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## Garheugh Fell

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Garheugh Fell Project



This marker pillar at Humphry is shown as a 'shepherd's cairn' on the 1st edition map. In the distance are the Galloway hills. Garheugh Fell Project

Garheugh Fell is an area of coastal moorland overlooking Luce Bay in Wigtownshire. The original aim of the SRP project was to record the three abandoned farmsteads shown on the 1st edition OS map of 1850. It soon became apparent that these settlements formed part of a larger, multi-period landscape and so the project has spent the last couple of years investigating and recording the archaeology of the whole of Garheugh Fell.

The earliest sites located during the project date from the Bronze Age. In addition to two previously recorded burial cairns the project has found five burnt mounds, further burial cairns and extensive areas of clearance cairns associated with round houses and fragmentary field and enclosure walls. Most of these cairn fields are found on the western, coastal side of Garheugh Fell but deep deposits of blanket bog to the east may conceal other groups of cairns.

The rural archaeology of medieval Galloway is something of an enigma and none of the sites on Garheugh Fell can be shown to belong to this period or earlier, with the exception of several isolated enclosures and small stone structures. The 1st edition map also shows a landscape of derelict fields – 'old walls' – surrounding the three abandoned settlements. The project has located and plotted these 'old walls' and also discovered evidence for larger and more extensive field systems nearby.

The three settlements shown as abandoned on the 1st edition map are Garnschog, Nether Croft and the curiously named Humphry. Nether Croft and Humphry are typical of the small post-medieval farmsteads found across much of upland Galloway. At Nether Croft the farmhouse is separated from a byre, barn and kiln by a narrow lane with an attached enclosure while at Humphry the main building is a combined house and byre with an adjacent enclosure. Both sites are enclosed by stone ring dykes. Garnschog is a larger township settlement. It consists of two houses with adjacent barns and a kiln which lie at the centre of a complex of stone walled fields, some of which contain huts, animal pens, clearance cairns and areas of curved rig cultivation.

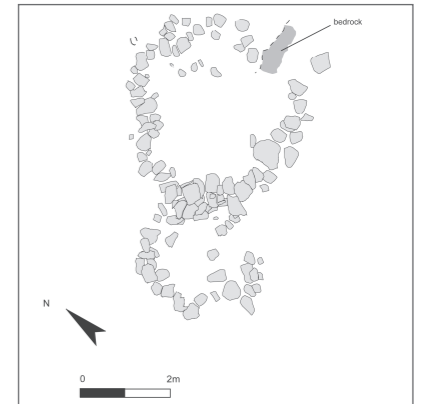
How old are these three settlements? They are shown in ruins at the time of the 1st edition mapping in the 1840s but are not marked on Roy's military survey of the 1740s. Does this mean that they were in use at some point during the second half of the 18th century and abandoned early in the 19th century?

The evidence for phasing and the size of the associated earlier field systems suggests that Garnschog, Humphry and Nether Croft re-used, albeit in a smaller form, the sites of pre-existing settlements and fields. The date of those pre-existing settlements is open to debate but they could incorporate medieval elements.

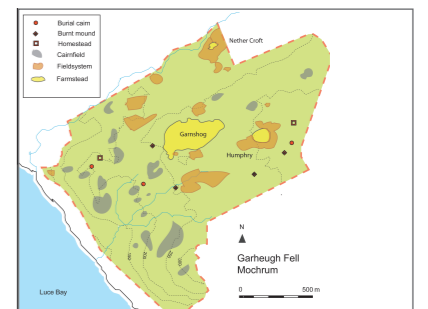
Garheugh Fell, like much of upland Galloway, has evidence for settlement and farming from many periods. The fun – and the challenge – is in trying to understand those various episodes of activity and come up with a convincing story of how the area has been used during the last 4,000 years.



The farm buildings at the centre of Garnschog township. The walls stand to 1.5m high. Differences in the construction and condition of the field walls and the discovery of a building overlain by the ring dyke suggest that there may be a number of phases of occupation at Garnschog. Garheugh Fell Project



There are a number of features which appear to predate the three abandoned farmsteads shown on the 1st edition map. These include a series of isolated enclosures associated with small stone structures, such as the two-celled structure shown above. These are probably lambing pens, or buchts, for milking ewes, as well as a number of possible shieling sites. Garheugh Fell Project



Map of Garheugh Fell. Garheugh Fell Project