CARTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE FOR SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY 'CROSS-SITES' IN NORTH-EAST SCOTLAND: ROBERT GORDON OF STRALOCH AND THE BLAEU MAPS OF SCOTLAND

Colin Shepherd

Honorary Research Fellow, University of Aberdeen

ABSTRACT

This paper considers the cartographic depiction of a series of crosses shown on one of Robert Gordon of Straloch's seventeenth-century maps of North-East Scotland. Their portrayal in map form within the religious context of the time is problematic. Their potential existence on the ground raises even greater problems of identity and form. That they were not, in reality, as they were depicted on the maps is evident by the landscape evidence. The survival of documentary evidence in the form of the Straloch Papers moves the story from the North-East of Scotland to Amsterdam, the place of production of the maps. These papers describe aspects of the wider political upheavals during which these maps were made and suggest possible motivations beyond geographic interest.

INTRODUCTION

The map by Robert Gordon of Straloch which is discussed here is held as part of the National Library of Scotland's collection under the shelfmark Adv.MS.70.2.10 (Gordon 32) and titled, 'Formarten and part of Marr and Buquhan'. It is dated to the period 1630 x 1655. A scanned copy can be found on the 'Charting the Nation' website.

The inclusion of these crosses on the maps raises a number of interesting historical questions surrounding the contemporary purposes of the maps and how they may reflect the socio-political events of their times. Archaeologically, they raise questions regarding the nature of what is being represented and what they may tell us about changes to the socio-political landscape in the North-East of Scotland through time.

The backdrop to most of Gordon's later life, during which his interest in map production appears to have blossomed, was the political turmoil caused by the Reformation, Covenanting and Counter-Reformation episodes in Scottish history. As an influential member of one of the major protaganist families of the time his activities are of interest. Indeed, it might be questioned whether his map-making concerns, in part, reflect the political anxieties of the time. Because of his advanced years (he was born in 1580), Robert Gordon was in no position to take an active part in surveying. He worked from the maps of Timothy Pont (made in the 1580s and '90s) but added extra detail to his home area, the North-East of Scotland. This area was also, at that time, the final bastion of Catholicism in Britain and a rearguard action was being fought beneath the banner of the house of Gordon. The map in question shows that part of Aberdeenshire lying between (and including) the city and port of Aberdeen and the castle of the Marquis of Huntly, beyond the Glens of Foudland, 40 miles to the north-west. It covers all of the historic Lordship of the Garioch, including his own lands around Straloch.

Oliver has noted the importance of separating out the 'agendas, identities and material conditions' that impinge upon map production (2011, p. 80). Also, Shannon has noted that maps produced for certain contemporary purposes often 'tended to include more information than was strictly necessary' (2015, p. 66). This could result in the recording of information concerning landscapes no longer accessible through any other means. It is suggested that these maps of Robert Gordon satisfy both sets of potentials. This premise will be discussed after the following brief descriptions of the cross-sites and the wider landscapes within which each depicted cross-site sits. Locational data is shown in Table 1 where National Grid Reference estimates are made based upon the topography depicted on the maps.

ID	Name	Description	Recorded Archaeology	NGR (NJ)
1	Selbie	Cross depicted on the Hill of Selbie	Cairn; Cist	798 228
2	Bourtie	Cross depicted on Pitgaveney Hill	None	812 243
3	Hattoncrook	Cross probably sited on Hill of Pitcow	None	839 245
4	Durno	Cross on the Hill of Durn known as 'the Law'	Cairn	701 281
5	Newton	Cross not shown on any hill	Stone?	654 290?
6	Tillymorgan	Cross depicted on Hill of Tillymorgan	None	652 348
7	Foudland	Possible cross depicted along the ridge of Foudland	None	603 332?
8	Clatt	No hill shown: two possible sites	'Tumulus'	533 262?
		Cross Hill (RHP 260/2)	'Tumulus'	533 262?
		or Bankhead	Stone circle	528 265?
9	Courtestone	Cross on Gallow Top on the Suie?	Cairn?	557 232?
10	Kintore	Cross on 'Towaks Hill'	Numerous	796 155
11	Hallforest	Two possible hills: Woodhead	None	756 167?
		or, Blairs Wood. (Noted as Blair M on map)	None	764 168?
12	Tillybin	Two possible sites: Lauchentilly	None	744 124?
		or, Lauchentilly Wood	None	739 121?
13	Lynturk 1	Cross possibly depicted on Hill of Lynturk	None	598 114?
14	Lynturk 2	Cross possibly depicted on adjoining hill	None	604 118?

Table 1. Cross-sites, names used and brief description of locations.

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE DEPICTED CROSS-SITES

Fourteen crosses are clearly depicted. These depictions have been named hereafter by reference to their nearest modern identifiable place-name. Some are clearly identifiable as having been positioned on prominent hill-tops whilst the topographic siting of others is less certain. Various archaeological features existed in a number of these places and were recorded on the First Edition of the Ordnance Survey 6-inch maps of the area. Subsequently, some of these sites have been lost and no longer appear on the more recent maps. The First Edition maps have, therefore, been used for comparative purposes rather than the more recent Ordnance survey maps.

1. Selbie (Fig. 1)

Cross shown on a hill-top with, what appears to be a further annotated cross-site lying a little above and to the right of the hill-top cross. This maybe indicates a further lowland cross-site, such as seen at Newton or Clatt (see below). The First Edition OS map shows a cairn in this position on the hill-top and is noted in the Aberdeenshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) as being a ring cairn measuring 12 metres in diameter (NJ72SE0039). Selbie Hill sits upon the major watershed dividing the Urie and Don rivers.

