

The Bridgeness Tablet

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The stone reflects Roman culture, propaganda and values in its commemoration of what was at the time the most up to date linear frontier in the Empire and which in 2008 was inscribed as a World Heritage Site.

Introductory Film : [The Bridgeness Tablet](#)

The distance or legionary tablet found in 1868 at Bridgeness, a little to the east of Bo'ness, is the largest and grandest of all such sculptured stones from the Antonine Wall. Indeed, it is one of the largest and most elaborately carved Roman building records to have come from Britain. Not surprisingly it is currently on display at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh, to which institution it was gifted shortly after its discovery.

The Bridgeness tablet is sculpted from a rectangular slab of fine-grained buff coloured sandstone and measures 2.75m (9ft) long, 0.9m (3ft) tall and 0.16m (6ins) thick. There are no distinct lithological features to indicate the source of the stone and such material is widely available in this part of the Forth Valley. It is only slightly bedded, which may have made it harder to extract from the parent rock but reduced the chances of subsequent lamination or flaking. The edges have been carefully squared and dressed leaving chisel marks; the back more roughly.

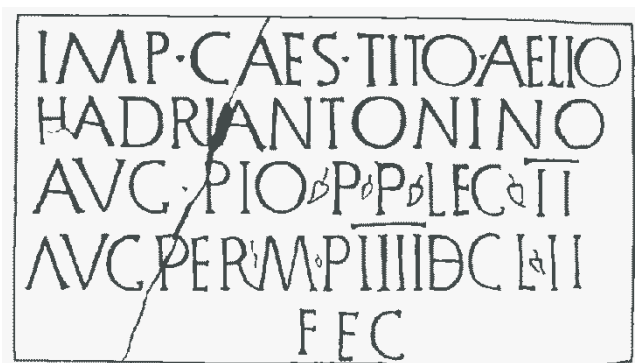
The front face of the Bridgeness tablet is elaborately carved with three discrete panels. In the centre is the dedicatory inscription and to either side are beautifully composed scenes in low relief depicting conventional Roman propaganda. The layout of these side panels is designed to focus the observer's attention on the central and principal panel.



Illus 1: Laser scan of the Bridgeness tablet on display in Edinburgh (for Falkirk Council).

The central panel consists of a cyma moulded rectangle bearing the inscription, with an animal-headed pelta to either side. The conventionalised peltae are short and plump in proportion – typical of the Second Legion which was

responsible for the stone. The left-hand pelta is missing its horizontal mid-line. The griffin-headed terminals are common in the second century, though here, unusually, they are turned back on themselves instead of to one side. The spaces between the peltae and the main moulded panel are each filled with a rosette, making four in all. There are slight differences in the rosettes and their spacing is not quite symmetrical. Above all of these is a palmette border, the lower edge of which slopes up to the right. The lettering of the inscription is well executed in a classical style and occupies five evenly-spaced lines, though the last line only contains three centrally placed letters. The letters of the first line have marginally wider grooves than the other lines and conventional stops are placed at the mid points. The second line is a little less well carved, with little or no gap between the two words. The third line uses ivy leaf interpuncts except after the first word which is AVG; as does the fourth line. The engraver could have spaced the lettering differently to utilise the blank space in the fifth line more efficiently though this would have changed the proportions of the panel. Such blank spaces at the end of the inscription are common on the other distance tablets. Indeed, three of the other tablets share the same spacing of the first three lines (RIB 2186 from Cawdor House; RIB 2193 from Summerston; and RIB 2196 from Castlehill). The Summerston tablet is particularly interesting as a comparison as it has similar themed side panels to the Bridgeness tablet. In its case the short fifth line is right justified, it being a continuation of the numeral on the previous line rather than a new word as on the Bridgeness tablet. Traces of red paint have been found in the letters.



The inscription reads:
IMP(ERATORI) CAES(ARI) TITO
AELIO/ HADRI(ANO) ANTONINO/
AVG(VUSTO) PIO P(ATRI)
P(ATRIAE) LEG(IO) II/ AVG(VSTA)
PER M(ILIA) P(ASSUUM) IIII DCLII/
FEC(IT).

