

## Walking through history at RSPB Inversnaid Reserve



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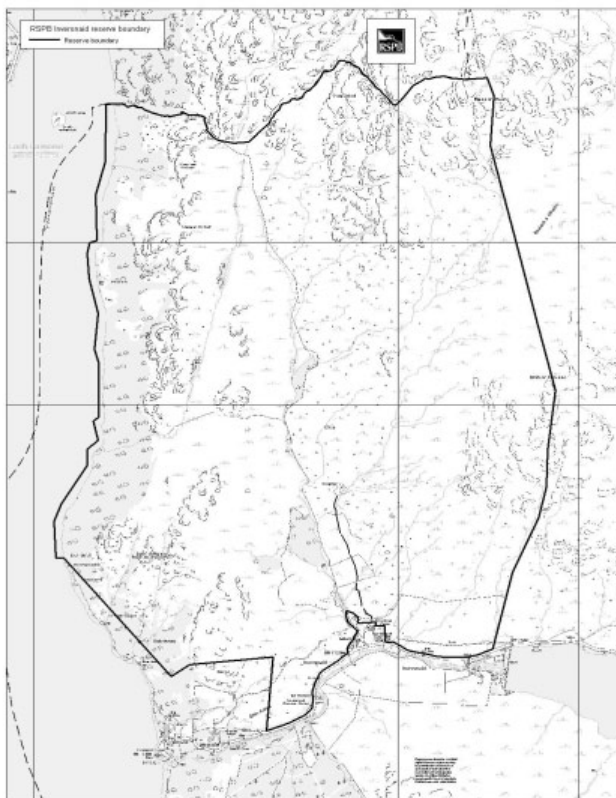
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Inversnaid is now an RSPB nature reserve, but people have been living and working on this site for hundreds, if not thousands of years. The name is a combination of the Gaelic word 'inver', meaning the mouth of a river, and 'snaid', a Scandinavian word for a piece of woodland.

RSPB Scotland bought Inversnaid in 1986 and later added the Garrison in 2002. Both were farms at the time. What we've been doing since is managing the land to recreate the ancient oak wood that would once have stood here, benefiting many birds and animals species, including black grouse, wood warblers and pine martens.

As well as being great for wildlife, the reserve has a colourful past. It is associated with both Rob Roy, who is believed to have lived somewhere on the reserve, and then later with Inversnaid Garrison, built to aid in the suppression of the Jacobites during the turbulent 18<sup>th</sup> century.

This booklet highlights the some of the historical features that can still be seen on the reserve to this day.



A more recent story to note is that during the 2nd World War a German bomber mistook the burning pyres on one of the hillsides of cattle that were being destroyed after an outbreak of foot and mouth disease, for Glasgow docks and dropped their bombs on it.

## 6. Sheepfank

A map dating back to 1719 shows the sheepfank as quite a substantial house. However it has not been possible to find out anything more about this dwelling and who may have lived here other than a tenant of the Duke of Montrose, who took the land from Rob Roy. It is uncertain when the house was built but it may have been after Rob Roy was forced to leave Inversnaid and this was were the new tenant of Duke of Montrose lived.

The walls have been altered over time but an archaeologist has stated there are discrepancies in the layout as a sheepfank. It wouldn't be such a stretch of the imagination to believe this was once a house, given that the garrison has also been converted into a sheepfank but more recently.

It is not certain when this glen was given over to (or taken for) sheep farming but we can assume around early to mid 1800s. This practice continued until RSPB bought this area and removed the sheep from the hill ground in order to establish woodland.



Systematic tree felling began in the 17th Century when local iron smelting sites called bloomeries, were set up in woodland clearings and adjacent woodlands were coppiced, with the wood used to produce charcoal. Bloomeries have been found on the reserve beyond the sheep fank but are now difficult to see.



## 4. Old field boundary

There are 3 types of boundary found on the reserve. The newest are the post and wire fences, erected during the last 50 years or so. There are also lengths of dry-stone dyking, these are a valuable habitat for nesting birds such as wheatear. Thirdly, the large bank you can see, has a very different structure. The stones, which formed the boundary edge are just about still visible and the whole structure is filled with earth. Although we have no

evidence to the date of this, structurally it resembles field boundaries found in many other parts of the UK, particularly the pre-historic landscapes of Cornwall and Pembrokeshire. Is this the oldest evidence of human activity remaining at Inversnaid?



## 5. Military camp

The Board of Ordnance has a site plan dating from 1719, which shows this flat, relatively dry piece of ground having 'huts' on it to accommodate soldiers while the Garrison was being built. It also guarded what was then the main route from the east to the head of Loch Lomond.



James Wolfe was garrisoned here in 1746 and later rose to the rank of General and commanded the capture of Quebec in Canada from the French.

