

Otterburn Battlefield Landscape

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INTRODUCTION

The Battle of Otterburn was fought in August 1388, between a Scottish army led by the Earl of Douglas and an English army led by Henry Percy. Today, the believed site of the battle is marked by Percy's Cross and is designated as a Registered Battlefield. But the exact location of the battle remains open to debate and the detailed course of the battle itself is not clear.

As part of the Revitalising Redesdale's *Conflict in a Landscape: The Battle of Otterburn Project*, the landscape archaeology review seeks to enhance our understanding of the medieval landscape, enabling us to better use contemporary sources and to better understand the tactical potential of the historic terrain to reassess the location of the battle, following the methodology that was used successfully to locate the Battle of Bosworth.

The battlefield landscape study area encompasses some 14.5km² in the townships of Otterburn and Troughend in the parish of Eldon, lying either side of the river Rede, between Elishaw in the north to just beyond Otterburn in the south (Fig.1). The traditional site of the battle lies at the centre of this region. Figure 2 shows the same area against a background of relief generated from the lidar data. This image reveals the undulating topography as well as showing some remarkably fine archaeological features, and the complex nature of the former river channels.

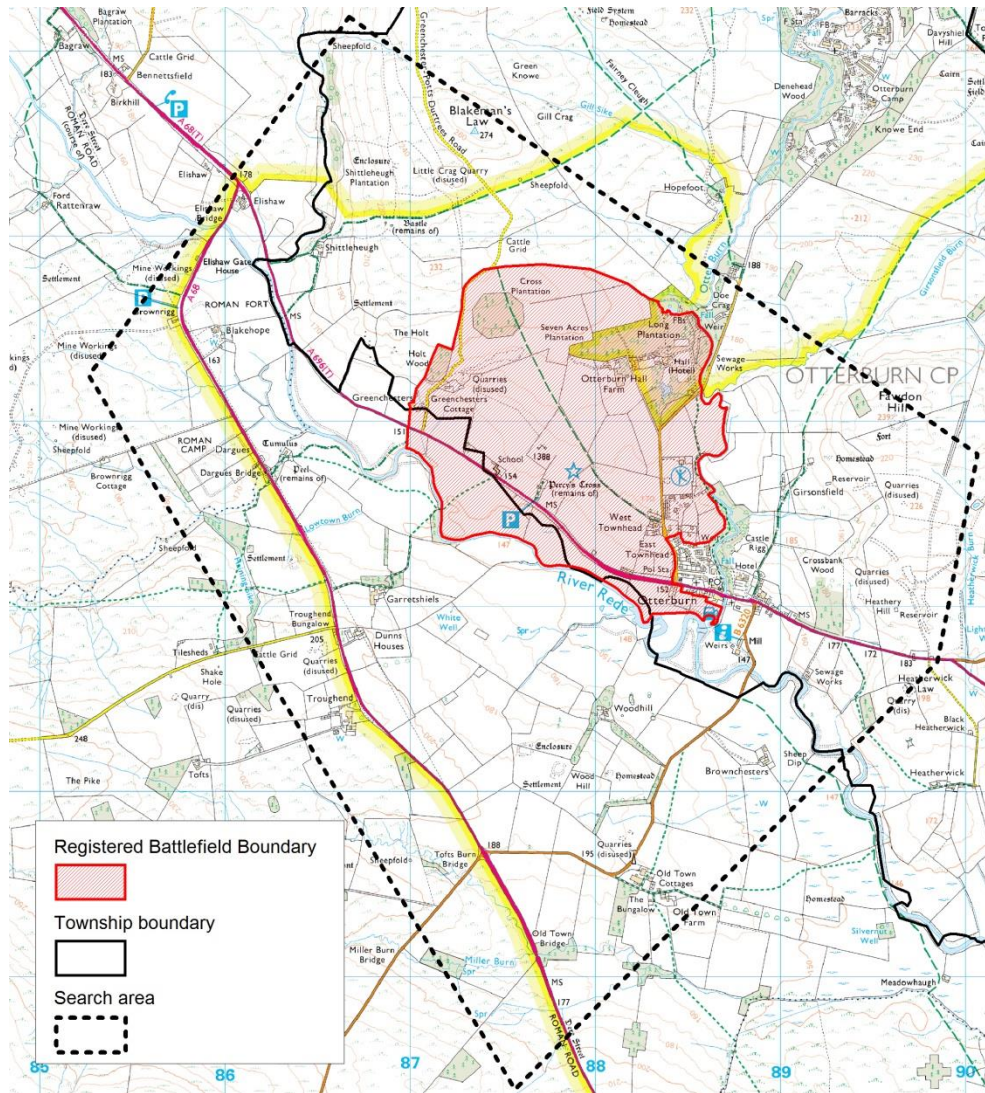


Figure 1: Ordnance Survey Explorer map showing Historic England’s Registered Battlefield boundary, the township boundary between Otterburn and Troughend, and the battlefield landscape study area.

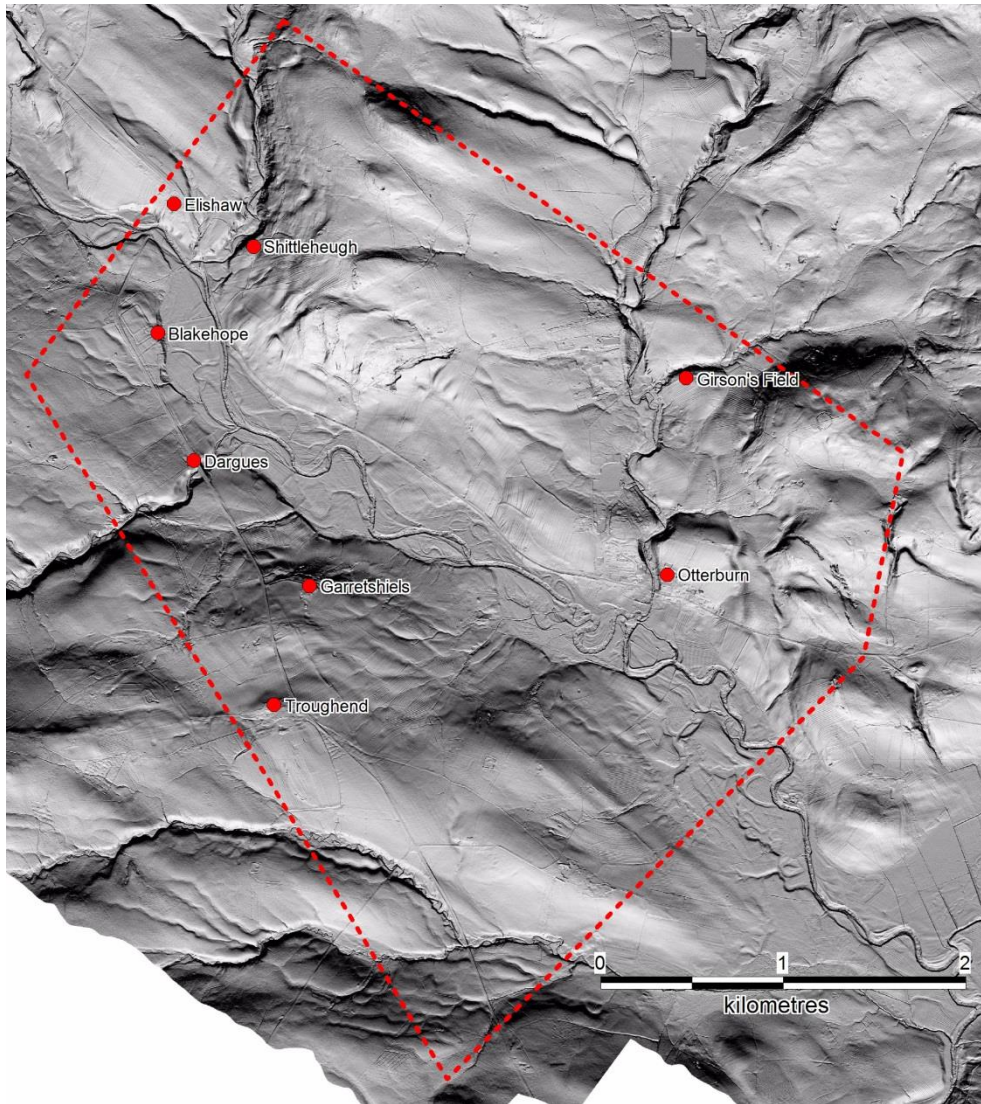


Figure 2: The historic landscape survey area outlined in red, also showing settlements recorded before 1388 against a background of lidar data.¹

The key features sought when reconstructing the landscape of a battlefield are those that affect the logistics - the long distance movement of men and materials - and the more immediate tactics of warfare, and are principally: roads; rivers with the position and nature of crossing points, whether ford, bridge or embankment; the pattern of relief; marsh or boggy land; wood and woodland; the extent and nature of unenclosed land, whether arable open field, common pasture or other broken ground such as furze or other scrubland; enclosed land; and settlement whether nucleated or dispersed. All these features can assist or hinder the movement of an army, the deployment of troops, and the engagement and action of the battle. But the landscape is not static and such features have often been altered, to a greater or lesser extent, since a battle. Roads might be realigned, upgraded to turnpikes and later major modern thoroughfares, or downgraded or even deserted entirely. Similarly rivers can be straightened, scoured or diverted, but might also meander and create new channels by natural process. Marshes can be drained, woods grubbed up and evidence of early agricultural

¹Produced by Revitalising Redesdale Landscape Partnership
<https://www.revitalisingredesdale.org.uk/projects/lost-redesdale-revealing-the-hidden-landscape/redesdale-lidar-landscapes/>

practices such as ridge and furrow destroyed by modern agriculture or development. Landscape evolution can result in many early features being obscured or obliterated and the earlier the landscape we seek to understand the more complex and challenging is the task. The earlier character of the landscape and the chronology and mechanism of its change, as well as the nature of land tenure, the production of records of it, and survival of archives can all lead to very different potential for reconstructing terrain at the time of a battle.