"For the Emperor Caesar Titus
Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus
Augustus Pius, father of his
country, the Second Legion

Augusta built (this work) for a distance of 4,652 paces."

The panel on the left contains a battle scene and that on the right a religious ritual at an altar. The fighting is framed by an aedicula with a low segmental arch allowing for the expansiveness of the field of action, whilst the votive offering is contained by a narrower aedicule with a triangular pediment (missing the horizontal cornice) hinting at the confined formal space in front of a temple. In each case the inner column is sligher to indicate the depth of a sloping facade. All of the columns are of the Tuscan order (though it should be noted that the right column capital is part of the 1980 conservation work).

A gallant mounted Roman cavalryman is depicted riding to the right in the upper part of the niche of the left-hand aedicule. The conventional heroic horseman and his steed are beautifully and vibrantly illustrated. He wears a plumed helmet, billowing cloak, shapely cuirass, flowing tunic and short military boots. The helmet has a prominent hinged cheek piece and a brow guard. The crescent-shaped plume extends well beyond the back of the helmet and its outer edge is emphasised by the sculptor with a series of short perpendicular incisions on the background material, resembling long hairs. The cloak is worn off the right shoulder to leave the spear arm free and is held in place by a broad band across the chest, attached by a circular brooch. A short sword hangs by his right side. His left arm is outstretched and, somewhat awkwardly, holds an oval shield with a circular boss. In his raised right arm he holds a spear which points diagonally downwards as if it was about to be thrust into one of the enemy below. The muscular horse is galloping with both of its front legs raised; its hooves emphasised to show their crushing potential. The harness is clearly depicted and the end of the bit protrudes from the rear of the mouth. The garth strap is only hinted at. The tail is plaited and the mane appears to have been dressed. The alert ears are upright.



Illus: Left-hand panel of the Brlidgeness tablet.



Illus: Mike Moore's reconstruction drawing of the Brlidgeness horseman.

Beneath the horse are four naked Caledonians – their lack of clothes emphasising their barbarity. Weapons are strewn hither and thither and the scene is one of battle carnage. However, it is possible to read the same scene not as four single foes but as an individual resistance fighter in four different stages of subjugation. The figure on the top left, his head under the rear hooves, lies on his back with his legs bent, trying to defend himself against the onslaught with his bossed rectangular shield held above his body. His sword lies uselessly on the ground to one side. To his right the next

figure has fallen onto his left knee with his right leg stretched out behind. His

rectangular shield and leaf-shaped headed spear lie scattered in his wake. The broken shaft of a spear sticks out from his back. To the right, and a little forward, the third figure is seated on the ground in the pathetic pose often used in Roman sculpture to depict captives. His left arm lies across his body with the hand outstretched and his right elbow resting in it. The right hand dejectedly supports the chin. On the ground below him a short stubby sword now appears, but this seems to be part of a poor reconstruction of the stone by the Museum in 1980 and originally the sloping edge seen here was simply the dipping border rising to provide a seat for the captive. Prominently placed in the foreground to his left is the final figure. The short stubby arms are an artistic device used to indicate that his hands are bound behind his back. This also occurs on the distance stones from Hutcheson Hill, Arniebog and Summerston (RIB 2193). On the Bridgeness stone the bound captive is shown decapitated and his head lies on the ground beside him. Traces of red paint were found at the severed neck emphasising the bloodiness of this final act.

Illus: The right-hand panel of the Bridgeness panel.



The religious ceremony in the right-hand aedicula includes three animals in the foreground that are about to be sacrificed in front of the altar. The animals - a pig, a sheep and a bull - show that this is a representation of one of the most important acts of purification known as the *suovetaurilia* (the word is composed of *sus* for pig, *ovis* for sheep and *taurus* for bull). Although not arranged in line, as was traditional, the animals are shown in the correct order of sacrifice with the cloven-footed pig furthest to the left, the horned sheep slightly behind and the bull at the back with its folds of skin on the neck. In front of them a man in a cloak and tunic crouches facing the animals and can be identified as the sacrificial attendant. Behind the

animals a musician wearing a tunic plays soothing music on the double pipes.

