

Ayrshire and Arran Woodland Partnership

AYRSHIRE

SURVEY OF GARDENS AND DESIGNED LANDSCAPES

Summary Report on Stage 1,
Desk-based Survey of Sites



The Landscape at Dumfries House as recorded by the Military Survey of Scotland c.1750
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1. BACKGROUND

The main product of Stage 1 of the Ayrshire Survey of Gardens and Designed Landscapes is a database describing 141 sites and their history that has been developed within the Ayrshire Sites and Monument Record (SMR) of the West of Scotland Archaeological Service, with their boundaries entered in the Geographical Information System (GIS) of the SMR. A list of the 141 sites is appended to this summary report. The report has been prepared by Peter McGowan Associates and Christopher Dingwall to accompany the database and GIS information and is intended to summarise the findings of Stage 1 of the Ayrshire Survey of Gardens and Designed Landscapes and to serve as the basis for field survey of the landscapes. Stage 1 is limited to desk-based appraisal of sites and was undertaken on the understanding that field survey of the sites or of a representative sample would form an essential second stage of the survey.

The survey has been undertaken with financial assistance from and in cooperation with Scottish Natural Heritage, the West of Scotland Archaeological Service and the Forestry Commission Scotland.

2. METHODOLOGY AND SITE SELECTION

2.1 Maps

The identification of sites for inclusion in the list has been based largely on map evidence, notably on those maps that offer consistent coverage across Ayrshire at a useful scale, and at suitable dates, as follows.

- The maps of *J. Blaeu* (1654), based largely on the manuscript maps of cartographer Timothy Pont dating from c.1600, which give a good impression of the late medieval landscape prior to extensive improvement and enclosure
- The *Military Survey of Scotland* of c.1750 (often referred to as Roy's Map) which gives an impression of a landscape in which improvement and enclosure had begun, but where the style of landscape design still owed much to the 17th century
- A. & M. Armstrong's *New Map of Ayrshire* of 1775, a 'county map' made at a time when rapid change was taking place in the social and economic circumstances of many people, and in the extent and character of landscape improvement
- The *Ordnance Survey County Series* (six-inch 1st edition), surveyed 1854-1859, by which time the process of enclosure and improvement was more or less complete

- The *Ordnance Survey Popular edition* (one-inch) of 1921-1928, prior to the two world wars and the beginning of extensive afforestation
- The current *Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 Explorer edition* (two-and-a-half-inch)
- Other maps as necessary.

2.2 Published Sources

The primary map evidence has been supplemented wherever possible with written evidence drawn from a variety of printed sources which contain descriptions of designed landscapes, or of the progress of deforestation and/or tree planting. Among the earliest descriptions are those to be found in Sir A. Mitchell's *Geographical Collections Relating to Scotland made by Walter Macfarlane* (1907), which include parish and site descriptions from the late 17th century and early 18th century. These are backed up by the parish descriptions in the *[Old] Statistical Account of Scotland*, edited by Sir John Sinclair (1791-1799), and the *New Statistical Account of Scotland*, edited by the Rev. J. Gordon (1834-1845), some of which contain detailed information on the progress of planting. Further contemporary descriptions of country seats are to be found in A.H. Millar's *Historical and Descriptive Accounts of the Castles and Mansions of Ayrshire* (1885). A broader picture is provided by M. L. Anderson's *A History of Scottish Forestry* (1967). Useful architectural information is to be found in R. Close's *Ayrshire and Arran : An Illustrated Architectural Guide* (1992) and D. Love's *Lost Ayrshire : Ayrshire's Lost Architectural Heritage* (2005). Though Ayrshire was little-visited by tourists, there are a few accounts of some use, as those by Robert Heron in his *Observations made in a Journey through the Western Counties of Scotland* (1793), and by John Claudius Loudon in his *Gardener's Magazine* (1833).

2.3 Site Selection

Sites chosen for inclusion in the list are generally those in which designed woodland or planting can be identified from map and/or written evidence as being, or as having once been, associated with a dwelling house or country estate, or which can clearly be seen to be, or to have been at one time, surrounded by a fenced or walled enclosure. Sites where woodland may no longer exist today have been included where it is thought that significant archaeological evidence of planting – eg. traces of avenues, garden terraces, park palings etc. – may exist, or where relics of earlier planting may be preserved in the form of veteran trees. Areas of unenclosed natural and semi-natural woodland have generally been excluded, unless they have a close and clear association with a particular house or estate. Commercial forestry plantations which do not form part of historic landscapes are also excluded. Sites below a certain size – approx 0.2 km² – have also been omitted from this study.

2.4 Landscape Components

Reference is made in the site descriptions to a number of characteristic features of woodlands within designed landscapes, as follows.