## 1. Inversnaid Garrison/Fort

Inversnaid Garrison or Fort was built around 1718 and was eventually garrisoned in 1720. It was identical to the fort that can still be seen at Ruthven (below) and would have been an impressive symbol to the Jacobean MacGregor's and other clans in the area of the Government's authority. It was burnt down in the 1745 uprising but was rebuilt.

It is likely that Rob Roy MacGregor and his sons would have kept things interesting for the men who were garrisoned here, but their main task was building roads and remnants of these can still be seen today.

It was last garrisoned in the mid 1790s when the poets William & Dorothy Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge visited Inversnaid in 1803 they found the barracks and outer wall in tact.

The remains of the Garrison can still be seen from the car park but has been modified in the recent past to handle sheep. Several of the outer walls have been incorporated into the outer walls of the cottage and steadings.



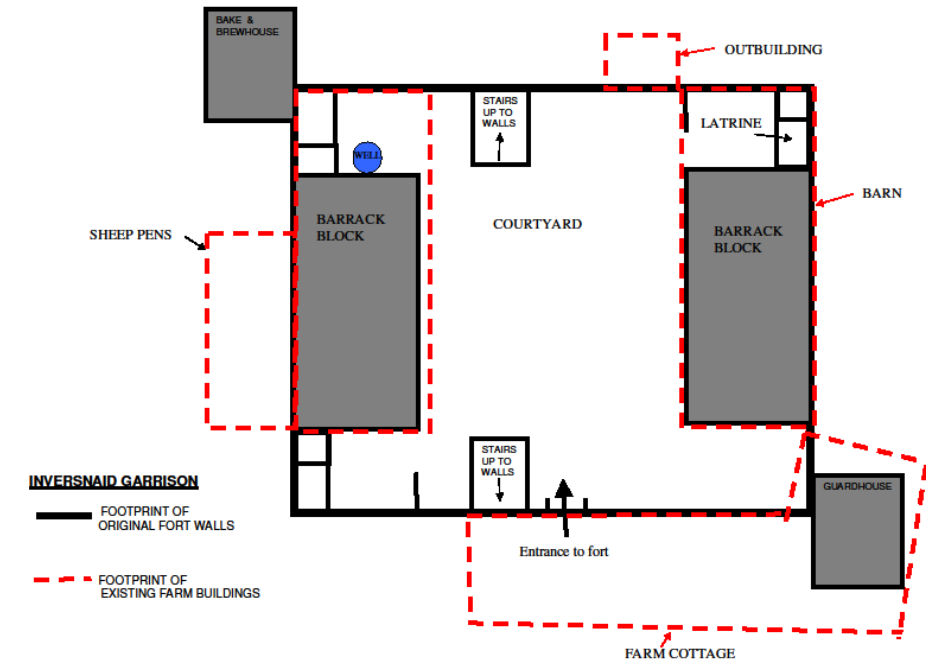
Rob Roy's youngest son Robert (known as Robin Oig) was captured and held by a party of military at Inversnaid Fort in October 1754 before being sent to trial in Edinburgh for abducting the young widower Jean Key from Balfroun and forcing her to marry him. He was found guilty and promptly executed.

### 3. The Post House (Rob Roy's House?)

There are few places in the Trossachs that don't have a link to Rob Roy MacGregor and Inversnaid is no different. The earliest documentation has him living at Inversnaid in 1708. However, there are claims that this house was the marital home following his marriage to Mary Helen MacGregor of Comar in January 1693, just up the road in Glen Arklet. Rob Roy had a sizeable estate in this area called Craigrostan that he managed from Inversnaid.

In 1712/13, Rob Roy borrowed a large sum of money mainly from the 1st Duke of Montrose James Graham, to increase the size of his cattle herd. He entrusted his chief herder with the money to go and buy the cattle, but he disappeared. Rob Roy, unable to pay back the loan was branded an outlaw and he and his family were evicted by the Duke, who then ordered the house to be burnt down. Since his eviction Rob Roy waged a feud with the Duke until in 1722 when he was forced to surrender.

It is unclear where the name Post House comes from. It could have been used as an outpost from the Garrison at various times during the occupation.



### 2. Rig and furrow

If you look carefully, you can see the straight lines created by small scale arable farming. The small ploughs which were in common use before machinery enabled bigger ploughs created this distinctive pattern as they turned the soil. As the plough ran down the furrow line, the soil was turned over. Once they reached the end of the furrow, they reversed direction and started back, turning the soil into the middle of the run, towards the previous furrow. Over time, this created the high and low areas of ground -



the rig and furrow which also assisted with drainage and weed control. This also shows the nature of farming here, small scale mixed agriculture, with oats complementing the livestock.