2. Bourtie (Fig. 2)

The cross is depicted sitting upon Pitgaveney Hill. This hill forms the meeting point of three major watersheds: the Don, the Urie and the Ythan. Pitgaveney Hill on Gordon's map now appears to be known as Lawel Hill. The name may suggest an earlier assembly site. Farm steadings at Kirktown of Bourtie, north of the hill, have a simple cross-incised stone built into the 'improved' nineteenth-century farm steadings and a Pictish symbol stone is built into the present church.
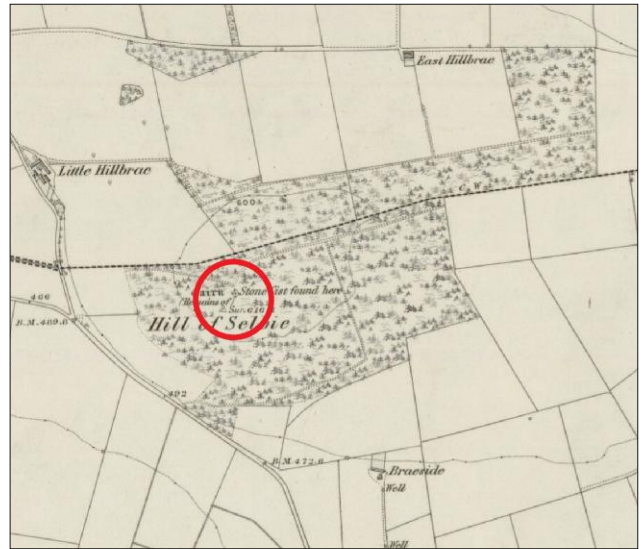
Figure 1a. Depiction of Selby Cross.

Figure 1b. 19th-century setting of the cross.
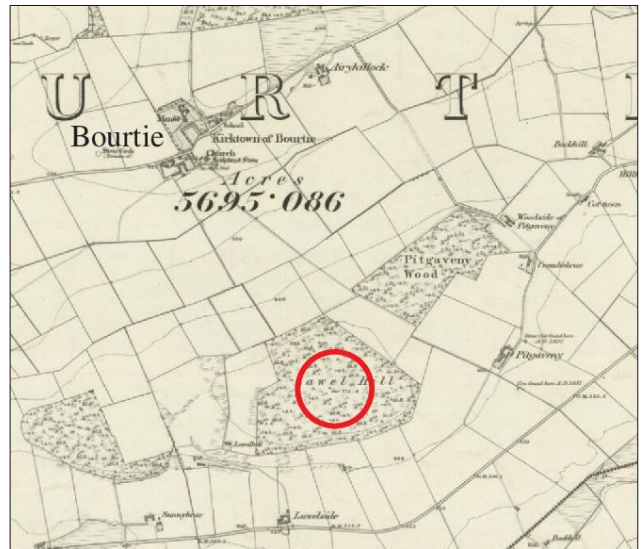

Figure 2a. Depiction of Bourtie Cross.

Figure 2b. 19th-century setting of the cross.

Figure 3a. Depiction of Hattoncrook Cross.

Figure 3b. 19th-century setting of the cross.

3. Hattoncrook (Fig. 3)

      This cross-site also sat on a major watershed, in this case dividing the Ythan and Don river systems. Aberdeenshire Sites and Monuments Record notes an antiquarian reference from the Scots Magazine of 1772 to bones and 'a flat stone, on which were some antique figures and letters' (NJ82SW0008; Scots Magazine, 34, October, 1772, p. 581). This would appear to be unrelated to the hill-top as the text also goes on to say that a fireplace stood nearby, suggesting the possible reuse of a carved stone in a more domestic or agricultural setting.

4. Durno (Fig. 4)

      This cross shown on the Hill of Durno sits on a minor watershed, separating two small burn systems that flow into the River Urie. The hill depicted also appears to be that carrying the name of 'The Law' and possibly marks a former local assembly site. A cairn is recorded on this hill-top on the Aberdeenshire SMR (NJ72NW0046). It is noted as a sub-circular mound measuring c. 16 metres in diameter with traces of a kerb and standing to a height of c. 0.8 metres. A Pictish stone was found approximately half a mile west-south-west of the Law in 1914 (Ritchie 1916, p. 281), but this seems too far from Gordon's depicted site and, furthermore, is on the lower slopes of a brae rather than on top of a hill.

5. Newton (Fig. 5)

      Newton cross is one of those depictions that is not placed upon a hill shown on the map and is, consequently, difficult to place on the ground. There is a low hill in the vicinity lying just west of the River Urie. If this was its site, it would have sat upon a minor watershed separating the Shevock Burn from the River Urie. Stones collected at Newton House may include the stone depicted on Gordon's map, though such a suggestion is, clearly, simple conjecture. It is clear that a number of incised stones lay in situ in this vicinity in the seventeenth century. A cairn is recorded on the First Edition OS map and, within the OS Name Book, is a reference to a local farmer digging into it but being stopped by the landowner when he hit a stone slab about 4 feet deep.

      An estate plan of 1764 (RHP 30788) depicts a stone standing within a 'loan' (driftway) south-east of the cairn upon the southern slope of the hill overlooking the Shevock Burn. There are conflicting accounts of where the second Newton stone originally stood. Southesk (1882, p. 24) claims that local knowledge had it that the two stones had originally stood together. However, he also notes that the Newton Stone stood within a plantation in 1803 near to a new road. The 1764 plan depicts a stone lying well to the south of the plantation (as shown along with the proposed new road line) on a later estate plan of c. 1780 (RHP 985). As the 1764 plan notes only a singular stone, it may well be that local knowledge, in this instance, was mistaken.

      Either of these stones may have been the 'cross' depicted on Gordon's map or his depiction may have been related to a further distinctive feature sitting elsewhere within the landscape.

6. Tillymorgan (Fig. 6)

      There can be little doubt concerning the whereabouts of the cross-site depicted on the top of Tillymorgan Hill — a prominent hill sitting on the major watershed dividing the river systems of the Urie and the Don. There used to be a place-name, 'Corsduock', lying at the foot of the hill on its western side, east of the main road that is shown on an estate plan of 1770 (MS 2769/III/4/4b).

7. Foudland (Fig. 7)

      Foudland cross may well have been sited on the summit of the Hill of Foudland, although the ridge along here is composed of a number of 'summits', any one of which might have carried the cross-site. Although technically not on the watershed between the Don and Urie systems, visually the

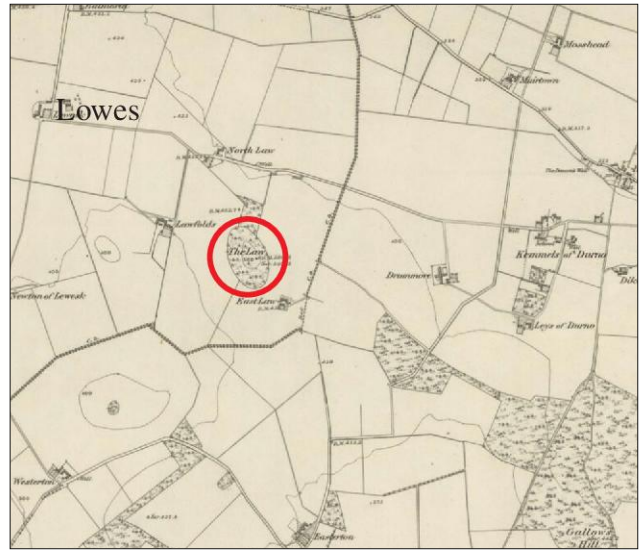*Figure 4a. Depiction of Durno Cross.*

Figure 4b. 19th-century setting of the cross.

