

Crieff and Strathearn Museum Roman Cycle Route

- * Bring your own bike or hire one from Comrie Croft (including electric bikes) <https://www.comriecroftbikes.co.uk/>.
- * Remember your helmet, lights and high-vis gear if you have it. Wear shoes that are suitable for both cycling and exploring Roman sites on foot.
- * If you're bringing your own bike, consider doing an M-check beforehand to make sure it's road worthy and safe: <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/our-blog/get-active/2019/everyday-walking-and-cycling/the-m-check-for-your-bike-in-11-steps/>.
- * Find out more about road safety at: <https://www.scotland.police.uk/advice-and-information/road-safety/cyclists/#road>. You undertake these routes at your own risk, so please take all necessary safety precautions.
- * Please enjoy the outdoors responsibly: be mindful of accessing private land (check with landowner or tenant where necessary), don't disturb crops or livestock and please don't leave litter: <https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/sites/default/files/2021-04/SOAC%20Enjoying%20Scotlands%20Outdoors%20leaflet%20online%20%28A3436975%29.pdf>
- * Bring plenty of water and snacks. You can start or end your journey with lunch, coffee and cake from the Comrie Croft Café,



or stop for food and drinks at Braco, roughly halfway through the ride.

- * If you take photographs of the sites, we would love to see them uploaded to MyCanmore, where they will join a collection of photos from everyone who's visited. Share your images by making an account and start uploading here:

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



Exploring Roman sites by bike

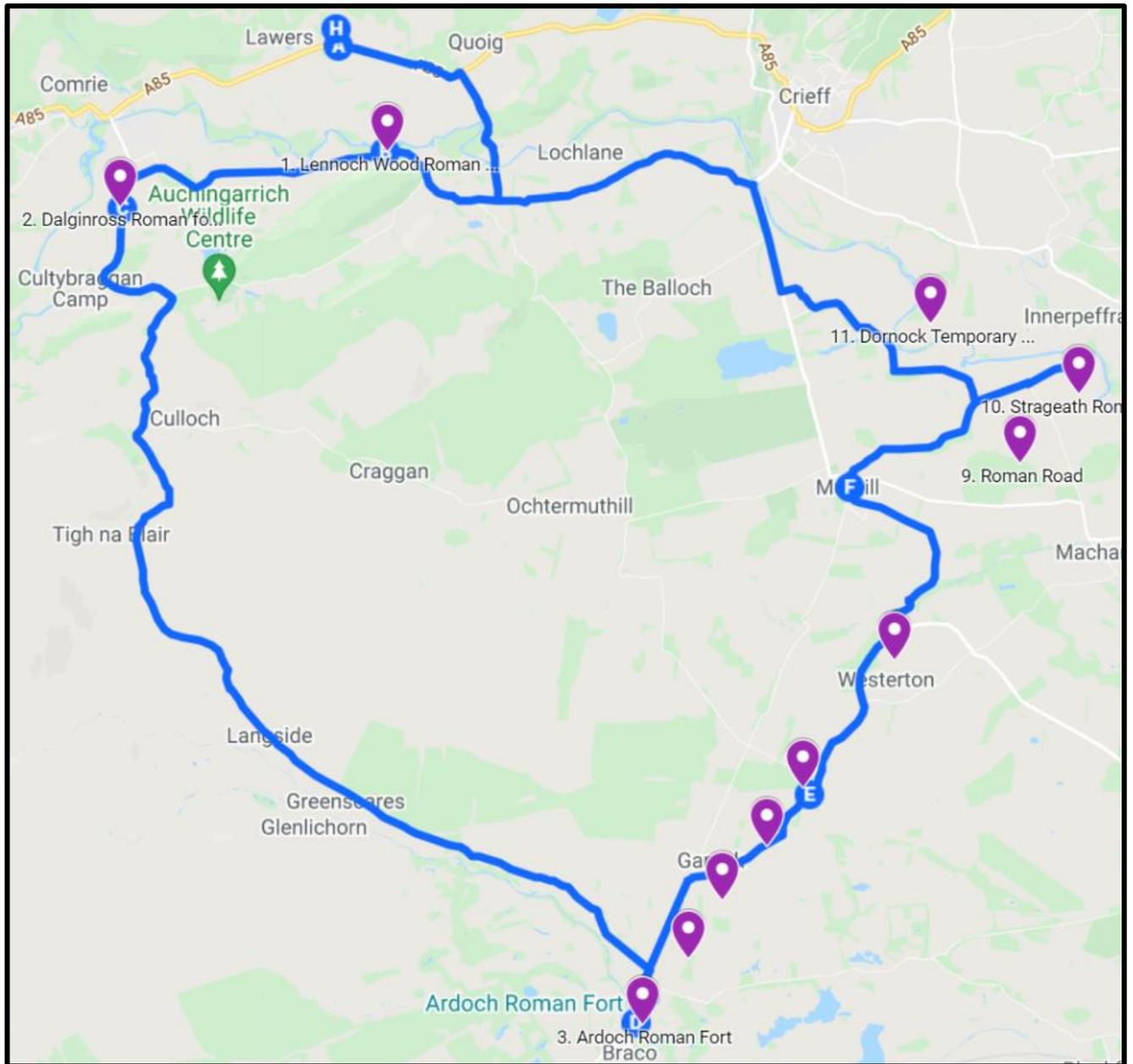
The archaeological remains of the Roman occupation in Strathearn tell a story about the size and power of the Roman army that was stationed here, how it controlled this area, and how it occupied and abandoned territory during the Flavian (c. AD 77-86/90) and Antonine (c. AD 139-165) periods. This cycle route is a way to explore Roman sites in the context of their wider landscape. You can move through the landscape at your own pace, taking some opportunities to think about how it might have looked in the first and second centuries AD, while enjoying a zero-carbon tour of Roman Perthshire! The references at the end show where you can find more information on this area during the Roman period.



