

# WHITE CASTLE

The evaluation of an upstanding  
prehistoric enclosure in  
East Lothian

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and Hana Kdolska

with a contribution by  
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# White Castle: The evaluation of an upstanding prehistoric enclosure in East Lothian

David Connolly, Murray Cook and Hana Kdolska

## 1. Abstract

*This volume describes the results of a four year programme of research between 2010 and 2013 carried out by Rampart Scotland at White Castle, an upstanding later prehistoric enclosure in East Lothian, Parish of Garvald and Barra. The monument is a Scheduled Monument (HES SM756) and Scheduled Monument Consent was obtained in advance of fieldwork (ref AMH/756/1/1), in addition, a Section 42 Consent (ref AMH/756/1/1) was obtained in advance of the geophysical survey. Despite being mapped and later surveyed for over the past 200 years, it has never been examined by excavation prior to the present project's interventions, which makes White Castle the first such site to be sampled in the Lammermuirs to date. The programme of survey and evaluation revealed that the main activity dated to the second half of the first millennium BC and focussed on an evolving enclosure sequence whereby the design and visual impact appeared more important than defence. It seems probable that the site's economy was concerned with controlling access to grazing and the final phase of activity on site appears to combine these twin factors: impressing visitors and stock control. While maintenance of White Castle's enclosure system was abandoned in the closing centuries BC, it is unlikely that the area was also deserted and there is limited evidence for two later phases of activity on site around the Medieval and Early Modern Periods.*

## 2. Introduction

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the excavation and survey of Scottish hillforts and enclosures, aiming to remedy the general dearth of evidence for their use and chronology (Ralston 2015, 203). To an extent, East Lothian may be regarded as an exception to the above pattern and has long been argued to be the best studied area in mainland Scotland (Ralston *et al* 1983, 164; Harding 2001; Lelong and MacGregor 2008, 239-269). The final publication of Broxmouth has served to cement this position (Armit and MacKenzie 2013) and indeed the authors argue that East Lothian is one of the best studied areas of temperate Europe (*op cit* 513). However, as this publication hopes to demonstrate, this assumption cannot be applied to the sites known as hillforts or enclosures. Indeed, Scotland's online national historic environment record, CANMORE, lists a potential 379 prehistoric 'forts' and 'enclosures' in East Lothian, of which only 18 sites have been subject to modern excavation that produced radiometric dates (see Appendix 1 and Section 5.2.5). Prior to this study, none of the sites in the Lammermuirs had been sampled, let alone dated (Haselgrove 2009a), which, given the proposed pastoral function of the Lammermuirs and the necessary interrelationships between lowland and upland settlement in the first millennium BC (Macinnes 1982, 59; Armit and Ralston 2003, 179), is a regrettable omission.