The altar is set close to the left edge of the aedicula and is the centre of everyone's attention. Behind it are five frontal figures. The sacrificant is the second from the left and is dressed in the prestigious toga. He pours a libation from a *patera*, which he holds in his right hand, onto the focus of the altar. To his right side is a bearded man clad in a tunic and open cloak. On the other side of the sacrificant, further away from the altar, are three more men wearing their cloaks closed. At least two of them are clean-shaven (the third figure is damaged at this point) and they presumably represent soldiers. The soldier nearest to the altar holds a banner or *vexillum* aloft above their heads. The inscription on this legionary standard reads *LEG(IO) II/ AVG(VSTA)*.

The tablet is a wonderful example of provincial art, combining classical, popular and Celtic styles. The architectural framework, the peltae, rosettes and palmette border are all taken from classical art, as are the themes of the two illustrative panels. The popular style of art originated in Italy and was a simplification of the classical tradition. It is here represented by the stylised linear treatment of the drapery, the distorted proportions of the figures – particularly the hands – and the prominent use of frontality and isocephaly for the five men behind the altar. The Celtic influence is seen foremost in the heads of the figures – the low foreheads, the shape of the eyebrows, the straight noses and mouths and the angular jaws.

The execution of the relief carving on the tablet is skilful. A groove or furrow has been chiselled out round several of the figures, or parts thereof, in order to give an impression of depth without actually increasing the overall depth of the carving. In the left-hand aedicule, for example, the cloak and plume of the horseman and the horse's hindlegs and tail have been treated in this way. In the other aedicule the furrows round the heads and shoulders of the soldiers to the right of the sacrificant enabled the sculptor to carve these figures in lower relief than the sacrificant himself and thus to provide an impression of a field of depth. This is also the case with the musician's head which is recessed into the body of one of the soldiers. This technique was varied on the body of the horse which was made slightly concave so as to accommodate the rider's leg. Combined with the muscular depiction of the figures, in particular of the horse, this makes the scenes vibrant and vivid.

The sculptor of the Bridgeness tablet has also shown great skill in laying out the individual scenes and the overall composition. He has adopted what is called the "high view-point" for the scenes, meaning that the further a figure is away from the observer the higher it is placed in the niches. In both panels the figures spill out from their restraining aediculae towards the inscribed central panel. Placing the altar to the left of the temple façade draws the gazes of all the figures there towards the inscription – apart from that of the sacrificial attendant, a lesser figure. In the opposite panel the cavalry officer charges towards the centre. Even the borders are designed to draw the observer to the central panel. The arch and pediment of the side panels which impart a sense of remoteness to them are replaced by the rich palmette border in the centre. Conversely the plain border at the bottom of the slab is dipped into by the action in the side panels providing a greater degree of immediacy to them and formality to the centre. This, combined with the out-pouring of the figures, gives a greater feeling of movement – dynamic movement that is focused on the central panel.

Separating the left-hand panel from the pelta of the central section is a prominent spiralled column of the Tuscan order – the spiral descending to the left. This is not balanced by one on the opposite side. It forms a barrier between the battle scene and the dedication and seems to emphasise the link between the religious ritual and the dedication. The crouching herdsman displaces the bottom of the pelta on this side, almost backing into it rather than masking it.

Reviewing the tablet in 1974 Phillips considered the symmetry to be unbalanced with the right-hand scene much narrower than that on the left. This was

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attributed to an error in laying it out which was only rectified after the left-hand panel had been all but completed (Phillips 1974). Not only does this seem unlikely, as few sculptors would work that way and any slack could have been taken up by changing the spacing of the lettering in the central panel, but also unnecessary as the composition is pleasing and appears to be deliberate.

