

# Croglin village atlas

Telling the story of a village



**North  
Pennines**  
National  
Landscape



**This village atlas has been put together by a team of dedicated volunteers who worked together through an eight week course, 'How to tell the story of a village', as part of the Fellfoot Forward Landscape Partnership Scheme's Uncovering the Past project.**

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This atlas represents the team's hard work over this eight week period, and beyond. It has been researched and compiled by volunteers who are not professional historians. As such, a document like this could never be a comprehensive history of a place. Instead, it tells the story of this village as the volunteers have come across it and hopefully serves to inform and inspire you to carry the work further and add your own research. You never know what stories are just under the surface, waiting patiently to be uncovered.



## The story of Croglin begins

Croglin is a small village in north-east Cumbria, lying at an elevation of about 190 metres on the eastern slopes of the North Pennines. It is about 12 miles south-east of Carlisle, not far from the border with Scotland.

The map below, Christopher Saxton's 1579 map of Westmorland and Cumberland,

shows Croglin church at the edge of the fells with the beck running down into the Eden Valley.

The name Croglin could have a number of different roots, perhaps from the Old Norse *krokr*, meaning 'torrent', or the Welsh *llyn*, meaning 'pool'.



## In the beginning: Croglin's geology

Croglin village is situated on St. Bees sandstone bedrock but the fells above are limestone with Carboniferous coal seams. This combination of bedrock allows for agriculture and mining and quarrying to be carried out. As is very evident from the houses, barns and walls in the village and surrounding area, the local sandstone has been used for most building purposes and indeed there is a quarry at the top of the village which was clearly a main source for building materials.

On top of the sandstone bedrock is sand and gravel with freely draining, slightly acid sandy soil,

which is easily erodible where the land slopes and is not very fertile. This means that arable farming consists mainly of root vegetables such as potatoes and turnips, and barley with some wheat. There is also grazing for sheep and some cattle. Lime from the fells, after it had been fired in the kilns, was used as fertiliser on the farmland and the coal from the mines was used as a heat source for firing the kilns.

The Croglin Water is a small river, or beck, which flows down from the fells to the east of the village and supplied the power for a corn mill and a saw mill.

Buildings in the village are typically constructed with the characteristic red sandstone of the area.



# Croglin through time: a brief timeline



## Late Bronze Age

Sandstone spearhead moulds discovered in 1883 show earliest known human activity in Croglin



## c.1135CE

Croglin is referenced in early 'Pipe rolls' records



## 1292CE

Bishop of Carlisle's gravestone dated 1278 now resides in Croglin Church graveyard



## Early 1500s

The old pele tower is constructed to protect against the threat of the Border Reivers



## 1601

Croglin is shown on the Barony of Gilsland maps



## 1878

Croglin Church as it stands today is built



## 1921

The War Memorial is erected, which is now Grade II listed

# Croglin through time: prehistory

## The Mesolithic period (c.10,000 - 4,500BCE)

Archaeological studies have shown that during the Mesolithic, Cumbria's landscape would have flourished as it became populated with deciduous trees, rich food resources, and a warming climate. Evidence from the Eden Valley shows that early people exploited these riches by travelling through these landscapes, making stone tools, and moving seasonally with their resources.



Artist reconstruction of the famous Mesolithic site, Starr Carr, in North Yorkshire  
© Dominic Andrews.

While we can't say anything specific about the village area yet, we think it's safe to imagine similar human activity near Croglin during this period.

The Mesolithic is also generally considered the start of the Holocene, the geological age following the retreat of the glaciers which covered a significant amount of the Northern Hemisphere. Before this, in the Palaeolithic period, most of the British Isles were covered in thick ice sheets which pushed populations back into mainland Europe. As such, we have very little evidence of people and their lives before this, with only a small handful of Palaeolithic sites known to us in Cumbria.

