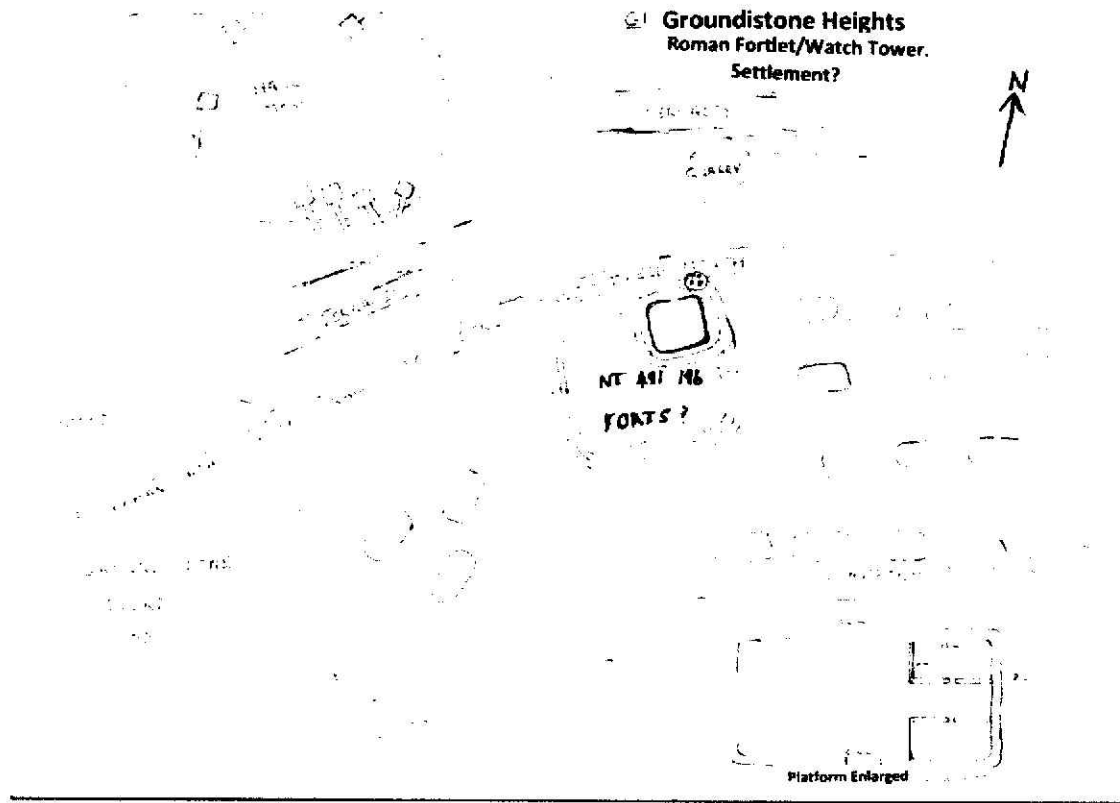


The Groundistone Settlement. NT 491 196

In the earlier years of the 1990s, I was plodding across the Borders to note the known Roman roads and look to extend them. Having worked in the hillier parts of the area for 33 years I already knew many of the possible routes and the more you walk, the more you learn. So I wrote wee notes, drew rough maps of sites and these laid these bye for further investigation. These are my 2019 thoughts on the Groundistone site from a recently re-discovered 1995 sketch/map.



The Roman road from Craik Cross to Dere Street is relatively easy to trace as it was 'The Kingis Grate Rode from Annan to Rocsburgh' in the time of Robert the Bruce and continued into the 18th century partly as a highway and later as a drove road.

There are traces of a number of fortlets with associated watch/signal towers along this line between Groundistone Heights and Maxton which cannot be other than Roman. See *Divining Archaeology* p 93 – 96. (The fortlet identification is speculative.)

On Groundistone Heights at the side of the road at NT49091 19708, there is a four-post Roman watch/signal tower on the corner of a 35m square double ditched fortlet within a 180m by 120m enclosure. This is on high ground which commands the south/eastern view from The Eildons to Ruberslaw and as far as the English Border.

The large enclosure is a bit of a mystery. It is fort-size, double ditched with gates in the centre of each side but without the mound/deep ditches of a fort. There are at least two lines of palisades around it.

Outside the enclosure are a number of raised platforms of a uniform size and rectangular shape, c32m by 18m externally with buildings in the NE and SE corners. I have found this standard pattern in several parts of the Borders, all on the side of known or suspected Roman roads. See *Divining Archaeology* p 128/9.

The fact that at Groundistone, these are laid out in a uniform pattern would suggest a Roman or more probably a post-Roman/early Anglian use in a hill-top settlement.

The Hall Moss.

To the north and west of the settlement is a bog called The Hall Moss. The name would indicate that there could be an Anglian hall in the vicinity and Groundistone (Groundestoun in the 1535 Register of the Privy Seal) may be the hall of Anglian chief, Grund-his-Toun within the larger enclosure. But it is said that *'imagination can be worse than the scab'* so perhaps not.

What is interesting is what I originally thought might be lake-dwellings, are more likely to be stands for pannier-horses or carts to collect marle from the bog for the fields and could date to date from the 18th/19th centuries.

This is my speculation but it would need an 'official person' to confirm or reject the idea.

Walter Elliot.

GI Groundstone Heights
Roman Fortlet/Watch Tower.
Settlement?