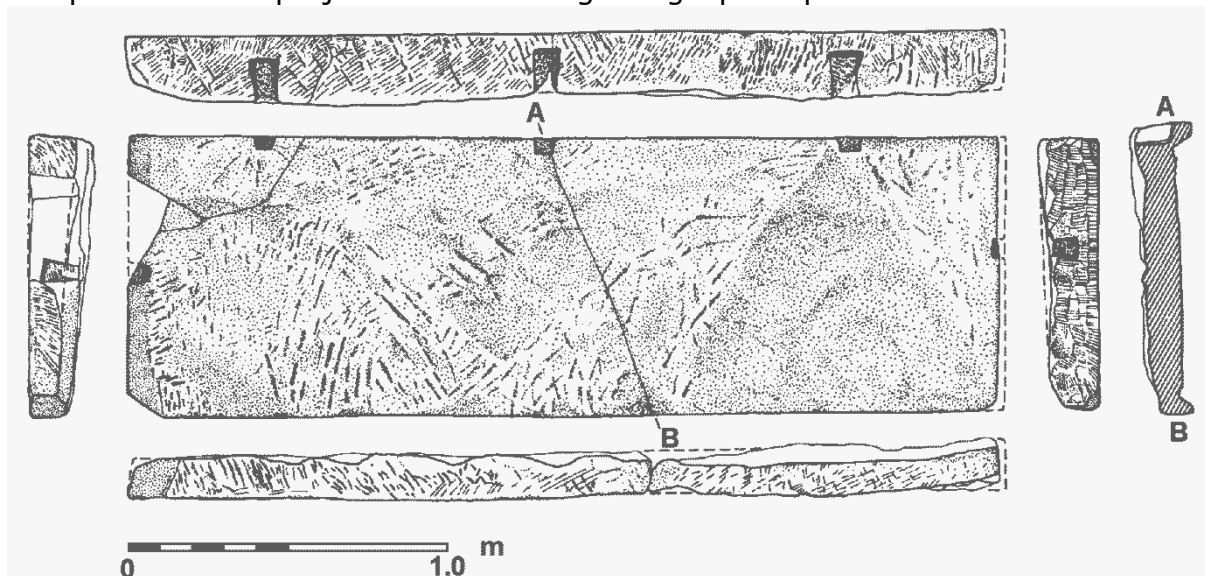
The victorious cavalryman riding down the barbarians is a common theme in classical art. It can be seen in Greek sculpture as early as the fourth century BC. It was also used relatively often in Roman Britain for commemorating elite cavalrymen, symbolising the final victory over death itself. There are 25 known examples of these so-called *Reiter* stones in Britain, most from the militarised north. One came to light as recently as 2005 in Lancaster. It is so far unique in that its barbarian had been decapitated and the rider was holding the head by its hair in his right hand; a reminder that the taking of such trophies was not unusual. Heads mounted on spikes from fort ramparts are depicted on Trajan's Column and more recently a skull from the fort ditch at Vindolanda behind Hadrian's Wall has been found with internal damage consistent with such display. The Celts revered the head and this act may have been a deliberate religious taunt. In most of the *Reiter* stones only a single barbarian is shown and none have as many as the Bridgeness tablet. In not a few of them the confined framework of the architectural field meant that the horse's elongated shape required its legs to extend beyond it, as at Bridgeness. In the context of the Antonine Wall the horseman scene represents the military conquest of Scotland. It is imperial propaganda and the message is clearly "Resistance is futile". A parallel can be found on the *Tropaeum Traiani* which was erected at Adamclisi in Romania to commemorate Trajan's victory over the Dacians in the winter of 101/102AD. Metope VI shows a cavalryman similarly attired to that on the Bridgeness tablet, crushing a Dacian under the horse's front legs. The *Tropaeum Traiani* was dedicated to *Mars Ultor* – Mars the Avenger – whose statue was also found on the Antonine Wall at Balmuildy.

The *suovetaurilia* was also carried out in the name of Mars, the god of war. Traditionally it was performed in advance of a major undertaking, particularly a military campaign and represented a cleansing or purification of the troops. It is shown four times on Trajan's Column taking place inside tented camps where the army had assembled before the advance into enemy territory. It was immediately preceded by a ritual procession round the camp's perimeter while inside the emperor poured a libation on the altar. As the *Pontifex Maximus* he is shown with a veil. In the case of the Antonine Wall this act was probably performed at the assembly point of the Roman army before the march into Scotland. The toga-clad figure on the Bridgeness tablet is therefore unlikely to represent Antoninus Pius himself as he did not personally participate on the ground, nor is the figure veiled. The commander of the army that invaded Scotland was the new governor of Britain, Quintus Lollius Urbicus, who has been specifically appointed for the task. He had served in Hadrian's Jewish war, in which he was decorated, and had then been governor of Lower Germany. His rise through the ranks shows that he was a capable soldier. Beside him would have been the legate of the Second Legion, Aulus Claudius Charax. Of the three legions commemorated on the Antonine Wall this was present in the greatest force. Charax may be the bearded man immediately behind the altar, whilst his officers would be ranked beside the legionary flag or *vexillum*. Charax was a Greek from Pergamum in Asia Minor – and a historian.

