

Part of Historic Environment Scotland



# CANMORE

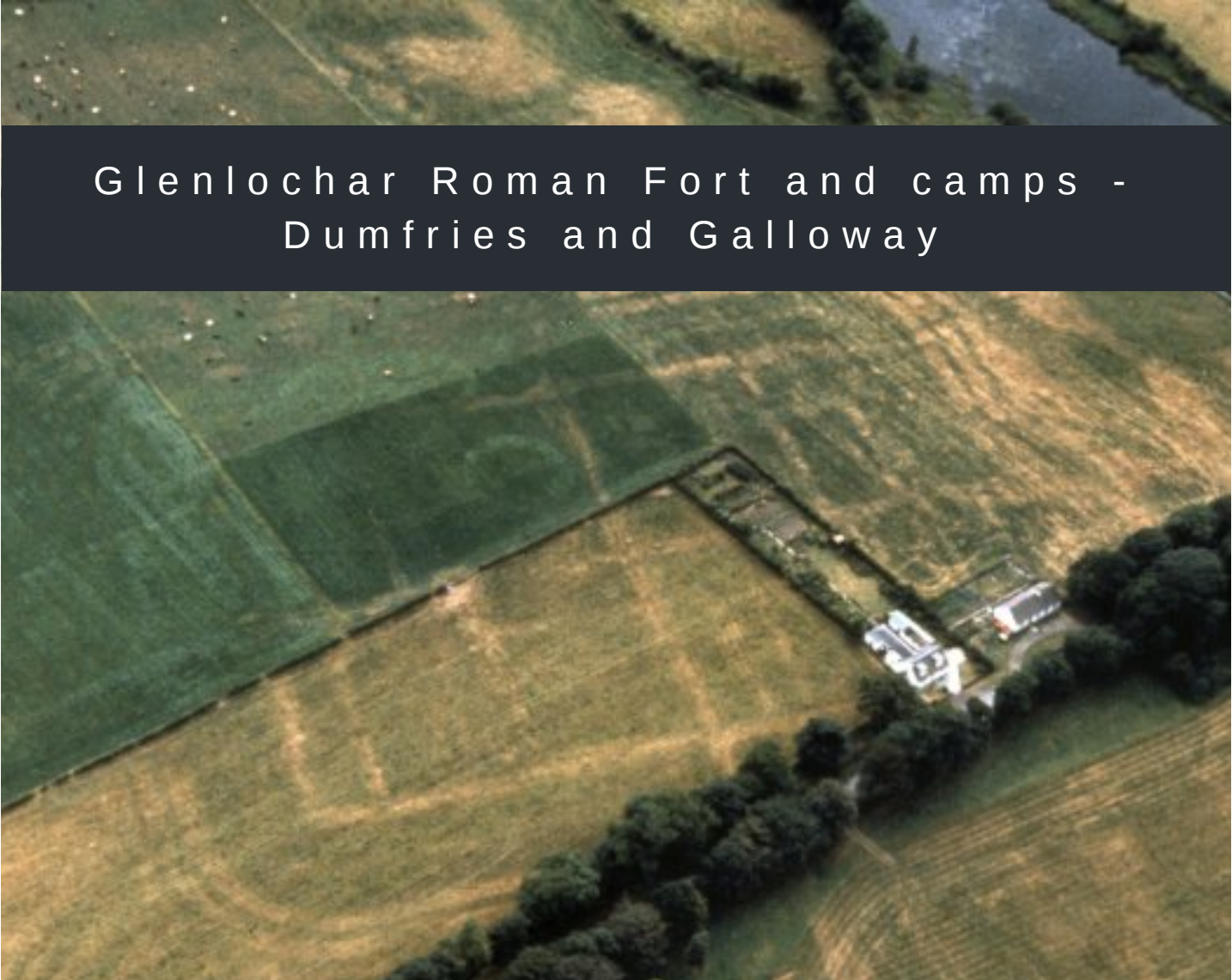
NATIONAL RECORD OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT



## Archaeology InSites



◀ [Return to Archaeology InSites](#)



