

## Roman Empire: Civilians

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Roman soldiers were well paid. To their forts were attracted merchants, inn-keepers and women - in fact all those who wished to transfer as much as possible of the soldiers pay into their own pockets. Little is known in Scotland of civil settlements which typically sprang up outside forts elsewhere in the empire. At Inveresk - beyond the east end of the Antonine Wall - excavation has demonstrated that the buildings outside the 2nd century fort were of timber but were later replaced in stone. The layout suggests that the buildings were set out along the main street which left the east gate of the fort.

One of the buildings here contained a furnace and was clearly used for industrial purposes. Other buildings in civil settlements would have been inns and shops, temples and houses. Although a Roman soldier was not allowed to marry according to Roman law, he might acquire an unofficial wife and perhaps marry her according to local custom. This union was retrospectively recognised by the State when he retired. The wife and children would have lived in the civil settlement: sons often appeared to have joined their father's regiment. Sometime these civil settlements gained self-governing rights. One such case in Scotland, at Carriden at the east end of the Antonine Wall.

We know of no other examples of local government in Scotland during any of the Roman periods; certainly no towns or cities seem to have been founded. The whole of the frontier zone was probably military territory, administered by the army.

The inhabitants of the civil settlements were wholly dependent on the army and would follow it wherever it led. There is no evidence that any of the settlements established outside forts in Scotland survived the withdrawal of the army in either the 1st or the 2nd century.

Surprisingly there is little tangible sight of contact between the soldiers and civilians of the fort, with its attendant village, and the people of the countryside. Some Roman objects found their way on to native farms, but relatively few. More artefacts were acquired by the higher strata of society, especially those who lived in the brochs and duns of southern Scotland.

Many Roman objects have also been found on Traprain Law in East Lothian, which has led to the suggestion that the tribe whose capital that was, the Votadini, had a special treaty relationship with Rome.

The tribesmen of this northern frontier area must have been taxed by the Romans, as no doubt they had been by their previous masters. Taxation was usually in cash, though it might be in kind in frontier areas. Payment in hides and also recruits are attested on other frontiers.

Some of the young men of the northern tribes may have joined the Roman army. (Most men joined the army between the ages of 18 and 21.) If they remained peaceful, and there is little evidence for warfare within the northern region of the Roman province - the local people may have had little contact with the army. The tribes beyond the frontier were different. As we have seen, they raided or invaded the Roman province on several occasions

One interesting aspect of the Roman records of these incursions is that the named tribes are reduced in number as the centuries pass. Thus, by the 4th century we know of only one tribe beyond the Forth, the Picts, though this nation seems to have contained a number of divisions which may have reflected earlier tribes swept up into a new confederacy.

Here may lie the major gift of Rome to the people of north Britain. The presence of a united political entity in the southern part of the island seems to have led to the amalgamation of the disparate tribes beyond the frontier, which then enabled them better to oppose the might of Rome. Certainly the Picts would need the strength formed from unity in the centuries ahead as they faced invasion by Scots from Ireland, Angles from Germany, and Vikings from Norway.

Information and images in these pages are extracts from the HMSO publication 'Invaders of Scotland' by Anna Ritchie and David J Breeze. This fascinating volume contains many more images and drawings and continues the invaders theme with sections on the Vikings and Angles. Well worth the price. To buy this book try at Amazon.com for ISBN 011494136X