

Cairngorms National Park Authority

**Cairngorms National Park**  
Historic Designed Landscapes Project

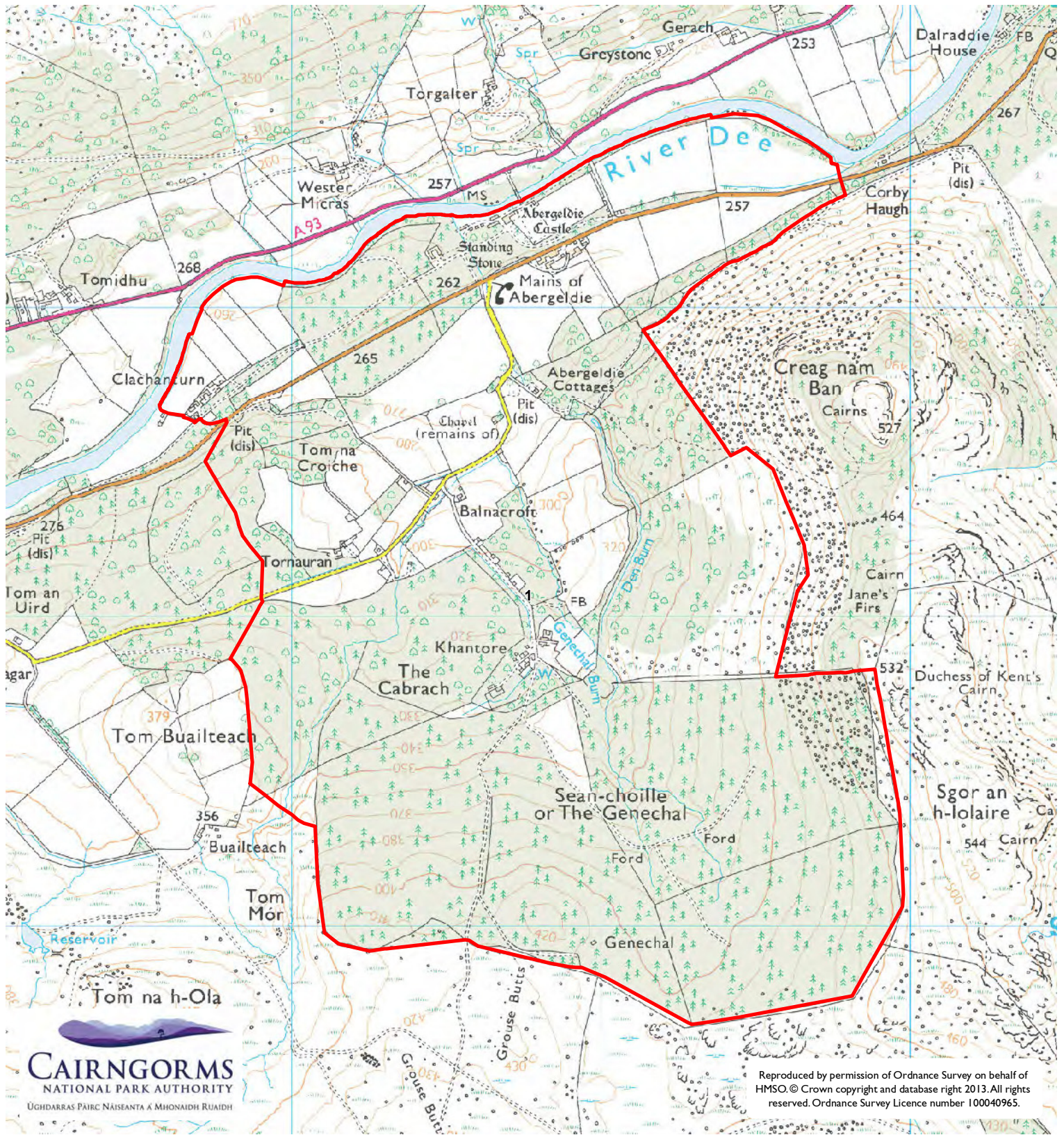
Site Research Report  
**01 Abergeldie Castle**