Figure 5a. Depiction of Newton Cross.

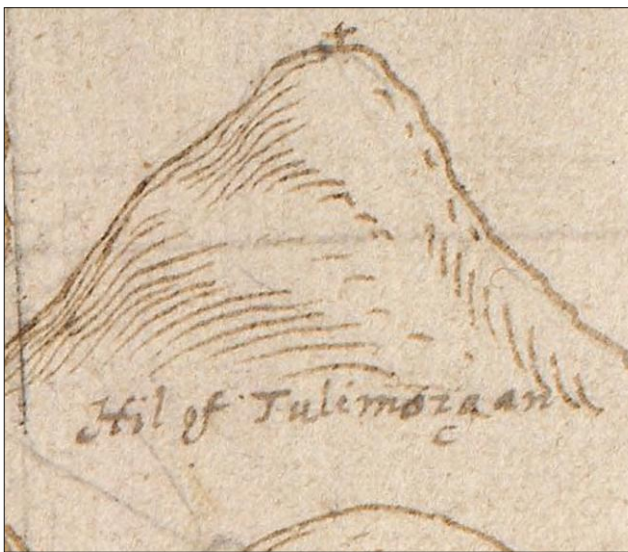*Figure 5b. 19th-century setting of the cross.*

Figure 6a. Depiction of Tillymorgan Cross.

Figure 6b. 19th-century setting of the cross.

Foudland ridge defines two distinct zones to the north and south. Later estate boundaries appear to have treated this ridge as the defining feature rather than the 'true' watershed lying north of the Glens of Foudland.

8. Clatt (Fig. 8)

The Gordon map appears to show the Clatt cross-site to be situated not upon a hill and, as with the Newtown cross, this makes its geographical position difficult to ascertain. The map appears to show the cross-site sitting north-west of Clatt and in the direction of Kearn church. A couple of low hills in this vicinity were sites of 'tumulii'. Either of these might be the site of the former cross and both lie upon a major watershed dividing the river systems of the Bogie and the Urie. This is also the general area from whence at least one of the Clatt Pictish stones is derived. However, an estate plan (RHP 260/2) shows a 'standing stone' lying on a rise somewhat to the north-east of Gartnach Hill on the site of the stone circle of Bankhead. However, as Welfare notes (2011, pp. 303-5), this standing stone appears to depict simply the site of the stone circle. Although this might supply a third possible location, Ritchie (1916) makes no mention of this possibility. Of more interest is the name 'Cross Hill' shown on the estate plan of 1771 (RHP 260/2) which is also the site of the most south-easterly of the 'tumulii' noted above.

9. Courtestone (Fig. 9)

Courtestone is also rather ambiguously placed on the map. It appears to 'float' above a pass between two hill-tops that would seem to define the northern line of the Correen Hills. It is uncertain, therefore, whether the cross-site stood atop the pass or below it to the north. If it stood at the pass it would have lain upon a major watershed dividing the river systems of the Don and the Urie. An eighteenth-century estate plan (RHP 14753) shows the main north south route across the Correen Hills (the 'South Road') passing by Suie Cairn in the area known as Gallow Top. Suie Cairn does not appear to be a simple roadside cairn and was known by that name even in the eighteenth century (as shown by the estate plan). The cairn appears to have a hollow centre and may have been a ring cairn. A few yards north of the cairn lies a large white quartz boulder marked as the 'White stone' on the First Edition OS map. The name 'Courtestone', whilst suggestive of an assembly site, appears to be a later corruption of an earlier form, noted as Cruterstoun/Cruuerstoun and Crucerystoun in the late thirteenth- and fourteenth-century records respectively of the Great Seal (Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scotorum, pp. 600, 490).

10. Kintore (Fig. 10)

The cross is sited on Tuach Hill. This hill overlooking the royal thanage of Kintore is unique in this collection of cross-site depictions in that it does not sit on any form of watershed. However, it is placed upon a hill that has clearly been of particular relevance at various points in time. It was the site of a gallows and contains a range of prehistoric ceremonial remains.

11. Hallforest (Fig. 11)

Hallforest cross is depicted on Blair Hill. Sadly, this name has been lost since the seventeenth century and the name may have belonged to either of two hill-tops. It appears to have been sited upon a minor watershed dividing two small river systems feeding into the Don.

12. Tillybin (Fig. 12)

This cross is shown upon a hill-top but its actual location is difficult to determine owing to the paucity of other detail depicted in this area. The identification of the place-name Lauchentilly suggests
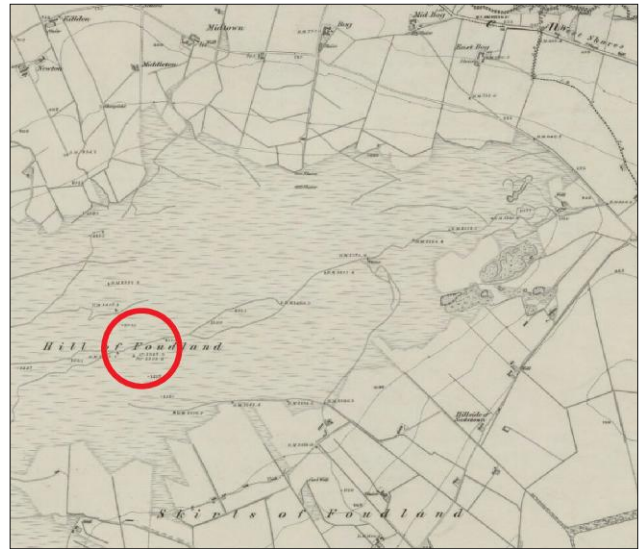
Figure 7a. Depiction of Foudland Cross.

