

The Hilltop Enclosure on Cluny Hill, Forres description, destruction, disappearance

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May 23, 2017

Summary

This report addresses the documented history of a hilltop enclosure on Cluny Hill in Forres, Moray. It reviews the published evidence to date, finding it to be both limited and sometimes unreliable. Four primary sources are established in Pococke (1760), McDonnell (1798), Leslie (1811) and Algie (1887). Additional historical evidence is identified in 19th century press reports. These reinforce the claim of a subcircular earthwork that was visible in its entirety as late as 1811, before being heavily degraded through the construction of paths. This information is compared with the current state of the hill through LIDAR, geophysics and visual inspection. Extensive ditch-like depressions are found to correspond closely with the historical testimony. The process by which the enclosure was both partially destroyed and obscured by the creation of a wooded parkland is documented. The report concludes with brief reflections on interpretation and recommends further fieldwork.

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1 Introduction

Local tradition has long held that a hill-fort¹ existed upon the summit of Cluny Hill in Forres, Moray. It has variously been attributed to Neolithic and Middle Iron Age² tribes, Pictish warlords, Scottish kings and Viking raiders. A record for it exists in the Moray Sites and Monuments Record (Moray SMR)³ and National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS).⁴ Both ultimately derive from accounts summarised by the Ordnance Survey. It also finds occasional mention in a wide range of local history books and the hill continues to exert an influence on the public imagination (Taylor, 2015; Yeadon, 2015). Yet the existence of an earthwork, let alone its nature, has remained a matter of debate. Cluny Hill was planted and heavily landscaped in the early 19th century, making visual confirmation extremely difficult. The SMR record, though expressing a high confidence in its existence and proposing an early medieval date for it, cites just two 19th century antiquarian works as evidence (Chalmers, 1807; Hibbert, 1857b) and holds almost no other documentary records about the site. Most of the literature in the more comprehensive NMRS record is little more than series of Chinese whispers, and the earliest source cited in common – the antiquarian George Chalmers’ *Caledonia* – is often unreliable in both its general and specific conclusions. Two mid-20th century visits by Ordnance Survey archaeologists disputed the designation and it was consequently removed from OS maps in 1984.

The aim of this report is to offer a firmer evidence base by which to determine its existence and nature. It commences with a discussion of published literature, followed by a more extensive investigation into early newspaper reports, maps and plans of the hills, and documents from the

¹The formal classification of ‘hill-fort’ covers an extremely broad range of archaeological monuments in terms of their situation within a landscape, their level of fortification, and their presumed function. Given the inherently loaded nature of the term ‘fort’, sites for which defence of the occupants is not necessarily the primary goal are often referred to as enclosures (Ralston, 2006, p.6-7). While the site of Cluny is indisputably a hill, the above-ground remains are currently insufficient to conclusively determine either form or function, and so the term ‘hilltop enclosure’ will generally be used here.

²Use of the term ‘Iron Age’ is problematic in Scotland, due the lack of an agreed cultural horizon to contrast it with. This can lead to confusion when comparing historical references which may or may not include within its scope the era of Roman occupation in southern Britain and/or the pre-Scottish kingdoms. A current convention is to talk of the ‘Long Iron Age’ which encompasses all of these and is divided into Early, Middle and Late periods. The bounds of these subdivisions are inevitably open to debate in a region of such heterogeneous influences (Hunter & Carruthers 2012). I will here follow Armit (2016, p.7) for a period between c. 700 BC and c. 400 AD before returning to the topic in more detail in Section 8.

³Reference NJ05NW0004; <https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/smrpub/master/detail.aspx?tab=main&refno=NJ05NW0004>

⁴Reference 15818; <https://canmore.org.uk/site/15818>

Chalmers Archive. An additional contribution of the research is to determine the sequence and impact of modifications to the hills in the 19th century. As many of the documents referred to are difficult to access, an extensive appendix of key document excerpts is also provided. All references, citations and URLs within the main text are hyperlinked for easier reading. Results are compared with the current state of the hill's surface, as determined both through visual inspection, a geophysical survey, and LIDAR surface scanning kindly provided by the Scottish Orienteering Association.⁵ GIS and 3D modelling technology are used to provide a more comprehensive view of the morphology of the hills than previously possible.

The report concludes that the presence of a large hilltop enclosure is all but certain and that it corresponds in some regards to the physical description published by Chalmers. This is followed by brief reflections on interpretation but further archaeological fieldwork is recommended in order to establish more reliable information as to its origin, development, abandonment and post-use history.

2 Cluny Hill

Cluny Hill, also known as the Cluny, Clunie or Cloven Hills, is a cluster of four low, steep-sided hills, approximately 33 ha. in extent and largely surrounded by the town of Forres near the southern coast of the Moray Firth ([Maps A.1, 2-5](#)).⁶ Their geological fabric is Pleistocene moraine till upon Old Red Sandstone bedrock (Wright *et al.*, 2013, p.11).⁷ The northern hill, surmounted by a tower commemorating Admiral Lord Nelson,⁸ is 77 m above Ordnance Datum and forms their highest point. This descends rapidly to parkland at 25 m AOD. The ground to the south of the hills is slightly higher (32 m AOD) with a borehole reaching bedrock at 30 m AOD.⁹ They are approximately 2 km south of Findhorn Bay and 2 km east of the Findhorn River. They are known to have been common property of the town of Forres since at least the 16th century (Douglas & Robertson, 1934, p.536), and quite possibly since its establishment as a royal burgh. The date of this event is unknown due to the destruction or loss of its earliest Royal Charter but may predate the reign of William I (1165-1214) (Simpson & Stevenson, 1982, p.1). The hills stand within the legal boundary of the burgh, southeast of its urban centre which occupies a low east-west rise terminating at the Mosset

⁵<http://www.scottish-orienteeing.org/soa/page/lidar-data-available>

⁶<http://portal.historic-scotland.gov.uk/hes/web/f?p=PORTAL:>

DESIGNATION::::DES:GDL00201

⁷BGS. <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html?location=forres>

⁸<https://canmore.org.uk/site/15864>

⁹BGS log NJ05NW28.

Burn to the west. Private estates originally occupied the land surrounding it, occasionally leading to boundary disputes which were settled with the presence of march stones ([Newspaper Reports D.11](#)), many of which are still in situ. The grounds of Forres House to the north were purchased by Forres Town Council and converted into a park in 1922.¹⁰

Now almost entirely forested with a mixture of deciduous and evergreen woodland, they have not always been this way. In the 16th century they were wholly or partly covered with broom which was harvested by the town's inhabitants (Douglas & Robertson, 1934, p.536). From 1653 parts of the hills were cultivated, initially by Thomas Tulloch of Bogtoun near the area of what is now Grant Park (Bishop, 2007, p.36). By the late 18th century the hills are (retrospectively) described as being covered by grassy heath ([Newspaper Reports D.7](#)), which was subsequently planted with trees and protective gorse. Planting was initially intended as a source of income but later became a means of extending and enhancing the hills' beauty as a public park, which they remain today ([Extracts B.5](#)). Multiple fires and replantings throughout the park's early years have led to distinct and varied woodland environments within it. The centrepiece is a tower dedicated to Admiral Lord Nelson which was erected on public subscription between 1806 and 1812 following his death at the Battle of Trafalgar (?). While trees now obscure much of the view at ground level, the tower's viewing platform provides an extensive and panoramic vista of the Moray Firth and surrounding countryside which would also have been visible lower down the hillside well into the 19th century ([Images E.3, 57-64](#)). To the north this extends across Findhorn Bay and the Moray Firth to the Tarbat peninsula and mountains of Caithness and Sutherland. Ben Wyvis in Easter Ross can be seen to the west. To the east are Kinloss Abbey, the promontory fort and village of Burghead, the plain of Spynie (formerly a loch), and the Knock of Alves hill-fort. Visibility is constrained by hills to the south, but still encompasses an extensive part of the local countryside.

The permanent status of the hills as a public park have greatly reduced urban encroachment and there are relatively few buildings on the hills. On the slope of the southern hill is Cluny Hill College, originally built as a Hydropathic Establishment in 1864. A number of residences run along St. Leonards Rd. (for a time known as Bullet Loan) on the southwest side. Other structures and man-made features include the Cluny Hill Cemetery and a flag platform on the western hill; a reservoir on the southern hill; and a sand quarry on the north side of the eastern hill. In addition to these are a great number of features associated with the park, including roads, paths, walls, gates, lamp-posts, benches and raised flower beds, although two centuries

¹⁰<http://www.parksandgardens.org/places-and-people/site/8866/history>

of continual use mean that not all additions to the hill may have survived.

The dual name of the hill is early, with descriptions from the late 16th century referring to Clowin, Clowne, Clwne and Clone Hills, apparently all in the plural (Douglas & Robertson, 1934, p.536). The earliest known reference is to 'Clunie-Hills', in a 1578 edict prescribing the meeting place for settling a feud between the Dunbars and Inneses (Innes 1864, p.129; Dunbar 1866, p.1). The mention of 'Cluny' in a list of episcopal rents for the adjacent Barony of Rafford in 1565 is unrelated: it refers to an estate 4 four miles to the south (Leveson-Gower & Sutherland-Leveson-Gower, 1837, p.445). Matheson (1905, pp.157-8) gives the name a gaelic origin¹¹ but the obvious etymological chain between variants and use of the plural makes clear that the four-fold division of the hill provides their common origin. An anonymous 1856 correspondent to the *Forres Gazette* claimed that in the middle of the 18th century each of the four summits were named: Black Hill or Blackhillock (east), Whin Hill (south), Braidhaugh Hill (west), and 'Toe F.r.st(?)' (north) ([Newspaper Reports D.9](#)) but that these names had largely fallen out of use by time of writing. The basis of this claim is unspecified but it is partially corroborated by a reference to a 'Blackhill of the Town' in a survey sketch map produced for the Earl of Seafield in 1768.¹² From the mid-19th century onward they are increasingly referred to collectively as Cluny Hill, or simply The Hill. The latter term sometimes solely indicates the northern hill. Individual summits are more commonly referred to in relation to the cardinal directions. The hills surround a deep central depression, known as Hell's or Helgy's Hole,¹³ and later as Cluny Hill Hollow, to which a considerable amount of local folklore is attached. A skeleton was discovered there in 1870 during levelling work (p.28 Algie,

¹¹'Fertile piece of land.'

¹²National Records of Scotland, Ref. RHP98278.

¹³The etymology of this name is unclear. Algie (1907, p.28) cites two theories. The first, that an Inverness shoe-maker named Helge moonlighted as an executioner, and was consequently stabbed to death and buried by a bunch of cobblers would seem to be... just that. No such individual or event appears in the historical record. The second theory, that it derives from a Viking general named Helgy on campaign with an Orcadian Jarl seems related to a similar conjecture about Elgin (Grant, 1793, p.1-2). Unfortunately, Grant conflates two separate stories from his source (Torfaeus, 1695, p.12-17,28-32,113). One pertains to Jarl Sigurd Eysteinnsson ('the Mighty', ruled c. 875-892) who invaded much of northern Scotland in collaboration with Thorstein Olafsson ('the Red', c. 1850-1890?). Thorstein was the nephew of two men named Helgi (Helgi the Lean, and Helgi Bjolan Ketilsson) but Torfaeus doesn't directly associate either of them with this military adventure. The other describes the actions of Helgi Njallsson, also mentioned in *Njall's Saga*, who briefly joined the personal guard of Jarl Sigurd Hlodvirsson ('the Stout', c. 960-1014). However, the battle described takes place near Duncansby Head. Even if the connection is not historical, the alliterative name suggests it may be poetic. Given the proximity to Sueno's Stone, it may simply be a case of nineteenth-century romanticism alluding to a fictitious Viking past.

1907; Douglas & Robertson, 1934, p.534-5).

Early maps of the region depict Forres but are at too small a scale to show the local topography ([Maps A.2](#)). The earliest visual representation of the 'Cloven Hills' is in a 1728 sketch plan produced to settle a boundary dispute between the Town of Forres and Mackintosh of Blervie ([Maps A.3](#)). Unfortunately, the plan is largely schematic in nature, representing Forres as two lines of houses and the three rows of hills in profile. This depiction bears no visual relation to the hills themselves. Two years later, Avery & Wade's *Plan of the Murray Firth* would also show a 'hill', but again only schematically ([Maps A.4](#)). The next occurrence is in General Roy's *Military Survey of Scotland* produced between 1747 and 1752. This exists both as the original survey (known as the 'Original Protraction') and the Fair Copy ([Maps A.5, 9-10](#)). While there are significant differences between the two versions, both depict the hills as a treeless northern summit with a lower ridge circling its eastern side. To the south west (and across a road in the Fair Copy), is the hill known as Breakback. No labels are given. Roy's antiquarian writings, published posthumously as *The Military Antiquities of the Romans in Britain* (1793), also contain a map showing Forres ([Maps A.5, 11](#)). Cluny Hill does not appear, merely showing an area of open heathland. A circular feature to the south of the town is Castle Hill. Roy labels the town 'FORRES, The Vario of R.C. [Richard of Cirencester]'. In the 1768 Seafield sketch map mentioned previously, the northern hill is represented as a series of light hachures and labelled as both 'Cluny Hills' and 'Cloven Hills'. The eastern hill is marked as 'Blackhill of the Town' – no label or depiction are given of the other summits ([Maps A.6](#)). The next representation of the Cluny Hills is in Taylor and Skinner's itinerary from Inverness to Banff in *Survey and maps of the roads of North Britain or Scotland* published in 1776 ([Maps A.7](#)). There are two hills, collectively named 'Cluny Hills'. The larger hill lies south of the Forres-Elgin road between Forres and the junction leading to Findhorn. The smaller hill lies further to the east and may be Drumduan Rise. Stockdale's 1806 map of Scotland similarly represents the hills as two separate summits in parallel with the Elgin road ([Maps A.8](#)). Subsequent maps depicting the hills, and in some cases a hill-fort, will be discussed in greater detail later in the report.

Several other aspects of Forres' historic environment are relevant to this inquiry. The most notable is Sueno's Stone,¹⁴ the largest known cross-slab in Scotland and famous for its depiction of hunting and battle scenes which are stylistically dated to the mid-9th or 10th century. The origins and purpose of the stone are unclear but may relate to the inauguration of a Scottish king or the battle in which King Dub was killed near Forres in 966 or 967

¹⁴<https://canmore.org.uk/site/15785>

(Foster, 2014, p.154-5). It stands close to the road leading to Findhorn and Burghead, and 500 m from the summit of the north hill from which it is clearly visible ([Images E.3, 65](#)). Timothy Pont's map of Moray and Nairn (ca. 1583-1614) appears to show the presence of a second stone ([Maps A.2](#)), and Robert Gordon's *Moraviae Descriptio* also suggests the presence of multiple inscribed stones (Gordon, 1654).¹⁵ *The Traveller's Guide through Scotland* also refers to 'several curious carved pillars on the right' when travelling from Kinloss to Forres (Thomson, 1814, p.128). This may include the one known as the 'Little Cross'¹⁶ before its disappearance. A basal socket for this stone is reported at the junction of the Burghead road as late as 1868 (Watson & Watson, p.269). A fragment of a Pictish symbol stone was also found embedded in a garden wall at 7 St. Leonards Rd, near the southwest boundary of the hills.¹⁷ Its provenance is unclear but presumably local to the area. A stone associated with the execution of women convicted for witchcraft is one of two or three known to lie near the Forres-Elgin road at the foot of the Cluny Hill.¹⁸ According to tradition, this was carried out by placing them in barrels containing spikes which were rolled down the hill following which they were burned in situ. The role of the stones in this cruel method of punishment is unclear but they are said to mark the site of execution or burial. Witch trials are known in Forres from at least the 10th, 17th and 18th centuries, making it impossible to assign them to a specific event (Algie, 1907, p.17-9).

3 NMRS and Moray SMR records

There has been no previous attempt to formally document the history of Cluny Hill or the existence of a hill-fort. Given the scanty nature of published documentation, it is very difficult to cleanly separate a 'scientific' literature from that of antiquarianism, local tradition and speculation. Thus this section of the report will restrict itself to establishing the origins of various claims made about the site held by the NMRS and Moray SMR so that they can be more clearly evaluated and the trends of 'conventional wisdom' established. While neither database holds much information directly,

¹⁵*Monumenta ejus rei lapides erecti et praelorium picturis ornati ad Foressam referentur* / Standing stones, ornamented with pictures of battles, are pointed out at Forres in proof of this.

¹⁶<https://canmore.org.uk/site/15796>

¹⁷<https://canmore.org.uk/site/73810>

¹⁸<http://canmore.org.uk/site/15807>. According to the present owners of the Ramnee Hotel, one of the stones now lies below ground level near the entrance to its drive and another is within a private garden nearby. Two stones are shown on the 1768 Seafield map. One in the centre of the road (near the present petrol station) and the other to the southeast of it (beneath the police station).

the NMRS has a fuller listing of references, all derived from the older OS Archaeology Division Card Index ([Extracts B.10, 36](#)).¹⁹ The SMR holds a brief summary of these, along with one additional reference to Ralston *et al.* (1983, p.160).

3.1 Chalmers' *Caledonia*

The first, and by far the most important pieces of documentary evidence cited in the NMRS record are a footnote ([Extracts B.2](#)) and map ([Maps A.9](#)) in the first volume of George Chalmers' *Caledonia* (1807). At first glance they appear to provide a clearly articulated, comprehensive, and ostensibly evidence-based claim for the presence of a hill-fort. It describes:

a form between oval and circular. . . surrounded by a strong rampart of earth and a fosse [ditch] which is still 12 feet wide. The area within the ramparts measures 6 acres, 3 roods, and 25 falls, Scottish. On the south side of the hill there is a small post of a square form, defended by an earthen rampart and fosse, inclosing an area of 10 feet square, or 16 falls Scottish.

It is attributed to the Vacomagi, a Middle Iron Age tribe contemporary with the Roman occupation of southern Britain, and the accuracy of the measurements are ostensibly confirmed by the expertise of a land surveyor, Robert Macwilliam, who is said to have conducted the survey in 1798. In addition to this, Chalmers' map shows the location and orientation of a 'British Camp' set upon the easternmost summit of two of the Cluny Hills.

Unfortunately Chalmers' claims must be accepted only with a great deal of caution, both in the specifics and more generally. In the first place, closer inspection raises much about Chalmers' description and map which is problematic:

- The concave southern side of the northern hill makes an oval or circular shape of this size hard to situate upon its topography.
- No evidence or justification is provided for the association between the circular enclosure on the summit and the 'post' to the south.
- It is not clear what is meant by 'post' but the measurements are inconsistent. 16 Scottish falls = ~508 m² whereas a square with 10 ft sides = ~9 m². Even the first measurement, with a side of about 22 m, is hard to reconcile with the presence of a surrounding ditch and rampart or

¹⁹For a review of the Ordnance Survey's work and its legacy, see:
http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archiveDS/archiveDownload?t=arch-352-1/dissemination/pdf/vol_134/134_161_171.pdf

a sufficient number of men to defend them. Even harder to explain is that to the south of the northern hill is Cluny Hill Hollow which seems an improbable location for a defensive position.

- The land surveyor Robert Macwilliam is not otherwise known from Chalmers' text or county records and his measurements seem remarkably precise (to the nearest 5 m²) for an area of approx. 36,000 m² and bounded by the kind of vaguely defined topography that is common to most ancient earthworks.
- The map is not to scale and includes a mixture of components which include a precise (if inaccurate) layout of the burgh (which is not relevant to Chalmers' text) but only a schematic, oval rendering of the 'British Camp'. There is no depiction of the outlying 'post' at all. Only two of the four hills are shown and their relationship to Drumduan House and Sueno's Stone seems incorrect.
- Chalmers' association of the hill-fort with the Vacomagi is derived solely from the combination of two beliefs, neither with justified foundation:

1. The claim by Roy (1793, p.132) that Forres is Varis, a Roman-era settlement mentioned in *De Situe Britanniae* ('On the situation of Britain', Bertram (1809)). This was a literary forgery attributed to a 'Richard of Westminster' (later confused with the historical Richard of Cirencester), but in fact produced by Charles Bertram in 1748 and responsible for much error and confusion in 19th century antiquarianism (Barker, 1990). Neither Roy nor *De Situe Britanniae* make any mention of a hill-fort however.

2. A tribal name attested to by Claudius Ptolemy in the *Geographike hyphegesis*, ('Manual for drawing a world map', Stueckelberger & Grasshoff, 2006, 2.2.13), a geographic text produced in Alexandria in the 2nd century AD. While this is a genuine work, its enormous scale required the Greek-speaking Ptolemy to draw on whatever sources were available, and the locations and names it lists are often utterly confused and corrupt as a result, especially beyond the boundaries of the Roman empire.

While clearly local tribes were present in the region during the Middle Iron Age, the existence of a settlement at Forres, let alone a hill-fort, cannot be confirmed on this evidence alone.

In addition to these specific issues, we must also bear in mind the circumstances under which *Caledonia* was written. Born in Fochabers in 1742, Chalmers was educated in Scotland and spent his early adult life in the American colonies before taking up a position as the Chief Clerk of Committee of the Privy Council for Trade and Foreign Plantations in London in 1786. Chalmers' goal was to demonstrate that knowledge of Scotland's history could be pushed back to classical antiquity, and that antiquarian pursuits such as the collection of artefacts and name-place analysis could help unearth it. Such history was greatly enhanced when it demonstrably featured monuments akin to the hillforts, henges and Roman camps of England. While the scale of his endeavour was impressive – he published three large volumes in his lifetime and accumulated material for a further four – it was neither a full-time occupation, nor was he able to visit many of the places he describes. The bulk of his research was conducted through networks of written correspondence, a practice typical of the day (Withers, 2008), and Chalmers himself describes it as 'the agreeable amusement of many evenings' (Chalmers, 1807, preface). *Caledonia* remains a magisterial work but it is one in which the limited and often erroneous evidence in Chalmers' possession is sometimes unable to carry the weight of his assertions.

Consequently, and despite the apparent certainty that Chalmers' description provides, there is very little here we can be confident of. There is no concrete evidence that he visited Forres, and his language intimates that he did not inspect Cluny Hill personally. It is unclear from the text how he became aware of the site prior to commissioning the survey. It appears likely that a surveyor did record a large sub-circular feature, probably on the north hill, and an additional smaller feature to the south. Their nature is difficult to determine based solely on his description and map. It is therefore premature to confirm the presence of a hill-fort solely on Chalmers' testimony.

3.2 'Vitrified Sites'

The next piece of evidence cited by the NMRS is 'Observations on the theories which have been proposed to explain the vitrified forts of Scotland', a paper by Samuel Hibbert (1857b) first presented to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland on 28 March 1825. 'Vitrification' is a phenomenon, first noted in the 18th century (Williams, 1777), that the masonry of many hill-forts in Scotland has been exposed to fire, thereby fusing some of the stonework. Hibbert's paper evaluates a number of competing theories, ultimately concluding that a variety of causes may have led to this effect – including warning beacons, celebratory bonfires and warfare – and that it

may not be limited to fortifications in the strict sense.²⁰ 'Clunie Hill, near Forres' is included in a list of 'Vitrified Sites' forming an appendix to the paper. Unfortunately, evidence either for Hibbert visiting the site himself, or for the presence of vitrified stone is ambiguous. In a preamble to the list he states that he has undertaken 'a laborious examination of most of the vitrified sites of Scotland', but continues:

Most of the examples of vitrification which have fallen under my personal inspection appear to me to have been so hypothetically described, as to well merit being resurveyed by individuals who have yet a theory to support [i.e. who are un beholden to one]. For the information of this class of observers, I subjoin the names of all the known vitrified sites of which I have been able to collect information, with the persuasion, at the same time, that considerable additions might be made to the catalogue. I will not, however, answer for its perfect accuracy, although it is given on apparently authentic information.

In fact the reference to Cluny Hill appears to derive from a letter to Hibbert by George Anderson and published in the same proceedings (Hibbert, 1857a). It promotes the theory that vitrification is caused by the use of warning beacons and describes the nature and intervisibility of a number of hill-forts along the coast of the Moray Firth and in the Great Glen. He does not describe Cluny Hill, but in reference to Bein Hill (Cullen), states 'It is . . . distinctly visible from the Ord of Kessock, from which also a station more celebrated (see Chalmers), that on the Clunie Hill at Forres, is discernible with greater ease, lying almost due east.' (p.196). It is referred to again in relation to Castle Finlay (Nairn), although this time because of the lack of intervisibility. The letter is undated but Anderson visited Ord of Kessock with Sir George Mackenzie on 21 December 1824, as described in another letter in the same collection in which intervisibility with Forres is also mentioned (Hibbert, 1857a, p.194). There is no suggestion in the correspondence that either Anderson or Mackenzie had visited Cluny Hill by this date, although Anderson must have done so by 1842.²¹ Earlier publications describing 'vitrified' sites, including Williams (1777) and Anderson (1779, 1782) do not mention Cluny Hill. We must therefore conclude that Hibbert's testimony in all likelihood derives from Chalmers via Anderson.

In a later discussion of vitrified forts cited in the NMRS, David Christison builds on Hibbert's work with a list providing more detail (1898, p.193-6). Unfortunately the entry for Cluny Hill reads only, '*Authorities*: Hibbert.

²⁰The cause or causes of vitrification remain a matter of debate. For a recent discussion see (Ralston, 2006, Ch.7).

²¹See Section 4, and [Extracts B.6](#).

Remarks on amounts &c. of vitrification: Not marked “vitrified” on O.M. [Ordnance Map]. No information.’ Christison (p.188) also makes clear the very unsatisfactory state of investigation, even of those sites of which something is known, and a tendency of the Ordnance Survey to mark a site as ‘vitrified’ without sufficient evidence. A similar list of ‘Gallic and Vitrified Forts’ is given by V. Gordon Childe (1946, p.134). It merely reads ‘Clunie Hill, Forres, ? Hibbert, *Arch. Scot.*, 160’. The NMRS record also cites M. A. Cotton’s description of ‘Clunie Hill, Forres, Morayshire’ which references Hibbert, Christison and Childe, and notes that ‘this site on the south coast of the Moray Firth is included in lists of vitrified forts, but no description or plan has been traced’ (Cotton, 1954, p.81). In summary, all the sources listed by the NMRS ultimately derive from Chalmers.

The single additional document held by the Moray SMR is a reference to Clunie Hill in ‘Later Prehistoric Settlements in North-East Scotland’ (Ralston *et al.*, 1983, p.160, p.169). The report distinguishes between larger hill-forts generally found at higher altitude (Class 1) and smaller ones (Class 2), assigning the ‘altogether less certain’ site at Clunie Hill an intermediate status. It is described as being ‘now unrecognisable in a public park, but estimated originally to have enclosed rather more than 2h [20,000 m²].’ Why this figure differs substantively from Chalmers’ (which equates to approx. 36,000 m²) is unclear and no further information or source is provided. Rivet (1966, see below) is cited in their bibliography however.

In addition to these reports, Clunie Hill is referenced by name or symbol in a number of maps and gazetteers, although without any substantive information attached, and sometimes with caution. These include: the map of Scottish Brochs, Galleried Duns and Gallic Forts in O’Dell & Walton (1962, p.59) where it is identified as a Gallic or Vitrified Fort (likely drawing on Hibbert); the supplementary map included with Rivet’s *The Iron Age in Northern Britain* (1966), drawn by I. G. Scott. The source is unclear, but the bibliography includes Childe, Hibbert and Christison; the map of minor forts (under 3 acres) in Avery (1976, p.362), derived from Rivet; the gazetteer and map of vitrified/timber-framed forts in MacKie (1976, p.235, p.444) derived from Cotton and Childe, where it is classified as without measurements, of uncertain vitrification, and is erroneously placed in Banff; the gazetteer of hill-forts in Hogg (1979, p.60) where it is classified as uncertain and has no references assigned to it. The introduction (p.3) suggests a probable source in Christison; and the derived map of Scottish hillforts in Hogg (1984, p.117) where it is symbolised as being less than 0.24 ha. in extent.

