

# The Significance of Several Hill - The First Freugh Stronghold?

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## Introduction

I had been meaning to write this up ages ago, but never got around to it! However, as you will see, it has become much more of a research project - and, I'm sure you will agree, of some significance to all Freugh McDoualls. I include myself, as descendant of tenant farmers, and I have used the more ancient spelling, with a 'u' in place of 'w'.

## Garlieston and Sandhead



**The Rhinns (west) and the Machars (east) in Galloway**

In August 2019, (with incredible foresight as it happens! - just prior to the Covid pandemic) Marion and I decided to buy a small motorhome. The following month we ventured down to Galloway arriving at Garlieston, a village eight miles north of Whithorn on the coast of that part of Galloway known as the Machars. We then went on to Sandhead on Luce Bay in the 'Rhinns'. Both areas having great significance for McDoualls.

The village of Garlieston was established in 1780 by Lord Garlies as a fishing and seaport. During WW2, because the seabed in Wigg Bay was of a similar nature to that at Normandy, the area was chosen for testing components of the Mulberry harbours<sup>1</sup> being constructed at Cairnryan on Loch Ryan.

Just south of Garlieston stands Galloway House, the former family seat of the Earls of Galloway, built by the 6<sup>th</sup> Lord Garlies in 1740. The 1<sup>st</sup> Lord Garlies, Alexander Stewart, was created Earl of Galloway in 1623 by James VI.



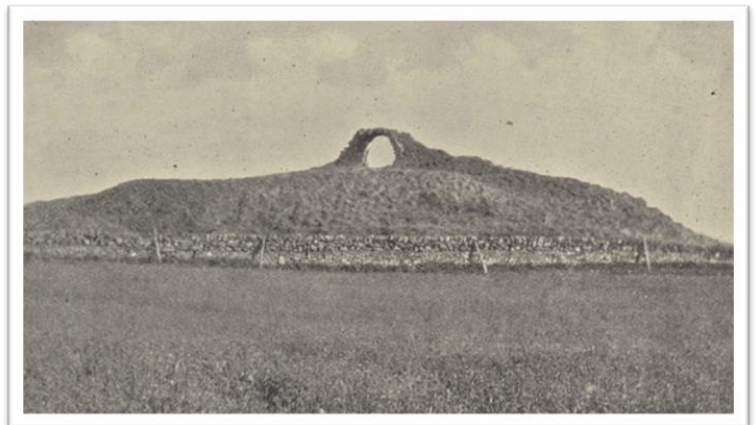
**Galloway House, rear (east) elevation**

However, were it not for intrigue and scandal at court, the honour might have gone to John McDouall 13<sup>th</sup> of Garthland. He was married to Margaret Ker, daughter of Lord Jedburgh, a relation of Robert Ker (or Carr), Lord High Treasurer of Scotland, a favourite at court who later obtained the title of Earl of Somerset.

With this influential connection, John McDouall obtained a knighthood and set his sights on the Earldom and, as McKerlie puts it, he 'bribed accordingly, selling farms to raise the money'.

However, in 1616 the Earl and Countess of Somerset were so closely implicated in the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury that they were condemned to die, and were imprisoned in the Tower of London - though later pardoned and released in 1622. But with the loss of this privileged connection Sir John's opportunity, and money, were wasted.

On the top of the cliffs to the south of Garlieston, is Cruggleton Castle, residence of the early Lords of Galloway. The original 12<sup>th</sup> century timber buildings and motte were further fortified by Alan, the last Lord of Galloway, or more probably, by his daughter and her husband, Roger de Quincy. Thereafter the site changed hands many times over the years; the original buildings being replaced in the 14<sup>th</sup> century by a stone tower, subsequently rebuilt in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. By the 1680's it had been mostly demolished. Part of a wall and a stone archway remain.

