

**Cairngorms National Park**  
Historic Designed Landscapes Project  
Summary Report

May 2013

**Consultants**

Peter McGowan Associates  
Landscape Architects and Heritage Management Consultants  
and Christopher Dingwall, Garden Historian  
with Ironside Farrar Ltd



Cairngorms National Park Authority

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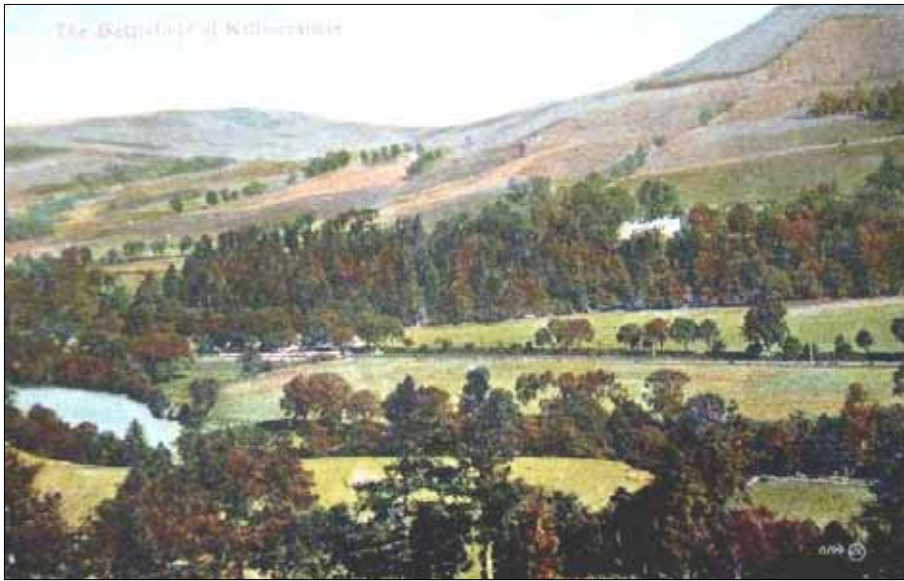
COVER *Balnaboth House (04) (Valentine) 1896, postcard*



*Abergeldie Castle*

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*Urrard (31) and The Battlefield of Killiecrankie*

*Castle Newe (G W Wilson),  
postcard pre 1904*



## 1 Physical context

### 1.1 Geology and landform

There can be few parts of Scotland where the distribution and character of designed landscapes is more strongly influenced by geology and landform than in the Cairngorms National Park. Physical constraints mean that landscape improvement on a large scale has always been confined to the straths and glens which cut through or surround the central core of uplands which comprise the Cairngorms, with part of the Monadhliath Mountains to the north and west, and of the Mounth to the south and east. This can be seen in the distribution of the thirty-three sites in the survey shown in Figure 1 (plan attached to report). Towards the north-west is the broad expanse of Strathspey, and towards the south-west the narrower valley of Glen Garry. To the east of the Cairngorm plateau are the near-parallel eastward leading straths of River Don and the River Dee, while in the south east are the narrow heads of Glen Prosen, Glen Clova and Glen Esk.

While the mountain plateaux are mostly the result of granitic intrusions which occurred during the Caledonian mountain building period, the surrounding landscape is mostly underlain by metamorphic rocks of the Dalradian Series, derived from a variety of sediments, which were uplifted and folded at the same time, around 500 million years ago, to create schist, phyllite, quartzite, limestone and slate. On the one hand these rock types are reflected in the variety of materials used in the buildings to be found throughout the area, and in the character of the dry-stone dykes which are a characteristic feature of the landscape of enclosure in so much of the Highlands. On the other hand, their outcrops can be seen to have some influence the patterns of soil and natural vegetation where the solid geology has not been completely obscured by later deposits.

Another major influence on the character of designed landscapes within the National Park is the natural topography, which owes much to the last phase of glaciation of the Scottish Highlands which ended less than 20,000 years ago, and to post-glacial events and processes. As well as shaping the valley sides and outcrops, these events have resulted in the deposition and subsequent reworking of unconsolidated deposits of sand and gravel to form the floodplains and terraces which mark today's river courses. It is no accident that most of the principal houses were built on these terraces or on rising ground, putting them well above the floodplains, as well as giving them good prospects over the surrounding country. The pattern of planting and enclosure, too, was often determined by breaks of slope, and areas of ground which proved unsuitable for agriculture. Walled gardens, an essential element of most country house landscapes, are often to be found on south or south-west facing slopes, so as to maximise solar gain. In some cases, as at Corriemulzie and Linn of Dee by Mar Lodge, or at Abergeldie and Balnaboth, picturesque natural cascades and



'Glen Nochtie' and site of Auchernach (33) from Gordon map c1650

wooded dens have been brought within the bounds of the designed landscape by the building of bridges, creation of paths, some of which lead to carefully chosen viewpoints.