The battle of Otterburn took place in 1388. To understand the landscape of this period it is necessary to work backwards in time beginning with map and documentary sources from the early-modern.

The character of the landscape in the medieval was governed by the natural environment and the agricultural regime, the latter in turn influenced by the administrative structure. Understanding the way in which the landscape was managed can assist in interpreting boundaries in the landscape. The basic units of administration were the parish, township and manor.² Medieval parishes were solely ecclesiastical units that in Northumberland often contained multiple townships, but they did not control the agrarian system and so are not discussed here. The manor was a feudal unit presided over by the lord of the manor, which governed through manorial courts controlling estate administration, including legal matters, and customary rights and duties. Such issues would be applicable to all members of the manor and some manors were vast, particularly in the north of the country, containing multiple townships. In the fourteenth century the Umfravilles held the principal manor in Redesdale. The capital messuage was the castle at Harbottle, but they also held an additional centre and messuage at Otterburn.³ The choice of Otterburn for this role is noteworthy as it likely reflects the importance, and vulnerability, of the road through the valley up to Scotland. A survey made in 1415 records a tower at Otterburn as well as at Elsdon.⁴

Manor courts often also governed agricultural practice, but locally the basic unit for managing the agricultural landscape was the township. A township was, in its simplest terms, a settlement with its agrarian system. It was, usually, a discrete expanse of land with defined boundaries, often using natural features such as rivers and watercourses. It might contain within its boundary nucleated and dispersed settlement, as well as communal open fields, woodland, meadows and pasture. Other shared resources outside of the townships territory, such as woodland and common pastures, might be vast areas enjoyed by members of a particular manor or township, or indeed multiple townships.⁵ Such shared resources did not form part of the township's territory until enclosure when allotments were made to each township in lieu of the common rights. The area of study encompasses land in Otterburn and Troughend townships (Fig.1). The boundary between them has been plotted from the 1840 tithe map which is the earliest map source to show it in its entirety.⁶ This boundary runs parallel to the river Rede, but along it only for a short distance. It might be expected that the

²A comprehensive discussion of the nature of territorial units is given in the Elsdon Village Atlas, Chapter 3. The Archaeological Practice Ltd., (2004), Historic Village Atlas 5: Elsdon. Northumberland National Park Authority. And for manorial documents the Manorial Documents Register Project is particularly valuable <https://www.northumberlandarchives.com/manorial-documents-register-project/>

³ Ibid, p.35

⁴ R. Young et al., An Archaeological Research Framework. Northumberland National Park, p.241

⁵ T Partida, 'Drawing the Lines: A GIS Study of Enclosure in Northamptonshire', PhD, Huddersfield (2014) pp.29-30

⁶ DT 164/4 M

river formed the original boundary but its meanderings and alterations over time may have forced a fixed line to be imposed.⁷ The same boundary is shown on a c.1779 estate map marking the border between Garretshiels⁸ and Greenchesters farms.⁹ It is not possible to state how early this boundary is.

METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

Data searches for historic maps and documents were initially made by township as that is how the agricultural regime was organised (see above). Individual places and estates identified from this were then targeted for further searches. Where possible digital copies of historic maps were made as this allows features not easily seen with the naked eye to be digitally enhanced, thus allowing more accurate data to be extracted. Data from map sources were digitised directly into GIS. Data are mapped to a base of the Ordnance Survey (OS) 1st Edition 1:10560 scale maps from 1855-1884¹⁰ as it provides the first systematic, accurate large-scale mapping for the whole country.

The primary sources for landscape analysis are the various types of historic map: county, enclosure, tithe, and estate. All have particular advantages and limitations as each was made for a specific purpose.¹¹ County maps being of smaller scale than the others omit much detail but are particularly useful for placing features in a wider landscape context; and are especially useful for road networks. Enclosure maps document the process of enclosure and, as they are legal documents, are typically highly accurate. They largely date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the parliamentary period of enclosure, and very few pre-eighteenth century enclosure maps have been found nationally. Their function was to plot the new allotment boundaries and roads. They often also map ancient enclosures, and pre-existing roads and buildings. But within the newly enclosed land former features are not shown so the landscape being replaced cannot be discovered from enclosure maps. Draft enclosure maps do plot both the existing and new landscape but these rarely survive and none have been identified in this study.

Tithe maps, like enclosure maps, were legal documents and, in addition to being highly accurately plotted, also all record the same information, although not always presented in the same way.¹² The purpose of the tithe map and apportionment was to record the new tithe tax, or rent charge, payable on every titheable parcel of land in England and Wales. In many parts of the country they are extraordinarily detailed giving data field-by-field: name, description, state of cultivation (arable, pasture, meadow etc.), measurement (acres, roods, perches), rent charge, owner and occupier. Unfortunately in Northumberland apportionment was by holding rather than by field making this county's surveys 'among the most impoverished of the whole

⁷ Hodgson in 1827 states that 'Troughen Ward comprises that part of the parish of Elsdon which lies on the west side of the river Rede'. John Hodgson, *A History of Northumberland in Three Parts, Part II. Vol. I.*, Newcastle Upon Tyne, (1827) p.132

⁸ Garretshiels has historically had variant spelling, typically Garretshield, but for consistency and to avoid confusion the modern spelling of Garretshiels has been adopted within the text except where quoting from an historic source. However, in the Appendix the spelling of the original documents has been retained.

⁹ 3590/40

¹⁰ <https://maps.nls.uk/os/county-series/dates-england-and-wales.html>

¹¹ Partida, 2014. pp.37-66

¹² For a full discussion of the Tithe Commutation Act and tithe apportionments and maps see, Roger J. P. Kain & R.R. Oliver, *The Tithe Maps of England and Wales: A Cartographic Analysis and County by County Catalogue*, Cambridge, (1995)

country'.¹³ Moreover, their date range 1836-1850 means they post-date enclosure for most places and any features they show, including the township boundaries, are enclosure or later impositions.

Estate maps can be the most useful as they are not confined to a particular process, function or period. However, they are limited to the land belonging to the estate, often wholly ignoring other property and for this reason should be treated with caution.

Other documentary sources such as county histories, estate and parish records are also consulted for evidence of landscape history and management. All of these can provide information about how agricultural systems were organised and managed, and the types of crops being grown and stock being reared. Archaeological features are also of great importance to understanding past landscapes, particularly so for those as early as the fourteenth century. Aerial photography and lidar data have been examined for Otterburn and have proved especially useful in identifying features, ridge and furrow and former river channels.

A full list of sources is given in the Appendix.

¹³ Ibid. p.359

LANDSCAPE DISCUSSION

A reconstruction of the historic landscape, encompassing at least part of its medieval character, for our search area has been made using a combination of documentary and archaeological sources. The primary source for this analysis is the historic map. All maps identified from the searches have been copied, analysed and relevant data digitised in GIS. In addition aerial photographs and lidar data were examined to identify significant features and to assist in accurately locating those shown on maps. A compilation of these data is shown in Figure 3.

