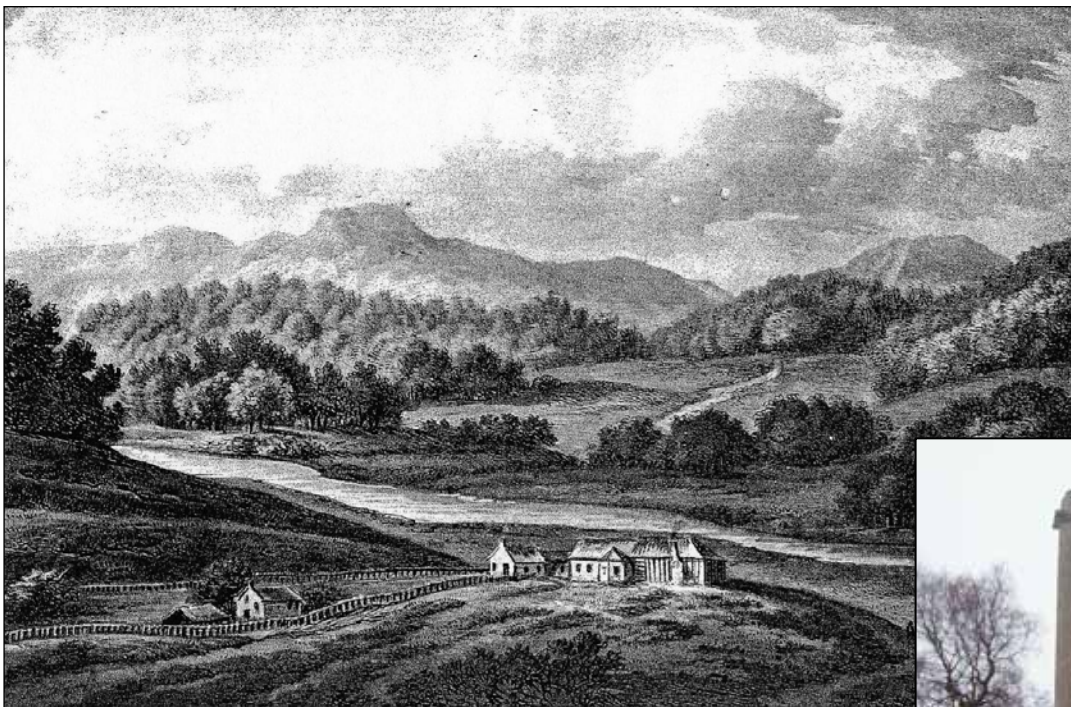




**A Project to Identify, Survey and Record the
Archaeological Remains of a farmstead at North
Kinrara and a possible fortification on Tor Alvie, both
near Aviemore, Inverness-shire**

June 2006 – Jan 2011



With the kind permission of Kinrara Estate

**Report of a Project to Identify, Survey and Record
Archaeological remains of a farmstead at North Kinrara,
and a possible fortification on Tor Alvie, near Aviemore,
Inverness-shire by
the North of Scotland Archaeological Society**

June 2006 – Jan 2011

Members of the team

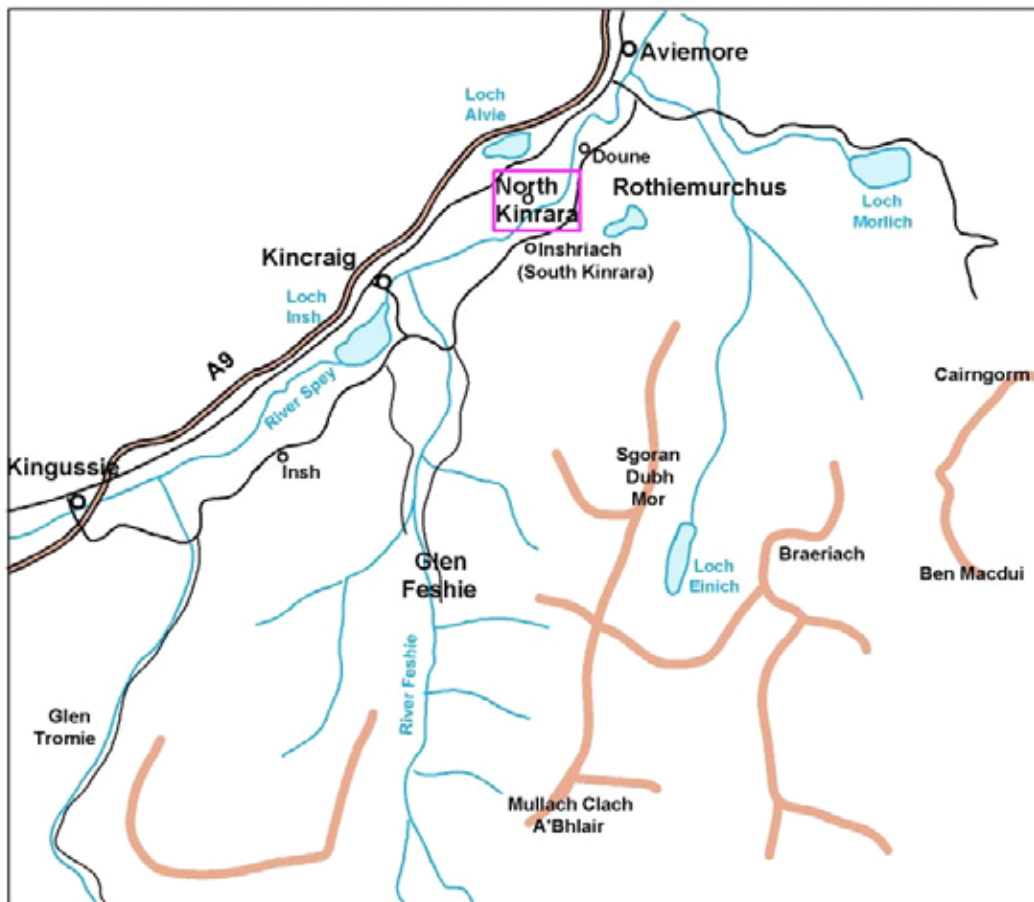
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This report was compiled and produced by Meryl Marshall for NOSAS