## 1.2 Soil and climate

Soils within the National Park vary greatly, from thin acid podsols and peat on higher ground to richer loams and alluvial soils on the valley floors. It is no accident that country houses and their estates within the National Park are seen to be concentrated in areas where the soils are richer and more easily cultivated. Soils can also be seen to have a major influence on vegetation, whether on the character of natural woodland, or on the species used in forestry. Climate, too is a significant influence on species which can be grown, with a marked gradation from maritime towards continental influences across the study area from west to east. A combination of factors, including the northerly latitude, results in a comparatively short growing season, and a higher risk of frost, than in the neighbouring Lowlands – a feature remarked by the Rev. John Gordon, author of the Statistical Account for the Parish of Alvie (1795).



Corriemulzie (07) (Wilson)

## 1.3 Natural vegetation

There are some remnants of the natural vegetation to be found in the study area, where they have escaped the effects of clearance and enclosure, or where the remoteness of the location has discouraged exploitation of the woodland. Where such remnants survive, they are sometimes included within designed landscapes, as at Mar Lodge, Rothiemurchus and Glentruim. Typically, the natural woods are described in the Old Statistical Account as comprising Scots pine, birch, alder, hazel, willow and the occasional oak. Also mentioned on occasion are elm, gean, ash and rowan. Of particular note are early accounts of the woods of Abergeldie. According to Anderson (1967) records of woodland management, whether for their protection as hunting reserves, or for the exploitation of their timber, go back at least as far as the 15th century. As elsewhere in Scotland, the natural woodland cover was subject to clearance and exploitation from an early date, and to the suppression of regeneration by subsequent grazing and burning. Anderson also records some early occurrences of planting, for example by the Earl of Mar in the 1630s, presumably to augment the natural woodland. The Old and New Statistical Accounts describe the inclusion of broadleaved and non-native species in policy planting around houses, notably sycamore and beech.



*Loch Inch, Dunchaton and adjoining sites in Strathspey (09) from Roy's Military Survey c1750*



There is also plenty of evidence to suggest that spruce and larch were being included in new plantations before the end of the 18th century.

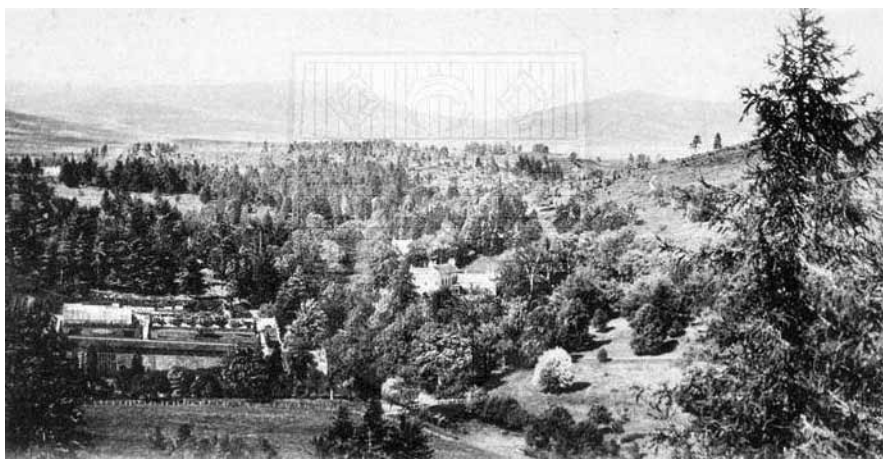
## 2 Settlement and landscape

### 2.1 Early settlement to the mid-18th century

As in other parts of Scotland, there has been widespread settlement of the area since prehistoric times, albeit confined to the straths and glens by the physical constraints described above. These straths and glens also served as traditional routeways through the mountainous country, linking settlements along the way. More so than in some other parts of Scotland landownership in the area of the Cairngorms National Park has long been dominated by particular clans or families. Thus Upper Strathspey was the traditional territory of the Macphersons and Mackintoshes, Lower Strathspey that of the Grants. In the south-west it



*Marr Lodge from Pennant  
1792*



*Balnaboth House (04)*  
*(Valentine) 1896, postcard*

was the Murrays of Atholl and the Robertsons who prevailed. To the east, in Strathdee and Strathdon, it was the Farquharsons, Gordons and Forbes who predominated, while to the south-east, in the Angus Glens it was the Ogilvies and Lindsays.