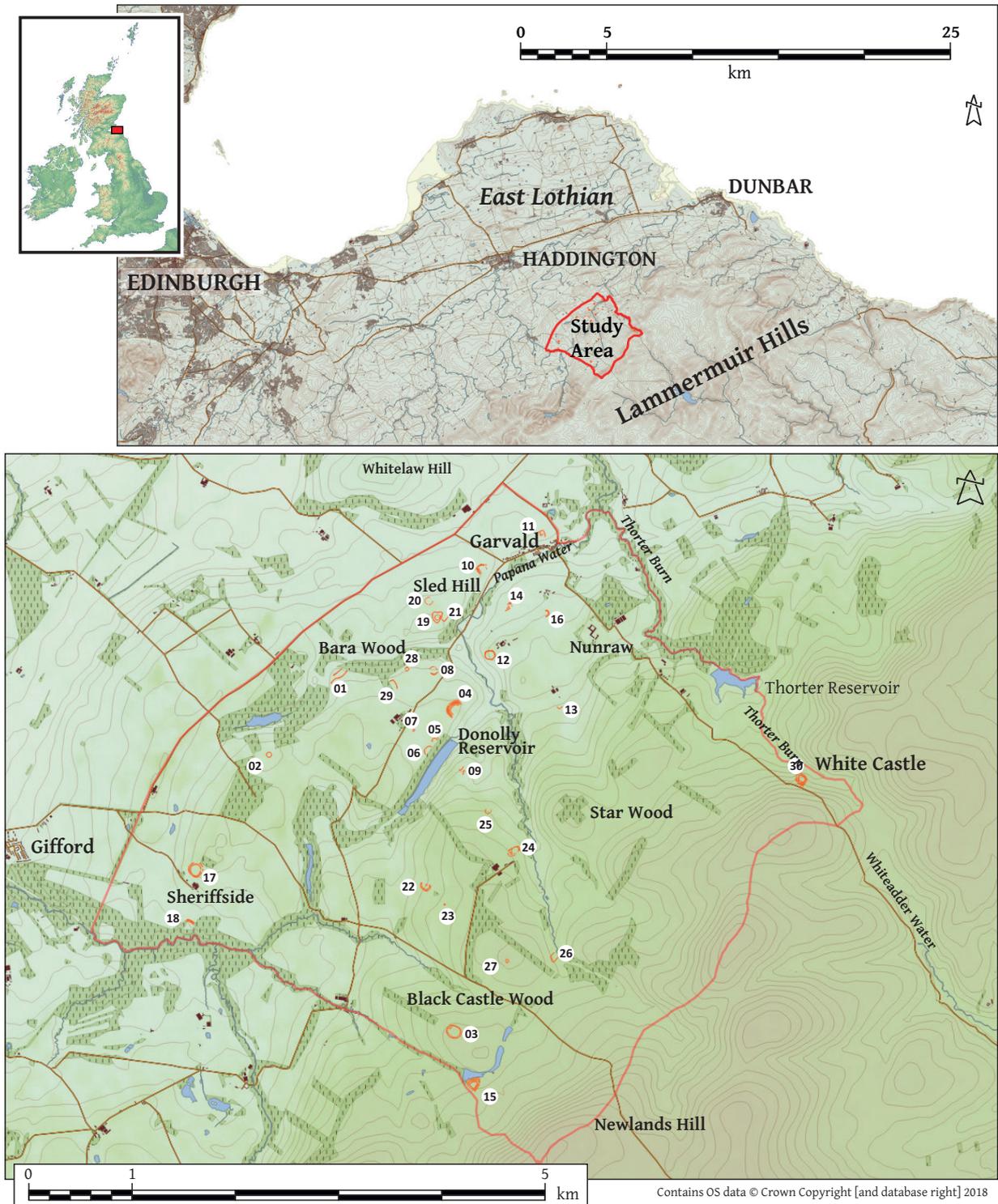
This small sample size of new data is partially a result of current planning policy (PAN 2/2011), which presumes preservation *in situ* of known sites, such as hillforts, as the preferred option, consequently minimising the volume of new data produced. Concurrently, in more peripheral areas, such as the Lammermuirs, there has never been the same development pressure as on the lower lying areas of East Lothian, which provided significant volumes of data from mitigation excavation (e.g. Harding 1982; Lelong and MacGregor 2007). It is argued that such a position risks fossilising interpretations and models as one does not know what one does not know, i.e. any model needs to be tested by new fieldwork (Cook 2012a).

It was in this context that the *Hillforts of East Lothian Project* was conceived and Rampart Scotland formed. Its prime aim was simple: to increase the volume of data on hillforts from East Lothian, with a particular focus on the Lammermuirs. The information obtained from these exercises would be used to critique and refine the existing models from East Lothian. In order to advance this broad aim, a study area on the northern fringes of the Lammermuirs was defined from Garvald in the east to Gifford in the west (Figure 1). Within this area, all hillforts and enclosures would be subject to a mixture of renewed survey, aerial photographic rectification, geophysical survey and excavation.

Given both the scale of the project, together with the site's status as a Scheduled Monument (HES SM756), any excavation was always going to be limited to dating key stratigraphic features of the site, via targeted key-hole excavation; in effect, the project was essentially an evaluation. The potential drawbacks of such an approach were understood and defined from the start of the project, notably that such an approach dates individual events within a complex site, rather than establishing its overall and more elaborate sequence (Clarke 2001). There is also a clear risk from the restricted observation afforded by a key-hole excavation of failing to comprehend precisely what is being dated and therefore skewing the site's eventual interpretation. However, despite these limitations, such an approach is widely supported as an initial and cost-effective step in producing preliminary region-wide chronology, which can be subsequently refined (Haselgrove *et al* 2001, 5; ScARF 2012, 76, 94).

This publication presents the results of the first phase of the overarching project, comprising excavations at White Castle, which comprised four seasons between 2010 to 2013. To place the data into context, the main text is preceded by observations and assessment of enclosure research and dataset within the study area and the surrounding Lothian region.