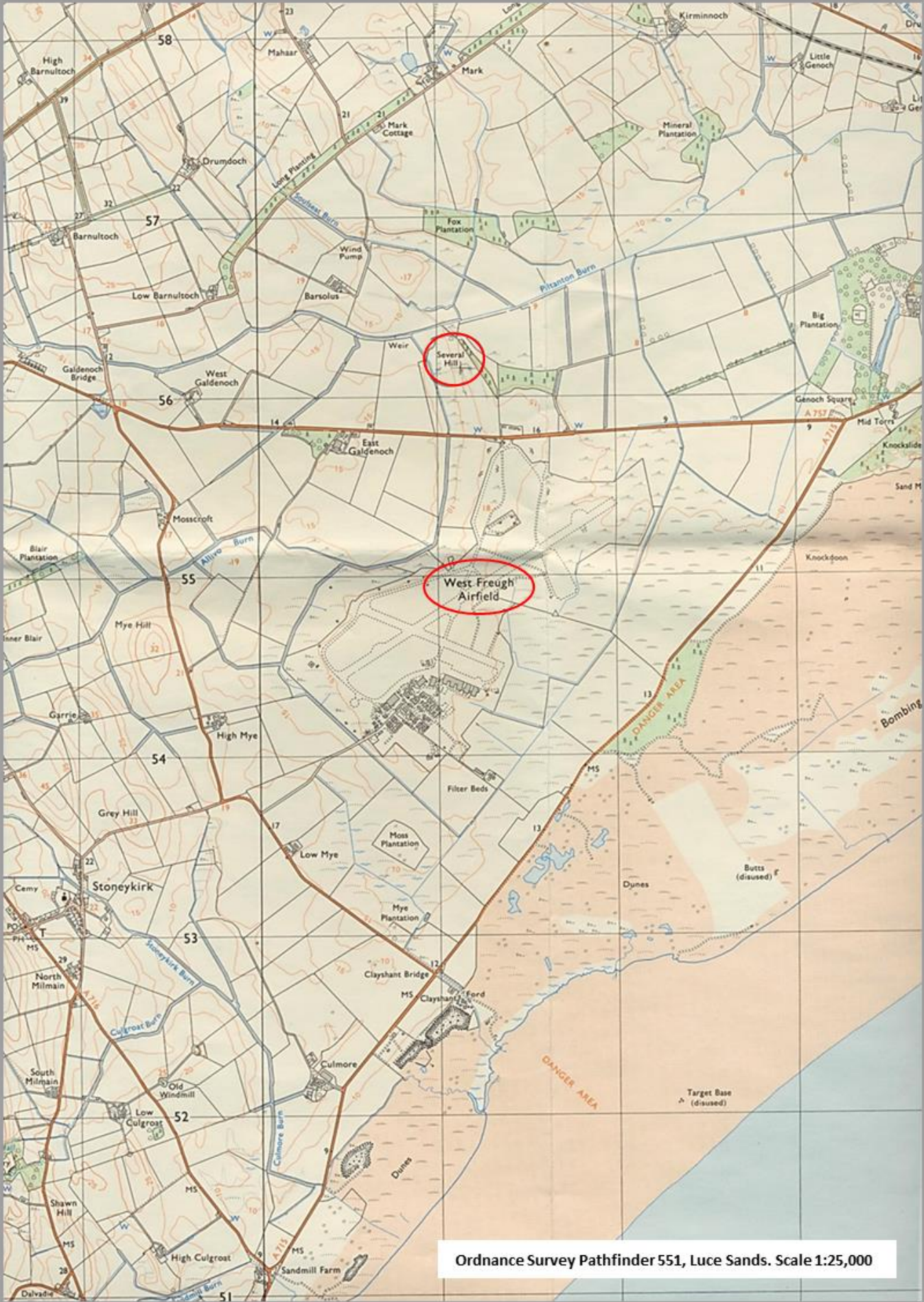


**Cruggleton Castle Ruins**  
(from MacCrimmon, D., *The Castles of Galloway* 1924)

Down at Sandhead, the Sands of Luce Holiday Park sits at the north-west corner of Luce Bay, on the ancient lands of Freugh. As those who travelled into the MOD (Ministry of Defence) establishment on the bus tour in August 2018 will remember, the site includes East and West Freugh, and we thought, somewhere, the original 'caput' of the Freugh family.

Further investigation reveals that the original medieval tower house may have stood to the north of the MOD site. According to 'Canmore'<sup>2</sup>, it stood 800m NE of East Galdenoch farm which is on the road that runs along the north perimeter of the MOD land. The name 'Freugh' appears on the Ainslie's county map of 1782 in about this location. 'Canmore' states 'the tower and its polices are depicted on J Gillone's plan of 1795'<sup>3</sup>. Fifty years later it had been demolished and only a trace of parkland was still visible.