Figure 7b. 19th-century setting of the cross.
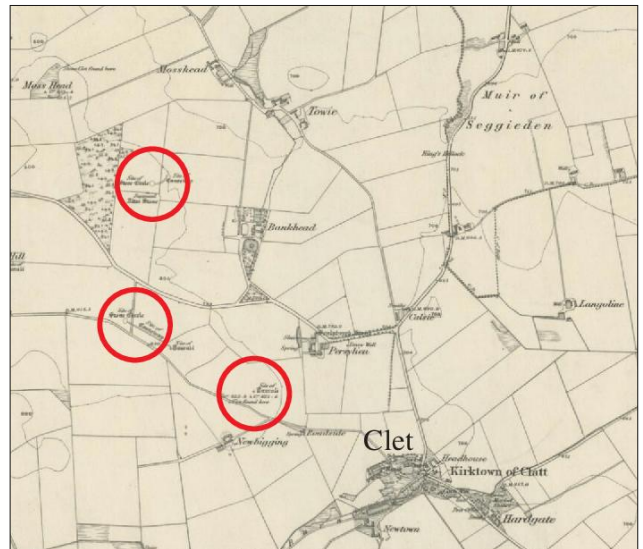

Figure 8a. Depiction of Clatt Cross.

Figure 8b. 19th-century setting of the cross.

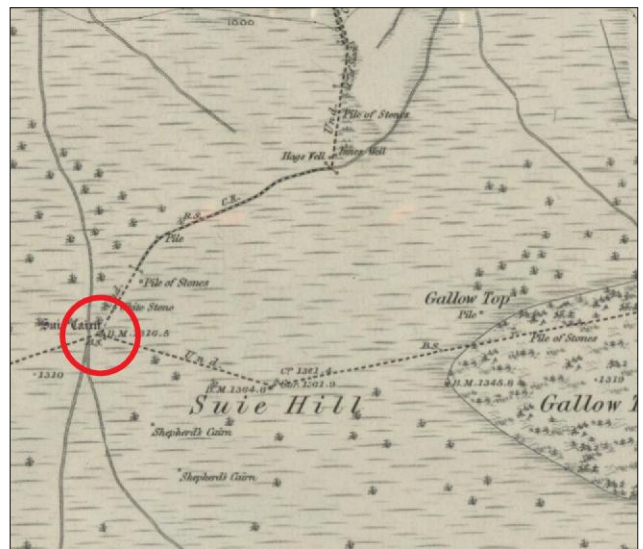*Figure 9a. Depiction of Courtestone Cross.*

Figure 9b. 19th-century setting of the cross.

Figure 10a. Depiction of Kintore Cross.
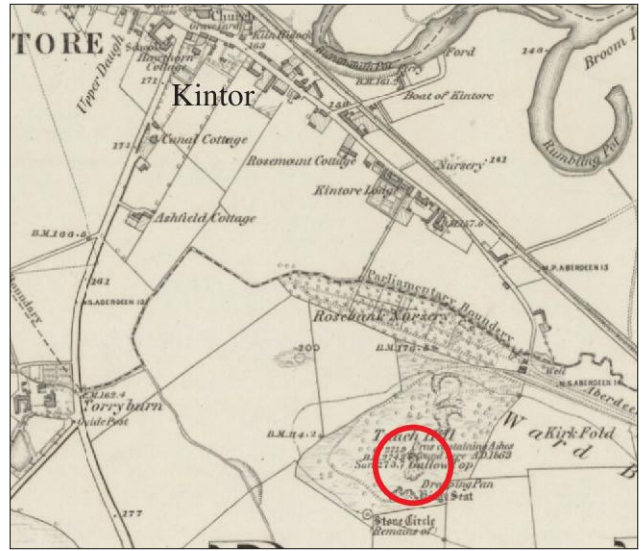

Figure 10b. 19th-century setting of the cross.

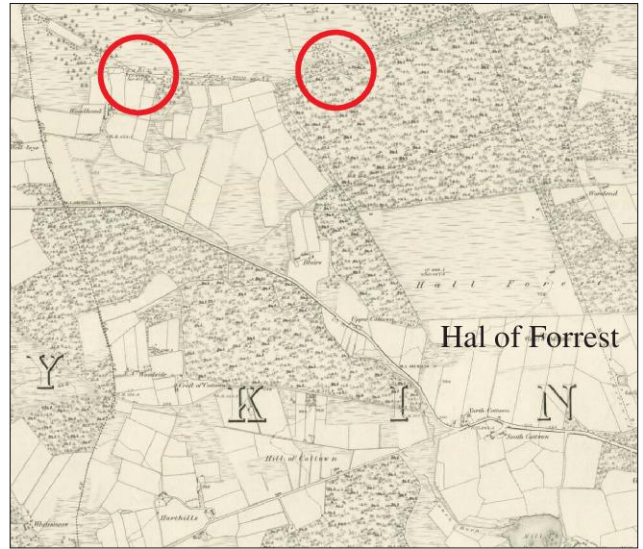*Figure 11a. Depiction of Hallforest Cross.*

Figure 11b. 19th-century setting of the cross.
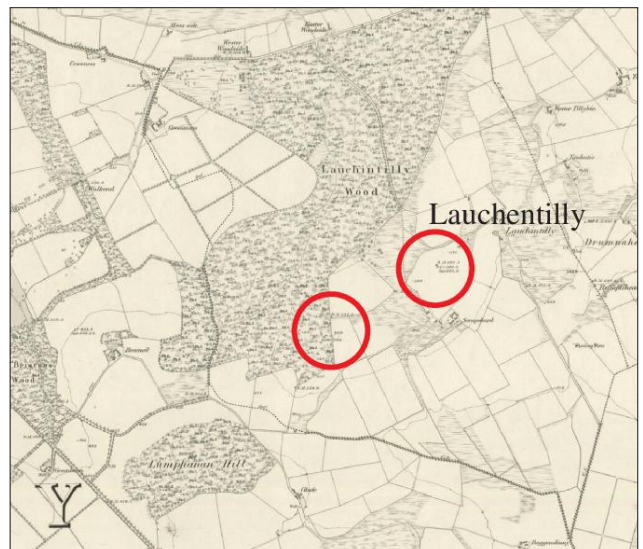

Figure 12a. Depiction of Tillybin Cross.

