance of 3000 feet with the later addition of 304 accidentally, probably by a different inscriber, repeating the original 'III'. This original intent may be supported by the absence of 'PER' on no. 4, the only example referencing 'M P' (nos 1-8) that does not include the phrase.

These pairings may have been placed at either end of a completed section due to exact lengths of paired stones from closely affiliated find-spots⁵³, but this seems implausible precisely *because* of the close proximity of some of their findspots, particularly three from Bearsden (nos. 9-11) along with, potentially, no. 2, marking 3000 units of measure and two from near Balmuilty (nos. 6 and 7) marking 3666 1/2. While it is possible their placement may have been one embedded into both the front and rear of the rampart at either end of a completed sector⁵⁴, the recovery of all but possibly one (no. 4 recorded as from 'the Roman ditch'⁵⁵) from south of the Wall cautions against that proposal which also, critically, runs counter to the ability of passers-by to encounter the inscription⁵⁶. Further, how to explain the completion of exactly comparable lengths by the second and sixth Legions recording 3666 1/2, above?

Perhaps an answer may be found by turning to inscription patterns of the Legions represented. Two were recorded as being recovered near Balmuilty, one each from the 2nd (no. 6) and a detachment of the 6th Legions (no. 7),

⁵³ MACDONALD 1934, 371.

⁵⁴ KEPPIE 1998, 51.

⁵⁵ STUART 1852, 325.

⁵⁶ KEPPIE 1998, 49.

⁵⁷ No. 1 © National Museum of Scotland; No. 7 © Glasgow Museums; Nos. 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18 and 19 © Hunterian Museum.

<https://canmore.org.uk/>

⁵⁰ MACDONALD 1934, 389; KEPPIE 1998, 86.

⁵¹ STRANG 2007, 15.

⁵² KEPPIE 1998, 75.



1



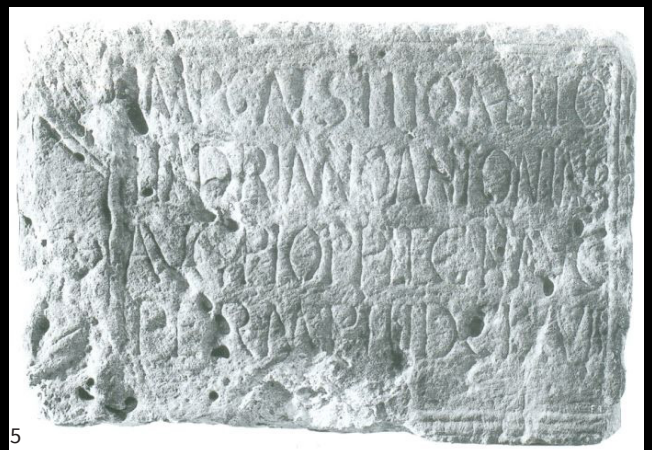
2



3



4



5



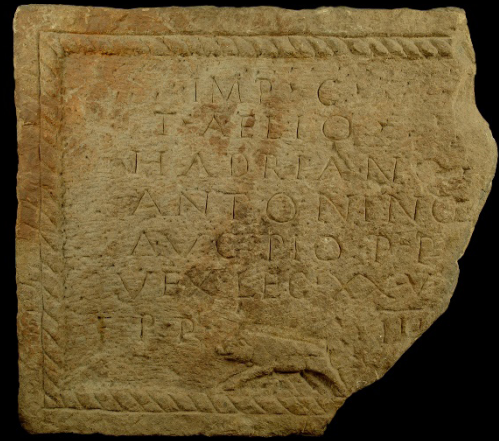
6



7



8



9



10



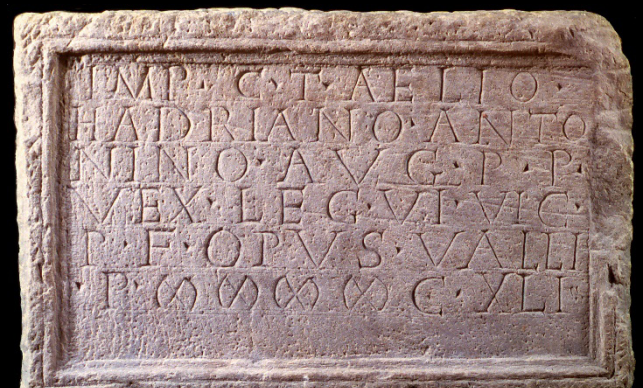
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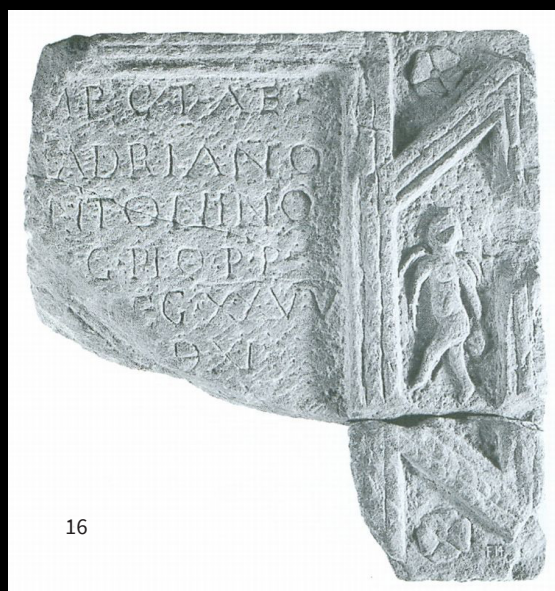
13



14



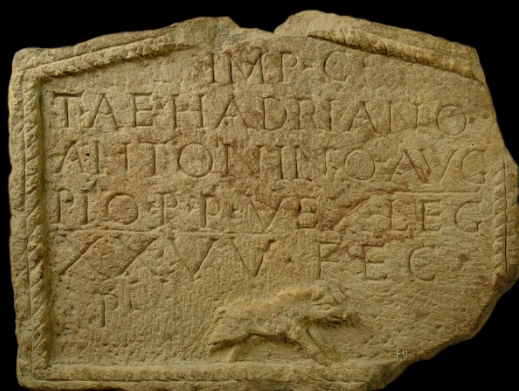
15



16



17



18



19

Fig. 6. The Antonine Wall Distance Stones.

and each have a proposed matched distance inscribed in either direction – to the east at Castlehill for the 6th Legion (no. 8) and to the west at Cawder House, Bishopbriggs (no. 5) for the 2nd Legion. However, the original context of discovery is not recorded for either. The situation is exacerbated for the latter since it was built into walls of Cawder House and the former was alternatively proposed to have originated from Summerston Farm⁵⁸. Having accepted his predecessors' accounts for other important information, there seems no valid reason for Macdonald⁵⁹ to argue against their suggestions that no. 5 derives from near Balmuildy except for the express purpose of substantiating his efforts to pair these four stones, one at either end of completed lengths. Indeed, it would be an inconvenient truth for Macdonald's hypotheses if no. 5 was recovered from close to Balmuildy since it would be the source for three of the four.

Alternatively, might we have found in Balmuildy the base for a stonemason who crafted the sculptures and later

he, or indeed someone else, updated distances by squeezing in an extra 666 ½ after an original standard inscription of 3000? Or, since two of the three commemorate the 2nd Legion and the other two detachments of the 6th Legion, do they validate Macdonald's proposal for one at each end of a stretch of construction in one direction *and* an additional reference to a section constructed by the 2nd (at full complement) in the other direction? I.e., a stretch constructed by the 6th Legion from Balmuildy westward to Castlehill commemorated by nos. 7 and 8 and the 2nd Legion constructing an eastern sector for 3666 ½ feet (no. 6) with its planned pair for the other end not yet moved from the stonemason's base to match the completed end of the section?

Another plausible, if controversial, explanation is their reference to sectors of work on different structures: the Wall and the Military Way. Macdonald originally considered the possibility of two legions working on different elements of the infrastructure side by side or even that different groups of men were assigned to construct the rampart, the ditch and

⁵⁸ *MONUMENTA ROMANI IMPERII* 1768; ANDERSON 1771, 33.

⁵⁹ MACDONALD 1934, 271.

the Military way⁶⁰ though later revised this, concluding these groups referred to different sectors of the Wall⁶¹. Keppie also proposes that ditch-digging would have been unlikely to have been commemorated on the Distance Stones⁶². He does not make suggestions for how construction of the Military Way might have been commemorated, despite this being an equally integral component of the frontier infrastructure, though he suggests that laying down the Wall base, rampart construction and ditch digging need not have occurred simultaneously. Using the appearance of 'OPUS VALLI' only on nos 12 and 15 as examples, he makes the critical observation that it may be inappropriate to assume the same Legion undertook all tasks or that the Distance Stones "need testify to the completion of both"⁶³. Conversely, Hanson and Maxwell⁶⁴ mention work involved in the Military Way, though they do not hypothesise on how that construction may have been recorded. Macdonald broaches this in his first edition with the suggestion that no. 7 was "lying so far south of the Rampart may be due either to its having been carried or to its having originally stood on the line of the Military Way"⁶⁵. He later excised this comment from his second edition⁶⁶ and it has not been subsequently picked up on.

It is, therefore, not too far a leap to suggest the use of *MP* on some of the Distance Stones might mark construction or repair of the Military Way, or at least may have been placed along it. Further, pairings of stones might have been placed at either side of the Way with one each facing east and west in the manner we remain familiar with in the present day.

It is also intriguing to note that all six of those dedicated by the 20th Legion are formulaic insofar as at least four record 3000, plus one other candidate in no. 4 that could have originally recorded 3000 with additional measurements incorporated at a later date, and two record a distance of 4411 (nos 16 and 17). This cannot be coincidental. The practice firmly suggests Legions commissioned the inscriptions in advance of the completion of construction work with the intention that precise dimensions could be incorporated later as briefly touched upon by Keppie⁶⁷. Certainly, these monumental inscriptions took time to create, particularly those incorporating sculptural detail. It is, therefore, conceivable that some inscribed stones were sculpted with distances partially completed with gaps left for distances to be added with precision on completion of work programmes. This might explain the less well articulated character of the numbers on many in comparison to the preceding inscribed standard templated distances (i.e. *III* or *IIII*).

The presence of two enigmatic examples lends credence to this hypothesis. Contrary to Macdonald's definition of no. 18 from Cochno Estate as a 'waster' since it is devoid of measured distance, it has been suggested⁶⁸ this and no. 3 from Eastermains, also lacking measurement, were ultimately used on the Wall due to their recovery from its vicinity. We cannot

be certain of the findspot for no. 18 since it was built into a wall above the gate of Cochno Estate, while the findspot of no. 3 was half a mile east of Kirkintilloch fort. Critically, both examples are fully complete in all detail aside from the inclusion of distances common to others. They can therefore be confidently defined as unfinished inscriptions commissioned by detachments of the 20th and 6th Legions respectively that awaited only the incorporation of precise measurements prior to installation at an appropriate location⁶⁹. The initial carving could have been undertaken at source quarries⁷⁰, though these two examples were recovered some distance apart which makes this less likely or might suggest, at least, that they have been transported from the artisan workshop to locations close to their intended placement.

An intention to inscribe measurements after the initial sculpting of main features on the Distance Stones may also explain the squeezing in of dimensions onto some that otherwise contain properly set out text with relatively standard-sized lettering, such as nos. 5-8 and 14. Intriguingly, the former examples relate to those oddly specific measurement of 3666 ½ units. Were these originally intended to document 3000 feet, or even 3 miles (*MP III*), but later extrapolated to reflect a longer than anticipated stretch of construction or even structural repair to the same work-sectors⁷¹?

This could explain, as hinted at above, the enigmatic inclusion of what was previously proposed as a combination of paces and feet onto no. 4 from Eastermains inscribed with "*MP III / P IIICCCIV*"⁷². This comparatively small and poorly executed example is the only Distance Stone from the 20th Legion that does not stipulate a vexillation, neither does it contain a dedication to the Emperor, in common only with no. 13 from Carleith. Might this indicate the presence of the entire 20th Legion, at least in an initial phase of construction? Macdonald⁷³ reports both omissions but rationalises it as restrictions in available space due to the small dimensions of the stone coupled with the large size of inscribed letters. He further relies on Bates⁷⁴ hypothesis of combined paces and feet to total 3660 4/5 paces which cannot be expressed in Roman numerals, so he likens it to the 3666 ½ recorded on nos. 5-8. Again, this is a convoluted and uncharacteristic way of expressing measurements, especially when compared to established practice on other Roman markers of distance. It is perhaps more feasible to suggest either two distinct phases of work or an intention to undertake work equating to 3000 feet, in common with the others dedicated by the 20th Legion, then the incorporation of accurate dimensions on completion of construction. Alternatively, perhaps we are over-thinking this conundrum which may simply be the result of an inexperienced scribe who should have followed the convention set with other examples of adding in the extra numerals after the standard measurement of '*III*' but he has erroneously repeated the '*III*', as suggested by Hübner⁷⁵.