Relevant archaeological works which do *not* mention the site include the UK List of Monuments (Commissioners of Works, 1937, pp.85-6); Feachem (1955); Feachem (1971); the archaeological survey of Forres by Simpson &

Stevenson (1982) and the gazetteer of early historic sites in Scotland (450-850 AD) in Alcock & Alcock (1990, pp.130-7).

There is no explicit indication from any of the authors mentioned above that they attempted to confirm the presence or otherwise of stonework, vitrification, or other signs of a hill-fort. In all these publications such a designation thus ultimately appears to stem from *Caledonia*. As sources of corroborating evidence for the presence of a hilltop enclosure they must therefore be discarded. No pre-Eighteenth Century masonry, stonework or rubble are known on Cluny Hill at all. Two large boulders can be seen near the summit of the north hill, one embedded in a pathway, but their provenance is unclear and may be geological ([Images E.4](#)). Neither shows any signs of vitrification.

3.3 Ordnance Survey

The only active attempt to ascertain the existence of a hill-fort by archaeologists or antiquarians other than Chalmers was by the Ordnance Survey as part of its national mapping survey programme. This was a result of the OS's need to justify the inclusion of individual features on its large scale 6-inch-to-1-mile (1:10,560), 1:10,000 and 1:2,500 maps ([Maps A.15, 21-23](#)). The original survey was carried out in 1870, with additional visits in 1943 and 1963, each offering a brief description ([Extracts B.10, 36](#)).

The first is the entry for a 'British Camp (site of)' in the Object Name Book associated with the publication in 1874 of the First Edition 6-inch-to-1-mile map ([Maps A.15, 21](#)). It notes confidently that 'the site of this Camp is situated on an eminence at the north eastern extremity of the Cluny Hills. Part of the works at its north and north eastern extremities can still be traced, all other signs of it are obliterated' ([Extracts B.10, 35](#)). On the map itself, the hill-fort is marked in gothic script in the vicinity of Nelson's Monument but without a boundary and within a series of looping paths. Scarping is depicted to the north of one of the paths.

The second report was produced in 1943 by the first OS Archaeology Officer, O. G. S. Crawford, and quoted in the NMRS record. It states unequivocally that, 'the very slight scarping of the natural slope (NJ 0445 5912) is not enough, by itself, to presume a hill-fort.' This refers to the same scarping depicted on the OS map. The last visit, carried out in 1963 and also quoted in the NMRS, largely supports Crawford's conclusions. It reads,

Crawford confirmed. The only other possible indication of a fort is the fragmentary remains of what may have been a rampart at NJ 0447 5894 [the southwest side of the north hill]. However, the entire hill covered by trees, is a public park and has been so

greatly mutilated by landscaping and the construction of walks, that it is impossible to recognise any remains of a fort. No trace of any vitrification was seen.

The site is marked as 'fort (site of)' on the 1:2,500 and 1:10,000 scale OS maps as late as 1972 ([Maps A.15, 22-23](#)). The OS 210 card index which documents revision history for antiquities on OS maps notes that an instruction to delete the annotation and citing symbol for the fort from the OS 1:2,500 map was issued in July 1976, and from the 1:10,000 map in March 1983 ([Extracts B.10, 37](#)). By 1984 it had been removed from both maps ([Maps A.15, 24-25](#)).

3.4 Summary

Having evaluated all the evidence provided by the NMRS and Moray SMR, both for and against the presence of hill-fort, the argument in favour looks weak. The entire case rests on the account of Chalmers, who never inspected the site personally. Later references are merely a series of chinese whispers based on Chalmers' footnote and the 'beacon' theory of vitrification – a phenomenon never observed at Cluny Hill. Three visits by the Ordnance Survey cast increasing doubt upon its designation. While none of this disproves the existence of a hilltop enclosure, the burden of proof must fall on establishing its presence. In addition to the sources we have just discussed, are a number of other publications and reports that make reference to a hill-fort on Cluny Hill. In the next section we will consider their value as additional independent evidence.

4 Other Published References

What may be the earliest concrete reference to archaeological remains on Cluny Hill is not recorded by an archaeologist. On 26 July 1760 the Bishop of Ossory, Richard Pococke, passed through Forres and noted in a letter to his sister that 'a little to the East of the town is Clover [sic] hill, round which about halfway up is an old entrenchment probably of the Danes' (Pococke & Kemp, 1887) ([Extracts B.1](#)). Referencing Alexander Gordon's *Itinerarium Septentrionale* (1726), he relates it to Sueno's Stone which he understands to be a monument to celebrate a battle between Vikings and the Men of Moray. Gordon's text makes no reference to Cluny Hill or a hill-fort. This is an extremely important piece of evidence: not only does it predate *Caledonia* by almost 50 years, but as Pococke's correspondence was not published until 1887, neither could it be one Chalmers' own sources. Though brief, it acts as the first piece of corroborating evidence for Chalmers' claim, even though the interpretation differs radically. As Pococke was en route to Elgin and passing through Forres on other business, it also suggests that the feature was clearly visible from the Forres-Elgin road at that time.

A second possible reference to the hill-fort is its apparent depiction in Aaron Arrowsmith's *Map of Scotland Constructed from Original Materials* (Arrowsmith, 1807). The map shows the hills as a single extended summit, surmounted by two concentric rings of dots to the east ([Maps A.10](#)). Frustratingly, there is almost no other information to go on. The symbol does not appear elsewhere on the map, and despite Arrowsmith's 1809 *Memoir* of its production – one of the first of its kind and which comprehensively lists his sources – none of the materials he cites appear to reference a hill-fort. As the first volume of *Caledonia* was also published in 1807, and the *Map of Scotland* was published in June, it seems an unlikely provenance. Furthermore, Chalmers does not reference Arrowsmith's work directly until the second volume of *Caledonia* (1810, p.65) and Arrowsmith does not mention Chalmers at all. Nonetheless, Chalmers and Arrowsmith both lived in London and within a social environment where the informal sharing of information through conversation and correspondence formed an essential component of intellectual endeavour (Withers, 2002). Whatever the truth, as Arrowsmith's map is known to be based entirely on third party sources – principally Roy's Original Protraction – it cannot be used as independent evidence. Failing any decisive link to an earlier source, notification by Chalmers seems as plausible an explanation as any. The later *Geological Map of Scotland* by MacCulloch (MacCulloch, 1840) also shows the concentric circles on Cluny Hill but is entirely derived from Arrowsmith.

A third crucial reference to archaeological remains unreported in the public record is found in an appendix to William Leslie's *General View of the*

Agriculture of the Counties of Nairn and Moray (1811, p.522-4) ([Extracts B.3](#)). Compiled as an updated report on the contemporary and potential state of rural industry in the region, it reports 'the track of a ditch and earthen rampart carried around a little below the summit', and surmises it to be the remains of a 'fortified military station'. Significantly, Leslie declares that 'no kind of tradition suggests even a conjecture of such remote occupation' which, in addition to the very detailed description of Nelson's Tower (then approaching completion), indicates that Leslie's account is both from personal observation and uninfluenced by Chalmers. Notably, while the accompanying map of Moray and Nairnshire is based on Arrowsmith's (Brown, 1810), it replaces the hill-fort iconography with a representation of Nelson's Monument ([Maps A.10](#)). Nonetheless, it may well have been the symbol on Arrowsmith's map which led Leslie to visit the site. Another 1811 publication, Neele's *Map of Scotland*, depicts the hills in an entirely original form of three summits, and show neither a hill-fort or the tower. The previous Board of Agriculture report (Donaldson, 1794) omits any mention of Cluny Hill.

In 1813, the entry for Forres in Nicholas Carlisle's *Topographical Dictionary of Scotland* (1813, 'FORRES') reports that 'On... Clunie Hill, are the vestiges of a British Camp: the area, within the ramparts, being nearly 7 Scottish acres.' However the phrasing seems so close to that of Chalmers' report that it is hard not to conclude that *Caledonia* provides his source.

A Guide to the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (Anderson & Anderson, 1842, p.104) contains a brief description of the 'Clunie Hills' ([Extracts B.6](#)). One of its authors is George Anderson, the man who brought Chalmers' description of Cluny Hill to the attention of Hibbert in 1825. As might be expected of a tourist guide, it is principally concerned with its beauty and views, along with the existence of pine woods and encircling walks. It also notes the presence of 'an ancient hill-fort', reiterating Anderson's belief that it was one of a chain of beacons for signalling maritime invasions to the residents of the interior.

Robert Stuart's *Caledonia Romana* (1845, p.210) makes a brief reference to the hill-fort while equating Forres with Varis (following Roy and Chalmers): 'On Clunie-hill, to the eastward of the town [of Forres], are the vestiges of a circular British stronghold'. Stuart directly cites Chalmers as his source and no further information is provided.

On 13 February 1851, a public paper on 'The Archaeology of Moray' was presented to the Elgin and Morayshire Literary and Scientific Association by Dr William Geddes, its Deputy Chairman. A version of the text was reported in the *Elgin Courant* the following day.²² It is mostly a summary of

²²<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000454/18510214/017/0003>

archaeological sites and finds known at the time, and includes the following statement: 'On the Cluny Hill, also at Forres, which is now the site of the Nelson Monument, The Vacomaji [sic] had a large hill-fort, the remains of which, until a late period, showed that it had been of a form between an oval or a circular shape, surrounded by a strong rampart of earth, and a fosse of 12 feet wide.' The description is drawn entirely from Chalmers (who is explicitly acknowledged later in the text) and adds almost no additional information beyond the implication that the remains are no longer sufficiently visible to determine its nature and extent.

On 5 June 1860 the same association was addressed by James Macdonald with a paper entitled 'A Sketch of the History and Antiquities of Burghead' ([Newspaper Reports D.10](#)). Much of the text is reported in the *Elgin Courier* of 8 June 1860.²³ Its aim was to challenge the prevailing belief, introduced by Roy and developed by Chalmers, that Burghead was the 'Winged Camp' [*Ptoroton Stratopedon*] of Ptolemy. Much of his argument can be seen as a reaction to the recent revelation that *De Situ Britanniae* was a forgery, along with an increasing availability of archaeological evidence. Without specific justification, MacDonald appears to shift its presumptive location to Forres:

The remains of a native encampment which can still be traced in the Cluny Hills, near Forres, points out the site of ancient British strength, near which were, doubtless, planted the huts of a primitive village, such as Caesar has described the capital of Cassivelaun. Forres, indeed, seems to me to have far better claims to be considered the 'Winged Camp' of Ptolemy than any other place with which it has hitherto been thought to be identical.

However, the line of argument is not pursued further. While the proximity of Forres to Elgin suggests that Geddes and Macdonald may have visited Cluny Hill, the lack of any new or significant details in their papers greatly reduces their value as independent testimony.

In 1887 Matthew J. Algie, an employee of the Cluny Hill Hydropathic Establishment, produced a *Guide to Forres and Objects of Interest in the Neighbourhood* (Algie, 1887). A 'new and revised' but undated edition was published sometime shortly after his death in 1906 (Algie, 1907, Preface). Catering to a thriving tourist trade brought about by the Hydro and Forres' important location on the Inverness-Perth railway line, it is the earliest book to focus on all aspects of historical and cultural interest in Forres and the surrounding area. It contains a description of Cluny Hill and offers new and substantive information about the presence of an enclosure ([Extracts B.7](#)). Described as

²³<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/b1/0000457/18600608/021/0006>

an 'Ancient British Camp', Algie notes that little of it survives because it is at the same level as the 'Circular Walk'. He adds that to the north it has survived where it is 20 feet lower than the path, and to the west where it is higher. He also adds that the late John Miller [d. 1872], founder and editor of the *Forres, Elgin & Nairn Gazette*, had instigated the planting of trees around its circuit. The original text states that 'these trees are now of great use in tracing it', a claim which is subsequently removed from the second edition. Whether this is because the feature was no longer possible to trace, because the trees had been removed, or for some other reason, remains unclear. The remainder of the description is heavily based on Chalmers, with a rough conversion from Scottish to English acres.

Despite the brevity of Algie's report, its partial dependence on Chalmers, and the fact that in 1887 only faint and partial features could be seen, this is an exceptionally important source. It provides the earliest published testimony from someone who was deeply familiar with the hills – Algie worked at the Hydropathic Establishment – confirms the location of both extant remains, and suggests new sources of possible evidence in the form of the local newspaper proprietor and the trees he planted to memorialise it. Its correlation with the 'Circular Walk' offers a concrete description of the remains which helpfully complements those provided by the Ordnance Survey, allowing for direct comparison with the modern topography.

1934 saw the publication of the *Annals of the Royal Burgh of Forres* (Douglas & Robertson, 1934). It contains an extensive description of Cluny Hill, along with a great deal of other helpful circumstantial evidence about Forres and its residents. Unfortunately the description of the 'hill-fort' (p.536) is derived almost exclusively from Chalmers and Algie ([Extracts B.8](#)). The only additional comment is that 'there is now practically nothing to be seen of the remains'.

A local history entitled *Forres: A Royal Burgh 1150-1975* offers a brief description (Forbes, 1975, p.13) ([Extracts B.9](#)). Most of the information provided simply repeats Chalmers, but it curiously asserts a 'Stone Age' origin and adds that a class from Forres Academy traced its outline in 1972. A 1976 history of Moray states that 'Clunie Hill, Forres, and the Doune of Relugas, both show signs of vitrification but neither has been closely investigated' (Omand, 1976, p.117). As has been noted, there is no sign of vitrification at Cluny Hill.

The Iron Age (700 BCE–500 CE) section of *Moray & Badenoch: A Historical Guide* has an entry for 'Cluny Hill, Forres (Lost)' which states that it is 'on the south side of Grant Park at the east end of the town. Landscaping of the hill in conjunction with the building in 1806 of the Nelson Tower on the summit removed all but the faintest traces of this substantial fortification'

(Oram, 1996, p.44). No specific source is given, although a direct or indirect connection with Douglas & Robertson (1934) seems likely.

A 2008 history of Mac Bethad mac Findlaech (Macbeth) by Taylor and Murray, with an accompanying website and documentary (Taylor & Murray, 2008; Taylor, 2015), describes Cluny Hill as the 'probable site of one of Macbeth's fortified residences' (pp.8,63) but no specific evidence is given for this claim.

Finally, a recent conservation report (Wright *et al.*, 2013, pp.15-17) also highlights the presence of a hill-fort, drawing on Chalmers, Algie, the First Edition OS Map and Taylor. It draws a possible relationship with Sueno's Stone, and suggests that the earliest references to a royal castle or residence could conceivably relate to Cluny Hill, rather than Forres Castle (now the site of the Thomson Monument), which is unlikely to pre-date the establishment of the burgh.

These are the only published sources not already listed by the NMRS and SMR it has been possible to identify which make direct reference to a hill-fort or enclosure. A considerable number of historical, antiquarian, survey and tourist publications which describe Forres before the 20th century, or otherwise might be expected to note any visible remains on Cluny Hill make no mention of them. These include: Gordon (1654, pp.306-9), Gordon (1661, pp.432), Rutgers (1661, pp.457), Gordon (1726, pp.158-9), Beverell (1727, p.1252), Burrell (2016, p.62), Defoe (1761, p.220-2), Pennant (1776, pp.136-40, pp.287-308), Johnson (1775, p.51), Boswell (1791, pp.103-4), Hanway (1777, pp.127-9), McNicol (1779, pp.52-4), Cordiner (1780, pp.54-6), Volkmann (1784, pp.204-5), Walpoole (1784, p.505), Rochefoucauld & Lazowski (2001, pp.158-9), Thomson (1788, pp.154-7), Heron (1791, p.116), Thomson (1791, pp.151-4) Lettice (1794, pp.378-87), Cordiner (1795), the 'old' Statistical Account of Forres (McDonnell, 1796), Grose (1797, pp.273-281), Heron (1797, p.259), Grant & Leslie (1798, pp.50-72), Stoddart (1801, p.113-5), Chalmers (1803, p.175-6), Thornton (1804, p.184), Forsyth (1806, pp.497-505), Hall (1806, pp.459-60), Carr (1809, pp.326-8), Smith (1911, pp.95-9), Forsyth (1813, p.37-8), Thomson (1814, p.128, p.154-5), Walford (1818, 'MURRAY'), Playfair (1819, pp.120-1), Daniell (1821, p.33-34), Mitchell (1825, pp.160-1), Southey (1929, pp.103-5), Webster (1819, p.269), Duncan & Duncan (1820, p.71), Leslie (1823), MacCulloch (1824, pp.426-7), Botfield (1830, pp.86-9), Anderson (1837, p.172), Rhind (1839, pp.127-41), Cockburn (1889, pp.42,138-9,156-7,219,320,336-7), the 'new' Statistical Account of Forres (Grant, 1839), Sinclair (1840, p.178), Scotland (1842, pp.573-6), Lewis (1846, p.444-6), Wilson (1851), Black (1852, p.31), Worsaae (1852, pp.214-8), Watson & Watson (1868, pp.233-279), Marion (1872, pp.45-55), Murray (1875, pp.365-6), Anderson (1881), Shaw & Gordon (1882, pp.163-176), Wilson (1882, p.91, p.184-5),

Carruthers (1887, p.93-97), Green & Faulkner (1891, p.157-8), Rampini (1897) and Groome (1895, pp.46-9).

In addition, no hill-fort is shown on John Wood's 1823 *Plan of the Town of Forres from actual survey* ([Maps A.13](#)) or mentioned in the accompanying report ([Extracts B.4](#)). It is also absent from the 1832 Great Reform Act Map and Report of Forres ([Maps A.14](#)). The 1868 Ordnance Survey 25 inch and Large Scale Town Plans of Forres do not include Cluny Hill.²⁴

4.1 Summary

While this review has demonstrated that the great majority of literature about Cluny Hill is either derivative of Chalmers or silent about an enclosure, it has also established four apparently independent sources supporting the claim for its existence:

1. A very brief reference from personal observation by Bishop Pococke, in a correspondence of 1760;
2. *Caledonia*, which offers an extensive description of the site in 1798 albeit at second hand;
3. *Leslie's Agriculture of the Counties of Nairn and Moray*, which confirms the presence of a complete ditch and rampart as late as 1811.
4. The 1887 *Guide to Forres*, which partially corroborates Chalmers, references its partial destruction and adds important details about the location of the ditch and rampart and the possible presence of yew trees planted alongside it.

If an enclosure did exist, much of its circuit was intact in 1811 but removed from the landscape by 1851, as the address by Geddes makes clear. We have also seen that its attribution to a Roman-era tribe derives from Chalmers on scant and long discredited evidence. While not offering conclusive proof either way, the foregoing discussion has enabled us to clear away much of the confusion and redundancy in the literature so that the small amount of direct testimony available in the published literature can be compared with unpublished and archaeological evidence. As *Caledonia* remains the most descriptive of all our sources, we will begin with an investigation of the Chalmers Archive.

²⁴<http://maps.nls.uk/view/74478415>,
<http://maps.nls.uk/townplans/forres.html>

5 Chalmers Archive

Following Chalmer's death in 1825, his library and correspondence were inherited by his nephew, James Chalmers (son of his brother, Alexander), and kept together until his own death in 1841. It was then sold to a dealer in London, where it was divided and sold on. Much of the archive relating to *Caledonia* was purchased by the National Library of Scotland (NLS) and other significant archives of notes and correspondence are held by the University of Glasgow²⁵ and the University of Edinburgh.²⁶ The NLS archive is itself extensive and divided into 20 separate collections. Four were consulted for this research.²⁷ This identified three documents pertaining to Chalmers' description of a hill-fort on Cluny Hill.

5.1 Letter from Rev. John Macdonell (Adv.MS.21.1.7, f.111)

The first is a letter from the Rev. John Macdonell, to a Mr James McWilliam, Writer [solicitor] in Elgin, dated 27 January 1798 ([Archive C.1, 38-40](#)). Macdonnell, who moved to Forres from Edinkillie in 1792, was Minister of St. Leonard's Church in Forres (Douglas & Robertson, 1934, p.252), and author of the report for Forres in the 'old' *Statistical Account of Scotland* (1796). McWilliam had connections to Fochabers, was married to a Helen Chalmers, and frequently mentions family matters in his correspondence, so may have been an in-law of George Chalmers. Other letters in the archive make clear that he acted as an occasional intermediary with other correspondents in Moray, especially with regard to place-name analysis, a common practice with Chalmers (Withers, 2008). The letter from Macdonell is in response to a communication from McWilliam on 19 December 1797 concerning a meeting between Chalmers and an unidentified Mr. Dunbar (possibly William Dunbar, the Town Clerk) regarding Sueno's Stone. Macdonell touches briefly on this point, then continues:

There is known to be clearly traced at this day upon the Cluny hills south east of Forres the appearance of a fortified encampment. The fossa [ditch] upon the shoulder of the hill is pretty entire and lines of circumvolution are visible round a great part(?) of the Hill. As we have no account of the Romans having penetrated this far into the north of Scotland I am disposed to think that this was a stronghold fortified by the Danes during their

²⁵http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk/manuscripts/search/detail_c.cfm?ID=5178

²⁶Item nos. 183, 448-455 in the Laing Bequest were consulted but no relevant documents were identified. For the catalogue see:

http://www.ed.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.123948!/fileManager/0029854e.pdf

²⁷Adv.MS.16.2.17; Adv.MS.21.1.7; Adv.MS.8.1.9; Adv.MS.81.9.2

inroads into this country, at the time they had possession of Burghead.

The letter introduces several new and important pieces of evidence. First and foremost, it establishes Chalmers' source, a resident of Forres who had recently conducted a statistical and cultural survey of the town. Second, it implies heavily that knowledge of features encircling Cluny Hill is commonplace among local residents. Third, the prevailing interpretation of a viking stronghold is the same as that of Pococke (1887), probably following Gordon (1726), whose book Macdonell cites. Fourth, it makes clear that at this date the earthwork surrounded almost the entire summit of one of the hills. Fifth, his description of 'lines of circumvolution' could imply that more than one line of ramparts was visible. It is also helpful that Macdonell remains circumspect, pointing out only that it is the 'appearance' of an encampment and that he is 'disposed to believe' it was fortified by the Danes.

The archive includes the original envelope (addressed to McWilliam), upon which Chalmers has noted both the sender ('Rev'd Mr. MacDonald [sic]') and subject, and that on the 7th of March he wrote to Macdonell.

5.2 Chalmers' To-do List (Adv.MS.16.2.17, f. 89)

The next piece of evidence is a short to-do list, presumably from early 1798, entitled 'Enquirys to be made' ([Archive C.2, 41](#)). The top entry reads '1st. The situation & measurement of the works on the Cluny Hills at Forres.' To this has been added a marginal note in pencil (probably by an archivist), reading 'wrote to Mr. MacDonell'.

5.3 Description of 'encampment on the Cluny hill' (Adv.MS.16.2.17, f.49)

The final record is a complex document in three hands – apparently those of Macdonell, McWilliam and Chalmers – describing one or more surveys of the feature identified by Macdonell ([Archive C.3, 42](#)). The main text clearly forms the basis for Chalmers' published description in *Caledonia* and comparison of the capitalised 'F' and 'E' with the earlier letter and envelope show this to have been written by Macdonell:

The encampment on the Cluny hill near Forres appears to have been of a circular form, and has occupied nearly three acres of ground –
Has been defended by an embankment of earth, and a Moat of about twelve feet broad each –
It commands an extensive view of the Moray Firth – In a hollow

on the south side of the hill there appears to have been a small camp of about ten yards square –

There are both similarities and important difference with Chalmers' published footnote ([Extracts B.2](#)). The encampment is described as circular and occupies a far smaller area: slightly less than three acres (~15,000 m², assuming Scottish acres). It describes both the ditch and bank as being 12 feet wide (not only the ditch). It notes the view of the Moray Firth, absent from Chalmers text but obvious from the hill itself. Finally it records the presence of a 'camp' rather than a 'post' that is ten yards (not feet) square in a hollow to the south (presumably Cluny Hill Hollow). There is no mention of this camp being defended by a ditch and rampart as in Chalmers' text.

Macdonell's description cannot be taken at face value either. Macdonell was not himself a surveyor and an addendum in the hand of MacWilliam, who presumably must have received the note for forwarding to Chalmers, reads: 'The whole hills have been planted for some years the whins [gorse] hained [enclosed] so that the particulars could not be well ascertained.' To complicate matters even further are three brief additions by Chalmers. The first is a heading: 'From Rob't McWilliam Land Surveyor 1798.' The second amends the description to read '*nearly* of a circular form'. Third, above 'nearly three acres' Chalmers has written '6 acres, 3 roods and 25 falls', the same measurements which appear in his publication.

There is much which remains unclear. No plan was found in the four archives consulted although one is mentioned in *Caledonia*. Presumably something of that nature must have existed in order to produce Chalmers' map of Forres and further investigations in the archive may yet bring it to light. No Robert McWilliam is known from county records and its similarity with James McWilliam may not be coincidental. It is not clear how James McWilliam came to know the state of the hill unless he visited it himself. It is also striking that Chalmers' note appears to directly attribute correspondence written by James to Robert. There may have been a confusion in names and professions by Chalmers, although this seems less likely in the case of a regular correspondent with possible family ties. The county records give no middle name (which would be unusual at this date), McWilliam's signature always reads 'Jas[.] McWilliam' ([Archive C.3, 43](#)), and his epitaph in Elgin Cathedral also gives James McWilliam as his full name (Moray Burial Ground Research Group, 2009, record 944). A search of parish birth registers on the ScotlandsPeople website²⁸ returns five Robert McWilliams born in the area between 1740 and 1785: four from the parish of Mortlach, and one from the parish of Bellie. There is no information as to their later

²⁸<https://www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk/>

occupations, and of course there is no particular reason to suppose that the surveyor was born locally.

However they were conducted, at least two surveys seem to have taken place: an earlier, less precise one by Macdonell and a later one by Robert (or James) McWilliam. The difference between 'nearly three acres' and almost seven acres seems hard to explain away, even accounting for the gorse and Macdonell's lack of surveying expertise. The wording of Chalmers' and Macdonell's text are slightly different however. Macdonell speaks of a circular 'encampment' of three acres, describing the ditch and rampart separately. In contrast, Chalmers text describes the shape of a 'hill-fort' or 'strength' as being between oval and circular, and then gives the area within the ramparts as being over 6 acres in extent. A possible interpretation that would reconcile these two descriptions is of a circular feature of three acres in size sat within a much larger ovoid ring of bank and ditch. This being said, Chalmers description of the feature to the south seems both much harder to square with Macdonell's and the landscape, so looking for a neat solution may be unjustified. All things considered, Macdonell's account of the camp to the south seems both more coherent and in keeping with the topography.

5.4 Summary

The documents in the Chalmers Archive offer a new perspective on the features described in *Caledonia*. They demonstrate that Chalmers never visited the site but offer a more reliable witness, a local Minister well-acquainted with the area who provides a more coherent description, and whose interpretation as a Viking fortification was apparently accepted wisdom at the time. Questions remain, and some may be resolved by further examination of the archive, but for now it provides a substantial body of evidence that a large bank and ditch enclosure, with a potentially related feature to the south, was clearly visible at the end of the 18th century. We now consider the extent to which this testimony is reflected in the contemporary state of Cluny Hill.

6 Current State

The historical evidence now offers clear if unsubstantiated testimony for the presence of a significant earthwork on Cluny Hill in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. We will now investigate the contemporary state of the hill to ascertain the extent to which it resembles these accounts. First, we look at the current topography of the hills, made possible by LIDAR. Second we investigate the planting of yew trees described in *Algie's Guide to Forres*. Third we inspect a number of distinct features on the hill related to the enclosure, including the scarping identified by the Ordnance Survey. Finally, we will consider the evidence from a geophysical survey conducted in 2016.