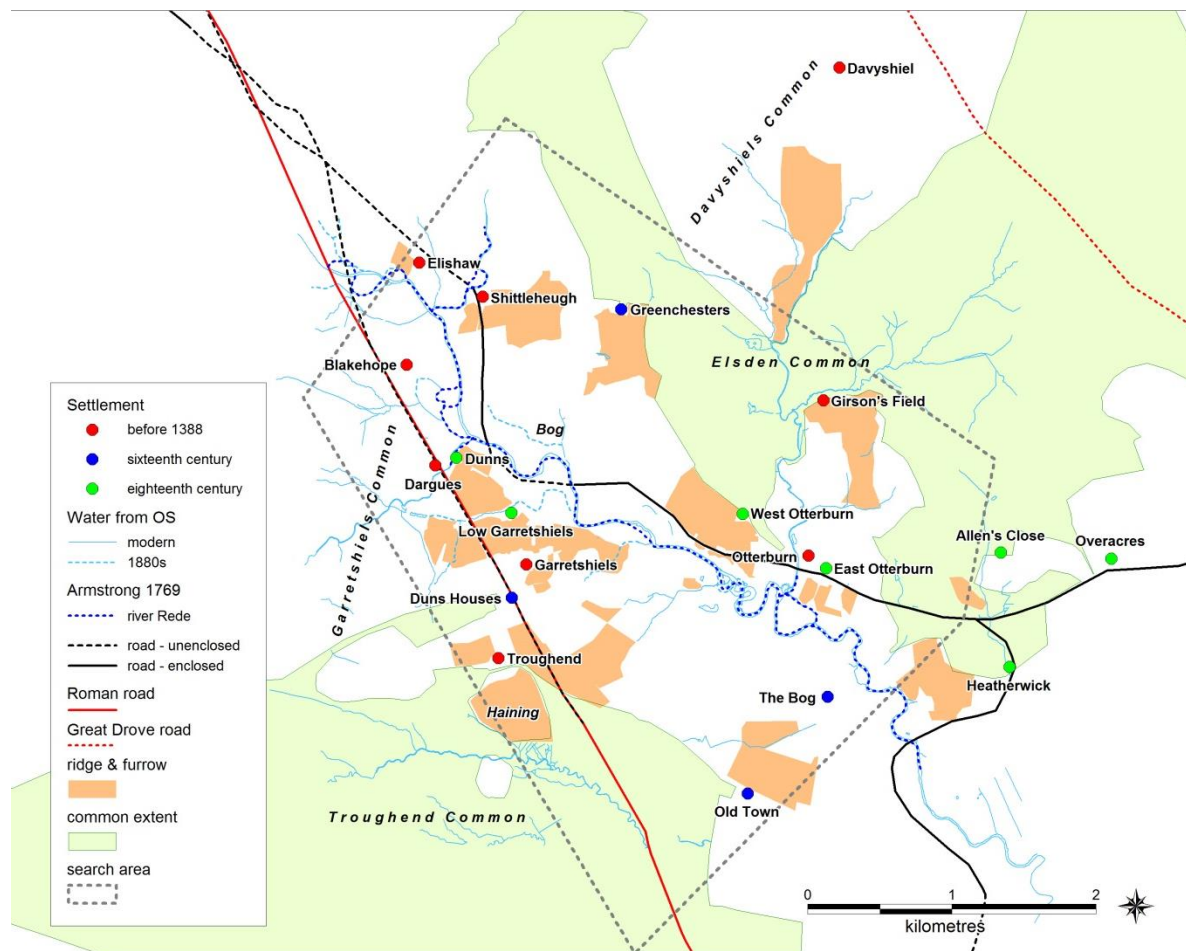


Figure 3: A compilation of potentially medieval landscape features from map and archaeological sources. The areas of ridge and furrow are interpretations from lidar data and aerial photography and are those features identified as being early (probably medieval). Rig suggested here as being of late origin (narrow rig) or of uncertain but probably late date is excluded from this map. See Figure 4 for a more detailed analysis of the rig data. The dates of the settlements refer to the earliest source.¹⁴ All other data are from map sources. The extent of Davyshiel and Garretshiels commons has not been established.

¹⁴ Dates for the fourteenth century settlements, with the exception of Dargues, are from A. Mawer, *The Place-Names of Northumberland and Durham*, Cambridge, (1920); Dargues has been identified as the modern name for Smallburn by I. Roberts A. Rushworth, R. Carlton, (2005), *Driving in Northumberland National Park: An Historical and Archaeological background*. The Archaeological Practice Ltd. p.25, which is in turn identified as Smaleburne by Hodgson and dated to 1385; all the sixteenth century settlements are from Hodgson, (1827); for the eighteenth century from map sources: West and East Otterburn QRD 003; Duns and Low Garretshiels ZCL B 337. The locations of Heatherwick, Allen's Close and Overacres are taken from the 1731 enclosure map of Elsdon Common, but as they lie outside of the study area the earliest date they are recorded has not been researched.

The river Rede runs through the centre of this landscape with land-use types mirrored on either side. At the outer edges were vast commons of rough grazing; inside these were areas of ridge and furrow cultivation which represent probable medieval open fields. At the centre lay a broad area of meadow on low lying ground either side of the river (Fig 8 & 9) Settlements lay on either side of the river, though were more numerous on the west. It can be seen that the landscape was largely unenclosed. There were no woods within this area. There was a parcel of some 37 acres marked as 'woody pasture' on an eighteenth century estate map, with a small close adjacent called 'The Holts' (Figs.8 & 9).¹⁵ The name 'holt' denotes a wood,¹⁶ but both the close and the woody pasture have ridge and furrow within them, though of uncertain date (Fig.9).

Arable and Meadow

An analysis has been made of the character of ridge and furrow to see if it might be possible to identify period of origin of the pre-modern field systems.¹⁷ An initial search was made for early documentary sources but this did not locate any evidence regarding the medieval agricultural régime that might have assisted interpretation, though a more detailed search could be made in future. The principal data used to define the extent and character of the ridge and furrow was the lidar data from the Environment Agency processed by the Northumberland National Park Authority for the Redesdale Lidar Landscapes Project.¹⁸ The data were processed to yield a series of 8 images for each km square with azimuth increasing by 45 degrees in each to better reveal the fine detail of rig whatever its orientation.¹⁹ The RAF vertical photography from the mid-20th century, held at Swindon, was also consulted but added little to the analysis. The extent of rig has been sketch-mapped on screen with reference to these images and each discrete area of rig classified according to several attributes. Firstly whether broad or narrow, the latter taken to indicate very late cultivation probably extending into the 19th century. The broad rig, which is taken to be earlier, was then divided according to whether it is curved or has a reverse S curve, which is suggested as indicative of early cultivation, possibly as early as medieval; versus that which is straight, which is suggested may be indicative of early modern cultivation but probably predating the narrow rig. The results are presented in Figure 4 and examples given in Figures 5-7.

¹⁵ ZCL B 337. The map is undated but marks the 'Turnpike Road' established in 1776, and also shows many of the same features as the 1779 map of Garretshiels and Greenchesters Farms. It has therefore been dated here as c.1779.

¹⁶ M. Gelling, *Place-Names in the Landscape*, London, (2000) p.196

¹⁷ The classification of ridge and furrow was undertaken by Glenn Foard

¹⁸ Redesdale Lidar Landscapes Project Report. Unpublished report for Revitalising Redesdale Landscape Partnership and Northumberland National Park Authority.

¹⁹ This was an additional process to the data produced for the Redesdale Lidar Landscapes Project Report and was provided by Ed Hudspeth (GIS Officer, Northumberland National Park Authority).

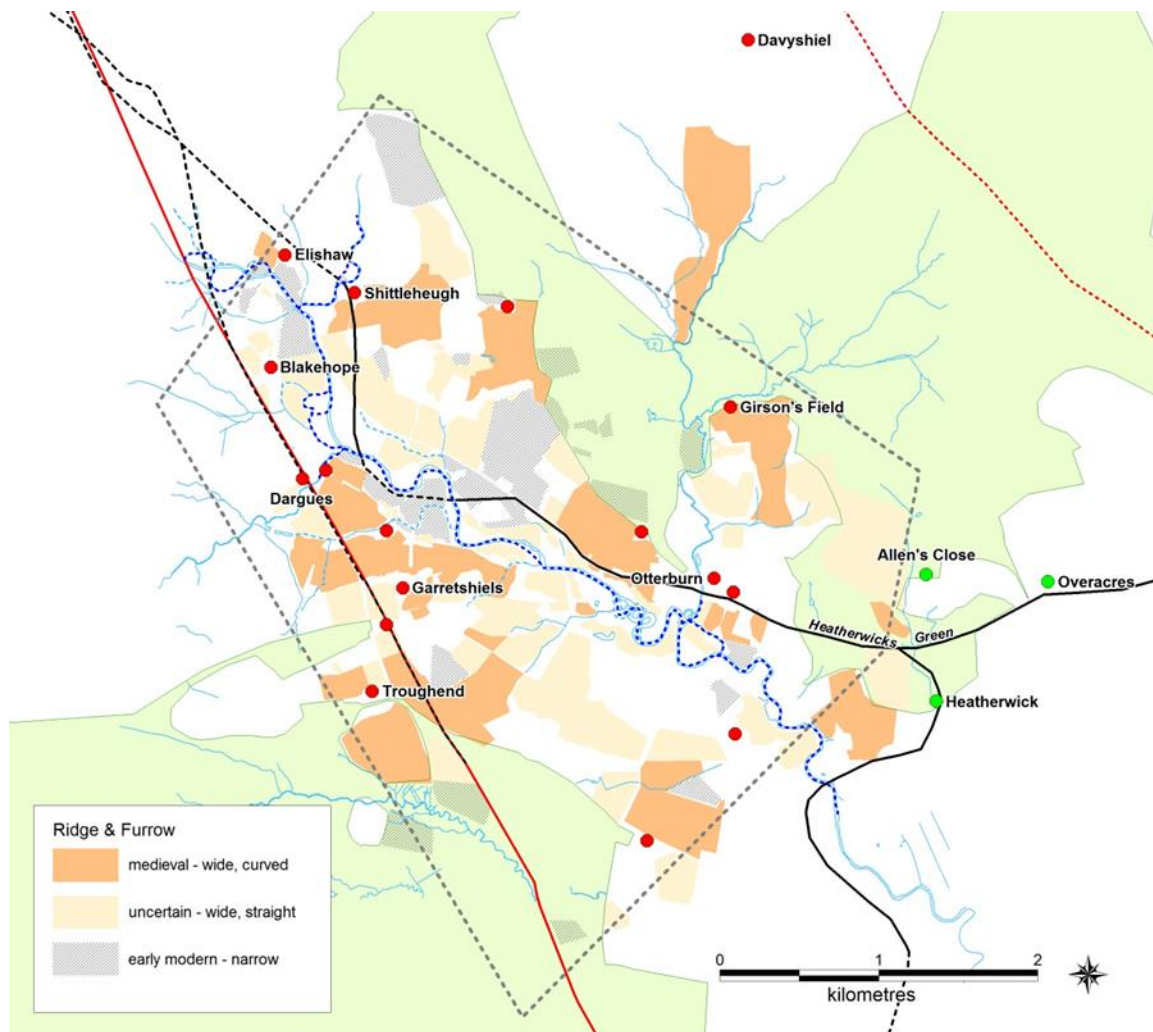


Figure 4: An analysis of ridge and furrow from lidar data indicating probable date of origin. The total area of uncertain period is as great as that classified as medieval and needs further research. Note the plot of probable medieval rig on Heatherwicks Green, the only place it appears on the former commons. For names and dates of other features see Figure 3.