# Croglin through time: prehistory

## The Neolithic period (4,500 - 2,300BCE)

Although there is no evidence of people settled in the village area during the Neolithic period, Croglin is only a couple of kilometres away from the Broomrigg Plantation. Here, there are multiple stone circles, burial cairns, and standing stones which have been dated to between 2,500 - 1000BCE (late Neolithic to Middle Bronze Age).

While still living at least a seasonally nomadic type of life during this period, people moved from place to place, and also built settlements where and when was needed. Although the Neolithic period has long been associated with the arrival of farming, it is now thought that people continued to be responsive to their environments, picking and choosing between farming, herding, and gathering lifestyles dynamically.

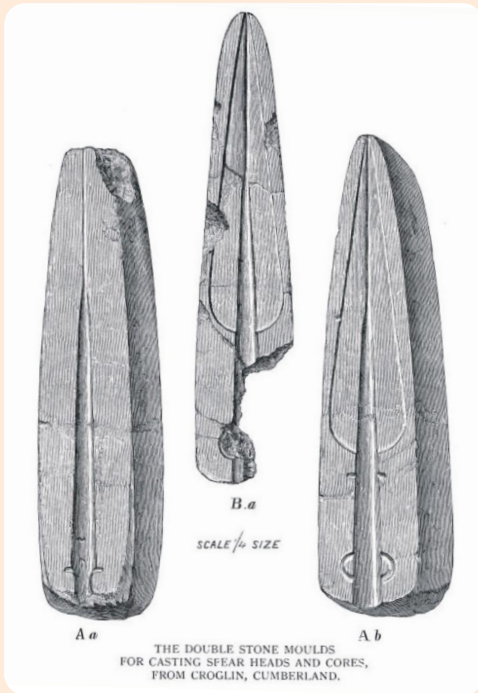
A further kilometre north-west of Croglin, the remains of another stone circle stand at Grey Yauds. It was still intact in 1777 and consisted of 88 'pretty large starry stones' with a large stone, now called King Harry's Stone, set apart from it.



While we cannot know exactly when and where people first settled here, it's safe to say that the Croglin area was occupied at least some of the time during this period.

## The Bronze Age (2,300 - 700BCE)

Two Bronze Age earthworks have been discovered at Croglin, one at Town Foot Farm and another possible one at Fieldhead, although the latter may be mining related and it can be difficult to accurately date such monuments to any period.



But two archaeological finds point to Croglin being a centre of work and habitation. A ceramic urn was discovered, described as "a food vessel containing a cremation",

sometime before 1815, and in 1883 two halves of a sandstone spearhead mould, used for casting bronze spearheads, were dug up in fragments near the quarry at Townhead. So it seems very likely that people were working and living in the Croglin area at this time.

Other artefacts providing evidence for human activity in the area during this period include a Late Bronze Age socketed axe found on the 'glebe lands' between Ainstable and the Nunnery.

By the Bronze Age, the climate of the UK had warmed up considerably and there is evidence from archaeological digs elsewhere in England that humans had moved up from the valleys to live on the uplands where the climate was sufficiently good for people to work and clear the fells of timber. Although we know this period as the Bronze Age, we often understate the importance of tree clearance and wood as a resource to people during this time.



Tullie House Museum & Art Gallery in Carlisle houses the county's collection of Bronze Age artefacts, including axe and spear moulds. A selection of Bronze Age artefacts as well as a collection of pottery are on display.

## **Iron Age (700BCE - 43CE)**

There is some evidence of activity during the Iron Age in the areas around Croglin but not in the village itself. Remote sensing methods such as LiDAR (Light

Detecting and Ranging) can give us a clearer picture of possible earthworks which haven't yet been investigated by archaeologists. Trackways and field boundaries still preserved in the landscape could date from this time.



## Croglin through time: the Roman period (43 - 410CE)

Although there is no specific evidence of Roman activity in the Croglin area, there are 4 Roman fort sites within what would have been a day's walk at the time. The nearest fort is Epiacum (shown on the map as Whitley Castle), 7 miles east over the hills.

Hadrian's Wall runs about 12 miles due north and the major fort of Banna (Birdoswald), with its very large civilian settlement (excavated in 2021), is around 15 miles from Croglin.

