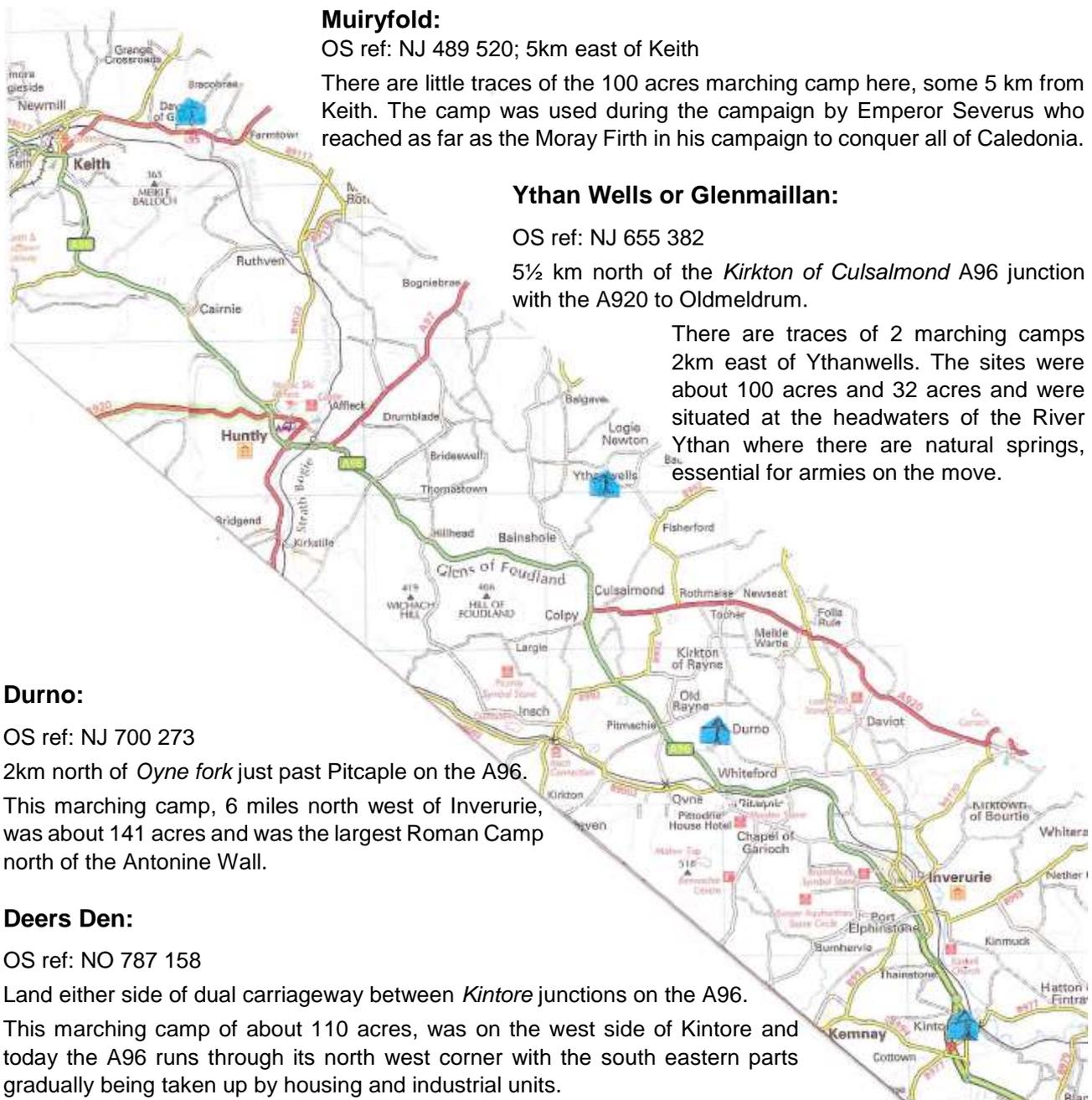


On the March with the Romans

Roman campaigns to conquer all of Caledonia (Scotland) were conducted between the 1st and 3rd centuries A.D. by the Governor of Britannia, Gnaeus Julius Agricola and Emperors Lucius Aurelius Commodus and Septimius Severus. There were large camps across Scotland and one beside Stonehaven (Raedykes) and one near Inverness (Cawdor) were linked by roads incorporating marching camps, where the troops would rest between transits.