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1. Location of North Kinrara



Location of North Kinrara within Badenoch and Strathspey and its relationship to Glen Feshie

2. Introduction and Background

During the summers of 2004 to 2006 NOSAS members undertook a project of survey and excavation in Glen Feshie. The project also included historical research and the eventual outcome was the publication of a book, "Glen Feshie – The History and Archaeology of a Highland Glen". One of the fascinating aspects of Glen Feshie was its associations with the Duchess of Bedford, Sir Edwin Landseer and the shooting estate in the 1820s and 1830s. Georgina, Duchess of Bedford (1781-1853), was the youngest daughter of the 4th Duke and Duchess of Gordon. She had spent some of her younger life at Kinrara, part of the Gordon estates, a few miles to the north of Glen Feshie and it is clear that it played a major part in her girlhood and was to influence later activities in Glen Feshie. References to Kinrara, or North Kinrara as it was known then, were located during the historical research for Glen Feshie: one which particularly stood out was a graphic account of the old farmhouse at Kinrara and the activities which went on there in "Memoirs of a Highland Lady" by Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus (1797- 1885). In addition an account of a visit and an etching of the farmstead (front page) dated 1801 was located in Sir John Stoddarts book "Remarks on local scenery in Scotland during 1799 and 1800" Was it possible to identify the site of the old farmhouse? Was there evidence of the farmhouse on the ground today?

In April 2006 several NOSAS members made a visit to Kinrara and were conducted around some of the sites of interest on the estate by a resident of Kinrara House. The beautiful estate of Kinrara lies in a secluded and well wooded position some 5kms south-west of Aviemore and 15kms north-east of Kingussie on the north bank of the River Spey. The northern boundary of the estate is the B9152, Kingussie – Aviemore road, with the main Edinburgh - Inverness railway line lying just inside the policies. Also within the policies is the wooded

hill of Tor Alvie crowned by a tall monument to the 5th Duke of Gordon constructed in 1840 and the Waterloo Cairn commemorating those who were lost at the battle in 1815. Kinrara House occupies a site on an escarpment on the south side of the hill overlooking agricultural meadows beside the river, and 800m to the south-west of the house a monument to Jane, Duchess of Gordon, is on the site of St Eatas Chapel: no evidence of the chapel survives today but St Eatas Well is just 400m to the NE.

We were pleased to locate what we thought were the remains of the Duchess of Gordons' old farmhouse, at NN 86767 07604, 1km to the SW of Kinrara House and 200m to the south west of the Duchess of Gordons monument. Local knowledge believed that this was the location of the old farmhouse and it seemed to entirely fit Elizabeth Grants description and Stoddarts picture. The site is on a close cropped grassy knoll and has extensive views towards the river and the Cairngorm Mountains beyond. The site was unrecorded and is not marked on the 1st edition OS map of 1877: the location of the site is depicted as wooded and no ruins or remains are marked. We felt that, with its associations and background, it was worthy of a full survey using planetables; a return visit in June was to be made to survey and record it properly.

Six NOSAS members spent a pleasant sunny day in June of 2006 investigating the area and surveying the features which make up the settlement. The survey was carried out by using two planetables linked together and the plan drawn up using OCAD, a mapping software programme designed for drawing orienteering maps, with the symbols changed to represent archaeological symbols.