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It is often said that the *suovetaurilia* depicted on the Bridgeness tablet was carried out for the commencement of the construction work on the Antonine Wall. However, it is far more likely that it was undertaken before the advance into Scotland and that the installation of the frontier system was seen as part of that project. There is no reason why the tablet could not have been completed some years after the scenes illustrated on it. The personification of Victory and captive barbarians occur on several of the other distance tablets, including that from the western end at Old Kilpatrick and yet the Wall must have taken several years to build. Four versions of the *suovetaurilia* are shown on Trajan's Column because the Dacian war which it commemorates was episodic. The final end came in 106AD, but the column was only dedicated in 113.

It has also been said that the appearance of the *suovetaurilia* at the east end of the Wall indicates that it was here that building work began, followed by a rolling project that saw the linear barrier gradually extended westward. However, once again the evidence is equivocal. Like Hadrian's Wall it now appears that different sections of the linear barrier were prioritised according to military demands rather than by bureaucratic dogma requiring a lineal incremental approach. The grandiose scale of the tablet would be just as appropriate for the completion of the project as for the beginning - perhaps more so.



Illus: Drawing of the back and sides of the Bridgeness tablet (after Close-Brooks).

The Bridgeness tablet was the largest of a series of distance tablets placed along the line of the Antonine Wall, marking the progress of its builders and we can be sure that it was carved within a few years of 142AD. These tablets must have been set into masonry frames as most of them have dovetail cramp holes on the top edge and the larger ones also have these on the side. The Bridgeness tablet has three along the top edge and one on each side edge. These recesses would have been matched by corresponding ones in the stone setting so that an iron cramp set in lead could be inserted to hold the tablet in place. This was a common form of fixture in the second century. The back of the Bridgeness tablet is roughly dressed. This may have been merely to reduce the weight for transport and lifting it into position. However, even the much smaller tablets are dressed on the back. Indeed, the reason that they are often referred to as slabs is because they are uniformly slender and for recording purposes only a single

measurement of depth is required. Apart from one, they vary from 10cm to 19cm in thickness, with an average of 15cm – the thickness of the Bridgeness tablet. This suggests that a recessed slot was left in the front face of a masonry structure or plinth which was perhaps only three times that width. The right-hand edge of the Bridgeness tablet had been trimmed back by a few centimetres, reducing the depth of the cramp hole on that side, and Hanson and Maxwell suggested that it may have been shortened in order to fit it into the pre-built slot in the plinth (Hanson & Maxwell 1983, 113). As Keppie pointed out, this is highly unlikely (1998, 55). In any case, the curator at Edinburgh who noted the trimming also stated that it had been done since the slab was discovered (Close-Brook 1981, 519). The exception to the depth range noted above was RIB 2184 (Hunterian 3) which was 38cm deep. The small size of its face, and the tapering shape of the stone, shows that it was built into a wall in the same way as all of the other face stones.

As the rampart of the Antonine Wall was mostly made of turf with sloping sides and the distance tablets occur along its length, they could not have been set directly into its side. It is possible that where the tablets were set up a short length of the south kerb of the stone base was built up as a mortared wall. Such short lengths could easily have been missed in recent times and the strange platform attached to the south side of the Rampart at Tollpark still requires an explanation (Keppie & Breeze 1981, 239-240). It was associated with burning which might have been derived from rituals. Such masonry settings would highlight the tablet's presence. These elaborate triumphal stones cannot be compared to the small plain centurial stones built into the south face of the Hadrianic stone wall and so they give us no guidance in this matter. The Antonine Wall stones were meant to be clearly visible, though we cannot be sure of the target audience. Unlike Hadrian's Wall the Antonine Wall does not have a massive vallum ditch running along the back to create a militarised zone. Instead, it has annexes that create more limited no-go areas for the general population. In any case, the vallum was quickly abandoned, meaning that civilians were probably able to traverse the zone behind both walls. They, along with most of the military, would have been using the Military Way and so the obvious place to have the distance tablets would have been where the Rampart and road came in close proximity to one another.

