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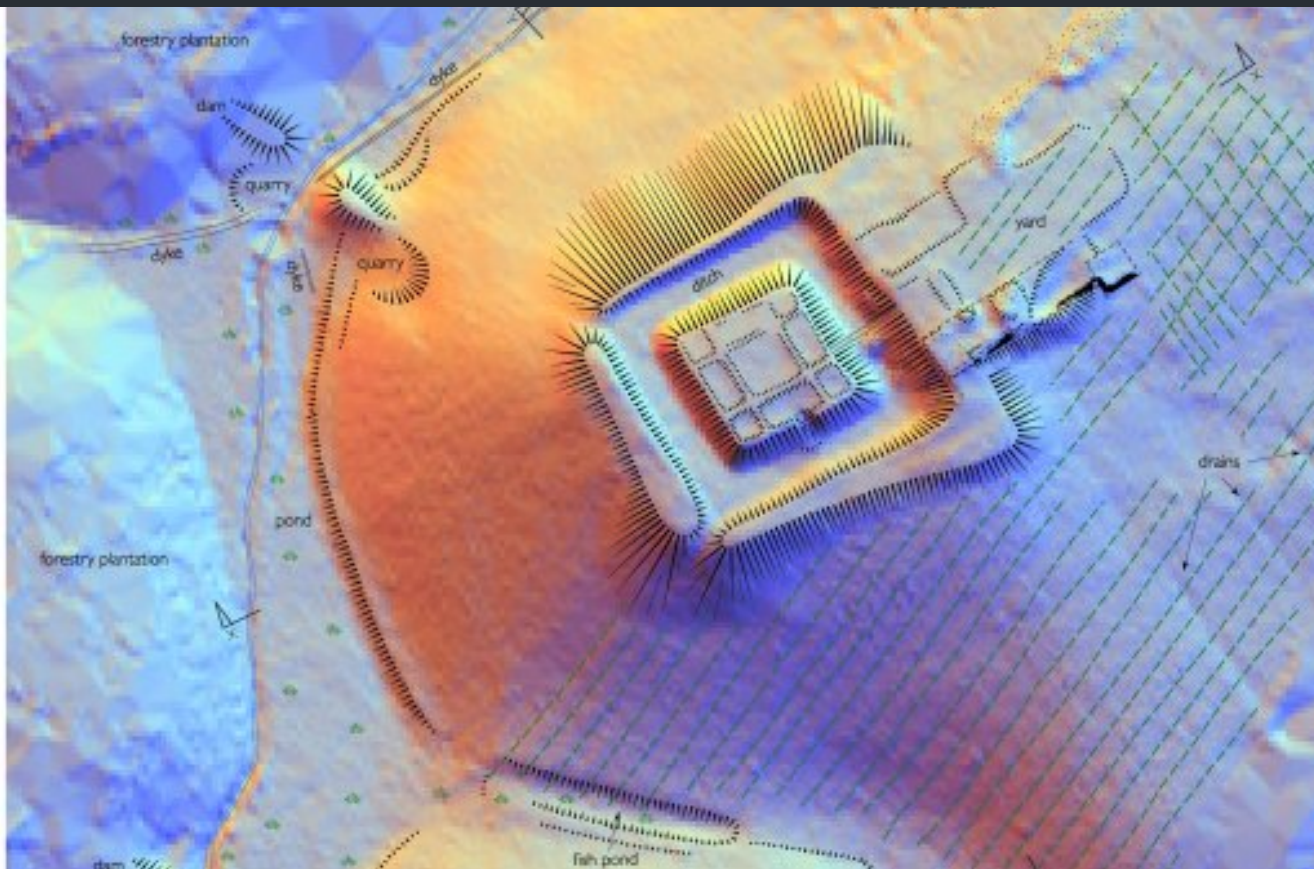