During our initial tour of the policies several stoney banks and changes of slope were noted on the summit of Tor Alvie but it was not until the winter of 2010-2011 that a further visit was made to investigate these. The NE end of the summit of Tor Alvie has been grossly disturbed by the construction of the Duke of Gordon Monument, but it was felt that there was probably the remains of a hill top fort enclosing an area of roughly 85m x 30m on the summit - indeed it was an ideal situation for such a site considering its location, vantage point and prominent position. Details were taken of the site and a sketch drawn in Jan 2011.



First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1877 showing Kinrara Estate and Tor Alvie

3. Historical Background

Jane Maxwell (1749-1812) was an intelligent and beautiful woman who in 1767, at the age of 17, married Alexander, 4th Duke of Gordon. They had 2 sons and 5 daughters, but the marriage was not a happy one and by the early 1790s the Duke and Duchess were living apart. From the late 1780s the Duke had openly kept his mistress, Jane Christie, and their ever growing family at Gordon Castle. It is not known when Jane first visited Kinrara but Charles Fraser Mackintosh records that early on in her marriage she much preferred Kinrara to Gordon Castle. Charles Fraser Mackintosh records

“the removal of a large and contented people (at Kinrara) was carried out.....On 20th February 1770 the Duke signs, in London, a precept agreeable to the ancient Scottish form, to warn out Patrick Grant of Rothiemurchus, principal tenant, and the following people in the personal occupation of the lands of Kinrara and Dellifour; Donald Grant, Peter Grant of Easter Kinrara, John Grant there, John Shaw there, James Grant of Wester Kinrara, Anna Forbes there probably over one hundred souls, doubtless poor enough, but honestly paying the whole rent exacted by the Gordons”

Several settlements are marked at Kinrara on the Roy map of c1750, the settlement of Kinrara-na-belly being marked in the position of the farmstead thought to be that where Jane established her first residence

Jane was passionately attached to Kinrara. Following the break-up of her marriage in 1789 she turned her attention to making Kinrara her country retreat. During the 1790s she planted numerous trees and designed a picturesque landscape taking inspiration from the fashionable landscapers of the day. An old farmhouse was to become her summer residence until the present Kinrara House was built in 1804. John Stoddart describes the old farmhouse in 1800 when he was the guest of the Duchess for 9 days:

“In this spot, on a knoll commanding the small plane, stands the cottage of her Grace, the Duchess of Gordon. The house was a mere Highland farm, no better than others of this country. Her Grace has taken it as it stood, its thatched roof, its outhouses, its barn and byre and with the addition of a single room and with some alteration and arrangement in the others has converted it into a summer residence.

The want of coal was supplied by a large peat stack, no baker being to hand our bread was brought either from Inverness or from Perth by the daily carriages on the road. Add to this that the house itself was by no means well built and the construction of the chimneys so faulty as to fill the rooms frequently with smoke. For the cottage itself some architectural embellishment would be necessary. The Duchess has therefore received several designs for this purpose, but her taste is too correct to adopt any whose simplicity does not accord with the surrounding scenery”



Roy's military map of c. 1750 of Kinrara and Tor Alvie

Elizabeth Grant describes Jane and the farmhouse at Kinrara in "Memoirs of a Highland Lady" (1804-1806):

"She had for the last few years spent her summers at a little farm on the Badenoch property, a couple of miles higher up the Spey than our Doune, and on the opposite side of the water. She inhabited the real old farmhouse of Kinrara, where she was happier and more agreeable and the society she gathered round her far pleasanter, than it ever was afterwards in the new cottage villa she built a mile nearer to us. It was a sort of backwoods life, charming to young people amid such scenery, a dramatick emancipation from the forms of society that for a while every season was delightful, particularly as there was no real roughing it. In the but and the ben, constituting the small farm cabin she and her daughter, the Lady Georgina, dwelt and with the help of white calico, a little white wash, a little paint and plenty of flowers they made their apartment quite pretty. What had been kitchen at one end of the house was elevated by various contrivances into a sitting room; a barn was fitted up as a barrack for ladies, stable for gentlemen; a kitchen was formed out of some of the out offices, and in it, without his battery, without his stove, without his thousand and one assistants and resources, her French cook sent up dinners still talked of by the few remaining partakers. The entrees were all prepared in one black pot - a large potato cauldron, which he had ingeniously divided within into four compartments by means of two pieces of tin sheet crossed, the only inconvenience of this clever plan being that the company had to put up with all white sauces one day and all brown the next. Her favourite footman, Lang James, a very handsome impudent person, but an excellent servant for that sort of wild life, able to put his hand to any work, played the violin remarkably well, and as every tenth Highlander plays on the same instrument tolerably, there was no difficulty in getting up a highly satisfactory band on any evening that the guests were disposed to dancing. Half the London world of fashion, all the clever people that could be hunted out from all parts, all the north country, all the neighbourhood from far and near without regard to wealth or station, and all the kith and kin both of Gordons and Maxwells flocked to this encampment in the wilderness during the fine autumns to enjoy the free life, the pure air, and the wit and fun the Duchess brought with her to the mountains.

