

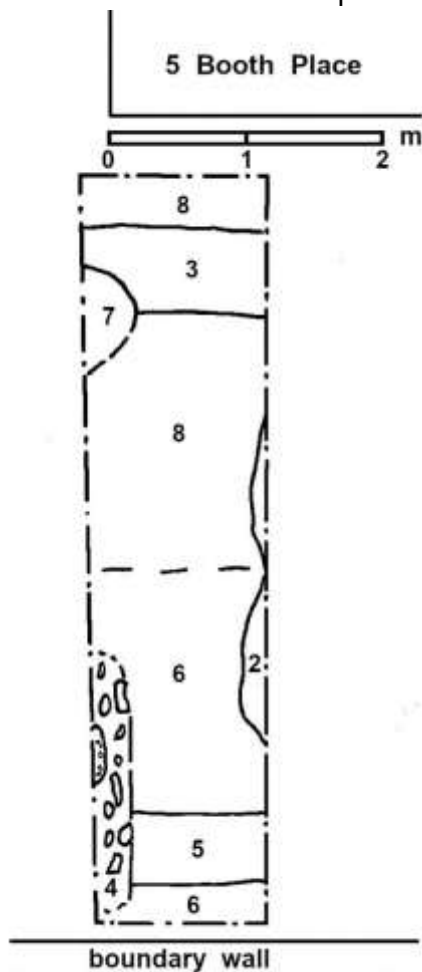
Excavation at 5 Booth Place, 2026

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Introduction

Illus 1: The Trench at 5 Booth Place under Excavation with the Steeple in the background.

On 3 July 2026 a trial trench was excavated by hand extending from the south-west corner of the dwelling at 5 Booth Place just over 5m southward to the boundary wall fronting the footpath alongside the road (NS 8865 7976). The trench was 1.1-1.2m wide and was only dug to a depth of 0.3m – the maximum depth of material to be removed for a proposed resurfacing of the drive. The site lies within the World Heritage Site of the Antonine Wall designated in 2008. Unfortunately, the area designated was based upon little information concerning the course of the Antonine Wall in this part of the town and relied upon the 1980s resurvey of the



Wall undertaken by the Ordnance Survey (Linge 2004). Although that realignment took cognisance of the latest information and the perceived topography, it was still largely conjectural. The new line differed significantly to that laid down on the 1951 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map which had the Wall further to the south. Since that major piece of work a number of observations have been made along the line, some with negative results, and the outline of the Roman fort in the Pleasance has been revealed. The presence of that fort distorted the previously accepted course of the frontier and it was evident that there would be no traces of the Roman frontier works in the grounds of 5 Booth Place. Nevertheless, as it was within the WHS it was necessary to provide an archaeological assessment of the area of the drive before resurfacing, despite the disturbance only applying to the upper 0.3m.

Illus 2: Plan of Features in the Trench at a depth of 0.3m.

Excavation

Below the gravel surfacing of the present drive was a hard compact layer of black loam and ash which graded into a dark brown sandy loam also with a high proportion of ash. This varied in depth from 0.25m at the south end of the trench to 0.05m at the north end. Below this upper layer was a deposit of lime mortar containing some small broken sandstone (F9). This was up to 0.2m thick in the north near

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to the house and tailed away to northing at 3.0m away from it. It was clearly connected with the construction of the house in 1851 (Bailey 2017 – see [Appendix](#) below).

This building debris extended into the 0.35m wide construction trench (F10) that ran along the south side of the wall of the house and which was therefore left outside the archaeological trench. Here it cut through brown clay loam (F8) which contained some charcoal flecks and sherds of china and which was evidently a 19th century cultivation soil.

Illus 3: The Excavation looking North.

Parallel with the house and just 0.75m from it was a 0.55m wide slot or drain (F3) filled with loose ash and clinker and some stone. It still had numerous voids and would have functioned as a rumble drain. Its sides appeared to be relatively vertical, but due to the depth limitations it was not sectioned. On the west side of the archaeological trench F3 was in turn cut by a small pit which had been backfilled with some of the same material, mixed with pale brown sandy loam.



F8 continued on the south side of F3 and at 3.2m from the house it gave way to brown-orange sandy loam (F6) which contained a large number of charcoal flecks. Previous excavations in this part of Falkirk have shown that this was cultivation soil associated with the garden nursery which occupied this site for several centuries prior to 1850. As is normal within this nursery this material was cut by a bedding trench aligned west/east (F5). F5 was 0.44m wide and contained dark brown silty loam with charcoal flecks. It was not sectioned.

