



Property in Care (PIC) ID: PIC206

Designations: Scheduled Monument (SM90217)

Taken into State care: 1912 (Guardianship)

Last reviewed: 2013

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

MERKLAND CROSS



We continually revise our Statements of Significance, so they may vary in length, format and level of detail. While every effort is made to keep them up to date, they should not be considered a definitive or final assessment of our properties.



© Historic Environment Scotland 2019

You may re-use this information (excluding logos and images) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated.

To view this licence, visit <http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/>

or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gov.uk

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

Any enquiries regarding this document should be sent to us at:

Historic Environment Scotland

Longmore House

Salisbury Place

Edinburgh

EH9 1SH

+44 (0) 131 668 8600

www.historicenvironment.scot

You can download this publication from our website at

www.historicenvironment.scot

MERKLAND CROSS

SYNOPSIS

Merkland Cross stands immediately to the north of the A74(M), 2 miles WNW of Kirkpatrick-Fleming. It comprises a fine medieval stone cross, 3m high, set on a modern base. The cross's decoration, in which each of the four arms of the head terminates in a carved fleur-de-lis, suggests a 15th century date for its erection.

CHARACTER OF THE MONUMENT

Historical Overview:

- **15th century** – the cross is erected beside the ancient Roman road running north-west from Carlisle (*Luguvalium*) up Annandale. Why the cross is erected is not known, but it most likely serves as a market cross for the long-vanished medieval settlement of Merkland.
- **Early 1750s** – William Roy, in his *Military Survey of Scotland*, depicts the settlement of 'Markland' lying either side of the former Roman road.
- **1912** – Merkland Cross is taken into state care.

Archaeological Overview:

The area around the Merkland Cross has never been investigated archaeologically. If it were, it may shed light on the reason for its erection, and determine whether the cross stands on its original site. Suggestions for its erection range from a market cross to a commemorative memorial (see [Spiritual Overview](#) below).

Archaeological excavation may also reveal buried remains of the medieval village of Merkland. William Roy shows the former settlement – 'Markland' – lying to either side of the former Roman road, but mostly to its west - in which case the construction of the A74 (M), and before it the former A74, may well have obliterated most of it.

Architectural/Artistic Overview:

The Merkland Cross is a tall, floriated cross standing 3m high on a stone base. It is carved from a single piece of sandstone. The tapered shaft has chamfered edges and terminates in a floriated cross-head, each of the four arms ending in a fleur-de-lis decoration. This evolved form of bracelet motif suggests a 15th century date for its erection. The stone base is modern.

Social Overview:

The reason for the cross's erection is not known. The most likely scenario is that it was a market cross for the village of Merkland. Other possibilities include as an outdoor preaching place and as a memorial (see [Spiritual Overview](#) below).

Today, other than being a minor visitor attraction, the Merkland Cross currently plays no social role.

Spiritual Overview:

The Merkland Cross, whatever its function, would originally have served as a reminder to locals and travellers alike of one of the central messages of the Christian faith – redemption through Christ's death on the cross of Calvary.

The cross has in the past been associated with a number of local traditions. The most popular is that it commemorates the site of the violent murder in 1484 of John Maxwell, master of **Caerlaverock**, steward of Annandale, by a man called Gass, whose cousin he had hanged; Gass struck him with a 'whinger in the fillets under his harness which was his death'.

The Merkland Cross plays no known spiritual role today.

Aesthetic Overview:

The Merkland Cross is located on a slight rise in the ground. Until recently its immediate surroundings were more attractive, the former A74 trunk road lying some distance away to the west. However, the construction of the new A74 (M) motorway immediately beyond the hedge has seriously marred what rural ambience it once had.

What are the major gaps in understanding of the property?

- When precisely was the cross erected, and why? Only archaeological excavation can now provide possible answers. It would be interesting to learn how the cross related to the medieval settlement of Merkland, recorded on Roy's mid-18th century map.
- Does the cross stand on its original site? Here again only archaeological investigation can reveal the answer.

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Key Points

- The Merkland Cross is one of the best-preserved examples in Scotland of a later medieval wayside cross.
- The cross serves as a visual reminder of the former existence of one of the main historic routes into Scotland from England.

Associated Properties:

(some other later medieval crosses): **Ormiston Cross**; 'Fair Helen's Cross', Kirkconnel; **MacLean's Cross**; **St Peter's Kirk, Duffus**

Keywords:

shaft; floriate design; market cross; later medieval

Selected Bibliography:

Irving, G., 'Merkland Cross', *Trans Dumfriesshire Galloway Nat Hist & Antiq Soc.*, vol. 17 (1906)

Mercer, R *et al.*, *Kirkpatrick Fleming, Dumfriesshire: An Anatomy of a Parish in South West Scotland* (Dumfries, 1997)

RCAHMS *Inventory of Monuments and Constructions in the County of Dumfries* (HMSO, Edinburgh, 1920)