These clans owed allegiance to their chiefs and or lairds, whose principal houses generally occupied strategic locations and/or defensible sites, the names of which appear from an early date on maps such as those drawn by Timothy Pont in the 1590s, and by Robert Gordon and Joan Blaeu in the mid-17th century – maps which, though drawn at a small scale, can also throw some light on the nature and extent of woodland cover. Of particular note in this regard are sites such as Mar Lodge and Abergeldie in Strathdee, Blair Castle in Glen Garry and Invermark at the head of Glenesk. Although some of these ‘castles’ or tower houses have disappeared, and others have been modified or replaced by later buildings, they often served as the focal points and engines of change in the surrounding areas. The Jacobite sympathies of some clans in the 18th century saw their chiefs attainted and their lands affected by the conflicts of the time, with some even administered for a time by the Government through the Commissioners for the Annexed Estates – estates such as Cluny Castle in Strathspey, Dalmore / Mar Lodge and Invercauld on Deeside. Although evidence is hard to come by, it seems likely that, in spite of their comparative remoteness from the Lowlands, a few of the higher status houses in the Highland straths and glens possessed gardens and plantations from an early date, albeit on a comparatively small scale.

It is only with the Military Survey of the Highlands c1750, overseen by William Roy, that we begin to get a clearer picture of the progress and extent of ‘improvement’ in the Highlands by the mid-18th century. Among the places within the Cairngorms National Park which stand out at this time, as being foci of larger scale enclosure and plantation are Castle Grant in Strathspey with its large walled park and rectangular plantations, Invercauld on Deeside with its series of radiating vistas, and Blair Castle in Glen Garry with a combination of these features. Landscaping on a smaller scale, mostly in the form of rectangular walled and tree-lined enclosures, avenues and grazing parks is seen, for example, at Rothiemurchus in Strathspey, at Skellater, Edinglassie and Newe in Strathdon, at Mar Lodge and Abergeldie on Deeside, and at Lude in Glen Garry. Apart from the immediate environs of the laird’s houses, much of the surrounding landscape was still characterised at this time by scattered townships or ‘fermtouns’, set amidst a mixture of unenclosed rig cultivation, rough grazing and patches of woodland, whether natural or planted, while in the neighbouring lowlands enclosure and planting was well under way. At this time, there were few settlements of any size in the glens, with those that did exist generally occupying strategic locations on the road network, for example close to river crossings.



*Invereshie (13) (G W Wilson)  
postcard*



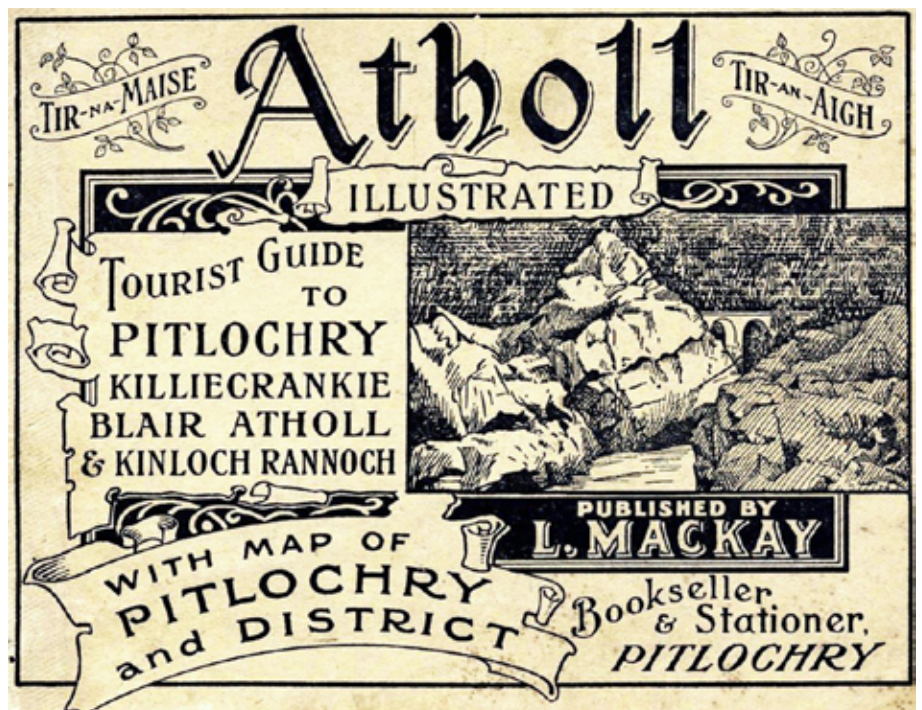
*Deeside Guide – Royal patronage, centred on Balmoral, did much to boost the popularity of Deeside, and of field sports in the second half of the 19th century*

