

HOUSESTEADS ROMAN FORT

HADRIAN'S WALL

Housesteads is one of 16 forts which defended Hadrian's Wall. Some of the fort buildings are well preserved including the finest preserved Roman latrines in the country. Housesteads Roman Fort together with other sites on Hadrian's Wall offers some excellent opportunities to study the Romans.

Historical description

Housesteads was built as an infantry fort, housing a garrison of up to 100 men. Built to a standard plan, its north side forms part of the Wall itself. Inside the fort are the remains of the headquarters building, the commanding officer's house, the granaries and a hospital, with an open courtyard surrounded by small wards and an operating theatre. Against the south-east corner is a latrine block, fed by tanks and a series of drains. Two barrack blocks have also been excavated. These were originally long buildings with compartments for the men, and larger houses at the end for the centurions, but were later replaced with individual units.

Immediately to the south of the fort are the remains of a civilian settlement which grew up around the fort. In one of the houses skeletons of murder victims were found during excavations.

Learning opportunities

A visit to the fort is an ideal focus for understanding the Roman conquest and occupation of Britain. It provides opportunities for pupils to see how a fort was laid out and to explore its relationship with the Wall, and the buildings in which housed the troops.

Preparation for a visit should include some knowledge of the Hadrian's Wall frontier zone and its various components, and an indication of what to expect on an archaeological site. It will help if pupils have an understanding of military life. For work in **history** the Hadrian's Wall Teacher's Handbook offers numerous suggestions. **On-site** work could also link with other curriculum subjects such as **Geography**, by looking at the strategic position of the fort and its relation to the Wall and other Roman sites. Work in **Mathematics** could involve survey work and making plans of parts of the fort. The remains of some of the walls are quite substantial so

they could be used to look at materials and at the way the Romans constructed buildings through forces and motion in **Science** and **Design and technology**.

Observations of the site and impressions of what life might have been like in and outside the fort could be used to develop work in literacy, discussion and role play work in **English**.

Location

2¾ miles NE of Bardon Mill.

OS map 87, grid reference NY 790687.

How to get there

Road: Adjacent to B6318 (½ mile walk).

Bus: For all public transport information Tel: 01670 533128.

Opening hours

1 April-30 Sept 10am-6pm daily.

1 Oct-31 March 10am-4pm daily.

Facilities

Access for disabled people: There is a steep climb up to the fort. Walking around the site also requires pupils to climb steps and slopes.

Museum: next to fort, contains information panels and displays of site finds.

Wet-weather shelter: can be used free of charge by groups of up to fifty pupils. Please book in advance.

Parking: at the visitors' centre. The car park is not owned by English Heritage and there is a charge payable to the National Park.

Refreshments: soft drinks and ice cream.

Picnics: permissible. Please check with custodians, as the surrounding land is not under the control of English Heritage. Please take away all your rubbish.

Toilets: at visitor centre car park (inc. disabled).

Shop: Please note that the English Heritage shop is inside the museum next to the fort. Our custodians welcome school groups as all proceeds contribute towards the continuing work of English Heritage. Please assist by supervising pupils in the shop.

Free educational visits

Educational visits to English Heritage sites are free if booked at least fourteen days in advance via the regional office. When your booking is confirmed you will be sent a permit for a free planning visit.

Teachers are not permitted to use outside providers to lead educational activities on our sites.

Limit on party number: 100.

Minimum staff-pupil ratio: 1 to 15.

Safety warning: Access to the site is up a steep path, and the summit can be quite cold and windy. Pupils will need warm, protective clothing and strong footwear.

Livestock: may be grazing on land nearby. Please keep to the pathways and do not approach them.

Contacts

Booking and site information: Education Bookings, English Heritage, 41-44 Sandhill, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 3JF.

Tel: 0191 269 1227/8. Fax: 0191 2611130.

Regional Education Officer: David Walmsley.

Custodian: Tel: 01434 681379.

Nearby and related sites

Corbridge Roman Site is an excavated military town which supplied the garrisons on Hadrian's Wall (museum on site). **Chesters Roman Fort and Museum** is an excavated cavalry fort, with fine remains of the headquarters building, barracks and the commanding officer's house. Outside the fort are exceptional remains of a bathhouse.

A guide to resources

Teacher handbooks (published by English Heritage Education)

Walmsley, D, *Hadrian's Wall*, 2002, ISBN 1-85074-823-3.

Barnes, J, *Design & Technology and the Historic Environment*, 1999, ISBN 1-850-74-651-6.

Collins, F, & Hollinshead, E, *English and the Historic Environment*, 2000, ISBN 1-85074-330-4.

Copeland, T, *Maths and the Historic Environment*, 1992, ISBN 1-85074-329-0.

Copeland, T, *Geography and the Historic Environment*, 1993, ISBN 1-85074-332-0.

Lockey, M, & Walmsley, D, *Art and the Historic Environment*, 1999, ISBN 1-85074-651-6.

Fairclough, J, *History Through Role Play*, 1994, ISBN 1-85074-478-5.

Primary History - using the evidence of the historic environment, 1999, ISBN 1-85074-650-8.

Watson, I, *Using Roman Sites*, 1997, ISBN 1-85074-334-7.

Posters

Hadrian's Wall Posterpack, 2002, ISBN 1-85074-811-X. Contains eight posters with 8-page teacher booklet to help pupils understand the extent and the impact of Hadrian's Wall Frontier Zone.

Roman Britain, 1997, ISBN 1-85074-684-2. Contains eight A3 posters.

Interpreting the Past, 1999, ISBN 1-85074-737-7. Contains six posters and booklet with practical ideas for using impressions on site and in the classroom.

Time Detectives, English Heritage, 2002, ISBN 1-85074-778-4. Contains six A3 posters with 8-page teacher booklet with curriculum ideas.

CD ROM

Real Romans, 1999, ISBN 1-902604-00-7, with VR tour, interactive activities and 48-page book. Features Housesteads in detail.

All English Heritage resources are available by post from English Heritage, c/o Gillards, Trident Works, Temple Cloud, Bristol BS39 5AZ. Tel: 01761 452966. Fax: 01761 453408.

The following free resources are also available:

- Designing activity sheets
- Using historic sites
- Using sites during residential visits
- Making successful visits to historic sites
- Hadrian's Wall - Information for GNVQ tutors and students.

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