Lady Georgina Gordon the youngest of the fair sisters and the only one unmarried was much liked; all through her life she has shown herself to be kindhearted, in her early youth she was quiet and pleasing as well as lively, so my mother described her when she described those merry doings in the old cottage at Kinrara in the days quite before my memory. Lady Georgina had been some years married to the Duke of Bedford and the Duchess of Gordon was living in her new house in this summer of 1804 when I first recollect them as neighbours. Our two dwellings were little more than a mile apart but the river was between us, a river not always in the mood for assisting intercourse.... But no day passed without a meeting between the Doune and Kinrara. When the Duchess had miscalculated her supplies or more guests arrived than she could possibly accommodate the surplus as a matter of course came over to us. All our spare rooms were often filled and at Kinrara shakedowns in the dining room were resorted to for the gentlemen who were too late for a corner in the wooden "room", a building erected a short way from the house in the midst of a birch thicket....We joined in the fun of this gay summer, we were often over at Kinrara, the Duchess having perpetual dances.



Jane, 4th Duchess of Gordons memorial monument
constructed in 1812 on the site of St Eatas chapel

In the 1790s and early 1800s Jane laid out a picturesque designed landscape at Kinrara and today it is largely unchanged, a relatively early example of such. In 1804 she built Kinrara House which was later to receive several extensions and alterations.

During the winter seasons she lived at her London house in Pall Mall. She was a spirited figure who was prominent in social and political society, forming a social centre for the Tory party. She was determined to marry her daughters well and succeeded in securing suitable husbands for all five. Georgina, the youngest, married the Duke of Bedford and was to maintain the association with the Strathspey area for many years by renting the Doune of Rothiemurchus and establishing a shooting estate in Glen Feshie from 1823 into the 1840s .

In 1793 Jane, Duchess of Gordon, had raised a regiment of 940 Gordon Highlanders from the surrounding district of Badenoch and Strathspey for the wars against France. Although 43 by this time she was reputed to have still been extremely attractive and adopted an unusual technique to encourage recruitment: anyone joining the army received the Kings shilling from between her lips by kissing her. When she died in 1812 her body was taken north to be buried at the old Celtic chapel of St Eata by the banks of the Spey at Kinrara. There her husband carried out her final wish and erected a memorial to her

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4.1 Results

4.1.1 Kinrara Farmstead, Buildings and Enclosure – NGR centred on NN 86767 07604

Alternative names – North Kinrara, Kinrara na belly (Roy map). The settlement is situated 1km to the SW of Kinrara House on a close cropped grassy knoll, above and to the north of the River Spey. It is on a south facing slope and has extensive views towards the Cairngorm Mountains. The settlement comprises 5 buildings and an enclosure spread over an area of roughly 100m x 80m. The remains of the largest buildings, A and B, are on the summit of the knoll, the other buildings appear as platforms and it is assumed that they were probably of timber construction. The enclosure has substantial turf banks surrounding it and a curious circular recess in its NW corner. The rotting stumps of several mature deciduous trees are seen throughout the site and local information has it that these were wych elm trees, a variety of tree that is not indigenous to these parts; they are thought to have succumbed to Dutch elm disease

Description

Building A – NN 86767 07604 The remains of a rectangular building which has a commanding position on the summit of the knoll. The substantial turf footings are aligned NE-SW. It has internal dimensions of 10.8m x 3.1m with the turf footings generally 0.2m in height and having a spread of 1 to 1.5m. There is an entrance of 0.9m width roughly halfway along the SE wall. Building B lies just 3m to the east and there are other man-made features of unknown purpose in the vicinity

Building B – NN 86780 07608 A rectangular platform recessed into the slope with the recessed faces on the north, east and west generally 0.6m in height. The platform is built up at the front/south and probably held a wooden structure. The structure measures 9.5m x 4.1m overall with internal measurements of 7.2m x 3.1m. Adjacent and to the east is a further small area recessed into a knoll, it has similar earthbanks and may have been an integral part of the structure.

Platform C – NN 86752 07577 A level platform on a NE-SW alignment. It is 3m in width but its extent to the west is not possible to determine, however the two eastern corners are obvious and recessed into the slope. Again it is most likely a platform for a wooden building.