- **Parks** – whether the mostly rectilinear tree-lined enclosures characteristic of the 17th century and early 18th century, or ornamentally planted 'landscape' parks characteristic on the late 18th century and 19th century. Evidence for 'empaled' parks of the late 16th / mid 17th centuries, ie. enclosed parks surrounded by palings or fences, comes from Pont's and Blaeu's maps, where they are shown generally wooded and surrounded by palings.
- **Avenues** – rides or drives bounded by evenly-spaced trees
- **Vistas** – views controlled by flanking trees or plantations

- **Rond-points** – usually plantations located on rising ground with several vistas radiating from a central point
- **Roundels** or **mounts** – mostly circular plantations planted to emphasise rising ground
- **Strips** or **belts** – narrow plantations several trees deep
- **Blocks** – regularly- or irregularly-shaped plantations which cannot be described as any of the above
- **Field boundary planting** or **roadside planting** – generally regularly-spaced trees deliberately planted along hedgerows, field dykes etc.
- **Wildernesses** – in the old sense of formal plantations, generally part of the pleasure grounds prior to c.1750, cut through with intersecting walks and rides
- **Orchards** – regular plantations of fruit trees.

The term *policies* (from the Latin word *politus* meaning embellished) may be taken to mean planting deliberately put in for its visual effect. This may be taken to include any ornamental planting within an estate, from the pleasure grounds close to the house to the outer boundary belt, and may extend in some cases to hill-top planting outwith the ‘core’ landscape where this has been deliberately planted for effect.

2.5 Site Boundaries

Although the extent of ornamental planting can appear obvious, site boundaries derived from map evidence alone can be unreliable. Estates expand and contract with the fortunes of their owners, and become conjoined through marriage and/or inheritance, or separated through death and the extinction of family lines. Large estates may swallow up or become united with neighbouring ones – as in the case with *Dalgain* (Site 137) and *Daldorch* (Site 080), both of which became part of neighbouring *Sorn* (Site 081) at different times; or in the case of *Sundrum* (Site 060) which was directly linked to *Auchincruive* (Site 062) for a brief but nonetheless crucial period in the mid-18th century when landscape features were created which still influence today’s landscape. Also the landscape influence of a large estate may be seen to extend well beyond obvious boundaries into the surrounding countryside in the form of roadside planting and roundels, as around *Eglinton* (Site 097). Boundaries are particularly difficult to define where landscapes abut each other – as in the several neighbouring landscapes on the banks of the River Doon between *Monkwood* (Site 036) and *Doonholm* (Site 059). There is also the question of ‘borrowed landscape’ where owners whose estates are intervisible may have worked together to create a landscape which both can benefit from, as seems to have been the case with neighbouring *Bargany* (Site 020), *Dalquharran* (Site 021) and *Kilkerran* (Site 022) in the Girvan Valley; or with *Blairquhan* (Site 24) and *Cloncaird* (Site 25) a little further upstream.

Generally site boundaries can only be confirmed with the help of local knowledge and documentary evidence, supplemented by field observation.

3. LANDSCAPE CHRONOLOGY

3.1 Historical Periods

Although some landscapes owe their character to a single period or phase – as *Rozelle* (Site 040) or *Maulside* (Site 136), many are multi-layered, and display designed landscape features derived from different periods of their history, as seen at *Dumfries House* (Site 082), *Culzean Castle* (Site 029) or *Craigengillan* (Site 074). In spite of this, the following paragraphs

attempt to summarise the main periods and styles of planting to be found in Ayrshire, with some typical and/or outstanding examples noted.

3.2 Medieval Period to c.1550

Early written records cited by M. L. Anderson in *A History of Scottish Forestry* (1967), and by J. M Gilbert in *Hunting and Hunting Reserves in Medieval Scotland* (1979) point to the existence of extensive tracts of natural and/or semi-natural forest in Ayrshire prior to the Reformation. The survival and/or exploitation of the forests owed much on the one hand to the fashion for royal hunting reserves, and on the other to the oversight of Ayrshire woods by religious houses such as Mauchline Priory, Crossraguel Abbey, Paisley Abbey and Melrose Abbey. Forested tracts included Kilvinnen (Kilwinning), Dalkarn (Dalcairnie) and Senecastre (possibly on the border with Renfrewshire). There is little to be seen on the ground that can be said to derive directly from this period, though Blaeu's map clearly shows some of more heavily wooded areas such as the hills to the south and east of Cumnock and the southern valleys of the Rivers Girvan, Stinchar and Doon.

3.3 Renaissance Period to c.1680

The passage of monastic property into secular hands and the distribution of lands and wealth to favoured families brought with it a flowering of architecture and landscaping, as described by Charles McKean in his *The Scottish Chateau : The Country House of Renaissance Scotland* (2001). The abundance of tower houses – many of them primarily residential rather than defensive – can be gauged from Blaeu's map of 1654 which shows a large number of enclosed parks and/or plantations associated with them. We cannot say without further evidence how the enclosed plantations which surrounded so many of these tower houses were used, whether for leisure and hunting, for the grazing of livestock, for coppicing etc., or for a combination of such purposes. A description of Cunninghame by Timothy Pont, dating from c.1600, talks of many such estates as 'well wooded'. Associated gardens or 'yards' were generally walled, and their enclosures characterised by rectilinear planting, avenues, terraces etc.