6.1 LIDAR

One of the most significant advances in modern archaeological survey has been the introduction of LIDAR, a laser-based remote sensing technique, usually undertaken from an airborne vehicle. LIDAR not only allows for precise measurement of terrain elevation (often with sub-metre precision) but is also capable of penetrating tree cover, thereby revealing features in the land surface which are not easily visible even by direct inspection or aerial photography. The Scottish Orienteering Association commissioned a LIDAR survey of Cluny Hill in 2015 in order to assist event planning and have kindly made it available for this research.²⁹

Generated directly from the LIDAR survey, [Maps A.16](#) shows the relative height of each of the hills. 1 m contour lines have been generated which give a better approximation of their shape and show up many of the paths cut into them but the remnants of any earthworks are hard to determine. A much clearer impression can be achieved by calculating a 'slope' value for each cell (the maximum degree of inclination between two opposite neighbouring measurements). With false colour this allows us to see more clearly any significant deviations from the natural curvature of the hills ([Maps A.17](#)). The paths now stand out more clearly, but it is also possible to make out a distinct, ditch-like depression to the north of the path encircling the northern hill, as well as a shallower linear depression running parallel to the southwest section of the path, but higher up the slope. These features match the description of the *Guide to Forres* ([Extracts B.7](#)), the grid references in the OS reports ([Extracts B.10](#)), and the northern scarp in the OS maps ([Maps A.15](#)).

²⁹Information about LIDAR coverage made available by the SOA can be found at: <http://www.scottish-orienteering.org/soa/page/lidar-data-available>

An additional benefit of LIDAR is the ability to convert it into a 3-dimensional digital elevation model. When this is done in conjunction with the false colour slope, the line of these depressions not only become clearer, but it is possible to see how they intersect with the present 'Circular Path' described by Algie. They are not simply stand alone features, but a complete circuit can be delineated. A 2D profile of such a model with vertical exaggeration is shown in [Images E.2, 53](#). By isolating this feature within a Geographic Information System (GIS) the internal area can be calculated, which comes to ~35,200 m², extremely close to the measurement of 35,084 m² surveyed by McWilliam ([Maps A.18](#)). At the time the 1798 survey was undertaken the Circular Path did not yet exist, as can be seen from the 1823 Wood Map ([Maps A.13](#)) and McWilliam's addendum ([Archive C.3](#)). Consequently, some other than the path must have been the basis for recording.

6.2 Yew Trees

While the *Guide to Forres* ([Extracts B.7](#)) offers important second-hand testimony about the planting of yew trees, it doesn't provide much detail other than that it was carried out at John Miller's instigation. Miller moved to Forres in early 1837 and founded the *Forres, Elgin & Nairn Gazette* the same year. He is described by Watson & Watson as 'an indefatigable antiquarian explorer' (1868, p.249, footnote). A search of the *Gazette* archives reveals a great deal more information about the event. On September 5th, 1845 the paper reported:

It is in contemplation to mark the site of the old British camp—part of which was demolished when the walks were formed some years ago—by planting English yews at certain distances in the fosse or trench all round the camp, which is in the form of an ellipse and measures eight hundred yards in circuit. This is a monument of antiquity well worth preserving, for from this spot, without doubt, did the courageous Vacomagi, the aborigines of the province, hurl defiance on the ninth Roman legion as they passed en route from Cromdale to Phtoroton. ([Newspaper Reports D.5](#))

The following summer, on June 6th, 1846, a reply to a letter from India concerning the 'British Camp' reports that:

... the area within the ramparts of the British Camp on the Cluny Hills, is stated by Chalmers (Caledonia) to be 6 acres, 3 roods, 25 falls. It measures in circuit about 300 yards. On the north and south-west sides of the hill it is still distinctly visible but

other parts of it have been destroyed by the encroachments of the lately constructed public walks. Irish and English yew trees have been planted last spring, alternately 50 or 60 yards equidistant, along the line of the camp, interspersed with a few walnuts, all of which, we are glad to say, are thriving.; and if protected for a few years, will hand down to posterity the land-marks of the venerable site—on which our forefathers fought for independence with the ‘Conquerors of the world’. ([Newspaper Reports D.6](#))

The enthusiasm with which both the camp and planting are described suggests that Miller himself may have authored both pieces. They provide a host of additional information: the fact that much of the earthwork had been destroyed several years previously, the species of yews (interspersed with walnut trees), the distance between them, the fact that they were planted within the ditch, the year and season of planting (spring 1846) and even the length and approximate shape of the circuit, which suggests that it was, at least until its destruction, still fairly complete. The enormous discrepancy in circumference seems likely to be a typo, replacing an ‘8’ with a ‘3’. The area identified by LIDAR has a circuit of 760 m = 830 yards. As the trees could offer secondary evidence for the circuit of the ramparts as understood by Miller and his contemporaries, can they still be identified?

A number of mature yew trees can indeed be found on Cluny Hill ([Images E.5, 68-70](#)). Many of these are found very close to the ditch and path circuit identified by the LIDAR, although one is within the circuit besides the path to the tower, and there appear to be two linear series on either side of Cluny Hill Hollow ([Maps A.19](#)). Although there are fewer of these trees than the number described by the *Gazette*, rotten stumps which may have been yew or walnut trees can sometimes be seen between them along the same line. An analysis of the wood should be able to identify the species and the better preserved stumps may even be susceptible to dendrochronology which would establish whether they were planted in 1846.

6.3 Additional Evidence

Despite the presence of autumn leaf-cover, a visual inspection of the north and south linear features shows clear, extended depressions in the ground surface that do not appear to have been caused by the construction of a path and show a clear disjuncture with the modern path network ([Images E.6, 71-76](#)). These areas are in places overgrown with mature bushes and trees. Measurements were taken at a series of points on both a) the linear features, and b) the circular path where it may have supplanted the course of an enclosure.

It approximated twelve feet in all cases where the boundary was sufficiently well delineated for a measurement to be made. This fits closely with the dimensions of the 'fossa' given by Macdonell and Chalmers, although no raised bank or rampart of the dimensions described by Macdonell is visible.

Part of the presumed circuit intersects with the path leading down from the northeast corner of the Circular Path path before breaking away to the west ([Images E.6, 71](#)). Where the path coincides with the assumed line of the ditch there is a prominent raised bank on the outward side which also contains the stumps of trees ([Images E.7, Figs. 77-78](#)). Both bank and stumps end abruptly at the point where the ditch feature breaks west. The path itself is also approximately twelve feet wide.

In addition to the ditches and trees are two large boulders on the summit of the north hill ([Images E.4](#)). One lies embedded within the pathway leading to the tower, the other sits upon the ground surface. Given that the natural geology of the hills is of morain till, they may simply be large inclusions. Nevertheless, the lack of other large boulders at surface level and their proximity to what seems like a natural break in the rampart hints leaves open the possibility that they are the remnants of construction material.

6.4 Geophysical Survey

In August 2016, a short magnetometry survey was carried out by the author and Christine Markussen (University of Vienna). This took magnetic readings in four areas of interest at 0.125/0.5 m spacings using a fluxgate gradiometer. The absolute value of the magnetic field in a given location can vary considerably due to the nature of nearby materials (including their water content), temperature and variety of other environmental variables. This means that they are always open to multiple possible interpretations. Nonetheless, the tendency of particular soil types or subsurface features to affect the field differently, makes it a useful technique for identify the interfaces between them. The four areas surveyed can be seen in [Maps A.20](#).

Area A This area is composed of 4 full 20x20m grids and one partial grid, capturing parts of the southeast and southwest linear depressions where they meet the main path to Nelson's tower. The southwest depression appears as a contiguous region of negative magnetic values, bounded by a region of positive magnetic values to the south indicating the bank. The southeast linear depression is less clear, as trees and bushes greatly restricted access, but here a similar band of negative values appears to show the depression, with the ground to the south showing up as positive values. Both LIDAR and magnetometry suggest an inward curve of both features at this location. All these measurements

are consistent with the former presence of a ditch. The inward curve, which presumably predates the modern path, may indicate the position of a break or entrance. There is significant magnetic variation throughout the rest of the area. This may be caused by large stone inclusions. As the geology is morain till, it cannot be the presence of bedrock. There are also a number of dipolar anomalies, especially in the northwestern grid.

In the process of conducting the survey we located three previously excavated holes which were cleared of leaves for inspection. Two of these are in the southwest linear depression (and can be seen as areas of high negative values). Both are square in form with sides of exactly 1 meter. The third is further up the slope to the north and about 1 x 1.5m. The original depth of all of these holes is unknown due to backfilling. The size and shape of the holes suggest that they may be test-pits, possibly dug by Forres Academy students in an attempt to locate the ditch in 1972 (Forbes, 1975, p.13).

Area B Composed of 5 full 20x20m grids along the crest and northern slope, east of Nelson's Tower. It is a relatively large area of gentle sloping terrain, with moderate tree cover and few ground plants. No clear pattern was identified in the magnetic distribution, other than a very large dipolar anomaly in the north central grid, where the hill slopes away steeply. Time constraints prevented a survey of the northeast grid, so it is not clear whether this connects with the dipolar anomaly on the northern edge of the southeast grid. A number of other dipolar anomalies can be seen throughout the survey area, and seem to form linear series. No surface features appear to correspond with these readings. Over 10 small pits were identified in the vicinity of this area, although very few fell directly within the survey area itself. The cause of these is unclear.

Area C One partial 15x15m grid capturing part of the northern linear depression. This is flanked by steep slopes on either side, with thick leaf deposits and significant vegetation at ground level. For this reason the survey was limited to the smallest practicable area that might identify a magnetic signature. Despite the comparatively small area, the feature stands out clearly as an area of positive magnetic values, bounded by negative values on either side. The areas of highest positive and negative values are on the south side of the linear depression. They could conceivably be caused by objects rolling downhill from the public path immediately above it and coming to rest at this point.

Area D One 3x10m grid following the main path to Nelson's tower where

a large stone is embedded in the path. This was surveyed to get an approximate idea of whether there was a visible magnetic signature for similar stone inclusions. The results appear to show a strip of higher magnetic values crossing the path in the area of the stone.

Interpreted in combination with the LIDAR and visual inspection, the survey results offer additional evidence for the presence of a significant ditch and possible bank in those locations identified by historical testimony. It has additionally shown the presence of significant anomalies in the magnetic field, including a large strong dipolar field near the summit, but at present none of these can be easily interpreted or associated with surface structures. Finally, the presence of numerous holes around the site indicates that invasive activity has taken place in recent years. It is not clear whether this is a result of earlier attempts to confirm the presence of a ditch, nighthawking, tree planting, or some other cause.

6.5 Summary

Taking into account the fact that the hills have been significantly landscaped, enough of the hill's surface features remain intact to support the 18th and 19th century reports of a ditch, bank and yew trees. Well-defined extended depressions exist and intersect with the current path network in a way which is consistent with the description and dimensions of a ditch, (and possible bank or rampart) described by Macdonell, Chalmers and Miller. The planting of yew trees can also be confirmed, and hints at a traditional association between the enclosure and Cluny Hill Hollow. The presence of boulders near the intersection of these features and the path to the tower offers only circumstantial evidence for stonework. The geophysical survey indicates that subsurface features reflect above-ground observations. Overall, the weight of evidence now points strongly to the existence of a significant earthwork enclosing the summit of the northern hill at the start of the 19th century. It appears to have suffered severe damage some time before 1840, and all but faded from view in the following decades. The next section will attempt to document the process by which such a large and conspicuous feature of the Forres landscape could effectively 'disappear'.

7 Destruction and Disappearance

A tremendous change took place on the Cluny Hills throughout the 19th century. This was in the form of both forestation and the physical construction of roads, paths, buildings and other infrastructure. The trend for ‘improvements’ was driven by a variety factors: income for the town, popular policies following the Great Reform Act of 1832, and private initiative. Fortunately many of these developments can be traced in local press reports.

7.1 Landscaping

Of principal concern to this report is identifying how and when the earthwork itself was affected. From both the LIDAR data and Miller’s reports, it is clear that the damage was overwhelmingly caused by the construction of paths. Most significant is the track referred to as the ‘Circular Path’, which forms a loop around the summit of the north hill and appears to coincide with the line of the earthwork on the western and eastern sides. A second path corresponding with the earthwork to the north branches off from the Circular Path on the northeast corner and leads downhill.

A *terminus post quem* and *terminus ante quem* can easily be established for these paths from the Great Reform Act Map of 1832 ([Maps A.14](#)) and the first edition OS Map of 1870, surveyed over the previous two years ([Maps A.15](#)). The topography of the hills in the earlier map seems partly based on Wood’s map of 1823 ([Maps A.13](#)), but includes a number of other important differences. These include the newly constructed Clovenside Road to the northeast and the apparent disappearance of the paths leading towards Nelson’s tower. In both of these maps there are very few established paths in the hills, with two of them leading to Cluny Hill Hollow from Bullet Loan (now St. Leonard’s Road). From the principal path, two further paths branch off up the side of the north hill in the map of 1823. Both seem to end near the approximate boundary of the ditch and rampart, one on the north side, one on the south side. No ditch or rampart is marked although the break in slope, also seen in Wood’s map, might be interpreted as a terrace. From one of these a further path branches off and leads to Nelson’s Tower. This can probably be dated to 1806 when the foundations for the tower were laid. The more westerly path could be earlier but no paths are mentioned in sources before this date. In the map of 1832 only the western path is marked, perhaps because it had been improved or was more substantial.

The 1845 article which describes the planting of yew trees ([Newspaper Reports D.5](#)) states that ‘part of [the hill-fort] was demolished when the walks were formed some years ago’. This could presumably be no later than 1840, leaving an intervening period from the survey of the 1832 map of

about a decade. The *Gazette* was founded in June 1837 and so cannot offer evidence for much of the period. A fascinating episode is reported in June 1839 that sheds light on the manner in which many of the tracks was constructed ([Newspaper Reports D.2](#)). A petition was presented by the town Treasurer on behalf of a large number of private individuals advocating the construction of a new road on the hills, apparently at their own expense and, according to a later story, with their own labour ([Newspaper Reports D.7](#)). The new road was intended to '[open] up some new and interesting views of the surrounding country' and had been planned by a Mr Logie of Blackhillock. County records and an 1854 *Gazette* article ([Newspaper Article D.8](#)) show Logie's residence to have been View Bank, Bullet Loan, directly adjacent to the path leading to the north hill.³⁰ The petition was accepted by the council but it is notable that a similar motion had faced opposition from unnamed council members at the previous meeting who were not then present. Council records may help to clarify the nature of the debate, or even provide a plan of the road itself, which may be the now paved road running from View Bank, around the western hill, and back to St Leonard's Road.

Failing explicit testimony, can the construction of the paths in the line of the earthwork be clarified any further at the present time? The First Edition OS 6-inch-to-the-mile map ([Maps A.15](#)) shows the radical transformation of the hills in the four decades from 1832. It presents a complex circuit of branching and intersecting walks in addition to a cemetery, a gravel pit, a flagstaff and the building and grounds of the new Hydropathic Establishment. The majority of these can be tied to developments after 1845 ([Maps A.21](#)):

- Most of the lower paths on the western hill seem related to the cemetery, first established in 1849;³¹
- The path on the summit of the western hill was constructed in 1855 (reported *Inverness Courier*, 19 July 1855);³²
- The paths on the summits of the eastern and southern hills were constructed in 1867 (reported *Elgin Courier*, 7 June 1867).³³ It seems probable that the path connecting them is related to the Hydropathic Establishment, constructed in 1863/4.

³⁰Oddly, a later article names the eastern hill as 'Black Hill' ([Newspaper Article D.9](#)).

³¹[http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/74548/FORRES%20\(CLUNY%20HILL\)%20CEMETERY](http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/74548/FORRES%20(CLUNY%20HILL)%20CEMETERY)

³²<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000446/18550719/037/0006>

³³<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000457/18670607/012/0005>

A Commissioner's Report for the British parliament in 1835 makes clear that some of the walks were produced through private subscription although this could refer to the walks leading to Nelson's tower ([Extracts B.5](#)). On 9 November 1838 the poet Evan MacColl visited Cluny Hill but makes no note of a hill-fort (MacColl & Mackenzie, 1887, p.331). This contrasts with his mention of the vitrified fort at Relugas the following week and an evident interest in local antiquities expressed within his journal.

7.2 Planting

An 1848 *Nairnshire Mirror* article suggests that in the mid-18th century all of the broom had been removed from the hills and they were covered in grass ([Newspaper Reports D.7](#)). It reports that in the earliest recollection of the 'oldest inhabitant' none of the hills had trees or bushes on them at all. In such an environment the line of any enclosure would have stood out clearly against the hillside. This was presumably the scene presented to Richard Pococke as he passed by on the road to Elgin in July 1760 ([Extracts B.1](#)).

It did not last much longer. The *Annals of Forres* reports that in 1789 'a plan was made of the Town's property and a decision made to plant the Cloven Hills' (Douglas & Robertson, 1934, p.104). This is almost certainly the 'Plan of the Califer Lands' produced by George Brown³⁴ that is referred to in an inventory of the Forres Tolbooth Record Room conducted in 1857 (Douglas & Robertson, 1934, p.303) but seemingly since lost. The planting itself may have actually begun a couple of years later. An advertisement in the *Aberdeen Journal* in October 1791 calls for someone to undertake the work of planting Scots Pine, ideally within the same year, and to maintain them for 7 years ([Newspaper Extract D.1](#)).

The lack of a local paper until 1837 means that evidence for the level of tree cover in the interim is thin, but helpful documents exist. Macdonnell's description in the 'old' *Statistical Account of Scotland* states that 'the South and South-east parts of this parish are hilly, covered with short heath and furze' (McDonnell, 1796, p.448). McWilliam's addendum of 1798 also makes clear that the gorse cover at that time was sufficiently dense to impede surveying ([Archives C.3](#)). In 1815 a fire destroyed many of the trees which were subsequently replanted (Douglas & Robertson, 1934, p.536). An aquatint engraving of Nelson's tower by William Daniell—originally painted in the summer of the same year—shows a large number of young trees which are starting to obscure the view to the east ([Images E.3, 54](#)). It is not clear whether it pre- or post-dates the fire. Another engraving by Daniell shows

³⁴http://libindx.moray.gov.uk/people/people_details_mainframe.asp?REF_ID=NM014508. Brown would go on to produce the map in Leslie's *General View of Agriculture* in 1810 ([Maps A.11](#))

Cluny Hill and the tower in the distance, but they are too small to pick out any detail ([Images E.1, 44](#)). A view from Breakback, purportedly produced in 1823, shows light tree cover ([Images E.1, 45](#)), but is potentially derived from Wood's map of the same year ([Maps A.13](#)). A plate in Lauder's account of the great flood of 1829 appears to show a row of tall but individuated trees along the crest of the hill ([Images E.1, 46](#)). The 1832 Great Reform Map also shows tree cover, apparently much denser on the slopes facing Grant Park ([Maps A.14](#)) and an 1835 Parliamentary Report noted that the 'the wood upon [the Cluny Hills] is rising into value' ([Extracts B.5](#)).

In 1841 the *Gazette* published a detailed report of a special meeting of the town council, in which a subcommittee toured the hills and identified additional planting to be done ([Newspaper Reports D.4](#)). It notes that on the north side of the northern hill the oak trees were starting to mature, whereas on the south side it remained predominantly gorse interspersed with occasional young trees. The council resolved to remove the gorse and plant additional trees. Some indication of the sparse nature of tree cover to the south can be seen in Charles Cranmer's painting *The Riding of the Marches* which depicts this major town event which took place on October 1st, 1840 ([Images E.1, 48](#)).

Miller's 1845 report of the council's plan to plant yew trees also mentions earlier additions of birches, firs and rantrees(?) to the oak and scots pine ([Newspaper Reports D.5](#)). The more detailed description in 1846 mentions both English and Irish yews along with walnut trees, but also mentions that the enclosure is 'still distinctly visible' ([Newspaper Reports D.6](#)). An 1848 report by the *Nairnshire Mirror* states that many of the firs had recently been cut down for sale, but that they were rapidly being supplanted by 'thickly planted' young trees of varying kinds ([Newspaper Reports D.7](#)). In 1854 another report by the *Gazette* declares that 'the Oak, Maple, Chestnut, Beech, and other hardwood trees are well up, and thrown their umbrageous shade over the most frequented portion of the walks'. The view of Cluny Hill from Balnaferry printed in *Morayshire Described* c. 1868 may be potentially misleading ([Images E.1, 49](#)). Although there appears to be a clear view to the base of the tower and ridges along the side of the hill, the text reports that the hills 'present one unbroken plantation' and that the 'greater part [of the walks] are agreeably shaded with trees' (Watson & Watson, 1868, p.273). It additionally notes that 'sixty years ago these hills were covered with whins and heather'.

By the 1870s the woodland had fully matured. This can be seen in another view from Breakback, possibly dating from 1874 ([Images E.1,50](#)), and a series of photographs taken by the photographer George Wilson sometime

between 1853 and 1877³⁵. A description of the woods from 1881 complains of much thicker vegetation which now obstructed the view from the hill and thus presumably also of the hill itself ([Newspaper Reports D.12](#)). A photograph from the south side of Forres dated 1898 shows the entire hillside wooded up to the height of the first floor of Nelson's Tower ([Images E.1, 51](#)). While the trees have since grown taller, it presents very much the same view familiar to Forresians today ([Images E.1, 52](#)).

7.3 Summary

The enclosure appears to have been damaged by three separate sections of pathway. The first, on the west side, appears on Wood's map of 1823 and may have been laid in association with the construction of Nelson's tower (1806-12) or even earlier. The second, on the east side, is part of the Circular Path around the summit and seems to have been constructed between 1832 and 1840. The third, on the north side, is the path leading downhill from the northeast corner of the Circular Path towards a gate on Clovenside Rd. This may have been constructed in conjunction with the Circular Path as a means for access, but could conceivably have a later date. The concern expressed about the destruction and future preservation of the enclosure in 1845 provides a likely *terminus ante quem*. The majority of damage to the enclosure can therefore be constrained to a narrow period of about 13 years or so, but may have occurred in stages. Not everything was destroyed however, and around 50% of the total circuit remains untouched by the network of paths.

The diminishing visual impact of the enclosure was not only a product of landscaping but also the growth of vegetation: from grass (pre-1789), to low scrub and gorse (1789-1806), to light tree cover (1806-1850s), and finally the heavy tree cover which persists today. Even in 1887, Algie could write that the yew trees were a helpful aid in tracing its outline. By the time of his death (c. 1907) this was apparently no longer practical. *The Annals of the Royal Burgh of Forres* remarked in 1934 that there is 'practically nothing to be seen' and that the enclosure 'is not now visible' ([Extracts B.8](#)). It is therefore hardly surprising that the visits by the Ordnance Survey in 1943 and 1963 should have reached such sceptical conclusions – by then it had almost entirely disappeared from view.

³⁵[http://digitool.abdn.ac.uk/R/EN2TQ71J5MQX1I3NM6YQR9BVKK88VXV133K99FUGQ49D8TGP5A-02091?](http://digitool.abdn.ac.uk/R/EN2TQ71J5MQX1I3NM6YQR9BVKK88VXV133K99FUGQ49D8TGP5A-02091?func=collections-result&collection_id=1293)
[func=collections-result&collection_id=1293](#). GB 0231 MS 3792/E2713; GB 0231 MS 3792/D0174;
GB 0231 MS 3792/D0251; GB 0231 MS 3792/E2717; GB 0231 MS 3792/A0035

8 Conclusions and Recommendations

The final section of this report acts as a summary of the evidence collected to date and the conclusions which can be drawn from them. It then turns briefly to the thornier issue of interpretation. It recommends that further investigation be undertaken in order to better establish the nature and history of the site.

8.1 Review of the available evidence

After a short overview describing Cluny Hill itself, we surveyed the published evidence for and against the presence of a hilltop enclosure, concluding that it was overwhelmingly derivative of *Caledonia* and/or of dubious validity. A small number of key sources – specifically Pococke (1887), Chalmers (1807) Leslie (1811) and Algie (1887) – though individually weak, collectively offered a basis for further investigation. This was followed by a look at alternative sources, in particular the Chalmers Archive and early newspaper reports. These offered substantive new evidence which strongly supports the case for a major archaeological feature still visible in the early 19th century.

Section 6 considered the current physical surface of the hills, through LIDAR, geophysical survey and direct inspection. It made a number of observations, including the presence of extensive linear depressions and magnetic anomalies which intersect with the path system in ways that closely correspond with the dimensions cited by Chalmers. Importantly, Chalmers testimony predates the presence of the Circular Path. The width of the depression, presence of yew trees and boulders, and a number of what may be yew and walnut tree stumps, provide additional circumstantial evidence and may suggest the inclusion of Cluny Hill Hollow within the notional footprint of the site as it was understood in the 18th century. It should not be inferred from this that any archaeological features present in these locations are related. The final section considered the process by which the earthwork was both partially destroyed and obscured by landscaping and the planting of woodland. The impact on its visibility can clearly be traced through maps, illustrations and press reports, and explains the understandable scepticism of OS surveyors in the mid-20th century.

Taking all this evidence into account, we can conclude to a high degree of probability that a large enclosure encompassing some 36,000 m² was visible on the summit of Cluny Hill at the beginning of the 19th century. The preservation of this evidence is in some ways remarkably fortuitous. Macdonell moved to Forres only after planting had begun, and Miller may have arrived after its partial erasure from the landscape by the construction

of paths. Were it not for their antiquarian interests, as well as those of Chalmers – who almost certainly never visited the hills himself – knowledge of the site might have been lost altogether. Despite their actions the obscurity of the site has only increased over time, leading to a persistent lack of archaeological and historical attention. We must therefore consider its potential significance, and what actions might be taken to preserve and better understand it.

8.2 Possible interpretations

The inconspicuous nature of the site means that it has rarely been considered in relation to our changing picture of Scotland's past, and only ever in passing. Major changes have occurred in our understanding of Iron Age, Pictish and early Scottish periods in recent years, as well as thinking about hill-forts and other hill-top enclosures in the North (Foster, 2014, xv-xxiii). As noted previously, earlier authors have assigned the earthwork to multiple different historical eras and cultures, including the Neolithic, Middle Iron Age, Pictish, early Scottish and Viking periods. None of these claims have been anchored in evidence that would be considered acceptable to modern scholarship. Given how little we still know about the site, there is a significant danger of perpetuating this confusion so the following comments remain speculative until more data becomes available.

Some theories seem capable of being ruled out, at least provisionally. There seems little reason to suspect (nor has it ever been proposed) that the enclosure post-dates the establishment of the burgh of Forres in or around the 12th century. Furthermore, Pococke and Macdonell's 'Danish Camp' theory is solely a product of its proximity to Sueno's Stone and Burghead. While these are potentially significant relationships, later archaeology and art historical analysis make clear that the Viking presence at Burghead was temporary, set within a pre-existing fortification, and did not produce Sueno's stone which is Early Scottish in character (Foster, 2014, p.154-5). Consequently, the case for a Viking fortification seems unfounded. The claim for a neolithic origin by Forbes (1975, p.13) has no evidence to support it at all and may simply be a mis-interpretation of earlier claims. Thus by process of elimination, an Early or Middle Iron Age, Pictish or Early Scottish origin seems most likely, although none of these possibilities are unproblematic on the basis of the very limited evidence available.

A Pictish or early Scottish origin is obviously tempting as an interpretation for a hilltop enclosure in Moray, especially given the recent relocation of the kingdom of Fortriu to north of the Mounth (Woolf, 2006). The presence and demise of two early Scottish kings at Forres – Domnall mac Causantín (Donald II, 889-900) and Dub mac Maíl Coluim (Duff, 962-967) – are docu-

mented by early chronicles. Malcolm II was also defeated by the Mormaer of Moray at Forres in 1008. The proximity of Sueno's Stone, dated to between the late 9th and mid-10th centuries, may also be relevant. However, Pictish and Early Scottish hill-forts are often (if not always) defended by timber-laced ramparts. The lack of any apparent rubble or scree from such defences does not help to promote such a theory. They are also usually smaller than Early and Middle Iron Age forts and so the scale of the enclosure (see below) seems unusually large for the residence or redoubt of a regional chief in this period.

