



Galloway Glens ‘Can You Dig It’ Community Archaeology project – Technical notes.

#2: Carminnow Fort – A footnote in the career of V.G. Childe

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Located west of the B729 at Glenkens Fish Farm, just southeast of Carsphairn, are the remains of Carminnow Fort. The site lies within an area of rough pasture on the edge of the Galloway Forest Park, and is bounded to the southwest by Kendoon Loch. Today the site can be viewed via access through the fish farm. It was excavated and recorded by Australian-born archaeologist Vere Gordon Childe. Appointed Abercrombie Professor of Archaeology at Edinburgh University in 1927, Childe remained in this post for a further twenty years, during which time he worked extensively in Scotland.

Its History

The fort was first recorded in the 1890s as a ‘supposed Roman camp’ by Fredrick R. Coles: his survey, which provided descriptions and illustrations of motes and forts throughout the Mid Stewartry of Kirkcudbright, was published in the 1892 volume of the *Proceedings of the Society of Scotland*. 1935 saw the excavations by Childe: these were followed in 1951 by a survey, conducted by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS).

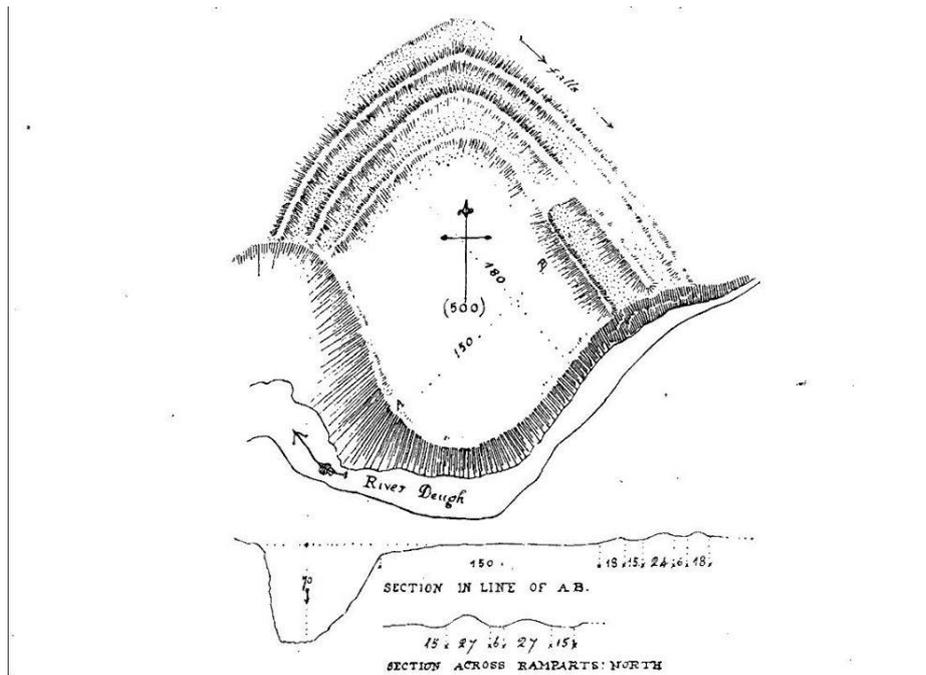
V. Gordon Childe 1852-1957



Vere Gordon Childe

One of the most widely known archaeologists of the twentieth century, [Childe](#) was respected for his work in incorporating regional research into the broader picture of European and Near Eastern prehistory. With emphasis placed on technological advancement and the development of economic structures within human society, he became celebrated in particular for his theories of the Neolithic Revolution and the Urban Revolution. He also excavated some well-known Neolithic sites on Orkney, including the settlement of Skara Brae and the chambered tombs of Maeshowe and Quoyness.

Childe was a known socialist, at a time when this was viewed with suspicion, and his work was deeply influenced by Marxist ideas, particularly with regard to how societies developed and changed over time. His penchant for poetry and fast cars was also widely known. Today, his theories have been largely disproved, but he remains a highly respected figure.



Coles' 1892 plan of Carminnow

The site

[Carminnow](#) provides us with an example of a promontory fort with triple ramparts: in plan, its interior is lozenge-shaped, measuring 45m x 59m in extent. The curving ramparts, which cut across the promontory, measure a maximum distance of 55m in length. The eastern edge of the promontory is the best preserved: here, two ramparts survive, standing 2.1m high to either side of an intervening ditch. To the west, both promontory and rampart are difficult to see. The site is not so well preserved now as it was in 1892, as at no point do all three ramparts survive together.



<https://canmore.org.uk/collection/1342876>

Section from the 1935 excavation

The excavations

Childe's 1935 excavations of Carminnow Fort took place with funding assistance from Sir Alexander Gibb and Sir Robert Macalpine & Sons. Sections were cut through the inner rampart, revealing a core of large stones surrounded by earth and rubble packing. Childe notes that during the excavation, no evidence of any kind of structures was obtained from the fort's interior. A small and modest selection of artefacts were recovered, including fragments of bone, two flint chips and a minute fragment of what was thought to be pottery. Although not the most glamorous of

finds, they still indicted some form of occupation on the site. The results of the excavation were published in the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*.

Its Current Status

On the 14th of December 1994, Carminnow was removed from the list of scheduled monuments as it no longer fulfilled the criteria for being of national importance. This was due in part to the raising of the water level of Kendoon Loch, which had caused much of the promontory to become submerged, leaving only fragments of the defensive ramparts exposed. These can still be viewed today. Despite the fort's change in status, it remains an important site as the information obtained through excavation and recording is still invaluable in assisting archaeologists to research and categorise similar sites today.

Further Reading

Childe, V G. (1936b) '(1) Carminnow Fort; (2) Supplementary excavations at the vitrified fort of Finavon, Angus; and (3) some Bronze Age vessels from Angus', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, vol. 70, 1935-6. Page(s): 341-7

Coles, F R. (1892) 'The motes, forts, and doons of the Stewartry of Kirkcudbrightshire', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, vol. 26, 1891-2. Page(s): 166-9 fig.71

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