Classification of period of rig by form (broad, narrow etc.) is not straightforward as there are various complicating factors including population decline caused by the Black Death (1348), climatic change causing the altitude limit for cereal ripening to reduce to around 200m, and Border Warfare and reiving.²⁰ Some, or all, of these issues may have had an effect on settlement and on the extent of arable land use in Redesdale. It is likely that by the time of the battle, in 1388, these factors may already have led to abandonment of some settlements and reversion of some, perhaps even most or all, arable to pasture around Otterburn, even if there was perhaps subsequent reoccupation of settlements and return of early rig to arable. Thus the presence of potentially early rig, even if it is medieval in origin, does not prove it was still arable when the battle was fought. Moreover, classification here of rig as early is further complicated by the well documented continued use of wide rig, and indeed of ox teams for cultivation as late as the 18th century.²¹

²⁰ Tim Gates pers. comm. We are grateful to Tim Gates for drawing our attention to these issues and identifying several relevant articles which discuss these issues. These are considered further in 'Recommendations'.

²¹ A. Young, A Six months tour through the north of England, (1771)

This has been a rapid analysis in order to seek, within the resources of the project, some indication as to where land might have been under open field cultivation in 1388 as opposed to some form of outfield, pasture or more extensive common. While reverse S form is generally very distinctive, classification as straight versus curved did not always prove straightforward. This is partly because of the poor condition of some rig and partly due to later features overlying earlier ones, a problem also noted by the Lidar Landscape Project.²² A much more rigorous but time consuming classification might be achievable by taking account of additional attributes, such as whether headlands or heads are present, as well as reviewing again the attributes used here, which might reinforce the argument for an early date of broad rig.

²² Ibid, p.63

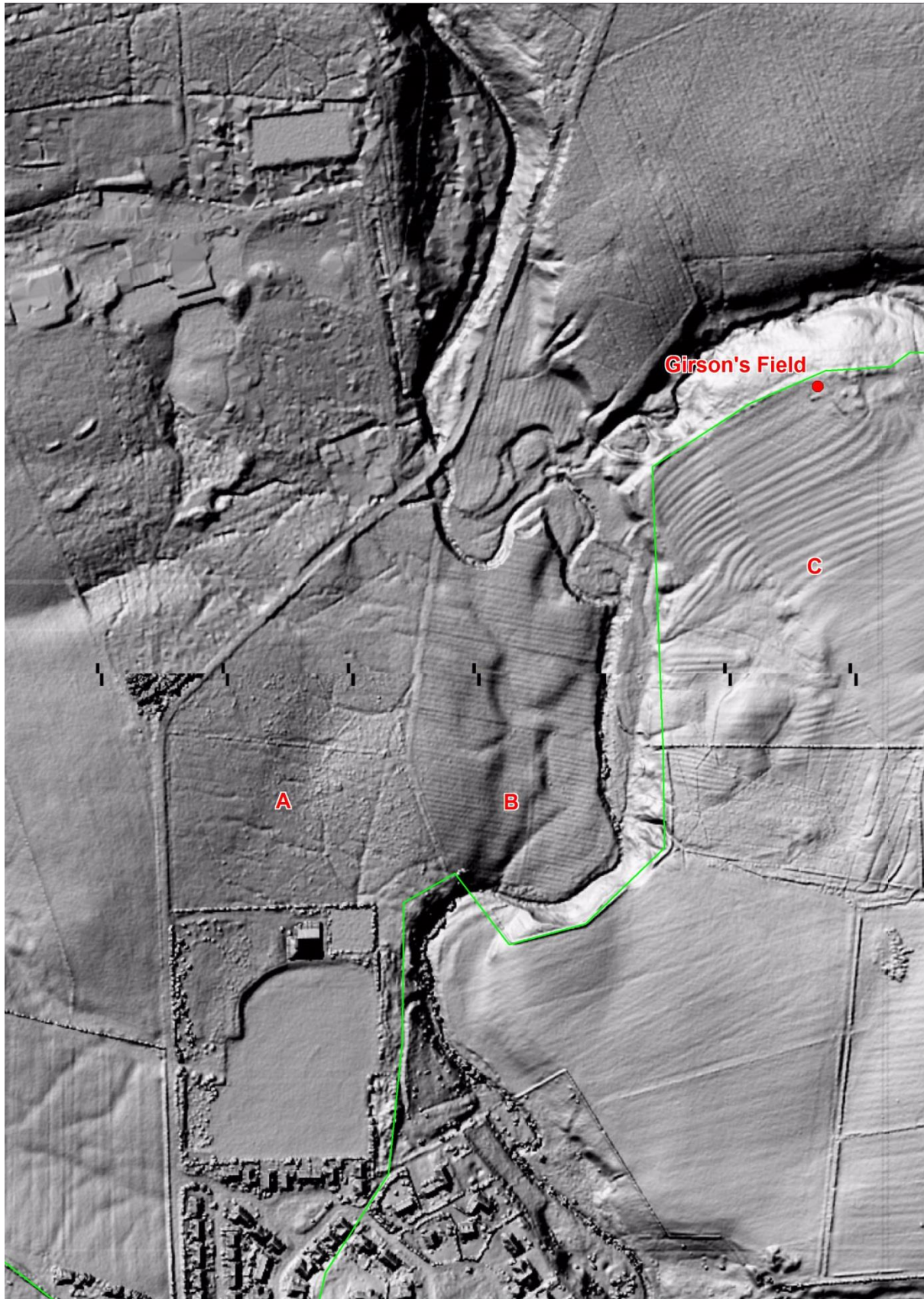


Figure 5: Examples of uncultivated land at A, straight narrow rig at B both within the former Elsdon Common, and at C broad reverse S shaped rig adjacent to Girson's Field lying outside of the common.

At 'A' the pattern of drainage suggests this area within the former Elsdon Common, the extent of which eastward is defined by the green line, has never been cultivated either while it was a common or since enclosure. At 'B' while underlying terracing caused by the stream is still visible it is overlain by very straight narrow rig. That this rig lies within the former Elsdon Common suggests this cultivation took place since enclosure of the Common in 1731. The distinctly reverse 'S' form of the ridge and furrow at 'C', which lies within the anciently enclosed land adjacent to the settlement of Girson's Field, and which abuts but does not cross into the former Common, suggests this cultivation was limited by the presence of the common and thus pre-dates the enclosure of Elsdon Common. It may be the early arable belonging to Girson's Field. Immediately to the south are small patches of broad rig which are too small to classify, showing the difficulty of classifying the broad rig in some cases, though the fragmentary form of the rig here may perhaps indicate late cultivation. Further south modern cultivation has probably levelled any former ridge and furrow.



Figure 6: Complex ridge and furrow at Garretshiels. Broad, straight rig at D of uncertain date, at E broad curved rig with visible over-ploughing of a headland, and at F possible realignment of rig to fit a now removed field boundary.

At 'D' this image shows distinct straight broad rig which fits neatly within the hedged field boundaries, supporting a late date, and perhaps having replaced earlier rig in a more comprehensive fashion than the smaller modifications nearby discussed below. To the east and north of this is an extensive area of curving and reverse S broad ridge and furrow surrounding Garretshiels settlement. The complexity of evidence which it has not been possible to adequately address in this rapid assessment, can be seen in the ridge and furrow north of Garretshiels. Here a headland has been over-ploughed at 'E', extending the strips eastward across a former furlong which ran at right angles but has been truncated and creating a new headland, with traces of the preceding rig just visible beneath the extended

strips. At 'F' part of a furlong appears extended and straightened beside and following a now removed field boundary. These may indicate quite late continued use and modification of the curving/reverse S broad rig, further complicating any analysis.



Figure 7: Examples of broad, curving rig at G and over-ploughing of headlands at H around the settlement of Old Town.

At 'G' can be seen an example of broad curving rig, part of a substantial area of ridge and furrow adjoining Old Town. Again there appears to be evidence of modification with possible former heads or headland running north-south across furlong 'H', having been over-ploughed to merge two furlongs into one. Detailed documentary study might enable dating to be allocated to such changes, helping to show how late the broad curving rig here remained in use.

This classification of the rig was intentionally undertaken without any reference to the other data sets collected in the landscape study. However, when comparison was subsequently made with the extent of commons enclosed in 1731 and 1768 (Elsdon and Troughend respectively), and with the distribution of medieval and early modern settlement, potentially significant patterning was noted. The rig classified as early was found to form discrete areas which in almost every case abutted or encompassed a settlement which existed by 1388 or which was in existence by the 16th century (Figs. 3 & 4). A particularly good example of this can be seen at Garretshiels in Figures 6 & 9. Previous studies have shown a direct relationship between broad rig and medieval settlement, notably at Davyshiel within the

Otterburn Military Training Area.²³ The overall pattern suggests the extent of curving/reverse S broad rig may define the approximate extent of arable infields which in some if not most cases may be as early as the medieval period and thus possibly existing at the time of the battle unless already reverted to pasture as part of the late medieval retraction of arable.

Both narrow rig and broad straight rig often extend into areas of former common, which reinforces the dating of the broad straight rig to the 18th or even perhaps 19th century. Only one small block of broad curved/reverse S rig lies within the former common. The latter, which is clearly reverse S in form, lies on the former Hatherwicks [Heatherwicks] Green, immediately south west of the ancient enclosure of Allen's Croft (Fig. 4). With this one exception, the distribution of broad curved/reverse S rig reinforces the argument that this form is indicative of an early, possibly medieval date. It is of course the case that where narrow rig or indeed broad straight rig exists any earlier curving rig will have been destroyed, but the discrete nature of the surviving areas of broad curved rig, together with its association with early settlement, may indicate that this has not been a major problem.