## 2.2 Later settlement from the mid-18th century

The pacification of the Highlands and the suppression of the clan system in the mid-18th century were followed by a number of developments which were to have an influence the type and distribution of designed landscapes in the Central Highlands. The construction of new roads and bridges improved accessibility, enabling economic development and agricultural improvement, encouraging the establishment of sporting estates, and paving the way for tourism. In much of the area 'improvement' brought about the demise of subsistence agriculture, with the traditional landscape of small townships, rig cultivation and patches of woodland giving way to one of enclosed fields and formal plantations. Many of those who did not migrate to the Lowlands or further afield were resettled in the new towns established by estate owners – for example in Grantown on Spey, founded by in 1765 by Sir James Grant in Ballater, established in the c1780 at the instigation of Francis Farquharson of Monaltrie; in Kingussie, founded by the Duke of Gordon in the 1790s; or in Blair Atholl, founded by the Duke of Atholl in the 1820s. These developments were further boosted by the arrival of the railways – the line from Perth to Inverness, along Strathspey opening in 1863, and from Aberdeen to along Deeside to Ballater in 1866. On Deeside, the adoption of Balmoral in 1856 by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert as a summer residence drew additional attention to the area and its landscape.

Although every designed landscape has a unique story to tell, and it is possible to attempt some sort of classification. First, perhaps, though few in number, are the extensive landscapes associated with seats of the long-established

*L McKay's guide book 'Atholl Illustrated' c1925 edition described the area around Pitlochry as 'the Switzerland of Scotland'*



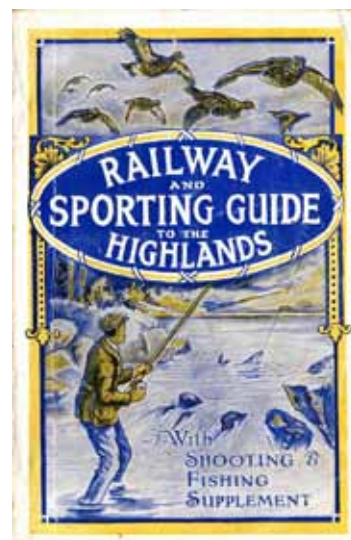




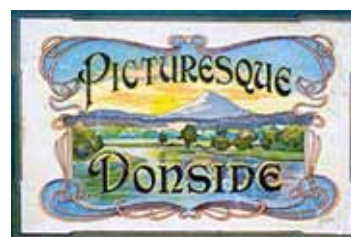
*The Square, Granttown-on-Spey – 1901 view by Dundee photographer James Valentine shows the importance of trees in the townscape (University of St Andrews)*

aristocracy and landed gentry, such as Blair Castle, Invercauld, and Castle Grant, the national importance of which are recognised by their inclusion in the *Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes in Scotland*. Second are the laird's houses, often with landscapes of small extent, but with comparatively long histories, such as Abergeldie, Skellater and Kinraig. Third are the landscapes of houses built for the *nouveaux riches*, some of them on the fruits of military service, as was the case with Auchernach, Castle Newe and Glenruim, with others founded on the fruits of industry and commerce, as was the case with Genmuick, Pitmain, and Craigendarroch. Noteworthy amongst these was the estate of Balavil, established by the poet and politician James Macpherson on his return from England, to take up the role of a Highland laird near his birthplace of Ruthven. Still other house served as homes for cadet branches of the dominant families, or as dower houses. What is noteworthy, perhaps, is how few of these houses served as principal or permanent residences for their owners, who used them as summer residences or advertised them as shooting lodges.