⁶⁰ MACDONALD 1911, 295.

⁶¹ MACDONALD 1934, 377.

⁶² KEEPIE 1974, 161-163.

⁶³ KEEPIE 1974, 163.

⁶⁴ HANSON/MAXWELL 1983, 130-133.

⁶⁵ MACDONALD 1911, 299.

⁶⁶ MACDONALD 1934.

⁶⁷ KEEPIE 1998, 55.

⁶⁸ KEEPIE 1998, 53.

⁶⁹ *contra* HANSON/MAXWELL 1983, 126 who suggest the distance may have been written in paint

⁷⁰ KEEPIE 1998, 55.

⁷¹ HÜBNER 1873, 193.

⁷² BATES 1898; KEEPIE 1979, 13.

⁷³ MACDONALD 1934, 368.

⁷⁴ BATES 1898.

⁷⁵ HÜBNER 1873.

MARKING THE MURAL BARRIER

Two of the inscriptions stand apart from all others – no. 12 from Braidfield Farm near Duntocher and no. 15 from Old Kilpatrick – both dedicated by detachments of the 6th Legion. These alone are inscribed with the phrase ‘*OPUS VALLI*’ which is traditionally taken as an explicit reference to the Wall’s construction⁷⁶. The term could alternatively be interpreted as incorporating all the mural barrier’s structural features, including the ditch⁷⁷, although different elements of the infrastructure may have been constructed by different Legions⁷⁸. Macdonald⁷⁹ recognises that the specified measurements on the Distance Stones refer to “some piece of work – in two instances expressly defined as ‘*OPUS VALLI*’, the work of the Wall”. Assumptions that the Distance Stones collectively, and solely, refer to constructed sectors of the Antonine Wall rest entirely upon these two texts which could legitimately be considered statistical outliers at less than 10% of the total collection. But caution should be exercised against hinging our interpretations of the collection based on just two examples. Indeed, the notion has been floated that ‘*OPUS VALLI*’ might alternatively refer to fort ramparts as opposed to the mural barrier⁸⁰, though this is later dismissed by the writers. It could be argued that the absence of explicit reference to the structures associated with monumental texts is common practice in Roman inscriptions⁸¹ but that would raise the question what prompted the requirement for these two particular sculptures to make reference to the Wall when none others do, particularly since none were found on the Wall so any assignation of them to that structure is conjecture.

Although stylistically different, these two Distance Stones incorporate inscribed texts that differ only very slightly in the measurements recorded as well as the abbreviation of *Victric(i)s* on no. 12 compared to *Vic* on no. 15. There are other, equally striking, similarities between them that do not conform to any of the other Distance Stones. Firstly, these are the only examples containing dedications to the Emperor that do not include his title *Pio* (Pius), a point that Macdonald⁸² dismissively attributes to accident rather than ignorance.

Secondly, and more significantly, these are the only Distance Stones that incorporate the symbols ‘(X)’ customarily translated to refer to thousands in the measured distances where all others use either III or IIII in reference to thousands. It is somewhat surprising that this latter point is not picked up on by Macdonald or others and only fleetingly referred to by Stuart⁸³ and Keppie⁸⁴. In reality, the (X) symbol more accurately translates as 10,000⁸⁵ in Roman epigraphic practice meaning that these Distance Stones actually record a measured distance of 30,240 feet (no. 12) and 40,141 feet (no. 15) not 3240 and 4141, respectively, as traditionally accepted. This equates to a total of 70,381

feet or 14,076.20 paces, a very significant proportion of the mural barrier which Horsley⁸⁶ originally suggested measured 39,717 paces.

This revelation is a game-changer that has tremendous ramifications for our understanding of Rome’s northwestern frontier, particularly since both were recovered in the extreme west of the Wall with no. 15 from close to the terminus which might feasibly mark the start/end of the mural barrier?

Taken together, the differences in epigraphic practice displayed on these two monumental texts in comparison to all others has great significance, particularly because of their unique reference to the Wall and their alternative method of articulating distance in relation to thousands. This might indicate the same stonemason crafted both examples in a style that differs from artisans carving the other Distance Stones. Alternatively, or perhaps additionally, they could feasibly have been articulated differently *because* they uniquely refer to the construction of the Wall as opposed to other parts of the frontier infrastructure.

PLACEMENT: AN ALTERNATIVE PROPOSITION

None of Distance Stones were recovered in-situ, so it is entirely possible that some of the inscriptions refer to the construction or repair of the Military Way⁸⁷ which could explain the duplication of measured distance as later repairs to the same work-sectors. This early hypothesis gained no traction, despite the raising of Roman honorific inscriptions being commonly employed to mark road construction and repair in other contexts⁸⁸. Since the Military Way was a strategically and logistically integral component of the Wall’s infrastructure and functionality, it is plausible to suggest the practice of monumental inscriptions are also highly likely to have marked its construction and/or repair.

Graafstal⁸⁹ makes a compelling case for construction of the Military Way in advance of the Wall, most likely as part of the pre-building planning of the infrastructure⁹⁰. Indeed, given the roadway’s strategic importance for facilitating deployment of personnel building the mural barrier and policing the region as well as the transportation of livestock and essential supplies⁹¹, it is here suggested as unlikely that the Wall preceded the Military Way. Macdonald⁹² opened the potential that the “Rampart, Ditch and Military Way had each been assigned to a different set of men”, an observation that did not make it into his second edition⁹³. Keppie also notes that the structure referred to on the Distance Stones is not described, but that “the passer-by would see from the location of the building-record *what* had been constructed”⁹⁴. This infers the monumental texts were logically placed in positions of prominence close to the structure to which they refer for maximum impact in terms of significance and content. This is a familiar practice for Roman monumental inscriptions that would traditionally have been placed in

⁷⁶ HANSON/MAXWELL 1983, 113.

⁷⁷ KEPPIE 1998, 51.

⁷⁸ KEPPIE 1974, 163.

⁷⁹ MACDONALD 1934, 359.

⁸⁰ HANNON/ROHL/WILSON 2017, 7.

⁸¹ KEPPIE 1998, 49.

⁸² MACDONALD 1934, 385 and 389.

⁸³ STUART 1852, 288.

⁸⁴ KEPPIE 1998, 51, 84 and 86.

⁸⁵ BRUUN/EDMONDSON 2014, 813.

⁸⁶ HORSLEY 1732, 162.

⁸⁷ HÜBNER 1873, 193.

⁸⁸ SAUER 2014; BISHOP 2019, 32.

⁸⁹ GRAAFSTAL, forthcoming.

⁹⁰ STEER 1957, 164; POULTER 2018, 138.

⁹¹ BISHOP 2019, 20.

⁹² MACDONALD 1911, 295.

⁹³ MACDONALD 1934.

⁹⁴ KEPPIE 1998, 49.

high traffic areas to engage the widest possible audience thereby validating and reinforcing Roman authority⁹⁵.

Logic dictates then, if they were originally embedded into the Wall, the Distance Stones should have been placed at locations with high footfall such as at crossing points or fort entranceways. Recent research using LiDAR technologies have, however, concluded that their projected locations do not correlate with Roman installations⁹⁶. The proposal for them to have been installed at these locations for convenience rather than at places that accurately record their constructed distance⁹⁷ is valid, though it runs contrary to the Roman penchant for precision in measurements as conveyed by the inscriptions themselves. Instead, perhaps the Distance Stones were carved in anticipation of construction work being undertaken and later updated with accurate distances and installed at appropriate points along the Military Way in line with traditional practice for distance markers where Romans and locals using this easily navigable roadway would have been regularly exposed to them. In this context the sculptures were empowered to fulfil one of their primary functions acting as propagandist tools to promote Rome's authority over the region, demonstrate the military strength of the Legions to enforce that power and to project the Empire's subjugation of indigenous peoples⁹⁸, making them less likely to revolt.

In his attempts to determine whether the distances expressed by the letter 'P' on the Antonine Wall inscriptions (variously inscribed as *PER MIL P*, *M P*, *P P* or *P*) refers to abbreviations of *passus* or *pedes* (paces or feet), Horsley⁹⁹ draws comparisons with milestones terminology *millia passuum* to conclude Roman miles and paces were intended. Setting aside the validity of Horsley's interpretation and later suggestions for altered terminology as construction of the *limes* progressed¹⁰⁰ for the reasons stated above, his comparison to milestones has potential significance that has been overlooked by Macdonald¹⁰¹ and others since.

Roman milestones are normally, though not always, associated with the construction or repair of roads¹⁰². The Military Way lies on average 40m to the south of the Antonine Wall and, since it respects the *limes*, the planning of both structural features can be reasonably expected to have coincided¹⁰³. Long stretches of the Military Way are no longer visible and likely to have been built over, at least through the urban development of Glasgow in the west. However, it has long been known that landowners robbed the stones from the Wall for drystone dykes and other buildings. For example, Wodrow¹⁰⁴ mentions ample stones available by digging just a foot of earth close to Summerston Farm where no. 6 was discovered. This is supported by Horsley's¹⁰⁵ assertion for the Wall's foundation stonework being "laid open and dug up for

near a mile together, from the middle of Ferguston Moor east of New Kirkpatrick almost to the village of Summerston". Given that the stones lay under only a foot of earth it is possible that they derive, not from the base of the Wall, but from the kerb stones lining the Military Way. If we can accept this, then no. 6 could have plausibly been recovered from the Military Way since it came from the same context.

Gordon¹⁰⁶ and Stuart¹⁰⁷ cast significant light on this by stating the ditch at Ferguston Moor was in a good state of preservation¹⁰⁸ and the Military Way was also very well preserved with a stretch passing within thirteen paces of the Wall here. Further significance can be ascribed to this location given Macdonald's¹⁰⁹ comment that no. 7 may also once have stood upon the Military Way based on the stone's recovery c. 100 yards from the Wall, another point excised from his second edition¹¹⁰. Steer and Cormack¹¹¹ make the critical observation that nos 9, 10 and 11 (all recording a distance of 3000) must refer to the same sector of work. To this we might add no. 18 which contains an incomplete inscription devoid of distance, but stylistically replicating no. 9 of the 20th Legion. Maxwell¹¹² suggests this may be a product of the workshop of the 20th Legion which leads him to concur with Steer and Cormack¹¹³ for placement of one from each pair on the north and south of the Wall. This would be in line with proposed practice on Hadrian's Wall where commemorative stones are thought to have been set into the inner and outer faces of both vallum mounds¹¹⁴ and possibly on the north face of the Wall itself¹¹⁵. That assertion is based on fragments from five centurial stones recovered by contractors building a housing estate without experience in archaeological excavation and it is therefore impossible to determine whether they derive from original contexts. Since none of the Distance Stones were recovered from original contexts it is equally possible that these examples constitute the placement of pairings on either side of the Military Way - one facing east and one west at either end of a completed sector. Here, it is important to note that no. 2 has been traditionally assigned to the east of Auchendavy but, based on the inscribed distance of *M P III* dedicated by the 20th Legion and the absence of any reliable information on its findspot, it may instead have been originally placed in the vicinity of Castlehill.

NEW INSIGHTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Close engagement with this unique body of evidence has cast up some additional intriguing patterns or points worthy of note, including:

MAPPING THE MONUMENTS

Following on from Macdonald's¹¹⁶ schematic for placement of the Distance Stones in locations that he

⁹⁵ MACMULLEN 1982; KOLB 2014, 658; BREEZE/FERRIS 2016, 32; HANNON/ROHL/WILSON 2017, 14

⁹⁶ HANNON/ROHL/WILSON 2017, 14.

⁹⁷ HANNON/ROHL/WILSON 2017, 14.

⁹⁸ KEPPIE 1979, 4-5.

⁹⁹ HORSLEY 1732.

¹⁰⁰ BATES 1898.

¹⁰¹ MACDONALD 1934, 360.

¹⁰² SAUER 2014; BISHOP 2019, 46.

¹⁰³ POULTER 2018.

¹⁰⁴ WODROW 1843, 66.

¹⁰⁵ HORSLEY 1732, 163.

¹⁰⁶ GORDON 1726.

¹⁰⁷ STUART 1852, 310.

¹⁰⁸ at 30' wide and 20' deep.

¹⁰⁹ MACDONALD 1911, 299.

¹¹⁰ MACDONALD 1934.

¹¹¹ STEER/CORMACK 1969, 125.