There is also clear evidence of ridge and furrow lying immediately adjacent to either side of the Rede. It might be expected that such low-lying, wet, and periodically waterlogged land would have been meadow. Indeed an eighteenth century estate map²⁴ marks 'Haughs' (the vernacular term for meadows), and an area called 'The Bog'²⁵ in the same places as much of the ridge and furrow (Figs.8 & 9). It has been noted that in Northumberland the often complex furlong patterns were 'fitting in with topography and drainage', but whether this accounts for what is seen at Otterburn is uncertain.²⁶ Almost all the rig in this area been classified here as late or of uncertain date, so probably does not reflect the medieval pattern of land use, but it requires further analysis.

Meadow grass was a valuable resource even in townships with access to large areas of rough pasture as it provided winter fodder for stock and was particularly valued for cattle. That the townships held mixed resources, including meadow, is recorded by Hodgson from late thirteenth century courts detailing the type and amount of lands held by individuals in Dayscheles (Davyshiel) and Troghwen (Troughend) and Ellesden.²⁷ Meadow, like commons, was often a shared resource. By the eighteenth century meadow was organised in blocks associated with individual farms, some of which lie detached from the farm. The undated estate map marks paths from both Dunns and Garretshiels farms across another's property to such detached meadow as 'The owner of Dunns/Garretshiels has a right to a road here' (Fig.5).

²³ Young et al., p.289

²⁴ ZCL B 337 Undated but c.1779

²⁵ Not to be confused with the farm also called the Bog lying some 800m to the north-east of Old Town. See Figure 3.

²⁶ D. Hall, *The Open Fields of England*, (2014) p.298

²⁷ Hodgson, (1827) p.27



Figure 8: An estate map c.1779 marking several haughs (meadows) where ridge and furrow is also evident. Compare to Figure 9. Note also the access roads from Dunns and Garretshiels to their detached meadows, and the position of the ford to the north-east of Low Garretshiels. (ZCL B 337)

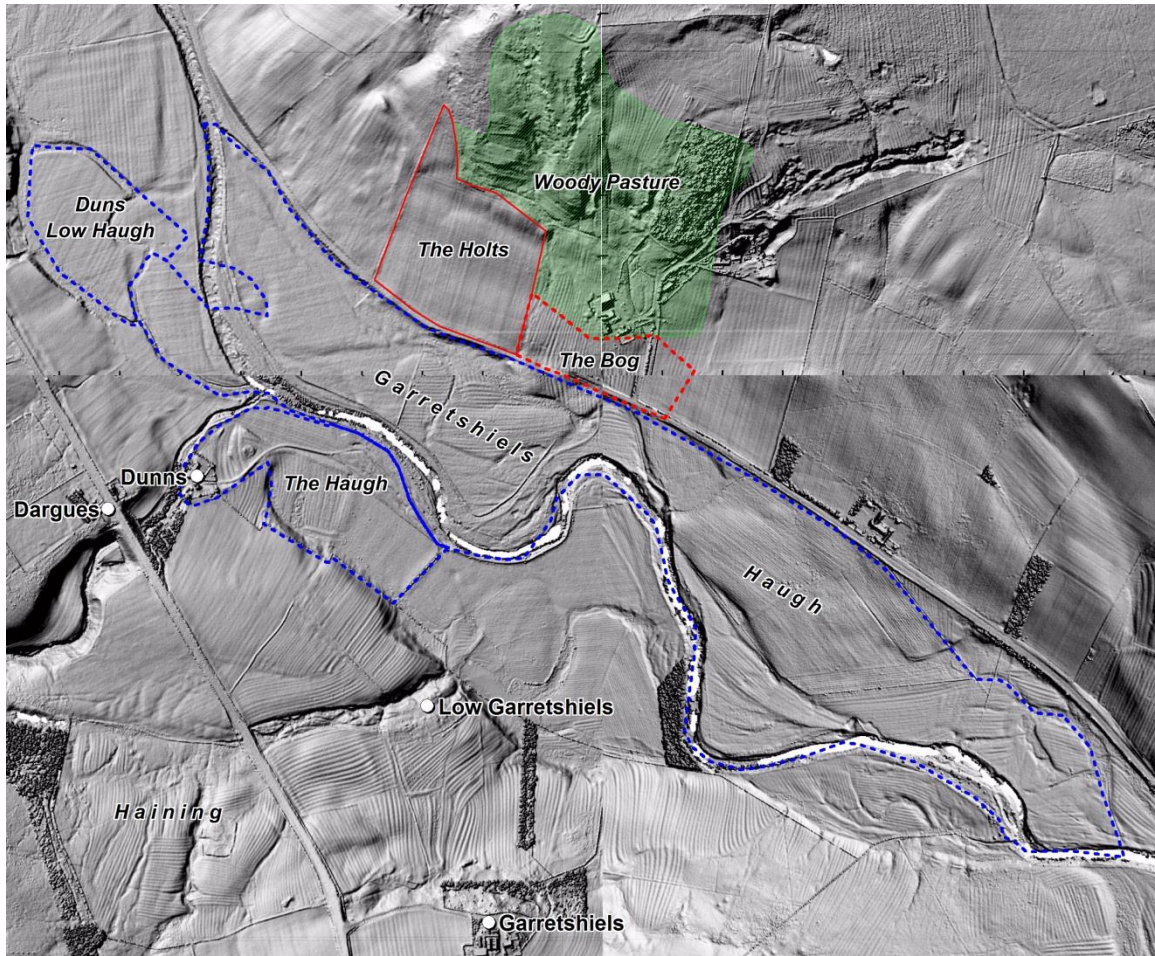


Figure 9: Lidar image showing, outlined in blue, the areas identified as meadow (haugh) on the eighteenth century estate map (Fig.8). Areas called The Bog, The Holts and Woody Pasture from the same map have ridge and furrow within them but of uncertain date. There is also wide rig within the complex former river channels. The potentially medieval ridge and furrow around Garretshiels is particularly fine. The ridge and furrow within the Haining is also clear, as is the boundary around that enclosure which is shown on the c.1779 estate map (Fig.8). The faint ploughed-out features and narrow early-modern rig can be seen in the north of the image.²⁸

Commons

Bordering the arable fields on the higher ground on both sides of the valley were vast areas of common pasture. These lay on higher ground as noted by the Northumberland antiquarian John Hodgson who noted that Otterburn 'basks finely under the shelter of higher grounds on the north and east'.²⁹ Elsdon common was enclosed in 1731 and Troughend common in 1768.³⁰ At the enclosure of Elsdon common allotments were made to Shittleheugh, Greenchesters, and Otterburn as well as those in Elsdon. Attempts had been made to enclose 'Garretsheles common' in 1723 but this failed and it was not enclosed until 1807.³¹ However, it is on the periphery of our study area and thus likely to have less significance to the site of

²⁸ <https://www.revitalisingredesdale.org.uk/projects/lost-redesdale-revealing-the-hidden-landscape/redesdale-lidar-landscapes/>

²⁹ Hodgson, (1827) p.107

³⁰ (A) ZWN/A3 [Act], QRD 3 [Award and Map]; W. E. Tate, *A Domesday of English Enclosure Acts and Awards*, Reading, (1978) p.201

³¹ Hodgson, (1827) p.134

the battle than the other commons. The date of enclosure of Davyshiel common is unknown, but it was still open in 1819 when it was referred to by Hodgson in his colourful description of a storm on the common that caused the Otter to 'pay an unexpected and unwelcome visit to the village ... and carry off with it pigs, poultry, all sorts of farmer's gear, and other things it could find and float away'.³² That these commons were still open in the eighteenth century means that it can be said with confidence that they were open in the fourteenth century, though at that time they may have been even more extensive. It was rare for common pasture to be enclosed and then later returned to the waste but rare examples do exist, as for example at another medieval battlefield site in Northumberland, Hexham. At Dilston near Corbridge, close to the site of the battlefield, some 60 acres were enclosed from the common in 1517-18. This land was held under lease and when it expired the land was returned to waste and was once more commonable.³³

Such large areas of unenclosed grounds, both open field arable and common pasture, would have offered few constraints to the movement of troops. However, it is possible that there was some form of physical boundary to the commons, such as a wall or dike, separating them from the arable fields.³⁴ Divisions within the commons were more likely to have been unbounded and marked by smaller features such as meer stones, and there are numerous stones and cairns marked on Elsdon common enclosure map on the boundary between Elsdon and Davyshiel commons. Similar demarcations are likely to have existed between other commons such as Garretshiels and Troughend. And in the case of Troughend and Corsenside the boundary between them was only fixed at enclosure as evidenced on the map of 1771 which marks 'Boundary betwixt Corenside and Troughend as Awarded by the Arbitrators'.³⁵ Access would have been required from the farms to the commons and two droves from High and Low Garretshiels can be seen to run either side of the enclosed Haining out to Garretshiels Common (Fig.8). The name 'Haining' refers to an enclosure that was specifically used for 'preserving grass for cattle'.³⁶ But whether that meant an enclosure in which cattle grazed or in which the grass was cut for hay to provide winter fodder is unclear. In addition the Haining is full of what appears to be early ridge and furrow (Fig.9), which may suggest either an early reversion to pasture or, conversely, expansion of arable onto pasture.

The allotments from the common made to Otterburn, Greenchesters and Girson's Field are shown in an extract Elsdon common enclosure map (Fig.10). It also shows the gated funnel-like droveway into Otterburn village from the commons. Note also the locations of Greenchesters and, the aptly named, Girson's Field farms. Both sit at the edge of the common behind large areas of medieval strips suggesting these farms were created by taking land from the common pastures for arable. However, as Girson's Field was in existence by 1378³⁷ it may have originated as a shielding. Girson's is called 'Grasing Field' by Armstrong in 1769 possibly a corruption of Girson or perhaps an indication of a reversion to pasture. Indeed Hodgson writing in 1827 refers to Girsonfield farmhouse as lying 'on a plot of rich *green*

³² Ibid. p.112

³³ Craster H. H. E., A History of Northumberland: The Parish of Corbridge, Newcastle Upon Tyne, (1914) pp.117 & 139

³⁴ Hall, (2014) p.295

³⁵ O XXV 2

³⁶ Mawer, (1920), pp.98-99

³⁷ Ibid. p.178

sward'.³⁸ Both farms have modern locations to the south and survive only as earthwork remains in their original locations.