The paucity of evidence available for Cluny reflects a much wider lack of information about Scottish hill-forts in general and those in the North-east in particular, though the recent ScARF report on Iron-Age Scotland does much to synthesize the available material (Hunter & Carruthers 2012, pp.68-94). While hill-forts are less common north of the Forth-Clyde line, this is only relative to the very large number of them in the south. Over 100 archaeological sites are identified as such between Inverness and Stonehaven. Theoretically this offers a large number of sites for comparison, but the challenges faced in doing so are significant. The term 'hill-fort' is poorly defined, including sites which are both extremely large (> 20,000 m²) and very small (< 250 m²). A broad classification scheme was developed by RCAHMS (now Historic Environment Scotland) but very few locations are have been assigned to this scheme. No unambiguously diagnostic features have been identified, with examples of differing sizes and fortification techniques known from all periods. Radiocarbon dating has been performed on only a very small number, and mostly on defensive structures, rather than internal features which would give a better indication of day-to-day use. Even in these cases, projecting what little we know of individual sites to those which seem superficially similar is a task fraught with difficulty and the potential to mislead.

Nonetheless, it makes sense to compare what is known about Cluny with other hill-forts north of the Mounth, if only to let future research focus on similarities and dissimilarities between them. In this we are aided by the excellent CANMORE service³⁶ which summarises details of all known archaeological sites and findspots in Scotland. A search for sites classified as 'FORT' or 'PROMONTORY FORT' and east of OSGB36 Easting 25000 was undertaken for the counties of Aberdeenshire, Morayshire, Banffshire, Inverness-shire, Nairn, Ross and Cromarty, Kincardineshire, returning 99 entries. Dimensions of each were gleaned from the record where available (typically as maximum length and breadth) in order to derive a maximum area for each. The dimensions of Bi- and multivallate forts were treated in-

³⁶<http://canmore.org.uk/>

dependently for each ring of enclosure. From this admittedly crude methodology it became clear that the some 80% of northeastern hillforts are < 1 ha. in size. 18 forts of 1 ha. or larger were identified (some are multiple enclosures of the same site). To these might be added the enclosed settlement at Tillymuick (categorised as a SETTLEMENT on CANMORE). Two of the smallest, Crathie Point³⁷ and Cullykhan,³⁸ are promontory forts in which the size is largely a factor of the peninsula's dimensions and so provide poor morphological comparanda with Cluny Hill. The largest, the outside enclosure of Tap o' Noth,³⁹ is approximately 21 ha. in size, some four times the size of the next largest. It also runs around the base of the hill and thus seems quite unlike Cluny Hill in form.

The extents of the remaining 15 forts were digitized so that their approximate areas could be calculated. The results are charted below. Cluny ranks fifth-largest (sixth including Tap o'Noth), in a group that seems notably larger than the rest which includes Hill Of Newleslie, Bruce's Camp, Dunnideer's outer enclosure, Durn Hill's outer enclosure, and possibly Little Conval's outer enclosure. Brief summaries from the CANMORE records are given below for comparison (areas are approximate):

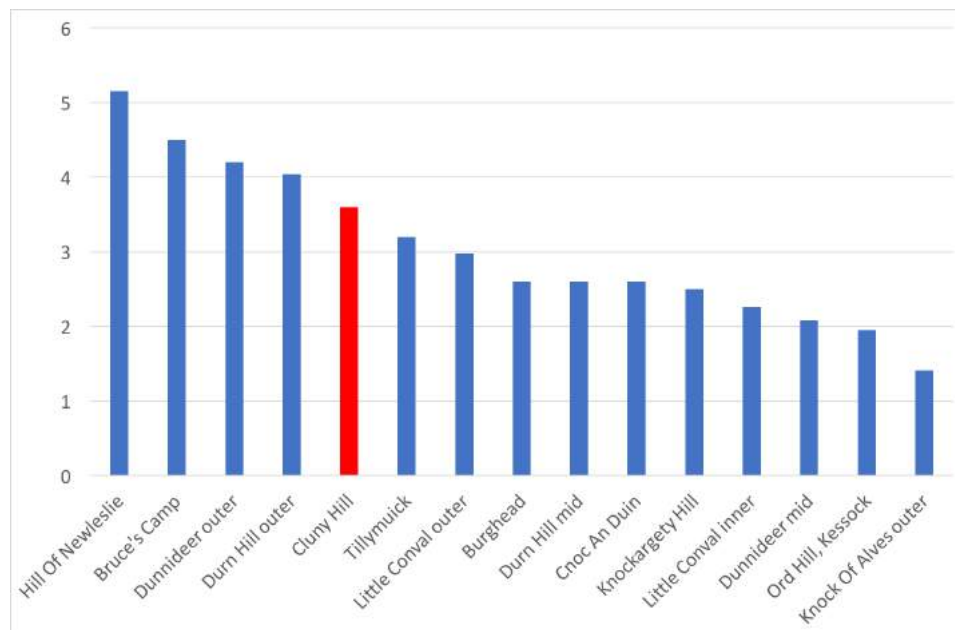


Figure 1: Comparative size of large hill forts in north-east Scotland (excluding Tap o'Noth)

³⁷<http://canmore.org.uk/site/17947>

³⁸<http://canmore.org.uk/site/19942>

³⁹<http://canmore.org.uk/site/17169>

- Hill of Newleslie 5.2 ha. 'Consists today of a bank and internal quarry ditch surrounding the hilltop (altitude 285 m) on three sides. On the S side no trace now remains due to ploughing associated with reseeding. The earthen bank measures between 4 m and 5 m wide, and is 0.5 m high. It may be rock cut at the E end. The internal quarry ditch is between 3 m and 4 m wide and 0.4 m deep. No entrance was detected. The fort measures 359 m E-W by 175 m transversely, making it one of the largest in the region, at over 4 hectares. (Watt 1983)⁴⁰
- Bruce's Camp 4.5 ha. 'The remains of this fort are situated on a rounded hill overlooking Inverurie from the SW... The fort measures 225 m from ESE to WNW by 135 m transversely internally and encloses an area of about 2.5 ha. The rampart, which is spread about 5 m in thickness and from 0.7 m to 1.5 m in height, is heavily disturbed around most of the circuit, and in several places, particularly on the SE, there are traces of a later enclosure wall of relatively recent date extending along its crest. An outer rampart extending along the SSW side of the fort and around the WNW end, is probably the remains of an earlier perimeter... At one point on the WNW this rampart is accompanied by a shallow external ditch (RCAHMS 2002).⁴¹
- Dunnideer 4.2 ha. 'Situated in an area of rough grazing on a prominent conical hill at an altitude of 265 m OD, this vitrified fort and its outer works are in turn surrounded by an incomplete trivallate system of defences. Slight traces of outer works appear as a ruinous stony bank which is seen best on the N and E but absent on the steep SW flank. The outermost line (E) of the trivallate defences is represented only by the remains of a marker trench seen as a slight terrace and situated well down the hill to enclose an area measuring about 290 m by 183 m; gaps for entrances have been left in the E and W. Line (D) is similarly marked-out and lies between 15.2 m and 45.7 m inside line (E); in this case, work on the construction of a rampart has begun on either side of each entrance-gap. The third line (C) cannot be followed across the steep SW flank of the hill but is otherwise similar to the outer pair. The fourth line (B) is a ruinous stony bank which is feeble at best and absent on the steep SW flank of the hill, but otherwise similar to the outer pair (D and E); it probably represents an outwork. The highly-vitrified innermost defence (A) encloses an area measuring 67 m by 27.4 m internally and is oblong on plan with a contemporary cistern near the W end; there is also a medieval tower within the interior. These remains must represent at least two main structural phases, but

⁴⁰<http://canmore.org.uk/site/17638>

⁴¹<http://canmore.org.uk/site/18586>

no evidence exists to indicate whether the vitrified fort preceded the unfinished outworks or vice versa. (NMRS 1977)⁴²

Durn Hill 4.0 ha. 'The fort on Durn Hill appears to have been uncompleted. The inner line is a shallow marker trench c. 0.5 m wide by 0.1 m deep which can be traced throughout its entire circuit. The outer line is a similar trench which can also be traced without much difficulty throughout its circuit. In the SW angle of this trench is an entrance c. 4.0 m wide. The medial line of defence, obviously unfinished, consists of a ditch with upcast bank on its outer lip, covering the SW angle for a distance of c. 140m. The ditch is c. 3.0 m wide by 0.8 m deep, and the bank is c. 4.0 m broad by 0.6 m high. In the centre of this stretch is a causeway c. 4.5 m wide. The remainder of this line can be traced round the summit of the hill as a slight scarp except on the NW segment where only a slight discolouration of the heather marks its course. A break in the SW angle of the inner trench can be faintly discerned, and is probably the entrance. Within the SW angle of the fort, where the medial rampart has been constructed, are the vague footings of two similar circular structures. The more southerly is contiguous with the ditch of the medial rampart and is 8.5 m in diameter and 0.1 m high; the other is 5.4 m in diameter and 0.1 m high - possibly hut circles. (OS 1961)

2014 work targeted the 'marker' ditches. The trenches quickly established that the ditches are in fact palisade slots encircling the summit of Durn Hill. A slot in the inner line of defence identified charred material within the foundation trench. Charred material was subsequently radiocarbon dated to the Early Iron Age (Beta- 381815 2450 +/- 30 BP; 760-410 cal BC 95.4%). The 2014 work suggests that Durn Hill is an exceptionally well preserved fort in NE Scotland with much of both inner and outer palisades traceable on the surface encircling the hill with the SW area further marked by a short section of rampart and ditch. (Noble & Sveinbjarnarson 2014)⁴³

Tillymuick 3.2 ha. 'A settlement comprised of an ill-defined, overgrown earth and stone bank (0.6 m maximum height and spread to 4.5 m maximum width) enclosing a sub-circular area (200 m NE- SW by 170 m NW-SE) containing traces of eight probable hut circles. In the WNW is a distinct 'bend' in the bank resembling an offset entrance but there is no apparent break in the debris, and the purpose of this change of alignment is uncertain. In the SSW a break of c. 10 m in the bank may

⁴²<http://canmore.org.uk/site/18128>

⁴³<http://canmore.org.uk/site/17973>

be the main entrance. Another break of 3 m in the N where an old track cuts though is presumably later. Yet another break some 30 m E of this track may be due to erosion. Inside the enclosure is a curving bank (about 18 m long, 4 m wide and 0.5 m high) about 40 m to the E of the entrance; this appears to be contemporary with the settlement but its purpose is obscure. (OS 1973)⁴⁴

Little Conval 3.0 ha. 'A hill fort with internal measurements of 680ft [207 m] by 400ft [122 m]. The innermost defences, which were incompletd, comprise a spread wall and marker trench. Outside this is a second marker trench, and a third line starts off 75ft [23 m] outside the second which becomes a wall 6ft [1.8 m] thick faced with large slabs. This ends among a group of shapeless enclosures which may be contemporary with the fort. A fourth line comprises a bank 110 yards [100 m] long covering the N approach. (Feachem 1963)⁴⁵

In addition to Durn Hill's Early Iron Age radiocarbon dates (760-410 BCE), burnt wood from the collapsed inner rampart at Dunnideer has given calibrated 2-sigma (95% probability) date ranges of 390-160 BCE (Cook, 2010). As it is now believed that multivallation generally indicates multi-phase occupation (Hunter & Carruthers 2012, p.80), an Early Iron Age date for the external defences is quite possible. The presence of a 'marker trench' at Little Conval, may also indicate the presence of a palisade, as was the case at Durn hill. However, no 'marker trench' has yet been found at Cluny Hill and could only be identified, if at all, through excavation.

Of course, use of the enclosure may well have extended over multiple centuries. For example, the apparent onomastic continuity between the Verturiones (3rd century), Waerteras (7th century) and Fortriu (Foster, 2014, 2-4) hints at a continuous sense of regional identity within that period. It is only applicable to the general region, however, and tells us little about social, economic, political or architectural practices, which may have varied dramatically. While reflecting on the enclosure's dating and nature we should also bear in mind that no significant archaeological finds have been reported from the enclosure itself or the surrounding hills. This is despite major landscaping, large building projects, the establishment of a cemetery and reservoir, and untold numbers of locals, tourists and Hydropathic patients wandering the hills. Absence of evidence may not equate to evidence of absence but many hilltop enclosures within the British Isles were never occupied as a place of residence or defence and Cluny Hill may be among them.

⁴⁴<http://canmore.org.uk/site/18212>

⁴⁵<http://canmore.org.uk/site/16307>

8.3 Need for further investigation

At this stage then, we should accept that any serious attempt to interpret the site must wait for further evidence to be produced. There may well be more 18th and 19th century documentation to be found in council archives, and perhaps in the Chalmers Archive as well. Such evidence is unlikely to radically alter the narrative described above, even if it helps to fill in much detail.

Yet desk-based assessment can only ever show that the existence of an enclosure is highly probable. To fully confirm it we must turn to archaeological survey. The site has suffered enormous disturbance already so this must be conducted with the least impact on the site that is possible. Much can be learned through remote sensing techniques such as magnetometry, Ground Penetrating Radar, and Electro-Resistivity surveys. Auguring could help establish the depth and composition of the linear depressions, as well as the extent to which a ditch could still be preserved beneath the modern paths. A survey of the tree stumps identified in Section 6.2 would help establish the footprint of the site as it was understood in 1846. Any survey should also include Cluny Hill Hollow, in addition to the enclosure and its immediate surroundings. The resulting information would provide vital data that could narrow down the range of possible interpretations and guide any future excavation. Excavation itself would allow us to establish the profile of the ditch, the foundations of any rampart or palisade, and produce a host of environmental, and potentially artefact material, which could help establish the date of its construction or demise.

Given the cultural and historical association between Forres and such important figures in early Scottish History as Macbeth, Malcolm II and King Dub, remarkably little is known about its history before the establishment of the burgh. Confirming the presence of a major hilltop enclosure within the historic boundary of the town has the potential to offer a tremendous source of information about its origins—which may be much earlier than suspected—and of Moray more generally. Indeed, an enclosure may only be the most prominent archaeological feature on the site. Modern archaeological methods will be able to tell us much more about Cluny Hill's use and transformation by the people of Forres and their predecessors.

Acknowledgements

This research was assisted by a large number of people. Grateful acknowledgement is expressed to Rhona McQueen, James Nock & Emma Robbie (Moray Heritage Centre), George Alexander, Billy Laing & Heather Shaw (Forres Heritage Trust), Olive Geddes & Hilary White (National Library of Scotland), Claire Herbert (Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service), Janet Trythall, Dave Anderson, Leanne Demay, Mary Saunders, Gary Lock, Andrew Wright, Colin Matheson (Scottish Orienteering Association), Kirsteen Mulhern (National Records of Scotland), Jan Smith (University of Aberdeen), Paul Cripps, Angus Winchester and India Brown. Special thanks are due to Christopher Fleet (National Library of Scotland), Peter McKeague (RCAHMS), Jessica Ogden, Zoe Pollock, John Pouncett (University of Oxford), Michael Sharpe and Holly Willmott, all of whom went out of their way in providing important evidence, comment and equipment. The greatest thank you is reserved for Christine Markussen and her tireless work conducting the geophysical survey.

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Appendices

A Maps

A.1 Location of Cluny Hill, Moray, Scotland

Figure 2: Location of Cluny Hill in relation to Moray Firth, Inverness and Easter Ross. Cluny Hill marked in red. ©Google Maps.



Figure 3: Location of Cluny Hill in relation to Findhorn Bay and Burghead. Cluny Hill marked in red. ©Google Maps.



Figure 4: Location of Cluny Hill in relation to Forres and River Findhorn. Cluny Hill marked in red. ©Google Maps.



Figure 5: Satellite overview of Cluny Hill. Boundary marked in red. ©Google Maps.



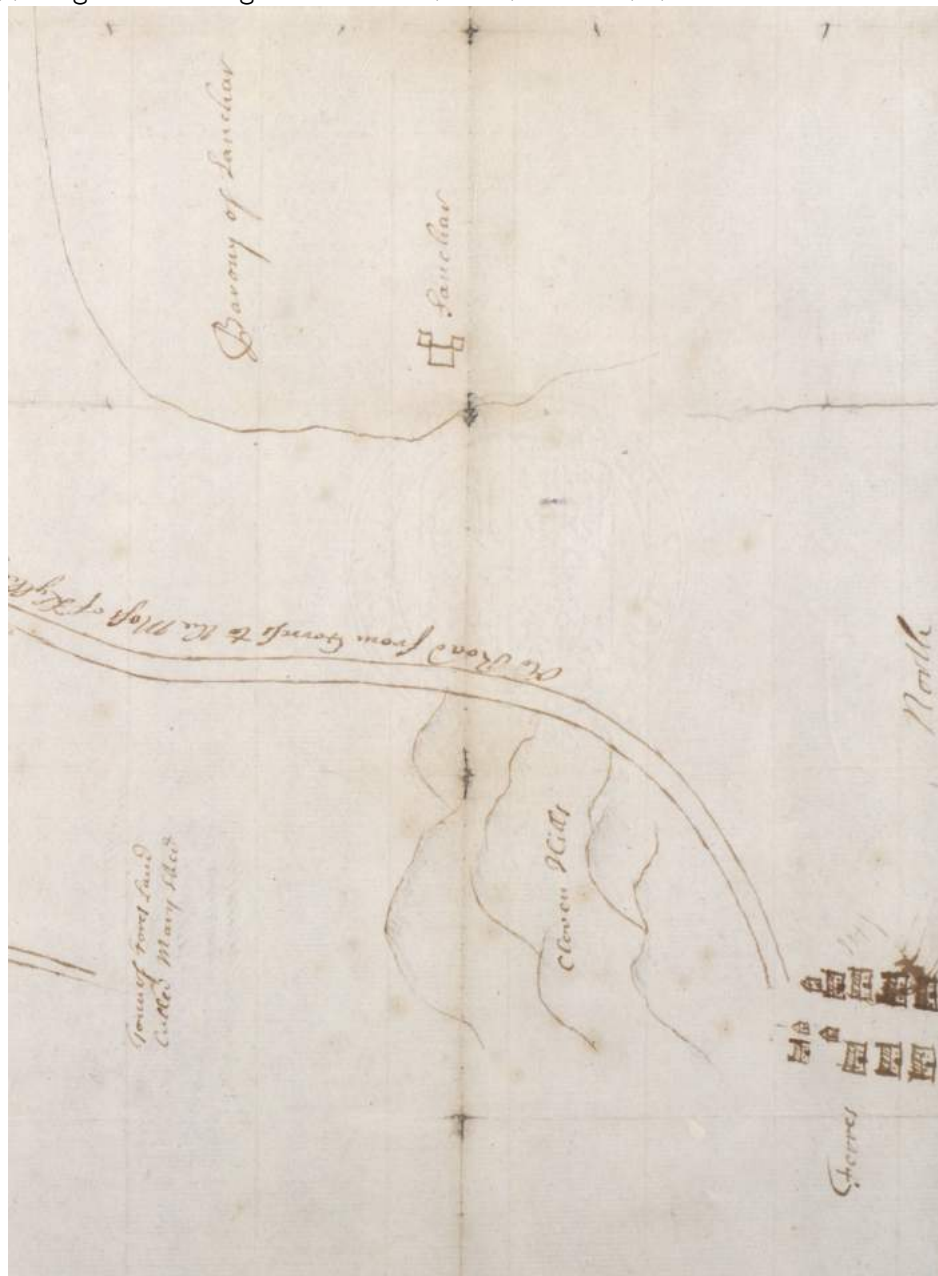
A.2 Timothy Pont

Figure 6: Detail of 'FORESS' and surrounding area from Timothy Pont's Map of Moray and Nairn, c. 1583-1614 (Pont 8, Adv.MS.70.2.9). ©National Library of Scotland. <http://maps.nls.uk/detail.cfm?id=266>



A.3 Anonymous

Figure 7: Detail of Forres, Sanquhar and 'Cloven Hills' from sketch map drawn to settle boundary dispute between the Town of Forres and Mackintosh of Blervie (1728). ©Keeper of the Records of Scotland. <http://images-teaching.is.ed.ac.uk/luna/servlet/s/8i79e5>



A.4 Joseph Avery & George Wade

Figure 8: Detail of 'Forest' and surrounding area from *Plan of the Murray Firth and Cromarty Firth, with parts of the Shires of Inverness, Sutherland, Ross, Nairn, and Elgin. Showing roads* (1730). ©National Library of Scotland. <http://maps.nls.uk/military/6.html>



A.5 Gen. William Roy

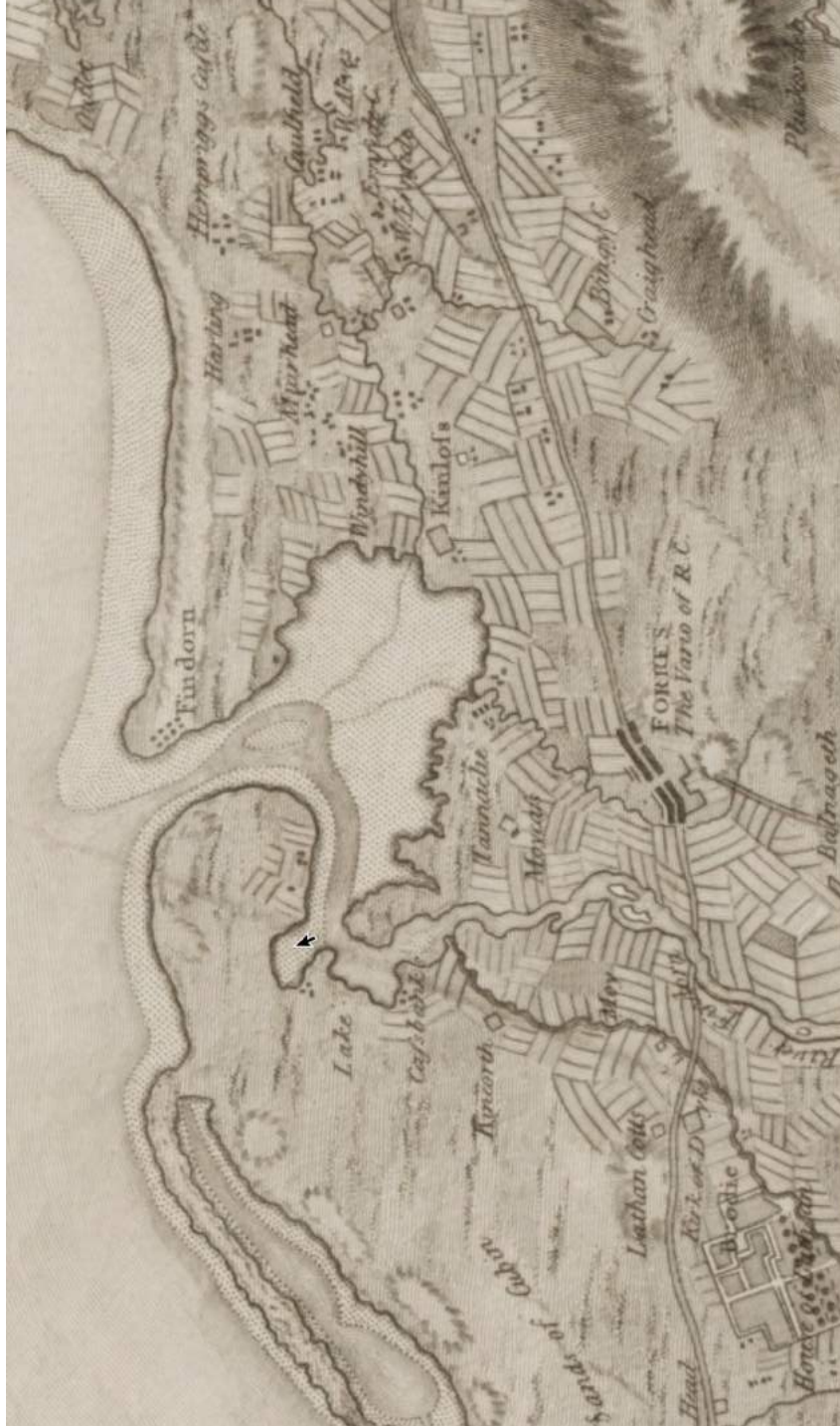
Figure 9: Detail of Forres and surrounding area from Original Protraction of *Map of the Highlands of Scotland, 1747-52* (1752b). ©British Library. <http://maps.nls.uk/roy/index.html>



Figure 10: Detail of Forres and surrounding area from Fair Copy of *Map of the Highlands of Scotland, 1747-52* (1752a). ©British Library. <http://maps.nls.uk/roy/index.html>

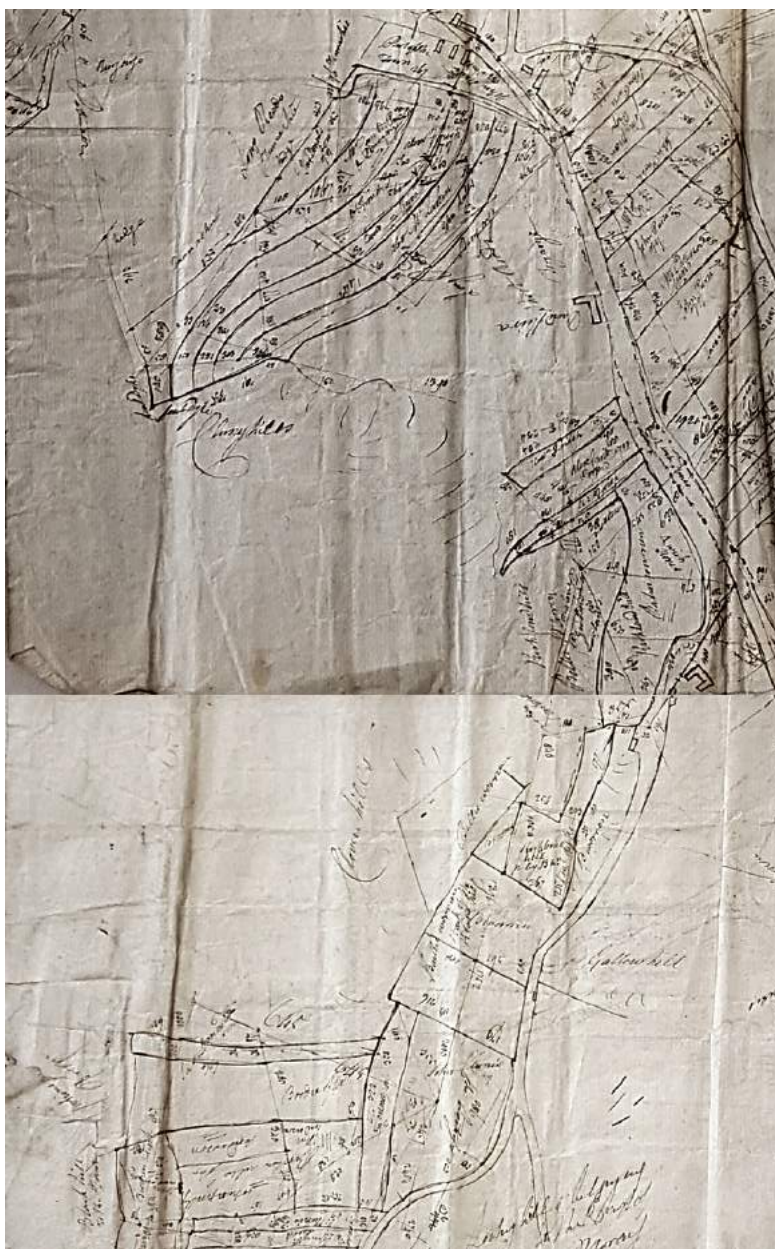


Figure 11: Detail of Forres and surrounding area from Plate 34 of *The Military Antiquities of the Romans in Britain* (1793). ©National Library of Scotland. <http://maps.nls.uk/roy/antiquities/page.cfm?seq=154>



A.6 Seafield Estate

Figure 12: Composite detail of 'Cluny hills/Cloven hills' from *Part of estate of Westfield lying south-east and north-west of Forres* (1768). ©Ogilvy family, Earls of Seafield. <http://catalogue.nrscotland.gov.uk/nrsonlinecatalogue/details.aspx?reference=RHP98278&>