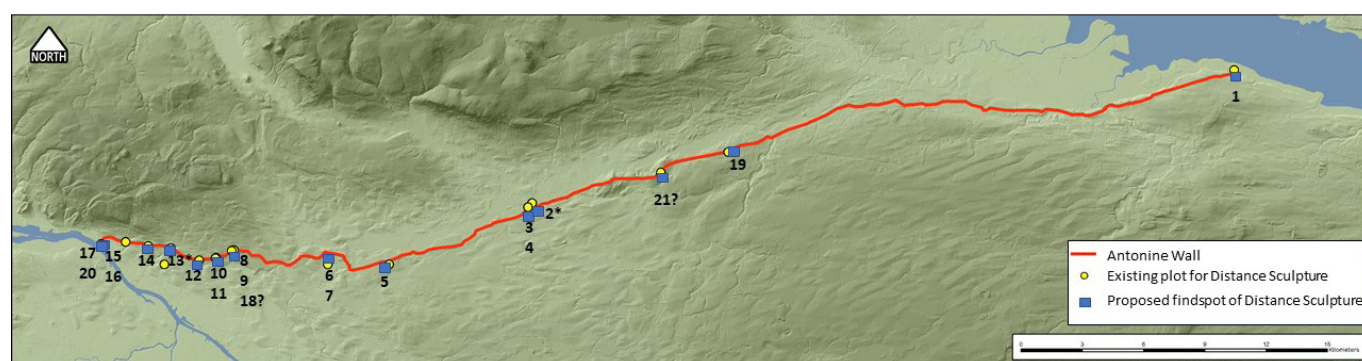
¹¹² MAXWELL 1974, 328.

¹¹³ STEER/CORMACK 1969.

¹¹⁴ RICHMOND AND BIRLEY 1937, 227.

¹¹⁵ KEPPIE 1976, 59.

¹¹⁶ MACDONALD 1911; MACDONALD 1934.



* - Unprovenanced: Nos 2 & 13

? - No. 18 found at Cochno but could be from workshop at Castlehill

- No. 21 recorded from Bar Hill or Croy Hill, but possibly refers to RIB 2312 (column-shaft milestone, not a Distance Stone)

NB – Original findspots for several Distance Stones are either unrecorded or not defined with certainty, including Nos. 2, 3, 5, 8, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 20, 21. Some were built into post-Roman structures (nos. 2, 4, 7, 8, 14, 16 and 17) and at least one is likely to have been redeposited during the medieval period (no. 1).

Fig. 7. Proposed locations of the Distance Stones.

extrapolates onto the Wall, a detailed survey of contexts of discovery, where recorded, has thrown up inaccuracies in the mapping of these monuments on both historical maps and digital platforms (see Appendix I). This includes Canmore¹¹⁷ where discrepancies from recorded findspots combined with approximate locations have erroneously displaced some. A review of findspots (Table 1) presents the opportunity to propose an alternative map for placements with a higher degree of precision and shows that all examples most likely originated from south of the Wall and could plausibly have been placed along the Military Way in line with distance markers associated with other roadways.

IMPERIAL TITLES

Nos 4 and 13 are the only examples devoid of dedications to the Emperor, though it is evident from the articulation of text on no. 14 that the Imperial dedication was not originally intended for inclusion in that inscription¹¹⁸. Macdonald¹¹⁹ attributes the omission on no. 13 as accidental. More likely it is because none of these three were originally intended to act as Distance Stones but may have been adapted from commemorative building stones of *Legio II* (nos 13 and 14) and *Legio XX* (no. 4) to serve that purpose, see below.

MAKING A MONUMENT AND RE-PURPOSING MONUMENTAL SCULPTURES

Macdonald asserts the Distance Stones were “all produced about the same time and all destined to serve the same purpose”¹²⁰, but this is by no means certain. A critical review of the inscriptions suggests that some could have originally been destined for a different purpose as indicated by the placement of text and awkward squeezing in at illogical positions between sculpted features on some. For instance, no. 2 is stylistically different from other examples and has been compared to tombstones from the Danube and Britain, e.g. RIB 832¹²¹. The decorative design sculpted onto no. 19 has been likened to an example from a *Principia* in a

Hadrian’s Wall fort¹²².

It is equally possible that nos 4, 13 and 14 were never intended to be Distance Stones since their original inscriptions do not incorporate dedications to the emperor, the dedication on no. 14 being poorly articulated and squeezed into an area outside of the main inscription panel. Similarly, nos 11 and 17 differ markedly from others in their sculptural style and content. No. 11 potentially depicts Britannia where Victory could normally be expected since the Fig. is devoid of wings¹²³ and 17 depicts a reclining Victory. The texts on both are clumsily interspersed through sculpted architectural features, including shield-like panels and façade.

An interesting point of note is the placement of *FEC* (or an abbreviation to *F*) which is omitted or out of place on several stones, including coming at the end of the recorded distances on nos 1 and 12. It is missing entirely from nos 5 and 6 and appears to have been a later addition to no. 9.

Overall, facets of these examples combine to infer that some Distance Stones may alternatively have been relief-sculpted inscriptions or building commemorations originally intended for a different purpose but re-fashioned and placed on the new northern frontier to mark the making of the monument.

DELIBERATE DEPOSITION

This detailed survey of the Distance Stones incorporated a review of depositional contexts that casts significant doubt upon the long-established proposal for their deliberate deposition into pits by a departing Roman army¹²⁴. In reality, of the 21 known examples, contexts of discovery for eleven are not recorded¹²⁵, with at least seven having been taken out of original context and subsequently built into later structures¹²⁶.

Of those where findspots are marginally better recorded, no. 1 was originally thought to come from a deliberately dug pit, though later excavation in the immediate environs disputes that, concluding it was subject to medieval

¹¹⁷ <https://canmore.org.uk/>

¹¹⁸ KEPPIE 1998, 85.

¹¹⁹ MACDONALD 1911, 280.

¹²⁰ MACDONALD 1934, 393.

¹²¹ KEPPIE 1998, 72.

¹²² KEPPIE 1998, 90

¹²³ KEPPIE 1979, 16.

¹²⁴ MACDONALD 1934, 394; KEPPIE 1976, 60.

¹²⁵ nos 2, 3, 5, 8, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 20 and 21.

¹²⁶ nos 2, 4, 7, 8, 14, 16 and 17

re-deposition¹²⁷; no. 4 was reportedly discovered face-down three feet below 'the Roman ditch'; nos 6, 7 and 19 may have been recovered from the vicinity of the Military Way; no. 10 was face-down on the southern slope of a hill 3 foot below the surface; and nos 15 and 16 are recorded as having been ploughed up at the end of the Wall.

Therefore, only nos. 9 and 11 were recovered from contexts where farmhands who found them considered them to be deliberately dug pits. There is a discrepancy in the recorded findspot for no. 9 since Buchanan¹²⁸ first floated the idea of it being thrown into a ditch 3 foot below the surface on the southern slope of Hutcheson Hill and thereafter erroneously recorded on historical Ordnance Survey maps from the berm of the Wall¹²⁹, despite it being reportedly found 'within a few yards south from the fort'¹³⁰. No. 11 has also been assigned a recovery context from a shallow pit through the opinion of the ploughman who discovered it¹³¹. Both examples confirm that farm workers with no experience in excavating archaeological materials or interpreting the stratigraphic relationships of objects and their depositional contexts come under the realms of unreliable sources of pivotal contextual information.

It has been suggested that examples from known findspots were carried only a short distance away from the Wall since their weight made transportation further afield problematic¹³², though they were evidently carried a reasonable distance to be placed in their intended position in the first place. Others, such as no. 6, came from foundation stones commonly ascribed to the Wall, but this research suggests the stones may more plausibly have been recovered from the Military Way (see Appendix I).

WORKSHOPS

If we can accept that no. 2 of unknown provenance which commemorates a distance of *M P III* built by the 20th Legion along with nos 9, 10 and 11 as well as no. 18 which is incomplete and contains no distance, could have originally derived from Castlehill we may have identified the workshop producing this group of stones. Given the proximity of nos 5-8 to Balmuily, it is possible that a stonemason's workshop may also have been located there.

FUTURE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

There is much to be gained from a deeper engagement with inscriptions and other evidence associated with the Antonine Wall. This current research demonstrates the validity of deconstructing long-held interpretations in order to present alternative, if controversial, perspectives on the Roman campaigns in northern Britain and, potentially, other provinces. It is beyond doubt that many more Distance Stones remain undiscovered in the landscape and a targeted programme of GPR exploring potential locations of these lost sculptures should be an absolute priority. Future research agendas should be alert to the possibility that these

monumental inscriptions were most likely placed south of the Wall so particular attention should be directed to the environs of the Military Way (both north and south of the road). Given the discrepancies in translation of *M P*, *P P* and *P*, the potential for placement at regular intervals between 3,000-4,000 feet as well as 18,000-23,000 feet should be considered.

Critically, since recent non-destructive analysis confirms intervention has a detrimental impact on the survival of surface treatments¹³³, any future discoveries of monumental inscriptions should not be subjected to intensive cleaning or conservation in advance of a comprehensive programme of analysis to identify and reconstruct original pigments and surface treatments.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

A review of the historical, contextual and material evidence associated with the Antonine Wall Distance Stones has cast significant new light onto these unique frontier sculptures. It proposes alternative perspectives and new dimensions to the Distance Stones that strip away past interpretive layers to consider their material and cultural properties for the people who commissioned, carved and engaged with them from the 2nd century through to the present day. Widely accepted hypotheses on their textual translation has thrown up inconsistent practices compared with other Roman distance markers. The complexities historically imposed relating to their incorporation of *M P*, *P P* or *P* continues to permeate scholarship, but this research questions the validity of some traditional approaches and makes alternative suggestions for interpretations.

Past reliance has been placed upon similarities between the inscriptions, but differences have been revealed that cast further doubt upon their traditional interpretation. This includes blanket acceptance that they refer in their entirety to the construction of the Antonine Wall, despite only two explicitly mentioning work on the rampart through the term '*OPUS VALLI*'. Seen through the prism of contemporary models, it is perhaps surprising that interpretation of this body of evidence hinges so completely on two examples which in any other context would be considered statistical outliers at less than 10% of the collection. That their significance as the only example of stones to measure distances in the tens of thousands has escaped the attention of scholarship for centuries is surprising. However, those differences combine to mark them out as special and lends weight to the hypothesis that these two may uniquely refer to the construction of the Antonine Wall. Past references to the potential that some may refer to other parts of the frontier infrastructure have been systematically lost as Macdonald and others have extrapolated distances to fit along proposed work-sectors in attempts to reconstruct the rampart. A full review of depositional contexts further highlights the shaky foundations upon which some of our historical hypothesis have been built. It has, for example, been widely accepted that the Distance Stones were buried in pits by a departing Roman army¹³⁴, but the reliability of recorded discovery contexts is tenuous at best.

Taken together, significant historical inaccuracies have

¹²⁷ BAILEY/ DEVEREUX 1987.

¹²⁸ BUCHANAN 1883, 18.

¹²⁹ MACDONALD 1911, 285.

¹³⁰ John Buchanan 1871 *GUL MR* 50/49, no. 2; KEPPIE 1998, 79.

¹³¹ STEER/CORMACK 1969, 122.

¹³² KEPPIE 1976, 60.

¹³³ CAMPBELL 2020.

¹³⁴ MACDONALD 1934, 394; KEPPIE 1976, 60.

evidently combined to influence traditional interpretations of the Distance Stones and the structure/s to which they refer have not been holistically considered. Some finds locations have been inaccurately recorded in both published accounts and modern digital platforms which, on the surface, point to placement of some to the north of the Wall. In reality, there is no evidence that they were originally located anywhere but to the south of the Wall and the distances involved combine with some recorded contexts of discovery to suggest that they might reasonably, and logically, have been alternatively placed along the Military Way consistent with Roman practice for other markers of distance.

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APPENDIX I

1: Bridgeness (National Museum of Scotland Number X.FV 27, RIB 2139)

IMP CAES TITO AELIO HADRI ANTONINO AVG PIO P P LEG II AVG PER M P IIIDCL II FEC

(For the Emperor Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius, Father of his country, the Second Augustan Legion built this over a distance of 4652)

Carved from buff sandstone, this is the largest known Distance Stone. It was found in 1868 and donated to the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland (now National Museum of Scotland). An inscribed central panel is flanked on either side by *peltae* with griffin head terminals. The left panel depicts a cavalryman on horseback galloping down a group of four naked indigenous warriors in the midst of battle as he prepares to cast a spear at them. One warrior is prostrate on his back, another has either a *pilum*¹³⁵ or broken off portion of the leg from the fallen warrior behind protruding from his back¹³⁶, a third is decapitated and a fourth strikes a contemplative pose. The right panel depicts a religious scene thought to represent the *suovetaurilia*¹³⁷ with members of the 2nd Augustan¹³⁸ offering sacrifices and libations on altars below a temple pediment.

