

Old Maps of the Cairngorms

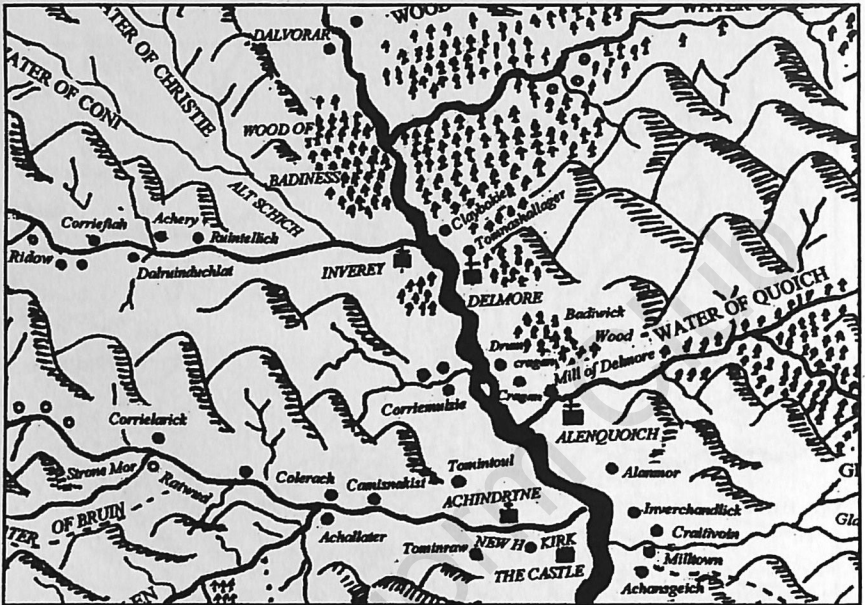
Graham Ewen

The first Ordnance Survey map of the Cairngorms area was published in 1866. Unfortunately for the purpose of historical research, by that time most of the old social order in the area had been swept away in order to create deer forests, and in consequence this map shows the area as being not very different from what it is today. There is little sign of the settlement pattern that had existed in earlier times. Fortunately however there are in existence quite a large number of earlier maps, which may not be as accurate as the Ordnance Survey maps, but they do show the earlier settlement pattern and are invaluable in locating the sites of earlier settlements and their names.

The first such map was drawn by Timothy Pont, a graduate of St Andrews University some time between 1583 and 1590. He produced a set of large-scale maps covering most of Scotland. There is unfortunately no map of the central part of the Cairngorms, but there is a sheet covering the area between Braemar and Blair Atholl, a small part of which is illustrated here (Map A)*. As can be seen, the map shows the area in great detail with even all the small burns being named. The mountains are shown in a pictorial way with most of the important ones being named, but the map shows little in the way of settlement and so is not of much interest for historical research. Its main interest lies in the continuity of place names from then to the present day, despite the difference in spelling. For example, Beinn a' Ghlo appears as Bin Gloin and Meall na Spionaig as Mealnaspinac. There is evidence that some of the script has been added by Robert Gordon of Straloch, the grandfather of the Robert Gordon who founded Robert Gordon's College in Aberdeen. Unfortunately this map appears to be unfinished as there is nothing like the detail shown on the Deeside section as is shown in Glen Tilt.

The same Robert Gordon produced a map of Upper Deeside some time between 1630 and 1640. It was drawn in the same way as the Pont map, with the hills shown pictorially, but he has added settlements which makes it much more interesting historically. The map also shows woods, but as they are more or less all over the map, including places which should be high mountains, I doubt the value of their inclusion. The place names are mostly similar to those of today but there are some interesting differences: Cairn Toul is called Soul Bin Macduff, Ben Avon is given as Badronald and Lochnagar as Bini Chichnes, although the loch at the

*As it is not possible to reproduce the originals, the maps appearing here have been redrawn by the author.



Map B John Farquharson 1703

show births in Glenlui around this time. This might suggest that the settlements were not yet recognised as being officially permanent, even if they were. The area shown as woods is much more credible than the Gordon map and does not look too different from the present day. The hills appear to have been sketched in any old way, just to give the impression of a mountainous area in between the valleys. Little effort has been made to name any of them. Such a map, had it been published, while interesting historically, would have been no use to hillwalkers but would probably have helped travellers who were only interested in following the valleys. The same of course applies to the maps previously described.