A.7 George Taylor & William Skinner

Figure 13: Detail of Forres and Cluny Hills from *Detail of Road from Inverness to Banff* (1776). ©National Library of Scotland. <http://maps.nls.uk/atlas/taylor-skinner/detail.cfm?id=1073>



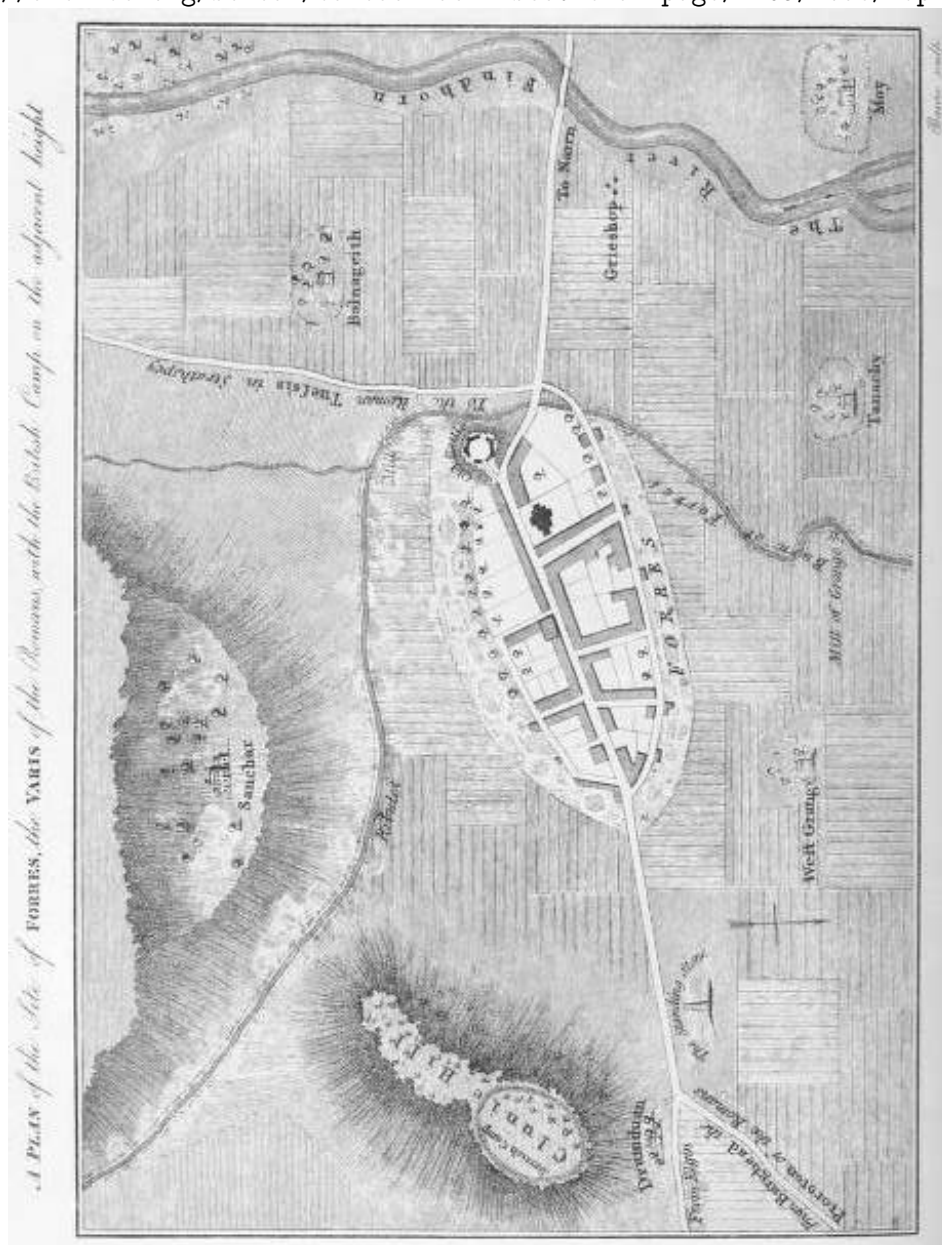
A.8 John Stockdale

Figure 14: Detail of Forres and Cluny Hills from 'Map of Scotland from the Latest Surveys' (Stockdale, 1806). ©National Library of Scotland. <http://maps.nls.uk/joins/734.html>



A.9 George Chalmers

Figure 15: 'A plan of the site of Forres, the Varis of the Romans, with the British Camp on the adjacent height' (Chalmers, 1807, p.130). <https://archive.org/stream/caledoniaorhisto01chal#page/n169/mode/2up>



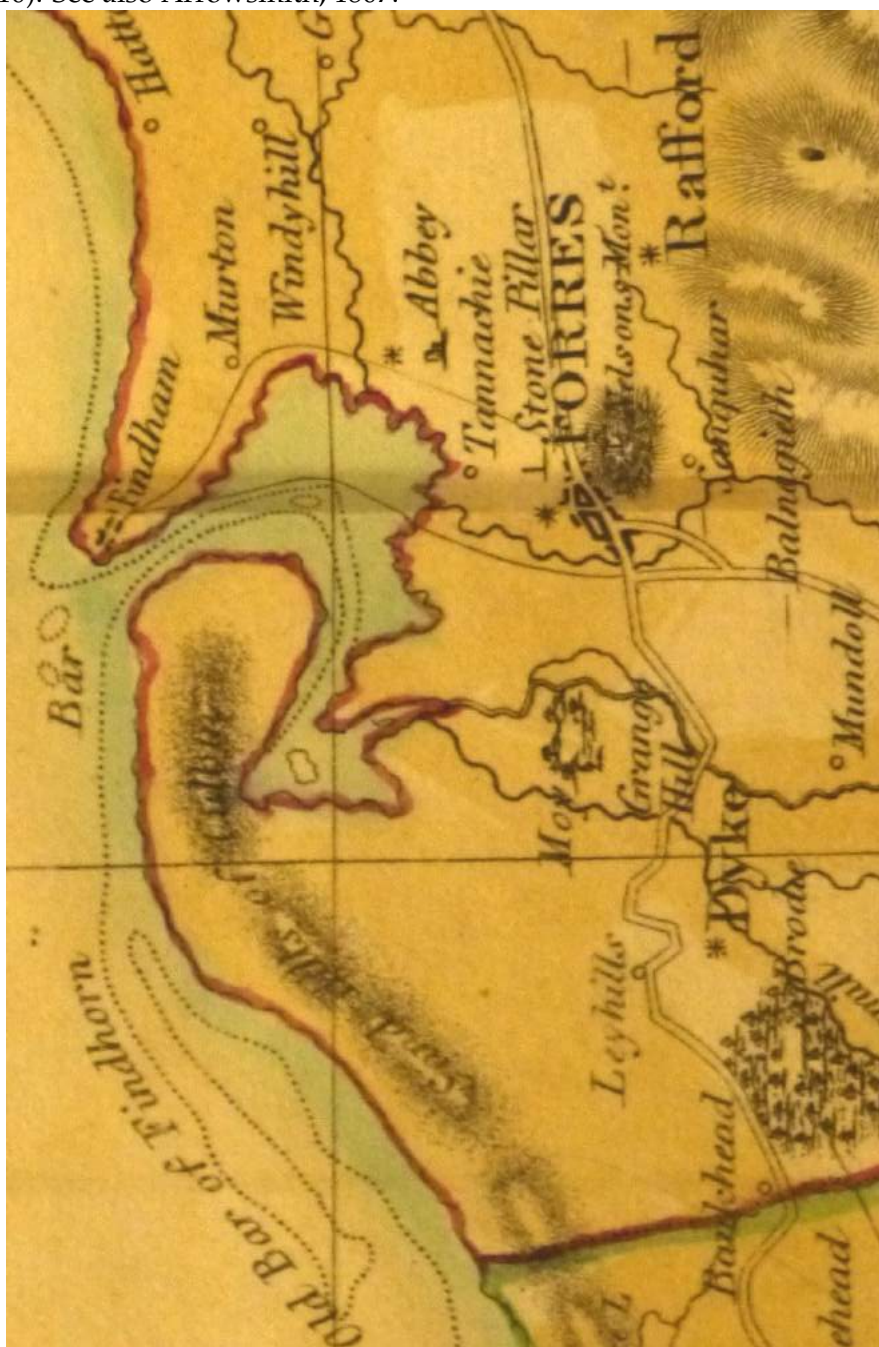
A.10 Aaron Arrowsmith

Figure 16: 'Map of Scotland Constructed from Original Materials' (Arrowsmith, 1807). See also Arrowsmith, 1809. ©National Library of Scotland. <http://maps.nls.uk/joins/747.html>



A.11 George Brown

Figure 17: Detail of Forres and Nelson's Monument from 'Map of Moray and Nairn Shires; Enlarged from Mr Arrowsmith's Map of Scotland' (Brown, 1810). See also Arrowsmith, 1807.



A.12 S. J. Neele

Figure 18: 'Scotland' (Neele, 1811). ©National Library of Scotland. <http://maps.nls.uk/joins/2809.html>



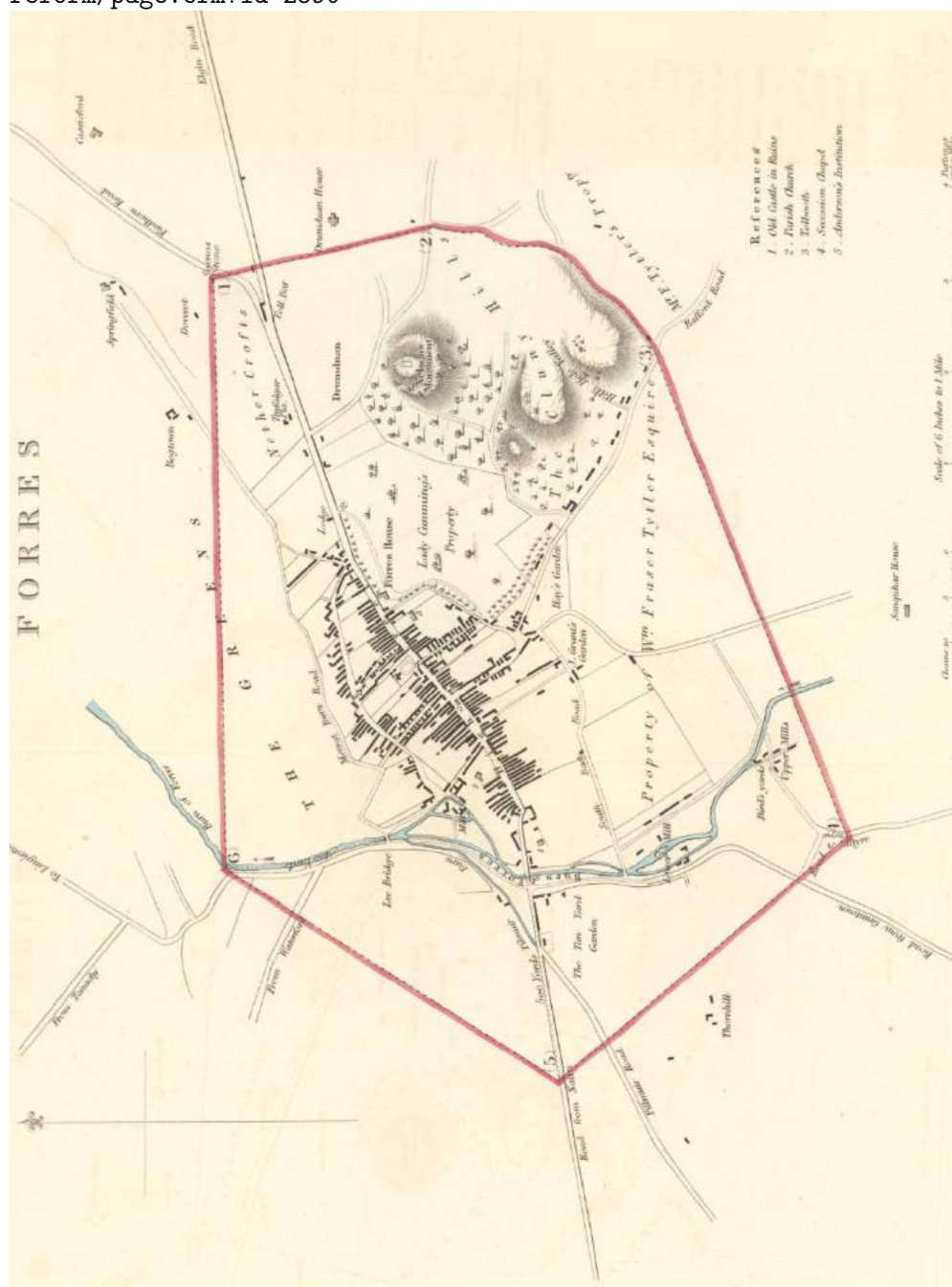
A.13 John Wood

Figure 19: 'Plan of the Town of Forres from actual survey' (Wood, 1823). See also ([Extracts B.4](#)) . ©National Library of Scotland. <http://maps.nls.uk/towns/detail.cfm?id=346>



A.14 Great Reform Act

Figure 20: 'Great Reform Act Plan of Forres' (House of Commons, 1832).
©National Library of Scotland. For report, see <http://maps.nls.uk/towns/reform/page.cfm?id=2590>



A.15 Ordnance Survey

Figure 21: Detail of OS Six-inch First Edition, Elgin, Sheet XI (1:10,560).
Surveyed 1870. Published 1874. ©Crown copyright 1874 OS.



Figure 22: Detail of OS 1:2,500 (A Edition), NJ 0459-0559. Revised 1964, published 1965 ©Crown copyright 1965 OS.

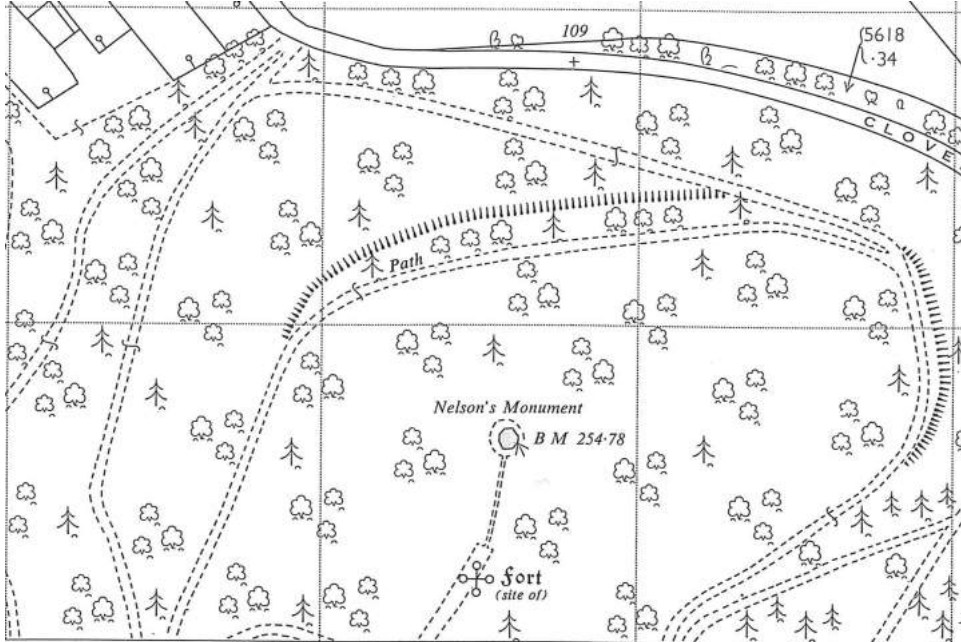


Figure 23: Detail of OS 1:10,000 NJ05NW. Revised 1964-71, published 1972. ©Crown copyright 1972 OS.

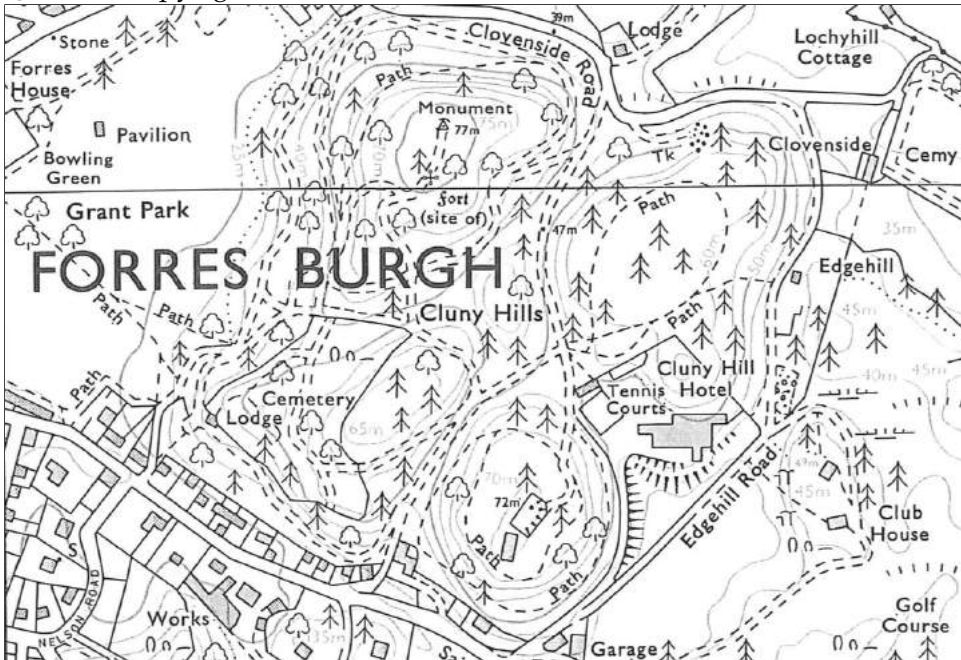


Figure 24: Detail of OS 1:2,500 (B Edition), NJ 0459-0559. Revised May 1983, published 1984. ©Crown copyright 1984 OS.

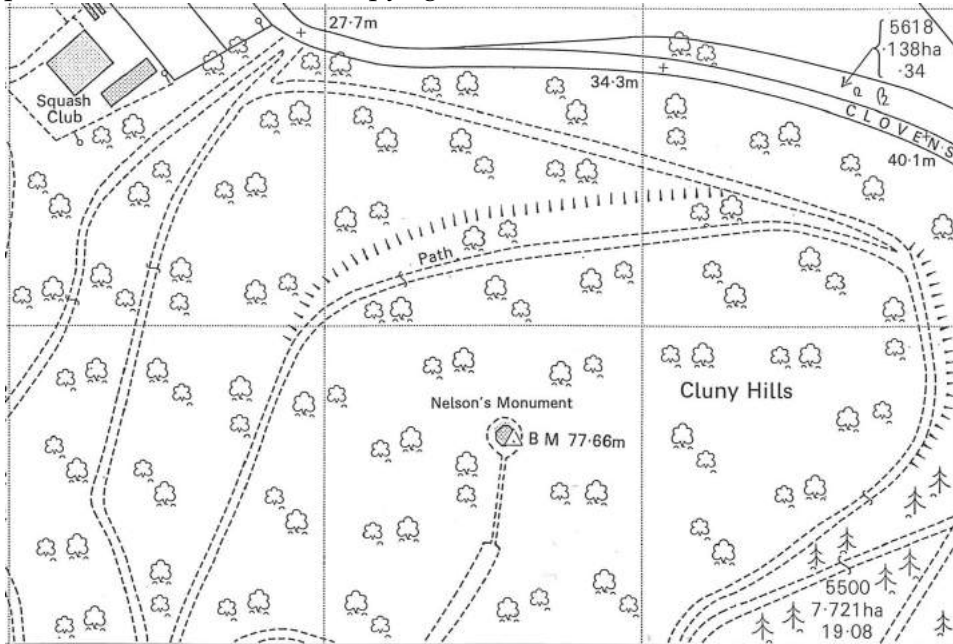
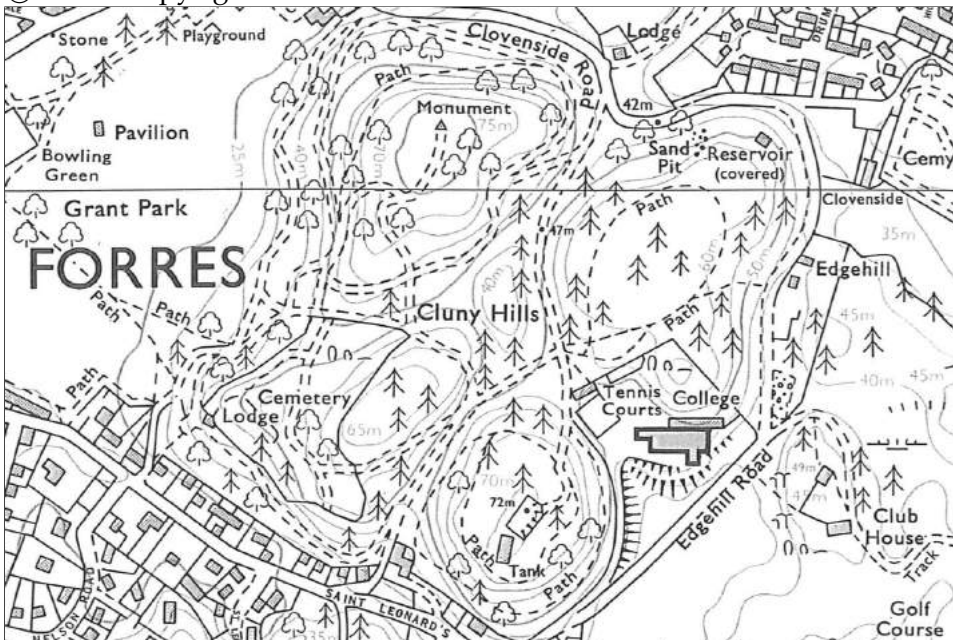
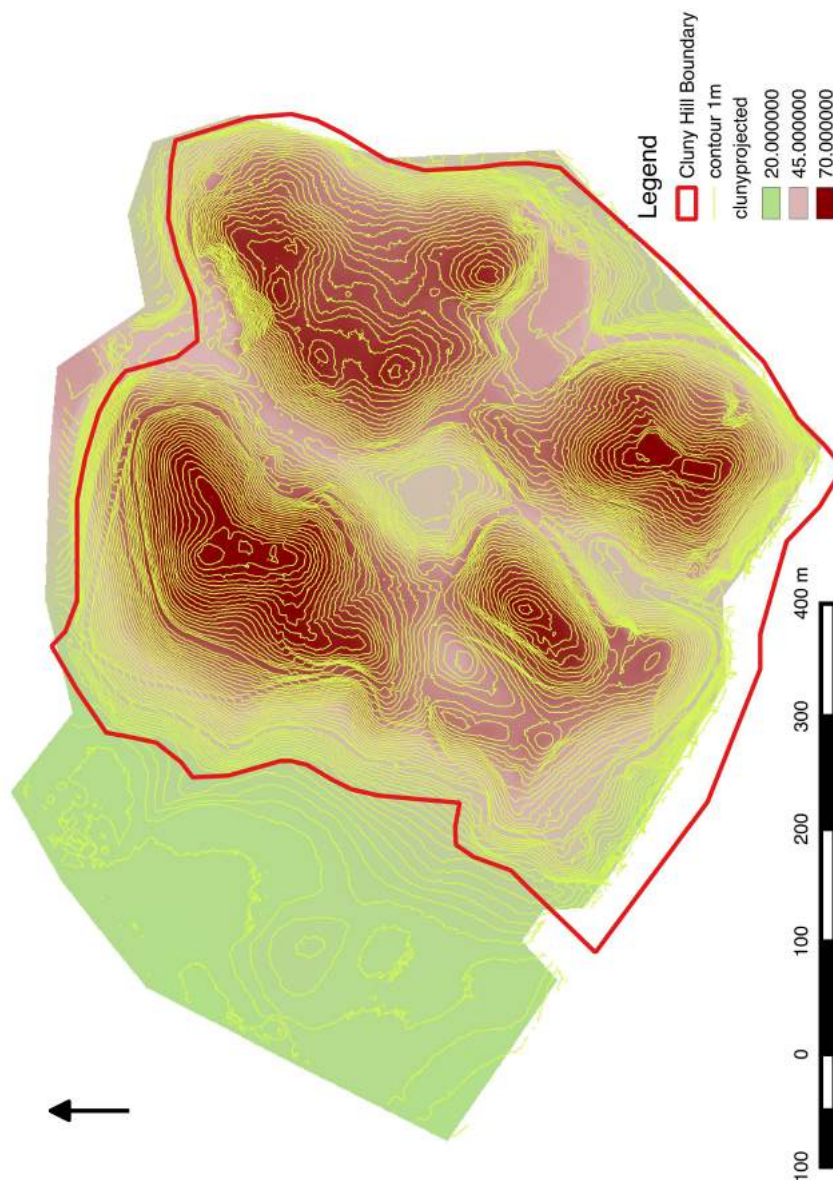


Figure 25: Detail of OS 1:10,000 NJ05NW. Revised 1964-83, published 1984. ©Crown copyright 1984 OS.