This example is comparable in structure, content and composition to the Summerston Farm sculpture (no. 6) and the left panel is similar in composition and structure, if not content, since the Summerston Farm iconography depicts captive naked northerners *after* battle. Evidence of red colouring on the sculptural reliefs of no. 1 has been noted during episodic cleaning¹³⁹ and recent non-destructive analysis using portable X-Ray Fluorescence (pXRF) and Raman Spectroscopy confirmed this brutal scene of battle was originally brought vividly to life in polychrome with a palette of pigments dominated by reds, yellows and whites¹⁴⁰. The use of bright red minimum (red lead) to depict blood on the decapitated head and neck of one of the fallen warriors is also evident on the Summerston Farm sculpture. Interestingly, this is the only example that inserts FEC after the other text, other examples that contain a reference to FEC (made/built) precede the measured distances either in full or abbreviated only to F.

This monumental inscription was previously thought to mark the eastern terminus of the Wall¹⁴¹, though more recent work proposes Carriden as a more plausible candidate for the terminal¹⁴². The sculpture was recovered from a rocky promontory just above a harbour at Bridgeness belonging to the finder, Mr Henry Cadell of Grange, who considered it to have been deliberately placed there by departing Romans¹⁴³, this too was questioned by Bailey and Devereux who posit a post-Roman re-burial¹⁴⁴ based on trenching close to the findspot where 14th-16th Century pottery was recovered from the tumble of the retaining wall. This, coupled with plough-marks on the rear which could not have been the result of ploughing *in situ* on a rocky promontory, suggest the stone was found out of its original context¹⁴⁵. The roughly dressed stones recovered directly below and immediately behind the inscription might alternatively indicate a structure into which the monument was embedded as confirmed by crampholes that are also present on other examples. After its donation to the museum a commemorative plaque was placed at the roadside to mark the approximate findspot at NGR NT 0137 8151.

2. Unknown Provenance (Hunterian Museum Number GLAHM.F.1, RIB 2173)

IMP CAESARI T AELIO HADRIANO ANTONINO AVG PIO P P VEXILLATIO LEG XX VAL VIC F PER MIL P III

(for the Emperor Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius, Father of his Country, a detachment of the Twentieth Valerian and Victorious Legion built this over a distance of 3000)

Carved from buff sandstone, this Distance Stone has an intriguing biography. Its date of recovery is unknown, though recorded by Camden¹⁴⁶ as being installed into the porch or portico then ballroom or gallery of Dunnottar Castle, Stonehaven, by the 5th Earl Marischal. It was then moved to Marischal College in Aberdeen in 1723 before the Earl donated it to Glasgow College (now University of Glasgow) on his return to Scotland in 1761 after a period of exile for alleged Jacobite sympathies¹⁴⁷. Keppie's observation that this example differs markedly from others commemorated by detachments of the 20th Legion is significant since he recognises it may derive from a different season of construction or a different sculptural style. He compares it stylistically to tombstones elsewhere in the Empire, including on the Danube and Britain¹⁴⁸. It contains a central panel framed with triple ribbed border on all 4 sides with swirling decorative bands of ivy tendrils above and below and flanked by elongated *peltae* depicting plumage of the griffins forming the terminals of each. Two crampholes dovetail at the top¹⁴⁹, in common with no. 3.

¹³⁵ CADELL 1871

¹³⁶ PHILLIPS 1972

¹³⁷ MACDONALD 1934, 363

¹³⁸ BREEZE 1990

¹³⁹ CLOSE-BROOKS 1981, 519

¹⁴⁰ CAMPBELL 2020.

¹⁴¹ MACDONALD 1934, 362

¹⁴² BAILEY/DEVEREUX 1987; HANNON/ROHL/WILSON 2017

¹⁴³ CADELL 1871

¹⁴⁴ BAILEY/DEVEREUX 1987, 99

¹⁴⁵ BAILEY/DEVEREUX 1987, 98

¹⁴⁶ CAMDEN 1607

¹⁴⁷ ANDERSON 1771, 40; MACFARLANE 1908; KEPPIE 1998, 72

¹⁴⁸ e.g. RIB 832

¹⁴⁹ KEPPIE 1998, 73

Curiously, Macdonald¹⁵⁰ fails to record the polychromy on this stone (Fig. 8). This is despite mentioning the Distance Stones were likely to have been “brightly, if crudely, coloured... no vestige of anything of the sort is visible on them now”¹⁵¹ and despite Camden’s¹⁵² explicit mention of this particular example being gilded under the direction of the 10th Earl Marischal and Horsley¹⁵³ noting black paint. Anderson¹⁵⁴ makes clear the painting was not the work of university staff, while Gibb confirms the paint was “very properly washed off”¹⁵⁵ before traces became once more visible during cleaning in 1976¹⁵⁶. My recent pXRF analysis of this monumental inscription confirms the light and dark brown paint was applied during the 17th century given its elemental composition, particularly the very high lead content which is consistent with that period¹⁵⁷ as opposed to Roman brown pigments which are often dominated by haematite or goethite¹⁵⁸. The presence of gold gilding can also be confidently assigned a 17th century date since it overlies the brown paint.



Fig. 8. Polychromy on Distance Stone No. 9 (RIB 2173)

Frustratingly, its findspot and context of discovery is unrecorded except for a note that it was “dug up from the Ruins of this wall [Antonine] and made a present long ago to the ancestors of the late Earl”¹⁵⁹. Although Macdonald¹⁶⁰ arbitrarily places it east of Auchendavy at NGR NS 677 749, Keppie¹⁶¹ assigns it more generally to somewhere in the central sector where the construction sequences are less well recorded. In any event, taking the historical evidence at face value, its placement would be east of the Roman fort at Auchendavy¹⁶² which can be ascribed to *south* of the Wall given the mural barrier’s altered trajectory to a sharp north-easterly direction immediately thereafter (Fig. 9). Indeed, it is entirely possible that this stone pairs with one of the three others recovered close to Bearsden that were also dedicated by detachments of the 20th Legion recording a distance of 3000 feet (not paces). Canmore records it from c. NGR NS 67 75, erroneously placing it *north* of the wall in the grounds of Bridgend Farm.

3. Eastermains (Hunterian Museum Number GLAHM.F.2, RIB 2185)

IMP CAESARI T AELIO HADRIANO ANTONINO AVG PIO P P VEXILLA LEG VI VIC P F PER M P
(For the Emperor Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius, Father of his Country, a detachment of the Sixth

¹⁵⁰ MACDONALD 1934

¹⁵¹ MACDONALD 1911, 310

¹⁵² CAMDEN 1607, 711-12

¹⁵³ HORSLEY 1732, 204

¹⁵⁴ ANDERSON 1771, 40

¹⁵⁵ GIBB 1902, 80

¹⁵⁶ KEEPIE 1998, 73

¹⁵⁷ FORTUNATO/RITTER/FABIAN 2005

¹⁵⁸ DOORYH/*et alii* 2005; CAMPBELL, in press

¹⁵⁹ GORDON 1726, 62

¹⁶⁰ MACDONALD 1934, 365

¹⁶¹ KEEPIE 1998, 72

¹⁶² MACDONALD 1934, 381

Victorious, Loyal and Faithful Legion built this over a distance of...)

Carved from gritty buff sandstone, this Distance Stone was discovered c. 1740 and purchased by the University in 1744. It finds stylistic and textual parallels with others from the 6th Legion (nos. 7 and 8). The differences between these examples are slight (see Fig. 6), but they broadly conform to a central panel with inscribed text dedicated by a *vexilla* or *vexillato* (no. 8) of the 6th Legion, framed by plain mouldings, triple ribbed at the top and bottom, and flanked by *peltae* which, on this stone, have griffin head terminals. Like no. 2, there are two dovetail crampholes in the top¹⁶³. Critically, in common with no. 18, the inscription has a blank space where the distance of measured units is present on all other Distance Stones. Although Macdonald¹⁶⁴ proposes it represents a distance of 1000 paces (1 Roman mile), his hypothesis is based on conjecture and a series of mathematical leaps in order for it to fit his narrative for proposed measurements between other Distance Stones. Recent non-destructive analysis using Raman spectroscopy suggests the presence of realgar red pigment in some of the letters and the rosette¹⁶⁵.

The provenance of this Distance Stone is uncertain, though its recorded discovery was half a mile east of Kirkintilloch fort¹⁶⁶ and west of Inchbelly Bridge c. 1740¹⁶⁷. Keppie¹⁶⁸ centres this to a findspot at NGR NS 667 747 on the Wall, though Canmore records an approximate findspot of NGR NS 668 748 inside the Forth and Clyde Canal just to the north of the Wall. These locations are rather arbitrarily defined, there is nothing in the records to suggest this inscription was recovered from north of the Wall. Though it may well have been placed close to No. 4 at NGR NS 66841 74772 it is purely conjecture that this is due to it “commemorating the completion of adjacent lengths by different sets of soldiers”¹⁶⁹ since this stone is devoid of measurement.

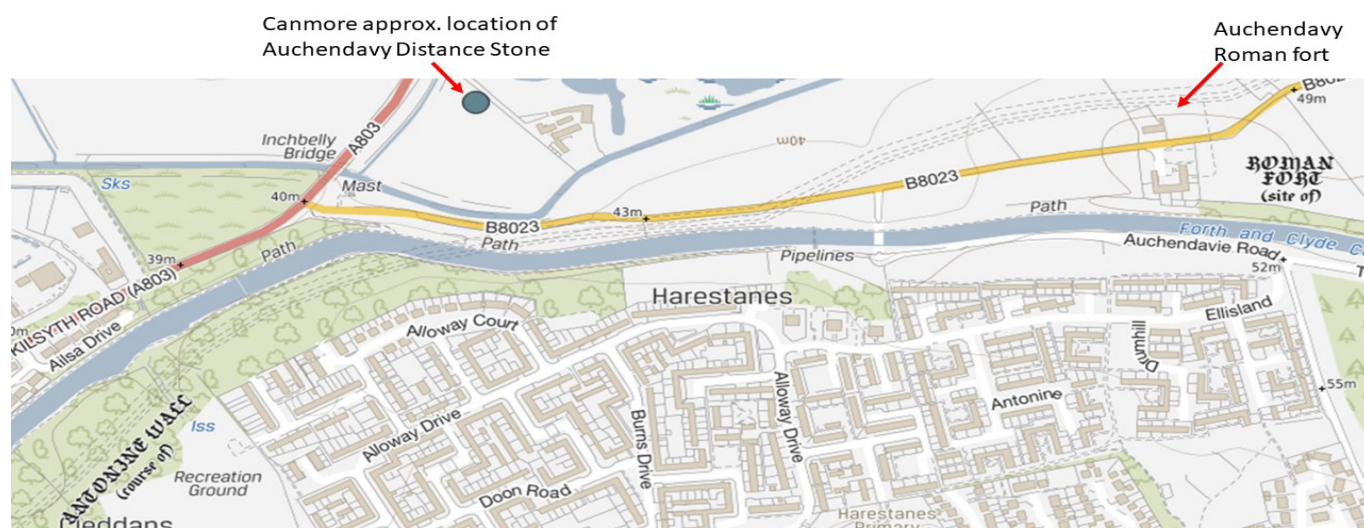


Fig. 9. Map with erroneous findspot on Canmore of Distance Stone No. 2¹⁷⁰

4. Eastermains (Hunterian Museum Number GLAHM.F3, RIB 2184)

LEG XX V V FEC M P III P IIICCCIV

(The Twentieth Valerian and Victorious Legion built this over a distance of 3000 (additional measurement is also included of 3304, possibly erroneously)

Carved from buff sandstone, this Distance Stone was found in 1789 and donated to the University by John Buchanan in 1871. It is the smallest of all those recovered and contains the most basic of information. But that does not detract from the enigma and significance of this artefact. The first part of the text is contained within a trapezoidal *ansae* panel, below this the distance is inscribed on the left with the legionary emblem of a boar running towards a tree on the right in a scene reminiscent of no. 10 in reverse.

This inscription is devoid of dedication to the emperor, in common with only one other (no. 13). Of all those commemorated by the 20th Legion this, uniquely, does not specify a detachment, prompting Macdonald¹⁷¹ to surmise this is because of restricted space available due to the large size of inscribed lettering. It could, alternatively, suggest the 20th were working at full complement at some stage of construction, perhaps the initial stage. Also unique to this inscription is an extensively long measurement, thought to incorporate both paces *and* feet (3000 paces and 3304 feet) which combine to

¹⁶³ KEPPIE 1998, 74

¹⁶⁴ MACDONALD 1934, 381

¹⁶⁵ CAMPBELL 2020.