Their attention would have been drawn to the distance slabs by the sculptural content, by the monumental setting, and by the colours. In 1980 it was observed that as well as the red lettering on the Bridgeness tablet, red paint had been used on the cavalryman's cloak and at the severed neck in the left-hand scene; and on the cloak of the soldier placed furthest right in the right-hand scene. It was also thought that the more fugitive colours used elsewhere would have been lost and it was noted that the horse's body and the rider's face and arm appeared slightly greyer and darker than either the background or the rider's dress (Close-Brooks 1981, 519). This has been confirmed by recent scientific analysis by Glasgow University using portable X-ray fluorescence and surface enhanced Raman spectroscopy.

Unfortunately we are not in a position to say what the exact relationship was between the Bridgeness tablet and either the Wall or the Military Way as their courses in this area remain unknown. Collingwood and Wright thought that the tablet may have been built into the gable or end of the Rampart facing out to

sea (1995, 658), but as we shall see this is no longer tenable. On balance the weight of evidence suggests that the Wall did not deviate from its course along the west/east ridge at Grahamsdyke to descend to the small promontory at Bridgeness as indicated on Ordnance Survey maps. The tablet cannot therefore have been found close to its original display position. Macdonald believed that the stone was too large to have travelled far (Macdonald 1934, 362), but with wheeled transport that is not the case, particularly if most of the journey was downhill. The deduced stratigraphic position of the stone upon discovery indicates a comparatively late date for its place of rest.

For many years the Bridgeness tablet lay face-down on a slight slope on the north side of Windmill Hill at Bridgeness (NT 0137 8159), within 20m of the south shore of the Forth Estuary. The windmill sat on a rocky eminence that protruded from a promontory. In 1863 Henry Cadell of Grange, the local landowner, built an iron blast furnace in an old stone quarry a little to the west and cut back the bottom of the hill on this side. This exposed a corner of the slab and probably accounts for the damage near its top right corner and also for the disappearance of the fragment. In 1868 one of his workmen asked for and received permission to extend his kailyard into the area where the stone lay. The corner of the stone was visible and as it lay just 1-2.5ft below the ground surface it was decided to pull it up. The area had been used for cultivation and had apparently been lightly ploughed, as evidenced by the plough marks on the back of the tablet. Double-digging by hand to a greater depth was required for its new use. It was soon realised that it was a large stone and helpers were brought in – it was the 14th April. It may have been now that the stone was broken in three. It was only when the stones were turned over that, to the surprise of all, the marvellous sculpture was observed and the Roman origin was realised. The discovery was immediately notified to Henry Cadell who arranged for his workmen to excavate the immediate vicinity. Adam Stanners, his gardener, was probably one of them. About 6ft north of where the tablet had been found they encountered a retaining wall that followed the contours of the hill. It was made up of small squared stones. These stones were evidently early and were assumed to be “probably Roman”. There had been a slight hollow under the tablet and then 3ft of soil before the natural whinstone was reached. The retaining wall was again uncovered in 1985 immediately to the east, and was found to have a metalled surface on its south side only 5-10cm above the bedrock. Medieval pottery lay below the wall tumble and it appears that the wall and cobbling were of that date. The Bridgeness tablet, we must conclude, had not been deposited by the Romans in its 1868 place of discovery.



Illus: Bridgeness Harbour photographed from the tower c1880. The building on the bottom left was part of the Ironworks. The tablet was found near the tree at the bottom right of the photograph.

In 1869 Henry Cadell offered the tablet to the Museum of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland upon condition that it placed "a stone near the spot where the tablet was found, with an inscription to tell of its being found there, and a copy of the inscription." This was done and the small stones found in the retaining wall were used to provide a masonry setting for it, facing onto Harbour Road.



Illus: The 1869 replica of the Bridgeness tablet in Harbour Road.