Platform D – NN 86747 07558 A platform which appears as a rectangular depression measuring 7m x 3m. It is roughly 0.1m deep and aligned NW-SE. Probably a platform for a wooden building

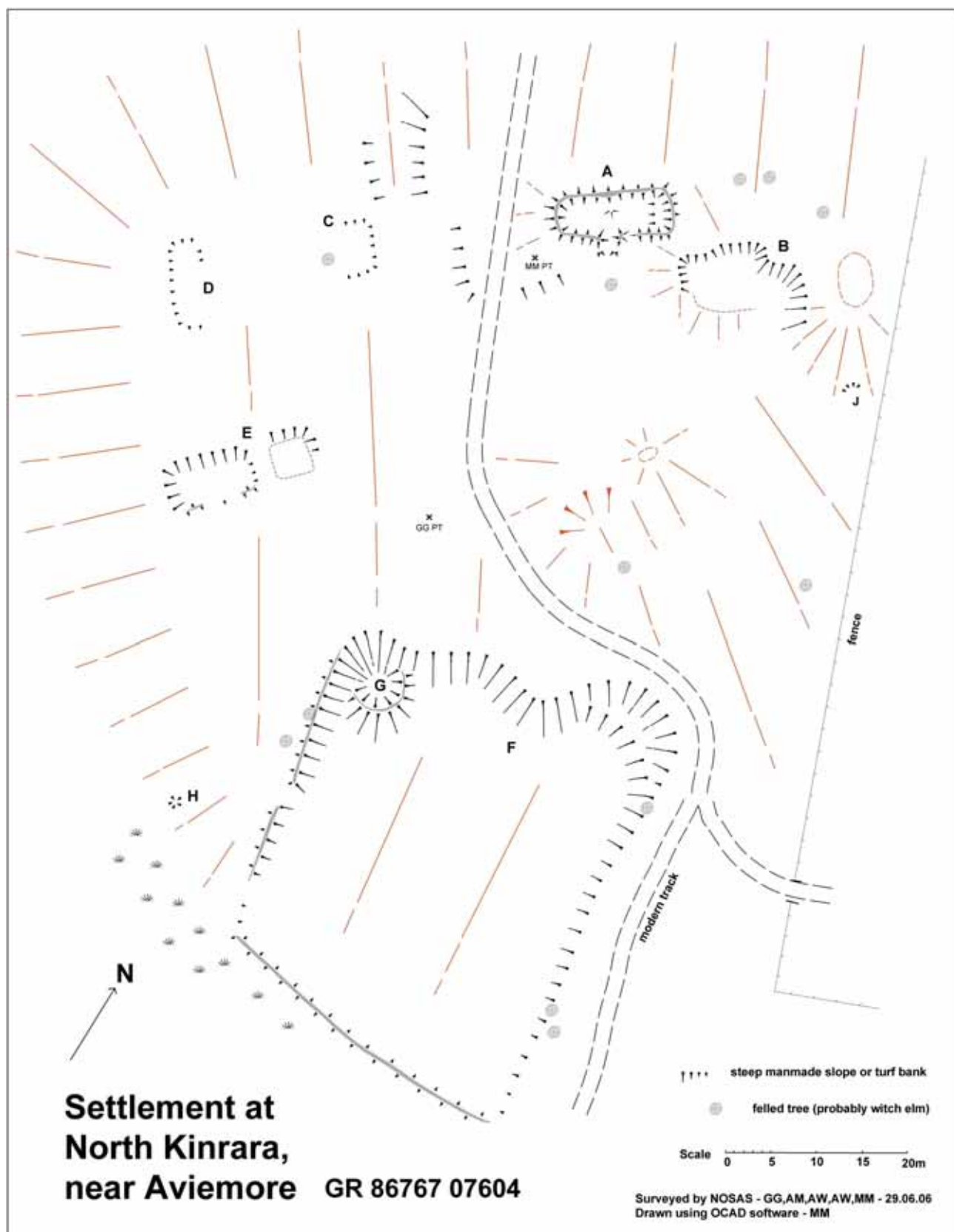
Platform E – NN 86760 07546 A rectangular recessed platform aligned NE-SW. It measures 10m x 3m internally, a low turf wall comprise the remains of the SE wall. To the NE there is a further platform 3.8m x 3.9m which may have been a part of the structure.

Enclosure F – centred on NN 86785 07515 This enclosure is situated on the lower part of the slope below and to the south of the buildings. It measures 42m (N-S) x 48m (E-W) and slopes gently to the south. It is bounded by a turf wall, 0.5m height, on its west and south sides but recessed into the slope on its east and north side where the face is between 1m and 1.5m in height. A circular depression, pit G, enclosed by a substantial earthbank is situated in the NW corner – its purpose is unknown.

Recess H – NN 86765 07507 A stone lined recess 3m in diameter may have been a well

Site of the settlement of the old farmhouse viewed from the southeast, the stumps of the trees, possibly wych elm, are clearly seen.







Building A from the east - the turf footings of the Duchess of Gordons' old farmhouse?