While many of these wooded estates have evolved over the centuries and survive to this day, some significant landscapes recorded by Blaeu had effectively become extinct by the end of this period. The decline of *Craigie Castle* (Site 126), with its extensive impaled and wooded park, was surely hastened by the owners decision to move to more comfortable accommodation at *Craigie House* in Ayr (Site 089). Other dramatic disappearances, for example of the large wooded parks associated with *Knockdaw Castle* (Site 49) and *Baltersan* (Site 28), have yet to be fully accounted for. Equally interesting is the apparent decline in status of small, but once well-wooded estates in southern Ayrshire such as those along the valley of the Muck Water – *Fardenreoch* (Site 45), *Docherniel* (Site 46) and *Bellamore* (Site 47) along with nearby *Benan* (Site 48) in the Stinchar valley to the north. In the far north of Ayrshire a similar fate seems to have befallen *Southannan* (Site 107).

3.4 Period of Enclosure and Improvement to c.1740

Economic and social changes brought about in part by the Act of Union combined with the founding of organisations such as the *Society for the Improvement of the Agriculture of Scotland* to stimulate change in the countryside, with an increase in the amount of enclosure and planting – a process which is revealed by the *Military Survey of Scotland* (Roy's map), undertaken in the early 1750s in the southern half of Scotland. Roy's map also reveals

several formal landscapes in Ayrshire laid out in the ‘grand style’, typical of French and Dutch landscapes of the period. Such landscapes demonstrated the power and influence wielded by their creators – the Earls of Eglinton at *Eglinton* (Site 097), or of the Earls of Loudoun at *Loudoun Castle* (Site 118) – which latter family may have been influenced, and even assisted by the Earl of Mar, who was notable for his extensive landscape scheme at Alloa in Clackmannanshire at this time. Similar formality is seen in other smaller-scale or less prominent landscapes of this period such as *Stair* (Site 064) and *Auchinleck* (Site 124). A few landscapes suffered decline prompted by the family’s loyalties, as at *Dean Castle* by Kilmarnock (Site 091). Along with *Place [of Kilbirnie]* (Site 109) this suffered a disastrous fire from which it never fully recovered, leading to a decline in the condition of its landscape.

On many smaller estates the planting, mostly of Scots pine and broadleaved species, was accompanied by enclosure, often in the form of rectangular tree-lined parks. That said, Ayrshire was and is particularly noteworthy for the number of circular plantations or roundels created at this period – often marked on modern maps as ‘mounts’. This and the following period were characterised by a fair amount of intermarriage between the landed classes in Ayrshire, with many families involved in the ownership and management of more than one property, and some in several.

3.5 Period of Landscape Improvement and Development to c.1880

The progress of enclosure and planting in the late 18th century and early 19th century is well-recorded in the first *Statistical Account of Scotland* of the 1790s, and the *New Statistical Account of Scotland* of the 1830s and 1840s, albeit rather patchily depending on the interest of the parish minister. These accounts can usefully be read in conjunction with Andrew and Mostyn Armstrong’s *New Map of Ayrshire* (1775) and the *1st edition Ordnance Survey* maps of c.1860. This was a period which saw wealthy families rebuilding or extending their old tower houses, in search of a more comfortable life. These changes were occurring at a time when landscaping had become more naturalistic, favouring tree-studded parks, sweeping drives and irregularly-shaped plantations, following the fashion for the English landscape garden, in place of the formal layouts which had characterised the first half of the 18th century. Significant examples of this period and style of landscape are to be found at places such as *Bargany* (Site 020), *Blairquhan* (Site 024), *Auchincruive* (Site 062) and *Culzean* (Site 029).

Although less well endowed with the type of picturesque or sublime scenery which attracted tourists to the Highlands of Scotland, significant landscapes of this type were developed where circumstances were favourable, as with the Craigs of Ness at *Craigengillan* (Site 074), or of Kelburn Glen at *Kelburn Castle* (Site 108), not to mention a host of smaller sites of similar character. This period was also characterised by a more extensive planting of commercial conifers, initially larch and spruce alongside the traditional Scots pine in the late 18th century, to be followed by American exotics in the 19th century. Noteworthy plantation landscapes of this period, possibly experimental in character, include *Tormitchell* (Site 051) and *Balkeachy* (Site 053). The smaller extent of industrial and economic development in Ayrshire, in comparison with the Central Belt, saw only a limited development of new landscapes on what had previously been green-field sites, such as *Moorpark* (Site 110) by Kilbirnie or *Cambusdoon* in Ayr (Site 056) built on the proceeds of industry; as *Lanfine* (Site 119) near Galston built on banking; or as *Coodham* (Site 072) built on overseas trade.

