

Cairngorms National Park Authority

Cairngorms National Park
Historic Designed Landscapes Project

Site Research Report
33 Auchernach

Consultants

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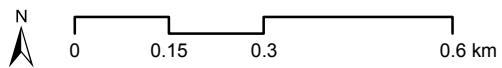


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- Legend**
- Cairngorms National Park Boundary
 - Designed landscape provisional boundary

Site 33

Auchenach



May 2013

33 Auchernach

County Aberdeenshire
Parish Strathdon
NGR NJ 330 159; OS 1:25,000 Sheet 405 (West) / 420 (West)

DESIGNATIONS

Listing Glen Nochty, Auchernach walled garden, HB Number 16199 – Category B (1971)
Auchernach dovecot, HB Number 16200 – Category B (1971)
Auchaernach Cottage including ancillary structure – Category C (1971)
Auchernach lodges – Category C (1984)

Part of the woodland as seen on 19th century OS maps is designated as Ancient Woodland.

All of the former designed landscape is in the ownership of the Forestry Commission.

Part of the woodland towards the east is the subject of both WGS Mark 1 and SFGS Agreements, while a very small part in the south-western corner is the subject of a WGS Mark 2 Agreement.

The southern boundary of the site touches on the Green Hill of Strathdon SSSI, noted for its base-rich flora.

The Auchernach walled garden has been included in the Register of Buildings at Risk

LOCATION AND EXTENT

Auchernach lies on the northern side of Glen Nochty, approximately 4km north of the village of Strathdon, from where access is by an unclassified road which runs up the east side of the Water of Nochty. The designed landscape, which has been almost entirely planted over by the Forestry Commission, occupies the southern part of the woods of Auchernach. Some elements of the designed landscape, including a gate lodge, walled garden, dovecot and alcovod well are still to be found within the site.



Gordon c1650



Roy's Military Survey c1750

LANDSCAPE HISTORY

Map and documentary evidence

Gordon (c1650) shows 'Glen Nochtie' as having been partly wooded, but without any named settlements. The settlement of 'Acharnoch' first appears on Roy (c1750), apparently as a township with a small area of associated rig cultivation, flanked to the west by the settlement of 'Craigengaron' and to the east by 'Torencroy'. There is no appearance of the name on Robertson (1822) or Thomson (1828), although the mansion of Auchernach is said to have been built c1810. The OS First Edition (1867) is the first map to show the mansion house and designed landscape. This comprised the house and offices, a short avenue to the east with gate lodge, and a rectangular walled garden, all grouped together, within surrounding fields which slope down southwards to the banks of the Nochtie Water. The whole is seen to be sheltered by a substantial plantation to the north and west. There is little change to be seen on the OS Second Edition (1899). The mansion house is said to have been demolished in 1945, since when the entire estate, including the fields, was planted over with a commercial conifer crop. Modern aerial photographs show the area to be under tree cover, save for the site of the house, offices and walled garden, where there has been some clearance.

Building history and ownership

Auchernach was part of the extensive lands owned by the locally-dominant Forbes family, prior to the building of Auchernach House in 1808 by Lt Gen Nathaniel Forbes on his return from military service in India, having inherited the property land at an earlier date from his father. It seems that there may have been an earlier house on the site, though little is known about this. Glenbuchat Heritage website suggests that the house was used only as a summer residence. That said, Nathaniel Forbes appears to have invested in agricultural and other improvements on the estate, and was presumably responsible for the formation



Auchernach House, demolished in 1945



View of Auchernach House and policies by G W Wilson c1890 (University of



Northern gate-lodge at Auchernach House



Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 1st edition 1867



Auchernach doocot

of the landscape seen on the OS First edition (1867). One of the more noteworthy features of the estate is the walled garden, said to have been built by Nathaniel Forbes in imitation of an Indian fort, with battlemented towers. By the early 20th century, the owner of Auchernach was Colonel G F Rose. The house is reported to have been demolished in 1945. It has not been possible to establish when the estate was acquired by the Forestry Commission, and/or when the land was planted over.

APPENDIX

Historical notes

Rev. Robert Meiklejohn 1840 (NSA) described the house as “for many years the best in the country”.

W Douglas Simpson in A.G. Hutchison (1930) commented that “it is with a feeling of pleased surprise that the visitor, on rounding the shoulder of the Green Hill, sees in front of him the fine demesne of Auchernach, with its spacious and well-timbered policies, and the ample walled garden stretching up the sunny slope behind ... Behind the house the ground rises steeply, and is occupied by the large and fine rectangular garden, covering an area of about an acre. It is enclosed by a massive rubble wall, 20 or 25 feet in external height, with round battlemented towers midway in each front, and a tall clock tower, likewise embattled, in the rear. The design is unusual and very striking. It is understood that General Forbes borrowed the idea from an Indian hill-fort ... Midway in its length, the garden is terraced, and in the centre is a fountain. There is also a sun-dial bearing the date 1826, and the initials NF and SF, for Nathaniel Forbes and his wife”.