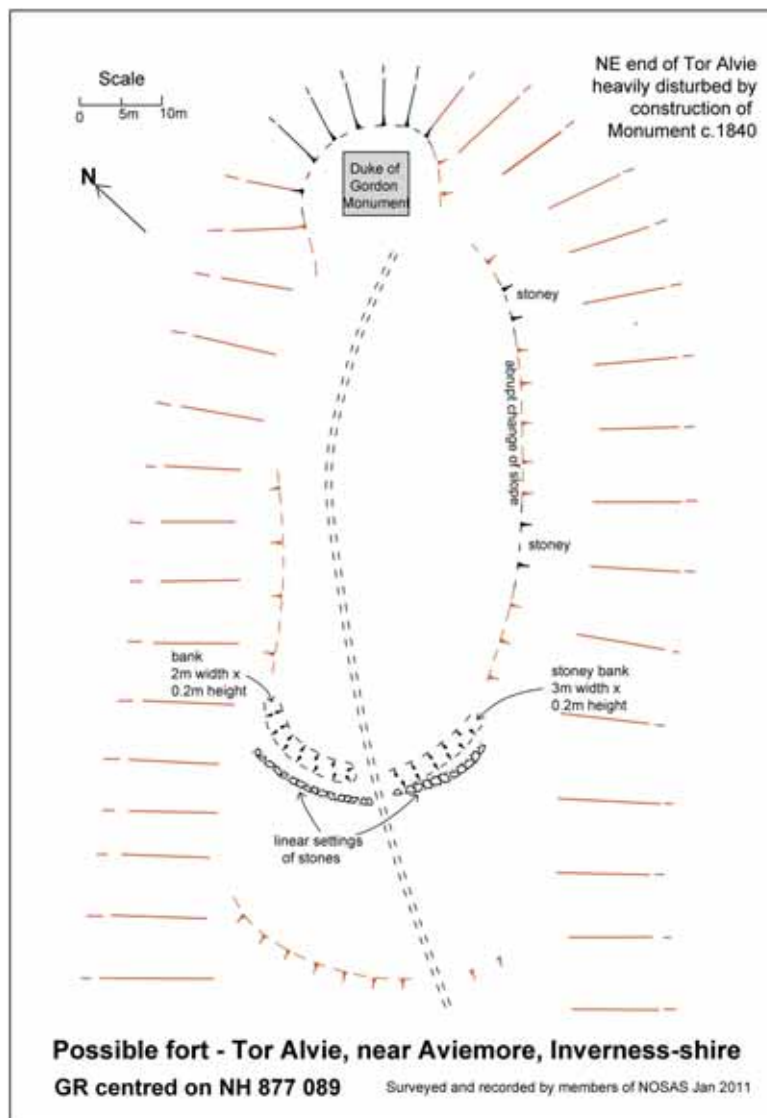
The remains of building B from the east - the building which may have been the kitchen

4.1.2 Tor Alvie possible dun or Fortification - NGR centred on NH 877 089

Alternative names – Kinrara. This site is situated 4kms SSW of Aviemore on the summit of Tor Alvie, a hill which occupies the floor of the Spey valley and which is notable for having a monument to the Duke of Gordon on its summit, altitude 358m. The hill is part of the Kinrara estate and lies between the river Spey and the railway. The hill is elongated, two kilometers in length and aligned NE-SW, with a steep NE end and a more gradual slope or “tail” to the SW. Access is gained from this direction by a rough estate track for most of the way. Tor Alvie is covered in open woodland with pine and birch trees and has rampant juniper bushes in many places.

Description

A flattish area of 85m x 30m tipping to the SW, is seen on the summit of Tor Alvie; it is enclosed by traces of a stoney bank. At the SW end this stoney bank is between 2 and 3 m thickness and 0.2m height and on its SE side there is an abrupt change of slope which for some of its length is seen as stoney banks and is continuous with the SW bank. At the NW side, the bank continues as a change of slope, similar to that on the SE side, for a short length. The NE end of the hill has been significantly disturbed by the building of the monument which is on a platform and it is probable that any remains of the fortification have been destroyed. At the SW end a linear setting of stones runs parallel and on the outside of the stoney bank and 25m to the SW a further change of slope of 40m length, may indicate additional fortification. These SW features are breached by a grassy track which continues to the monument at the NE end of the area.



Summit of Tor Alvie with the Duke of Gordon Monument - a section of the stoney bank on the SE side of the site, bottom right, indicating a possible fortification.