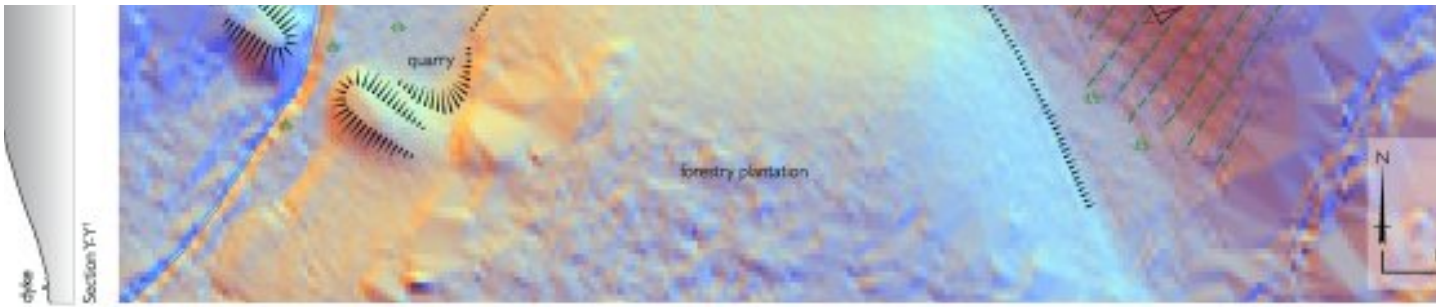
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# Sir John De Graham's Castle - Stirling





## A Place of Some Interest

*Sir John de Graham's Castle is a fine example of a relatively rare type of medieval earthwork – a square moated enclosure. Access to the castle must have been via a wooden bridge on the north east side of the flat-bottomed ditch. The central platform is almost square and may have been occupied by four ranges of buildings around a central square. Similar sites are those at Dunrod in Galloway and David's Fort in Easter Ross. Dunrod has been dated by excavations to the 13th century.*

*The castle occupies the end of a ridge overlooking the Carron reservoir, once the watershed between the Carron and the Endrick Water. The castle dominated the route through from the royal hunting forest of the Forth valley to Fintry in Lennox. Around the foot of the castle there are the remains of a system of water management with two dams with openings for sluices. In addition, a gully to the south of the castle has a long narrow fishpond, which may have been a spawning pool for the larger ponds.*

*The Statistical Account of Scotland (from 1791-99) contains an entry describing the site by the Reverend Sheriff: "the ruins found in the muirland, near the source of the Carron, should, with some others in the parish, have been passed over in silence, were they not generally supposed to be the remains of a castle, the residence of Sir John the Graham, who fell in the battle of Falkirk [in 1298], defending the liberty of his country against the ambition of Edward" (Vol. 18 Parish of St Ninians).*

*Sir John de Graham is one of William Wallace's principal supporters in Blind Harry's famous poem 'The Actes and Deidis of the Illustre and Vallyeant Campioun Schir William Wallace' (also known as 'The Wallace'), written around 1477. For an archaeological site of this nature to be so 'generally supposed' to be associated with a significant historical figure is unusual – and this has served to elevate the site above others normally 'passed over in silence'. But what is the actual evidence linking this site to Sir John de Graham?*





## A Tale too Good to be True?

*A 13th century charter records 'the whole waste lands of Dundaff and Strathcarron, which was the King's forest' being granted by Alexander II to John's father, Sir David de Graham, 'for his homage and service' (and in exchange for land in Galloway). So the castle itself may be of earlier date, having been built as the principal stronghold of the Barony of Dundaff. That a John de Graham was the third son of Sir David de Graham is not in doubt – but was this the same John immortalised in 'The Wallace' as having fallen at the Battle of Falkirk, or perhaps a son or relative?*