Figure 12b. 19th-century setting of the cross.

the hill to be Lauchentilly Hill with Lumphanan Hill shown foregrounding it. This would place it upon the major watershed dividing the Don and Dee river systems. Other than that, there does not appear to be anything pertinent about the siting of this cross.

13. Lynturk 1 and 2 (Fig. 13)

Even more so than Tillybin, the two clearly marked crosses at Lynturk appear to demonstrate no obvious purpose for their siting. The southern one is clearly shown atop the Hill of Lynturk whilst the position of its partner to the north is difficult to determine. It is possible that they sit upon a minor watershed dividing two burn systems that both flow into the Don, but even this feels like special pleading! Whether there is any relevance to the fact that Robert Gordon married Catherine, daughter of Alexander Irvine of Lenturk (Lynturk), is similarly beguiling but not necessarily relevant.

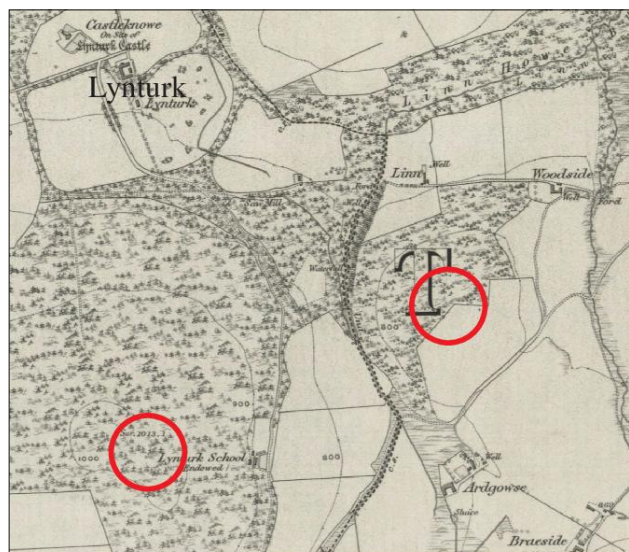*Figure 13a. Depiction of Lynturk Cross.*

Figure 13b. 19th-century setting of the cross.

DISCUSSION

Although Robert Gordon worked from maps made by Timothy Pont, certain of them — particularly the ones of the North-East — are considered to contain major amendments made with local knowledge (Stone 1981, pp. 18 19). It is noteworthy that no other map sheets produced by Robert Gordon for the North-East appear to show any similar crosses. Even other maps produced in the series, where they overlap with this map, fail to depict the crosses shown here. In fact, it is quite remarkable that any such depictions should be shown in Scotland at this time after the intense iconoclasm of the preceding generations. Though, against this, must be set the recognition that the North-East was still robustly Catholic under the local protection of the Marquess of Huntly (and his extensive Gordon kin) and was still largely defiant in its disdain for the 'national' covenant (Shepherd 2011, p. 22). Numerous attempts to have it sworn in by local Presbyterian ministers were unanimously rebuffed by local parish congregations and objections to the imposition of Presbyterian ministers persisted into the 1700s. Priests were also still causing offence to Presbyterian sensibilities at that time (see below). The lands of the Marquess of Gordon were held at the mercy of the 'Protectors' from 1653 until the Restoration and, during that period, they are unlikely to have been as prominent in their support for Catholicism in the locality. Even so, the context for the survival of Catholic symbolism within the countryside might not have been as unfavourable as across other parts of Scotland. Furthermore, the Counter-Reformation may have buoyed-up local hopes of a genuine return to the former national faith in the foreseeable future.

The Straloch Papers (Stuart 1841, pp. 3-58) show Robert Gordon as a man frequently petitioned for his advice by various members of the Catholic Gordons in their political manoeuvrings of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Grant's (2010) consideration of the machinations of George Gordon, 1st Marquess and 6th Earl of Huntly, suggests a pragmatic Catholic. Robert Gordon's stance may well have been similar. He appears to have trodden the knife-edge between the two factions without drawing down the wrath of either. Rather, his support appears to have been sought from both sides, though the surviving letters would suggest familial ties were strong. It might be proposed that he was a Catholic sympathiser with a pragmatic interest in survival and the continuance of his studies. His genuine interest in the study of the geography of the area cannot be questioned and his texts display an intimate knowledge of the landscape and social institutions. Prior to the class-centricism of the 'Enlightenment', the Gordon aristocracy appear to have formed merely one end of a fully articulated social landscape (Shepherd 2011, pp. 22 3; 2015, pp. 64 7). His knowledge granted him royal exemption from official duties to pursue his map-making (Stone 1981, p. 21). A letter from Charles I requested his help in correcting deficiencies in maps of 'divers schyres of this our ancient kingdom' (Stuart 1841, p. 11). Stone (1981, p. 7) suggests that he appears to have avoided involvement in public affairs whenever possible. Another reading may be of a more politically engaged person of academic standing courted, at times, by his enemies. A letter from Archibald Marquis of Argyll, covenanter and enemy of the royalist Marquess of Gordon, was received by Robert Gordon in 1644 petitioning for his aid (ibid., p. 20). More frequent at the time are letters from the Marquess asking for meetings to discuss strategies (e.g. ibid., pp. 15 6, 31, 33). There is an interesting reference to the use of his maps by the family in 1643: 'for I perceaue without yowr companye or one of your Mapps to show him the way, I need nott expect him' (ibid., p. 27). This points to their more everyday use by the family, though, as the letter is again dealing with matters of political importance, it might also be considered that the maps were being used as tactical devices in a military context.

A letter dated 1645 from Sir John Scot of Scotstarvet (who was instrumental in communications between the printer Joan Blaeu in Amsterdam and Robert Gordon) records the theft of a map by people in Ostend 'so malicious agans our cuntrie' (ibid., p. 52). It also goes on to state that 'all the carts that ar in Jansens hand ar now printed', which may have implications for the dating of the maps (see below). A subsequent letter of 1648 suggests that the lost map may have been one of Pont's made by him of Angus (ibid., p. 53). But the nationalist tone inherent in the reporting of the theft suggests a connection between the map and the political events of the day. Such overviews of the contested landscape as provided by these maps would have given a definite military advantage if only held by one side.