The stoney bank at the SW end of the site, viewed from the west

4.2 Discussion

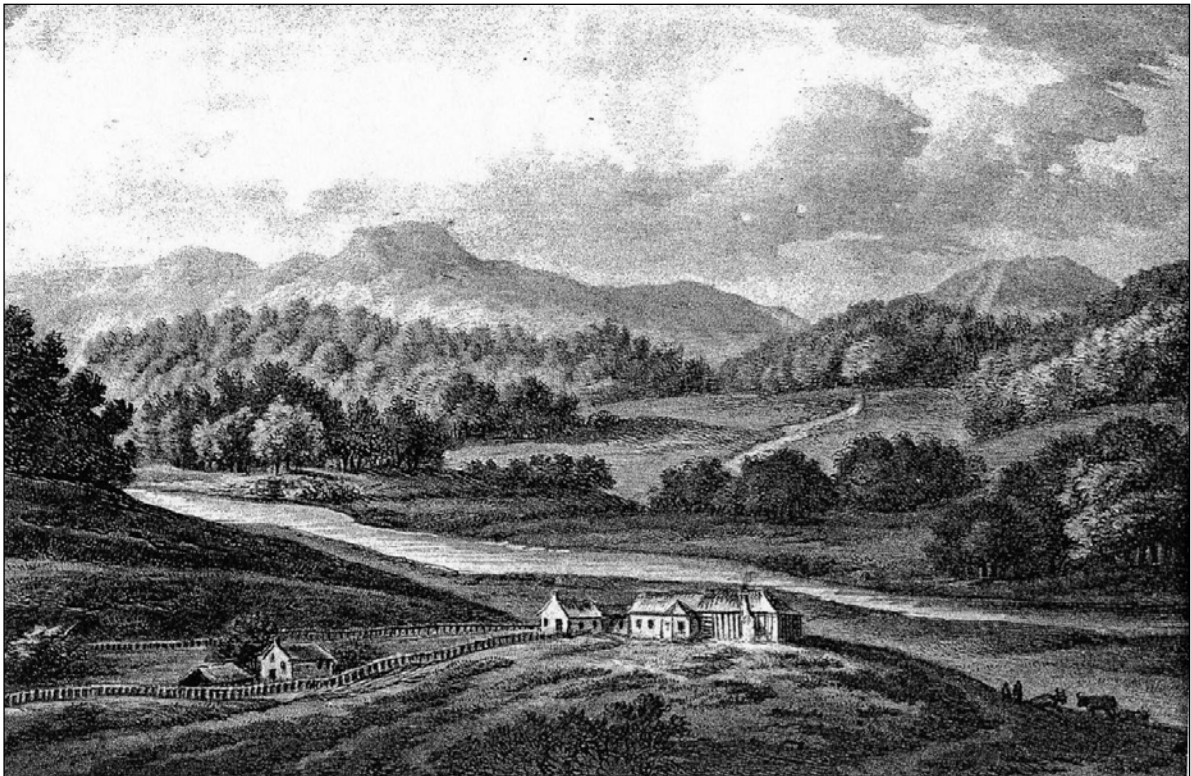
The evidence for the farmstead at Kinrara being the Duchess of Gordons original farmhouse is arguably overwhelming. Local belief of the Kinrara House residents however is divided; one person maintains that the site is the farmstead and another that a more modern building on a knoll near Kinrara House is the farmstead – this site however is lower down and does not have the same elevated position or outlook as the farmstead in Stoddarts sketch neither does the location fit Elizabeth Grants description

The site of the farmstead we recorded more or less fits the location described by Elizabeth Grant as “a little farm on the Badenoch property, a couple of miles higher up the Spey than our Doune, and on the opposite side of the water”, the distance between the two sites is exactly that. Elizabeth Grant describes Kinrara House as being just one mile nearer to Doune than the old farmhouse: it is actually 1km nearer, hardly a difference to quibble about.

Although we cannot be entirely confident in Roys map of c1750 it would appear that the settlement is in the position of Kinrara-na-Belly. The very existence today of settlement remains in an area that has received intensive agricultural activity and landscape design is unusual and is perhaps evidence that, for some reason, the site was respected and had some value. Most other settlements marked on the Roy map in the area have disappeared completely and no traces of them remain today. Many of these settlements were cleared of their people in 1770 according to Fraser Mackintosh. The nature and composition of the remains of the main buildings at the site are typical of an 18th farmstead. They are of modest size but have the substantial remains of turf walls. This entirely conforms with Stoddarts description “The house was a mere Highland farm, no better than others of this country. Her Grace has taken it as it stood, its thatched roof, its outhouses, its barn and byre”.

The settlement is in an attractive situation and has a commanding position on the summit of a knoll with impressive panoramic views towards the Cairngorm Mountains, surely a situation that would impress and be desirable to most people who were wishing to establish a residence on the estate - according to Stoddart “the Duchess’ taste is too correct to adopt any (designs for embellishment to the farmhouse) whose simplicity does not accord with the surrounding scenery”.

The 1801 etching in Stoddarts book has the farmhouse on the summit of a knoll with the aspect, topography and view towards the river and the mountains more or less matching the site of the farmstead recorded,



The

etching of the old farm house at North Kinrara from Stoddarts book of 1801

although the sketch shows the countryside as being much more open, not surprising since the trees, newly planted then, will have grown up today. The two main buildings in the sketch have an appropriate relationship to one another but their shape and size appear to vary from the remains on the ground today. The outshot on the west side of the main building in the sketch may have been of timber construction and has possibly been truncated by the nearby track.