It is still possible that the tablet had been dumped in the general area by the Roman army as it withdrew from lowland Scotland and abandoned the Antonine Wall. Almost 37m to the north-east another Roman stone was found in 1937 during building work

(Macdonald 1937). This was an armchair voussoir from the vault of a bathhouse, similar to one found at the fort at Carriden in 2008. The voussoir was found lying on sand some 8ft below the surface of Harbour Road and very close to what must have been the Roman shoreline. Harbour Road, it should be noted, was constructed by the Cadell family in the early 19th century to get coal down to their pier at Bridgeness. Such stones may have been dismantled at the end of the Roman occupation for reuse elsewhere (Bailey forthcoming) and so it

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is possible that the voussoirs and the tablets were due to be shipped south when it was decided to abandon them. The Bridgeness promontory would have provided a safe haven for vessels and the descent from the fort at Carriden to Bridgeness is far more gradual than that from the fort to the beach below the fort at Burnfoot. That the Forth had reached to within 10m of the find spot of the tablet at some time is demonstrated by the presence of sea shells. Roy's map from the 1750s shows that even at that date the promontory had to be defended by a sea wall.

Many of the surviving distance tablets from the Antonine Wall are known to have been buried upside down in shallow pits just off the line of the Wall and this is the reason why so many of them have survived. The Roman army would have done this before they left in order to avoid the desecration of these important stones, stopping them from falling into the hands of the enemy and being turned into propaganda against them. It would be only right for the grandest of the stones to be taken south to Hadrian's Wall; only for some reason this order was rescinded and the stone arrested in its flight.



///us: Lithograph of the Bridgeness tablet.

After its discovery in April 1868 all of the remaining fragments of the tablet were carried to the grounds of the nearby Grange House where it was placed on a course of the small squared stones and propped up by an old tree stump and a wooden post. Here it was photographed by George Waldie, a Linlithgow bookseller, and by Brown and Dunlop, photographers, Falkirk. This was a relatively new tool



///us: Adam Stanners and the tablet in the grounds of Grange House.

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that the antiquarians were able to make use of for recording the find. One of the photographs has Adam Stanners in it, but the tree stump was removed on the negative and replaced by small foliage. It was subsequently relayed to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland who had a lithograph made of it by J Adam. This time the gardener was removed.



Illus:

Left - 1st ed OS of 1864 showing the area at the time of the discovery of the tablet.

Right 1897 OS map with the find spot marked and later development of the area.

Since its removal to Edinburgh the Bridgeness tablet has been more or less constantly on public display. The three large pieces were joined together and placed in a wooden frame and the breakage lines partially infilled. A fourth,



Illus: The new replica in Kinninggars Park on the opening Day

much small fragment, was also fitted into position in the right-hand panel at the head of the soldier to the far right – where it had been hit quite hard on the edge in 1863. This required a fair amount of filler to hold it in place and part of the column to the right was reconstituted. It was in this condition when a cast was taken of it for the collections of the Hunterian Museum in Glasgow. When the

original was dismantled in 1980 it was found that this fragment had been placed back to front and part of the missing mouth was discovered. Now the capital of the column was also

recreated. The stone had been washed periodically and when this was done in 1980 the red paint was noted. The restoration did not stop at the column capital and the entire missing section was recreated. Some flaking had occurred to the face along the bottom edge of the left-hand panel before the stone was given to the Museum which may have been occasioned by the lever used to prize it from the ground. The flaking was under the captive or third barbarian and left a triangular raised lump which may have provided a seating area. However, it was reconstructed as the blade of a sword.

Over the decades the soft sandstone used in the replicated inscription on Harbour Road eroded and became barely legible. In 2002 Bo'ness Community Council suggested a new memorial and together with Falkirk Council they created a good quality replica of the entire tablet to form the centrepiece of a more vibrant display nearby in Kinningars Park. This time taking a cast was not an option because of the contact damage that would be caused to the original and so they arranged for a laser scan which had the added benefit of providing raw data to aid a computer-guided milling machine to accurately rough out the new sandstone block. By using smaller and smaller routers an amazing amount of detail was cut out, but had to be finished by the skilled hand of a sculptor. It was set in a new masonry plinth and unveiled in 2012 – appropriately the whole process was recorded using another photographic technique once called moving pictures!

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