3.6 Period of Mixed Fortunes to the Present

Although many estates entered the 20th century in fairly good shape, the two world wars combined with dramatic social and economic changes to affect those involved in land management. Very few new landscapes were created since 1914, and many existing ones became progressively degraded and fragmented following the abandonment, ruination and/or demolition of the big houses which served as their focus – as at *Dalquharran* (Site 021), *Eglinton* (Site 097), *Brisbane* (Site 113) and *Loudoun Castle* (Site 118). Shortage of timber led to the felling of much estate timber in the early years of the 20th century and the establishment of the Forestry Commission in 1919. Grants to assist forestry planting favoured quick-growing conifers in place of slower-growing native broadleaves and more ornamental species for many decades, as may be seen at *Cassilis* (Site 030), *Bargany* (Site 020) and *Glenapp* (002).

Other designed landscapes have been adversely affected by various forms of development – by coal mining in the case of *Drongan* (Site 077), by major infrastructure developments such as Prestwick International Airport which saw the obliteration of *Orangefield* (Site 139), or the re-aligned A78 which has eaten into the western half of *Eglinton* (Site 097). Where towns have expanded, as is the case with Ayr, Irvine (New Town) and Kilmarnock, some of the smaller landscapes swallowed up by urban growth have been adapted for use as public parks as with *Castlehill* (Site 042) and *Ardeer* (Site 100), while others have been partially or wholly lost to residential development as *Bourtreehill* (Site 101), *Fullarton* (Site 070) and *Craigie House* (Site 041), with still others subject to industrial development, as in the case of *Shewalton* (Site 125). A few landscapes have become country parks, as *Dean [Castle]* (Site 091), *Eglinton* (Site 097) and *Culzean* (Site 029) the last now in the care of the National Trust for Scotland; while still others have seen the development of golf courses as at *Ballochmyle* (Site 079), *Rowallan* (Site 093), *Kelburn* (Site 108) and *Loudoun Castle* (Site 118), the last of which estates also plays host to the Loudoun Castle Theme Park. In many, if not most, of these cases woodland management has become a secondary consideration, with all the repercussions that arise from this.

Where big houses have survived, some have been converted to hotels or institutions such as schools, colleges or residential nursing homes as is the case at *Auchincruive* (Site 062), *Daldorch* (Site 080), *Glaisnock* (Site 083) and *Townend House* (Site 140). Still others have seen ruinous mansion houses restored by developers for residential use, too often at considerable cost to the designed landscape through the introduction of enabling residential development, as at *Craig House* (Site 089), *Coodham* (Site 072), *Rowallan* (Site 093) and *Ballochmyle* (Site 079). That said, there are many landscapes which remain intact and in single ownership, some of them well-maintained, others less so. Even where estates are well-managed, the decline and loss of non-commercial planting – eg. of roadside and field boundary trees, parkland trees and smaller clumps – can be seen to have a dramatic effect on landscape character.

4. SITE STATUS AND CONDITION

4.1 Condition based on Site Survey

As a desk-based exercise, comments on the ‘condition’ of the sites have been confined to those where the present use and/or condition of the landscape is apparent from map evidence, or is

known from information gleaned from other sources. Field survey is the only reliable way of gathering the information necessary to complete the surveys of sites in respect of surviving features, general condition, extent, current use, management issues and related matters. Indeed, the findings of a desk-top study such as this should be regarded as provisional until such time as they can be confirmed by field observation.

5. FUTURE LINES OF ENQUIRY

5.1 Potential Future Lines of Enquiry

Field survey of all or a selected sample of the sites remains the essential second stage of the project, as originally conceived, in order to provide a full and accurate assessment of the sites and current management and planning issues.

Beyond the site assessment, there are many specific lines of enquiry which might be pursued from a study of this sort, which could help to throw additional light on the history of landscape improvement and planting in Ayrshire. These might include, for example:

- site-based studies of specific landscapes, using a combination of primary documentary research and detailed site investigation
- thematic studies of particular periods or landscape types – eg. picturesque or sublime landscapes, or 18th century formal landscapes
- thematic studies of subjects such as planting methods, or the species mixes used in planting at different periods
- the influence of particular families or individuals on the history of landscape improvement and planting
- the distribution of veteran trees and other remnants of past landscaping
- the nature and distribution of medieval deer-parks and enclosures

It is hoped that, as well as serving as a basis for further and more detailed investigation of woodland history, information gathered in the course of this study of the development of planting in Ayrshire will prove useful both in informing policy at a regional level, and in deciding on the future management of individual sites.

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