In addition, while the terms 'hillfort' and 'fort' have been used above as a convenient shorthand, at present there is no absolute consensus either in terms of function, size or chronology of these sites (Cunliffe 2005, 347; Ralston 2006, 12-24; Armit 2007, 25; Harding 2012, 5-7). Therefore, while recognising this complexity and acknowledging the ongoing discussions, the present publication uses the more neutral term 'enclosure', which is intended as a portmanteau term to describe sites of varied morphology, dates and topographic locations, including both cropmarks and upstanding sites.



- 1: Bara [273365] 2: Bara Wood [56077] 3: Black Castle [56073] 4: Carfrae [56106] 5: Carfrae [145442] 6: Carfrae [90597]  
 7: Carfrae [168014] 8: Carfrae [56100] 9: Donolly Reservoir [70826] 10: Garvald [56431] 11: Garvald [56433] 12: Garvald Mains [56095]  
 13: Garvald Mains [84835] 14: Garvald Quarry [134471] 15: Green Castle [56084] 16: Nunraw Barns [84838] 17: Sheriffside [56099]  
 18: Sheriffside [56101] 19: Sled Hill [56482] 20: Sled Hill [84826] 21: Sled Hill [84834] 22: Snawdon [56088] 23: Snawdon [84843]  
 24: Snawdon [167038] 25: Snawdon [167845] 26: Snawdon [313664] 27: Snawdon Hill [167821] 28: Sounding Burn [93487]  
 29: Swarnie Cleugh [56094] 30: White Castle [57479]

Figure 1: Location map with extent of study area and known 'enclosed' sites (number in brackets is NMRS UID)

### 3. Study Area

White Castle was the first site sampled by the Rampart Scotland project within the study area and was selected specifically to best represent the topography of the Lammermuirs and their foothills. The study area is a rough 5 km square, bounded to the southeast by the Lammermuirs and to the northeast and northwest by the Thorter Burn and Newlands Burn respectively. The village of Garvald lies in the northeast corner of the study area, representing an old crossing point and ford over the Papana Water that runs through the settlement (Figure 1, 4.1; Graham 1962, 223-4).

The study area encompasses 30 enclosures, both cropmarks and upstanding monuments, of different shapes and sizes, with a variety of perimeter works, including palisades, ditches and banks, and ranging from univallate to multivallate (Figure 2, Table 1).

The study area was chosen in part because of this diversity of type, size and geographical location, where dating of phases of works or occupation may present a more nuanced understanding of activity and use in a chronological framework.

Table 1: Shapes, types and approximate dimensions of known enclosures within the study area

<b>Id</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Canmore</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Shape</b>
1	Bara	273365	Fort (possible)	170 x 120 m exterior	bivallate
2	Bara Wood	56077	Palisaded Settlement	50 m diameter	circular
3	Black Castle	56073	Fort	125 x 115 m max	rough circle; bivallate
4	Carfrae	56106	Fort	180 x 90 m max; 100 x 50 m int.	multivallate; D-shaped
5	Carfrae	145442	Palisaded Settlement	45 m diameter	circular
6	Carfrae	90597	Settlement	90 x 30 m	curvilinear
7	Carfrae	168014	Enclosure	23 x 15 m	oval
8	Carfrae	56100	Settlement	70 m diameter	circular
9	Donolly Reservoir	70826	Enclosure (possible)	?	rectilinear
10	Garvald	56431	Enclosure	80 x 100 m	square/rectangular
11	Garvald	56433	Enclosure, Souterrain (possible)	90 x 90 m	rough square
12	Garvald Mains	56095	Fort	90 x 90 m	rough square
13	Garvald Mains	84835	Palisaded Enclosure	50 m diameter	sub circular
14	Garvald Quarry	134471	Enclosure/Roundhouse	12 m diameter; 17 x 23 m	circular/rectilinear
15	Green Castle	56084	Fort	75 by 65 m	triangular; bivallate
16	Nunraw Barns	84838	Palisaded Enclosure	60 x 40 m	oval/sub-rectangular
17	Sheriffside	56099	Enclosure	100 m int.; 140 m ext. dia.	curvilinear
18	Sheriffside	56101	Fort	120 x 70 m	multivallate
19	Sled Hill	56482	Enclosure	100 x 100 m	irregular
20	Sled Hill	84826	Palisaded Enclosure	75 m diameter	circular
21	Sled Hill	84834	Timber Structure	60 x 3m	rectangular
22	Snawdon	56088	Enclosure (possible), Fort	110 x 65 m	bivallate
23	Snawdon	84843	Enclosure (possible roundhouse)	12 m diameter	circular
24	Snawdon	167038	Fort	130 x 75 m	multivallate
25	Snawdon	167845	Palisaded Enclosure	50 x 45 m	sub-rectangular
26	Snawdon	313664	Enclosure	60 m across	sub-rectangular
27	Snawdon Hill	167821	Settlement	35 x 25 m	sub-rectangular
28	Sounding Burn	93487	Settlement (possible)	33 m diameter	circular
29	Swarnie Cleugh	56094	Enclosure	80 x 45 m	sub-rectangular
30	White Castle	57479	Fort	125 x 100 m external	