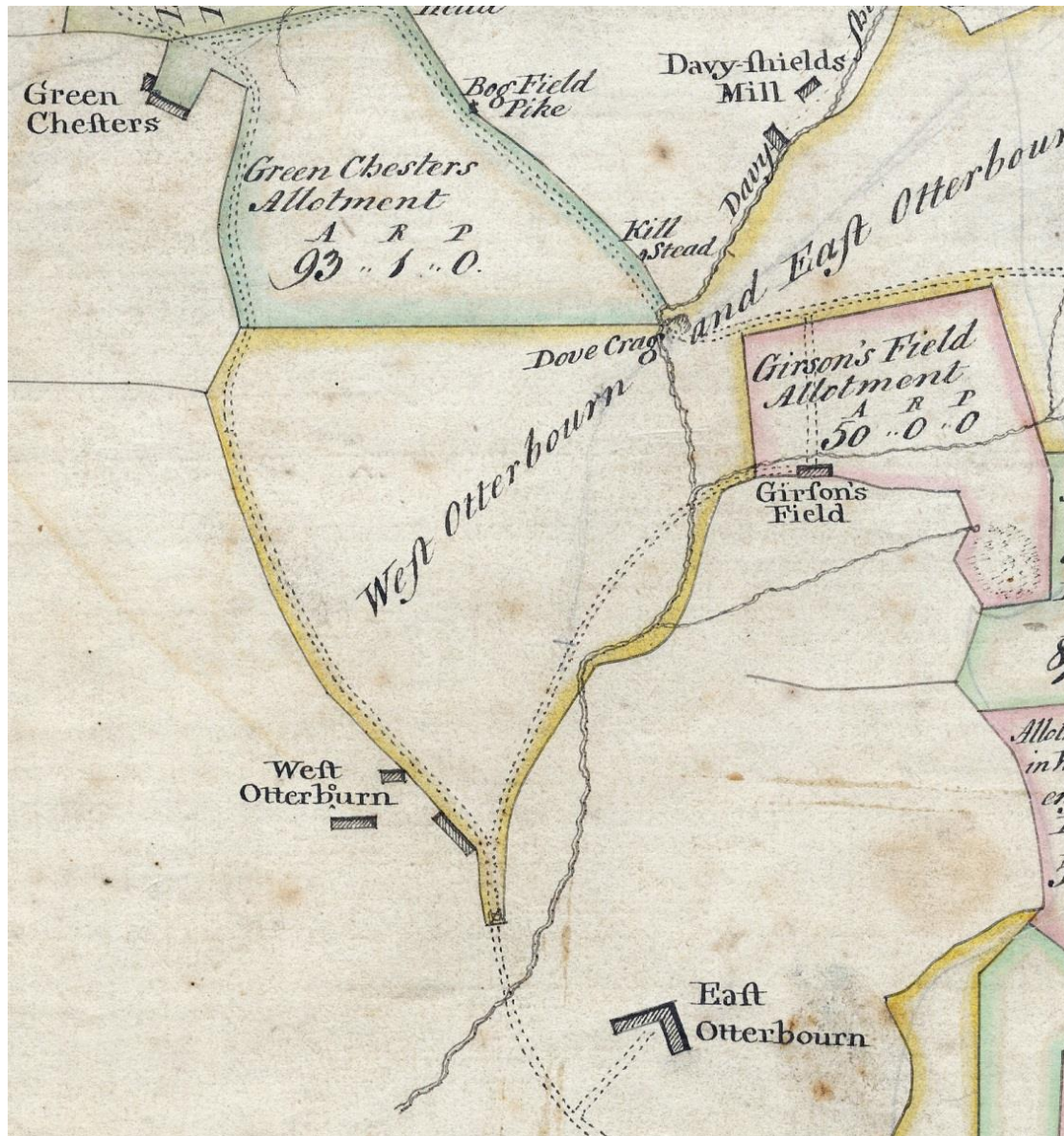


Figure 10: An extract from Elsdon enclosure map showing the allotments to Otterburn Greenchesters and Girson's Field. Note the gate at the end of the funnelled droveway into the common. (QRD 3)

Settlement

There were a number of settlements within the study area, most of them single farms. The location of these settlements is shown in Figure 3 with an indication of the date by which they had become established. There are four places that do not appear in the sources, seen so far, before the eighteenth century: Dunns, Low Garretshiels, West Otterburn and East Otterburn.³⁹ They are all probably post-enclosure, secondary settlements to earlier places; i.e. Dunns to Dunshouses, Low Garretshiels to Garretshiels, West and East Otterburn to

³⁸ Hodgson, (1827) p.110

³⁹ Dunns and Low Garretshiels ZCL B 337, West and East Otterburn QRD 003.

Otterburn, and as such not expected to have any significance to the landscape of the battle. Low Garretshiels had gone by 1840.⁴⁰ East Otterburn is described in the OS Name Books of 1861, as 'The farmhouse and dwellings of the outdoor servants of T. James Esqr. Otterburn Castle.'⁴¹ West Otterburn has been renamed West Townhead and is described in the Name Books as 'A farmhouse with outhouses..'. There are another four settlements first recorded in the sixteenth century. Old Town is mentioned first in the Watch lists of 1552 (see below), when it is named Aldertone.⁴² Dunshouse, Greenchesters, and The Bog are all listed in a survey of 1568.⁴³ It is unclear when any of these places were established, although Greenchesters may be an example of expansion onto the commons, as has been suggested above.

The eight settlements identified as being established by the the mid-fourteenth century, Otterburn, Shittleheugh, Elishaw, Blakehope, Dargues, Troughend, Garretshiels, and Girson's Field are, with the exception of Garretshiels, securely located from map sources. Garretshiels is slightly complicated by an eighteenth century estate map that marks two places 'High 'and 'Low 'Garretshiels as separate farms some 370 metres apart.⁴⁴ For our purposes its location has been given as that of the modern farm, the former High Garretshiels. It is worth remarking that the document of 1552 mentions 'the two fords at the Garret Sheels 'perhaps indicating dual settlement from an early date.⁴⁵ High Garretshiels is now a single large modern farm. There are no buildings remaining at Low Garretshiels but there is very good earthwork survival indicating multiple buildings. Similarly, Greenchesters and Girson's Field have surviving earthworks indicating a once larger settlement.

Elishaw is potentially of greatest significance to the battle as it was the site of a spital by 1240,⁴⁶ and it is located at the point where two major roads, the Roman Dere Street and the pre-cursor to the modern A696, meet. Spitals not only provided care for the sick but also acted as a type of inn providing 'hospitality 'to travellers, and as such would have had provision for accommodating both people and horses. This may have been used to advantage by Scottish troops. Shittleheugh lies some 500 metres southeast of Elishaw on the opposite side of Durtrees Burn and may, according to Hodgson, be linked to Elishaw. Hodgson suggests that the name Shittleheugh is a corruption of Spittlehaugh, and may owe its origin to its proximity to the spital at Elishaw.⁴⁷ Mawer does not follow this argument suggesting a derivation from either a personal name or from 'some fancied resemblance to a shuttle'.⁴⁸ Certainly documents from 1378 use Shittleheugh and it is unclear what Hodgson is basing his interpretation on as he does not provide a reference.

Several of these sites may have had their origin as temporary sheltering places for people attending stock during the summer, notably those with the 'sheil 'suffix (and all its variant spelling). 'Sheil 'indicates a clearing for that purpose, and 'sheild' 'a field with shiels or

⁴⁰ SANT/PLA/03/01/01/01

⁴¹ OS 34/364

⁴² Hodgson, (1827) p.137

⁴³ Ibid. p.75

⁴⁴ ZCL B 337

⁴⁵ Hodgson, (1827) p.71

⁴⁶ Ibid. p.146

⁴⁷ Ibid. p.147

⁴⁸ Mawer, (1920) p.178

shieling on it'.⁴⁹ It is also possible that although in existence by the late thirteenth century and still evident in the eighteenth century, they may not have been continuously occupied.⁵⁰ It is however, worth noting that Dargues is mentioned in 1552 as Dausburn and was owned by Anthony Daug in 1723 and Michael Daug in 1779 showing continuity of family ownership, if not occupation.⁵¹ But, what is of note is that all of the settlements, including the 'shiels', are within the tract of arable and surrounded by ridge and furrow. Presumably as the settlement became permanent then land was taken into cultivation around the farms and gradually expanded. An example of this happening can be seen in the study of Davyshiel.⁵² Much has disappeared beneath the Otterburn Training Camp but there is still some fine surviving medieval ridge and furrow.

The date of enclosure for any of the land outside of the great commons has not been established. Certainly by the second half of the eighteenth century there are discrete farms with their own mix of agricultural resources.⁵³ Enclosure would appear to have been a gradual and piecemeal process as we haven't found any documentation for it. It is therefore impossible to tell what happened and when either side of the river between Otterburn and Shittleheugh on the north and east, and Old Town and Blakehope on the south and west. It is possible that the agricultural system here, along with small settlements and individual farms, meant some enclosure took place as early as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁵⁴ But unlike the Central Province where early enclosure was usually for grazing and especially for sheepwalks,⁵⁵ in Northumberland access to plentiful grazing meant enclosed fields could remain under the plough. However, the survival of extensive areas of ridge and furrow indicates an early return to pasture or continued cultivation in wide rig even after enclosure, which is the implication of the earthwork evidence (fig. 6). Nevertheless, all the settlements were small and there were none within our search area close to the traditional site of the battle. And any early enclosures associated with them are likely to have been few and small, as evidenced by the archaeology, and are thus unlikely to have had a significant effect upon the movement of troops.