### Glenlochar Roman Fort and camps - Dumfries and Galloway



## First contact

*Roman soldiers first entered southern Scotland in the later 1st century AD – tree-ring dating of timbers used to build the fort at Carlisle demonstrates that it was built in about AD 72/3. This would have been accompanied by campaigns in the north prior to the push into southern Scotland which came later in the AD 70s. Soldiers on campaign were housed in temporary camps – these were enclosures with a bank and ditch protecting their perimeter, with soldiers housed in rows of tents in the interior. We have evidence for a number of such temporary camps in south-west Scotland, but their distribution is patchy, showing how many must still remain undetected. A cluster of camps, together with a Roman fort, were recorded from the air in the dry summer of 1949 on the east bank of the River Dee at Glenlochlar by Kenneth St Joseph, a pioneer of aerial archaeology based at Cambridge University. The buried remains of ditches reveal themselves as darker markings in the crops growing above, with lighter marks showing the roads within the fort, where crop growth is stunted by the stones below. The site lies at a strategic point right next to the modern bridge (carrying the B 795 road) at one of the few suitable crossing points of the River Dee in this area. At least five camps surround the fort, further emphasizing the importance of the location for the Roman army.*





## Evidence and record

*From the air, the familiar 'playing-card' shape of the fort can be seen, with multiple ditches around the outside and the gridded pattern of roads within. Lines of dark marks outside the fort to the east reveal the quarry-pits for the Roman road which connected this fort to other Roman bases in the south-west. Small-scale trenches cut across the site in 1952 (this style of excavation was in vogue at the time), showed a 1st century fort (probably dating to the AD 70s) followed by later forts during the Antonine occupation of Scotland in the AD 140s-150s. Whilst other Roman sites are suspected in the area, of note are the number of camps sited around the fort. As some overlap one another and could not have been contemporary, they probably date to multiple Roman incursions in both the phases of campaigning in the 1st century as well as in the 2nd, and probably housed troops "on the march" in south-west Scotland. Marching camps usually reveal more on excavation and geophysical survey than they do from the air, but the southern-most camp displays a higgledy-piggledy array of dark marks in its interior. Evidence from other Roman camps would suggest that these were pits (including, potentially toilet-pits) and also Roman ovens. Some lines can be discerned in the remains, and these may hint at the location of rows of tents (the rubbish pits outside).*

*The two-week excavation in 1952 suggested that the first fort at Glenlochar was terminated through a 'wholesale conflagration'. Whether this was as a result of Roman abandonment or enemy action is not possible to determine. Glenlochar still has much to tell us about the Romans in south-west Scotland.*

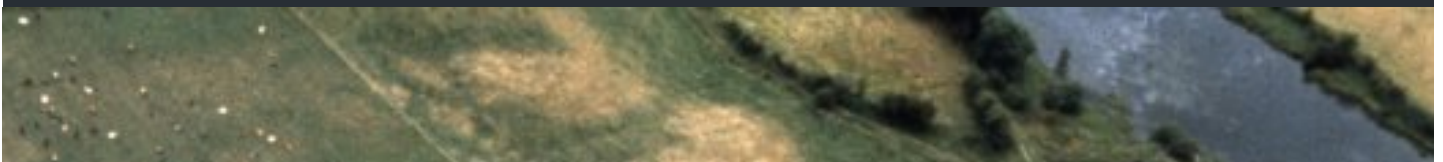
Dr Rebecca Jones - Head of Archaeology and World Heritage



<https://canmore.org.uk/site/64687/glenlochar>

<https://canmore.org.uk/site/64696>

<https://canmore.org.uk/site/76176>





## #ArchInSites

Please be aware that this site may be on private land. For more information regarding access please consult the [Scottish Outdoor Access Code](#)



[Accessibility Policy](#)  
[Buying Images](#)  
[Cookie Policy](#)  
[Legals](#)  
[Glossary](#)  
[Contact](#)  
[MyCanmore](#)

Sitemap  
User Guide



SUPPORTING  
year of young people  
bliadhna na h-òigridh  
2018



HISTORIC  
ENVIRONMENT  
SCOTLAND | ÀRAINNEACHD  
EACHDRAIDHEIL  
ALBA

© Historic Environment Scotland. Scottish Charity No. SC045925