Two N/S features were observed. Along the east side of the archaeological trench was a series of patches of black loam which deepened to the east (F2). These appear to be the top edge of a modern service trench located just beyond the confines of the 2026 trench. The other feature (F4) was placed in the south-west corner of the excavation trench. It was relatively shallow, just cutting the upper levels of F5 and F6. F4 contained broken pieces of sandstone set in a brown sandy loam matrix. The presence of brick and even a lump of concrete show that it was associated with the occupation of 5 Booth Place and its location suggest that it provided a link between the south boundary wall and the south-west corner of the house.

Conclusion

All of the deposits within 0.3m of the modern surface date to the 19th century. Below that is a cultivation soil associated with an earlier garden nursery. Excavations elsewhere in Booth Place (Bailey 2021) and Rosehall Terrace indicate that this might be expected to be 0.5-0.8m deep. There is therefore no prospect of the proposed work in connection with the resurfacing of the drive touching any Roman stratigraphy. Indeed, given the alignment of the Antonine Wall in this area it is unlikely that there would be any such stratigraphy here.



Illus 4: The Line of the Antonine Ditch through Falkirk.

The 1980s Ordnance Survey line is shown as a series of dotted lines.

S10 – Church of Christ, 2019.

S11 – 16 Booth Place, 2017.

S12 – Noric, 2022 & 2024.

S13 – Elgin Place, 2010.

S14 – Comely Park, 2026.

S15 – 14 Booth Place, 2019.

S16 – 6 Booth Place, 2019.

S17 – Woodside, 2010.

S18 – Tattie Kirk.

S20 – William Street.

Bibliography

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Bailey, G.B.	2021	The Antonine Wall in Falkirk District.
Linge, J.	2004	‘The Cinderella Service: the Ordnance Survey and the mapping of the Antonine Wall’, <i>Proc Soc Antiq Scot</i> , 134 (2004), 161-171.

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Appendix

BOOTH PLACE – 1853

History. In 1850 it was announced that nursery ground belonging to Peter Booth south of Baxter's Wynd was to be feued (FH 10 Oct 1850), and the following year construction began: *"Extensive building operations have been commenced in the nurseries to the south of the town, situated between the Cow Wynd and the Pleasance . The ground has been marked out and cleared for seven handsome houses and spacious gardens; and the masons are already on the ground, preparing the stones for building. The metal has been laid down for a street to run at right angles from the Cow Wynd, and it is proposed to form another approach from the Pleasance, to run north and south, and eventually, if the amount of feuing should encourage the execution of such a design to join the road to the Railway Station, somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Poors'-house."* (FH 13 March 1851).

The first two houses to be built were the 'cottages' on the north side called Wallfield (after its proximity to the Antonine Wall) and Couttsland. *"HOUSES TO LET. To be Let, Entry immediately or at Whitsunday, THOSE TWO HOUSES lately built in Mr Booth's Nursery Grounds, consisting of 5 Rooms, Kitchen, and Servants' Room, with other conveniences in each. They are situated in a fine healthy locality, and within a few minutes' walk of the Railway."* (FH 2 March 1854). Before long they were sold to their occupants – Wallfield to Thomas Cochrane, chemist, and Couttsland to John Beeby the Inspector of the Poor.

At the same time one of the seven plots, that immediately to the east of Wallfield, was acquired by Alexander MacDonald, the main contractor for the Stirlingshire Midland Junction Railway. He divided the plot into two and erected two semi-detached houses. The stone for these probably came from Westquarter, where he had opened up a new quarry on the line of the railway.

Within the decade a substantial two-storey villa was built on the south side of Booth Place, opposite Wallfield. A gateway was placed across the road at this point because the road was still private westward. That area was not developed until the 1930s - Number 10 in 1935 for Fisher the baker, and Number 12 in 1930 for JJ & P McLachlan the builder.



Illus 5: Elevation Drawings of 7 Booth Place.

Description. Wallfield (Number 5 Booth Place) and Couttsland (No. 7) are similar in design. They are single-storey, having detailed ashlar fronts, rubble sides and backs, with slate roofs. Only one of them has canted dormers. The main facades face south onto Booth Place and

have elegant symmetrical layouts – a pilastered central doorway with a large architraved window in a slightly advanced panel to either side, pilastered ends and plain parapets.



Illus 6: 5 Booth Place looking east to the Tattie Kirk. The two-storey building on the left was erected by Alexander Macdonald.