Voreda, also known as Old Penrith, 10 miles to the west, supported a civilian settlement until around 300 AD.



## Croglin through time: early Medieval period

As the Roman Empire in the west breaks down, military and administrative functions mostly withdraw from the British Isles.

It would seem that Cumbria, and possibly parts of lowland Scotland and northern Lancashire, become part of the Kingdom of Rheged during this time. Some references to the kings of Rheged and their successes in battle were described by Nennius, a Welsh monk of the 9th century.

In the Iron Age, and possibly up to around the sixth century, the Celtic tribes of Britain spoke a form of Gaelic we now call Brythonic or P-Celtic. Welsh is one of the modern descendants of this language,

but it also includes Cornish and the remnants of the Cumbric language.

Physical evidence of the Viking presence in the area was discovered a few miles away in Cumwhitton, around 2004, when a Viking cemetery was discovered and subsequently excavated.

Beautiful artefacts such as brooches and sword hilts found in the graves show that people were moving through, and perhaps dying in, the landscape in the 10th century.

Place name evidence, or **etymology**, often becomes important for this time period. Evidence for the Welsh language exists in Cumbrian place names, which often bear a surprising similarity to Welsh place names (such as Penrith, Cumwhitton, Cumrew, Tarnmonath, Helvellyn, and Blencathra). Later, local places names show a Norse influence, including Ainstable, Armathwaite and Scalehouses.

## Croglin through time: Medieval period

By the 12th century, or earlier, the population of Croglin was big enough to justify a church, mentioned in the Wetheral Priory Registers of 1133-47: *'tertium partum Crogelin cum ecclesia'*.



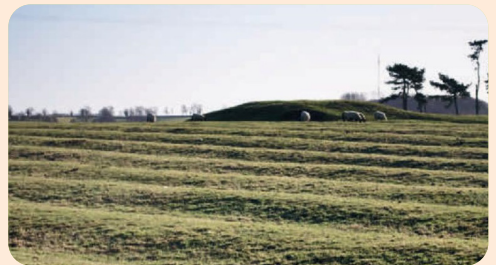
The current church building dates from 1878 but it seems likely the earlier church stood just south of the current church. The graveyard has several interesting medieval grave slabs including one for Robert de Chaucy, Bishop of Carlisle, who died in 1278.

Throughout the medieval period, villagers would have worked side by side in open fields. The majority would be tied to the land through their tenancies and bound to provide services to the landowning lord. They farmed in shared fields and could keep animals and grow

vegetables around their properties in their own 'tofts' – the private enclosure around their dwelling. The Townfields lie just west of the pub.

They were expected to provide labour to farm the lord's land. In exchange, the lord provided access to common land for grazing and for peasants to collect natural resources such as timber, gravel and clay.

Land owned by the church was subject to 'tithe' conditions, where villagers would have to give a tenth of their produce to the church as a form of taxation to support the living expenses of the clergy.



These undulating lines in the landscape preserve the activity of ploughing in the earth and are one of the most common remnants of the medieval past we can see.



## The Reivers and the Old Pele

The 13th to early 17th century was the time of the Reivers. Raiders from both sides of the English-Scottish border would rob portable household goods, steal livestock, and kidnap people for ransom. They were particularly active in the early winter months, when daylight hours were short and animals were fat after summer grazing.

Those inhabitants of the borders who could afford to do so built themselves fortified houses to protect their family and livestock,

known as bastle houses or pele towers. Bastle houses had a living room at first floor level with an external flight of steps. The former rectory or old pele, above, is an example of a pele house and is now a Grade II listed building.

Across from the church in Croglin is a building known as the 'old pele'. The earliest part of the building, to the right of the image, dates from the early 15th century but the building has seen many alterations over the years.



# Croglin through time: post-Medieval period

Due to the nature of the landscape surrounding the village, farming was based around the rearing of sheep and cattle. The 'Helm Wind', the only named wind in the British Isles, with its severity and biting icy temperatures influenced how Croglin dwellings were constructed; turning their backs to the fell and enclosing themselves with farm buildings to protect inhabitants and animals.

