

DESCRIPTION

The entrance steps, built in 1974, descend 3.2m below the surface to Roman ground level. As you walk down the upper flight you are passing through the successive metallings of a buried medieval street. At a lower level to your right is a buried Roman street which runs round the whole city just inside the defences.

As you turn left down the lower flight of steps you are within the site of an early second-century stone building. The floor of this building, of crushed tile mortar, is represented in the floor ahead of you, and you presently pass over a line of tiles indicating its rear wall of lias limestone.

You are now standing within the body of the first-century clay rampart. The black stripes beneath your feet indicate a corduroy of oak planks. (They were carbonised to a black colour when uncovered in 1969.) The corduroy is one of a series which were laid in and under the rampart to stop the clay from slipping. The front and back faces of the rampart, of stacked turves, were later cut away to accommodate the early second-century building and the city wall. The rampart was raised with a loam bank in the late second century.

Before you is the back face of the third-century city wall. This face was never seen in ancient times, as the loam bank was retained as reinforcement. The foundation of the wall, below floor level, is of pointed oak piles packed with rubble. Above this you can see two courses — or, to the right, one deep course — of large blocks of oolitic Cotswold limestone. At least three of the blocks are re-used from an earlier monument: one of them has a finely polished surface, another has a drafted (rebated and dressed) edge, and another shows anathyrosis (a recessed panel in the centre of one face enabling it to fit tightly to its original neighbour). At the left-hand end, where the wall is breached, you can see a block 1.9m long which runs the full thickness of the wall. On the front face these blocks are fitted together with hair-line joints and dressed with a deep chamfer.

Return again to the back face of this third-century wall. Its upper courses are of squared rubble taken alternately from two sources — cream oolite from the Cotswold and blue lias limestone from the Severn vale. Numbered from the bottom, the courses are as follows: 1 mixed, 2 lias, 3 oolite, 4 mixed, 5 lias, 6 mixed, 7 oolite, 8 mixed, 9–10 lias and 11 oolite. The core is of random coursed rubble.

The exhibition chamber in King's Walk lies at the eastern limit of ancient Gloucester, astride a line of fortifications which was defended from the first century until the eventeenth. The bastion (semicircular tower) is only one of many defensive structures of different periods which are shown inside the chamber, either as surviving monuments or as coloured panels in the floor.

BUILDING HISTORY

Gloucester was founded as a legionary fortress in the *first century*. Its earliest defence, which passes through the exhibition chamber, was a clay rampart with a ditch close in front. To the north and south the rampart was unmounted by timber towers.

Re-founded as a city in A.D. 96-98, Gloucester remodelled its defences in the *early second century*. The front of the rampart at the south end of the exhibition chamber was reinforced with a narrow wing wall which continued southwards to the city east gate. The first-century ditch was filled in with clay and a new ditch dug further out. At the same time the back of the rampart was cut away to accommodate a stone building.

In the *late second century* the rampart was enlarged with a loam bank, the early second-century stone building being demolished and buried in the process. Beyond the exhibition chamber to the north the loam bank was interrupted by a stone tower.

In the *third century* the front of the loam bank was reinforced, except at the south end of the exhibition chamber with a broad city wall.

In the *fourth century* the broad city wall was extended southwards to replace the narrow wing wall of the early second century.

In the *thirteenth century*, after the grant of a charter to the medieval city, a stone bastion was added.

At its right-hand end six courses of the third-century wall taper abruptly to a thickness of 1.3m in order to fit the early second-century narrow wing wall which originally ran southwards from this point to the city east gate. No trace of this narrow wall remains but it was probably built, like the east gate, entirely of large oolite blocks. Possibly the same blocks were re-used to form the lowest five courses of the broad wall which now stands in its place.

This is the fourth-century city wall which, starting from an irregular joint with the third-century wall, passes southwards through the end of the exhibition chamber. Its upper courses are of squared oolite rubble with an offset above the fourth course and two putlog holes — for temporary scaffolding — in the sixth.

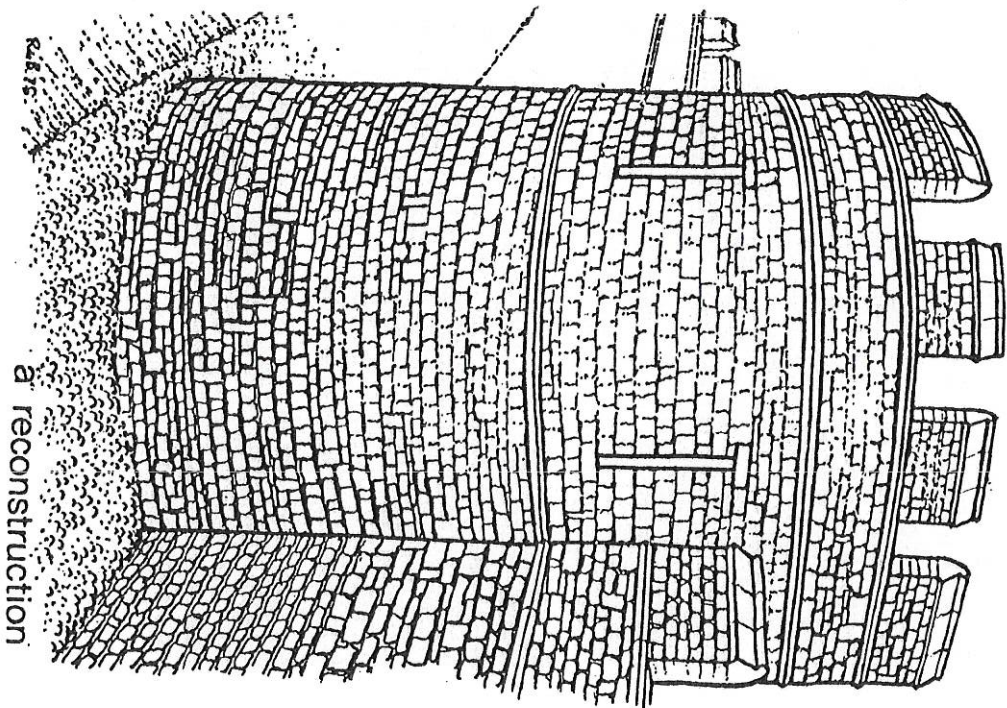
Now retrace your steps to the left. Here likewise the third-century city wall originally continued northwards through the end of the exhibition chamber, but it has been breached to give access. On the floor within the breach the black corduroy (here a purely conventional marking) ceases at the front face of the first-century rampart, built as a near-vertical face of turves against the clay rampart core. After passing this point you are in the first-century ditch, which is coloured brown as it was filled in with clay in the early second century. The second-century ditch is ahead of you, marked in black; it was periodically recut throughout the later history of the defences.

To your right is the thirteenth-century bastion, built of roughly coursed lias and oolite rubble. Some of the lias blocks originally contained iron carbonate and have since decayed to produce reddish-brown iron-bearing bands. An offset approximates to thirteenth-century ground level, here about 80cm above the floor of the chamber. Above the offset, but not below, the bastion makes housed joints in the face of the third-century wall.

The space above and around you was filled up with earth in the eighteenth century to make a garden, and the defences were then buried and lost. They were rediscovered by excavation in 1873 and 1969, and enclosed within the exhibition chamber in 1973.

THE KING'S WALK BASTION

GLOUCESTER



a reconstruction