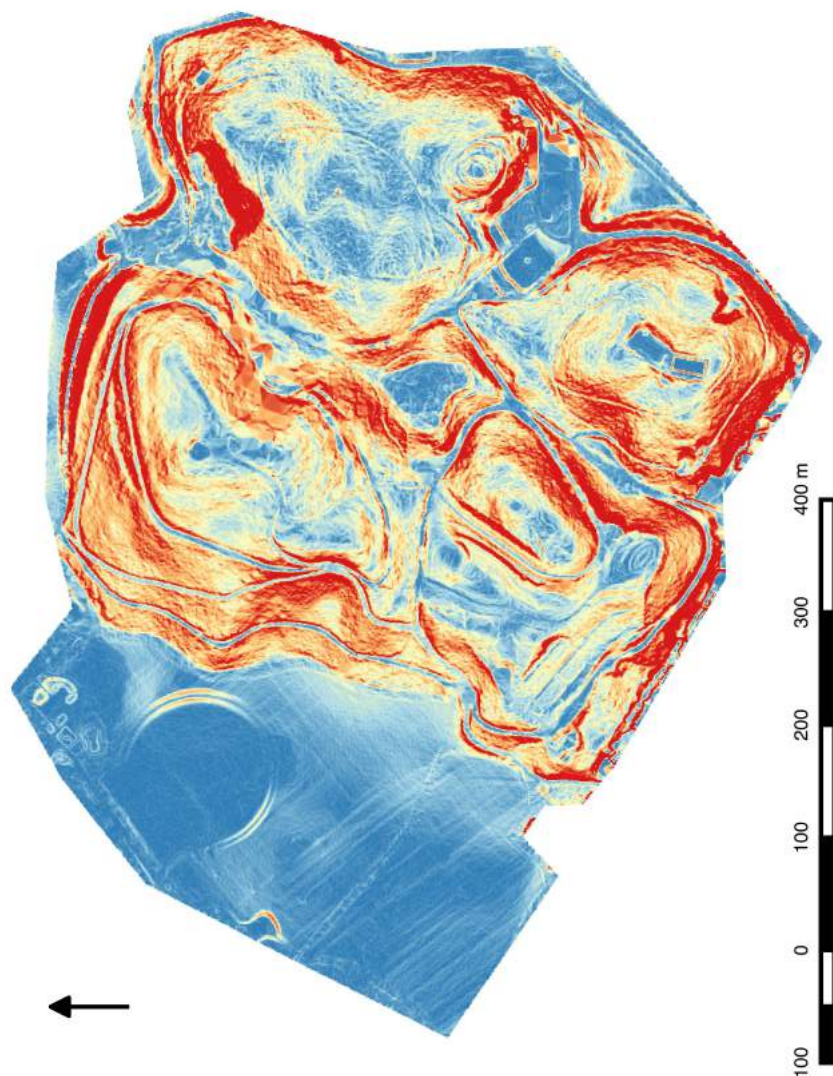
A.16 Topography of Cluny Hill

Figure 26: Topography of Cluny Hill with 1m contour lines. Based on LiDAR data supplied by the Scottish Orienteering Association. <http://www.scottish-orienteering.org>



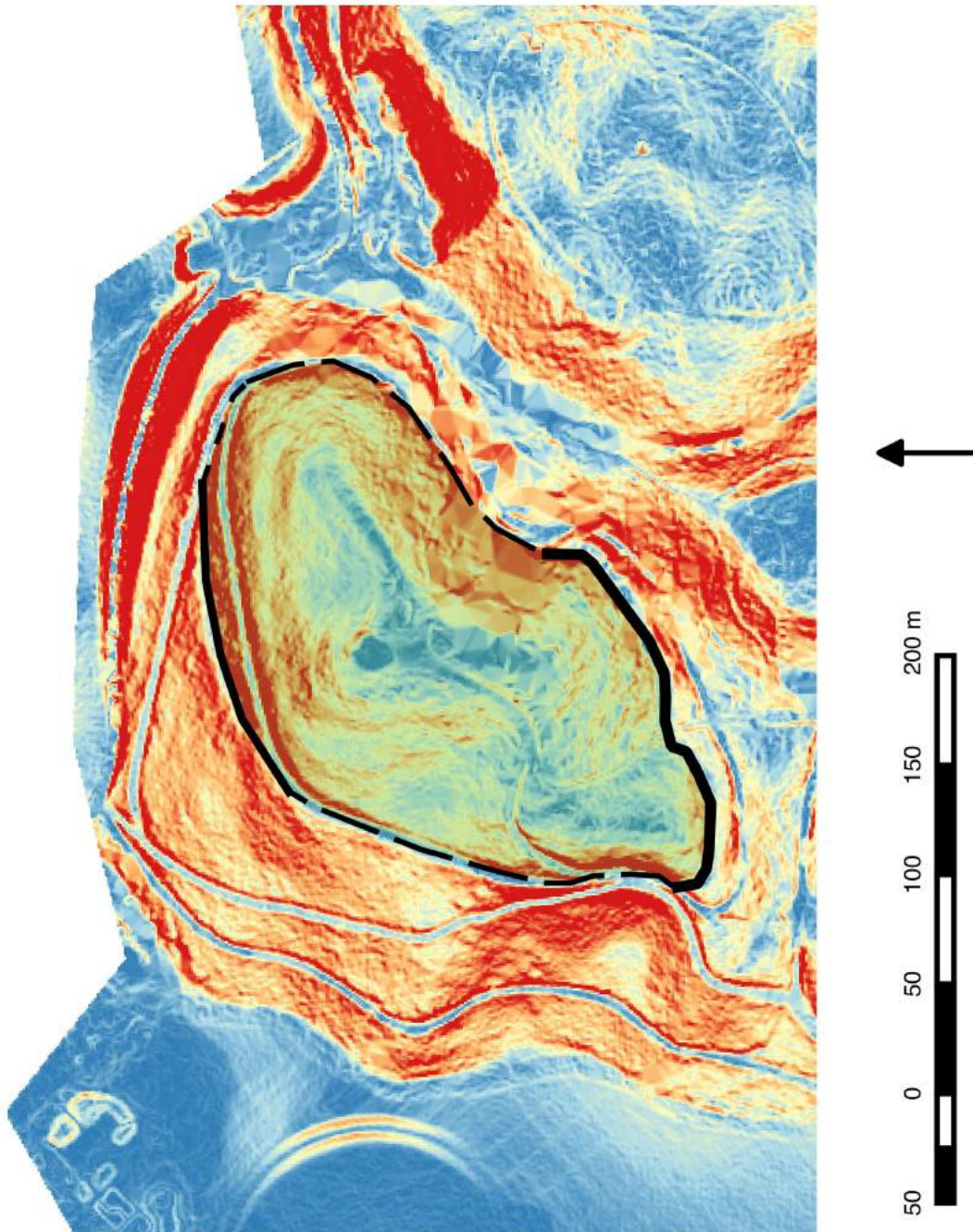
A.17 Gradient of Cluny Hill

Figure 27: Gradient of Cluny Hill. Based on LiDAR data supplied by the Scottish Orienteering Association. <http://www.scottish-orienteering.org>



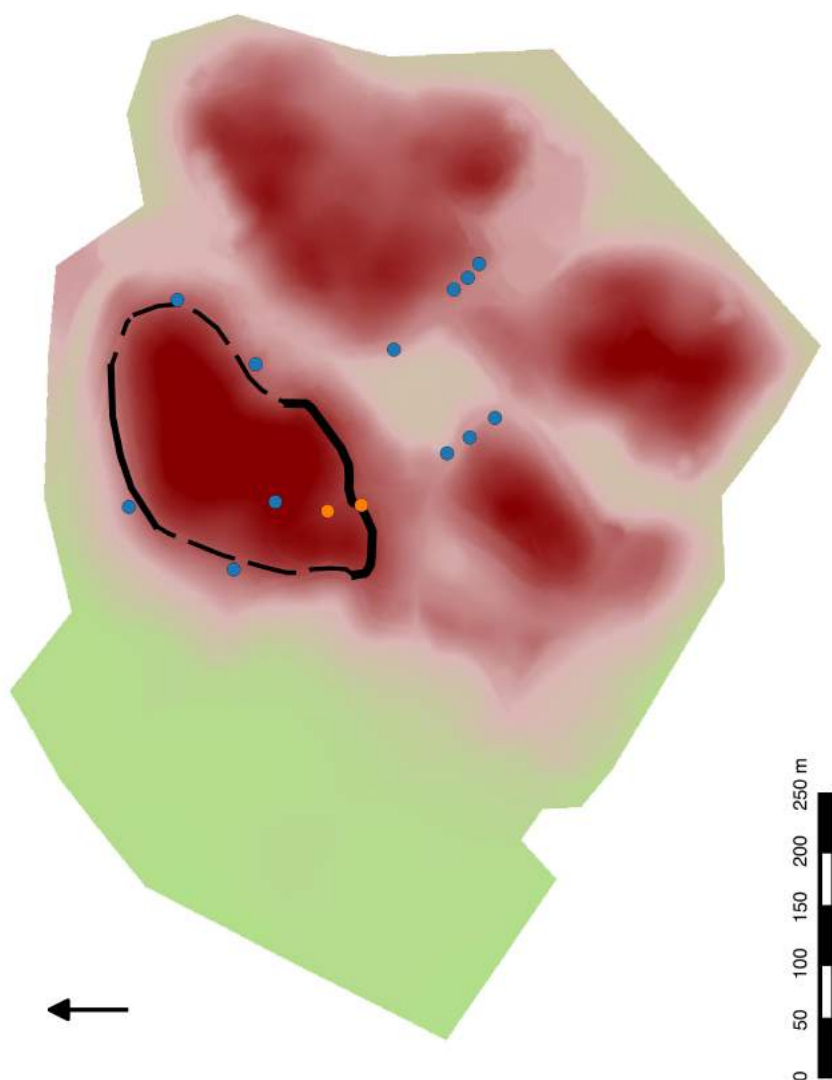
A.18 Enclosed Area

Figure 28: Area enclosed by ditch features and Circular Path (~35,200 m²).
Based on LiDAR data supplied by the Scottish Orienteering Association.
<http://www.scottish-orienteering.org>



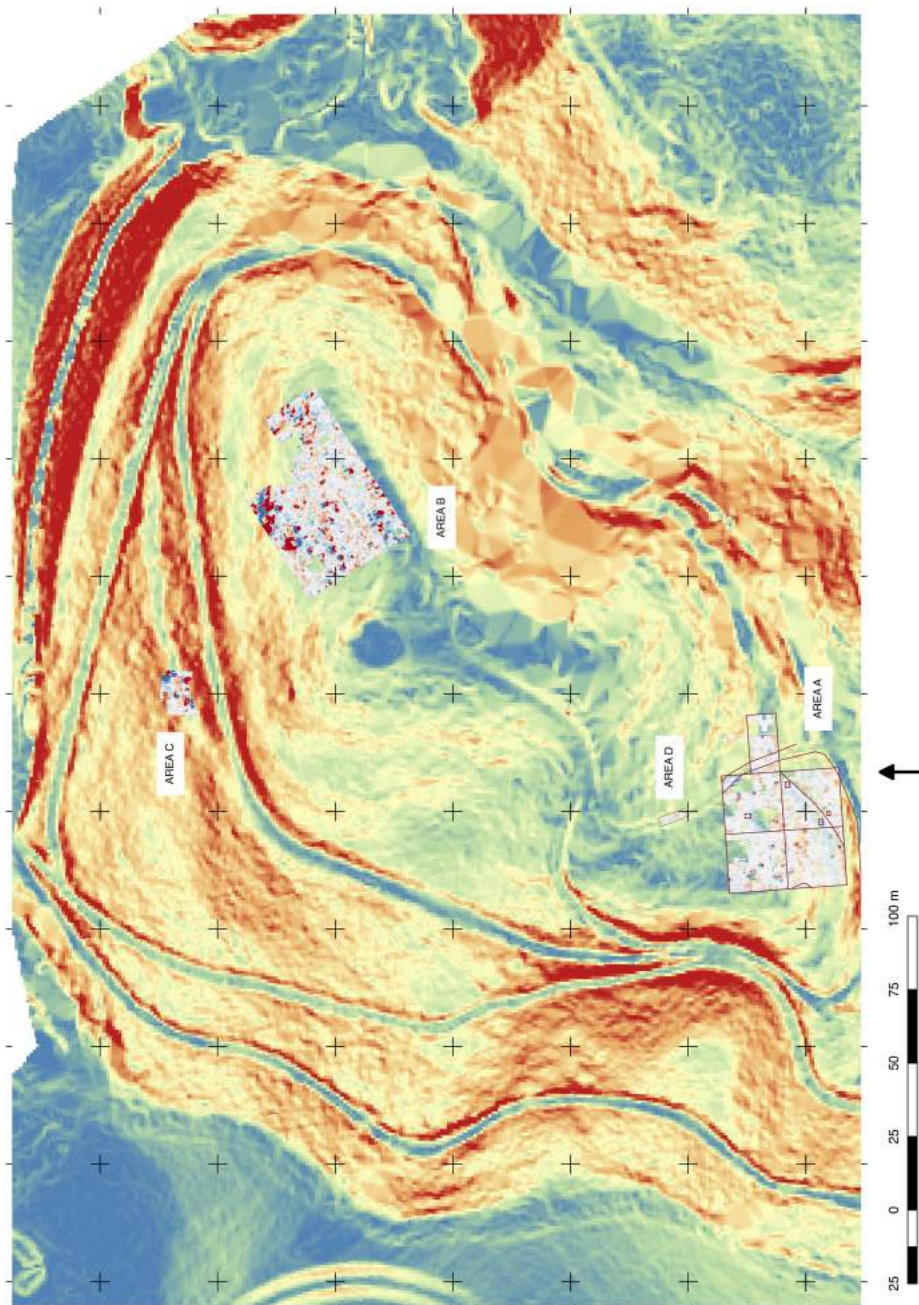
A.19 Yew Trees and Boulders

Figure 29: Known yew trees (blue) and boulders (orange) on Cluny Hill. All locations are approximate. Based on LiDAR data supplied by the Scottish Orienteering Association. <http://www.scottish-orienteering.org>



A.20 Geophysical Survey

Figure 30: Magnetometry survey of Cluny Hill. Red = positive values; Blue = negative values.



A.21 Development of paths on Cluny Hill

Figure 31: Paths and roads on Cluny Hill in 1823.

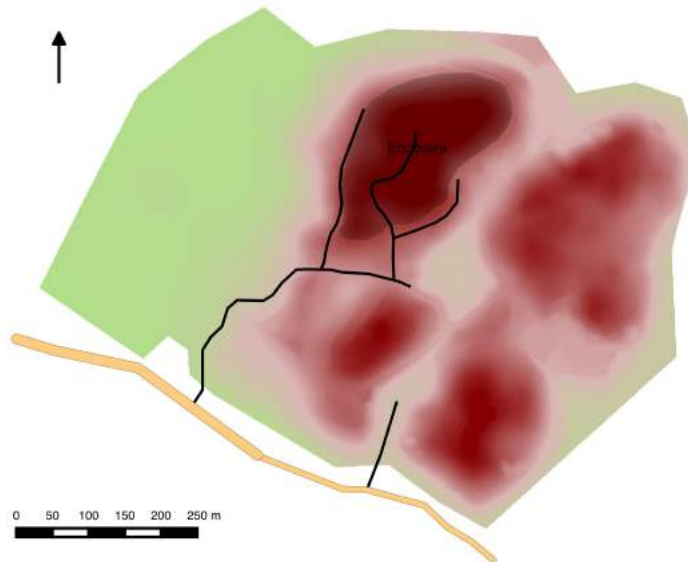


Figure 32: Paths and roads on Cluny Hill in 1832.

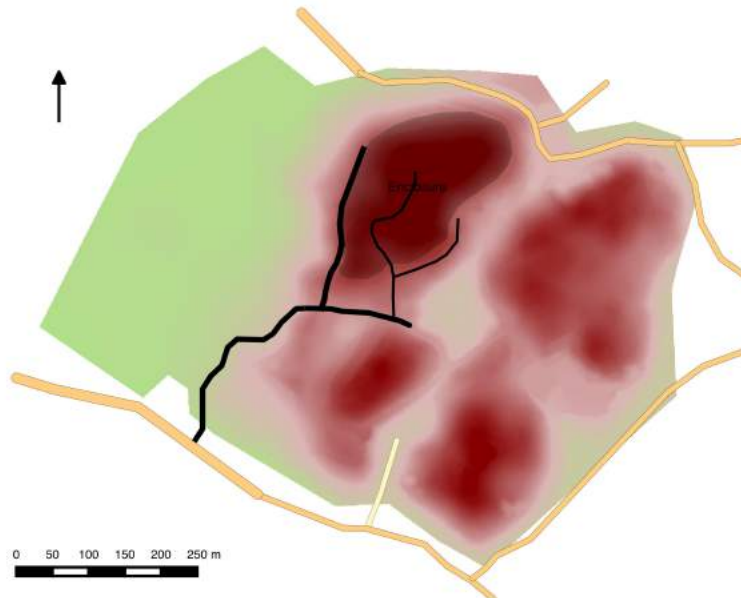


Figure 33: Paths and roads on Cluny Hill c. 1860.

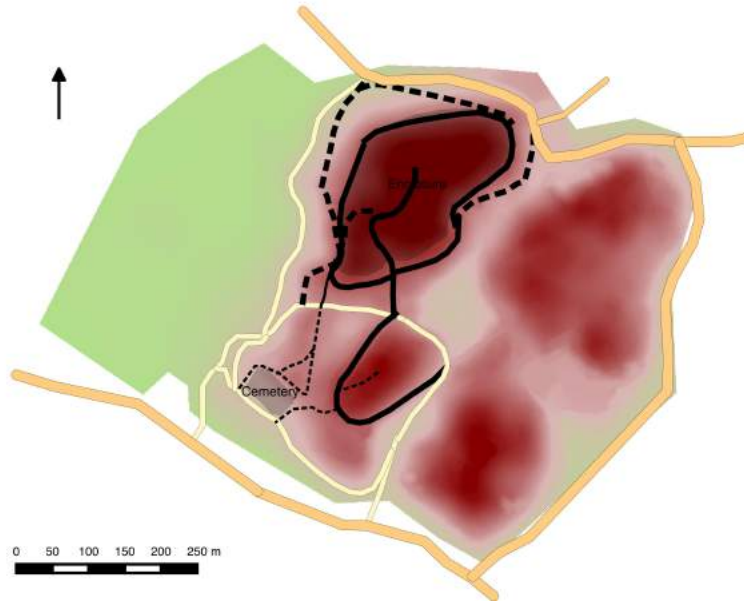
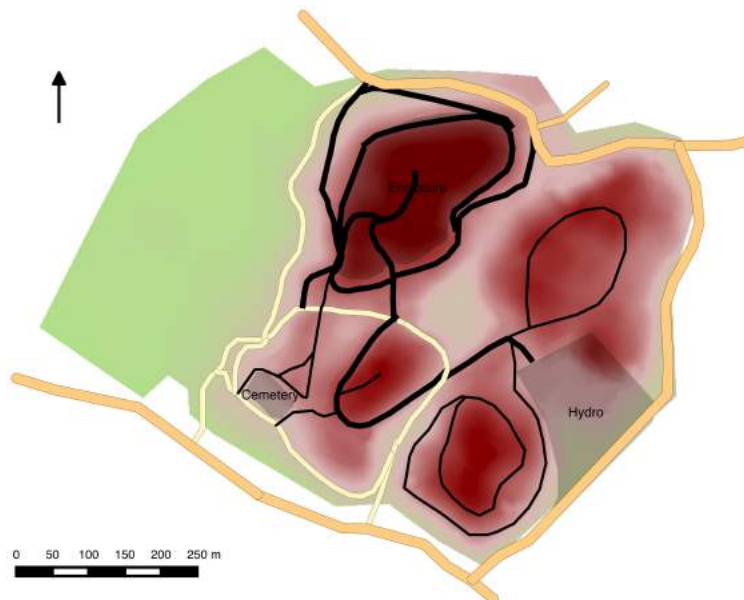


Figure 34: Paths and roads on Cluny Hill in 1870.



B Excerpts

B.1 Description of 'Danish Camp'

Richard Pococke,
Letter 36, *Tours in Scotland, 1747, 1750, 1760*,
(1887, p.183)

ELGIN, July 26th 1760

DEAR SISTER,—

...

It is situated over a rivulet, which falls into the Findhorn a terrible torrent after rains, across it we forded, and in about two miles came to Forres another small town consisting of a handsome broad street, and about 150 houses; it is well built and most delightfully situated in view of the river, the sea, and very fine country; A beautiful situation at the West end of the town belongs to Sir William Dunbar; it was the site of an old castle, on which a modern house was begun to be built.

This is the Royal borough & the Provost Mr. Cummin the head of that very ancient family came to town on purpose to give me my freedom, but the town Clerk was absent, and it was sent after me.

A little to the East of the town is Clover [sic] hill, round which about halfway up is an old entrenchment probably of the Danes who gained a great victory over the Scotch near this place where a pillar is set up about 20 feet high: on one side is a long cross, and a compartment below it something like a Coat of Arms; on the other side are about ten compartments of figures some of men, others of horsemen, and some of beasts; this is the East side, which being the rainy quarter is much defaced.

...

The Danes fought a second time at Motlick—ten miles South of Elgen and were defeated; Gordon [(1726, p.159)] thinks the stone at Forres was set up on that Victory.

...

I am &c.

B.2 Description of 'hillfort' of the Vacomagi at Forres

George Chalmers,
Caledonia, vol. 1,
(1807, p.131 f. (a))

Roy's Milit. Antiq. p. 132. In November 1797, J. Brodie of Brodie, F.R.S. assured me 'that when the streets of Forres were lately dug up in order to repair the pavement, there were discovered several roman coins and a roman medallion in soft metal, which resembled a mixture of lead and tin: this medallion he presented to the antiquarian society of Edinburgh.' The *v* and *f* were often changed in the name of places, as *Muref* to *Murev*; and the *Varar* of Richard is now called *Farar*: so *Varis* is now called *Faris*, which is the Gaelic name of the place even to this day, as I am assured by the Gaelic minister of the town. The vacomagi had probably a village at *Varis* or *Faris*. They certainly had a large hill-fort, the remains whereof are still extant on the summit of the Clunie Hills at Forres. This strength is of a form between oval and circular, is surrounded by a strong rampart of earth and a fosse which is still 12 feet wide. The area within the ramparts measures 6 acres, 3 roods, and 25 falls, Scottish. On the south side of the hill there is a small post of a square form, defended by an earthen rampart and fosse, inclosing an area of 10 feet square, or 16 falls Scottish. This description is given from an accurate survey and plan which were made for me in 1798 by Robert Macwilliam, a land-surveyor.

B.3 Description of 'ditch and earthen rampart' by Forres

William Leslie,
General View of the Agriculture of the Counties of Nairn and Moray,
(?, p.523)

A broken range of low hills, stretches down for several miles from the west, and terminates in a mount somewhat higher than the general elevation, at a little distance behind the town on the south. From the track of a ditch and earthen rampart carried around a little below the summit, this mount appears to have been in ancient times a fortified military station, but no kind of tradition suggests even a conjecture of such remote occupation. Were it ascertained that the noted obelisk near its base had been set up as the memorial of the expulsion of the Danes from Scotland, with justice of the people of Forres, it might be said, that by their attentions to the objects of national glory they had been in every age distinguished. For on the summit of this mount, they have erected a lofty tower, as a memorial of Lord Nelson and the victory of Trafalgar. The tower is an octagonal fabric, on a diameter of 24 feet including the walls at the base, raised to the height of 70 feet, and completed by a battlement and a flagstaff, with ropes resembling a mast; but similar to the monument of London it is constructed only for being seen, not being convertible to any purpose. It will doubtless carry down to many generations, the patriotic object of its builders.

B.4 Description of the 'Cloven, or Cluny Hills'

John Wood,
Descriptive account of the principal towns in Scotland,
(1828, p.143)

The environs of Forres, even within the Parish, afford many beautiful rides and walks, and if extended beyond its bounds, the banks of the Findhorn, towards its source, offers some of the finest river scenery of Scotland. But the chief attraction as a promenade, are the Cloven, or Cluny Hills, which arise to some considerable height, immediately behind the town to the south. The highest of these Hills, which, as their name imports, rise in an isolated cluster, is crowned by an octagonal Tower, dedicated to the memory of Admiral Lord Nelson. To this, by personal labour, and pecuniary contribution, the Inhabitants of Forres have carried roads, which, sometimes winding around a shoulder, at others, forming Terraces, by embracing a whole hill, finally meet near the Tower, amidst thriving plantations, which cover the greater part of them. It is almost impossible to describe with effect, the splendid view from the summit; it comprises all the elements of grand and picturesque scenery, plain and wood, sea and mountain. It must suffice to say, that part of nine Counties are distinctly visible, as the more distant prospect; whilst a home view of twelve gentleman's seats, circle within a small radius round its base.

B.5 Description of ‘Cluny Hills’

Parliamentary Commission on Municipal Corporations in Scotland,
Report on the Burgh of Forres (Morayshire),
(1835, p.450)

Cluny Hills—It may not be improper to mention one valuable part of the burgh property which yields no rent strictly speaking, although the wood upon it is now rising into value. The Cluny Hills, in the immediate neighbourhood of the town, have been judiciously planted by the burgh, and walks formed through them by private subscription, open to all the inhabitants; an appropriation of burgh property which might with advantage be more generally imitated.

B.6 Description of ‘Clunie Hills’

George Anderson & Peter Anderson,
Guide to the Highlands and Islands of Scotland,
(1842, p.104)

The very beautiful undulating range of the Clunie Hills, which are crowned with pine woods, and encircled with numerous walks, press in upon the town towards the south. On the nearest of them an ancient hill-fort stood, - the first link, also, it is probable, of the chain of signal posts which extended from the sea to the interior of the country, and by means of which the approach of hostile fleets was announced in ancient times to the inhabitants of the glens. In its room a high tower has been erected, to commemorate the victory of Trafalgar under Lord Nelson; from the summit of which a most extensive view is obtained of all the very varied lands and mountain screens bordering the Moray Firth.

B.7 Description of 'Ancient British Camp'

Matthew J. Algie,
Guide to Forres,
(1887; 1907, p.26).

An Ancient British Camp is believed to have occupied a considerable part of the hill on which the tower stands, but the only vestige of it which is now visible, is a faint trace of an artificially levelled belt or circle which is probably the remains of the rampart. The belt encircles the hill about the level of the path known as the 'Circular Walk.' It is a little higher than the Circular Walk on the west side of the hill, and about twenty feet lower than it on the north side. Some years ago, through the influence of the late Mr [John] Miller [d. 1872], editor and proprietor of the *Forres Gazette*, a row of yew trees was planted along the line of the rampart [1887:, and these trees are now of great use in tracing it].

Mr George Chalmers, in his famous book called *Caledonia*, attributes the hill-fort to the Vacomagi,—one of the native tribes who inhabited Britain at the time of the Roman invasion. They are stated to have occupied a strip of country extending from Burghead on the Moray Firth, to the River Tay. The camp is supposed to have occupied the top of the hill, and to have extended down its sides as far as the rampart which encloses an area of about eight English acres.

B.8 Description of the 'Cluny Hills'

Robert Douglas & Andrew B. Robertson,
Annals of the Royal Burgh of Forres, (1934, p.535-6)

The position and structure of the Cloven Hills, so far have been under review, but it is necessary to describe the external appearance of the hills. The present beautiful covering of trees was not always there, in fact for a long time they would be bare and unsightly eminences to the south and south-east of the town. Broom would probably make its appearance at an early date. References are frequent such as:—23rd October, 1585—'The same day James Wawss appointed to keipe the townis and ye browme on ye Clone Hyllis.' 9th December, 1588—'William Hasbine, servitor to Alex. Urquhart of Drumroicht, compears—complaint of cutting broom on Clowin Hylls and also Alexander Hay.' 16th December, 1588—'Archibald Glass and John Mill, servitors to Andrew Mill, cut 'haint browm of the ye Clowne Hylls.'

The broom in its season would no doubt be very pleasing to the inhabitants of Forres, but at the beginning of the last century the Town Council determined that the hills should be planted with trees, which would eventually be much more profitable than the broom. In the Burgh Records of 1806 the name 'Cloven' for 'Cluny' appears. The Cloven Hills, in 1806, were planted with trees and destroyed by fire in 1815 and again planted. The destruction of the trees by fire may have occurred at frequent intervals if one may judge from the bellman's warning on such occasions (Perter Spurtles)—

'Tammie wi' the red coat, Tammie wi' the gun,
Fire in the mountains, run, boys, run.'

A destructive fire occurred in the Cluny Hills on 6th May, 1848.

The oldest institution connected with Cloven Hills is, without doubt, the hill-fort situated on the highest and largest hill. There is now practically nothing to be seen of the remains of this Fort, but Chalmers in his 'Caledonia' specially describes this interesting relic of the past. He thinks that the Vacomagi, the ancient inhabitants of this district, prior to the time of the Romans, had a village or colony at Forres with defence works or a hill-fort on the Cloven Hills. Chalmers describes and illustrates this fort in his book. Its form is between oval and circular and surrounded by a strong rampart of earth and a fosse which in Chalmers' time was still twelve feet wide. Robert McWilliam, a land surveyor, in 1798, made an accurate survey and plan of this fort for Chalmers. McWilliam measured the area within the ramparts and found it to be 6 acres 3 roods 25 falls (Scottish) in extent. On the south side of the hill there is a small fort of a square form defended by an earthen rampart and fosse. The area included in this fort is

one of 10 feet square or 16 falls (Scottish). The rampart of this ancient British camp which, as I have said, is not now visible is thought to correspond with the present position of the Circular Walk. The late Mr Miller of the 'Forres Gazette' planted some yew trees as near as possible along the rampart line.

B.9 Description of 'the fort on Cluny Hill'

Alfred H. Forbes,
Forres: A Royal Burgh 1150-1975,
(1975, p.13)

The Califer Hill is taken to be the first site of a permanent settlement. The sea may have been higher and nearer, or the lower ground too wet to produce crops. The graves at Templestones, south-west of Blervie Castle, date from the Stone Age, as does the fort on Cluny Hill. This fort was clearly visible two centuries ago when George Chalmers, the historian, commissioned Robert McWilliam, surveyor, to send him a report on it. The shape was between round and oval, enclosing an area of 6 acres, 3 roods and 25 falls Scots. On the southern side there is a small fort 12 feet square. These outlines were retraced in 1972 by a class from Forres Academy with their teacher, Mr Ron Philp.

B.10 Reports from Ordnance Survey

Elginshire OS Object Name Books, 1868-1871

BRITISH CAMP (Site of).

The Site of this Camp is Situated on an eminence at the North Eastern extremity of the Cluny Hills.

Part of the works at its North and north eastern extremities can still be traced, all other signs of it are obliterated.

Figure 35: Elginshire OS Object Name Books, Parish of Forres, County of Elgin (1868-1871) ©RCAHMS.