In 1646 Robert Gordon claimed, and was granted, (by the covenanting lords of parliament) a renewal of his royal exemption from onerous services so that he could continue with his 'reviseinge and correcting thee carts of this kingdome' (ibid., pp. 56 7), though, it would seem that much of his map-making was complete by this date (see below). It is also salutary to note a letter of March, 1647 that anticipated peace between Charles I, then at Holdenby, and parliament (ibid., pp. 54 5). However, in June Charles was seized there by the New Model Army and held in 'protective custody'. Events were clearly moving quickly. That letter also claimed that Blaeu was in the process of printing the map of Fife and would take on no other work until all the maps were completed.

What seems clear is that the printing of a number of the maps was underway by the mid-1640s and in 1647 no further work was going to be undertaken by the printer prior to their completion. The publication date in atlas form appears to have been 1654 but it must be assumed that Robert Gordon and his associates had access to printed versions of some of the maps by 1645. The reference to 'one of your mapps to show him the way' (ibid., p. 27) in relation to a meeting regarding the national political situation in 1643 may suggest that some were circulating amongst family members earlier still. The time lapse of at least a decade between the first epigraphic evidence for printed maps and their public

dissemination is noteworthy. Stone (1998, pp. 26 8) highlights the limitation in present knowledge concerning the motivations of Robert Gordon in reviewing and enhancing certain of Pont's maps of Scotland. But, a consideration of the letters above may suggest a politically active, if not necessarily outspoken, turn of mind. It is unlikely that the prime motivation for these maps was to define estate lands or to provide ornamentation for a lordly environment. The final published atlas may have fitted the desire to emulate Speed's county maps of England produced near the end of the sixteenth century and other early seventeenth-century European equivalents as adornments for an emergent 'polite society'. But, as individual plans, they may have had more personal uses pertinent to the times.

Before considering the contents of the maps, two further and almost identical, symbols need to be considered. They survive on one of Timothy Pont's plans of the coast of Buchan (MS.70.2.9 [Pont 10]) (circled on Figure 14). The map shows two crosses on top of hill symbols and it might be noted that these have not been copied onto the Gordon maps. It is also noteworthy that Pont depicts standing stones. Though whether these relate to a very small proportion of the numerous stone circles bedecking the north-east or whether they depict subsequently removed tall standing stones is questionable. Of the three hill symbols, one hill (at 'Kairndell') may carry a single pillar and the place-name may belong to the comhdhail – 'meeting' or 'tryst' names – known across the area (O'Grady, 2014). Another of the hills with a cross is noted as 'Karn of Kaack' and may indicate a subsequently removed archaeological cairn. The cross on the hill at Balnamoon appears to fit with no presently recognisable archaeological hilltop feature in the area.

Figure 14. Portion of one of Timothy Pont's maps showing two crosses and one possible 'pillar' on hilltops.

In considering the contents of the Robert Gordon maps, it is interesting to note that only one of the crosses depicted (Clatt) appears to coincide with any of the commonly occurring 'cross' or 'cors' place-names in the area (see Fig. 15). It has been noted how these place-names frequently coincide with routeways across upland zones to the extent that the name began to approximate to 'across' or the act of 'crossing' a piece of landscape. This is a subtle distinction that requires consideration. In many parts of Britain crosses were used to demarcate routes across uplands and moorlands where navigation could be hazardous or other hidden dangers might lurk. Others were set up as memorials, to demarcate land, or as a means of reducing purgatory time (Whyte 2009, pp. 29-39). Examples can be cited from Norfolk (ibid.), Ireland (King 1985), Wales (Ramsey & Murphy, 2011) and south-west England (Turner 2006, pp.
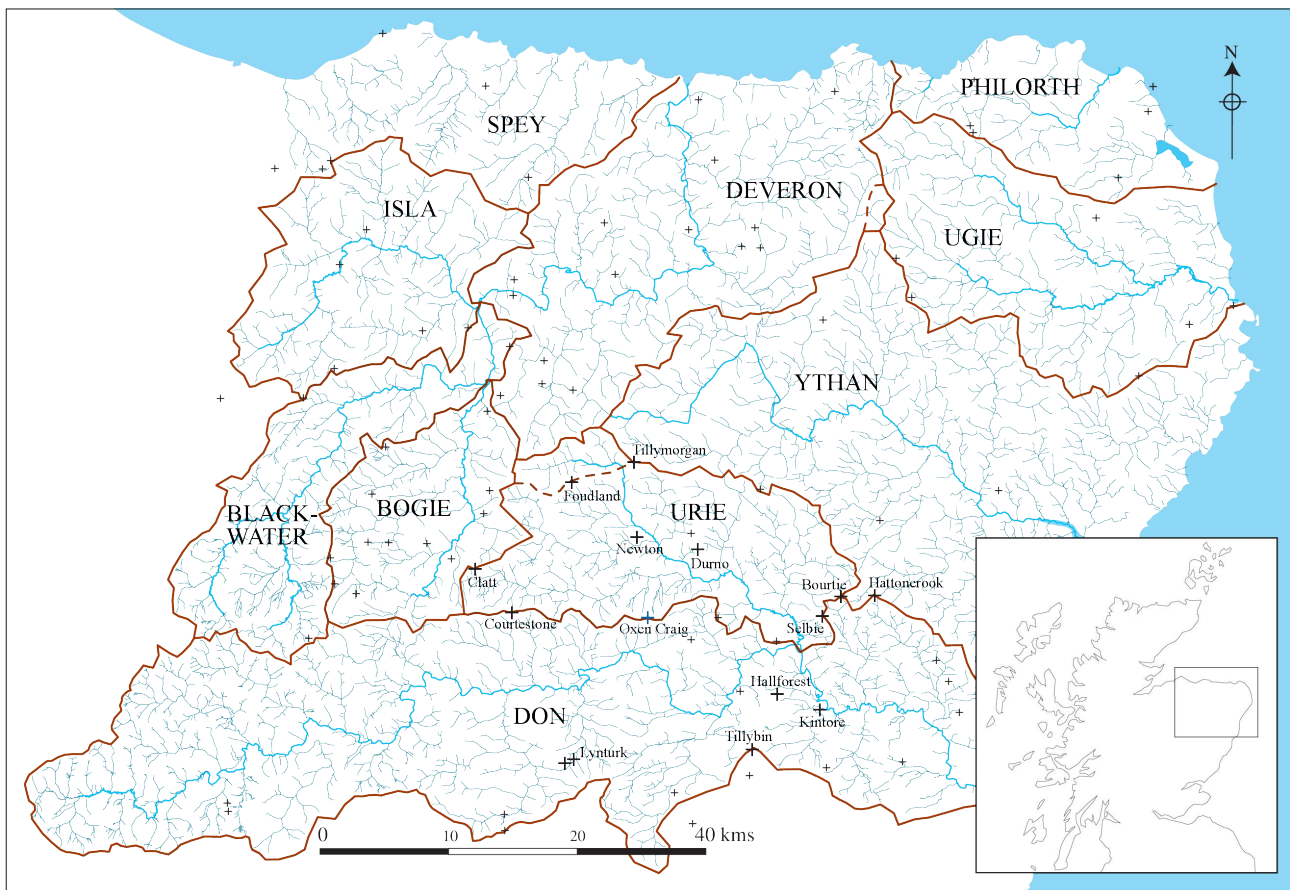
Figure 15. Distribution of Robert Gordon's depicted crosses. Smaller crosses indicate 'cross'/ 'cors' names whilst the boundaries depict the lines of the major watersheds in the North-East.