In seeking to distinguish the designed landscapes included in this survey from the wider and more functional landscape of agriculture and forestry, note has been taken of those landscape elements or features which point to the higher status or function of the house – for example, gate lodges, carriage drives, stable blocks, walled kitchen gardens, specimen trees, home farms, parkland planting, garden paths, summer-houses and the like. That said, there can be some difficulties in defining the boundaries of these landscapes from map evidence alone, where they are seen to merge into the wider landscape of agriculture and forestry. Also omitted from the survey are the numerous hunting lodges, many of which are to be found at remote locations within the mountainous country at the heart of the National Park. Although some of these are sheltered by trees, and may consequently have a dramatic visual impact in what is an otherwise treeless



*Railway Guide, 1938 – the railways in made the Highlands accessible to sportsmen and tourists*



*Donside Guide – Souvenir booklet of pictures emphasising the comparative fertility and picturesque character of Strathdon*



*Late 19th century view of Ballater by Aberdeen photographer G W Wilson; Craigendarroch is among the houses on west of the distant hill (University of Aberdeen)*

*Invermark Lodge (25) (G W Wilson)*



*'Sportsman's and Tourist's Guide' J W Lyall 1880 – demonstrates the important contribution made by field sports to the Highland economy*

landscape, they generally lack the complexity of the designed landscapes which are the subject of this study – sites such as Gaick Lodge in Glen Tromie (Grid Ref. NN 756 848), Derry Lodge in Glen Lui (Grid Ref. NO 039 942), Phoinies Lodge in Glen Fernisdale (Grid Ref. NN 704 940) or Forest Lodge in Glen Tilt (Grid Ref. NN 932 741). These sites, almost all most of which date from the Victorian period, form a distinct group within the park, and may merit a separate study in their own right.

Another largely Victorian phenomenon was the development of planned settlements such as Kingussie, Grantown on Spey and Ballater, mentioned earlier, in which their layout included designed landscaping elements such as The Square and Cemetery in Grantown on Spey, or the public park in Kingussie. Encouraged by the arrival of the railways in the 1860s were some fine suburban villas, the gardens of which can contain fine trees which contribute to the character of the townscape, whether individually or collectively. Tourism, too, had its own impact on the landscape, in the shape of hotels and guest houses which seek to outdo each other in the colourful layout of their gardens. Picturesque locations such as Corriemulzie and Paninich Wells contain paths and other features designed to add to the visitor's enjoyment of the site.

## 2.3 Recent changes

While some landscapes within the National Park can be seen to have retained their integrity and to have changed little through time, and are well maintained, others have witnessed changes in character brought about for a variety of reasons. Some have suffered the loss of the house which once served as their focal point, as is the case with Corriemulzie Cottage, Pitmain Lodge, Castle Newe and Auchernach House, the last of which sites is now little more than a forestry plantation. Others have seen a decline in their status, as seems to have been the case with lairds' houses such as Kincraig and Skellater. Still others have seen the impact of built development as is the case at Monaltrie and Craigendarroch, near Ballater, or of static caravan parks on the margins of the landscapes at Glentruim and Alvie. Quarrying can be seen to have had a significant impact on the landscape settings of Alvie and Lude. Road realignment, particularly of the A9, has had a significant impact on some sites, cutting through parkland and across drives, as at Balavil, where two gate lodges have become separated from the rest of the designed landscape by the new road. Further impacts can be anticipated with the dualling of the carriageway in years to come.

### 3 Conclusion

Although localised in their impact, the designed landscapes in the Cairngorms National Park can be seen to make a significant contribution to landscape character through their buildings, policy woodlands, parkland, surrounding plantations and fields. While some are comparatively isolated, and stand out in the landscape through their contrast with their mountainous setting, others benefit from their proximity to neighbouring landscapes, as Strathdon and around Kingussie, where they can be seen to have a group value. Although the landscapes can be categorised to some extent by their period, style or other characteristics, each one has a different story to tell, depending on the circumstances of its creation. This broad overview is not intended to be a comprehensive account, but should be seen as the start of a process of unravelling the complex history of designed landscapes in the National Park, and as a basis for more detailed and focused research and site assessment.

It should be noted that the site reports, and this initial overview, are the product of a desktop exercise, based almost entirely on map evidence, and publicly available information sources. It is likely that some of the comments and conclusions contained in the report might need to be modified in the light of more detailed research and field evidence.