Manual of Names in a Parish of Elgin

List of Names as written on the Plan	Number under of Spelling the same Names	Authority for those modes of Spelling	Number	Description, Remarks, or other General Observations which may be considered of Interest
<i>British Camp</i> <i>1868-71</i>	<i>British Camp</i> <i>1868-71</i>	<i>Mr. Mackay</i> <i>Mr. Seal</i> <i>Mr. Michie</i>	<i>Sheet 11. 5</i>	<i>The site of the Camp is situated on an eminence at the North Eastern extremity of the Cluny Hills. Part of the works at its North and North Eastern extremities can still be traced, all other signs of it are obliterated.</i>
<i>Cluny Hills</i>	<i>Cluny Hills</i> <i>Do</i>	<i>Mr. Mackay</i> <i>Mr. Seal</i> <i>Mr. Michie</i>	<i>11. 5</i>	<i>Applied to a number of small wooded hills extending from Byllibillan on the South to the Statute Lane Road on the North. They are obliterated by handiwork laid out walks and are the property of the Earl of Forres.</i>

OGS Crawford, Archaeological Officer, OS, 5 May 1943

The very slight scarping of the natural slope (NJ 0445 5912) is not enough, by itself, to presume a hill-fort.

Visited by OS (R. Dickson), 19 September 1963

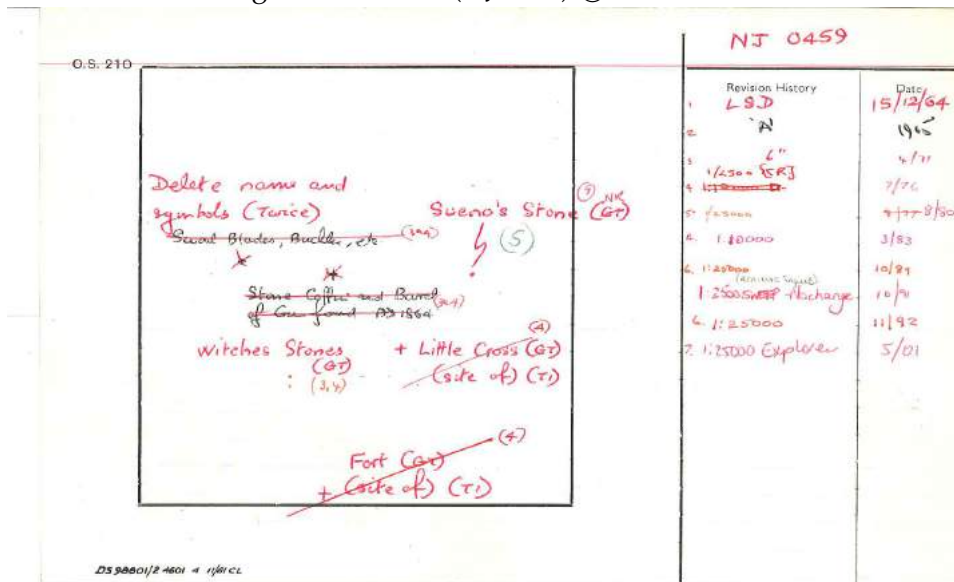
Crawford confirmed. The only other possible indication of a fort is the fragmentary remains of what may have been a rampart at NJ 0447 5894. However, the entire hill covered by trees, is a public park and has been so greatly mutilated by landscaping and the construction of walks, that it is impossible to recognise any remains of a fort. No trace of any vitrification was seen.

Figure 36: Ordnance Survey record cards ©RCAHMS.

NJ OS SW 4	County & Old 6" No. Moray 11 NW 9	Parish FORRES	Sheet No.	Scale
FORRES (site 27).			47 0445 5902	
(NJ 0445 5902) British Camp (O.S.) (Site of)			1. O.S. 6" (Prov.) 1920	
The remains of an almost circular hillfort, with a earth rampart and a ditch 12 ft. wide, enclosing an area of more than 6 acres. On the south side of the hill is a small "post" with bank and ditch enclosing an area 19 ft. square. This description is taken from an accurate survey and plan made for Chalmers in 1798 by a land surveyor, Robert Macmillan.			strong	2. Galeodius I, 1807 p. 131 map (George Chalmers)
Hibbert lists this fort as being vitrified and is followed by Christison and Childs, though the latter queries it.			3. Arch. Scot. 4, 1831, p. 181 No. 16 (S. Hibbert)	
			4. Early Fort. Scot. p. 195 No. 23 (D. Christison)	
			5. Scot. before Scots. p. 134 No. 16 (G.S. Childs)	
			6. Arch. J. III 1956, p. 81 (G.A. Cotton)	
O.S. 6" (6. 43 (W. & A. 1920) 240194033/9911a 109			Cont.	

NJ OS NW 4	County & Old 6" No. Moray 11 NW 9	Parish	Sheet No.	Scale
The very slight scarping of the natural slope (NJ 0445 5912) is not enough, by itself, to presume a hill-fort.			7. Rec. 6" (O.G.S. Crawford 5.5.43) E.S. 11.7.63	
Arthy 7 confirmed. The only other possible indication of a fort is the fragmentary remains of what may have been a rampart at NJ 0447 5894. However, the entire hill covered by trees, is a public park and has been so greatly mutilated by landscaping and the construction of walks, that it is impossible to recognise any remains of a fort. No trace of any vitrification was seen. (see Arthy 3).			8. R.D. Lowrey, F.I. 19.9.63	
O.S. 6" (6. 43 (W. & A. 1920) 240194033/9911a 109				

Figure 37: OS210 (NJ 0459) ©RCAHMS.



C Chalmers Archive

C.1 Letter from John Macdonnell to James McWilliam (Adv. Ms. 21.1.7, f.111, National Library of Scotland)

Forres 27th January 1798

Dear Sir

I am favoured with your letter of 19th last, and in consequence of your requisition to me have made inquiries of Mr. [William?] Dunbar concerning his interview with Mr. Chalmers. But he thinks the object of this conversation was the long stone in the neighbourhood of this Town. Of this curious relique of antiquity you will find the best account in Mr Gordon's(?) book [*Itinerarium Septentrionale* 1727].

There is known to be clearly traced at this Day upon the Cluny [*inserted: Cluny*] hills South east of Forres the appearance of a fortified Encampment. [*illegible annotation*] The Fossa upon [*inserted: the*] shoulder of the hill is pretty entire and lines of circumvolution are visible round a great (?)part of the Hill. As we have no account of the Romans having penetrated this far into the north of Scotland I am disposed to think that this was a stronghold fortified by the Danes during their inroads into this country, at the Time they had possession of Burghead. And to me it appears pretty Evident that the very curious ston[e] above mentioned was used to communicate some victory obtained by them or according to the current(?) tradition, a Treaty or League made betwixt them and the Inhabitants of the Country. It would give me great pleasure to contribute any thing in my power towards forwarding a work of that kind in which Mr Chalmers is engaged particularly(?) at your instance. Believe to be(?) with regards your most obed. & faithful
Serv't [signed] John Macdonell

Envelope:

Notes in Chalmers' hand:

Murray-shire –

The Rev'd Mr. McDonald[sic] Forres

anent the remains of a

fortification on the Cluny

Hills near Forres –

27 Jan'ry 1798

7th March - wrote him on the

subject - & also sent list

of names in W. of

Murray for explaining &c.

Written underneath in different ink and Macdonell's hand:

To Mr.

Mr. MacWilliam Writer

in Elgin

Figure 38: Adv. Ms. 21.1.7. f. 111a, National Library of Scotland

Dear Sir
I am favoured with your letter of
the 10th. and in consequence of your request to
have made enquires of Mr. Dunbar concerning
interview with Mr. Palmer. But he thinks the
subject of their conversation was the Long Stone in the
parish of this Town. Of this curious relique
doubtless you will find the best account in
any historians books. There is however to be clearly
seen at this Day upon the Clony hills South east
of this Town the appearance of a fortified Encampment
the Fossa upon the shoulder of the hill is pretty entire and
lines of accumulation are visible round a great
part of the Hill. As we have no account of the
armies having penetrated thus far into the North
Westland I am disposed to think that this
is a thing well performed by the Danes during some
of their incursions into this Country, at the Town
of this parish of Braughlehead. And to me it
seems pretty evident that the very curious Stone
mentioned was used to commemorate some

Figure 39: Adv. Ms. 21.1.7. f. 111b, National Library of Scotland

... victory obtained by them or according to the
tradition, a Treaty or League made between them
and the Inhabitants of this Country. It would
give me great pleasure to contribute any thing
in my power towards procuring a work of this
kind in which Mr. Chalmers is engaged
At your instance. Believe me to be with regard
your most obed^t & affec^t Servant
Geo^r John Mawson

Figure 40: Adv. Ms. 21.1.7. f. 111 envelope, National Library of Scotland

Murray - Shire -
The Riv^r Mill Donatⁿ Fort
about the remains of a
Fortification on the flying
Hills near Forres -
27th Jan^y 1798

J^r March. wrote him on the
subject, & also sent him
the names in the War of
Murray for the plan
of -

William Maitland
in Coleridge

(53)
110

C.2 Note from George Chalmers Archive (undated)
(Adv. ms. 16.2.17 f. 89, National Library of Scotland)

Enquiries to be made.

1st. The situation & measurement of the works on
the Cluny Hills at Forres.

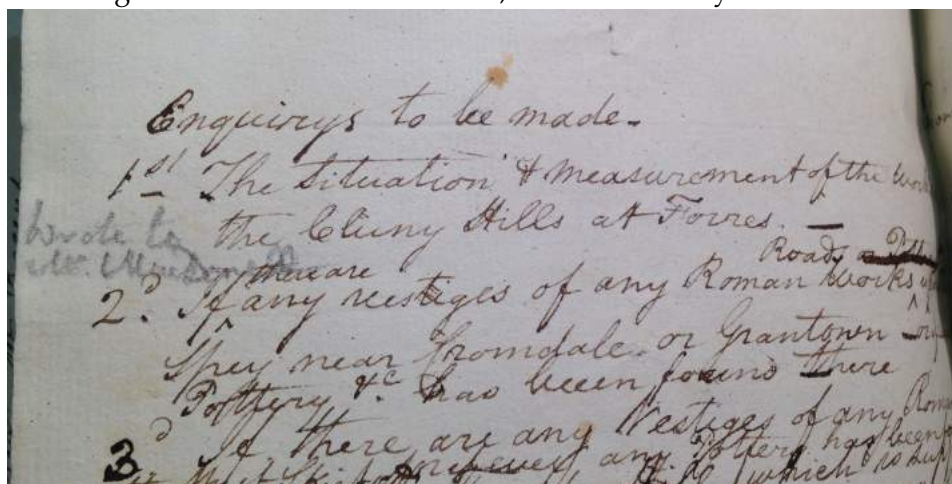
...

Marginal pencil annotation:

Wrote to

Mr. MacDonell

Figure 41: Adv. ms. 16.2.17 f. 89, National Library of Scotland



C.3 Report on 'Encampment' by John Macdonnell with annotations by James McWilliam and George Chalmers (1798) (Adv. Ms. 16.2.17 f.49, National Library of Scotland)

In hand of John Macdonnell:

The Encampment on the Cluny hill near Forres appears to have been of a Circular form, and has Occupied nearly three acres of ground – Has been defended by an embankment of earth, and a Moat of about twelve feet broad each –

It commands an extensive view of the Moray Firth – In a hollow on the south side of the hill there appears to have been a small Camp of about ten yards square –

Trailing comment in the hand of James McWilliam:

The whole hills have been planted for some years the whins hained so that the particulars could not be well ascertained

Preceding comment in the hand of George Chalmers:

From Rob't McWilliam Land Surveyor 1798.

Superscript comment in the hand of George Chalmers between 'been' and 'of':

nearly

Superscript comment in the hand of George Chalmers above 'nearly three acres of ground':

6 acres, 3 roods and 25 falls.

Figure 42: Adv. Ms. 16.2.17 f.49, National Library of Scotland

From Rob^t McWilliam Land Surveyor 1798. 49

The Encampment on the Cling hill near
Torres, appears to have been ^{nearly} of a Circular form,
and has occupied ^{about 3700 sq ft and 25 fells} nearly three Acres of ground -
Has been defended by an embankment of earth,
and a Moat, of about twelve feet broad each -
It commands an extensive View of the Moray
Firth - In a hollow on the south side of the
hill, there appears to have been a small
Camp of about ten yards square - The whole
hills have been planted & for
some years the whins thinned
So that the particulars could
not be well ascertained

Figure 43: Signature of James McWilliam. Adv. Ms. 16.2.17 f.102, National Library of Scotland

James McWilliam

D Newspaper Reports

D.1 Notice for planter

Aberdeen Journal,
24 October 1791

CLOVEN HILLS near FORRES to be planted.

These Hills, consisting of about 60 acres, are already inclosed. An UNDERTAKER to plant them with Scots Pins, and to support them for seven years after being so planted, is immediately wanted. Proposals in writing may be addressed to William Dunbar, Town Clerk of Forres, on or before the 20th of November next, immediately after which time, if the season permits, the planting is to begin and carried on with all convenient speed.

Not to be repeated.

D.2 Petition to build paths upon Cluny Hills

Forres, Elgin and Nairn Gazette,
4 June 1839

TOWN COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS
SPECIAL MEETING.

May 6.

...

CLUNY HILLS. Treasurer Forsyth presented the following petition to the Town council, praying for allowance to make several new roads on the hill. The Clerk read the petition as follows:—

‘Unto the Magistrates and Town Council of the Burgh of Forres,
the petition of the undersigned inhabitants thereof,
HUMBLY SHEWETH,

that your petitioners value as an inestimable privilege their right of enjoying the walks on the Cluny hills of Forres, and have always regarded with satisfaction the great care and attention bestowed by the Council on the improvement of this part of the public property. That although the public have already the benefit of many excellent roads, a line of road has recently been planned out by Mr. Logie, Blackhillock, opening up some new and interesting views of the surrounding country; and your petitioners think that, while the formation of this road can be attended with no expense to the Council, and no encroachment upon private resorts,—(great laughter)—it may conduce to the improvement of the hill, and the gratification of the inhabitants. that your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Magistrates and Council will grant their consent to its being now completed, and that, if considered necessary, they will appoint a committee to examine and report thereon,’

Treasurer Forsyth said was most respectably signed, and might have received 300 signatures had there been time.

Councillor Bell said it was a pity that the members of the Council who opposed Mr Logie’s communication at last meeting were not present. (Laughter.)

After a short discussion, in which several members of Council expressed themselves in favour of the object,

Treasurer Forsyth, moved that a small committee be appointed to carry into effect the wishes of the petitioners.

The Council then appointed the office bearers, along with Councillors R. Urquhart and Kay, to the said effect.

D.3 Gates set up

Forres, Elgin and Nairn Gazette,
7 April 1841

IMPROVEMENTS AT CLUNY HILLS—

Our local readers are aware the Dean of Guild Seal carried, at last meeting of the Town Council, a motion for enclosing the plantations, and placing gates, on the various public approaches to the Cluny-hills, and with his wonted energy these improvements were immediately afterwards commenced and are now in progress of being completed. We know of no community in Scotland who can boast of a privilege such as the inhabitants of Forres enjoy, of having access to a plantation of nearly 200 acres in extent, intersected by well laid out out, spacious walks, embracing the most magnificent views in the country. Any inhabitant of the town may, in less than 10 minutes after leaving his own domicile, ascend to Nelson's Tower, along a pathway which would grace the approach to a Royal Demesne. The whole of the walks have been thoroughly cleaned and trimmed, and it only remains for Mr Seal, who to his praise he is spoken, always takes the lead in every really useful public measure, to get a keeper appointed to take charge of the hill, to prevent those depredations on the wood and soil, which are constantly occurring, and to keep the alleys in their present neat and tidy condition.

D.4 Additional Planting

Forres, Elgin and Nairn Gazette,
2 December 1841

Special meeting,
Nov. 16 1841

Sederunt—Provost Urquhart; Bailies, Kynoch, Gill and Russell; Dean of Guild Seal—Councillors Riach, Sclanders, white, Milne, McKenzie, Manford, Brands and Ross.

Provost Urquhart brought up the report of the planting committee, which was read by the Clerk at the table. It being a document of some importance we give it entire –

The committee having this day met at Cluny Hills, on the ground of those parts embraced in the remit, and John Grigor, nurseryman who attended the committee, and having given their best attention and most anxious consideration to the whole matter, have to report and recommend as under, viz :–

1st. That part of the South East Hill which was planted last year is greatly too thin in the number of plants, owing, in the first place, to a sufficient number of plants from scarcity, not having been originally put in, and in the second place, from failures, owing to their being planted at a very late period of the season. In these circumstances, it is Mr Grigor's opinion, and also that of the committee from personal observation, that in each acre of this Hill, already planted, a thousand additional larches will require to be put in at the present time, in order to make the same complete, with the prospect of future success.

2nd. The section of the south east Hill, where the whins had been rooted out and still unplanted, the committee understand consists of from seven to eight acres. In that section larch should principally be employed with a mixture of a large firs, and a few oaks three thousand plants, they understand, from Mr Grigor, should be placed in each acre, which will cost

for plants £1 10 0

Planting, pitting apart, &c. £0 12 0

Per acre £2 2 0

At this rate the cost of planting, say eight acres, at 42s. is £16

16s. the plants to be chiefly put into this section, are larch interspersed with a few oaks. The measurement not being exactly ascertained, of course the expense must vary more or less according to the precise extent of the ground.

3rd. The committee recommended that the whins on the small section of the Hill, lying to the East of McAuley's ground, should be carefully grubbed out, so as not to damage the plants already thriving in this spot, and the whins being thus removed, that the additional number of plants required should be immediately put in. This section of the Hill is small in extent, and the expense of the proposed improvement will be very trifling.

4th. After visiting the section of the hill already referred to, the committee perambulated to the South and South-east divisions of the principal Hill, or that on which the Tower stands. Here they would recommend that all the whins on the South and East should immediately be cut down and removed, as these might possibly endanger some very thriving and beautiful young trees presently growing in those places, and in reference to the large Bank or Brae, facing the property of Drumduan, the committee recommend that the additional number of plants required to make that section complete should immediately be put in.

5th. In reference to the complaints regarding the entrance to the Hill to the Bulletloan [St. Leonard's Rd.] and opposite Drumduan, the committee would recommend that feal [turf] dykes and ditches in continuance of those already erected, leaving an opening for foot passengers should immediately be completed, so as prevent all intercourse by horses and carts in those parts of the Hill.

This can be done at a very trifling expense, and will, in the opinion of the committee, be quite sufficient to put a stop to the evil complained of.

6th. The committee afterwards perambulated and carefully inspected the the oak plantation on the north side of the principal Hill are clearly of opinion that while any interference with the face of the hill on this section, would destroy its beauty, and detract from the general comfort, utility and interest, as a resort

for the inhabitants; in a pecuniary point of view the few trees which might, in any case, be cut down, so far as the judgement of men of skill extend, would be very inconsiderable, and add little to the present finances of the Burgh; whereas by allowing them to remain, they may, at a future period, be of infinitely greater value. The committee for these reasons, humbly recommend, that the planting on this section of the Hill, should not at present be disturbed.

7th. Not being aware of the precise extent of the ground the committee cannot condescend particularly on the exact amount required to carry through the improvements now recommended, but they confidently expect that the whole may be done at from £30 to £40, and, in any case, it cannot possibly exceed £50. The prospective advantages to the laws are very great, and the planting, as proposed, should, in the opinion of the Committee, be forthwith completed.

(signed) ROBERT URQUHART

D.5 Plans for marking 'British Camp' with Trees

Forres, Elgin & Nairn Gazette,
5 September, 1845

CLUNY HILLS—The magistrates have, in course of the past month, ordered the delightful walks on 'the hill' to be cleaned and dressed; so that no nobleman's policies now exhibit a finer appearance than these promenades. The young plantations on the hill are also in a very thriving state, and considerable quantities of English acorns sown by the magistrates in various parts of the area and sides have sprung up and show vigorous shoots. The Deodars are vegetating here as if in their native haunts, and hundreds of birches, firs, rantrees &c. indigenous to the soil, are springing up among the sward. It is in contemplation to mark the site of the old British camp—part of which was demolished when the walks were formed some years ago—by planting English yews at certain distances in the fosse or trench all round the camp, which is in the form of an ellipse and measures eight hundred yards in circuit. This is a monument of antiquity well worth preserving, for from this spot, without doubt, did the courageous Vacomagi, the aborigines of the province, hurl defiance on the ninth Roman legion as they passed en route from Cromdale to Phtoroton. We observe patches of sweet briar have been introduced in the openings of the whin hedges, along the western walks, which in moist weather perfumes the surrounding air with its balmy odour. It is intended to give the fragrant hawthorn a local habitation in other portions of ground skirting the alleys. Many fine shrubs and flowers have been planted this season in this attractive spot. One of the magistrates who lately paid a visit to Windsor Castle says, the prospect from the site at the convergence of the walks on the north elevation of the Cluny Hills, in the direction of the low fields &c. is as nearly as possible the same which meets the eye of Her Majesty from the battlements of that chief of England's royal residences!

D.6 Description of 'British Camp'

Forres, Elgin & Nairn Gazette,
6 June, 1846

Notices To Correspondents, &c. BRITISH CAMP ON THE CLUNY HILLS—
[A-E]. N. India, is informed that the area within the ramparts of the British
Camp on the Cluny Hills, is stated by Chalmers (Caledonia) to be 6 acres,
3 roods, 25 falls. It measures in circuit about 300 yards. On the north and
south-west sides of the hill it is still distinctly visible but other parts of it have
been destroyed by the encroachments of the lately constructed public walks.
Irish and English yew trees have been planted last spring, alternately 50 or
60 yards equidistant, along the line of the camp, interspersed with a few
walnuts, all of which, we are glad to say, are thriving.; and if protected for a
few years, will hand down to posterity the land-marks of the venerable site—
on which our forefathers fought for independence with the 'Conquerors of
the world.'

D.7 Description of 'the hill'

Nairnshire Mirror,
2 May, 1848

But we hasten, in the meantime, to notice what we consider as par excellence the beauty of the burgh - the beautifully laid out grounds and walks about the Cluny Hills. The group of small eminences known by this designation consists of four rounded knolls, with a depression in the centre termed Hell's or Helg's Hole. They are evidently the result of some geographical upheavement of the olden time, their mass consisting chiefly of sand and gravel, deposited by water a long time previous to that upheavement. The eminence fronting the North, usually denominated 'the hill,' and surmounted by the well know 'Nelson's monument', was at one time the site of a British fort, of which hardly a vestige now remains. It is therefore partly artificial, but independently of that is the largest and most conspicuous of the group. The fort by which it was occupied stood in the line of march pursued by the Romans during the invasion of Britain. Within the recollection of the 'oldest inhabitant', the whole group was clothed with a natural covering of grass, without a tree or shrub to adorn it. Subsequently it was gradually overgrown with furze or whin (vernacularly funns) and within the last fifty years, numbers of fir and other trees began to be planted. The firs especially have yielded a handsome return to the burgh, lots of them having been at various periods sold at from £300 to £600. They have recently been cut down to a considerable extent, but their place is fully supplied by sapling of some year's growth, and the whole of the hills are thickly planted with young trees of various kind, which are rapidly rising into what not many years hence will be a large and valuable forest. The eminence known as the Hill has long been a favourite resort of the inhabitants. The old walks that wound around its sides were some years ago partly improved and partly superseded by the exertions of a number of gentlemen of Forres, who in true workman style turned out with picks and spades, and formed the spacious roads and avenues that now encircle it. These again have been recently re-dressed, and along their sides are in many parts formed wide borders planted with shrubs and flowers...

D.8 Description of improvements to Cluny Hill

Forres, Elgin & Nairn Gazette,
28 June, 1854

CLUNY HILL IMPROVEMENTS.—The western approach to the Cluny Hills has been completed. The road-way, now some fourteen feet wide, is laid off with a border of 5 or 6 feet along the north side, of Mr Logie's property, in which birches, interspersed with Azaleas, Rhododendrons, and other flowering shrubs are to be planted. A strong wooden paling separates the road from the adjoining property, and the border is protected by a rustic fence of larch thinnings. The walks along the whole circuit of the Hill have been recently cleaned, repaired, and the sides and embankments turfed. The Oak, Maple, Chestnut, Beech, and other hardwood trees are well up, and thrown their umbrageous shade over the most frequented portion of the walks, thus screening the pedestrian from the solar heat; while the seats and grassy banks here and there by the way-side invite to refreshing rest in positions commanding the most extensive views of the loveliest scenery any where to be met with. At the north the rich and luxuriant fields of Invererne, Lingiestown, Greeshop, and Grange, with their dividing hedgerows and beltings, attract the eye. Farther off the sinuosities of the River Findhorn, like a silver fringe along the dun-wooded skirts of Kincorth and Moy. Still farther away the sand hills of Culbin, the type of barrenness and desolation, bounds the sea margin; beyond which is the firth studded with the fishing boats of the industrious sea-faring people of Findhorn and Burghead, with an occasional steamer or merchant vessel in the offing. On the edge of the horizon, the well defined summits of the blue hills of Ross, Sutherland, and Caithness, with distance lent enchantment—present a succession of scenery of almost unparalleled beauty. On the South side of the hill the view is more circumscribed, but the authorities deserve the highest praise for the taste and judgement with which the planting and other operations for the public gratification and convenience have been here carried out.

D.9 Names of Hills

Forres, Elgin & Nairn Gazette,
September 17, 1856

Notices to Correspondents.

...

'THE CLUNY HILLS.'—We have received the following from 'A Constant Reader'—'I am much gratified in hearing of the recent improvements on the Cluny Hills; but regret that the very names of the various hills have been suffered to fall into oblivion. The people of Forres, about the middle of the 18th century named these hills as under. Beginning at the Tower Hill—before the tower was built, however, it was called 'Toe F.r.st;' the next hill to the south (above the sand-pit) was called the 'Black Hill;' the third, following the course of the sun, the 'Whin Hill;' and the fourth, the 'Braidhaugh Hill'—I hope the community, through the press, will now be at no loss when referring to the different hills, how to distinguish them.'

D.10 Report of paper presented to Elgin Literary and Scientific Association by James MacDonald

Elgin Courier,
8 June 1860

'A Sketch of the History and Antiquities of Burghead'

...

The remains of a native encampment which can still be traced in the Cluny Hills, near Forres, points out the site of an ancient British strength, near which were, doubtless, planted the huts of a primitive village, such as Caesar has described the capital of Cassivelaun. Forres indeed, seems to me to have far better claims to be considered the 'winged Camp' of Ptolemy than any other place with which it has hitherto been thought to be identical.

...

D.11 Boundary markers and dispute in 1654

Forres Elgin and Nairn Gazette,
17 June 1862

EXTRACTS FROM BOOK OF BURGH RECORDS—1654.

THE CLUNY HILLS OF FORRES.

In the older records of the Town the Boundaries of the Parks of the beautiful domains of Forres House, now the property of Robert Grant, Esq. of Kincorth, are very generally defined. 'The Great Lodging' as it was called, and the parks to the south of the Mansion, belonged in the early part of the seventeenth century to Tulloch of Taonachie, and the property was bounded at the north by the 'Clounie hillis.' In 1653 encroachments had been made on the Town's Commontie on the north side or rise of the hill—by Thomas Tulloch of Bogton—then the proprietor. Reference to this occurs in the Town Court Book of date 14th March, 1653, as follows :-

The qlk day the provest Baillies, and Counsell went up to the syd of the ye clounie hills, accompaned with nuian dunbar of grangehill; Thom. Tulloch of tanachie; Robt. Dunbar of bogs; Francis fforbes of Thornhill; Pa. Campbell of boathe to visit & remarke the wronge done be Tho. Tulloch of boigtoune, in earing and tylling out land on the north syd of the clouniehills, qlk vas the toun's commontie; qlk being scin, & greatt fault found yrwith, the sd Tho. Tulloch, wt consent of Patrick Tulloch, his eldest laull son, both being yr pnt., referred the potting, marching and meathing of the debatabl Land, to the decision of the provost, baillies & counsell, be virtue of ane act subscryvet wt yr hands, of the date of yr puts, to the effect the Provt, baillies, & consill might meit ypon the morrow, be ten hors, being the fyftein of the sd month, qho sit the tym apoyntit did met & set in sex severall merch stoins, betwixt the sd Tho. Tulloch, his proprietie & the comontie, on the syd of the clouniehills, qr the sd Thos. incroached; qrupon the sd Mr John Dunbar, provest, for himself & in name & behalf of the conseil & comontie (communitie?) required and took act. This was done betwixt thrie and four hors in the eftir noune, before yr witnesses—Wa. Kynand In calsayford; John Cumming, Indweller in Forres; James Sinclair and Andrew Christie indwellers there.