**Consultants**

Peter McGowan Associates  
Landscape Architects and Heritage Management Consultants  
86 Constitution Street Edinburgh EH6 6RP  
0131 261 6265 • pma@ednet.co.uk

and Christopher Dingwall

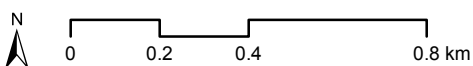
May 2013



- Legend**
- Cairngorms National Park Boundary
  - Designed landscape provisional boundary

Site 1

**Abergeldie Castle**



May 2013

## 01 Abergeldie Castle

County Aberdeenshire  
Parish Crathie & Braemar  
NGR NO 286 952; OS 1:25,000 Sheet 388

### DESIGNATIONS

Listing Abergeldie Castle, cottages, game larder & boundary walls: HB Number 3005 – Category A (1972)  
Abergeldie Bridge over River Dee: HB Number 2987 – Category B (1976)  
East Lodge including gate piers and walls: HB 50770 – Category B (2006)

Abergeldie Castle lies towards the eastern end of Deeside and Lochnagar National Scenic Area

Parts of woodland to west and south of the castle are designated as Ancient Woodland.

The SMR notes a standing stone on the lawn in front of castle

### LOCATION AND EXTENT

Abergeldie comprises a comparatively small core designed landscape on the south bank of the River Dee, lying between the B976 Crathie to Ballater Road and the river, with its associated estate landscape. There is a Home Farm of the same name, with substantial plantations to the east of the castle, and on the neighbouring hills to the south surrounding an area of farmland. There are additional features along the line of the Den Burn, to the south of the castle.

### LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT

#### Maps and documentary evidence



Blaeu 1654



Roy's Military Survey c1750

The castle is shown by Blaeu (1654) as a high status house, named 'Abirgeldie', with a well-wooded hill 'Crag-gewis' to the south-east. Roy (c.1750) marks the castle (unnamed) flanked by three rectangular tree-lined parks, one to the west and two to the east. To the south is a large rectangular stone-walled enclosure apparently under rough pasture, within which is the settlement of 'Drumnapark'. Outwith this enclosure, a little further to the south, is an area of unenclosed rig cultivation surrounding the settlement of 'Balecroft'. Roy marks a large block of woodland to the west of the castle, beside the River Dee, but gives no indication of woodland on the hilly ground to the south. Robertson (1822) and Thomson (1832) both show the castle, parks and plantation to the west of the castle, along with extensive (new ?) planting on the hill ground to the south. Both the First Edition OS (1866) and Second Edition OS (1900) show the castle with a walled garden to the south east, also well seen on 20th century aerial views (1948), along with parkland, farmland, policy woodland and hill planting – also 'Mains of Abergeldie'. The OS maps also show three artificial ponds on the line of the Den Burn, some distance to the south, with footpaths running up on either side of the burn, leading up to an 'ice house' and 'cave'. This den feature, which appears ornamental, is separate from the 'core' landscape surrounding the castle. A suspension footbridge dating from 1880s leads across the River Dee to a small area of planting on the north bank of the river. Historical descriptions talk of the castle being leased by Queen Victoria as a guest house in the second half of the 19th century, when it was linked to the neighbouring Balmoral estate by a riverside path.



Ordnance Survey 1:10,560  
2nd edition 1900

### Building history and ownership

Coventry (2006) describes a three-storey tower house dating back to the 16th century, to which a large extension was added in the 19th century, since demolished. Abergeldie has been the property of the Gordon family from the 1482. It was burnt in 1592, after which it featured in Jacobite military campaigns during the 17th century. Greatly extended in the early 19th century, it was leased by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert for forty years as a guest house for the neighbouring Balmoral estate. Following the demolition of the 19th century extensions, it continues to serve as a family home in the ownership of the Gordon family.



