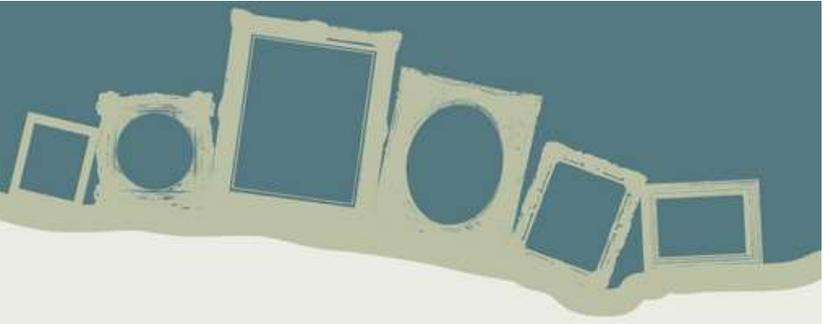


Wall Face



Antiquarian Image Card #2: William Stukeley by Sir Godfrey Kneller

Pencil, ink and wash, 4th Feb 1721, NPG 4266

Linked to Birdoswald Roman Fort (Northumberland)

William Stukeley (born 1687, died 3rd March 1765) is best known for his work at Stonehenge and Avebury, but also travelled along Hadrian's Wall and published over 30 books 'concerned with British or Romano-British antiquities'. He was the first secretary of the Society of Antiquaries in 1717 and in 1752 he wrote one of the first memoirs of his friend Isaac Newton's life. A medical doctor and cleric, latterly he was a member of the Freemasons and described himself as a druid. Although he did no digging on the Wall, he encouraged others, and his writing pulled together the current knowledge.

Key achievements

- made large contributions to the early understanding of Avebury and Stonehenge.
- made detailed drawings of many monuments, recording their condition and setting.
- Stukeley is one of the early scholars who travelled the wild lands of Hadrian's Wall and reported on their own observations and encouraged local antiquarians to send him their own reports which he collated; common practice, when travel was not easy nor safe.

Links to Hadrian's Wall

- visited in 1725, making a lot of contacts and galvanising the local antiquaries to report new discoveries to him.
- wrote a letter to the Princess Augusta (the Princess Dowager) in 1753 about the '*Roman Wall....being pillaged for stone to build the new military roads in Scotland*'. This was followed by a '*directly worded letter urging legislation to stop the destruction.*'
- in 1757 he spoke to the Society of Antiquaries of London deploring the destruction of the Wall '*all under the sanction of the government*'.

Character insights

- Stukeley was likely to have chosen the composition of this portrait by the leading royal court painter. The profile pose is reminiscent of ancient coins and medals, evoking his interest in antiquities, and is rare in English portraiture of this date.
- Stukeley's diary has on 4 February 1720 the entry '*Sr. Godfr. Kn. sketched my profile on paper*', and is one of several portraits of himself listed by Stukeley in his papers.



William Stukeley by Sir Godfrey Kneller © National Portrait Gallery, London