On the main trunk routes between Keith and Stonehaven, there are 6 of these Roman marching camps close by the A96 and A90. Unfortunately, there is not much left to see now but if you're driving between Inverness and Stonehaven on the A96 to the Craibstone junction and thence south on Southern Leg and then Fastlink of the AWPR before meeting the A92 at Stonehaven, you will be travelling not too far from the route taken by the Romans, marching to invade the northernmost parts of Caledonia, more than 1800 years ago. The tents show approximate positions on the map details shown below.



Muiryfold:

OS ref: NJ 489 520; 5km east of Keith

There are little traces of the 100 acres marching camp here, some 5 km from Keith. The camp was used during the campaign by Emperor Severus who reached as far as the Moray Firth in his campaign to conquer all of Caledonia.

Ythan Wells or Glenmailan:

OS ref: NJ 655 382

5½ km north of the *Kirkton of Culsalmond* A96 junction with the A920 to Oldmeldrum.

There are traces of 2 marching camps 2km east of Ythanwells. The sites were about 100 acres and 32 acres and were situated at the headwaters of the River Ythan where there are natural springs, essential for armies on the move.

Durno:

OS ref: NJ 700 273

2km north of *Oyne fork* just past Pitcaple on the A96.

This marching camp, 6 miles north west of Inverurie, was about 141 acres and was the largest Roman Camp north of the Antonine Wall.

Deers Den:

OS ref: NO 787 158

Land either side of dual carriageway between *Kintore* junctions on the A96.

This marching camp of about 110 acres, was on the west side of Kintore and today the A96 runs through its north west corner with the south eastern parts gradually being taken up by housing and industrial units.

The camp was primarily used during the Emperor Severus' invasion circa 200 A.D. However, it may also have been used during campaigns by Agricola (1st century A.D.) and Commodus (2nd century A.D.) but little trace remains of this camp now. A smaller camp of about 30 acres was also identified about 1 km north of the main camp.

**Normandykes:**

OS ref: NO 830 994

4km south west of A90 AWPR *Deeside* junction.

Normandykes marching camp was south west of Peterculter close to the River Dee. The site was rectangular and occupied 106 acres on a small hill beside the river just a bit west of the golf course. The Roman troops would have marched here from Raedykes via the Forrest of Durris to avoid the Red Moss marsh near Netherley and other boggy ground. Like Raedykes camp, it also dates from the 1st century A.D. during the Agricola campaign to conquer the Picts.

Raedykes:

OS ref: NO 845 902

5km north west of the A90 AWPR *Stonehaven* junction with A92.

The camp was positioned on the summit and eastern slopes of a hill just off the Slug Road near Stonehaven and could have held 16,000 troops. 5 gateways are still visible although there were probably 6 in total. Mid-Raedykes farm is located in what would have been the camp's north-west corner and Broomhill farm is at the eastern rampart. It dates from the period during the governorship of Agricola between 78 – 84 A.D.

The Ordnance Survey references are given for each camp's location along with the direction as the crow flies from identifiable junctions on the A90 and A96 trunk roads. The extracts of maps shown here are replicated with kind permission from the AA 2019 GB Road Atlas © AA Media Limited.

Some other facts about the Roman occupation of Caledonia:

Julius Ceasar first invaded Britannia in 54 B.C. but it didn't last long nor did his troops come as far north as Caledonia. It was not until some 90 years later that a full invasion by 4 legions (about 20,000 soldiers) took place. This was during the reign of emperor Claudius.

The Romans occupied parts of Caledonia from the mid-1st century A.D. to the start of the 5th century A.D.

Hadrian's Wall was started in 122 A.D. and provided a stone fortification 73 miles long between the River Tyne and Solway Firth.

The Antonine Wall was constructed in 142 A.D. It was a turf bund some 3m high and 5m wide which ran 40 miles between the Firth of Clyde and Firth of Forth.