You can start and end this route at Comrie Croft (point A)

Braincroft, by Crieff, Perthshire, Scotland PH7 4JZ

What3words: ///beaten.lighten.tall



<https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1-tAO8D31WmxQkoIMvEhV9pFFd1bXlccF&ll=56.347095736461775%2C-3.9993457737119815&z=11>



1. Lennoch Wood Roman road

The first evidence of Roman military occupation you will pass is the line of a possible Roman road, which lies to the left of the road (away from the River Earn) towards Lennoch Wood. No remains are visible today, but its line is important evidence for archaeologists to understand the landscape here and how the Roman military presence affected it. Cycling down this road, you can just imagine how the building of new roads during the Roman occupation would have changed the landscape for the people living here...

2. Dalginross Roman fort and camp

As you exit Dalginross, the road will take you through two fields opening to either side of you. This is the site of a large Roman military fort and temporary camp, likely with several phases and a complex history of occupation. In the field on your right traces of earthworks have been identified using aerial photography during dry periods. These can be found on the Canmore website: <https://canmore.org.uk/site/24832/dalginross>. Forts were the regimental barracks and administrative bases for the army. In this part of the world forts' external defensive features would have been made of turf, whilst buildings within the fort would have been made of timber. Although there are no remains visible today, you

can probably picture the tall structures and heavily defended turf walls surrounding the road where you are now cycling.

3. Ardoch Roman Fort

Where the B827 meets the A822, turn right to travel southwards towards Braco and Ardoch. We'll retrace our steps along this section of the road, but it's worth it to explore Ardoch Roman Fort! This Fort has some of the most extensive earthworks from the Roman Empire. The fort is complex with different phases dating from both the Flavian and Antonine occupation. Excavations in 1949 revealed that the early buildings had been burnt at the end of their lives shown by a thick layer of charcoal. Buildings found beneath this demolition layer are thought to be Flavian in date. The huge Flavian fort may have measured 8.6 acres while the two Antonine forts may have measured 6.3 acres (Breeze 1983). We know from the writing on a tombstone found here that the military unit stationed here originated in Spain. If any of the auxiliaries had still been raised in Spain, this would have been a chilly posting to Rome's most northerly frontier (Woolliscroft and Hoffmann 2006).

The original Roman road passes to the east of Ardoch Fort. When this road was first uncovered in the 19th century, the Victorian excavators



described it “as smooth as a cyclist could wish”. Hopefully the modern road that you will now follow north will prove the same! The Roman Road turns northeast along the defences of the temporary camp and passes the Black Hill Roman marching camps, which will be our next stop.

4. Black Hill Roman Camps

As you travel northwards along the A822, the Black Hill camps lie to your left, just past the junction with the B827 which we turned out of on our way here. Black Hill is part of the extensive Ardoch complex and managed by Historic Scotland, but is free to visit and open all year round. <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/places/black-hill-roman-camps>. You can get off your bike and explore the camps on foot.

5. Shielhill South Roman Watch Tower

A few minutes further up the road, the A822 will curve to the right, whilst the Muthill road branches to the left. Stay on the A822 here. To your right lies Shielhill South, a Roman Watch Tower. Only the faintest traces of it have been captured using aerial photography, however, excavation showed that it had been demolished and its



timbers and wattle and daub had been burnt in a huge fire at the end of its life (Woolliscroft and Hoffmann 2006). Watch towers were used to observe the roads and movement of people. They could also be used as signalling stations in case of attack <https://canmore.org.uk/site/25404/shielhill-south>.

6. Shielhill North Roman Watch Tower

Another 5 minutes of cycling north, and you will pass Shielhill North Watch Tower, close to the road on your right. Surface remains of this watch tower were visible until the eighteenth century, but now farming practices and landscape change mean that it is only visible from the air. Like its southern neighbour, this watch tower was also demolished and burnt once the army withdrew from the area.

7. Kaims Castle Roman Fortlet

A few more minutes cycling, and you will pass through a series of cottages, and Orchil Castille road on your right. Here on your left is the best-preserved fortlet on this line: Kaims Castle. You can get off your bike and walk through the wooden gate to the south of the cottage. The fortlet lies on the summit of a slight knoll at the summit of Drum Collie, with the rampart and ditch visible on the

ground. This site would also have held a tower and likely dates from the Flavian period. This means that the soldiers stationed here would have been able to see those at Ardoch Roman Fort, and signals could have been passed between the two in case of an attack.

8. Westerton Watch Tower

We will now continue to follow the line of the Roman Road northwards towards the next watchtower: Westerton. In five or so minutes, after passing the Machany road on your right and entering a line of trees on your left Westerton Watch Tower lies a few metres to your right. No visible remains can be seen today, but you can imagine how visible this site would have been from Kaims Castle; an important point in this defensive line.

9. Roman Road

Continue to follow the A822 until you reach the village of Muthill. On leaving Muthill, we will take the smaller Wardside road, leaving the A822 for a while to enjoy some quieter back roads. The route passes closer to the line of the Camelton - Ardoch - Strageath - Cargill Roman Road, approximately 500m to the right of the modern road.



10. Strageath Roman Fort

The next site on the route is Strageath Fort. To get here we will take the right fork at the next junction. We will retrace our steps along this round, ultimately taking the other fork to continue our journey northwards, but it's worth the few minutes' cycle eastwards to explore this site! Excavation in the 1970s revealed that Strageath Roman Fort was used in both the Flavian and Antonine periods. It overlooks the River Earn and can be accessed on foot. Laurence Keppie's guide to Scotland's Roman Remains (1998) recommends asking at the Strageath Mains Farm for access. From the front of the farm buildings, you can walk uphill along the field boundary, then left along the tree line. 120m into the second field there is a low bank which represent the rampart of the fort's annexe. 80m further on there is the fort and rampart surviving as a low mound. Continue along the fence line to find the northern rampart.

From here, the line of Roman frontier remains continues across the River Earn. However, the exact point that the Romans used to cross the river is still unknown, although it is thought a ford was used rather



than a bridge. Without a modern-day crossing here, we will turn and head north again, back towards Comrie Croft.

11. Dornock Temporary Camp

The final site that we will pass nearby is Dornock Temporary Camp. As you pass Templemill Farm Cottage, the River Earn runs close to the road on your right. Just beyond it, on the other side of the river, are the remains of this large camp which would have been approximately 23.5 acres in size.

References

- D. J. Breeze (1983) 'The Roman forts at Ardoch', in O'Connor, A and Clarke, D V, *From the Stone Age to the 'Forty-Five': Studies presented to R B K Stevenson, Former Keeper, National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland*, Edinburgh
- Lawrence Keppie (1998) *Scotland's Roman Remains*, Council for British Archaeology Scotland: Edinburgh
- D.J. Woolliscroft and B. Hoffmann (2006) *Rome's First Frontier: The Flavian Occupation*, Tempus: Stroud
- <http://scarf.rcahms.gov.uk/content/33-flavian-scotland-c-ad-77-8690>
- <http://scarf.rcahms.gov.uk/content/34-antonine-scotland-c-ad-139-165>

Safety information

Please be careful when using these routes, you are travelling at your own risk and the route includes busy roads and narrow lanes. Take care of yourself and of other road users around you. Please be mindful when visiting monuments on private land and adhere to the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

Before undertaking any of these routes, you should:

1. Assess the weather conditions, terrain, dangerous roads and crossings on the route, considering their own ability in this assessment.
2. Consider risks on the route and take all necessary safety precautions.
3. Assess your own ability to complete the route. Do not undertake the cycle ride if you have any medical conditions which could be aggravated by the ride or additional needs which may cause difficulties on the ride.
4. Print out the map so that you have a physical copy, in case the electronic map cannot be accessed via the internet, or you run out of battery on your device.
5. Ensure your bike is roadworthy and safe. If you do not have a suitable bike for the route you can hire one from Comrie Croft. Here you will be able to hire route-appropriate bikes, including electric bikes for less able road users.
6. Ensure you have enough water and food with you.
7. Prepare a first aid kit and puncture repair kit.

Whilst cycling, you should:

1. Use appropriate PPE, including a helmet and high-visibility clothing.
2. Wear clothing which is appropriate for the weather conditions. Do not wear loose clothing that could get caught whilst cycling.
3. Keep a mobile phone with you for emergencies.
4. Cycle during daylight hours, avoiding dusk.
5. Consider other road users such as horse riders, drivers and pedestrians. Always give pedestrians priority.
8. Keep safe distances between other riders and road users.
9. Keep speed low where necessary.
10. If children are taken on the route, consider shepherding them with outriders.



11. Maintain single file where appropriate, especially on busy roads.

When exploring the places on these routes please remember to treat the landscape and archaeological sites with respect: **Leave no trace.**

