

Rudchester (*Vindobala*)

This fort guarded and stood immediately east of the valley of the March Burn, an ancient route to the Tyne ford at Newburn. The land falls away to the March Burn on the west and to the Rudchester Burn on the south and east. The size of the fort is 1.80 ha (4.50 acres). *Cohors I Frisiavonum* constituted the garrison in both the 3rd and the 4th centuries (*RIB* 1395; *Notitia Dignitatum* XL₃₆).

History of exploration

The first major excavations were by Parker Brewis in 1924 which *inter alia* showed that the fort projected north of the Wall (AA⁴ 1, 93-120). The next and also most recent investigations occurred in 1972 when part of the south-eastern quarter was investigated (Gillam et al 1973). An analytical field survey of the fort and its environs was carried out in 1990 (Bowden & Blood 1991).

Layout and history

Little of the fort plan is known apart from the headquarters building and a granary to its west revealed in the 1924 campaign and a barrack block found in the south-east quarter during the 1972 excavations. Destroyed by fire, this had been rebuilt to the same plan in the late 2nd or early 3rd century. By the last quarter of the 3rd century this had fallen into disuse; its ruined walls covered by a layer of humus. This part of the fort was re-commissioned c. 370 AD when a series of timber-framed buildings set on stone sill-walls were erected.

Vicus

Official buildings and structures.

None known as yet.

Civilian buildings.

The land to the south and south-west of the fort is known to contain building remains, presumably those of *vicus* structures (Gillam *et al* 1954, 177). Excavation of a 3rd century Mithraeum to the south-west of the fort in 1953 found traces of underlying and unrelated buildings associated with Antonine pottery (Gillam et al 1954, 183-6). Although the precise course of the Vallum here is unknown, these almost certainly lay to the south of it and thus would be most likely to belong to a 2nd century *vicus*. Bruce refers to suburbs lying to the south-east of the fort.

Religious structures.

A Mithraeum was excavated to the south-west of the fort in 1953 (above).

Cemeteries.

As yet unlocated.

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Bibliography

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