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Discovery of Lost Early- Medieval Kingdom in Galloway

Recent archaeological research likely reveals the location of a hitherto lost early-medieval kingdom that was once pre-eminent in Scotland and Northern England. The kingdom of Rheged is probably the most elusive of all the 6th-century British kingdoms. Its poetry extolled the prowess of its king, Urien of Rheged – and fragments of early medieval historical records tell of Urien’s dominance in southern Scotland and northern England; still, the actual location of Rheged not been known. Now new archaeological evidence from the excavation of Trusty’s Hill Fort at Gatehouse of Fleet in Dumfries and Galloway indicate that it might be the lost site. “What drew us to Trusty’s Hill were Pictish symbols carved on to bedrock here, which are unique in this region and far to the south of where Pictish carvings are normally found,” said Ronan Toolis of GUARD Archaeology, who led the excavation.



Excavators found that the summit of the hill was fortified with a timber-laced stone rampart, with supplementary enclosures on its lower-lying slopes transforming it into a nucleated fort, associated with high-status settlements of the early medieval period. Approaching the summit of Trusty’s Hill, one passed between a rock-cut basin on one flank and an outcrop on which two Pictish symbols were carved on the other, forming a literal rite of passage, where rituals of royal inauguration were conducted. On entering the summit citadel one may have been greeted with the sight of the king’s hall at the highest part of the hill on the west side, where feasting took place, and the workshop of his master smith occupying a slightly lower area on the eastern side, where gold, silver, bronze and iron were worked into objects. The layout of this fort was complex, each element deliberately formed to exhibit the power and status of its household.

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