Roads

Two major roads ran through the study area on either side of the Rede (Fig.3). The two roads join approximately 1.5km north of Elishaw. Both still operate as modern roads though modified in alignment. The Roman road, Dere Street,⁵⁶ on the western side of the Rede, ran from York into Scotland. The line of the Roman road presented here has been accurately digitised from Woodhouse in Corenside parish in the south, to Rochester in Elsdon in the north following the precise description given in MacLauchlan's Memoir of his Survey of Watling Street.⁵⁷ This road was in the medieval a 'major component in the political

⁴⁹ Richard Carlton Ian Roberts, Alan Rushworth, *Drove Roads of Northumberland*, Stroud, (2010) p.24; Mawer, (1920) p.176

⁵⁰ Richard Carlton, pers. comm.

⁵¹ Hodgson, (1827) p.134; ZCL B 337

⁵² Young et al., pp.288-289

⁵³ ZCLB 337 or 3590/40

⁵⁴ Hall, (2014) p.6

⁵⁵ T Partida et al., *An Atlas of Northamptonshire: The Medieval and Early-Modern Landscape*, Oxford, (2012) pp.53-58

⁵⁶ Called Watling Street on all historic maps of the region.

⁵⁷ Henry MacLauchlan, *A Survey of Watling Street*, London, (1852) pp.28-33

geography of the region 'and used by Scottish forces in several conflicts.⁵⁸ Further north the importance, and permanence, of Dere Street resulted in it being used as a property boundary mentioned in various perambulations by the twelfth century.⁵⁹ Within our search area it is not respected by either parish or township suggesting it did not have a similar status, or not as important a status as the Rede (See Fig. 1 for the township boundary).

The road on the east side of the Rede, the modern A696, was turnpiked in 1776.⁶⁰ The traditional site of the battle and the monument lie some 200 metres to the north-east of this road (Fig.1). Armstrong's county map of 1769 shows the road in its pre-turnpike condition (Fig. 11). Given the complex nature of the river channels and the scale of Armstrong's map, accurately placing the former line of the road has proved challenging. Armstrong clearly shows the road fording the river twice to the west of the battle monument. And it is of note that where the road lies on the west side of the river it is shown as unenclosed (with pecked rather than solid lines). It was not unusual for the road to cross the river in this way as can be seen further north around Byrness where it repeatedly fords the river (Fig.12). However, even with the benefit of lidar data it has not been possible to identify any earthwork evidence for the pre-turnpike road alignment on the west of the Rede, nor the position of the fords (see below).

In addition to the Roman and turnpike roads there were numerous lesser local tracks. Of these the most significant was the Great Drove Road which ran from Scotland over the high ground to the north of Otterburn into Elsdon, and on to Corbridge (Figs.3 & 11).⁶¹ Although this road was of undoubted importance to drovers and probably local traffic, it is unlikely to have had any influence on the movement of troops *if* the battlefield is in the accepted location. There would also have been smaller routes for the movement of people and stock between settlements and into the great pastures.

⁵⁸ Richard Oram, 'Trackless, impenetrable and underdeveloped? Roads, colonization and environmental transformation in the Anglo-Scottish border zone, c.1100 to c.1300', in Valerie Allen and Ruth Evans (eds.), *Roadworks: Medieval Britain, medieval roads*, (Manchester, 2016), pp. 309-310

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p.313

⁶⁰ The Archaeological Practice Ltd., (2004) p.58

⁶¹ *Ibid.* p.34



Figure 11: Extract from Armstrong's map of Northumberland 1769 showing the three principal and parallel routes. Note where the valley road (middle of the three roads), fords the river twice, and the unenclosed section of this pre-turnpiked road on the west side of the river. The double pecked lines running further to the west represent the Roman road and are not indicative of the enclosed state of the road. The Great Drove Road runs from the top centre of the map in a south-east direction to join the main valley road to the west of Elsdon.



Figure 12: Extract from Armstrong's map of Northumberland 1769 showing the road repeatedly fording the river.

River Rede, Fords and Watch posts

There were numerous fords on the Rede, and Hodgson in 1827 comments on their number noting 'nine between the Whitelees and Birness'. He also speculates the name of the Rede to originate from this feature, 'the ancient Britons called a ford a *rydd*, and in this sense Redesdale would mean *the Dale of the Fords*.'⁶² However, the precise location of the fords has proved difficult to determine as the course of the river has altered significantly. The fords to the west of Elishaw where both roads cross can be tentatively located with lidar although the data are complex. But the two fords to the east of Garretshiels where the pre-turnpike road crossed have not been securely located.

The importance of the fords is indicated by their prominence in the day and night watches established by the Earl of Northumberland in 1552 against Scottish incursions. Hodgson provides a detailed description: 'The ford at Otterburn mill to be watched nightly with the inhabitants of the Old-Town with two men. The two fords at the Garret sheels to be watched with the inhabitants of Troughen and Garret Sheels, with two men nightly ... The two fords at Elishaw to be watched with the inhabitants of Dausburn and Blakam and Rattenraw, with two men at every ford nightly '(Fig.13).⁶³ There were numerous other fords, 'streets', and places

⁶² Hodgson, (1827), p.161. But 'Rede' may also derive from 'red' as reference to soil colour, and the river is named Red Water on the 1779 estate map of Garretshiels (3590/40), or to a clearing, or possibly reeds, see Mawer, (1920) p.164

⁶³ Hodgson, (1827) pp.70-71

to be watched within the region. This information is significant as it identifies the places, in the mid-sixteenth century at least, that were considered appropriate places to monitor for reiver and more substantial incursions and highlights the numerous crossings of the Rede. This might also suggest a potential tactical significance during the 1388 campaign. The c.1779 estate map marks a single ford to the north-east of Low Garretshiels (Fig.8), and various later maps up to the modern OS Explorer also mark fords. But none correspond with those marked by Armstrong even allowing for the constraints of a map at this scale.

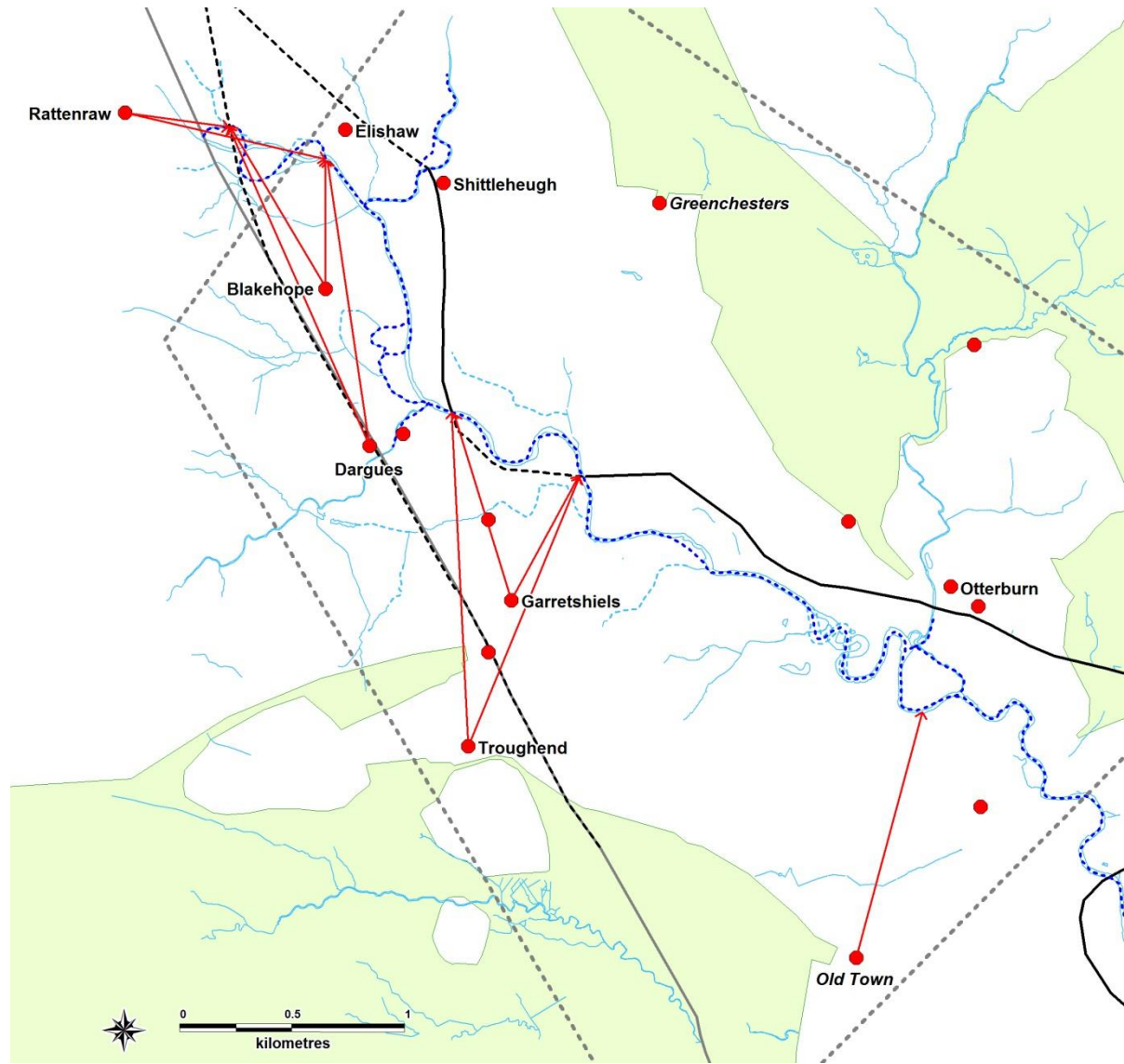


Figure 13: Map of the 1552 Watches indicating the places providing men and the fords at which they watched. The location of the fords is tentative due to the lack of precise documentary information, the complexity of the river channels and absence of archaeological evidence on the lidar data.⁶⁴