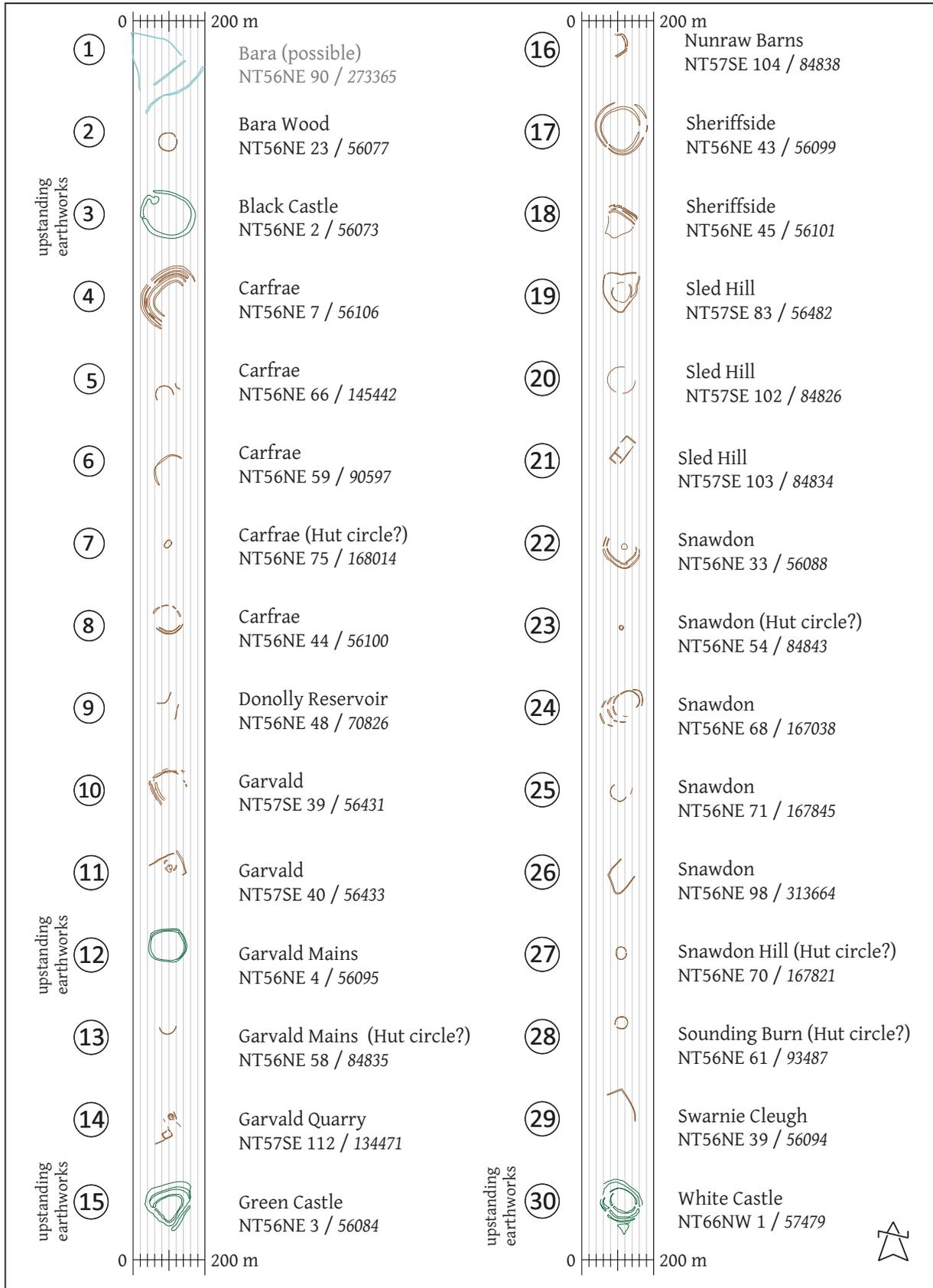
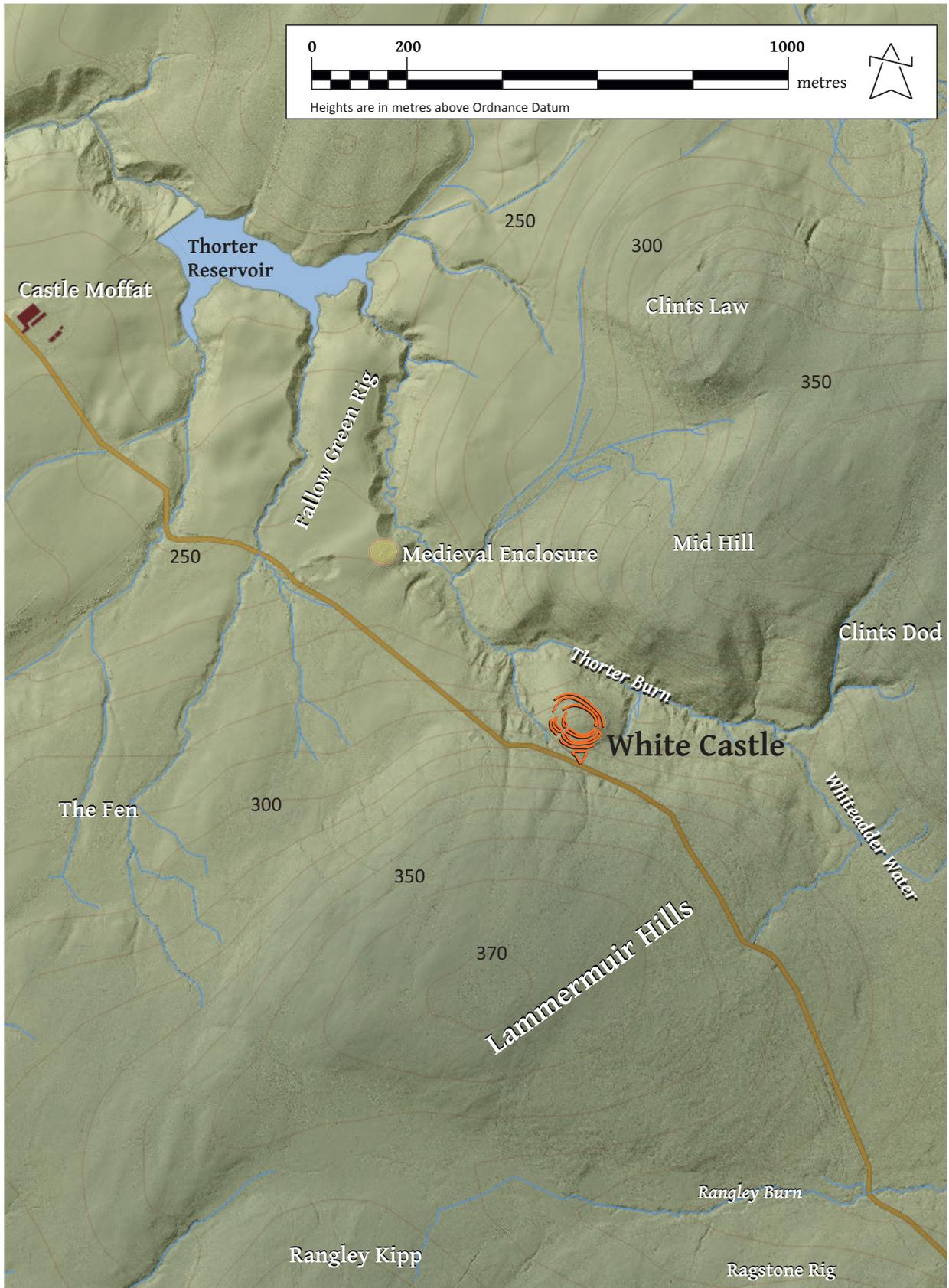


Figure 2: Enclosed sites within study area to same scale



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Figure 3: White Castle within immediate landscape setting.