In 1725 a map called "The Shire of Kincairden or Mears with the South part of Aberdeenshire" was published by a geographer called Moll. This map is of limited interest as it is on a small scale, and although it covers the Cairngorms there is not very much detail. It is also not very accurate even in local detail. Beinn a Bhuid for example is shown extending west of Glen Derry, and Lochnagar lies well to the south-west of Loch Muick. Interestingly Ben Avon is referred to as Bad Renald and Lochnagar as Bin Chichin, very similar to the spelling used on the Gordon Map.

After Culloden a decision was made to make a proper survey of the whole area of the Scottish Highlands. This task was completed by the military between the years of 1747 and 1755 under the supervision of

William Roy, a military surveyor who finally rose to the rank of Major-General in 1781. The maps were drawn at a scale of 1000 yards to the inch, and their accuracy surpasses anything that had gone before. It is not possible to reproduce the Roy map here as it was a coloured map. The hills are shaded brown and these come up in black on photocopies, thereby obscuring many of the placenames. Coloured slides of this map can however be obtained at considerable expense from the British Map Library in London.

The Roy map is the first one to use symbols instead of pictograms. The newly completed military road from Perth to Braemar is shown by a thin red line. Other roads are shown by thin black lines, including most of the drove roads. One such is shown going right over the top of An Sgarsoch, from the bend in the Feshie to Falls of Tarf, thus giving some credence to stories of a cattle market on the top of this hill. Settlement is shown by red dots, each dot representing a single building. This makes the map particularly interesting historically because settlement in the area was at its maximum extent at the time the map was drawn. All the settlements in Glenlui, Gleney and Glendee are shown, apart from the inexplicable omission of Dalvorar in Glendee, and this map has been invaluable in matching ruins on the ground with names. Woodlands are also shown and, like the Farquharson map, cover an area much the same as the present day.

The Commission which was set up in 1803 for making roads and building bridges in the Highlands of Scotland employed a surveyor called Aaron Arrowsmith to survey the Highlands and to prepare maps to assist with road building in the area. These were published in 1807. Arrowsmith acknowledged that he made use of the Roy map, which he said had been deposited in the King's library and forgotten about. The sheet on Upper Deeside seems to be exactly the same as the Roy map except that the coloured hill shading used by Roy is replaced with hachures. The fact that the layout of the rivers is the same and the same place names are used, including all the settlements in Glenlui, which had been cleared by this time, makes one doubt if there was any re-surveying done. There is one serious mistake, with Allanaquoich being named as Mar Lodge. A secondary purpose of the map was apparently to demarcate the County boundaries.

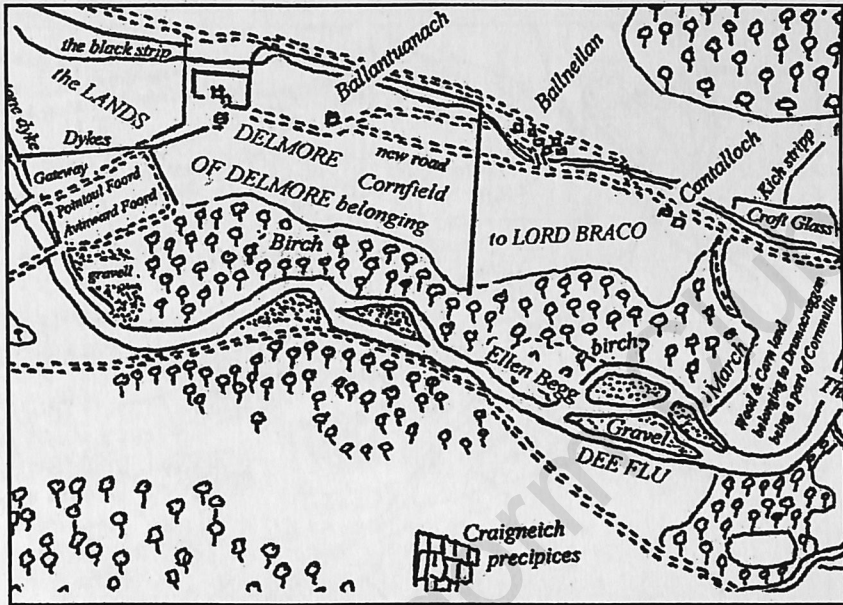
James Robertson, a native of Shetland, published a series of maps of Aberdeenshire in 1822 from a survey he had completed on his own. This is the first map where an attempt has been made to state the actual height of the principal mountains. Strangely these are not named on the map but numbered, with the names and heights given in an index at the foot of the map. He gives, for example, Ben Macdhui as 4,327ft, Derry Cairngorm as 3,792ft, and Beinn a Bhuid as 4,039ft, all within a hundred feet or so of the correct figure. Slopes are shown by a form of hachuring and the layout

of rivers begins to approach the accuracy of the later Ordnance Survey maps. The map shows woodland with much the same extent as the present day. It also shows roads and main settlements only. The scale is one inch to one mile.

In 1826 another map of the area was published by a John Thompson. This map seems to be based on the Roy map and is not so accurate as Robertson's effort of four years earlier. It contains surprisingly little detail for such a large-scale map and contains at least one serious mistake, the Linn of Dee being marked at the mouth of the Geldie.

In addition to the maps so far described there are a large number of larger-scale maps, which were drawn to fulfil a particular purpose. The first of these was drawn in 1735 by a surveyor called Joseph Avery, and showed the intended route of the military road to be built from Invercauld to Ruthven Barracks. The map is drawn to a scale of one inch to the mile and shows that the projected route was to follow roughly the line of the existing right of way from Invercauld all the way through to Carnachuin in Glen Feshie. The map is not very accurate and contains numerous mistakes; for example Dalvorar is marked on the wrong side of the Dee and the road to Blair Atholl is shown in the wrong place. It is of interest, however, that the map shows the existing road at that time to have followed the south side of the Dee and Geldie all the way to the Eidart.

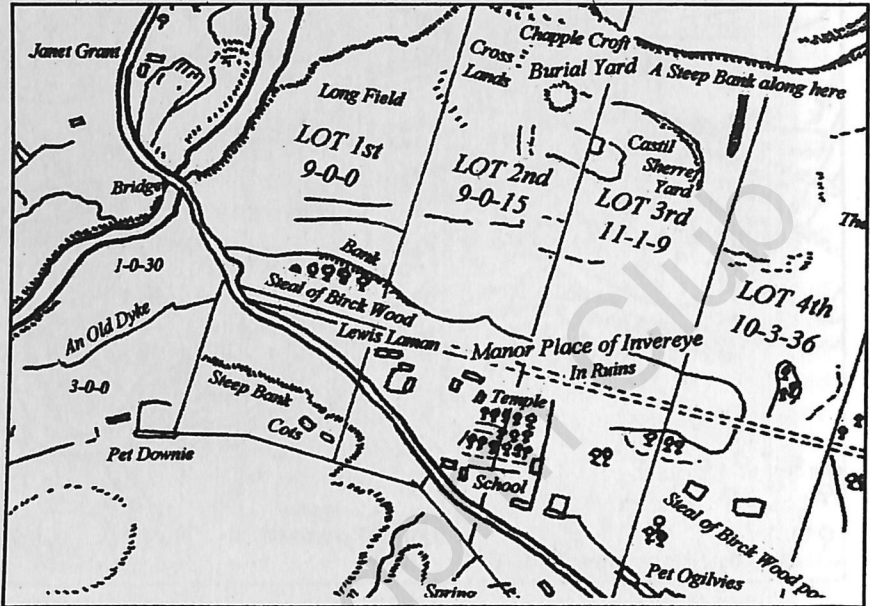
The second map of this type was drawn in 1743 to provide evidence for a protracted court case which took place between Lord Braco (later to become the Earl of Fife) the proprietor of Dalmore and Allanaquoich, and Farquharson of Inverey, who owned all the land on the south side of the river Dee and, as can be seen on the extract shown (Map C), a small part of land on the North side of the river (the part shown as belonging to Drumcraggan). The dispute arose from the fact that prior to this time the people of Inverey, when travelling to Braemar, normally forded the Dee by the Pointoul Ford, or sometimes the Avinward ford, and proceeded through the grounds of Delmore House (later Mar Lodge) before heading east towards Allanaquoich. From there they would head to Boat of Inverchandlick, where there was a ferry across the Dee to Braemar. Lord Braco wanted to establish a new road along the south side of the river, which might follow a line similar to the road existing today. This is possibly the only map which shows the positions of the old settlements of Ballantuanach, Ballneilan, Cantalloch and Croft Glass which were cleared as part of the development of the policies around Delmore House. No trace of these settlements remain as the stones were used either to build or repair the bulwarks along the river bank. The surveyor of this map was an Englishman called Thomas Winter who lived at Muthill in Perthshire, apparently introduced to Scotland by Sir Archibald Grant of Monymusk, but not much else is known about him.



Map C Thomas Winter 1743

Around 1745 a very large scale and surprisingly accurate map was drawn to show the haugh between Allanaquoich and Allannmore. The purpose of this map was to plan the drainage of the area, a scheme that was carried out jointly by Lord Braco and Farquharson of Invercauld during the 1745 uprising. The settlements of Allanaquoich, Kandakyle and Allannmore are shown with little pictures of houses. The map also shows the Mill of Delmore and the Mill of Allanaquoich on opposite banks of the Quoich, but sharing the same weir to divert the water into their respective lades. The original of this map can be inspected at Aberdeen University, where it forms part of the Duff House collection. Another variation of this map also exists, obviously drawn somewhat later and showing progress to date.

In 1787 the Earl of Fife, shortly after acquiring the Inverey Estate, had a large-scale map drawn of the villages of Meikle Inverey and Little Inverey, along with their associated areas of agricultural land. A small part of this map is shown here (Map D). It seems likely that this map was drawn with a view to reorganising the various holdings in the area. The map is interesting in that it shows a school already established in Inverey at this time. The name Chapple Croft would presumably indicate the approximate location of a former Chapel. The houses are named with the names of the people who occupied them. I cannot explain the presence of



Map D Inverey 1787

the word “temple” just below the Manor Place of Invereye. A similar map of the area around Achindryne was drawn at the same time.

There are also a very large number of very large-scale maps of Invercauld Estate, some showing the whole estate and others individual farms. They were mostly drawn during the first quarter of the nineteenth century and are too numerous to describe here individually. They were obviously drawn with agricultural improvements in mind, as certain parts are annotated with entries such as “flat mossy ground, might be drained and improved”. I will confine my comments to one such map showing the Mains of the Coldrach, which was directly across the Clunie from the present-day farm of Achalater. The individual field boundaries are shown and each field annotated to show its worth, e.g. stony land, pretty good land, birch wood and grass, arable. There is a mill, and the mill-race and dam are clearly shown. Also beside the farm there is a milestone on the old military road, which of course passes through the farm. Numerous buildings are also shown.

There are also three smaller-scale maps, the first drawn in 1775 showing the whole of Upper Deeside west of Bridge of Gairn. The first map was obviously drawn in connection with a court case and shows all the estate boundaries, all the settlements and also information about timber servitudes. The second one, described as “Part of the Mains and Forest of

Invercauld", was drawn in 1808. This map shows the valley of the Dee in great detail from the Inver to Braemar Castle. The third one, drawn in 1828, shows the whole of Invercauld Estate and all the settlements at a time when settlement on the estate would have been at its greatest extent. There are for example nine settlements shown in Glen Clunie south of the existing farm of Achallater, an area which is deserted today.

The above maps are by no means the only ones that exist but they are the most interesting. Without them, the locations of many of the place-names found in the estate papers would have remained a mystery. They show how the settlement pattern expanded from the Dee valley at the time of Robert Gordon's map into the surrounding glens by the time of the Roy map. Unfortunately they do not illustrate the later contraction of settlement in the same way, as later map-makers seem reluctant to remove names if they have appeared on earlier maps. A modern example of this can be seen in the O.S. Pathfinder series of 1989 which records such places as Dubrach and Tonnagaoithe in Glendee despite the fact that they were abandoned more than 150 years earlier. The maps also have a variety of other historical information on them including woodlands, roads, estate boundaries, sites of mills and many other items of interest.