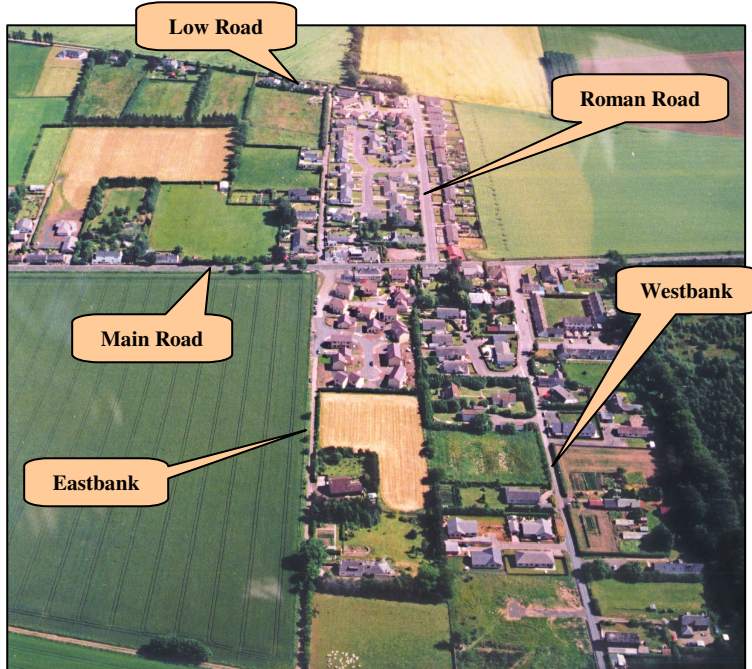


Westmuir - Historical Summary



Northmuir, Southmuir and Westmuir were specifically created by the Kirriemuir authorities in 1815 ostensibly to allow the town to develop. At Westmuir more than thirty smallholdings were laid out to enable handloom weavers and their families to practise self-sufficiency whilst plying their trade. However there is evidence to suggest that all three hamlets were located on the edges of the town/parish boundaries in order to deter local farmers who were encroaching on the town's common lands. This would explain why the Westmuir is a mile out of town and not at Herdhill.

About a third of the initial buildings survive in one form or another and many of the smallholdings and their wells can be located. In addition at least two communal wells were sunk outside the present shop and in **Roman Road**. Some of the smallholdings were located along the Airlie/Kirriemuir road which bisects the village. Most were sited to the north and south of the main road and were reached by paths between the plots and fields. These footpaths in time developed into the four side roads on which most of the village housing is now to be found.

To the north of the main road lie **East** and **West Bank**, the latter was and sometimes still is known as **Old School Road** or **School Brae**, names which explain why it came into use in the 1870s to service the new village school. Prior to that date early O.S. maps indicate that the western houses of the village were accessed by 'the Strippie' now a wide but partially overgrown footpath between the Parish Boundary mound and the property boundaries. The title is not as one might presuppose a familiar diminutive common to locals – as with 'Shoppie', but is an actual Old Scots term for an approach road.

East Bank sometimes known as **Rossiebank** from the property at the northern end certainly predates the 1815 village and was the trackway which led to **Cloisterbank** whose buildings have disappeared in the last fifty years. This farm was reputed to be the site of the late 18thC confrontation between the townsfolk of Kirriemuir and the surrounding farmers when disagreements over the hoarding and price of grain led to the fisticuffs described in Reid's 'Regality of Kirriemuir' as the **battle of Cloisterbank**. In fact the name itself may well suggest even greater antiquity. In 1202 A.D. Gilchrist, Earl of Angus gifted Kirriemuir Parish Church and the lands which sustained it to the Abbey at Arbroath as part of the Abbey's fund-raising to contribute to the fourth Crusade. It is not impossible that CLOISTER bank may well relate to some of the arable and grazing lands so gifted. Could it be that these rents partially financed the sack of Constantinople in 1204?

South of the main road lie the Low Road and Roman Road. The fact that the former has always been referred to as The **Low Road** may well indicate that in the early years this was the major access route to the lower and southern part of the settlement. Certainly a substantial number of the older houses of the village were adjacent to it. In more recent times the **Roman Road** has taken precedence as the most populated road in the village. The name recalls the Roman Road which runs SW/NE across the field immediately to the west of the village. This feature forms part of the metalled road linking the fort of Cardean in the west to the fort at Inverquhar in the east and dates from the Agricola invasion and occupation of 79/87 A.D.

The existence of this stretch of road has been known for decades but it was spectacularly revealed as a crop marking photographed by Prof. J K St. Joseph and the Cambridge Aerial photography group in 1951. More recently in 1994 another aerial survey of Strathmore by the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historical Monuments Scotland revealed two more sections of the road. To the west and 200 metres south of Reddie Farm lay a continuation of Westmuir's **Roman Road**. More curiously a new section of road was discovered at Balbrydie Cottage a mile north east of Westmuir. This section was aligned to the most northerly piece of Roman Road known in Britain which was found in Caddam Woods. It would appear that at some point between Westmuir and Herdhill the Roman west to east advance up Strathmore temporarily went northwards.

Might it be that the first structures raised at Westmuir were the leather tents of the engineers of the 20th Legion as they swithered about going north or south to avoid Kirrie Den and the Tannage Brae?