

Cairngorms National Park Authority

Cairngorms National Park
Historic Designed Landscapes Project

Site Research Report (preliminary)
06 Castle Newe

Consultants



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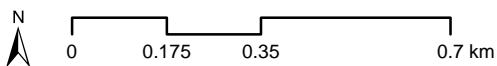


Legend

-  Cairngorms National Park Boundary
-  Designed landscape provisional boundary

Site 6

Castle Newe



May 2013

06 Castle Newe

County Aberdeenshire
Parish Strathdon
NGR NJ 377 122, 1:25,00 Map Sheet 288 (West)

DESIGNATIONS

Listing Bridge of Newe over River Don, HB Number 16195 – Category C (1971)
Coach House, HB Number 50639 – Category C (2006)
Newe Lodge, HB Number 50640 – Category C (2006)

Bellabeg, Broomhill, Altdachie Plantations & Quarry Wood designated as Ancient Woodland.

The great majority of the woodland is subject to a WGS Mark 3 Agreement, with some smaller blocks of woodland around the edges of the landscape subject to both WGS Mark 2 and SFGS agreements.

LOCATION AND EXTENT

The site of now demolished Castle Newe, now seemingly occupied by a modernised fragment of the old house complex, lies on the north bank of the River Don, approximately 3km to the east of the village of Strathdon, opposite the junction of the A944 and A97. The mansion house stood in a prominent position on a terrace overlooking the central part of Strathdon. Other estate buildings have survived, notably the court of offices at Newe Avenue, together with the West Lodge and the Bridge of Newe, the last of these built to allow the diversion of the public road away from the main house. To the north of the are extensive commercial forestry plantations on Hill of Greenstile and Corlich Hill, while to the south, across the River Don are further extensive plantations on Forbridge and Coulick Hills and other neighbouring hills, clearly seen in views across the valley, though it has not been possible to establish ownership.



Roy's Military Survey c1750

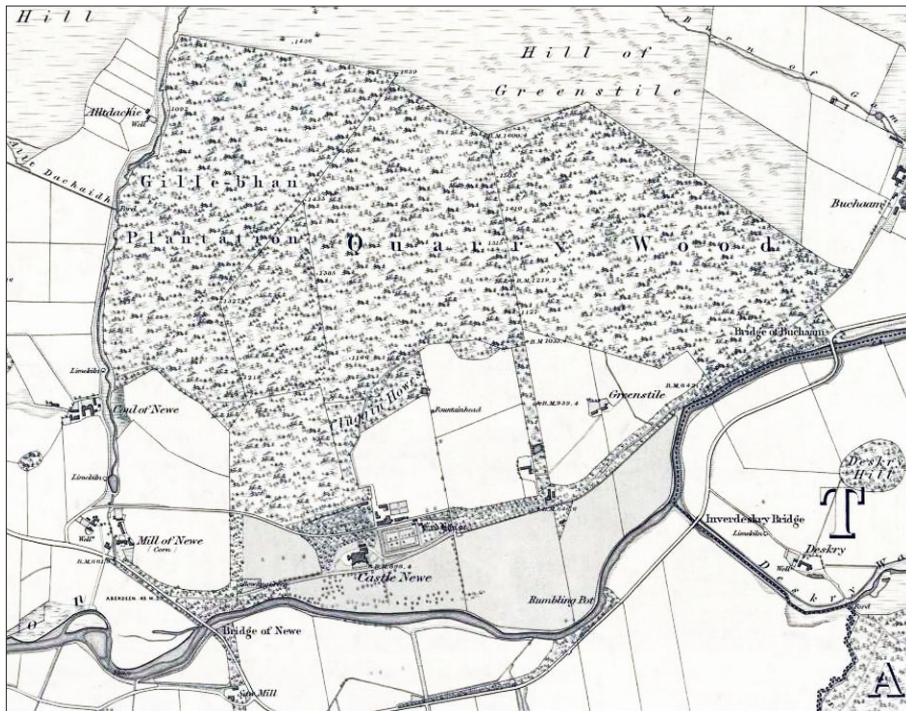
LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT

Map and documentary evidence

Gordon (c.1650) records the settlement of 'New' on the north bank of the River Don, as does Blaeu (1654), but with little additional information of value, from which to judge its scale and setting. Roy (c.1745) shows 'New' as a high status house within a series of small rectangular enclosures lined with trees. Immediately to the north-west is a rectangular walled plantation, while a short distance to the east is another rectangular stone-walled enclosure, divided into three by

View of Castle Newe and
walled garden across
Strathdon by G W Wilson,
pre-1904





Ordnance Survey 1:10,560
1st edition 1867

internal walls. The banks of the River Don are characterised by unenclosed rig cultivation, through which the public road is seen to run on the north bank of the river. To the east is seen a township settlement at 'Greenstie', and to the west a similar group of houses at 'M[ill] of Newe'. No other planting is evident at this date, with the southern slopes of Ben Newe shown as treeless. Robertson (1822) marked 'House of Newe' with a very modest line of trees or shelterbelt to the west, but still with no planting on the hills to the north or anywhere else nearby. By the date of the OS First Edition (1867) the hill to the north had been planted. The house is seen to stand amid fields, overlooking a small are of parkland which stretches onto the south bank of the river on the OS Second Edition (1900). Immediately to the east is a rectangular walled garden. Both OS maps show the public road diverted along the south bank of the River Don, which is crossed by Bridge of Newe, constructed in 1858 so as to take traffic further from the house. The OS Popular Edition (1923) shows only fragments of the original woodland on the slopes to the north of the house, since when the plantations have been replanted and extended further up to the summit of Ben Newe.

Building history and ownership

In an area dominated by the Forbes family, Castle Newe was one of several high status houses in the upper reaches of Strathdon, said by Coventry (2006) to have been built as a tower house of 1604, replacing an earlier building. It was a John Forbes who invested money earned in service in India in extensive agricultural and other 'improvements' in Strathdon, commented on by the Rev. Robert Meiklejohn in the NSA (1840). It was his successor Sir Charles Forbes who employed the Aberdeen architect Archibald Simpson to build a new mansion house c.1831. This survived until 1924 when the estate was broken up and sold off in separate lots. The mansion house was demolished in 1927, and the stone re-used elsewhere. The estate would appear to be now in fragmented ownership.



South front of Castle Newe by
G W Wilson pre-1904

APPENDIX

Historical notes

Rev. Robert Meiklejohn 1840 (NSA) described the extensive improvements carried out by Sir Charles Forbes in Strathdon “there [being] no feature in which the progress of improvement is more distinctly indicated within the last half century, than in the woods and plantations. The whole extent of ground covered with wood did not, before then, exceed 200 or 300 acres, whereas there are now nearly 3,000 acres of thriving plantations. Scotch fir and larch are the predominant description of the trees, and to these both soil and climate appear to be most congenial. Ash, plane and gean grow also freely, and in the more sheltered situations the other kinds of hardwood thrive. In the more recent plantations a much greater proportion of hardwood plants has been introduced ... there are large sized trees of plane, as and elm”.

Sir Bernard Burke 1855 described “the stately castellated house of Castle Newe ... appropriate to the situation ... being [built] in the simple and massive style of an old Scottish mansion, with many gable ends, slender towers with pointed roofs, and solid and substantial round towers at the corners. It is well adapted to the severe and grand surrounding scenery. To the north of the house rises the mountain Ben Newe, and to the south is a lawn extending to the noble River Don”.

OS Name Book 1867 (Strathdon, Aberdeenshire Book 81) described “Castle Newe, a very handsome mansion built of Kildrummy freestone, erected 1829-1830. It is pleasantly situated on a slight rising ground on the north bank of the Don. It is surrounded by ornamental ground and has a well-stocked garden. It is the property and residence of Sir Charles Forbes, baronet of Newe and Edinglassie”.

Francis Groome 1882 spoke of “a mansion on the left bank of the Don ... partly dating from 1604, it is chiefly a handsome castellated edifice of 1831, with a central tower 85 feet high; its owner Sir Charles John Forbes ... [who] succeeded in 1877.”
