

World Heritage Status granted to Antonine Wall

The Antonine Wall – once the northwest frontier of the Roman Empire - was last night (Mon, July 7) awarded World Heritage Site status. The decision was made by UN cultural body UNESCO at a meeting in Canada.

The announcement was part of a larger, international effort to see Roman frontiers across Europe recognised. A Scottish bid was put forward by Historic Scotland with the backing of both the Scottish and UK Governments.

The Wall - built around AD 142 - spans central Scotland from Bo'ness on the Forth to Old Kilpatrick on the Clyde. It now joins a select group of globally-important structures like the Great Wall of China, New Lanark and Stonehenge.

Supporters believe World Heritage Site status for the Antonine Wall will bring more tourists to museums and Roman sites across central Scotland.

Some of the best-preserved remains of the Wall run across the Falkirk Council area from Roughcastle, near Bonnybridge in the west, to Kinneil at Bo'ness in the east.

“Gaining World Heritage Site status is a major achievement – and focuses international attention on our area,” said Bo'ness Councillor Adrian Mahoney, Falkirk Council's Convener of Environment and Heritage.

“There's no doubt the recognition by UNESCO's World Heritage Committee will attract more tourists to the area, keen to find out more about our Roman history which can only help our local economy, particularly hotels, restaurants and tourist facilities.

“We only have to look at northern England and see how Hadrian's Wall has helped to boost the profile and fortunes of that area. Hopefully, the Antonine Wall will do the same for central Scotland.”

The Wall was built by the Emperor Antoninus Pius to hold back Caledonian tribes from invading southern Scotland, then under Roman rule. Unlike the stone-built Hadrian's Wall, the Antonine Wall consisted of a rampart of soil, faced with turf, resting on a stone foundation. It stood 12 feet high, and was protected on the north side by a wide, deep V-shaped ditch. It was abandoned around AD 160, when the Romans retreated to Hadrian's Wall.

Today, many parts of the Antonine Wall lie under towns and settlements, built long after the Romans departed Scotland. However, evidence of the wall's ramparts and buildings can still be found.

Councillor Mahoney said: “The Falkirk area is fortunate in having a number of highly visible parts of the Antonine Wall. As well as the remains of a fortlet at Kinneil, Bo'ness, and a fort at Roughcastle, near Bonnybridge, the wall can also be seen at Polmont Woods; Watling Lodge, Tamfourhill (near the Falkirk Wheel), Callendar Park in Falkirk; and Seabegs Woods, near Bonnybridge. We also have free exhibitions on the Romans in our museums, Callendar House, Falkirk, and Kinneil in Bo'ness.

“Of course, it’s also important that we work with partners to preserve and look after the parts of the Antonine Wall which remain. Over hundreds of years parts of the wall have disappeared. It’s now our responsibility to look after this very important structure and preserve this important piece of world history for future generations. After all, this isn’t just any Roman artefact – it’s a World Heritage Site . . . and we’re delighted to have that status.”

• Falkirk Council has published a free guide to walks along the Wall and has also set up web pages to help people find out more about the Roman frontier in central Scotland www.falkirkonline.net/antoninewall

More on the World Heritage Site bid at

<http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/antoninewall>

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