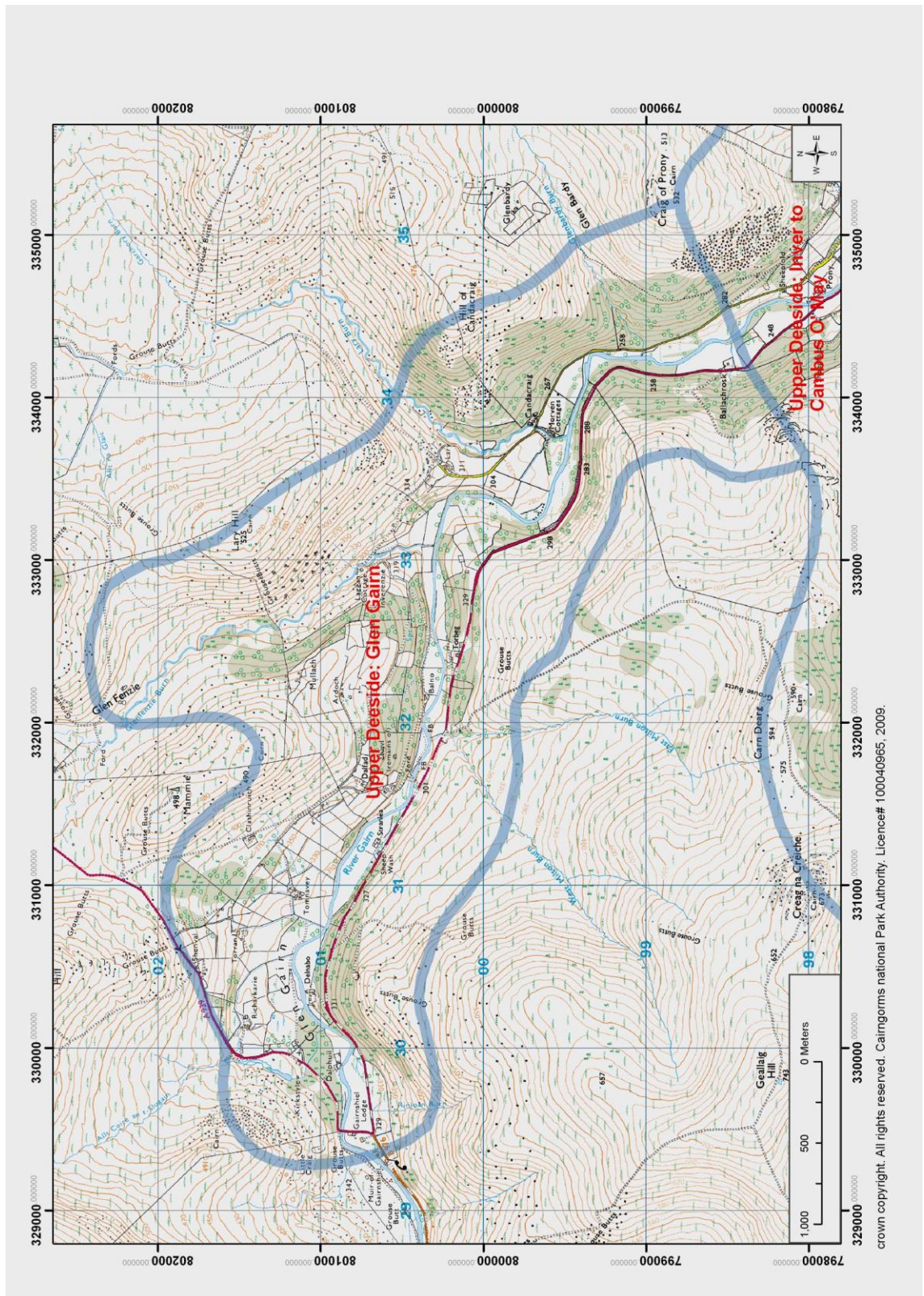


I.1 Upper Deeside: Glen Gairn



1.1.1 *Landscape character*

This narrow and deeply enclosed glen branching to the north of Deeside near Ballater, extends to Gairnshiel Lodge where the valley opens out with more gentle elevated side slopes

The influence of glacial erosion is less marked than in the main valley of Deeside, and the winding pre-glacial form of the glen is still apparent

Nevertheless, bands of scree on some of the slopes have been created by glacial erosion exposing bands of bedrock which have subsequently been subject to frost weathering, resulting in rockfalls

The River Gairn winds along a narrow valley floor with small arcs of floodplain alternating either side, constrained by protruding hill spurs

The steep hill slopes are largely covered with extensive birch woodland. Juniper forms clumps over open grassy slopes while drifts of native pine and birch cling to the scree slopes below Craig of Prony and the Hill of Candacraig.

Late 18th/19th century improved fields, their rectilinear shapes enclosed by both stone walls and more recent fences, extend across the floodplains along the length of the glen

These fields of improved pasture also extend up side slopes of rounded landform, particularly where side valleys meet the main glen

Long slopes of south facing, fenced, broadly rectilinear late 18th/19th century improved fields extend more widely at the top of the glen, where slopes become less steep and the valley broadens

Small farms are sited on slightly raised ground on the valley floor or in elevated locations at the junction with narrow side valleys

The influence of policy woodland and estate architecture, so characteristic of Deeside, increasingly diminishes up the glen as planting is less diverse and buildings are more plain in style

The A939 sits on a narrow terrace, elevated above the floodplain, becoming increasingly steep and windy mid-glen

An elevated, dead end minor road east of the river offers long views

1.1.2 *Landscape experience*

Glen Gairn has a very different character to Deeside because of its small scale and absence of designed landscape features

Glen Gairn forms a transition between Deeside and the sparsely populated north eastern uplands of the Park

1.1.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

The strong topographical containment of this landscape limits inter-visibility with adjacent character areas.

1.1.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

The narrowness and enclosure of Glen Gairn contrasts with broader straths and valleys elsewhere in the Park. Small bright green fields associated with the dispersed compact farms are frequently surrounded by semi-natural woodland, moorland and rougher pasture, accentuating the intimate scale and semi-upland character of this glen.



Mixed woodlands cover the steep hill slopes which contain the lower narrower reaches of this glen



Small farms are often located at the foot of the narrow side glens which cut into Glen Gairn above sloping pastures



Rounded landform where a side valley meets Glen Gairn, are the focus for bright green pasture and a farm steading



Walls delineate these rectangular fields



The broader upper valley, with improved fields and sometimes abandoned farm steadings on south facing slopes



Benches of scree created by frost shattering of exposed bedrock on the upper slopes at the southern end of the valley