¹⁶⁶ unknown author, recorded in KEPPIE 1998, 74

¹⁶⁷ MAITLAND 1757

¹⁶⁸ KEPPIE 1998, 74

¹⁶⁹ MACDONALD 1934, 367

¹⁷⁰ © CANMORE at 100m

¹⁷¹ MACDONALD 1934, 368

make $3660 \frac{4}{5}$ paces¹⁷², very close to the oddly specific measurement of $3666 \frac{1}{2}$ ¹⁷³ inscribed onto four Distance Stones (nos. 5-8). This hypothesis requires a complex series of cognitive and arithmetical acrobatics that not only defeats the fundamental purpose of the Distance Stones, but it is uncharacteristic of Roman practice. More plausible is Hübner's¹⁷⁴ early explanation that the stone carver has inadvertently repeated the P III distance along with the other measurements (CCC IV) at a time after the stone was originally carved.

The findspot for this Distance Stone is not recorded with precision, though it was reportedly discovered lying face-down in the Roman ditch through deep ploughing¹⁷⁵ and later installed into a pigsty near Kirkintilloch¹⁷⁶, which explains its poor condition. It has been assigned the same findspot as no. 3 at c. NGR NS 667 747 on the Wall by Keppie¹⁷⁷ which differs from that allocated by Canmore in the middle of the canal. Given that it was discovered at a point where the Wall traverses Eastermain c. three quarters of a mile east of Kirkintilloch¹⁷⁸ and immediately adjoining Whitehill "on the south bank of the canal"¹⁷⁹, its findspot is more likely closer to NGR NS 66841 74772.

5. Cawder House, Bishopbriggs (Hunterian Museum Number GLAHM.F.4, RIB 2186)

IMP CAES TITO AELIO HADRINO ANTONINO AVG PIO P P LEG II AUG PER M P III DCLXVIS
(For the Emperor Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius, Father of his Country, the Second Augustan Legion built this over a distance of $3666 \frac{1}{2}$)

Carved from buff sandstone, this inscription is set within plain mouldings flanked on the left with an *ansa* with central rosette. While it is possible the right *ansa* has been broken off, Keppie¹⁸⁰ favours an additional stone block completing the schematic since all edges have been finished in a similar fashion. Two broad shallow dovetail crampholes have been carved in the top. This is one of four examples containing an oddly specific distance of $3666 \frac{1}{2}$ units of measure¹⁸¹ that could be pairings originally located at either end of a completed sector¹⁸², see above for further discussion on this.

Its date of discovery is unknown, though it was recorded as having been incorporated into the walls of Cawder House then into its square keep at the beginning of the 17th century¹⁸³ before being donated to the University c. 1735 by the owner of Cawder House, Mr Stirling of Kier. Earlier accounts of it having been recovered from close to the house at the Wall's ruins

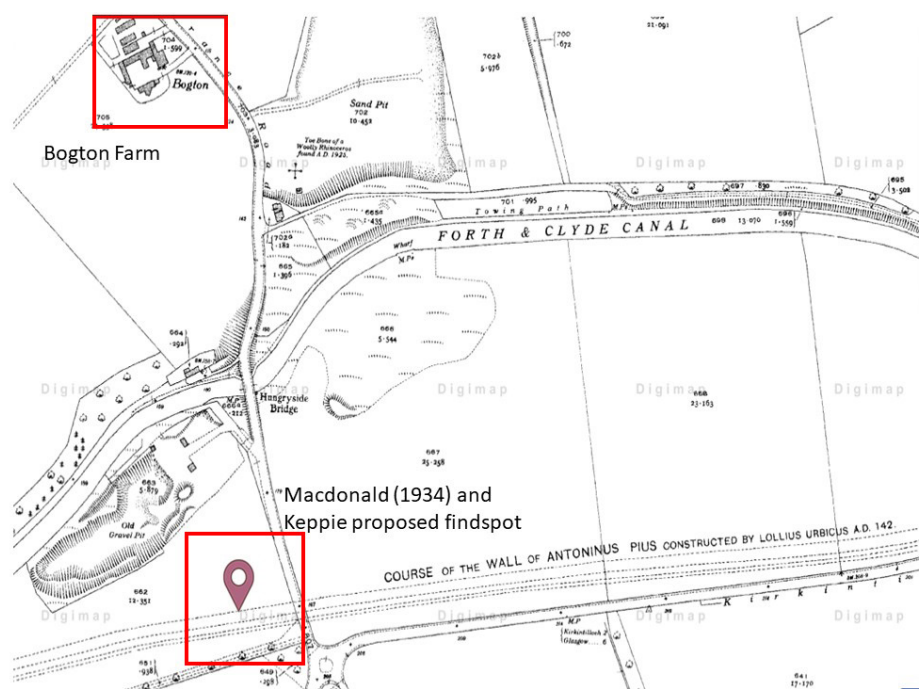


Fig. 10a. Ordnance Survey map (1940s)¹⁸⁴ with findspot at NGR NS 623 728 for no. 5¹⁸⁵

¹⁷² MACDONALD 1934, 368; KEPPIE 1976, 13

¹⁷³ MACDONALD 1934, 368

¹⁷⁴ HÜBNER 1873

¹⁷⁵ STUART 1852, 325

¹⁷⁶ HODGSON 1840, 439

¹⁷⁷ KEPPIE 1998, 77

¹⁷⁸ STUART 1852, 325

¹⁷⁹ MACDONALD 1934, 369

¹⁸⁰ KEPPIE 1979, 13

¹⁸¹ see also nos. 6-8

¹⁸² GLASGOW ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY 1899, 9; MACDONALD 1934, 371

¹⁸³ SCALIGER 1606; CAMDEN 1607, 699; GORDON 1726; HORSLEY 1732, 198

¹⁸⁴ © ORDNANCE SURVEY at 1:50,000

¹⁸⁵ as proposed by MACDONALD 1934, 372 and KEPPIE 1998, 76

near Balmuldy, the estate upon which Cawder House sits¹⁸⁶ may instead refer to another inscribed stone of the 2nd Legion from Cawder House, RIB 2209¹⁸⁷. Macdonald¹⁸⁸ is dismissive of Sibbald's proposal and assigns it to Bogton Farm, but this is conjecture based primarily on the inscribed distance (3666 ½ feet) which aligns with the other examples from this vicinity c. NGR NS 623 728¹⁸⁹. Bogton Farm is, however, a good distance north of the Wall (Fig. 10a) and closer to Cadder fort. Despite including Macdonald's proposal for this stone's original place of discovery from Bogton Farm, Canmore has placed its findspot at c. NGR NS 60 72, Wilderness plantation to the south of the Wall and east of Balmuldy (Fig. 10b) which may better reflect its discovery location given its placement between Balmuldy and Cawder House, though it may have been more accurately closer to the Wall and fortlet here at NGR NS 59803 72120.

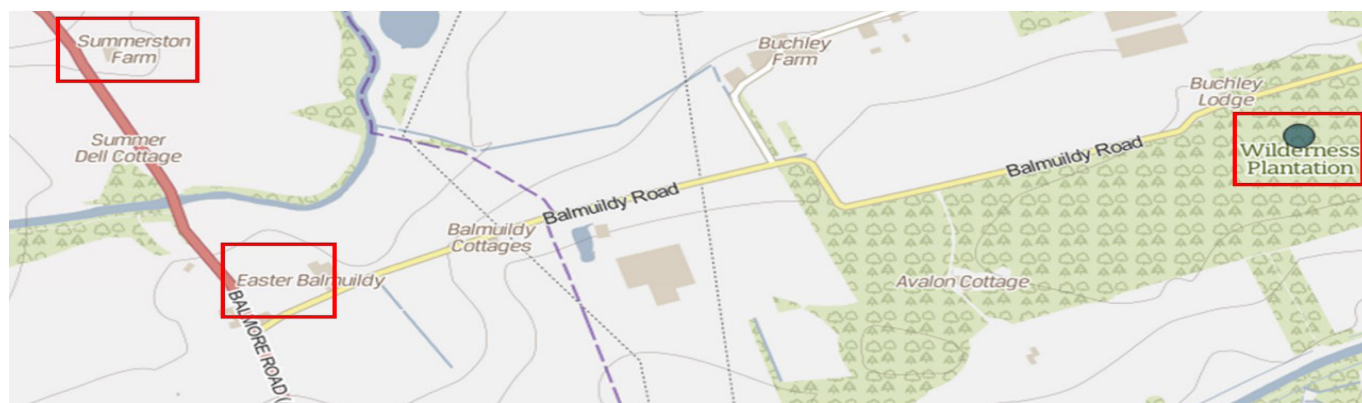


Fig. 10b. Map with no. 5 close to Balmuldy as located by Canmore¹⁹⁰

6. Summerston Farm (Hunterian Museum Reference GLAHM.F.5, RIB 2193)

IMP CAES TITO AELIO HADRIANO ANTONINO AVG PIO P P LEG II AVG PEP [R] M P III DCLXVIS
(For the Emperor Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius, Father of his Country, the Second Augustan Legion built this over a distance of 3666 ½)

Carved from buff sandstone, this sculpted inscription was gifted to the University of Glasgow in 1694 by John Graham of Dougalston. The inscription mirrors the text on no. 5, including the oddly specific measurement of 3666 ½ which is thought to refer to construction between Balmuldy and Bogton, adjacent to no. 7¹⁹¹. The sculpture loosely parallels Bridgeness (no. 1) in structure and composition, though the left panel shows a winged Victory holding a laurel wreath to crown a horseman guarding two bound and naked northern warriors *after* battle. On the right Rome's eagle perches on the back of the 2nd Legion's emblem, a Capricorn, above another naked captive. Large crampholes have been carved into the sides as well as a small one at the centre of the top.

During cleaning some red pigment became visible¹⁹² which pXRF and Raman Spectroscopy has confirmed to be red lead (minium) on the chest, head, beard, thigh and cheek of the captive warriors as well as on the eagle's beak¹⁹³. This bright red pigment may represent blood on the captives here as well as the decapitated head and neck of one of the Bridgeness warriors, while its presence on the eagle's beak could symbolise Rome feasting off the blood of her enemies.

The findspot for this sculpture is uncertain. Despite Gordon¹⁹⁴ and Horsley¹⁹⁵ recording its recovery from Castlehill, Macdonald¹⁹⁶ suggests their proposal is based on erroneous information leading to confusion since Gordon may have been referring to no. 8. Instead, he favours Summerston Farm from the descriptive account of Wodrow¹⁹⁷ which refers to its recovery from foundation stones dug up for almost one mile between Kilpatrick and Kirkintilloch stretching almost to the village of Summerston to make dyke stone walls¹⁹⁸. It is quite possible these 'foundation stones' could conceivably derive from kerb stones of the Military Way. Keppie¹⁹⁹ places it at c. NGR NS 574 725 on the Wall, very close to Summerston Farm, but this is significantly north of the mapped location on Canmore (Fig. 11). More likely it was located just to the south of the Wall in the vicinity of the Roman camp c. NGR NS 5742 7245.