The need to repeatedly ford the river would have had a significant effect upon the movement of troops to or from the battlefield. And the very presence of a river would have placed a

⁶⁴ The river Rede and lesser water courses and streams are shown. The pale blue lines are from the Ordnance Survey, the solid lines are modern data and the pecked lines have been digitised from the 1st Edition 1:10560 scale mapping to indicate where channels differ or those that were already former channels by c.1880. The line of the river as given by Armstrong is overlaid in darker blue.

constraint upon action during the battle, particularly as the numerous former channels suggest wet and possibly waterlogged ground for some distance either side of the main channel. However, the river could have been a major asset for an army if using it to control enemy movement. But it would not have been used as a means of transport as the suggestion that the river may have been navigable in the Roman period, and thus in the medieval, has been thoroughly refuted by Anderson.⁶⁵ He goes on to argue that 'Rather than to facilitate river-borne supply, forts at Piercebridge, ... Risingham, Blakehope and High Rochester ... were constructed to protect strategic river crossings of the all important, road system.'⁶⁶

RECOMMENDATIONS

The greatest potential for further research in this landscape, and indeed in the wider Revitalising Redesdale Project, is the ridge and furrow. Extensive surviving features and exceptionally good lidar data provide the potential for further analysis that could seek to classify the rig by period, which would greatly enhance our understanding of agricultural practices over several centuries. Otterburn might be used as an example, but it is suggested that it would be more useful to target an area that has good surviving early documents to enhance the interpretation of the archaeology. Secondary works that provide analysis of field systems, even if not specifically of Redesdale or Northumberland, should also be consulted. David Hall's national study includes a chapter on Northumberland, and the Northamptonshire Atlases by Hall, Foard and Partida provide far greater detailed investigation, albeit in a different landscape.⁶⁷ A study of the field systems in Scotland by Piers Dixon may reveal a landscape closer in character to Northumberland than that of Northamptonshire.⁶⁸

To be properly understood field systems should be studied in the context of their settlements, and vice versa. Therefore further research on settlements should also be undertaken. Piers Dixon's study of DMV's in north Northumberland, although not including Redesdale, does examine issues affecting desertion such as climate conditions, warfare and reiving, and plague, which could provide a useful background to the settlements in Redesdale.⁶⁹

Fieldwork survey is recommended for archaeological evidence of field systems and settlements, but also for former river channels, early road alignment and to locate the position of fords.

It is also suggested that the wider Revitalising Redesdale Project might pursue the issue of protection of rig and indeed of associated settlement earthworks by taking specialist advice on how unusual such survival is and whether protection might be justified.

⁶⁵ James Anderson, 'The Piercebridge Formula in the North-east of England: an assessment and alternative method of supply to the Roman army', PhD, Newcastle (1991) pp.158-177

⁶⁶ Ibid. p.297

⁶⁷ Hall, (2014); Glenn Foard et al., Rockingham Forest: An Atlas of the Medieval and Early-Modern Landscape, Northampton, (2009); Partida et al., (2012)

⁶⁸ Piers Dixon, 'Field-Systems, Rig and Other Cultivation Remains in Scotland: The Field Evidence', in S. Foster and T. C. Smout (ed.), *The History of Soils and Field Systems*, (Aberdeen, 1994),

⁶⁹ Piers Dixon, 'The Deserted Medieval Villages of North Northumberland', Cardiff (1984)

APPENDIX

Sources

NORTHUMBERLAND RECORD OFFICE

3590/40

A Plan of Garretshields and Greenchesters in the Parish of Elsdon 1779.

The earliest dated map identified for the battlefield area. It maps the lands belonging to the two farms which lay in the heart of the search area. The boundary between the farms followed the township boundary for most of its length. Greenchesters farm lay some 900m north of its present location within an area marked as 'Greenchesters in Field'. Adjacent to that to the east is 'Greenchesters Fell Close', the allotment made to the farm at enclosure of Elsdon Common in 1731. A small area of woody pasture lay on rough ground to the north-west of the modern farm location.

Both Low and High Garretshields are drawn though only Low is named. An enclosure called the 'Haining' and another called 'Smallburn Croft' with a house and barn belonged to Garretshields, as did a large enclosure called 'Pasture Field' and a substantial meadow to the north of the river called Garretshields Haugh'. The river is named Red Water.

The present A696 is marked as the 'Turnpike Road'. The Roman road, Dere Street, is not marked although it separated the Haining and Smallburn Croft enclosures. Includes a schedule.

ZCL B 337

An undated map of Otterburn but post 1776 as it includes the turnpike road 'from Jedborough to Elsdon and Morpeth'. The map covers the same area as the 1779 map of Greenchesters and Garretshields (3590/40 above), but includes additional land.

The Roman Road, Dere Street, is shown but marked as 'The old Roman road called Watling Street'. Lands belonging to Dunns and Daug's are distinguished. All land parcels are named with either the owners or a field name, and acreage given. Meadows, haughs, are identified and this map is particularly useful for locating detached parcels; an island in the river to the north of Daug's is shared between four owners. Roads, or tracks, leading from Garretshields and Dunns farms across another's property to their detached meadows are marked respectively, 'The owner of Garretshields has a right to a road along here', and 'The owner of Dunns has a road here'. Of note is a small area adjacent to the turnpike road and close to the location of the modern Greenchesters farm called 'The Bog'. House and barns are shown but not distinguished though a 'smith's shop' is identified at Low Garretshields. Includes a schedule but damage to the map has removed the title.

QRD 003

A Map of Elsdon Common Divided in the Year 1731

Allotments are named by the property rather than owner e.g. 'Green Chesters [sic]

Allotment'. Includes a schedule to the numbered allotments that were too small to contain all the information within the map. Ancient enclosure is indicated by colour and some are

named, but only those around the village of Elsdon. No ancient enclosure is marked or named at Otterburn and Greenchesters. Shittlehugh 'ancient land' is named but no boundaries are drawn. Buildings are drawn in plan with some named. Numerous features around the outer edge of the common, many of them stones, are marked and named.

ELS M&D 045

A Plan of Troughend Common, 1771 [ref.O XXV 2]

SANT/PLA/03/01/01/01

Map of Elsdon Parish by Thos. Arkle, 1840

Shows the whole parish with the seven wards or townships marked.

DT 164/4 M

Tithe map of Elsdon (parish), Northumberland 1839. Shows buildings (named), school, toll bars, boundary stones and cairns, hilltop cross, hill-drawing, marsh (moss), waterbodies, rock outcrops, crags, cauldron pot, named streams, springs, antiquities (Roman encampment, Roman road). Colouring used. Scale: 1 inch to 12 chains; index map at 1 inch to 80 chains [1:63,360]. Map was 'Copied from Old Plans' by Thomas Arkle, High Carrick. With 3 altered apportionment maps, dated 1900, 1921, 1925

(A) 542

Historical notes re farms and hamlets in Elsdon Parish by W. Percy Hedley

QRD 2/1

Conveyance of property entitled Greenchesters, in Elsdon, Northumberland 1 June 1751-2 June 1751

Generic description of 'all lands' belonging to Greenchesters but no named plots, abutments, boundaries or acreage.

ZCE

Carr-Ellison family of Hedgely 1572-2016

ZCE/23

Carr-Ellison (Hedgely) Mss. ESTATE: Maps and Plans

ZCE/A

Manorial Records – all Hartleyburn manor

(A) 542/18

Elsdon Lairds II, Earlside - Ironhouse. Manuscript notebook regarding lands and tenants at: Earlside Eastnook Elishaw Elsdon Mill Elsdon Evistones Featherwood Ferneycleugh (inc. sketch plan) Foulshield Garretshields Girsonfield Grassless Greenchester Haining Hatherwick (inc. sketch plans regarding Elsdon Common Award 1731) Headshope Highfield Highshaw Hill (Laingshill) Hillhouse Hillock Hirdlaw Himeshouse Hole and Hole and Mill Holy Dod Hopefoot Hopehead Horsley Hudspeth Ironhouse nd. [c.1970]

EP/83/34

Tithe award and maps for Rochester, Otterburn, Woodside and Monkridge 1839.

EP 83

Elsdon Parish records 1672-1977

(A) ZWN/A3

Inclosure Act, Elsdon Common, 1731. Description of boundaries NRO 1731, 1766

(E) DT 164/4 D

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QRA/56

(ref from TNA) Inclosure Award 6 April 1771. Troughend in Elsdon by act of 9 Geo. III. (1768)

10958 and QRA/17/1 (enrolled copy)

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C 5/167/100

1697. Short title: Hall v Grey. Plaintiffs: John Hall. Defendants: Thomas Grey, and others. Subject: property in East Otterburn, West Otterburn, Fairhaugh, Fallowlees, Elsdon, etc, Northumberland. Document type: bill only

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Add MSS 36639-51

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ALNWICK

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Elsdon and Otterburn manor court files 1618-1634.

AC:C/XI/1/31a-33c, AC:C/XI/2a/1a-18

Elsdon and Otterburn manor court files 1648-1658

PARLIAMENTARY ARCHIVES

HL/PO/PU/1/1776/16G3n84

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