

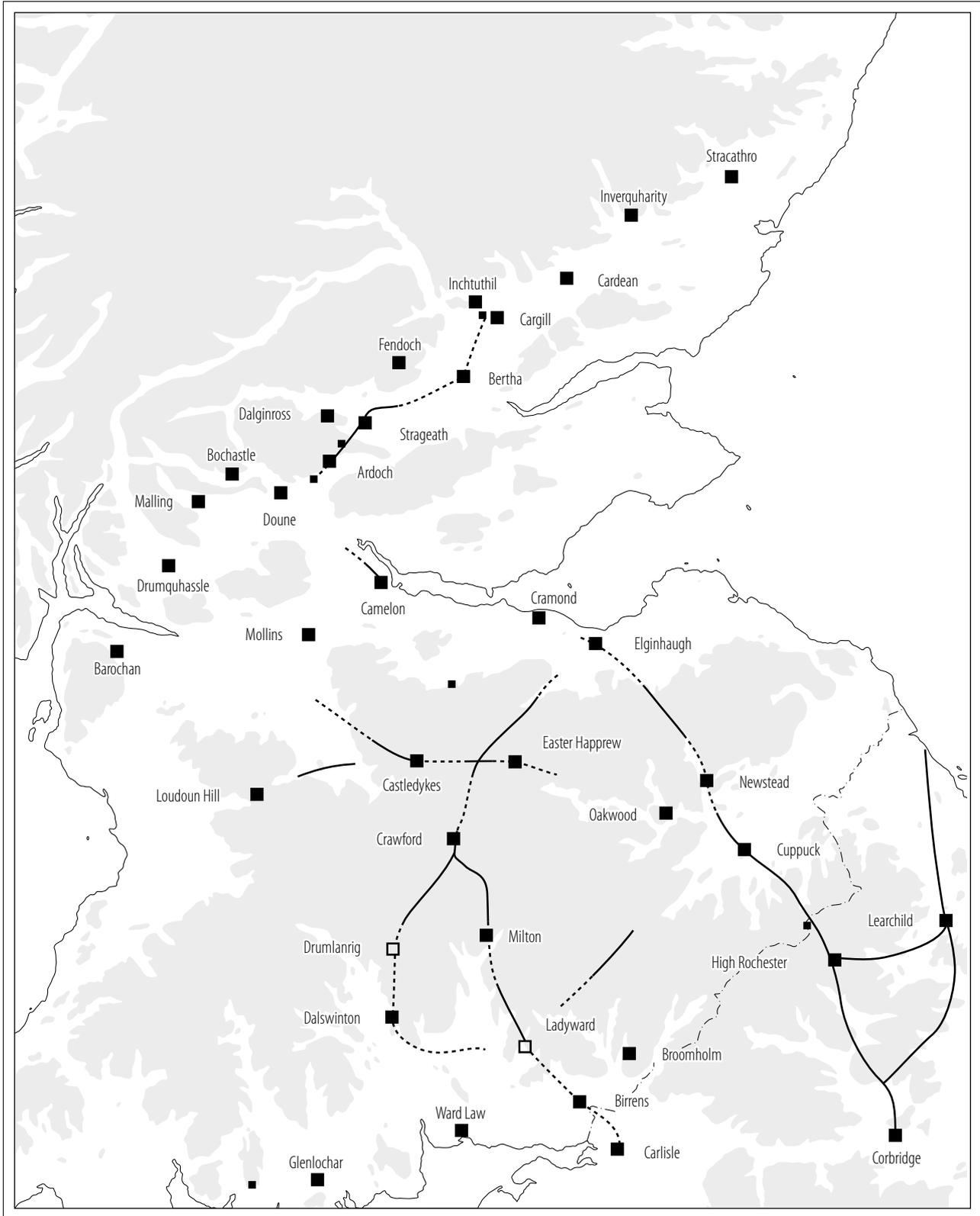
3. BACKGROUND TO THE FORT

The fort was initially identified during aerial survey by the RCAHMS in 1983 (Maxwell 1984). The aerial photographs identified one set of ditches on the south-east turned inwards to unite in what is known as a ‘parrot’s beak’, indicating the position of the entrance. The probable location of the *via sagularis* was also identified during this survey. A small-scale investigation was carried out in 1984 by Gordon Maxwell, who identified a number of construction trenches associated with single-phase timber buildings, with 1st-century AD pottery recovered (Frere 1985: 275). The pottery confirmed the Flavian date of the fort, as previously suggested by the parrot’s beak entrance (Maxwell 1998). An archaeological evaluation in 1999 confirmed that the foundations of buildings associated with the fort were located within the footprint of a proposed new nursery development (Moloney 1999a).

The Roman fort lies on a low promontory formed by the River Teith and the Ardoch Burn (see Illus 2), close to the medieval Doune Castle. The ground falls away sharply into the river valley on the south side of the fort and it is bounded to the east side by the burn. The interior of the fort occupies a level plateau and it is conceivable that it guarded a crossing of the Teith, which is fordable at this point. The significance of the fort has been discussed by Maxwell, who speculated that the Teith could be the *Tameia / Tamia* in Ptolemy’s *Geography* (Maxwell 1984: 221–2).

Maxwell described the fort as a ‘route blocker’ (1984: 218), similar to the Flavian forts on the outer line from Drumquhassle to Stracathro (Illus 5). Here he also speculated that the forts of Drumquhassle, Malling, Bochastle and Doune could have formed a temporary frontier along the northern extremity of the Forth–Clyde isthmus (ibid). The fort at Doune also lies close to the presumed line of the Roman road north of Camelon, which is thought to have crossed the upper reaches of the River Forth close to Stirling (Crawford 1949: 18–26; RCAHMS 1963: 112–15). This Roman road is presumed to run into southern Stirling. Excavations across the probable line of the road at Beechwood Park in Bannockburn identified a cobbled surface (Cook 2014). Post-medieval pottery and coins were recovered which could indicate that this cobbling was a later surface, potentially built over the line of the Roman road. Alternatively, the cobbles could be the original Roman road surface with later material incorporated into it through later use. The road is identified again north-east of Dunblane, close to the Allan Water en route to Ardoch fort (Woolliscroft & Hoffmann 2006: 85).

There is enough uncertainty about the route of the Roman road between Stirling and Dunblane that alternative routes through the extensive mosses west of Stirling have been proposed, but none have been recognised on the ground so far (eg Crawford 1949: 18–21; Woolliscroft & Hoffmann 2006: 80–1).



Illus 5 Distribution of Flavian forts and fortlets in Scotland. © Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd