

STRATHARD LANDSCAPES

Alexander Robertson

As far back as 218 BC, when Archimedes was looking for a spar to build a fabulous 122m long cruise ship at Syracuse, complete with a sporting deck, gymnasium, marble baths, shaded garden deck, manned by 600 oarsmen in 20 groups, rooms for 300 passengers and 3,500 tonnes of cargo, the available trees for the main mast in the then known world could only be found in the highland glens of Caledonia. Ironically, his boss, Hieron II didn't have a port big enough for the boat. So he loaded it with fish and oats and sent it off to Egypt as a gift. Sadly, there is little left of the great Caledonian pine forest of Scotland. So much so that it gave rise to a litany of jibes at a time when Scotland had barely 2-3% forest cover, such as:-

"Scotland is so barren that the the crows fly to Norway to get sticks for their nests."

"Judas had scarce got a tree to hang himself" Sir Anthony Weldon, 1617

"A tree in Scotland was as rare as a horse in Venice." Dr. Samuel Johnstone, 1740

"There were neither trees nor bushes to relieve the eye from the russet livery of absolute sterility. The very heath was of that stinted imperfect kind which has little or no flower, and affords the coarsest and meanest covering, which, as far as my experience enables me to judge, mother Earth is ever arrayed in. Living thing we saw none, except occasionally a few straggling sheep of a strange diversity of colours, as black, bluish, and orange. The sable hue predominated, however, in their faces and legs. The very birds seemed to shun these wastes, and no wonder, since they had an easy method of escaping from them."

INVERRNAID

Timothy Pont's map of 1583 shows scarcely any woodland in and around Glen Arklet apart from the oak forest banks of Loch Lomond. In fact, even today, as Mike Trubridge's recent photos show the are scattered are relatively young, naturally regenerated native birch in landscape of Rob Roy's Innersnait (Inversnaid) and the neighbouring farm with a 17th century sheep fank that was occupied by a tenant of the Marquis (later Duke) of Montrose's. However, in the bottom of the photo of the sheep fank, there is a ruin of an iron-age bloomery – and probably a few more in the glen, which indicates the area did have substantial ancient woodland. In fact, in nearby Bruach at the northeast end of Loch Arklet, there is the only surviving ancient wood in the glen that is shown on a 1717 military drawing of the north side of Glen Arklet.



Inversnaid has a glorious history and is forever linked to the famous Rob Roy MacGregor, whose real history and that of the Garrison has been muddled up by the romantics - including Sir Walter Scott. So here's a brief timeline that outlines the real story about Inversnaid and its famous highlander.



INVERNSNAID TIMELINE 711-1986

711 Battle of Glen Arklet “ Congressio Britonum & Dal Riati for Loirgg Eccllet ubi Britones deuicti”. An encounter between Britons and the Dál Riata at Lorg Eccllet, (Glen Atklet?). The Britons (Strathclyde Scots?) were defeated. Annals of Tigernach U711.5

1694 Kilmannan (MacGregor of Glenstrae) transfers ownership of Inversnaid farm (Craigrostan) to Rob Roy

1703: This is the year James Nasmyth, a successful engineer and inventor of the steam hammer, claimed that his great-great-grandfather, Michael Naesmyth (1652-1705) a well-known Edinburgh builder and architect - had the contract to build Inversnaid garrison; during which he and workers were captured by Rob Roy and his men and dragged through the snow which led to his ill-health and early death. The claim is fictitious construction of the garrison and event of workers being carried off, occurred 15 years later. However, some writers speculate that the Duke of Montrose may have started to build his own garrison which may have involved Michael Naesmyth. Naesmyth had a fine reputation for his masonry and woodwork; and since his business was in designing and erecting new mansions, principally for the landed gentry and nobility he in all likelihood knew and probably did some building for Montrose in the Inversnaid area. After all, Montrose had several strategic houses built throughout his estates which served as watch stations. For example, in 1716,

24th December 1712 Rob Roy's signs a contract with the Duke of Montrose. Rob Roy undertook to buy two hundred cows from Kintail for Montrose in return for £2,800 Scots. He failed to deliver the cattle and Montrose and his other customers took legal action to recover their money. They started proceedings by recording their contracts in the Register of Deeds.

5th July 1712 Robert Campbell (Rob Roy MacGregor) sends by hand to James Graham, writer (lawyer) in Glasgow. **Indicating on writer's debt to Montrose that once he gets what money he is due from others, he will repay Montrose.**



The agreement between Montrose and Rob Roy.

6th Oct 1712 Letters from James, 1st Duke of Montrose: to officers of the independent companies requesting arrest of Rob Roy for debt. With a warrant for this from the Lord Advocate, and a narrative of Rob Roy's practices and evasion of justice.

1712 Montrose took over Rob Roy's lands illegally since Rob Roy had already and legally disposed of them to Bardowie and Glengyle.

September, 1716 Major Green orders Rob Roy's farmhouse be burned and attempted to conquer confiscate his livestock (they much wild to be caught). After which examines a site nearby for a proposed barracks. The burning reported in the Flying Post 18th October, 1716. **The location of the farmhouse is not mentioned, but presumably it was Inversnaid. On Dumaesque and Bastide's military map dated 1717 there's a black spot where Innersnait farm stood. A 1725 military also has a black spot in approximately the same location as that in the 1718 map.**

1716 Montrose submits plans for a garrison at Inversnaid in a letter sent to Secretary of State Lord Charles Townsend but addressed to Gen Carpenter

1st June 1716. The King in Council in London orders the building of barracks in the highlands with priority given to Inversnaid

5-6th Nov 1716 Duke of Montrose starts legal proceedings that dispossess Rob Roy of Innersnait (alias Craigrostan)

27th Nov 1716 Court rules that **Robert Campbell of Innersnait** (and not Bardowie and Glengyle) was **legally the owner of Craigrostan** and therefore **liable for debts owed to creditors**.

25th June 1717. Balwhidder, Copy of declaration by Rob Roy, **`to all lovers of honour and honesty'; treacherous attempt to arrest him and his escape; `to narrate all particulars made towards this foul plot and the persecution I suffered by the Duke of Montroses means, before and after I submitted to the government, would take up too much time. Were the Duke of Montrose and I left alone to debate our own private quarrell, which in my opinion ought to be done, I would shew to the world how little he would signify to serve either king or countrey'.**

19th July 1717 Buchanan writes The Park has been broken into and 32 of the best of the cows stolen; Killearn ordered fire crosses to be sent through Menteith to raise the country for pursuit, but no one has turned up; **Rob Roy intends to attack with his own clan and all the broken men.**

23rd July 1717 Inversnaat, The tenants refuse to come and work as **Rob Roy has threatened to burn their houses;** he has stolen 16 bolls meal from the giral; work on the barracks.

21st July 1717 Buchanan's fruitless pursuit of Rob Roy as far as Correrklett.

1718 Lt. John Dumaresq and Lt. John Henry Bastide produce ' A draught of Innersnait.....) Including a proposed location of temporary barracks for 100 men, the site and plan for the garrison and location of rubble stone quarries as well as the location of existing farms and Corriearklet houses and run-rigs. Dumaresq & Bastides also produce a map of 'roads between Innersnait, Ruthvan of Badenock, Kiliwhilam and Fort William in the Highlands of North Britain'

March, 1718 Work begins on the barracks, the well-known Edinburgh architect James Smith is appointed *Surveyor and Chief director of work on Barracks in North Britain.*, Major Thomas Gordon is his chief overseer with Lt. John Dumaresqu acting as *clerk of works* and Lt. John Henry Bastide as *draftsman* (later he becomes famous as Lt. Colonel and chief engineer of fortifications in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and second in command to Gen. Jeffrey Amherst). Gilbert Smith *mason* plus James Livingstone and eight other *masons* Robert Mowbray *carpenter* and James Syme *slater*.

3rd July 1718 Sale of Craigrostan

July 1718 Capt Biggar is in command of the soldiers billeted in the temporary barrack located 550 yards up and on the opposite side the Snaid Burn from Garrison site. Masons and quarries began construction in work in -.

8th August 1718 At 11pm, James Livingstone, mason testifies that a man knocked on the door saying he had a letter from Capt. James Biggar thereupon they were seized by 'persons unknown' and marched 16-18 miles to the lowlands.

19th September August At his court martial Capt. Biggar's defence was that his temporary barracks up the Snaid some distance from the construction site which was out of sight, and that the contractors insisted his workers had no need of protection. He was found not guilty.

April 1719 Barracks nearing completion, Richard Struckburgh commander reports that Lord Drummond and Rob Roy were 4 miles away with large numbers of men. Gen Wightman orders reinforcements and construction of palisades and ditches. **The fort was not attacked.**

May 1719 Following the Jacobite rebellion of 1715 Parliament passed an Act (1715 c.50) vesting in the king the real and personal estates of those attainted of high treason committed before

1719 the London-based York Buildings Company, of which Duke of Montrose was major shareholder, floated a joint stock fund of £1.2 million pounds sterling 'for purchasing forfeited and other estates in Great Britain' including Inversnaid (Rob Roy),

19th June 1719 Sir Patrick Strachan of Glenkindie appointed Barracks Master General of Scotland. Recommends building the Inversnaid Garrison

5th July 1719 Brig. George Preston orders a Captain, 3 Lieutenants, and 100 men to Inversnaid

19th July, 1719 Soldiers from Drymen under Capt. Brown and Killearn occupy Corriearklet

20th July, 1719 Reinforcements led by John Graham of Drunkie and Patrick Graham arrive. Killearn is confused as to where the garrison should be built. Later, Montrose charges government £350 sterling for the construction of temporary barracks.

2nd December 1719. Declaration by two of birleymen of the barony of Buchanan concerning the value of ground marked out round the barracks at Inversnaid.

Sept. 1720 Notice of **public auction of the forfeited estate of the rental property of Robert Campbell (RR)** in Edinburgh

13th October 1720 Starting price for Inversnaid is 20 years purchase. Purchased by Graham of Gorthie for £820 (31 years purchase) acting for Montrose

19th March 1721 Register of Baptism, Parish of Buchanan records birth of a son to wife of a soldier stationed at Inversnaid barracks. Buchanan Stirling 1646 1854 OPR 474

28th November.1724 After settling with creditors **Montrose finally obtains ownership of Craigrostan**

28th November, 1735 Transcript of Testament of Robert Roy Campbell (Rob Roy) of Inversnaid and Inverlochlarig Beag (Balquidder).

"The Testament Dative and Inventory of the goods gear cattle Household plenishing and others which pertained to the Deceast Robert Roy Campbell in Innerlochlangbeg within the parish of Balquhidder and Commissariat of Dunblane the time of Decease which was in the Moneth of Decemberlast Faithfully made and given up by Mary Mcgrigor alias Campbell the Defuncts Spouse only Executrix Dative Decernedas Credetrix to her said Deceas'd husband



The testament of Robert Campbell (Rob Roy) of Inversnaid

For payment and Satisfaction to her of the sum of four hundred and thirty six pounds ten shillings and four pennies Scots money Expended and Deburs'd by her on the Defuncts funerals and for Masters rent, and Servants fees and for medicaments and other Necessaries furnished during his Sickness Conform to a particular Accompt and Several Instructions thereof produced Whereon she made faith as use is As also for payment of the expences of Confirmation hereof By Decreet of the Commissary principal of the said Commissariat as the samen of the date of these presents in itself more fully Bears

There was pertaining and belonging to the Said Defunct the time of his decease forsaid the goods gear and others aftermentioned of the values after express'd According as the Samen were valued in Virtue of the said Commissarys warrant Vizt.

Imprimis Two Tydie Cows at eight pound Scots per piece Inde Sixteen pound Item Two Yeald Kine estimate at Six pound Scots pr. piece Inde Twelve pound Item Two old Kine with a Stirk estimate at Six pounds thirteen shilling And four pennies Scots per piece Inde Thirteen pound Six shilling and eight pennies Item Two forrow Kine with a Stirk estimate at Seven pound Six Shilling and eight pennies Scots oer piece Inde fourteen pound Thirteen Shilling and four pennies Item Two Six quarters old queys estimate at Two pound thirteen Shilling and four pennies Scots per piece Inde five pound Six Shilling and eight pennies Item a ten quarter year old quey estimate at Three pound Item thirteen Ews and one Ram estimate at fourteen pound It[em] seven hoggs estimate at three pound ten shilling It[em] fourteen Goats with a Buck estimate at Twenty pound It[em] eight Minchaks estimate at four pounds Item Ane Old Mair with a filly estimate to eight pound It[em] two horses estimate to thirty pound It[em] a Blind horse estimate to One pound ten shilling It[em] Two

*Bolls of Gray Corn with the Straw estimate to ten pound It[em] the Key estimate to Twelve pound It[em] the Saddle and Armes estimate with the Bridle Twenty four pound It[em] Betwixt his body Cloaths and heall house plenishing estimate to eighty four pound Six Shilling and eight pennies. Item The said Defunct had Justly addebted and resting to him the time foresaid of his decease By Alexander Mcfarlane in Coreitlet the Sum of One hundred pounds Scots money and whole annualrents thereof as a part of the sum of Six hundred merks Scots money principal Specified in a Bond Granted by him to the said Defunct therein **Designed Robert Campbell of Innersnait Dated the Twenty eight day of November and day of One thousand seven hundred and seven years.***

*Summa Confirmed 6th February 1735 Raynold Drummond and John Fisher of Tayenrouyoch Cautioners**

14th Oct 1740: Richard Hawley, commanding officer of the Inversnait barrack

1745 Inversnait garrisoned by 89. The barracks were partially **partially destroyed by Rob Roy's son, Maj. James Mohr MacGregor.**

1746. List of lands belonging to Montrose whereof the houses and furniture were burnt down by the king's troops on 8-10 June 1746, and from possessors thereof, the cattle, horses etc. were carried away to Crieff; with an estimate of the people's loss and sufferings.

1st August 1746 Disarming Act - 19 George II, Chap. 39, Sec. 17, 1746 Abolition and Proscription of Highland Dress (except for Highland Regiments). There is no mention of playing of Bagpipes anywhere in the act let alone their abolition.

June 1746 The Earl of Albemarle decided to reoccupy Inversnait and writes to the Duke of Newcastle that it would prevent the MacGregors, from robbing, plundering, and laying waste the country about them. **Brevet- Major James Wolfe (Later General Wolfe killed at the Battle of Abraham Heights, Quebec) returning from Hawley's headquarters, rejoined his regiment and was ordered to reconstruct the Inversnait garrison** which had been wrecked by insurgents. He did his work well, setting up sub-posts in the district, arresting bandits, and sent soldierly reports every fortnight. Here he remained there until late in November 1746, when he received orders to rejoin his regiment on the Continent in six weeks' time, reactivate the Fort.

May 1753 Rob Roy's son Roberts (Rob Og) captured at fair in Gartmore by soldiers from Inversnait barracks.

20th March, 1753 The Jacobite Dr. Archibald Cameron was captured near Inversnait. If Andrew's lang's version alluding to the Corriearklet children is closet to the truth, insofar as **the discovery and chase may have began at Bruach** about 2 km east of which, according to Dumaresq and Bastides 1718 draught, was the only substantial wood in the vicinity of Corriearklet. A clan Cameron website gives the location of Benachyle (i.e., Benachaille Lodge) several kilometers away on the north side of Loch Katrine.

*"Hereupon, a detachment from Lord George Beauclerk's regiment was sent in search of him, and he was taken in the following manner: -- Captain Graves, with thirty soldiers, going towards the place (**BRUACH?**) where, it was presumed, he was concealed, saw a little girl at the extremity of a village, who, on their approach, fled towards another village. She was pursued by a servant and two soldiers, who could only come near enough to observe her whispering to a boy, who seemed to have been placed for the purpose of conveying intelligence. Unable to overtake the boy, they presented their guns at him; on which he fell on his knees, and begged his life; which they promised, on the condition that he would shew them the place where Dr. Cameron was concealed. Hereupon the boy pointed to the house where he was, which the soldiers surrounded, and took him prisoner".* Source: **Excerpt from the Newgate Calendar - The Tyburn Calendar, or Malefactors Bloody Register**

*"In 1753 Doctor Archie was sent on his second, and as it turned out, disastrous visit (back to Scotland, concerning the disposal of the famed "Treasure of Loch Arkig.") He reached the Highlands, and while staying secretly at **Brenachyle (Brenachaille) on Loch katrineside...he was arrested."*** Source: Clan Cameron website

"...there were several spies among the demoralised Jacobites in France, and it is to be feared that the good doctor fell victim to treachery. It happened that while he was being hunted

*round Inversnaid the children of the neighbourhood were his best sentries. The soldiers were puzzled by the strange conduct of the children, who always uttered loud cries whenever they saw a redcoat. At last the soldiers caught a boy who had hurt his foot and could not run away. By bullying him they found out that Dr Archie was hiding in a certain **bothy in a wood (Bruach?)**. He escaped in time from the house, but was caught among some bushes.* Source: Clan Cameron archives

“...he was detected near Inversnaid (possibly through a scoundrel of his own name), and was hunted by a detachment of the Inversnaid garrison. They were long baffled by children set as sentinels, who uttered loud cries as the soldiers approached. At last they caught a boy who had hurt his foot, and from him discovered that **Cameron was in a house in a wood (Bruach wood?)**. Thence he escaped, but was caught among the bushes Source: Andrew Lang’s ‘Pickles the Spy’

1768 Inversnaid garrisoned by 24 soldiers

1770’s Inversnaid garrisoned by 5 soldiers

July 1772 Messrs. Montague and Sheldon, officers, the one commanding at Inversnaid, the other the working party on the roads. Buchlyvie. A formal note asking permission to shoot on the Duke’s ‘manors’.

1777 Charles Ross produces a map of Loch Lomond with location of Rob Roy’s Prison. This is the source of popular myth.

1820 John Thompson’s map has Rob Roy’s Cave in the same location Rob Roy’s Prison Loch Lomond – thus perpetuating the popular myth that persists on modern maps. Rob Roy was never imprisoned in his home district.

1792 About 1792 Sir Walter Scott chanced to pass that way while on a tour through the Highlands, he states the garrison consisted of a single veteran. “The venerable warder was reaping his barley croft in all peace and tranquillity and when we asked admittance to repose ourselves, he told us we would find the key of the Fort under the door”.

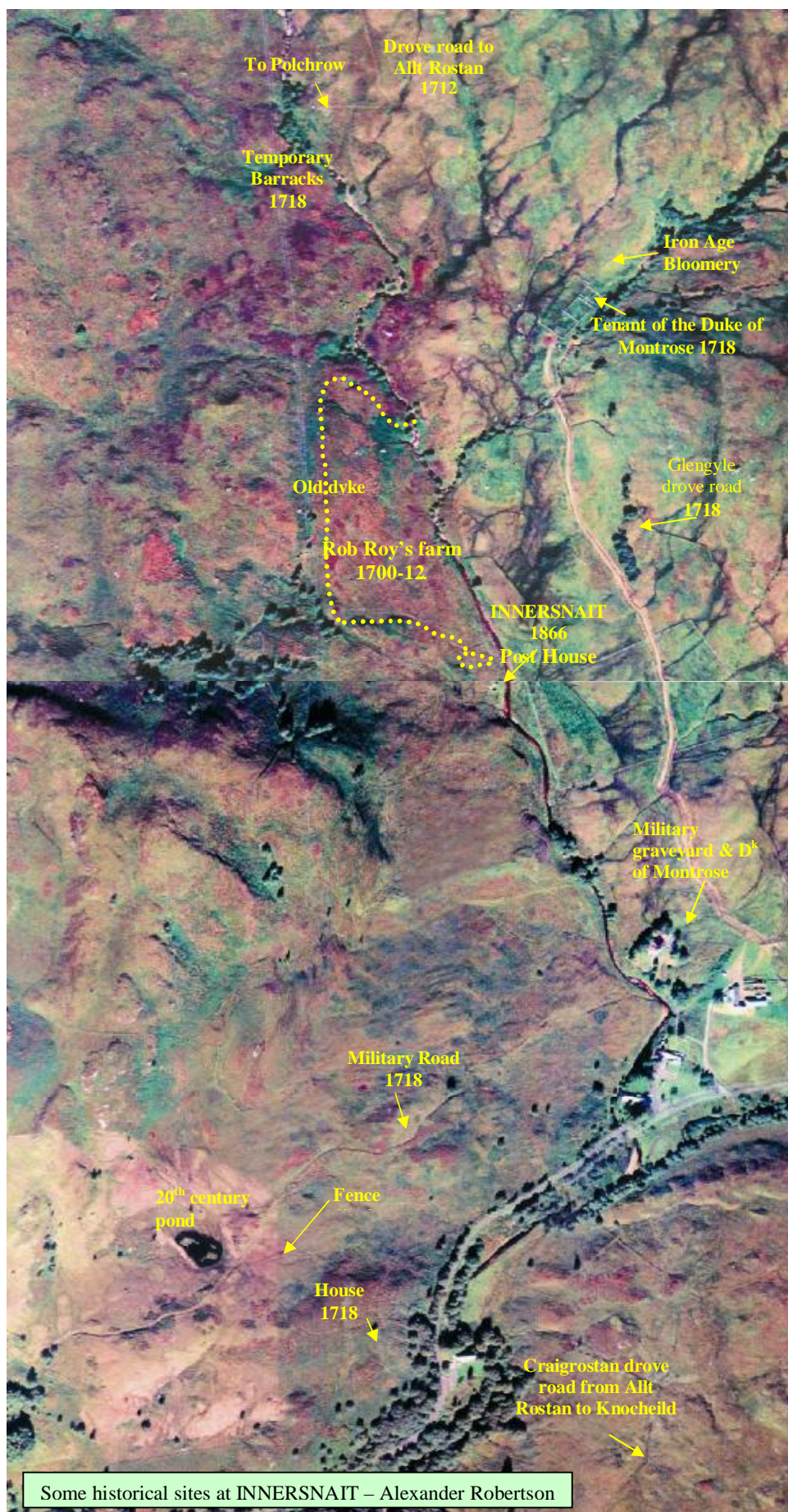
1803 William Woodsworth, his sister Dorothy and friend Samuel Taylor Coleridge visit Inversnaid.

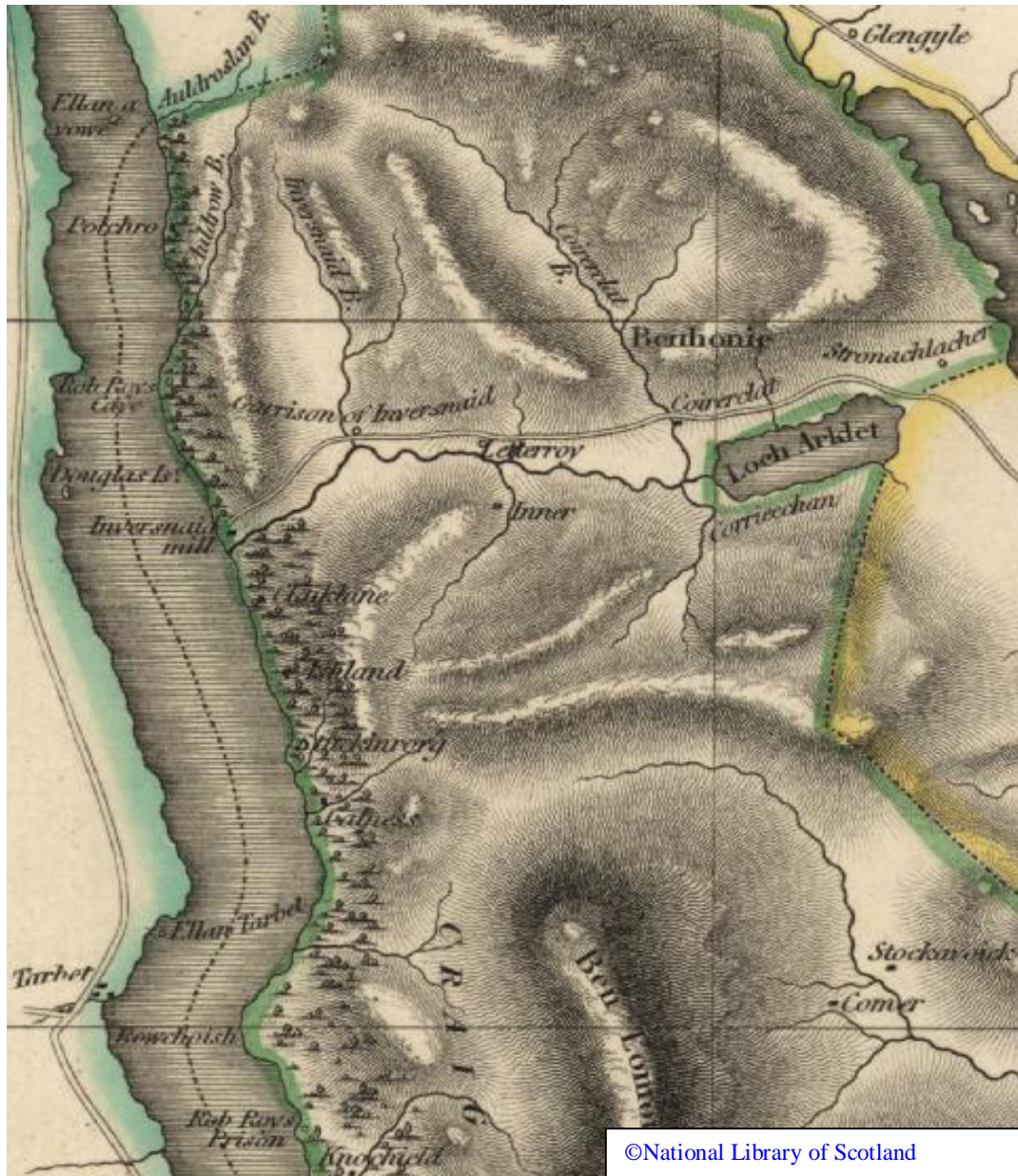
22nd December 1823. Letter from R. Byham, Office of Ordnance, to the Duke of Montrose’s transferring the garrison of Inversnaid to the Inversnaid Estate.

21st Sept. 1839, Glasgow. Letter from Andrew MacGeorge, younger, to the duke of Montrose. Expresses surprise at demolition of Inversnaid fort; urges an interdict against this as ‘part of the history of our country ... It has been already, with too much justice, the reproach of **Scotsmen that they have failed to preserve as they ought our historical ruins and to arrest their natural decay. God forbid that to this should be added the reproach of active, and, as in the present instance, wanton destruction**’.

15th May 1941 During night air raid a bomb from a German bomber destroyed the Post Office within Inversnaid Hotel. There were no casualties. Another 28 bombs dropped in the vicinity did no damage to property. Apparently, burning bracken at the rear of the hotel had, at high altitude, been mistaken for the burning Clydeside docks fifty miles away.

1986 The RSPB purchases the 376 hectares of the Inversnaid Estate and in 2002 a further **441 hectares adjacent to it known as of ‘Garrison Farm’**.

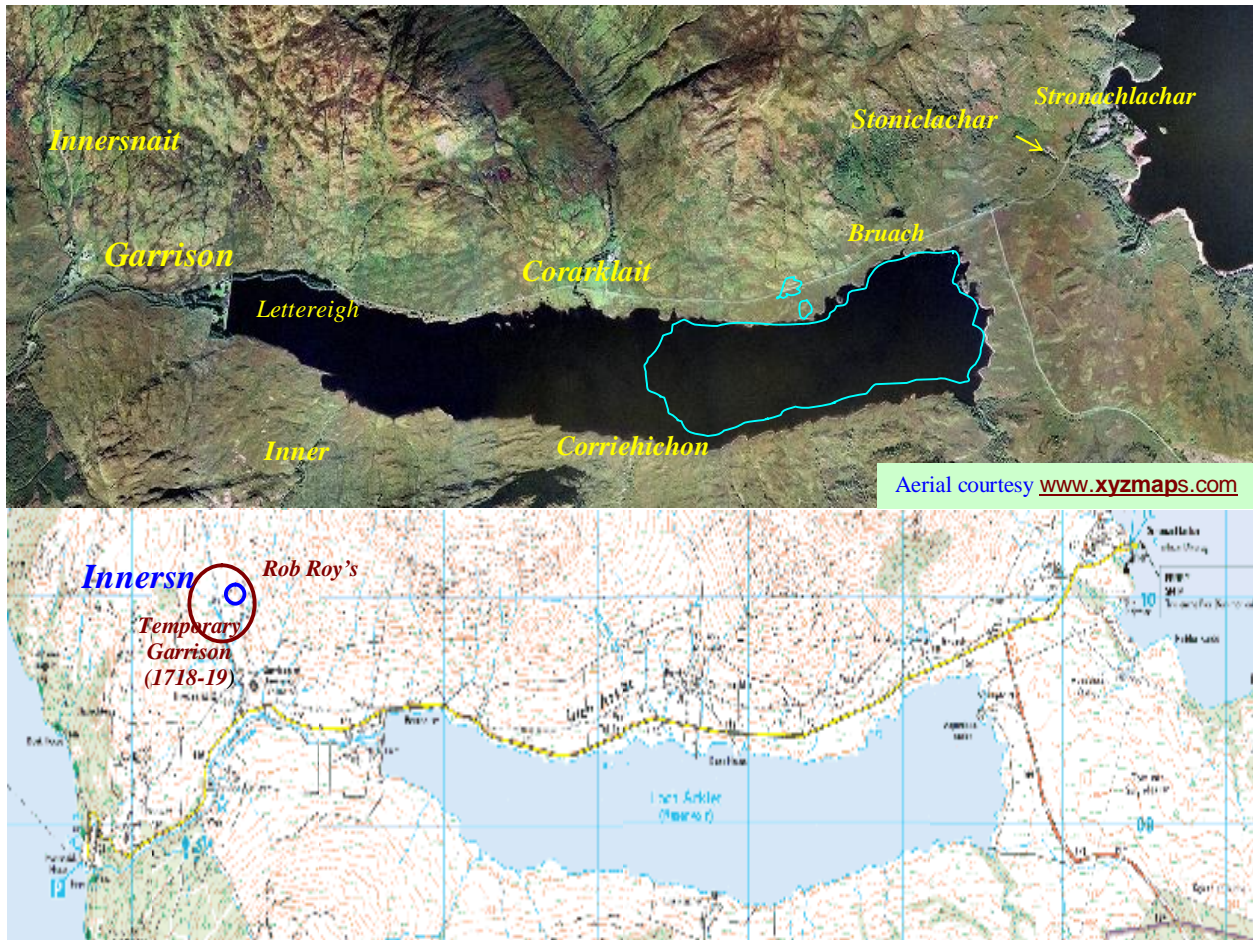




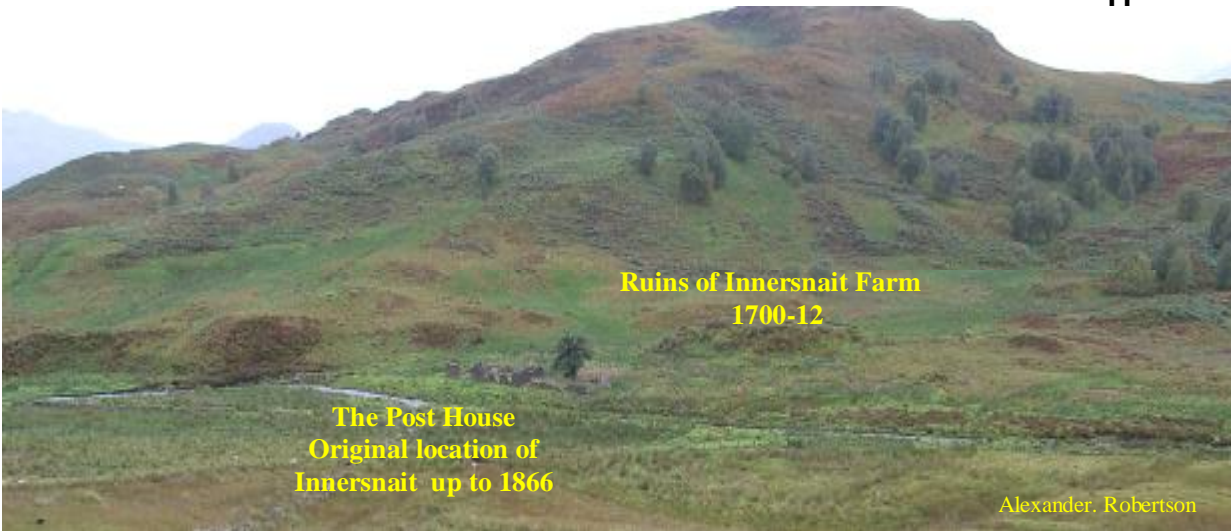
A section of John Thompson's 1820 map Stirlingshire and Dumbartonshire. Rob Roy's Prison at the bottom left is wholly fictitious, as is Rob Roy's Cave near the top. In fact, the origin of the mythical cave can be traced to a much earlier map maker (who put the location of the cave further south) as a ploy to promote tourism and his map sales just as Thompson's map was intended for hunting sports.

GLEN ARKLET





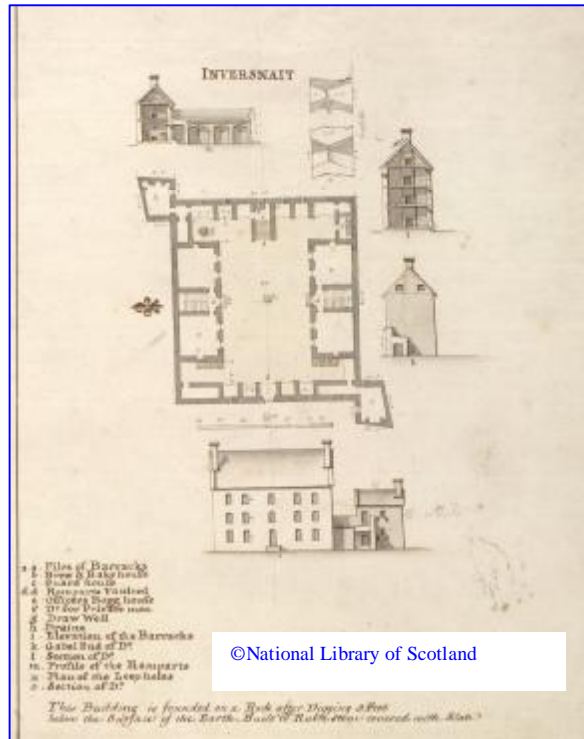
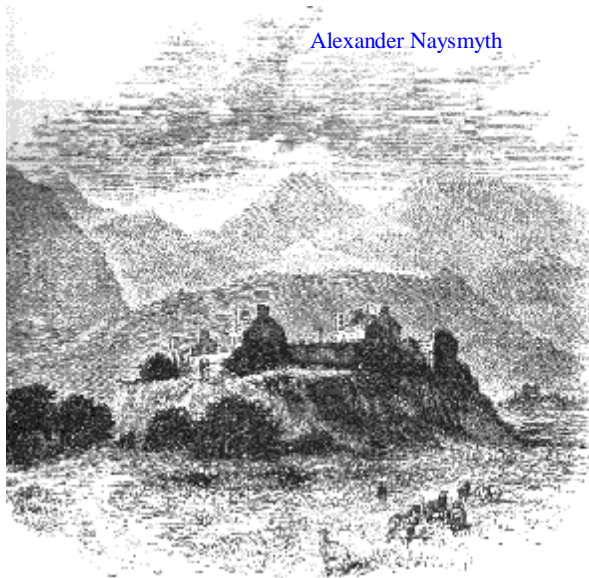
Aerial photo showing settlements of Glen Arklet. Note the historic location of **Innersnait** (*Inversnait*) and **Stoniclachar** (*Stronachlachar*) from 1718-1865. **Coracklait** (*Corriearklet*) was the glen's "ferm town" which had 22 buildings in 1718. **Bruach** was demolished in the early 1940's but its prominent group of 5 Scots pine and 1 Sitka spruce and a geodesic benchmark and the spring flush of daffodils mark the site. **Inner** is a ruin - although there was one building in 1865. **Innersnait Harbour** (formerly *Inversnait Mill* and presently *Inversnait Hotel*). **Lagbuidhe** (*Clacklain*). Lettereigh still exists. **Corrieichichon** (*Corrieachan*), where Mary McGregor lived with her uncle before she married Rob Roy, was flooded when the loch was enlarged in 1915. **Drummesorn** on the old military road was a substantial building in 1820s but doesn't exist. It said that Rob Roy burned the first Duke of Montrose's **Inversnait Lodge**. The present building was built by the 3rd Duke in 1790 and enlarged since (perhaps with stones from the derelict fort). Contrary to popular belief, the old military road above the present road was not one of General Wade's roads – in part it was probably an old drove that was upgraded over the past 300 years.



The original location of Inversnait was actually at the post. Early military plans by Lt. John Dumaesqu and Lt.. John Henry Bastide (see pp10) do not show buildings other those planned for the temporary barracks upstream (to the right) and the location for the fort and workers house, and a couple of the tenant farm in the photo below. However, there is a black dot above the Post House (the original location of Innersnait) where Rob Roy and his family may have lived. The location of Innersnat (inversnait) was maintated on maps as late as 1866.



The sheep fank is at the junction of the old Glen Arrklet to Glengyle drove road and a drove road to Loch Lomond which crossed the Snait and up over the ridge (top right) where the temporary barracks was located in 1719-20 while the fort was being built 550 yards further down stream at the present day Inversnait. In 2002, this area was purchased by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) to create the 816 ha Inversnait Reserve. Sheep have been excluded from the reserve, but wild goats, red deer still roam the reserve. The mountain in the distance is Ben Vorlich on the western side of Loch Lomond. Note the naturally regenerated birch with symmetrical crowns – indicating this is not a particularly windy site. Since the sheep grazing has been considerable reduced there has been a surge of naturally regenerated native woodland (particularly birch) in the district. That, plus many iron-age bloomeries, suggests an abundance of ancient woodland before it was transformed into pastures.



Images of Glen Arklet:: *top left* - a B&W photo of an 1828 painting; *top right* -one of several architectural military plans for the fort held in the National Library of Scotland; *middle left* – a part on the Dumbarton Castle similar to Inversnaid Fort; *bottom left* – the only surviving wall of Inversnaid fort c1950 used as a sheep pen (it has deteriorated much more since then); *bottom right*: the fort recycled into the Garisson Farm in the mid-19th century. .

ANCIENT BRUACH

Bruach (Gaelic for *farm-on-the-hill*), was an old shieling beside the Glen Arklet road about mid-way between Stronachlachar and Corriearklet on the north-east side of Loch Arklet. All that remains of the shieling is one of its corner stones and an Ordnance Survey geodesic benchmark No.FB555134 and a conspicuous group of 5 Scots pines and a Sitka spruce.

Military plans from 1717-1742 showed there was only one decent woodland in Arklet was the wood on the hillside above Bruach which apparently has gotten small over the centuries. The maps drawn prior to the construction of the fort (such as the one below) show an ancient drove road to Glengyle via Corriearklet and above Inversnaid traversing across the hillside, passing through the Bruach Woods to Corriearklet, above present-day Inversnaid and on to Glengyle. The ancient drove road is clearly visible in the photo below. As shown below, the military road passed along the bottom of the braes and joined the drove road near Stonichlachar (old Stronachlachar).

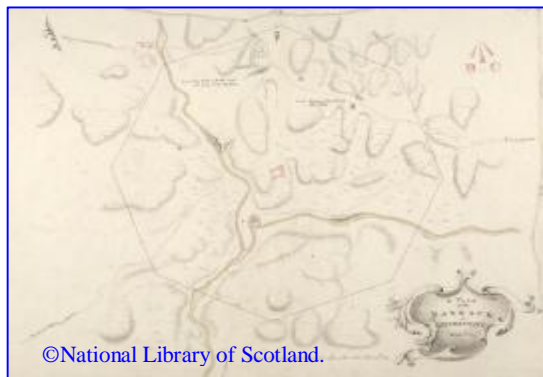


Top: Dumaresequ and Bastide's drawing (National Library of Scotland (MS:1648 Z03/15a) of the north side of Glen Arklet, showing the small woods above Bruach and a photo taken by Alexander Robertson in 2002 showing the woods appear to have become much smaller (Bruach is on the left just above the end of Loch Arklet).

The route of the ancient drove road prior to any military construction of roads and the fort is shown in Bastide and Dumaresq's drawing 1717. The drove road is still evident passing along the hillside and through the remnants of the Bruach woods below which are traces of the military and/or statute road which is evidently still being used by tractors and probably a landrover. Further west, the drove road is still visible as it traverses the braes above the Snaid to the site of a temporary military barracks at the junction of other drove roads to Glengyle, Polchrow and northwards up the Allt Rostan.



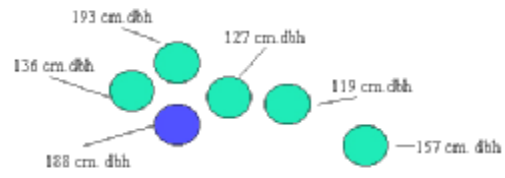
Alexander Robertson



Top photos are snapshot along the 1717 military road from Loch Katrine to Bruach; the military plan for the Inversnaid fort and temporary barracks. The four-in-hand stage coaches passing Bruach along the 'new' road c1930. The service was run by the Inversnaid Hotel to carry tourists from Stronachlachar pier on Loch Katrine to the Inversnaid Hotel beside Loch Lomond. It ceased operation in 1937 and is reputed to have been the last public stage coach service in Britain.



Alexander Robertson

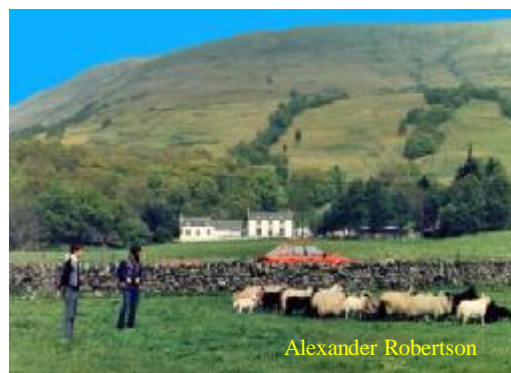


Alexander Robertson

Top left: a group of 5 Scots pine and 1 Sitka spruce around the perimeter of the garden at Bruach. *Top right:* Ordnance Survey geodesic benchmark No.FB555134 located on the east side of the foundation. *Middle:* Breast height diameter of the Bruach trees measured in 2003 by Þröstur Eysteinnson and Sherry Curl of the Icelandic Forest Service. The blue dot is a Sitka spruce and the others are Scots pine planted c 1941. *Bottom:* view across Loch Arklet showing part of the 1717 military road disrupted by a 'new' reservoir constructed in 1915 to supply water to Stronachlachar Hotel; a few meters beyond is the clump of pines and a spruce at Bruach; on the other side of Loch Arklet is Corriehiechan farm where Mary Macgregor of Comer lived with her uncle before she married Rob Roy MacGregor (alias Robert Campbell).

Weather buffs among you will have noticed that relatively benign winds from the west shaped the Bruach trees; while in the late fall or winter strong winds coming off Loch Katrine flattened the dead bracken and grass towards the west. The photo was taken in mid-June, 2005. So, judging from the snow on top of the hills and the still dormant vegetation, Spring obviously arrived much later than usual.

Like most of the highlands of Scotland, Glen Arklet was rendered virtually treeless primarily for summer pasture for sheep and cattle. In fact, the £1,000 loan Rob Roy (1671-1735) borrowed from the Duke of Montrose in 1712 was partly earmarked to buy cattle that would be raised in the area, and to **maintain the charcoal and tannin production based on oak copsewood** located along the shores of lochs Lomond and Katrine on his vast Craigroyston Estate. Unfortunately, as keen movie-buffs know, the bills-of-exchange and its courier, a MacDonald, disappeared. So began the legend of Rob Roy's epic struggle with Montrose at a time when there was considerable more people and many villages in and around Glen Arklet. Everywhere one can still see the ruins of many "ferm toons" (farm villages). Most of these succumbed to the highland clearances of 1745-1800 when people left area and the land was transformed into the sheep pastures we see today. The area is almost legendary for its high annual rainfall which sustains a superb water supply for the burgeoning City of Glasgow and the greater part of Strathclyde. Until recently the watershed was owned by Glasgow Corporation who maintained its own flocks of sheep and a high standard of mountain pasture as well considerable tree planting in the valleys. John Barrington, who lived at Glengyle and later Inversnaid wrote a best selling book 'Red Sky at Night' describing life, work and nature in this beautiful landscape.



Left: Stirling Robertson (left) poses with John Barrington author of the best selling book 'Red Sky at Night' and two of his famous dogs at Ledard Farm, Kinlochard. *Right:* Stirling and John sizing up some of John's ancient breeds of sheep. Photos were taken in 1985.

Bruach is less than a mile from the much romanticised forests on the braes around Loch Katrine - those legendary woodlands that inspired the likes of Sir Walter Scott, Jules Verne, William Wordsworth, Samuel Coleridge and Ruskin to produce some of their finest works. Scott's *Lady of the Lake* is said to have been the inspiration for the anthem of American presidents *Hail to the Chief* and Schubert's "*Ave Maria*."

Sir Walter Scott's genius lies as much in his masterful description of landscapes as it does his insight into humanity. It fair to say Scott and like-minded "pastoral" writers, immensely influenced Scottish culture. Scott's romanticized description of the woodlands in classics based on the district's historical landscape, notably *Rob Roy* and *Lady of the Lake*, provided the impetus for a bountiful tourist industry thus ensuring the preservation of the iconic birch-dominated woodlands on the banks of Loch Lomond, Loch Katrine and those spreading naturally in Glen Arklet.

Benvenue.

*"But nearer was the copsewood grey,
That wave and wept on Loch Achray,
And mingled with pine trees blue,
On the bold cliffs of Benvenue.*

Sir Walter Scott ' Lady of the Lake



Left-right: (Top) Sir Walter Scott, William Wordsworth, Tobias Smollet, Alfred Lord Tennyson, (middle): Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Hopkins, Alexander Naysmyth, (bottom) Queen Victoria, Gen. James Wolfe, Dr. Archibald Cameron, John Ruskin.

Romantics apart, the district has a long tradition of forestry practice to draw upon. In the 15th century there was an ironworks based on birch and oak charcoal which lasted at least until the 18th century.

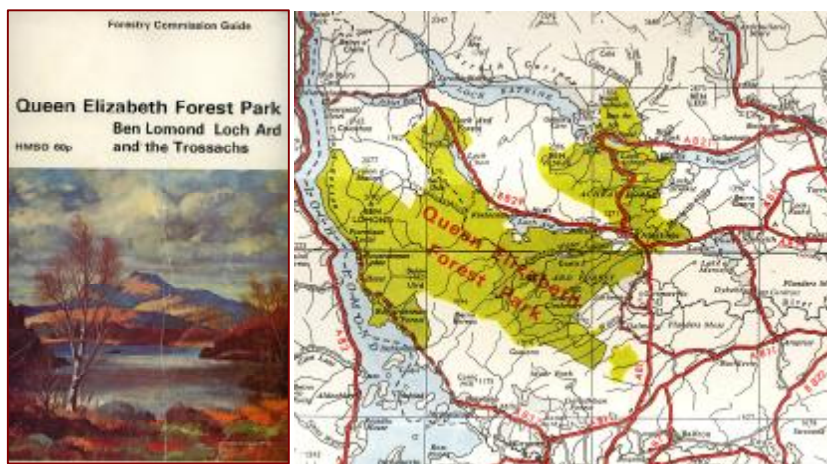
In fact the road south-eastward from Bruach passes through remnants of oak copsewood on the braes of Loch Chon, Loch Ard and on to Aberfoyle. The *Statistical Account of 1794* reports that a well planned forestry programme was practised along this route. The district is described in the *Accounts* as the land of lakes bordered by woodlands of oak, ash and birch extending half way up the mountain slopes and covering the summits of lower hills. The glens were divided into 24 parcels of equal area, each with an annual felling area and some intermediate thinning. There were strict regulations to ensure adequate restocking of standards (tall trees). The technical term for these woods is *coppice with standards*.

Sir Walter Scott captures the flavour of the copsewood in this verse from *Lady of the Lake*: -

*Aloft, the ash and warrior oak
Cast anchor in the rifted rock;
And, higher yet, the pine tree hung
His shatter'd trunk, and frequent flung,
Where seemed the cliffs to meet on high,
His boughs athwart the narrow sky.*

QUEEN ELIZABETH FOREST PARK

Besides the epics of the literati and glitterati, there were many other constant reminders of the rich natural and cultural heritage of our landscape. One of the best and most concise book emphasizing the natural and cultural heritage of the district is undoubtedly the booklet Forestry Commission's guide to the Queen Elizabeth Forest.



The Forestry Commission's guide to the QENP (published 1954) and a clip from the map provided with the guide. The booklet illustrates the rich and very diverse natural, historical and cultural heritage of this famous district. The darker shades show that in 1954 the extent of forests occupied less than half the area within the QEFP.

The National Forest Policy was formulated during an awful century of unemployment and world wars coupled with migration from the countryside to the industrial heartlands or overseas.

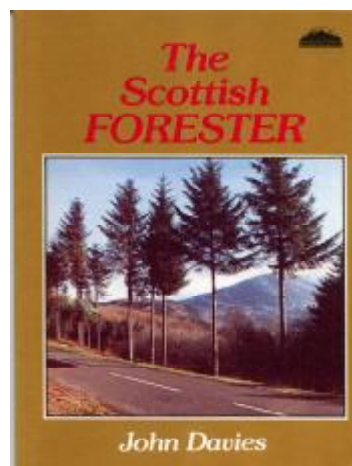
From the Forestry Commission's inception in 1919 the tough, single-minded Australian and Rhodes Scholar Sir Roy Robinson created and ran the Forestry Commission with a strict, top-down command structure until his death in 1952. For his tireless dedication he was knighted in 1931 and raised to the peerage in 1947 as 1st Baron of Keilder.

Robinson set the tone for the style of commercial forestry in Scotland throughout the 20th century which, due in part to Lord Lovat's early influence on him, was modelled on the golden years of plantation forestry between 1750-1850 carried out by the planter Dukes who planted 200,00 ha – most of it cut down during WWI & WWII. Incidentally Lord Lovat was a forester in his own right with large woodlands on his estate and he too was a tireless campaigner for a National Forest Policy. Another was Sir John Stirling-Maxwell who set up the Forest Park Scheme starting with Argyll Forest Park in 1935

When the Queen Elizabeth Forest Park (QEFP) was created in 1953, it had about 11,000 ha, less than half of which was forested. Later, when Strathyre Forest was added, the QEFP increased to its current size of 17,000 ha. As to the circumstances on how the Forestry Commission acquired the land of the authors of the chapter on forestry in the QEFP Guide, J. E. James and Roger Hurst (both Forestry Commission staff) wrote

“At this time agriculture of the locality was suffering depression, aggravated by virtual collapse of stock-rearing due to tick- and fluke-borne diseases ...”

Most of the great blankets of monoculture spruce were planted between 1950-1960. Due to the mild climate with an abundance of rain, many of these plantations are among the



John Davies was Conservator for South Scotland and gives an excellent account of the history and development of Scottish Forestry.

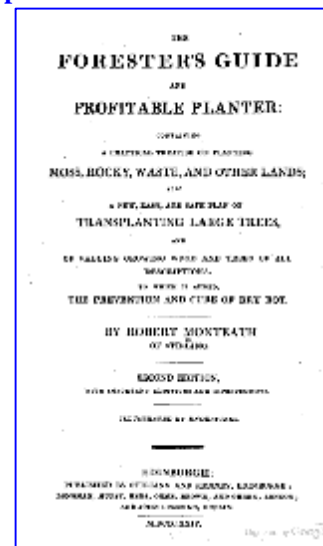
fastest growing forests in the world. Some quarters consider the monocultures to be the work of mindless robots with limited talents. Quite the contrary! After all, the Scottish landscapes are renowned for their beauty and their glorious history and culture which was not lost on us forestry workers; in fact, added a little bit of spice to the lives of those of lucky enough to live and work in such surroundings. Had not we the advantage of such magnificence we would have led a life of drudgery to say the least. Consequently, it is no accident that many of the plantations have a natural, pristine beauty that scarcely any visitor realizes they were actually hand-crafted and maintained by generations of forestry workers over many decades. The beautiful oak woods between Loch Chon and Aberfoyle as examples of planned forestry dating back to 1794 come to mind; as does the walk around Lochan Spling. So for me at least, as a former forestry worker, Scottish forestry is still a very important part of my legacy and heritage and as much a cultural experience as it was necessarily utilitarian for sake of keeping body and soul together.

In the aftermath of WWII, when all hands were at the grindstone, so to speak, we never lost sight of the importance of highland forests as a strategic natural resource. There could easily have been another world war and an ensuing blockade so far as we knew. We knew well too that, sad as it was, the home-grown timber cut for the war effort came from beautiful forests in the Scottish Highland that the 'Planter Dukes' had planted between 1750-1850, while English and Welsh forests, consisting mostly of inferior timber species, remained virtually untouched. So, in the 1950-60's, we all shared a sense of urgency in replanting new forests on such a grand scale that was never matched before or since in the history British forestry. The logistics and infrastructure, research and development was mind-boggling.

It is not an easy task to ensure that a plantation with the right kind species and provenance will prosper on the comparatively harsh environment of a barren well enough to fulfil its economic and social purpose. There are only two ways to go about it. The first and most popular strategy is to establish a big plantation **and hope for the best**. The second strategy, requiring extraordinary patience, is to study the plantation environment and genetic resources for a lifetime, then establish a plantation **and hope for the best**. I have belonged to both camps.

In my experience, the first strategy of simply having a go, relying mostly on instinct, has turned out extremely well for the most part. Indeed, it is gratifying to witness the end results of my comparatively small contribution to a thriving tourist and commercial industry that was built up from the proceeds of forest plantations that substituted for the poor gleanings of barren mountains slopes.

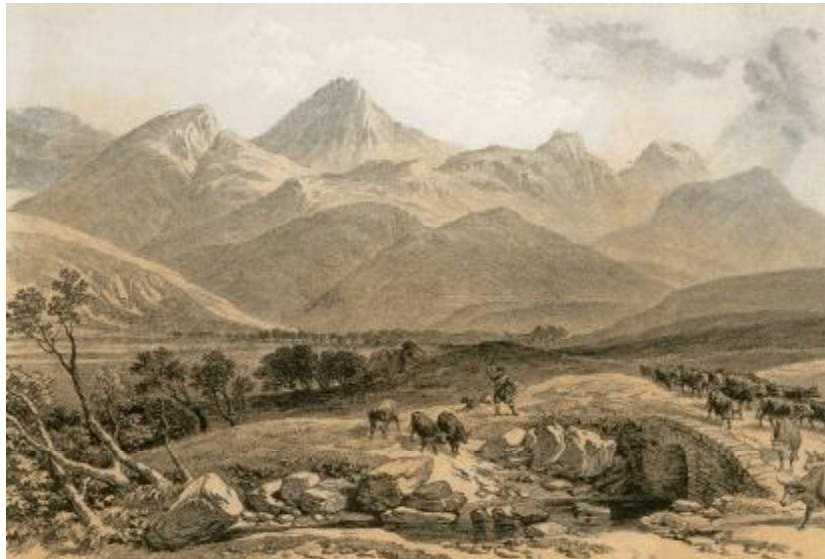
In 1824 when afforestation by the planter Dukes had peaked, Robert Monteath of Stirling, published "**Forester's Guide and Profitable Planter**". Of course, there have been books in many languages on planting forests before and since Robert Monteath's time. But few that aim squarely at the problem of planting on "moss, waste and other lands"



"The next kind of uncultivated land or lands, not fit for any kind of culture, which we shall consider, and endeavour to plant, is that of rock soils, particularly whin rock. Of these there are many thousands of acres in Scotland which, like moss, does not bring in one sixpence of annual rent to proprietors: which would also be planted with wood, and will, in many places, carry fir, oak, and other trees, to maturity; and in every place, excepting where there is a great proportion of bare rock, coppice oak can be grown....."

It's appears Monteath is giving instructions for planting up the land God gave to Cain.

W.L. Leitch's lithograph of features barren mountain around Benmore, and a Strathfillan sparsely adorned with clumps of wind-swept birch as the only upright vegetation. There must have been times when the highland drover tending his cattle (centre). From the same vantage point today there are vestiges of the 19th century scenery. Some of it is deliberate to retain the romantic beauty of the strath. But the lower slopes carry spruce forests that need their sharp edges roughened, so as not to be such a blight from a tourist's point-of-view.



Flanders moss as seen from Arnprior near the Roman Antonine Wall. The shelterbelts around the productive fields date from early 19th century when Robert Monteath was had his forestry practice and when his friend Sir Walter Scott passed by on his way to the Trossachs. Perhaps, Monteath planted some of these shelter belts. The advanced highly-mechanized agriculture is in stark contrast to an early time when the 'Moss Lairds' - poverty-stricken dispossessed Highlanders mostly from the Balquhider area toiled to make a life on the vast peat lands.

Monteath wrote:

“One observation founded upon actual experience is undoubtedly worth five hundred plausible theoretical conjectures, and will ever be so estimated by the ingenuous inquiring after truth”

On the importance of keeping an open mind to a myriad of possibilities for plantation forestry design and strategies, Monteath echos my own sentiments:

“Attached to no theory, and having no favourite system to support, I invariably follow truth founded on experience, in however plain a dress my want of appropriate language obliges me to state.”

Nowadays, planting strategy is based largely matching tree selection to specific soil sites (indicated by vegetation, and according to topography not so different from what Monteath advocated. In fact, up until the 1970's at least, the layout of plantations was very similar to the planned forestry practice described in the *Statistical Accounts of 1794*; i.e., land is parcelled into geometric compartments separated by unplanted "rides". But in the 1980's the style of plantation design and social priorities change. So that, with the advantage of ecologists and landscape architects the plans became much more aesthetic. For example, subtle changes in soil type are recognized and mapped by the pattern of flora down to 1/4 acre. This allowed the forester to estimate the number of seedlings of a particular tree species and even clones for each compartment. In addition, There was provision made for special edge-planting; e.g., wind-firm trees on the windward, amenity planting along roads, unplanted corridors for wildlife and sheep grazing (through the Duke's Pass for example) and along banks of rivers. In the primary stage of plantations, one species would dominate at least until selective thinning with smaller areas reserved for other 'amenity' species.

In my youth, machinery had not yet been developed for site preparation. So most of the forestry work from draining to logging in the QEFP prior to 1960 or so was done by hand. For example, in late November work tended to concentrate on brashing, thinning, felling, extracting established young forest; and fertilizing, installing deer/rabbit fences around new plantations and in between helping the road squad and the gamekeeper. On wet days crafting birch fire beaters (brooms by any other name) and sundry work in a big open work shed.

Being a very wet part of the highlands the corries and hanging valleys were fens and bogs too wet for trees to grow. So draining was necessary. Actually most of what we drained had already old drains dug by the hill farmer which is why they had mostly pasture vegetation as opposed to wild bog and fen vegetation.

The first order of business was installing 8 ft fences designed to keep out rabbits and deer followed by draining with the rutter, houk (a hill drag with three prongs at right angles to the shaft) and a square drain shovel. The drains were laid out in a herring-bone pattern; i.e, with one main (leader) drain and alternating angled secondary drains on both sides of the leader. The first cut with the rutter was up one side and the next a bout 18 in from the first down the other side. A rutter was used to cross cut between the lines to make turves that were hauled (heaved) out with houk and thrown between drains at precise spacing of 5ft into which a tree seedling would be planted. Good hauling is done with the same graceful motion like throwing the ball-and-chain at a highland games, i.e., by sticking the houk into the turf then lifting and swinging it to make it fly off the houk to land in a predetermined spot; spacing the turves at 1.75 m apart. The mucky part of the job is tidying up and smoothing the drain with the shovel. From a distance, the orderly arrangement of black turves contrasted with the light coloured vegetation that it looked like a 18th century battle formation.

Many of hillsides and well-drained lowlands were in sort of rain-shadow and hence generally drier. So there was no need for the big rutter spade. But they often had old, thick heather that was difficult to walk through and very tough to plant in.



Left: rutter spade, hauk (hill drain drag) and square drain shovel for draining wet mountain slopes; *centre:* 50 yrs later our drains are still working under the canopy of a planation; *right:* the beautiful and sometimes abominable heather when it comes to planting in it.

At that time only bare-root seedlings were planted with various versions Schlich planting spade. If draining was not necessary, planting was done from October to March. On level ground, and on drained sites with turfs, planting was kindly enough. But on steep hillsides it was tough going because it involved ‘screefing’ (cutting and scraping away the tough mats of heather and bracken) on the rocky braes of steep mountains – most of the time bothered by rain and sleet followed by midges, mosquitoes and clegs when spring arrived. And while our apprentices’ wages were small at £1.2s 6d (\$5.00) a week, nevertheless, our enthusiasm was boundless - bolstered by the wise council of that fictional character in Sir Walter Scott’s novel *Guy Mannering*. the Laird o’ Drumbiedykes;-

“Ye may aye be plantin’ a tree. Jock. It’ll be growin’ when ye’re sleepin’”

And grow our plantations did as you can see by the wee sample of logs from one of our 47 year old plantations

Monteath’s treatise takes us beyond merely planting. For example he gave site indices on what and where species should be planted on any given site and what species fare well in mixed planting and those that do not. For example on the larch – which was relatively new to Scottish forestry at the time, he gives this advice.

“.....If care is taken to thin out the larch so as not to drop upon a plant, still I will affirm, that there is not more speedy and sure method of rearing hardwood plantations than by planting larch firs for a few years before putting in the hardwood plants. This I have practised, and recommended to all my employees for these number years past, and have had the satisfaction of seeing the most unexpected and flattering result from it, and could give many instances of their most promising success.”

In Monteath’s time, larch was an excellent substitute for oak in repairing Royal Navy ships during the early settlement of the ‘new world’ especially Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. Larch still use in boatbuilding; for example in the famous schooner **Blue Nose** and its replica built in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia. Scottish foresters as far back as the days of “Planter John” (4th Duke of Atholl) have long known that the real value of larch is as a pioneer soil improver and nurse tree.



Einar Gunnarsson of the Ielandic Forestry Association poses with a fine example of a 300 yr-old Russian ‘boat’ larch in Karelia, Russia planted on the instructions of Peter The Great – an accomplished, well-trained boat builder – for his Navy.



A magnificent 300 yr-old larch plantation in Karelia, Russia. The wood was intended for the construction of ships for Russian Navy. Some, like the slightly bent tree, were deliberately bent on the instruction from the naval architects. Scottish foresters, through commercial links around the Baltic, such as the 4th Duke of Atholl, who published an article on the merits of larch and built a ship made of larch, were well aware of this plantation. In eastern Canada larch is still used in small-boat building.

The photo below demonstrates that planting larch as a soil improver was a common practice in the highlands. The beautiful 30 m tall plantation above the village of Aberfoyle in the QEFP with its large portion of larch has since been thinned and under-planted, i.e., it is now a shelterwood. However, it is such great attraction for tourism and recreation and for planners that it has become almost sacrosanct even for the wind to blow down a single tree larch.



Achray forest above the village of Aberfoyle is one of the most photogenic forests in Scotland mainly because it high proportion of some of the finest stands of larch in Scotland. The forest is often touted as the ideal design for multiple use forestry. I remember the forest as one of the best places to encounter the rare Scottish wild cat among other wildlife. To the left of the rainbow is a vestige of one of the the old oak copsewoods planted in the area in 1794.



An interesting use of larch is as a firebreak. In spring, when grass and bracken is dry, it is prone to fire spreading in from the deliberate burning heather to maintain well-stocked grouse moors. There was also a risk of fire along roadsides from cigarette butts thrown onto the kerbside by a careless motorists and walkers. Because larch is deciduous, and the ground sheltered and warmer, grass under the canopy tends to stay green most of the winter; or at least green up much earlier in spring than outside the plantation. So the green grass under larch is a fire retardant which is why it the larch was planted around the perimeter to protect more valuable timber species, such as Douglas fir inside the square. It looks a trifle out-of place, but it works. As an additional protection, all vegetation was grubbed to leave a 2 m wide strip of bare soil.

An example of how quickly a forest fire can get started, reminds me when an elderly forestry worker and I were on weekend fire patrol on the Duchray road beat - between Duchray Castle and Kirkton. With our yellow arm bands with 'Fire Patrol' on it and armed with a birch broom fire beater we casually walked up and down the beat. While adjacent to Lochan Spling, a dozen or so cyclists came along and asked if they could stop and have a wee drum-up (boil-up). Naturally we gave them permission and they settled down among spruces on the south west side of the loch. A few minutes later smoke came billowing up through the forest. By the time we arrived at scene a fine blaze was underway; but not so bad that we got the better of it within a quarter of an hour. It started when one cyclist, in his haste, accidentally tipped over a small primus stove. Mercifully, for the preservation of our jobs (and the overtime), the trees were no worse for wear. **SO BE CAREFUL IN THE WOODS!**



A more aesthetic fire barrier is to retain or plant broadleaf woods with a ground flora of early flowering herbs that greens up early in springs, and mow the grass early in the fall so there will be no dry fuel for the fire to catch hold somewhat like the beautiful oak and birch woods on the Loch Ard road and around the David Marshal Lodge on the Duke's Pass above Aberfoyle.



Much of Duchray was nectled pastures with tall bracken such in the photo taken near Balliech. So, to allow newly planted seedlings to get off to a good start, most the 200 or so forestry workers in the QEFP cut bracken on piecework throughout the summer. The photo on right shows it was worth the expense.



In the 1950's there was not a lot of heavy machinery used in forestry. So workers by nature were generalists (multi-taskers in modern sense). To describe their tasks is worthy of a separate article. In late October we'd cut down ancient oaks standards about 1.5 m in diameter with a beautiful Swedish stainless steel salmon-belly cross-cut saws and axe. This was a bit of an art to do without spoiling the wood and course dropping it where it did no to the young Douglas fir understory. It also required skill and patience to sharpen the saw. There many onerous tasks, like dipping fence posts in creosote, building roads and bridges by hand, lugging 1cwt sacks of 'basic slag' left over from the iron foundries to spread as fertilizer around the seedlings planted in the turves – amounts measured precisely as $\frac{1}{2}$ of a can of spam (much to the delight of Monty Python comedies). In the older woods there was brashing (pruning), thinning, logging. In wet weather Birch fire beaters and peeling and pointing logs into fence posts in an open shed on wet days. In cold, frosty damp days of late December we youngsters were give a extendable aluminium pole and sent with a gamekeeper to the east Stirlingshire and as far away as Bush Estates near Edinburgh. Our job was to poke grey squirrels (considered vermin) out of their nest high in the oak woods so the gamekeeper could shoot them for 2s 6d a tail (which he didn't share the bounty with us). Climbing the tall trees (without ropes) to collect cones and acorns was a lot of fun. Early spring we got sent to Tulliallan tree nursery near Alloa to weed miles of seedbeds. This was truly miserable work! However, since I couldn't distinguish emerging tree seedlings from weeds (wink, wink) I got sent to chores back on the midge- and cleg-infested Menteith Hills which was marginally more comfortable circumstances than nursery work. In later years there would be landscape surveying, mapping, mensuration and updating working plans. And many more tasks.

Our forestry work week was 5.5 days. Some of us (not good enough for the local Rob Roy Football team) would spend after-hours helping the farmers plough their fields, plant and tend the crops and, and later cut and bale the hay, stook the corn (oats) and wheat and thrash when ripe and lift the potatoes, cabbage, neeps, and once in a while milk the cows and dip the sheep. On the whole, I never enjoyed myself more than doing such honest work to support the realm.

The yield from plantation forestry established on the barrens mountain of Caledonia is amazing by any world standard. In fact, some of the plantations are among those with the highest productivity in the world. And when a couple of the neighbourhood's comparatively young, 150 year-old Douglas firs duke it out for the title of 'tallest tree in Britain' at a 65.53 m (215 feet), and a lot of pretenders not far behind, you know that the likes of Monteath and the planter Dukes were on the right track. Perhaps, by the time these tall trees have stopped growing they will have substantiated Archimedes assertion that the best spar trees in the *Greek World* could only be found in Caledonia.



Alexander Robertson

Top: Part of the forests in Duchray Waters, Loch Ard Forest in the QEFP and the snowcapped extinct volcano Ben Lomond in the distance. *Top:* the spruce and larch plantations are between 40-50 years old, with much older native broadleaf woods in the valley. *Middle left:* walking by one of our squads 50 yr old plantations. *Middle right:* a fine crop of logs from a 47 yr old stand (according to tree rings). *Bottom:* the cutover where the logs came from being planted the old-fashion; i.e., bare root stock planted way with a Schlich spade,