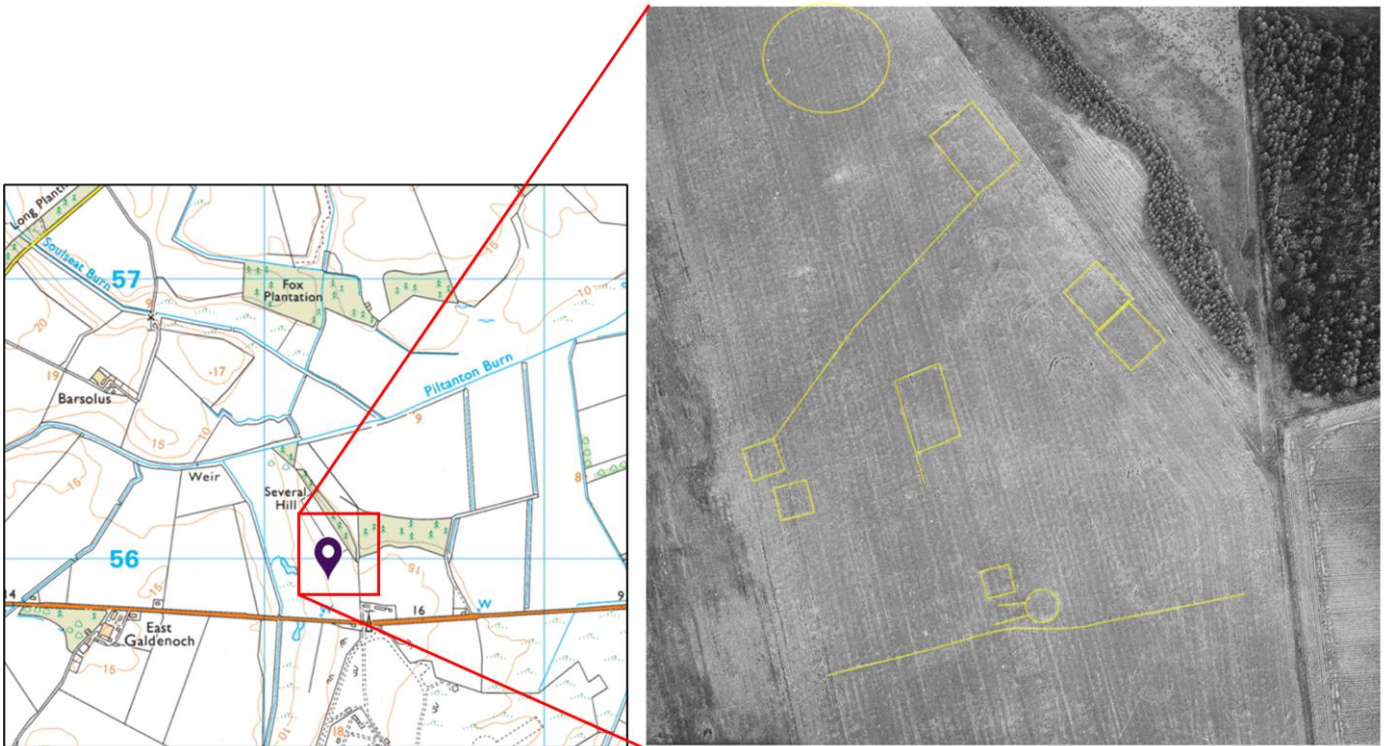
Interestingly, in the same approximate location, the name 'Several Hill' appears on the current OS map. With a contour difference of only 5m, this can hardly be described as a 'hill'. Indeed, the whole area, with a previously meandering Piltanton Burn running through it, is low-lying - ('Freugh' meaning 'heathland'). 'Several' refers to 'land separated from adjacent land', it applied to 'landed property as possessed distinctly from that of others or contrasted with a common'<sup>4</sup>. This strongly suggests that, on slightly higher ground, perhaps surrounded by marshland, the towerhouse of Freugh once stood.



Ordnance Survey Pathfinder 551, Luce Sands. Scale 1:25,000

The Ordnance Survey Name Book<sup>5</sup> describes Several Hill: 'A portion of high ground in the middle of a large field remarkable for its fertility. From the appearance of the ground and trees still growing on the place it would appear to have been once an enclosure of an oval shape. There is a traditional report current that a castle or gentleman's mansion once stood on this place belonging to the family of McDowall, now extinct, but no trace of buildings can now be seen at this place'.

The only evidence currently available is an aerial photo of Several Hill which reveals crop marks that appear to show possible foundations and tracks of a much earlier origin, one of which could conceivably be that of a tower house and an adjacent fortified building (the lower circle and square).



**Several Hill Aerial Photograph**

**Note the rectilinear and circular shapes in the crop marks (highlighted)**

It was attacked and burnt by Cromwell's troops in 1654. This may have prompted the relocation of the family home to a new site beside Balgreggan House (as shown on Roy's map of 1752 below). Patrick McDouall (the Covenanter) succeeded his father Uchtred in 1670 and during the troubles his house was garrisoned on two separate occasions.

John Graham of Claverhouse ('bloody Clavers') had his eye on the forfeited lands of 'Galdenoch, now called Freugh, with houses, buildings, yards, orchards, mills, etc' <sup>6</sup>, and it seems more likely that this included the new 'Castle McDouall' rather than the original medieval tower house.



**Balgrogan House (as shown on Roy's map of 1752)**

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#### Notes

1. Mulberry harbours were temporary portable harbours developed by the United Kingdom during the Second World War to facilitate the rapid offloading of cargo onto beaches during the Allied invasion of Normandy in June 1944.
2. National Records of Historic Environment Scotland. (RCAHMS 1987) Canmore ref 61240. Map ref NX 1113 5616
3. Gillone, J. (1795) A Plan of the Right Honourable the Earl of Stair's Estate Lying in the Parish of Inch and Shire of Wigton, S.R.O. (RHP 4620/1) (Note: the land actually belonged to Rt. Hon. Patrick Maitland of Freugh. This error also occurred in the OS Namebook (see below) and was subsequently corrected).
4. Maxwell, Sir Herbert, 'The Place Names of Galloway', 1930. p241.
5. Object Name Book of the Ordnance Survey 1848-78. Book no 38. p 18.
6. Morton, A. S. Galloway and the Covenanters. Paisley 1914. p177, 187. In 1680 and 1681. The requisition order says: The House of Freugh, (as opposed to 'Castle').