161-9). There is little to suggest that these usages were not also prevalent in the north-east of Scotland and much to suggest that it was. Religious intoleration and destruction was often worse in Scotland than in many other parts of Britain generally and continued for far longer. Few reminders of the pre-Protestant religion survive to be seen today. It is pertinent, therefore, to consider whether these crosses do signify such a record. It may also be appropriate to consider whether the resultant constriction of 'cors'/'cross' names to a specific usage may be simply indicative of the aftermath of the iconoclasm rather than a true representation of an earlier distribution pattern of cross-sites. This may have been defined by a wider distribution. The Clatt instance is suggestive that some 'cross'/'cors' names were not related to the passage across land but do define actual cross locations. The low hill at Clatt bearing the 'cross' name was clearly not related to any form of 'pass' between hills and probably indicates a former cross-site. In this case, possibly, the one noted on Gordon's map.

All of the crosses depicted fall within the river systems of the Don or the Urie or along watersheds shared with adjoining systems. However, these are also largely the defining topographic features of these map sheets. Though the 'cross'/'cors' names frequently refer to passes between hills, the depicted cross-sites — whenever their topographic situation is noted — appear to sit upon hill-tops. The area containing the cross depictions is largely coincident with the later Lordship of the Garioch, though there are some important exceptions. The Clatt cross could not have fallen within that Lordship and neither could the crosses of Lynturk, Tillybin, Hallforest or Kintore. With reference to the thirteenth-century ecclesiastical divisions noted by 'Bagimond's Roll' (Miscellany of the Scottish History Society 1939), all fall within the confines or along the boundaries of the deaconries of Marr and Garioch. Quite where the boundary between Buchan and Marr lay prior to the creation of the Lordship of the Garioch is a moot point. The position of these crosses relative to that boundary is, therefore, impossible to state. Eight of the fourteen crosses fall upon major watersheds with all except one of the

others, arguably, falling upon minor watersheds. Ignoring the latter minor watersheds, the former are suggestive of deliberate placement upon lines that are likely to be significant. (Of the Pont features, 'Karndell' appears to sit on a minor watershed and the 'Karn of Kaack' is in the region of a major watershed boundary. But, as its location is impossible to determine precisely, this point cannot be pushed. It is interesting, however, that the dotted line indicating the former parish boundary does not pass through this feature and merely skirts 'Karndell'). Although high hills are likely to fall upon watersheds, there are a great many other high places across the area, not on watersheds, that might have been chosen. In other words, altitude was not the only topographic consideration in the siting of these features. Certainly, none of the cross groupings appear related to obvious historically attested landed estates. There are some correlations between certain of the cross-sites and parts of the Lordship of the Garioch and with parts of some known pre-Reformation church landholdings. But, cumulatively, the evidence is, as yet, not compelling for any significance in these apparent correlations.

In considering what form these crosses took, two suggestions present themselves. Firstly, they may have been large, free-standing stone crosses (though wood might have been a possibility). Or, secondly, they may have been smaller 'Pictish'-style cross slabs. The former has been suggested for defining the royal landscape around Forteviot (Aitchison 2006, p. 130). Within the North-East, such monumental sculptures have yet to be identified. However, as noted above, such overt symbolism is likely to have felt the full force of Presbyterian zealotry. The depictions on the map may be considered to favour such free-standing crosses. They are shown as though displayed on their hill-tops for all the world to see. However, consideration of the landscape suggests that such crosses would have had to have been enormous to present such a view in reality. Therefore, it is more likley that their depiction may have been symbolic of their importance within the landscape rather than illustrative of their real visual impact. From this perspective, these crosses may have been depicted as a means of displaying, to the wider world, an observation of the strength of Catholic feeling in its last great bastion within mainland Britain. The activity of Catholic priests in the area is well attested by a Protestant 'grass' writing in 1713:

"There are severall priests who haunt in the presbitery of Garioch, viz. mr Wallis Innes brother to Drumgask, John Innes alias ?litle Innes, mre (blank) Graham alias Ramsay son to Sir James Strachan of Thorntoun, Mr Ross alias Seaton natural son to the late Earle of Dumformling and mr Hackett. All which now prosecuted before the Lords Commissioner of Justiciary before the northern circuit for the crymes of hearing and being present at mass upon none Compearance were declared fugitievs were Orderly Denounced Rebells and put to the horn and captions raised against them about two years ago. Notwithstanding of which they publickly frequent Fetternier which is the ordinary place of the residence of the superior of the Jesuits the principall dwelling place of the Laird of Balquhan, and within the parish of Garrioch, openly say mass, baptise children and perform other acts of their idolatrous worship in a chappell consecrate for that use - with ane altar, vestments, and all the other costly appurtenances belonging thereto. Its from Fetternier that the popish youths are recommended when they go abroad. The family of Balquhan haveing the disposall of most (if not all the Bursaries in the Scots colledges of ?Doroay & Rome) and its there they full come when they return home missionaries, and from thence are dispersed. Besides these, there are other priests who usually frequent the bounds of the said presbitery of Garrioch, likewise in the presbitery of Aberdeen, viz. ..."
(transcribed from GD 124/9/78).