¹⁸⁶ SIBBALD 1707, 50; GORDON 1726, 54

¹⁸⁷ KEEPIE 1998, 76

¹⁸⁸ MACDONALD 1934, 371

¹⁸⁹ KEEPIE 1998, 76

¹⁹⁰ © CANMORE at 200m

¹⁹¹ KEEPIE 1998, 78

¹⁹² KEEPIE 1998, 77

¹⁹³ CAMPBELL 2020

¹⁹⁴ GORDON 1726, 52

¹⁹⁵ HORSLEY 1732, 195

¹⁹⁶ MACDONALD 1934, 374

¹⁹⁷ WODROW 1843, 66

¹⁹⁸ HORSLEY 1732, 163

¹⁹⁹ KEEPIE 1998, 77

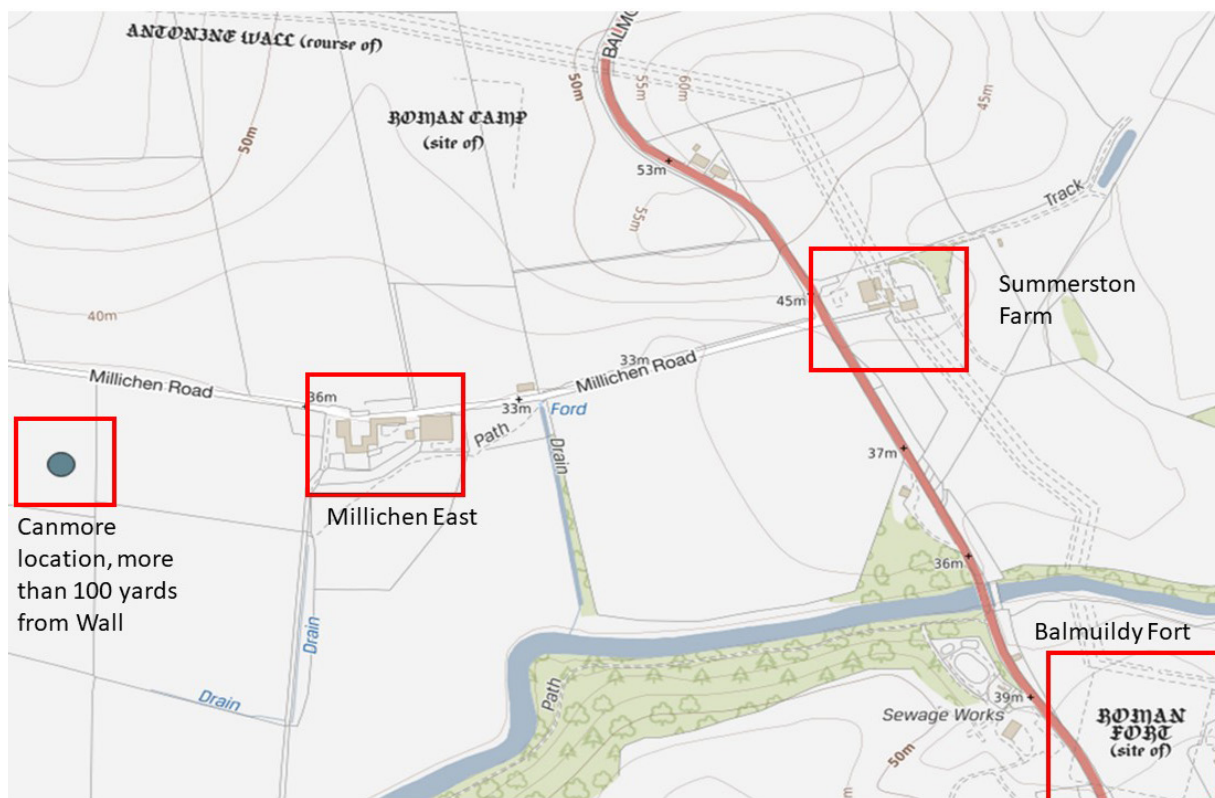


Fig. 11. Map plotting nos. 6 and 7 in relation to Summerston Farm and Millichen East²⁰⁰

7. East Millichen, near Balmuldy (Glasgow Museums Number A.1942.18.01, RIB 2194)

IMP CAES T AELIO HADRI ANTONINO AVG PIO P P VEXILLA LEG VI VIC P F PER M P III DCLXVIS

(For the Emperor Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius, Father of his Country, the Sixth Victorious, Loyal and Faithful Legion built this over a distance of 3666 ½)

Carved from buff sandstone, this Distance Stone was discovered in 1803 and is held in the collections of Glasgow Museums. It is poorly preserved due to exposure and resembles no. 8 in format with plain central panel containing inscribed text framed with plain single borders at each side and triple-stepped borders at the top and bottom. The inscription panel is flanked with plain *peltae* terminating with griffin heads and central rosettes. It contains the, by now familiar, distance of 3666 ½.

This Distance Stone was recovered from digging a deep drain at Low Millochan farm c. 100 yards from the Wall²⁰¹ It is recorded as having been in the possession of a Glasgow schoolmaster, James Reekie, then passing to a relative on his death – a weaver from Calton who used the stone as a footrest before being acquired by James Ewing of Levenside who built it into his mansion at Queen Street in Glasgow²⁰². Here, Macdonald's selectivity in sources is apparent, and significant. In the first edition of his *The Roman Wall in Scotland*²⁰³ he concludes "that it was lying so far south of the Rampart may be due either to its having been carried or to its having originally stood on the line of the Military Way". This last comment does not make it into his second edition²⁰⁴ and has not been picked up on since. He proceeds to conclude it was originally placed next to no. 6 based on the distances inscribed. It is plausible to posit that these two Distance Stones were once closely positioned without reverting to the complex series of suppositions that Macdonald imposes in order to fit into a measurement sequence that has already been established to be improbable on the basis that absence of evidence is not evidence for absence²⁰⁵. Like no. 6, it was potentially located just to the south of the Wall in the vicinity of the Roman camp c. NGR NS 5742 7245.

8. Castlehill (Hunterian Museum Number GLAHM.F.6, RIB 2196)

IMP CAESAR T AELIO HADRIANO ANTONINO AVG PIO P P VEXILLATIO LEG VI VICTR P F PER MP III DCLXVIS

(For the Emperor Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius, Father of his Country, a detachment of the Sixth Victorious, Loyal and Faithful Legion built this over a distance of 3666 ½)

Carved from grey sandstone, this example was first recorded in 1696 and donated to the University in 1720. Decorative details are similar to no. 7, though the *peltae* here are more elaborately decorated in griffin-like plumage with rosettes at the terminals and centre. This inscription too refers to the oddly specific 3666 ½ units of measure and thought to be a partner to

²⁰⁰ © CANMORE at 100m

²⁰¹ STUART 1852, 315

²⁰² STUART 1852, 315

²⁰³ MACDONALD 1911, 299

²⁰⁴ MACDONALD 1934

²⁰⁵ SAGAN 1997, 213

no. 7 marking the eastern stretch of the construction work²⁰⁶.

Contradictory accounts of the find location have been ascribed to this Distance Stone, with Gordon²⁰⁷ assigning it to New Kilpatrick built into the wall of a cottage at or near Castlehill while the *Monumenta Romani Imperii*²⁰⁸ and Anderson²⁰⁹ place it at Summerston. Macdonald supports the proposal for an original findspot at Castlehill, again, to fit his schematic for the Wall's construction based upon Bates²¹⁰ proposals for paces recorded on nos. 1-8. This is hinged upon the yet more complex supposed inclusion of *both* paces and feet on no. 4 along with a sequence of elaborate calculations, that he concedes could be misleading, in order to "satisfy all the conditions"²¹¹ for its placement at Castlehill.

Here, we reach the crux of Macdonald's²¹² selective acceptance of accounts from his predecessors combined with Bates's theory for altered meanings ascribed to the units of measure contained in the inscription. He disregards proposals of a findspot at Summerston Farm near Balmuldy, preferring a source at Castlehill as it was reportedly built into a 'dike house' on the wall near Castlehill. Macdonald's proposal for this stone to derive from Castlehill as a pair to another, as yet undiscovered, example at the other end of a sector of Wall on the east which he hypothesises must have been placed close to no. 4 at Eastermains can only be reached through acrobatic arithmetic. Alternatively, this stone could indeed have originated from close to Summerston farm, near Balmuldy, where the artisan who created all four of these inscriptions measuring 3666 ½ may have been based. Perhaps from there they awaited transportation to their allocated place along a structure, most likely the Military Way as posited for nos 6 and 7. Keppie's²¹³ proposed findspot at NGR NS 524 728 would place it north of the Wall which contradicts his reference to it from south of the Wall so an alternative location c. NGR NS 5742 7245 at Summerston based upon the earlier accounts which may be more reliable sources.

This would leave the other three recovered from the Bearsden vicinity (nos. 9-11) all dedicated by a vexillation of the 20th Legion and all recording a distance 3000 feet. If we tentatively place no. 2 (of unknown provenance) at Castlehill this would lead to a pairing of all the known Distance Stones dedicated by a detachment of the 20th Legion (nos 2 & 9; 10 & 11; 16 & 17) with only no. 4 devoid of a discovered partner, though that is the only example dedicated by the 20th Legion as opposed to a detachment thereof. This is, of course, a controversial hypothesis since no. 2 records a distance of 'MIL P III', whilst no. 9 records 'P P III' and marks a change in the recording methodology on all Distance Stones hereafter westward.

9. Castlehill (Hunterian Museum Number GLAHM.F.7, RIB 2197)

IMP C T AELIO HADRIANO ANTONINO AVG PIO P P VEX LEG XX V(V) [F] P P III

(For the Emperor Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius, Father of his Country, a detachment of the Twentieth Valerian and Victorious Legion built this over a distance of 3000)

Carved from buff sandstone this Distance Stone was discovered in 1847 through ploughing which resulted in damage. It was acquired by John Buchanan shortly after discovery and thereafter donated to the Hunterian Museum in 1871²¹⁴. This is a relatively plain panel inscription set within a cable/rope inner moulding and plain outer mould. A boar, Legionary symbol of the 20th, is carved in relief running to the left in the centre below the inscription and a single dovetail cramphole is carved into the top.

The findspot for this Distance Stone is recorded by Buchanan²¹⁵ as being 3 foot beneath the surface where it was discovered by a ploughman on its side on the southern slope of Hutcheson Hill which he assumes indicates it was deliberately thrown into a pit then covered up. This follows Stuart's²¹⁶ proposal that it was originally built into a structure in the fort before being carried down the hill by departing troops. There is a discrepancy in its placement on historical Ordnance Survey maps as well as a hand-drawn map that appeared in Macdonald's first edition²¹⁷, see Fig. 12, placing the stone on the southern berm of the Wall c. 200 metres west of the fort despite Buchanan's statement that it was found 'within a few yards south from the fort'²¹⁸. Keppie²¹⁹ suggests this Distance Stone was located close to no. 8 and marks the eastern end of wall sector marked by nos 10 and 11. Macdonald²²⁰ also suggests its placement on the Ordnance Survey maps is inaccurate, though he prefers a findspot further up the Castlehill to accommodate his proposal for the pairing of nos 9 and 10. Taking the information from its contemporaneous source, this Distance Stone should perhaps more accurately be assigned a findspot of c. NGR NS 5246 7258 as opposed to Canmore's placement at NGR NS 5229 7267 which places it north of the Wall or Keppie's suggestion of NGR NS 522 727 which locates it north of the Wall and east of the fort.

²⁰⁶ KEPPIE 1998, 79

²⁰⁷ GORDON 1726

²⁰⁸ *MONUMENTA ROMANI IMPERII* 1768

²⁰⁹ ANDERSON 1771, 33

²¹⁰ BATES 1898

²¹¹ MACDONALD 1934, 379

²¹² MACDONALD 1934, 377-381

²¹³ KEPPIE 1998, 78

²¹⁴ KEPPIE 1998, 79

²¹⁵ BUCHANAN 1883, 18

²¹⁶ STUART 1852, 311

²¹⁷ MACDONALD 1911, 285

²¹⁸ BUCHANAN 1871 GUL MR 50/49, NO. 2; KEPPIE 1998, 79

²¹⁹ KEPPIE 1998, 80

²²⁰ MACDONALD 1934, 384

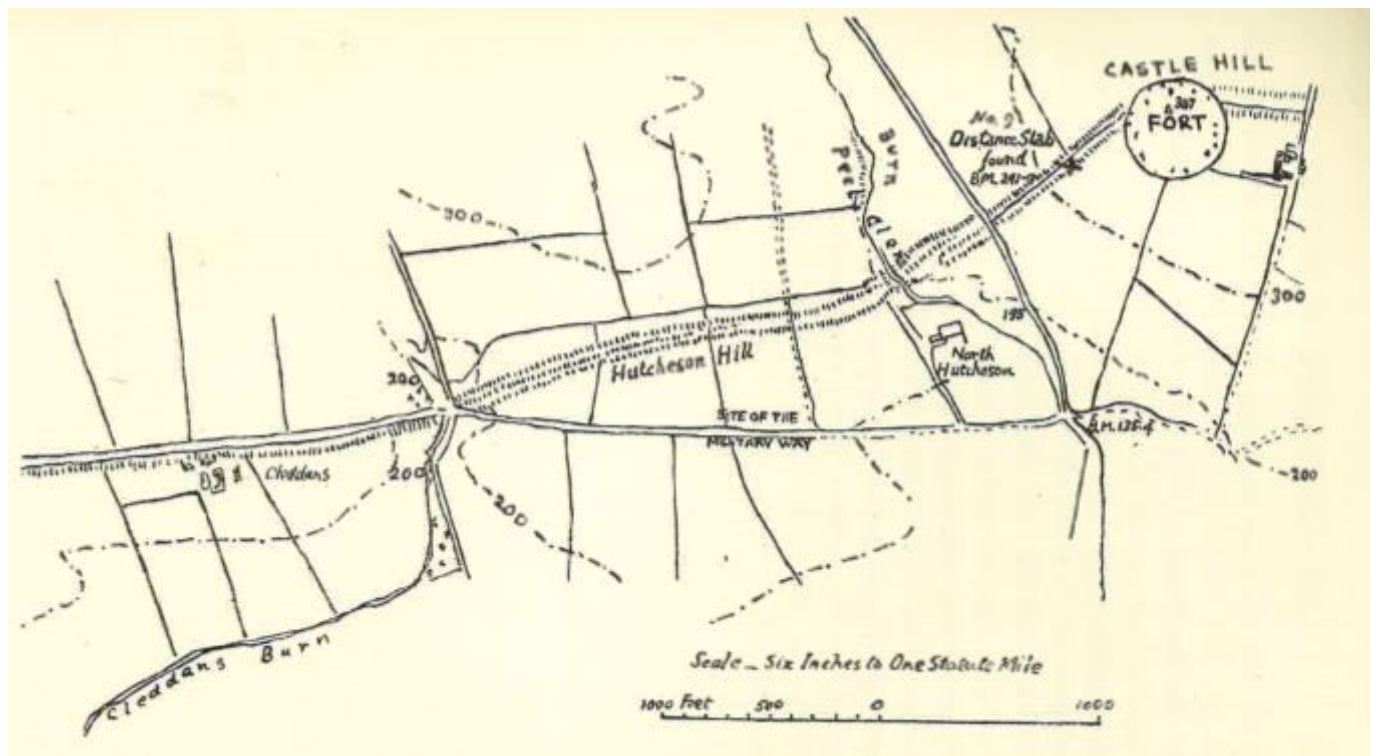


Fig. 12. hand-drawn map of Castlehill fort and placement of no. 9 Distance Stone²²¹

