

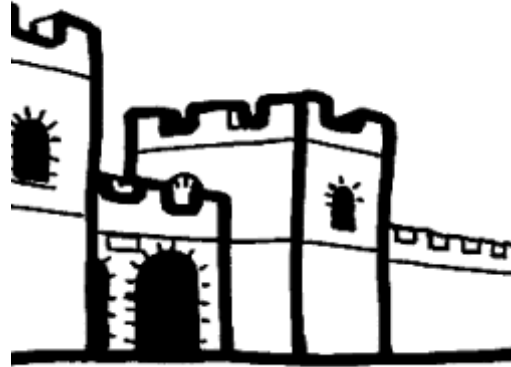
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A short guide to Brecon Gaer Roman Fort

by the *Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust*

Brecon Gaer (OS national grid reference SO00332966), also known as Y Gaer, is situated in fields belonging to Y Gaer farm near Aberyscir just north of the river Usk. The main part of the fort is in the care of Cadw but the surrounding land and farmhouse is private.

The earliest fort was built about AD 75 with defensive banks of clay which rested upon a cobbled surface. A wooden palisade would have protected the defenders. The buildings inside, one of which may have been stabling, were also constructed in wood. At this time the troops at Y Gaer included Vettonian cavalry from Spain. The tombstone of a young cavalryman, Candidus, has been found a mile north of the fort and is now in the Brecknock Museum, Brecon. The fort was rebuilt in stone during the second half of 2nd century AD by the men of Legion II Augusta.



Brecon Gaer was, like most Roman forts, rectangular in shape with an entrance in the middle of each side. A substantial part of the rampart wall survives on the north side up to a height of about 3 metres. The insertion of heavier, more crudely shaped stone shows where it was repaired in the 4th century. Beyond the wall the fort was protected by a ditch up to 9 metres wide and nearly one metre deep.



The footings of the gates and guard-lodges survive complete with the pivot-holes in the sills in which the wooden gate revolved. At each corner was a turret built against the rear of the wall.

Inside the fort remains of the principal buildings have been excavated including the principia and praetorium. The latter was the living quarters of the commanding officer while the principia was the headquarters of the legion where

the eagle standards were stored alongside the legionary shrine. This building contained a small cellar where the valuables of the legion would have been kept. The central courtyard contained a hearth and a well. Another important building was the stone granary which lay to the north of the principia. The original bath-house was probably built outside the fort but a later one was built in the north-west corner of the fort. This contained four hot or warm rooms,

several unheated rooms and a cold plunge. The barracks occupied most of the area east of the principa and praetorium.

To the north of the fort lay a civilian settlement or vicus together with a commercial area which contained craft workshops of blacksmiths and tanners. Set somewhat apart from the vicus was a mansio or official residence used for visiting officials and by the Imperial Post. This contained its own bath-suite and latrines. Three inscribed tombstones, including that of the young cavalryman, have been found in the vicinity of the fort. The two others commemorate one Valerius Primus and a couple shown in life size. The latter stone, which is in Brecknock museum, is known as Maen y Morwynion (The Maidens' Stone).

Access and Parking

Brecon Gaer lies west of the town of Brecon. From the traffic lights in the centre go south-east down the hill, past the library and take the first right, signposted Cradoc, just before the bridge over the river . Turn left in Cradoc towards Aberyscir and then left again at the first crossroads. The site is through a farmyard at the end of the road. Please note the farm and surrounding fields are private: park with consideration and close all gates. The site is not signposted from the road. *Ordnance Survey Landranger map 160*

The above information comes from the Sites and Monuments Record of the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust. For further information about the historic environment of this area, contact:-

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