That these crosses were not simple conceptual formations, however, is suggested by their alignments on major watersheds. These suggest they are likely to have been depictions of real, locally important features, though possibly rather less visually significant than suggested by the map. It is possible that the crosses depicted were locally venerated cross slabs that had originally defined political borderlands. One piece of stonework at Oxen Craig on Bennachie may be relevant. Plate I shows the socket for some free-standing monument. Local anecdotal history records it as the site of a granite plaque raised in memory of a local child who died at this spot in the mid-nineteenth century. The tale

notes that the distraught mother broke the slab with her own hands in disgust at the hypocrisy of the local worthies who had commissioned the memorial. There are a few aspects of the story that cause concern — though there appears to be no doubt about the tragic death of the child. The socket does not appear to be designed to support a plaque which would presumably have required a fairly wide face for the length of the supposed inscription. The socket appears to have held something rather taller and thinner. Secondly, the size of the socket suggests a relatively thick piece of granite that is unlikely to have been easily demolished by a grieving mother with her own hands — even if those hands wielded a fairly hefty sledge-hammer. Thirdly, there is no sign of any residual debris, though this may have been cleared away. This socket does, however, sit upon the highest spot of the watershed separating the Urie and Don river systems and appears also to have lain upon the line of the march of the Lordship of the Garioch. It is interesting to speculate whether this socket marks the site of an earlier stone monument with its survival having been woven into the narrative of a later tragic incident in order to explain its existence.

Plate I. Socket on Oxen Craig, Bennachie (Photo by courtesy of Barry Foster).

Use of stones as boundary markers has been attested widely across Britain (e.g. Forteviot: Aitchison 2006, p. 130; Eastern England: Whyte 2009, pp. 36-9). In Aberdeenshire a perambulation of a disputed boundary of lands in Aberchirder in 1493 records a 'Red Stane', 'Tua Grey Stanes' and a 'White stane' in its description (Registrorum Abbacie de Aberbrothoc 1856, pp. 274-80); though, sadly, no 'cors stane'! That thirteenth-century boundaries appear to be traceable by reference to stones, modern field boundaries and archaeological monuments, has also been noted in the immediate vicinity at Oyne (Teachers & Pupils of Oyne School 2013, pp. 95-6). Within the group of crosses noted here, it is interesting to consider that the stones at Clatt and Newton might relate to known Pictish stones that have subsequently been moved through antiquarian cleptomania. One example from Clatt has ended up at a small farm in the Clashindarroch Forest in Strathbogie, miles from its known point of origin in the Garioch. Similarly, the Newton 'cross' may well be one of the depicted stones. That some other examples depicted on this seventeenth-century map have been opportunistically removed by antiquarians or for simple constructional purposes would not be a surprise. Many such stones in the North-East have been utilised as building material and continue to come to light during renovation processes.

The Clatt stone may be instructive for other purposes. A number of stones have been recorded from the tounship, though not all now reside there. Ritchie (1916) records five. Only one, from Tofthill, is inscribed with a cross. The most likely stone to have been in the position marked on the Gordon map is the Percylieu stone — now in the Clashindarroch Forest. This carries the design of a salmon on one side and an 'arch' on the other. It was found in 1838, purportedly at a depth of 6 feet, and was later cut down to form a flagstone. These data beg a number of questions: why was it buried 6 feet deep, how was it found at that depth when 'rough land' was being brought into hand and why would it have been marked as a cross on the map even though no cross motif was present? Clearly, a range of suggestions

present themselves but, without further evidence, all roads are fraught with uncertainty. All that might be suggested is that the 'crosses' on the map may not necessarily relate to actual crosses on the ground. Catholic adherence may have been signified with a cartographic cross but, within the landscape, its symbolism may have found its focus in any one of a number of locally important sites — from holy wells to other ancient symbolic sites, the keys to which have been lost. It is interesting to note, for example, that the Maiden Stone in Chapel of Garioch — which does contain a cross within its Pictish symbolism — does not feature on the map. Neither does a cross-incised boulder not far away at Woodend of Braco. Both sit within the protected Catholic lordship of Balquhain singled out in venomous words by the 'grass' in 1713. Catholicism in Britain had emerged as a syncretic faith and it is likely that its final symbols maintained that sense of ambiguity. A cross on a map, therefore, may not have represented exactly that feature on the ground.

Conclusion

The crosses depicted by Robert Gordon on a seventeenth-century map within a restricted area of the North-East are of interest for a range of reasons. They depict monuments that are no longer visible within the landscape — having been removed, possibly for ideological reasons. They suggest, as might naturally be supposed, that a far greater number may have been in existence here at an earlier period. This suggestion is underlined by their separate survival, in different geographical locations in the north-east, on the drawings of an earlier map-maker, Timothy Pont. Of course, Gordon may also have had access to a now-lost Pont map from which he derived the symbols discussed here. That such an overt depiction of such potentially inflammatory symbols, within the context of the period, was made, deserves notice. Was Robert Gordon acting simply as an exacting map-maker — recording all that he noted? The Maiden Stone suggests not. Or, was he making an ideological statement concerning the religious adherence of a large proportion of the population in this part of the country? If the latter were the case, however, why were not similar crosses depicted for other parts of the North-East which were similarly religiously aligned? One possible solution would be that such locally important symbols in those other areas had already been destroyed but that, within this confined location, a few had survived the ravages of iconoclastic zeal. The symbols on the Pont map may support such a notion. That their non-inclusion upon other of the Gordon maps overlapping with these, however, may suggest a more particular use for this specific copy. The potential uses made of these maps by members of Robert Gordon's immediate family within this Catholic heartland may suggest a context beyond scholastic interests and point towards networks of alliance during difficult times.

A further suggestion that might be elicited from these depictions relates not to their later use but to their initial purposes. If it is correct in assuming that these 'crosses' were decorated stones or other symbolic archaeological features, their positioning upon high points along the various watersheds may help in drawing boundaries of early political structures within the area. It is noteworthy that many of the cross-sites still contain archaeological remains such as cairns. Some may have lain upon sites of assembly.

Finally, much as in modern cartography, where a symbol is simply a reference for something else — such as a cross standing for a church — Gordon's crosses on hill-tops may, in fact, refer to objects that were not necessarily crosses. However, they may have continued to carry a particular Christian meaning for the local Catholic population and attempted to demonstrate that ideological and political stance to a wider world.

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