10. Hutcheson Hill (Hunterian Museum Number GLAHM.F.8, RIB 2198)

IMP C T AEL HADRIANO ANTONINO AVG PIO P P VEX LEG XX VV FEC P P III

(For the Emperor Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius, Father of his Country, a detachment of the Twentieth Valerian and Victorious Legion built this over a distance of 3000)

Probably carved from yellowish-buff sandstone, this Distance Stone was discovered by a farmer digging trenches near the southern slope of Hutcheson Hill in 1865. Attempts were made to sell it to both the University of Glasgow and Hunterian Museum before its acquisition by Professor J H McChesney, the US Consul at Newcastle who had it shipped to Chicago where it perished in the Great Chicago Fire²²². A plaster cast taken by the Antiquarian Society of Newcastle survives in the Hunterian after being donated by the Glasgow Archaeological Society sometime prior to 1879. Triple beaded mouldings frame a central panel with inscribed text flanked by *ansae* containing naked cupids carrying sickles and grapes. Three crampholes are recorded and indications of a fourth²²³.

The context of discovery is recorded as west of the Peel Glen in the southern slope of Hutcheson Hill south of the Wall where it was recovered face-down during trenching for drainage c. 3 foot below the surface²²⁴. Macdonald calculates that nos 9 and 10 were paired and mark opposite sectors of work on the Wall due their recording of 3000 feet which roughly corresponds with the measured distances between them²²⁵. Keppie's proposed placement c. NGR NS 516 723 appears relatively accurate from the descriptive accounts.

11. Hutcheson Hill (Hunterian Museum Number GLAHM.F.1969.22, RIB 3507)

IMP C T AE HADRIANO ANTONINO AVG PIO P P VEX LEG XX VV FEC PP III

(For the Emperor Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius, Father of his Country, a detachment of the Twentieth Valerian and Victorious Legion built this over a distance of 3000)

Carved from yellowish-buff sandstone, this is an exceptionally well-articulated sculpture that depicts architectural features, including an archway in the centre with triangular pediments on the side atop Corinthian pillars. Under the central archway a female figure, thought to be a representation of *Britannia* rather than Victory who would normally be depicted with wings, holds a sacrificial dish in her left hand and presents a small laurel wreath to the eagle atop the legionary standard (*aquila*) held by an *aquilifer*²²⁶. They are flanked on either side by kneeling and bound captives looking on with inscribed roundels or shields behind them. The left captive is clean-shaven and naked like those on nos 1 and 6, whilst the groin of the bearded captive on the right is covered by what appears to be a loincloth-like garment. In a central panel on the bottom the legionary boar charges to the right flanked by *peltae*.

²²¹ after MACDONALD 1911, 285

²²² KEPPIE 1998, 80

²²³ BUCHANAN 1883, 14-17

²²⁴ BUCHANAN 1883, 14-17

²²⁵ MACDONALD 1934, 384

²²⁶ KEPPIE 1998, 81

This is the first Distance Stone to have been discovered in more than a century and was found in 1969 between Castlehill and Duntocher forts at Cleddans farm during ploughing c. 3m south of the Wall in what the ploughman considered to be a shallow pit at NGR 51547234²²⁷. It was donated to the Hunterian Museum some months later. Like other examples, it has dovetail crampholes for securing this inscription to a supporting frame. Its recovery from the same field as no. 10 suggests these two were originally placed together, though doubt has been cast on whether the distance inscribed fits into Macdonald's schematic²²⁸. The authors suggest nos 9, 10 and 11 must all refer to the same sector of work and may have been placed on the north and south of the Wall. Perhaps more likely, it is here suggested they were located on either side of the Military Way.

12. Braidfield Farm, Duntocher (Hunterian Museum Number GLAHM.F.9, RIB 2200)

IMP C T AELIO HADRIANO ANTONINO AVG P P VEX LEG VI VICTRIS P F OPVS VALLI P (X)(X)(X) CCXL F (flag: *VIRT AVG*)

(For the Emperor Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus, Father of his Country, a detachment of the Sixth Victorious, Loyal and Faithful Legion built the work of the wall over a distance of 30,240)

(On flag: *Virtus Augusta* - Valour of the Emperor)

Carved from yellowish-buff sandstone, this Distance Stone is also exquisitely sculpted and depicts two winged Victories with right feet resting on globes holding up an inscribed panel framed by *peltae* and flanked on the left by a bearded Mars in full panoply and Valour in Amazonian attire and holding a on the right holding a flag inscribed with *VIRT AVG*²²⁹. It was discovered in 1812 and shortly thereafter donated to the Hunterian Museum.

There are some significant similarities between nos 12 and 15, both commemorating the 6th Legion, that differ markedly from all other Antonine Wall Distance Stones. They are, for example, the only examples dedicated to the Emperor that do not include his title of *Pio*²³⁰. They are also the only examples that make explicit reference to construction of the Wall (*OPVS VALLI*) and both are the only two to include symbols 'X' thought to indicate thousands as a variant of 'M'²³¹. However, more likely this practice of framing an X in brackets is an abbreviated way to define 10,000²³² meaning that instead of the traditional translation of this distance as 3240 it should, in fact, more accurately read **30,240 feet**.

There is sparse information recorded as to the find context for this inscription, save for it being found in 1812 on Braidfield Farm c. half a mile south-east of Duntocher²³³. Macdonald²³⁴ places this on the third field to the left of the road westward of Cleddans Farm, probably c. NGR NS 5033 7221. This differs slightly from Canmore's recorded spot c. NGR NS 507 722 and Keppie's²³⁵ proposed spot immediately beside Braidfield Farm at NGR NS 501 721. In his first edition Macdonald²³⁶ notes this is the stone referred to on historic Ordnance Survey maps close to the Roman bridge just north of Duntocher Burn, though he has altered this in the second edition to refer instead to no. 13²³⁷.

13 - Unknown provenance, possibly near Duntocher (Hunterian Museum Number GLAHM.F.10, RIB 2203)

LEG II AVG F P IIII CXL

(The Second Augustan Legion built this over a distance of 4140)

Carved from buff sandstone, this Distance Stone was donated to the Hunterian Museum between 1826 and 1845 and the circumstances of its discovery are unrecorded though Stuart²³⁸ suggested it could have belonged to either Duntocher or another fort. Stylistically it is almost identical to no. 14 with inscribed text framed in a central panel, here with acanthus leaf patterns²³⁹, flanked by *peltae* with griffin-head terminals and rosettes in each corner. On the top a Capricorn with twisted tail swims to the left and on the bottom a winged Pegasus also gallops left. This is one of only two examples that are devoid of a dedication to the Emperor (see also no. 4), though close inspection of no. 14 strongly suggests the dedication is a later addition to the original sculpture. There are two dovetail crampholes on the top.

The findspot for this Distance Stone has not been ascertained with any degree of certainty and is based on conjecture, first by Stuart²⁴⁰ who does state it could easily have been derived from another fort but has been assigned to Duntocher based upon the stylistic similarities with no. 14. It is thought to record a distance westward from Braidfield²⁴¹, despite not finding any parallel with the example from Braidfield (no. 12) either stylistically, in measured distance or in the dedicating legion (no. 12 by *Legio IV* and no. 13 by *Legio II*). Keppie²⁴² assigns it an NGR findspot of NS 595 728, but that would place it significantly north of the wall near Wilderness Plantation and west of Cawder House. More likely it is correctly placed by Canmore c. NGR

²²⁷ STEER/CORMACK 1969, 122

²²⁸ STEER/CORMACK 1969, 124

²²⁹ KEPPIE 1998, 83-4

²³⁰ STUART 1852, 298

²³¹ KEPPIE 1998, 84

²³² BRUUN/EDMONDSON 2014, 813

²³³ STUART 1852, 297

²³⁴ MACDONALD 1934, 385

²³⁵ KEPPIE 1998, 83

²³⁶ MACDONALD 1911, 297

²³⁷ MACDONALD 1934, 386

²³⁸ STUART 1852, 298

²³⁹ KEPPIE 1979, 17; *contra* KEPPIE 1998, 84

²⁴⁰ STUART 1852, 298

²⁴¹ MACDONALD 1934, 386

²⁴² KEPPIE 1998, 84

NS 4931 7279 near the Roman Bridge noted in the historic accounts²⁴³. It has been suggested this stone may find a partner with no. 15 by a detachment of the 6th Legion since the distance here (4140) is thought to differ only by one foot to no. 15 which records 4141 which may be the result of an error by the inscriber²⁴⁴. However, see notes on nos 12 and 15, it is here suggested that errors permeate traditional translation of no. 15 which should alternatively be read as 40,141 feet.

14 – Carleith, Duntocher (Hunterian Museum Number GLAHM.F. 12, RIB 2204)

IMP ANTON AVG PIO P P LEG II AVG F P III CCLXXI

(For the Emperor Antoninus Augustus Pius, Father of his Country, the Second Augustan Legion built this over a distance of 3271)

Carved from buff sandstone, this Distance Stone was incorporated above the gate at Cochno House, near Duntocher²⁴⁵ and has a small triangular cramphole in the top centre²⁴⁶. It was donated to the University of Glasgow between 1732-1759 by the owner of Cochno House, James Hamilton of Barns. Stylistically, this is a very close copy of no. 13, but the border of the inscribed panel is cabled and it includes a dedication to the Emperor Antoninus Pius, though its placement squeezed into gaps between the Capricorn in the top section has clearly not been planned into the original sculpting²⁴⁷. Additional slight variations appear with the Capricorn's tail which in this sculpture is straightened and the rosettes are more complex in structure. Critically, the distances are not duplicated so they evidently do not form a pair marking either end of a completed stretch of construction work, though no. 14 is thought to mark a sector between Duntocher and Carleith²⁴⁸. Macdonald²⁴⁹ posits that it records the distance between nos 13 and 14.

The original findspot for this Distance Stone is unrecorded, though it has been reasonably assumed to have come from close to Duntocher given the assertion by Stukeley²⁵⁰ that it was found at Carleith combined with its placement at Cochno House which is the immediate vicinity of the fort²⁵¹. Keppie²⁵² has erroneously assigned a findspot at NGR NS 481 731 which would place it north of the wall close to Dalnottar Cemetery. More likely it could have originally been located closer to the spot assigned on Canmore c. NGR NS 482 729, though in the circumstances that is conjecture.

15 – Old Kilpatrick, Dalnottar Burn? (Hunterian Museum Number GLAHM.F.13, RIB 2205)

IMP C T AELIO HADRIANO ANTONINO AVG P P VEX LEG VI VIC P F OPVS VALLI P(X)(X)(X)(X) CXLI

(For the Emperor Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius, Father of his Country, a detachment of the Sixth Victorius, Loyal and Faithful Legion built the work of the wall over a distance of 40,141)

Carved from greyish buff sandstone, this inscription is set within a plain double moulding with guidelines above and below letters faintly visible as well as a seventh line that was ultimately not inscribed²⁵³. It has a small dovetail cramphole in the top. Although not stylistically similar, the inscription on this example bears striking similarities with no. 12, including making explicit reference to the construction of the Wall through the term 'OPUS VALLI', omission of 'PIO' in the Emperor's title, a feature that is unique to both and ascribed by Macdonald²⁵⁴ as accidental rather than ignorance, and both contain (X) symbols for thousand. However, like no. 12, this is probably an abbreviated way to define 10,000²⁵⁵ meaning that instead of the traditional translation of this distance as 4141 it should, in fact, more accurately read **40,141 feet**.