Abergeldie Castle Sheet  
Music Cover 1880 (SCRAN)

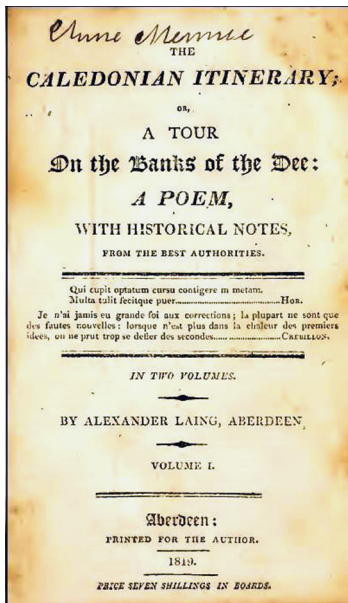
## APPENDIX

### Historical notes

Sibbald c1680 (in Mitchell 1907) stated that "A little below [Crathie] on the right is Abergeldie Castle, where this district is called by the name of Strathdee ... Here rises a high mountain, cut off as it were from the others, completely covered with wood on all sides, with its rocks and its summits to the very highest point occupied by a beautiful forest of tall evergreen firs of immense size, while the pleasing greenery of limes and birches clothes the slopes of the mountains and the plains nearest the river. The name of the height is Crag Gewis, 'crag' meaning a mountain and 'gewis' fir. Among the numerous forests with which the river is wooded, particularly in the upper parts, this mountain is very pleasant to see".

Laing 1819 extolled the beauties of Abergeldie in verse – See Abergeldie tow'ring to the sight, where winged cherubs sing soft tales of love, / and gentle breezes fan the verdant grove / whose boughs umbrageous shade the flow'ry plain, / soft lawns, rich meads, and mountains capp'd in blue ; / Betulean bowers, and pines alternate green, / majestic oaks and aller shrubs between. / When thro' the groves the gentle zephyrs play, / and balmy odour scents the robes of May, / all hail ye shades, hail variegated scene, / sweet blooming groves, majestic blue serene. / The Dee romantic winds along the shade, / and on the verge reclines

*Abergeldie Castle and  
standing stone pre-1900,  
G W Wilson (Aberdeen  
University)*



*A Laing, Caledonian Itinerary  
title page 1819*

the black hair'd maid, / where sylvan beauties in their splendour reign, / and Flora spreads her garments on the plain."

Anderson 1850 described "the birchen birks of Abergeldy [which] succeed down the river [below Balmoral], and a beautiful walk, a favourite one of Her Majesty leads through them on the south side [of the River Dee] to Abergeldy, where there is an extensive reach of level ground laid out in fine farms, and ornamented by the policies and magnificent birch woods of Abergeldy Castle – an imposing building on the south bank of the river. Considerable tracts of arable land stretch up along the course of the Geldy – another stream which helps to drain Lochnagar".

OS Name Book 1866 (Crathie & Braemar – Aberdeenshire : Book 19, p.131) stated "This castle is very ancient, once the residence of the Muat family until the beginning of the fifteenth century, when a feud arose between the Camerons of Brux and the Muats of Abergeldie ... The present building is situated on the south bank of the Dee, about six miles above Ballater, and consists of a square tower of ancient date and some recently erected buildings. The whole is in excellent condition."

Groome 1882 described "the [Abergeldie] estate, extending ten miles along Deeside, finely planted with old Scotch Firs, Larch, and the natural birch, mixed in the private grounds with spruce, ash larch and sycamore ... the birks are celebrated in a time-honoured melody."

J Coutts 1899 noted "Abergeldie Castle, a small but robust looking pile, with some addition (which) stands on the bank of the Dee fully two miles from Balmoral, with its back to the river, and its front to Craignaban and the south. The Geldie Burn enters the Dee a little to the west, while on the other side there is a trim garden, and in front a green, though a hollow in which it is said the Dee once flowed ... The pine-clad hill of Craignaban faces north-west so that its eastern part is much nearer the Dee than its western".

McConnochie 1900 talked of Abergeldie as "a good and picturesque example of the 16th century manor house in Aberdeenshire ... an uninscribed standing-stone, some six feet in height, fronts the castle ... the Dee at one time flowed on the south side of the Castle, the old channel extending from Drymill, below the suspension bridge near Easter Balmoral to Corby Hall ... Abergeldie has been leased in connection with Balmoral since Her Majesty came to reside on Deeside, its possession being essential to the amenities of the royal residence".