Such was the settlement of the encroachment two hundred years ago, and so doubtless matters remained till within the last fifty years, when the old march stones had disappeared, and, we apprehend, the ancient encroachments were full renewed. About 12 or 15 years ago [1850-1847], the

Magistrates and the agent of the coterminous Proprietor—then the Laird of Altyre—met on the ground, when the marches were settled, and new march stones fixed as present.

D.12 Overgrown woods on north side of hill

Forres, Elgin & Nairn Gazette,
5 October 5, 1881

PROFESSOR BLACKIE ON CLUNY HILL AND THE FINDHORN
(From the Scotsman).

...

The Hill of Cluny, on the southeast corner of which the Hydropathic Establishment is situated, affords an efficient shelter from the cold north-east winds that, at certain seasons, can be no stranger to this quarter. The only objection indeed, that I know to Cluny Hill Establishment as a summer residence is this very shelter, not so much of the hill as of the wood with which it is thickly overgrown. In the summer season, a fresh breeze and a bright outlook are amongst the amongst the luxuries which hydropathic visitors naturally look for; and as the view to the south, the only one open to the establishment, is deficient both in point of picturesque effect and of panoramic range, I venture to submit to those interested in the prosperity of the good old town, famous for witches and pine forests, with which the prosperity of the Hydropathic Hall is closely bound up, that the north side of the beautiful Cluny Hill, already so richly provided with shady walks, should be largely opened up to the breeze, and the magnificent panoramic prospect of the Moray Firth and the Ross-shire and Caithness mountains spread before the eye in that direction.

...

JOHN S. BLACKIE
Forres, September 1881

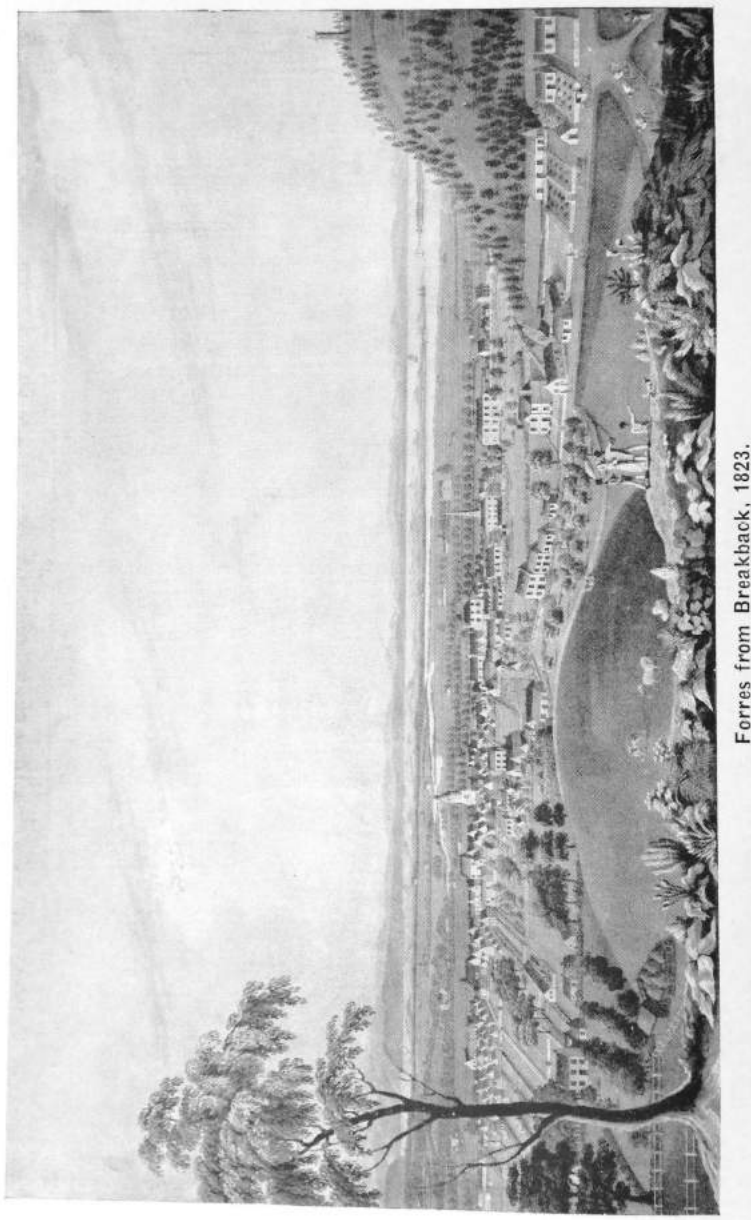
E Images

E.1 Views of Cluny Hill

Figure 44: Aquatint engraving of *Brugh-head, Murrayshire* by William Daniell in 1815.



Figure 45: View from Breakback, possibly dating from 1823 but without source given, (Douglas & Robertson, 1934). View is to the north with Cluny Hill on the right.



Forres from Breakback, 1823.

Figure 46: View of Forres from Invererne House, August 1829 // (Lauder, 1873, p.82).

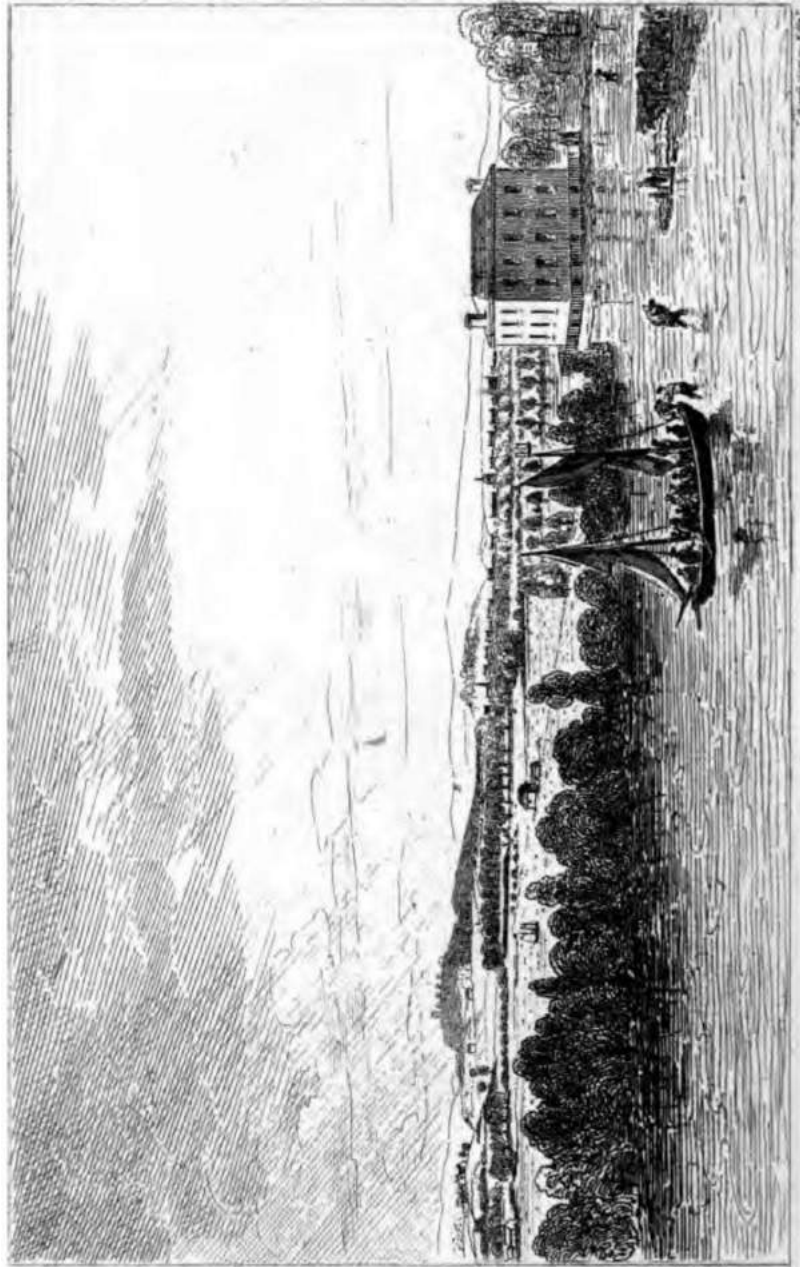


Figure 47: Detail of unnamed painting gifted to Forres Tolbooth, Early 18th century? View is to the southeast.

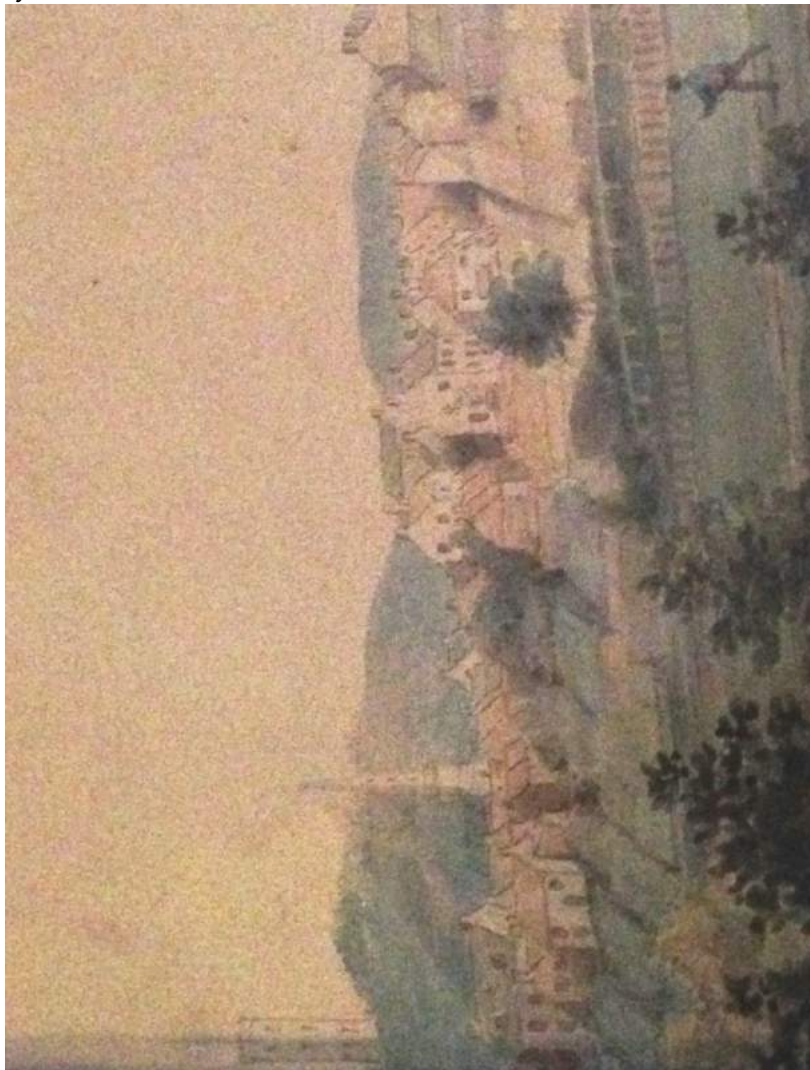


Figure 48: *The Riding of the Marches*, 1841, Charles Cranmer (1780-1841), Forres Tolbooth. The painting depicts an event which took place on Califer Hill, to the south of Forres, on 1st October 1840.

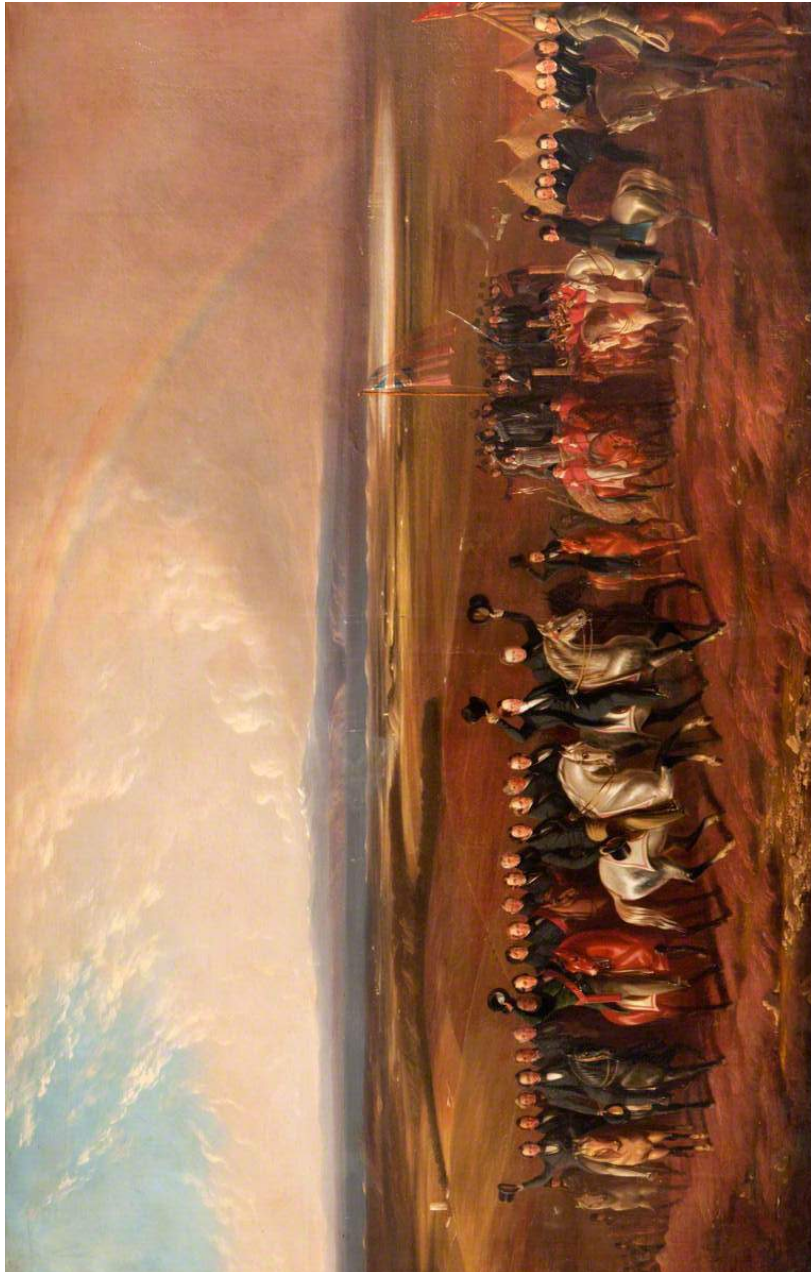


Figure 49: View of Forres and Cluny Hill from Balnaferry, c. 1868. The recently established Inverness-Perth railway service is in the foreground. (Watson & Watson, 1868)

. View is to the east.

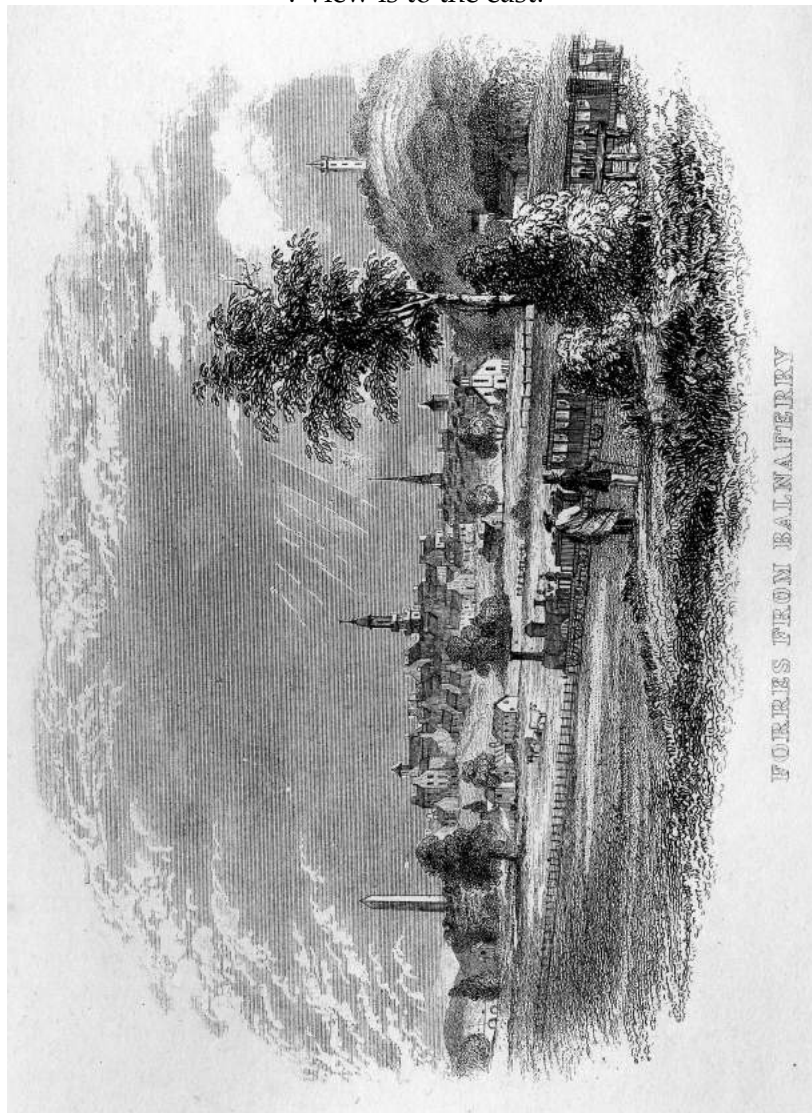


Figure 50: View from Breakback, possibly dating from 1874 but without source given, (Douglas & Robertson, 1934). View is to the north with Cluny Hill on the right.

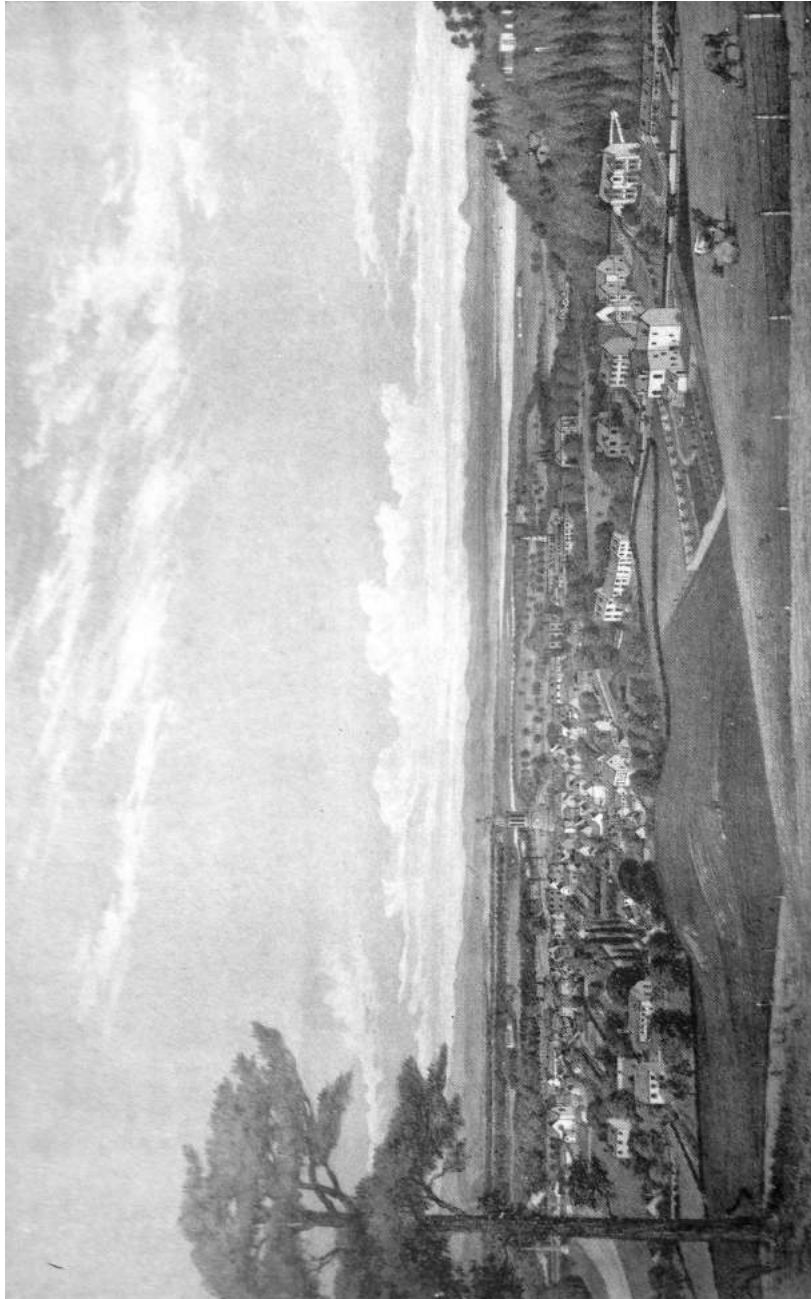


Figure 51: View of Cluny Hill from Forres station in 1898, (Fraser, 1989, p.33). View is to the southeast.

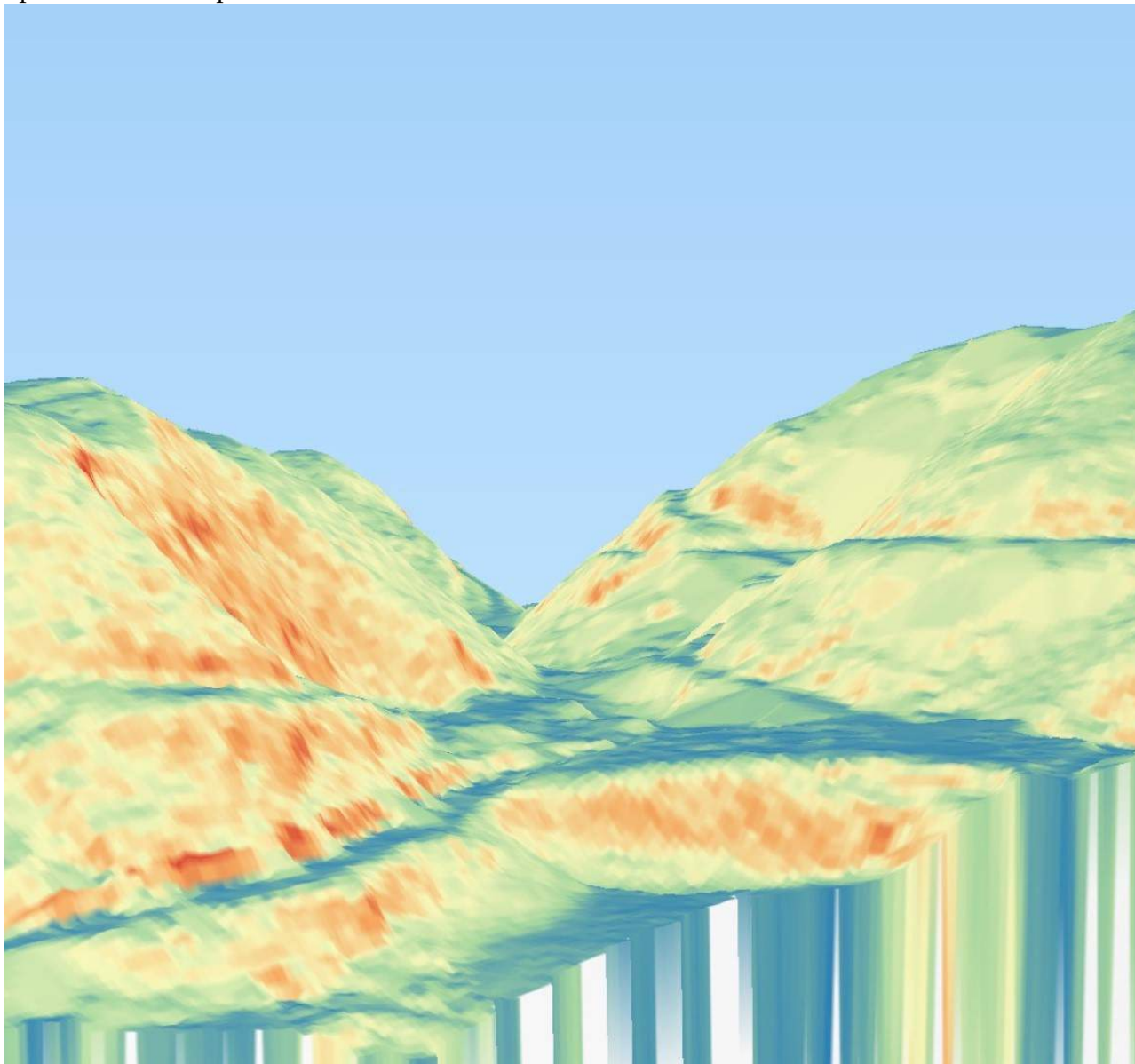


Figure 52: View of Cluny Hill from Grant Park, 2015. View is to the south.



E.2 3D Models

Figure 53: Perspectival 3D model of LIDAR data from the north east with false colour slope and exaggerated vertical elevation. The north hill is on the right. The level line of the Circular Path can be clearly seen, with a ditch feature dropping away to the north, while on the south side a ridge tracks upwards from the path.



E.3 Views from Nelson's Tower

Figure 54: Aquatint engraving of *Nelson's Tower, Forres* by William Daniell in 1815.



Figure 55: Nelson's Tower



Figure 56: View north from Nelson's Tower at ground level. Surrounding trees block visibility in other directions.



Figure 57: View north from Nelson's Tower viewing platform



Figure 58: View northeast from Nelson's Tower viewing platform



Figure 59: View east from Nelson's Tower viewing platform



Figure 60: View southeast from Nelson's Tower viewing platform



Figure 61: View south from Nelson's Tower viewing platform



Figure 62: View southwest from Nelson's Tower viewing platform



Figure 63: View west from Nelson's Tower viewing platform



Figure 64: View northwest from Nelson's Tower viewing platform



Figure 65: View of Sueno's Stone (NNE) from Nelson's Tower viewing platform



E.4 Boulders on summit of Cluny Hill

Figure 66: Boulder besides path to Nelson's Tower, north hill.



Figure 67: Boulder embedded in path to Nelson's Tower, north hill.



E.5 Yew trees on Cluny Hill

Figure 68: A yew tree near the intersection of the northern ditch and Circular Path.



Figure 69: Two yew trees southeast of Cluny Hill Hollow.



Figure 70: Tree stump besides northern descending path on Cluny Hill.



E.6 Linear depressions on Cluny Hill

Figure 71: Intersection of the northern linear depression and northern descending path.



Figure 72: Northern linear depression showing measurement of 12 feet.



Figure 73: Intersection of the southern linear depression (E) and eastern Circular Path.



Figure 74: Southern linear depression (E) showing measurement of 12 feet.



Figure 75: Intersection of the southern linear depression (W) and western Circular Path.



Figure 76: Southern linear depression (E) showing measurement of 12 feet.



E.7 North descending path on Cluny Hill

Figure 77: View uphill of northern descending path at intersection with linear depression (right). A raised bank planted with tree stumps begins on the opposite side at the same location.



Figure 78: View downhill of northern descending path showing measurement of 12 feet.



E.8 Comparison of Cluny Hill with Burghead at equivalent scale

Figure 79: Cluny Hill Enclosure. ©Google Maps



Figure 80: Burghead earthworks. ©Google Maps