Its context of discovery is not clear, the closest findspot recorded as it being ploughed up in the Parish of Kilpatrick in Lennox "where the wall ended"²⁵⁶ between Glasgow and Dumbarton Castle on the lands of William Hamilton of Orbiston. It was then briefly retained at Hamilton's country home at Erskine House, south of the River Clyde, before he donated it to the University of Glasgow in 1695²⁵⁷ along with no. 16²⁵⁸. The historical sources make no mention of Dalnottar, but Stuart's²⁵⁹ statement that nos 15 and 16 were recovered from the Chapel-hill (Old Kilpatrick fort) matches the earlier accounts of its recovery from the Wall terminus at NGR NS 4600 7315. Despite this, and Macdonald's²⁶⁰ earlier acceptance of this findspot, it has been traditionally ascribed to Dalnottar Burn marking the Wall sector from there to Carleith (c. NGR NS 471 731 on Canmore) following on from no. 15²⁶¹ to fit into Macdonald's proposed schematic.

²⁴³ MACDONALD 1934, 386

²⁴⁴ STRANG 2007, 15

²⁴⁵ HORSLEY 1732, 195

²⁴⁶ KEEPIE 1998, 85

²⁴⁷ KEEPIE 1998, 85

²⁴⁸ KEEPIE 1998, 85

²⁴⁹ MACDONALD 1934, 388

²⁵⁰ STUKELEY 1720, 9

²⁵¹ MACDONALD 1911, 277

²⁵² KEEPIE 1998, 85

²⁵³ KEEPIE 1998, 86

²⁵⁴ MACDONALD 1934, 385 and 389

²⁵⁵ BRUN/EDMONDSON 2014, 813

²⁵⁶ STUKELEY 1720, 8

²⁵⁷ SIBBALD 1707, 52

²⁵⁸ MACDONALD 1934, 389-390

²⁵⁹ STUART 1852, 285

²⁶⁰ MACDONALD 1911, 276

²⁶¹ MACDONALD 1934, 389; KEEPIE 1998, 86

16 – Old Kilpatrick, Dalnottar Burn? (Hunterian Museum Number GLAHM.F.14, RIB 2206)

[I]MP C T AE [H]ADRIANO [A]NTONINO [AV]G PIO P P [VEX L]EG XX VV [PP IIII C]DXI

(For the Emperor Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius, Father of his Country, a detachment of the Twentieth Valerian and Victorious Legion built this over a distance of 4411)

Carved from yellowish-buff sandstone, this inscription was donated to the University of Glasgow by William Hamilton of Orbiston, owner of Erskine House, in 1695 along with no. 15. It contains a central panel inscription bounded by triple mouldings and an *ansate* on the right which was probably duplicated on the left which is now missing. Inside the *ansate* is a naked and winged cupid carrying a bunch of grapes and sickle²⁶². There is a small triangular cramphole in the top right of centre which was possibly matched by another on the left missing segment. It mirrors no. 10 from Hutcheson Hill in style, dimension and iconography and may also at one time have depicted a boar galloping toward a tree at the bottom as the emblem of the 20th Legion, dedicators of both stones.

As with no. 15, the findspot for this Distance Stone is not recorded, though Keppie²⁶³ does indicate Old Kilpatrick (NGR NS 4600 7315) as a potential candidate for its discovery as the eastern partner to no. 17 which duplicates the recorded distance on this inscription. It could alternatively have been placed alongside no. 17 with both facing opposite directions on either side of the Military Way.

17 – Old Kilpatrick, Ferrydyke? (Hunterian Museum Number GLAHM.F.15, RIB 2208)

IMP C T AE HADRIANO ANTONNO AVG PIO P P VEX LEG XX V V FEC P P IIII CDXI

(For the Emperor Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius, Father of his Country, a detachment of the Twentieth Valiant and Victorious Legion built this over a distance of 4411)

Carved from buff sandstone, this ornately decorated Distance Stone was donated to the University of Glasgow before 1684 on the death of the Third Marquis of Montrose²⁶⁴. As the Marquesses did not own the land on which Old Kilpatrick sits it may have come into his possession from a third party and is recorded as having been located in Mugdock House prior its destruction in the wars of 1640²⁶⁵ and before the death of the donor²⁶⁶. The inscribed text mirrors that of no. 16, both dedicated to the 20th Legion and marking a distance of 4411. The iconography depicts a reclining winged Victory beneath a pediment atop fluted pilasters with Corinthian capitals. The goddess is holding an upright palm frond in her left hand and a large laurel wreath in her right which has been used as a panel to hold some of the inscribed text. Her left elbow rests on a globe with criss-crossed bands and below her an elongated *ansate* panel has the legionary symbol of a boar facing leftward with the measured distances on either side of it. There is a dovetail²⁶⁷ cramphole in the top. Since it matches the distance on no. 16, it is thought to record the completion of a sector between Dalnottar Burn and Old Kilpatrick fort²⁶⁸.

The findspot for this Distance Stone is not recorded, Sibbald²⁶⁹ notes only that it came from the Wall and Gordon²⁷⁰ assigns it with other carved stones from Old Kilpatrick while Maitland²⁷¹ states it derives from Ferrydyke, on the River Clyde close to the fort. Its place of discovery cannot, therefore, be assigned with any more accuracy than the environs of Old Kilpatrick fort, though Keppie²⁷² likens the reclined position of Victory to the pose normally adopted by river gods which may refer to its placement close to the River Clyde. If the reference to Ferrydyke is reasonably accurate at c. NGR NS 45902 73000, this stone could well mark the western terminus of the Wall or Military Way which could explain its exquisite sculptural detail and stylistic composition mirroring sculptures of river gods.

18 – Duntocher, Cochno Estate (Hunterian Museum Number GLAHM.F.11, RIB 2199)

IMP C T AE HADRIANO ANTONINO AVG PIO P P VEX LEG XX V V FEC P

(For the Emperor Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius, Father of his Country, a detachment of the Twentieth Valiant and Victorious Legion built this over a distance of ...)

Carved from buff sandstone, this inscription is set against a plain panelled background with cabled border and stylistically very similar to no. 9, though on this example the legionary boar faces to the right and this is a five-sided shape as opposed to rectangular with a dovetail cramphole in the gable angle²⁷³. Although previously dismissed as a ‘waster’²⁷⁴, this is very clearly an unfinished inscription, one of only two examples devoid of measured distance. Given the very small dimensions of the area to the right of the boar where measurement would logically have been inscribed, a very short distance of ‘III’ is likely to have been intended for inclusion here, as with no. 9.

The original findspot for this Distance Stone is unrecorded, though it was assumed to derive from Duntocher near the

²⁶² KEPPIE 1998, 87

²⁶³ KEPPIE 1998, 87

²⁶⁴ STUKELEY 1720, 10

²⁶⁵ KEPPIE 1998, 68 and 88

²⁶⁶ GORDON 1726, 50

²⁶⁷ KEPPIE 1998, 88

²⁶⁸ KEPPIE 1998, 88

²⁶⁹ SIBBALD 1707, 207

²⁷⁰ GORDON 1726, 50

²⁷¹ MAITLAND 1757, 182

²⁷² KEPPIE 1998, 88

²⁷³ KEPPIE 1998, 82

²⁷⁴ MACDONALD 1934, 387

Cochno Estate purely because of its donation to the University of Glasgow in October 1699 by the owner of the estate, Claud Hamilton of Barns²⁷⁵, before his descendent, James Hamilton of Barns, donated no. 14. In his second edition Macdonald²⁷⁶ dismisses it as a ‘waster’, though he does question its provenance from Cochno purely on the basis that the 20th Legion “was busy elsewhere”.

Following Maxwell’s²⁷⁷ hypothesis, Keppie²⁷⁸ agrees this must refer to one of the work-sectors completed by the 20th Legion west of Castlehill. However, given its duplication of no. 9 except for the omission of completed distance, the clear evidence of some stones moving between owners of different estates (e.g. nos 2 and 17), the dedication by detachments of the 20th and the duplicate distances of 3000 units of measure, it is here proposed that this inscription may have originally been located at Castlehill alongside nos 9, 10, 11, and possibly 2. This may indicate four stones commemorating each work sector with two placed at either end or, taken a step further, it is possible that we may have identified a second artisan’s workshop at Castlehill c. NGR NS 5246 7258, as at Balmuildy, which may explain the absence of measurement inscribed onto this incomplete example. It is incorrectly placed at NGR NS 49 72 on Canmore which is a distance away from Duntocher fort.

19 – Arniebog, Cumbernauld, near Westerwood (Hunterian Museum Number GLAHM.F.16)

No inscription (broken object)

Carved from yellow sandstone, this is a fragment from the left side of a large sculpted stone which could be a commemorative tablet. However, it is assumed to have been a Distance Stone due to its recovery from the vicinity of the Antonine Wall along with the sculpted detail of a naked captive resting on one knee with hands bound behind his back, as depicted on other examples such as nos 1, 6 and 11, and a bearded Triton above with twisted tail holding an anchor in the crook of his right arm²⁷⁹. The dimensions allude to an original rectangular shape and an internal panel with cabled border differs from the other examples as it takes the shape of diamond or hexagon²⁸⁰ that is reminiscent of the screens fronting the *Principia* at Vindolanda²⁸¹. Although the decorative technique of triple borders have been likened to those of the 20th Legion on nos 10, 11 and 16²⁸², comparisons are perhaps more legitimately made with the kneeling bound captives on examples dedicated by the 2nd Legion, nos 1 and 6, and the 20th Legion’s no. 11, particularly the latter. This sculpture was acquired by John Buchanan and donated to the University of Glasgow along with other inscribed stones in 1872²⁸³. There is one dovetail cramphole on the left side.

This sculpture was discovered through ploughing by the family of farmer, William Chalmers, from a field bounded on the north by ‘Grim’s Sheugh’ (the Wall) around 34 feet from the mural barrier, between Westerwood fort and Castlecary fort which lay c. 1 mile to the east²⁸⁴. Keppie²⁸⁵ suggests a findspot c. 450 m further east of Arniebog farm based on the descriptive account at Hag Knowe. This would place the stone at NGR NS 770 777²⁸⁶ on the Military Way (not at c. NS 766 775 as noted on Canmore).

20 – Old Kilpatrick, Ferrydyke (lost)

Unknown inscription (missing object)

An inscription thought to be a Distance Stone was at one time built into the threshold of a house at Ferrydyke c. NGR NS 45902 73000 where it was recorded as being carved with a curiously sculpted 8.75 cm border containing an inscription that was so worn by walking over that it was unintelligible²⁸⁷. Keppie²⁸⁸ suggests the description matches that of no. 9 dedicated by the 20th Legion who constructed this sector of the frontier as confirmed by the other Distance Stones in the vicinity. It is now lost.

21 – Bar Hill (CIL vii 1110a, RIB 2312? - lost)

IMP CAES T AELIO ADRIA ANTINO AVG P O P P ...VEXLL

(For the Emperor Caesar [Titus] Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius, Father of his Country, a detachment of)

Macdonald²⁸⁹ makes a passing note to an ‘imperfect inscription’ that he considers to have been a Distance Stone based on the inscribed text recorded in CIL vii (1110a). Although Macdonald states it must have originated from Croy Hill or Bar Hill, the CIL note records it quite clearly from Bar Hill ‘*in pariete horti domini de Kilseith*’, (Kilsyth) at c. NGR NS 707 759, not at Croy Hill as noted on Canmore (NGR NS 733 765). This may refer to RIB 2312 which could be a column-shaft milestone rather than a Distance Stone²⁹⁰.

²⁷⁵ GORDON 1726, 61; MACDONALD 1911, 279; HAMILTON 1933, 121; KEEPIE 1998, 83

²⁷⁶ MACDONALD 1934, 387

²⁷⁷ MAXWELL 1974

²⁷⁸ KEEPIE 1998, 82

²⁷⁹ KEEPIE 199, 89

²⁸⁰ KEEPIE 1979, 20

²⁸¹ KEEPIE 1998, 90

²⁸² KEEPIE 1988, 89

²⁸³ KEEPIE 1988, 89

²⁸⁴ BUCHANAN 1872, 473

²⁸⁵ KEEPIE 1974, 154

²⁸⁶ KEEPIE 1998, 89

²⁸⁷ MAITLAND 1757, 183

²⁸⁸ KEEPIE 1979, 20

²⁸⁹ MACDONALD 1934, 392

²⁹⁰ W HANSON, pers. comm.