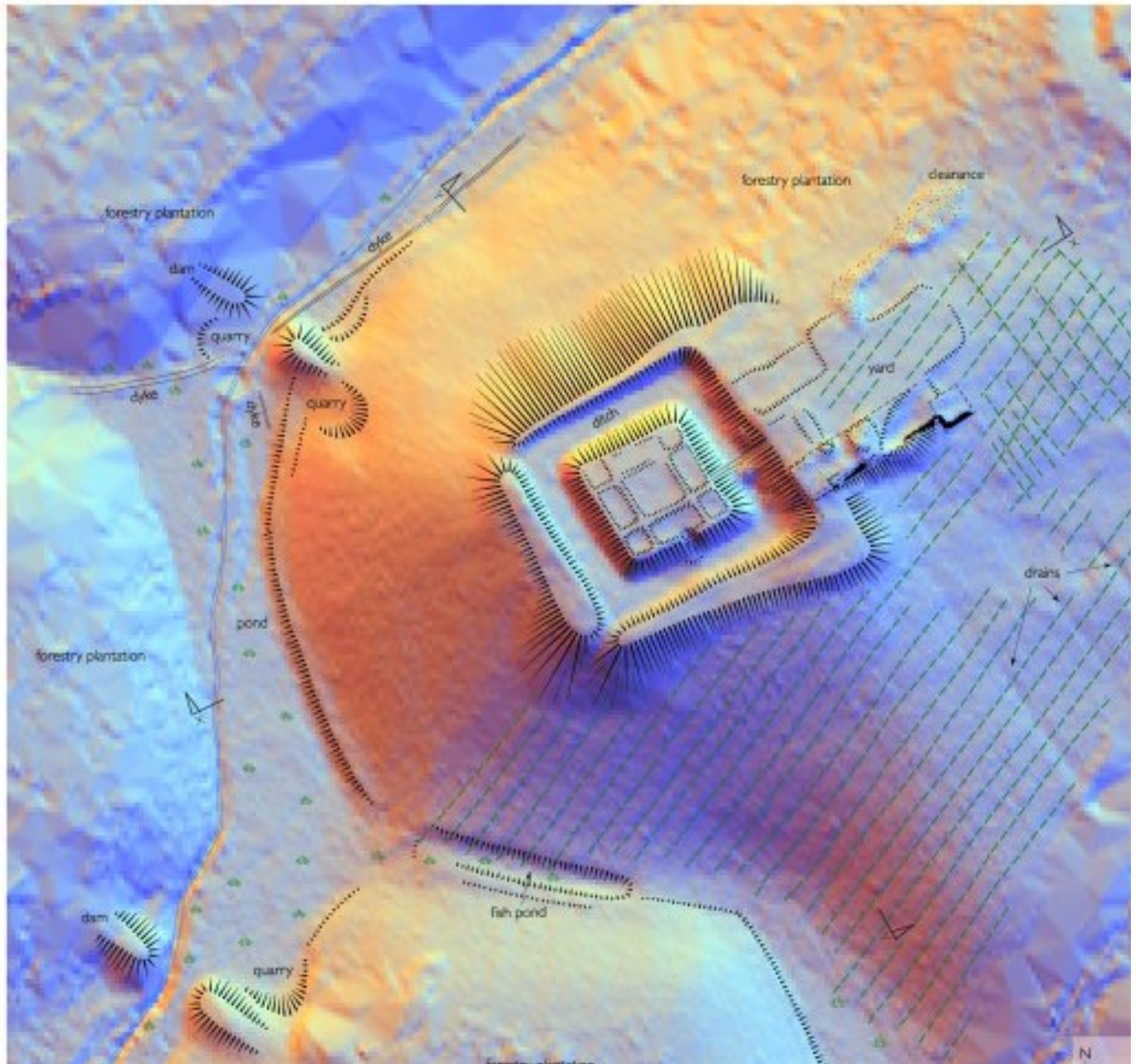
*"In this sad pickle, Wallace by and by,  
Thought it convenient for him now to fly.  
Spurr'd up his horse, lamenting still for Graham,  
Then to his folks at Carron Water came."*

*Although Blind Harry's poem was written long after the event, it does clearly link his Sir John de Graham to the area; and although the earthwork was likely built some years beforehand, it does mark the feudal estate of Dundaff, property of the de Graham family. Fact and fiction do seem to meet at Sir John de Graham's castle to tell a story of place that is firmly rooted in the past.*

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