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## Notes on research methodology and site descriptions

A variety of cartographic, documentary and pictorial sources has been used in the compilation of the individual site descriptions. Except where primary source material is readily available on-line – eg. the Ordnance Survey Object Name Books, historical photographs, or scanned images of documents – most of the information has necessarily been drawn from secondary sources.

Initial site identification has been based primarily on map evidence, using historical maps of various dates, and at a variety of scales, cross-referenced to the current Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 Explorer maps. In most cases the titles of the site entries use the spelling as marked on the current Ordnance Survey maps. Where a site was previously known by a different name – eg. Mar Lodge / Dalmore or Glenshee Lodge / Runavey – the previous name has been included in brackets. Site entries also include details of the county and parish in which the site is located, together with a six figure grid reference which marks the location of the principal house, whether still extant or not. In some cases, it has been possible to verify map evidence with the help of current aerial photographs available through the Google Maps or Bing Maps websites

Designations affecting each of the sites have been identified from the on-line databases maintained by Historic Scotland, Forestry Commission Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage, cross-checked with information from the RCAHMS Pastmap website. Listed Building designations include the current grade – ie. Category A, B or C – together with the date of the designation.

Site boundaries defined in the report are based on map evidence alone, and will need to be verified using field observation, especially where the designed landscape blends more or less imperceptibly into the surrounding landscape of forestry or fields, or where neighbouring sites are closely juxtaposed, as in Strathdon. Nor has it been possible to determine the current landownership from map evidence. Where a site has experienced changes in the shape or extent of the designed landscape, the boundary has generally been drawn to include the landscape at its maximum extent.

Information on building history and past ownership has mostly come from Historic Scotland's Listed Building descriptions, and from the various architectural guides cited in the bibliography – notably the Building of Scotland Series, covering all of the study area, and the RIAS Illustrated Architectural Guides for Aberdeenshire and Perthshire. Where available, this has been cross-checked with other sources. This information has been augmented by descriptions of the site to be found in a variety of printed sources, including travellers' accounts, tourist guides, sporting directories, gazetteers, and the Statistical Accounts of Scotland compiled in the 1790s, 1830s-1840s and during the 20th century. In the appendices the extracts from the Statistical Accounts are denoted OSA (Old Statistical Account), NSA (New Statistical Account) and TSA (Third Statistical Account). These and relevant quotations from other sources, included as an appendix to each site description, are identified by author, and arranged chronologically. Sources can be identified by referring to the bibliography.

Sites included in Historic Scotland's *Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes in Scotland* have not been included in this study. Detailed information on these sites is available on-line through Historic Scotland's gardens website, and/or through the Parks and Gardens UK website.

It should be assumed that all illustrations included in the report are subject to copyright, and ought not to be published or reproduced in any form without the necessary permission having been sought. Historical maps are mostly drawn from the National Library of Scotland's maps website. Where the copyright holder of other images is known, this is generally included in the illustration caption.

## Bibliography

List of the principal cartographic, documentary, pictorial and on-line sources consulted in the course of preparing the individual site reports. Printed sources are generally identified in the site descriptions by the name of the author or publisher, followed by the date of publication.

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Reference is made in many of the individual site descriptions to the *Ordnance Survey Object Name Books*. There were the manuscript notes made by the OS surveyors at the time of the First Edition Ordnance Survey. The original OS Name Books are held by the National Records of Scotland, and are available both on-line (from 2013) and on microfilm held at RCAHMS, as part of the National Monuments Record of Scotland.

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<http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/index/heritage/gardens.htm> (gardens)  
<http://maps.nls.uk> (maps)  
<http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/index/heritage/historicandlistedbuildings.htm> (buildings)  
<http://www.nas.gov.uk/onlineCatalogue> (archives)  
<http://www.nas.gov.uk/onlineRegister> (archives)  
<http://www.parksandgardens.org> (gardens)  
<http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/imu/imu.php?request=search> (photographs)  
<http://www.scotlandsplaces.gov.uk> (buildings and landscape)  
<http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk> (buildings)  
<http://www.scran.ac.uk> (buildings and landscape)  
<http://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/searchmap.jsp> (designations)  
<http://stat-acc-scot.edina.ac.uk/sas/sas.asp?action=public&passback> (history)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page) (history)

In some cases additional on-line searches have been made using the site name and/or family name. Where relevant, information derived from on-line sources is identified in the text of the descriptive entries.

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May 2013



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Historic Designed Landscapes Project  
Summary Report