Prior to the 18th century, open-field systems and common grazing were common in villages. However,

in the 1700s, the Enclosure Acts increasingly brought land under the control of fewer, wealthier landlords, and better roads and more sophisticated farming techniques 'improved' land. This created a crisis for many as people were no longer able to make a living and feed themselves.

Enclosures took place in Croglin around 1815. There were nine farms located in and around the village, with the majority of the land being owned by wealthy landowners.



## Croglin through time: post-Medieval period

However, Croglin was not only agricultural. Limestone quarrying and burning had long been a feature of the fellside here and in 1709 Thomas Robinson noted that there were coal mines on Croglin Fell.

Lime has been used since at least Roman times, and probably earlier, for lime mortar plaster and lime wash in buildings. Since medieval

times through to the 20th century, quicklime was spread on acidic soils to improve the land for farming.

Drovers' roads and enclosure roads improved travel and created access to fields and new farmsteads. Still seen in our modern roads, the example below is from Lazonby, about 6 miles south of Croglin.



## Croglin through time: industrial period

Any short walk on the fell above Croglin will bring you to one of the many lime kilns and limestone quarries of the 18th and 19th centuries. These beautifully constructed kilns are the remnants of an industrial past quite at odds with the tranquil rural atmosphere of today.

Extracting quicklime from the limestone is a process which requires considerable heat. More

primitive limekilns may have used peat, wood, or bracken but Croglin is fortunate in having a narrow seam of 45-50cm of coal above the line of limestone. Mineral rights to mine and quarry the land were held by the local landowners, although they were often sold or sublet. The earliest recorded date of this was in 1738 when Charles Seymour, Duke of Somerset, bought the lease for mining coal at Croglin.



The remains of a large lime kiln above the village show a well laid out track in front of the kiln as well as the quarry behind.



## Croglin through time: industrial period

Although there is considerable documentary evidence for coal mining and lime burning around Croglin in the 18th century, neither kilns nor mines were shown on Thomas Donald's 1774 Historic Map of Cumberland. Kilns are already marked as 'old' by the 1862 Ordnance Survey map yet the large double kiln was still in use in the 20th century.

By 1794, the antiquarian and topographer, William Hutchinson, wrote of Croglin that "a great quantity of lime is burnt and coal of the fell serves that purpose though of a quality much inferior to Tindale fell coal."

Today, you will find some of the kilns overgrown but they are still well worth a visit to see the beautiful stone work of the village's industrial past.



The bricks pictured here (taken in October 2021) had fallen down from the retaining wall above the double kilns. Thanks to catalogues of industrial era material culture, we know that these bricks were sourced from Tyneside Brickworks and were only manufactured from 1877 onwards.



## Croglin through time: Victorian period

Like many places with an industrial past, Croglin still contains the architecture associated with local workers as they toiled in the area's mines, quarries and pits. A walk down the main street in the village to the quarry demonstrates how the local stone would only have been transported mere metres before being put to use.



## Croglin through time: Victorian period

A 'grammar' school, with students going to Oxford University, was endowed by the rector in 1724.

The school, later rebuilt on the same site, was constructed in 1770 on previously common land. Although we now reflect critically on the injustices of land enclosure, institutions, such as this, perhaps wouldn't have been

possible without it. The relatively high education rates in Croglin helped people prosper, travel, and improve the opportunities available to them.

The Methodist chapel was built in 1877, on land donated in 1876, one year before the rebuilding of Croglin church in 1878.







The Fellfoot Forward Landscape Partnership Scheme, led by the North Pennines National Landscape team and funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, was a major project to conserve, enhance and celebrate the natural and cultural heritage

of a special part of the North West of England, stretching from the Cumbrian fellside of the North Pennines National Landscape and UNESCO Global Geopark to the River Eden, and running north from Melmerby to Hallbankgate.



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