No traces of the building on the left in the Stoddart sketch were found, but this may be because any remains have disappeared: the site is in an adjacent field which has been intensively ploughed. The other 3 buildings which we recorded as platforms at the site and the wych elm trees are not seen on the sketch, probably because they were not in existence at this early stage or possibly because the artist, or indeed the Duchess, preferred to omit them from the picturesque landscape. According to Stoddart "the Duchess' taste is too correct to adopt any (designs for embellishment to the farmhouse) whose simplicity does not accord with the surrounding scenery", this may explain why, when she came to build Kinrara House only a couple of years later, she chose its present situation well away from the farmhouse. She wished to maintain this simple farm house in its surrounding scenery



A panoramic view from the entrance of building A showing the profile of the Cairngorm Mountains



Tree growth obscures the equivalent view of the old farmhouse in the Stoddart sketch today - this was the best that could be achieved. The memorial to Jane, Duchess of Gordon is behind the tall pine tree on the left

The remains of the two main buildings of the farmstead may fit Elizabeth Grants description “What had been a kitchen at one end of the house was elevated by various contrivances into a sitting room; a kitchen was formed out of some of the out offices, and in it, without his battery, without his stove, without his thousand and one assistants and resources, her French cook sent up dinners still talked of by the few remaining partakers.” The main building A has substantial turf footings with rough internal dimensions of 11m x 3m and may have been the sitting room. The secondary building B, just 3m to the east, may have been the kitchen; it is more of rectangular platform recessed into the slope and built up at the front/south, possibly to hold a timber structure.

Of the three platforms the two northmost may have been part of a single building making just two in total, they had probably held timber buildings and may have been what Elizabeth Grant describes as “a barn fitted up as a barrack for ladies and a stable for gentlemen”

The rotting stumps of several mature deciduous trees were an obvious feature throughout the site, local information has it that these were wych elm trees which are not indigenous to these parts; they may have been planted by Duchess Jane as part of her landscape design. It was difficult to get an idea of the age of the trees but it is not impossible to believe that they were 200 years old and it may be that by planting the trees here she was demonstrating her affection for the place and felt she was enhancing it.

It seems entirely appropriate that Jane, Duchess of Gordon, would have chosen to be buried next to the place she loved and where she was happiest. If this is the site of the farmhouse then her memorial is in the trees just to the left on the Stoddart sketch.

5.3 List of Photographs

1. Kinrara Farmstead, Buildings and Enclosure

1. General views

	1. From NW	
	2. From NW cropped	
	3. From NW	
	4. From W	
	5. From W	
	6. From S	
	7. From SE	
	8. Wide angle view from entrance of main building showing panorama of Cairngorm Mountains to S	

2. Building A

	1. A & B in profile from N	
	2. From SW	
	3. From E	
	4. From NE	
	5. From SSW	
	6. From E	
	7. From E	
	8. View from entrance	

3. Building B

	1. From E	
	2. W part from NE	
	3. W part from W	
	4. E part from W	
	5. E part from NW	Duchess of Gordon memorial in trees beyond

4. Platforms C to E

	1. C from NE	
	2. C from S	
	3. C from SW	
	4. D from N	
	5. D from SE	

	6. E from NE	
	7. E from SW	
	8. E from N	

5. Enclosure F and Pit G

	1. F from SE	
	2. F N part from west	
	3. F S part from NW	
	4. F from NW	Pit G in foreground
	5. G from W	
	6. G from NW	
	7. G from NE	

6. Well H	From W	
7. Well H	From S	
8. Trackway to north	From N	

2. Duchess Janes' Monument

	1. Site from SW	
	2. Monument from S	
	3. Detail of plaque	
	4. Site of St Eatas Well	

3. Tor Alvie

1. Fortification

	1. Summit area from SW	
	2. SW stoney bank from S	
	3. SW stoney bank from SE	
	4. SE stoney bank (S part) from W	
	5. SE stoney bank (S part) from W	
	6. SE stoney bank (S part) from E	
	7. Turf edge/change of slope on SE side	
	8. Section of SE stoney bank (N part)	
	9. Section of SE stoney bank (N part)	

2. Monuments

	1. Duke of Gordon Monument from SW	
	2. Duke of Gordon Mon detail of plaque	
	3. Waterloo Monument from W	
	4. Waterloo Monument from S	
	5. Waterloo Monument detail of plaque	

4. Kinrara House and policies

1 to 4. House and surrounds		
5 – 6. Views to policies	From N	
7. Building on knoll		Thought to be alternative site for farmstead
8 – 10. Other buildings		