



Excavating a cobbled road surface at Cramond (AOC Archaeology Group).

## Roman Road revealed at Cramond Campus Excavation

In August and September 2003, AOC Archaeology Group undertook an excavation in advance of a residential housing development within the former Cramond Campus of the University of Edinburgh, previously Moray House College of Physical Education. The excavation, which covered an area of approximately 6,710 m<sup>2</sup>, revealed two fragments of Roman road and defensive features associated with the enclosure of the Roman fort's civil settlement.

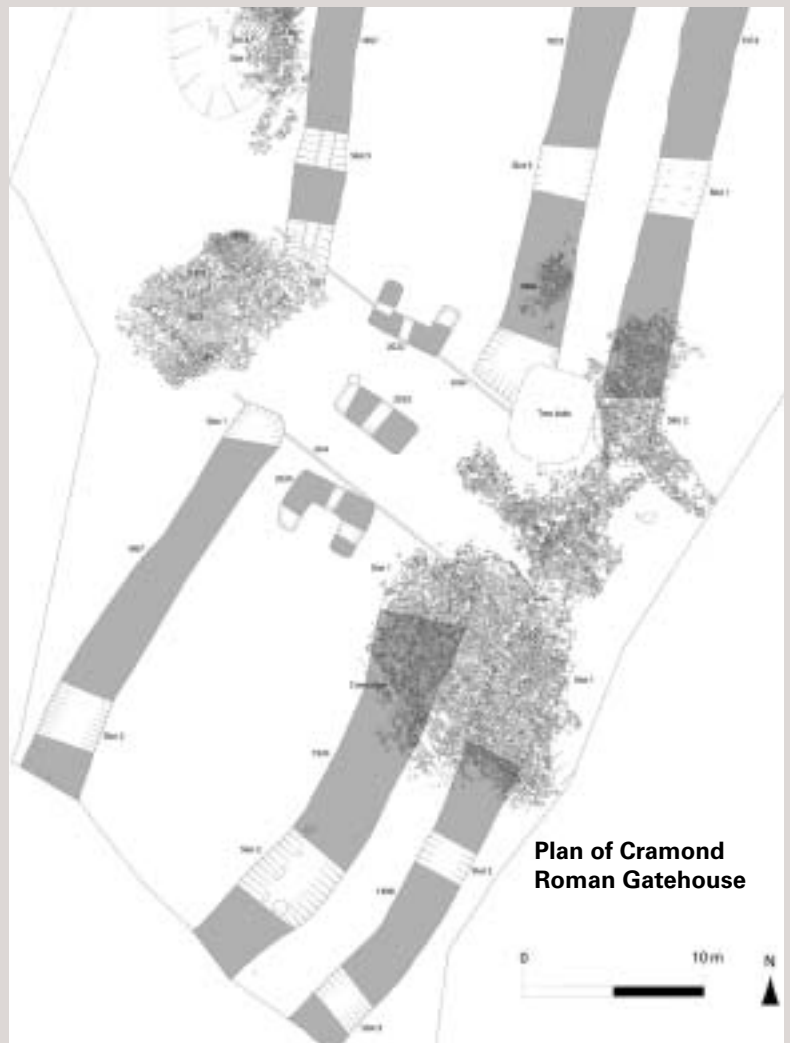
Cramond fort, situated to the north-west of the excavation area, has been subject to several small scale excavations since early pioneer work by Alan & Viola Rae in the 1950s. A recent book by Nicholas Holmes – *Excavation of Roman Sites at Cramond, Edinburgh* (Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Monograph 23) brings together much of the evidence garnered from these excavations. In addition to the fort itself, the evidence points to the existence of a large annex on the south-east side of the fort containing remains relating to contemporary industrial activity.

Two sections of cobble road were revealed by the 2003 excavation, each approximately 10 m wide. Their NW-SE alignment coincided with another section of Roman road to the NW, discovered by Charles Hoy in 1986, and to that of a post-medieval road, unearthed by evaluation trenching in 2000, lying to the SE. Both sections overlay the defensive works described below. Amphora sherds were frequently

found in the road surfaces as were, in lesser quantities, domestic pottery sherds and ceramic tile and rotary quern fragments.

The outermost features discovered in 2003 comprised large, parallel twin ditches aligned NNE-SSW and separated by a 3 m wide berm. Their profiles varied from V-shaped to U-shaped, with a rectangular slot at the base in places and they were a maximum of 1.90 m deep. The ditches generally varied from 2.60 m to 3.70 m in width, but widened to up to 5 m at the terminals of a 10 m wide entranceway south-west of the site. No trace of any rampart was discovered. Behind the entranceway lay three shallow foundation

trenches for a stone-built gatehouse, whose twin arches each spanned about 3.3 m. Its fine construction was evident from the several large blocks of dressed sandstone which were recovered from the ditch terminals.



Plan of Cramond Roman Gatehouse

A third, slighter ditch was found about 13 m to the west, lying within the circuit of the twin ditches and sharing the same alignment and entrance way orientation. Its width varied from 2.3 m to 3.3 m, and the feature had a maximum depth of 1.7 m. The profile varied along its course, although the angle of the ditch sides generally steepened towards the base.

These defences are provisionally considered to represent an extensive and, to judge from the gateway, highly formal Severan enclosure. It may have bounded an industrial area, or perhaps a vicus, a civilian settlement commonly found outside Roman forts inhabited by people servicing or associated with the fort. It is expected that post-excavation analyses will provide a fuller understanding of the site and allow the integration of data from earlier investigations.

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## Excavations at the Roman Marching Camp, Kintore

Archaeologists from AOC Archeology Group completed a further programme of archaeological works during December, 2003 at Kintore Roman Marching Camp, Aberdeenshire. The current work covers around 3 ha and is located in the south-western corner of the camp. As with the previous projects these works have uncovered a sequence of activity from the Neolithic to the medieval period. Highlights include a possible pit defined cursus monument, two roundhouses, 16 Roman bread ovens, an entrance to the Roman Camp. The present works brings the total volume of excavation at Kintore to around 17 ha making it one of the most extensively studied archaeological areas in Scotland!

The post-excavation works from the first series of excavations at Forest Road, Kintore is nearing completion and should be in print for the end of 2004.

### Highlights

Highlights of this work include the following: a Beaker decorated with crushed bone; a sequence of 30 roundhouses from 1500 BC to 100 AD where the entrances move in anti-

clockwise direction over time; and the remains of a Roman casket without parallel in Britain. The casket is of particular interest as it was obviously used to carry something of high status to Kintore and then destroyed, which begs the question of what happened to the casket's contents, were they perhaps a bribe for the local peoples?

The bulk of the dating evidence from the camp indicates that the Roman phase dates to the 1st or 2nd Centuries AD, although there are some indications of 3rd century activity! Following the Roman phase there is a hiatus of site activity until the 6th century AD. Is it possible that the area around Kintore was so badly affected that settlement took three or four hundred years to recover? Another possibility is that the locals maintained a tradition about the Roman presence and the land was considered inappropriate for settlement.

The post-excavation results of this latest phase of works are eagerly anticipated and it is hoped that they will reveal more of Kintore's secrets!

The archaeological work at Kintore has been undertaken by AOC Archaeology Group for Aberdeenshire Council.

Excavating prehistoric roundhouses at Kintore. (AOC Archaeology Group)

