

## A.

*Concrete Underfoot*

If you've ever walked the pathways between Comrie and Balquhiddier Station, you may have noticed the arched bridges you cross. What you might not have realised is the significant engineering involved in the creation of these arches; they were constructed using mass concrete. Only a dozen or so such bridges were built in Scotland over the short period between 1880 and 1910. Mass concrete is a material made from three ingredients: aggregate (crushed rock), cement and water. No reinforcement was needed, no iron rods or steel wires to rust, its strength is inherent in the shape of the arches and the way they were formed. The process of arch construction was to build temporary timber supports, called formwork. The concrete would then be poured in layers, left to strengthen before another layer was added. The legs of the bridges, called piers, were built first, sometimes hollow and filled with rubble, sometimes solid. Then the careful procedure of layering the arches would begin. Often markings, called rustication, adorned the bridges giving them a look of masonry, sometimes castellations were added for grandeur and small insets, called refuges, were built in the parapets to make life safer for the railway workers. Concrete was used due to lack of suitable building stone in the local areas.

Mass concrete bridges are often only attributed to Robert 'Concrete Bob' McAlpine. The much-photographed Glenfinnan Viaduct is the most famous example, but he was not the first to use this type of construction. In 1880 engineer John Strain built Scotland's first mass concrete viaduct at Cruachan Falls in Argyll for the Callander & Oban Railway. The second, built over the River Dochart at Killin, was also constructed by John Strain, with resident engineer, John Paton, taking the lead.

In 1891 John Paton began his own contracting business and became the successful bidder for the contract to build the first part of the fifteen-mile railway between Comrie and Balquidder to join Upper Strathearn to the west coast by eventually meeting the Callander to Oban line. The first stretch between Comrie and St Fillans began in June 1899. Over three hundred navvies descended on Comrie to work on the railway. They lived in sheds and were paid monthly. With little available entertainment these navvies flocked to public houses in the town and soon reports of drunkenness and lawlessness appeared in the local newspapers. A missionary was appointed to care for the navvies' wellbeing, and a reading room was established. Soon John Paton's earlier experience in mass concrete arches became evident. A girder bridge crossing the Earn at Comrie had several arches supporting the line on either side. Although the bridge is long gone, two arches are still standing and, with some negotiation from Ross, it is possible to scramble up the embankment to see how the birches have reclaimed their territory on the parapets. A short walk to Tullybannocher is rewarded with views of what would have been an arch and girder bridge but is now being used as a wood store.

The best example of Paton's mass concrete bridges on the Comrie/St Fillans section is found the railway path from Dalchonzie to Tynreoch. Where the path crosses Dundurn Wood, a three arch viaduct demonstrates how durable this material is. The bridge shows hardly any signs of age and, like a fingerprint, it's possible to see the detailed layers of construction.

When this first part of the line opened on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1901, John Paton again won the contract for the final nine and a half miles from St Fillans to Balquhidder. The navvies, along with their missionary, reading room and often anti-social behaviour were moved along the line.

On this stretch of railway there are five mass concrete bridges. One impressive bridge on the railway path spans Allt an Fhionn, west of St Fillans. The bridge has five arches. Sadly, the dense foliage around the piers prevents viewing the structure in detail but it is possible to see how it would look by travelling to Lochearnhead and witnessing the equally impressive viaduct over the Ogle Burn. This bridge consisted of nine arches sweeping into the glen on a graceful curve. Today the bridge ends abruptly at the A84 where the road crossing is missing. This fine viaduct does not form part of the railway trail and to reach the parapets involves a tussle with brambles and bracken.

In January 1902 John Paton died of a chill, aged only 40yrs. Work on the railway ceased and the navvies, having no income, became near destitute. The minister of St Fillans organised a collection and soon, with the generosity of the village, a soup kitchen was set up. The remaining cash being used to pay rail fares for navvies who wished to move on.

Soon a new contractor, William Duncan, was appointed and work on the railway resumed. The line from Lochearnhead to Balquhidder experienced many problems not least from the landowner, Lady Helen MacGregor of Edenchip, who tried to prevent the ground survey before the land was purchased.

All obstacles were overcome, and line progressed towards Balquhidder. The concrete viaduct at Edenchip became the last bridge in the sequence. With its seven arches and eighty feet girder (twenty-four metres) over the Kendrum Burn, it was reported to have taken the heaviest portion of labour and expense of the whole line. In further testament to the durability of mass concrete it's interesting to view this bridge today. It sits on the eastern branch of the cycle track south of Lochearnhead. The central girder has been replaced but the concrete arches still hold their original form. The line was completed in 1905 and was operational for almost fifty years.

Although the railway is long gone it is a delight to see the remainder of these concrete arches being repurposed for footpaths and cycleways and to be reminded of the engineers and navvies who battled nature to bring the railway to Strathearn.

## B.

*Conspiracy*

In the spring of the year 1600, John Ruthven, 3rd Earl of Gowrie returned home to Perth after completing his studies at Padua University. He was 23 years old and an outstanding student who had studied under the famous Galileo Galilei. As a leading member of the Scottish aristocracy, John was wealthy, popular and recognised as a powerful influence within the growing “calvanist” movement of the day. During his long journey home he had visited Theodore Beza in Geneva and had been invited to be a guest at the royal court of Elizabeth I. From England he continued his return via Edinburgh, where he was officially welcomed by many leading dignitaries and religious figures, before reaching his home in Perth. He was delighted to be safely home with his family and his friends. As his daily life became more normalised he settled into his new role as Provost of Perth.

King James VI of Scotland was 34 years old, and had ruled Scotland since he was one year old. In July 1600 his court moved to Falkland Palace in Fife, his favourite hunting lodge. Although hunting was his most pleasing pastime, King James had accumulated quite an array of debilitating physical and mental health issues that he had to overcome. The negative effects of these health issues had caused him to develop a strong sense of resilience and determination that helped him in containing, controlling and governing his “unruly colt” of a nation.

Although well-educated in classical studies, languages and philosophy, it is also recorded that he had suffered a very brutal upbringing with an absence of parental love and emotional guidance. This harshness created a necessity to develop expertise in strategic compromise, but conversely sometimes caused him to over-react in the execution of his political judgment. His strategies were often too convoluted and often terminated in a flurry of muddled chaos. His determination and a lack of any sense of guilt, ensured that his policies were fulfilled, albeit maybe not quite as planned. King James was profligate, frivolous and vain and he constantly needed money to furnish the gifts that fed his greedy, sycophantic advisers who responded with their steadfast loyalty, adoration and obedience.

The return of John Ruthven to Scotland had immediately swung the focus of attention away from the King towards the handsome newcomer. The young Earl was the new champion of the influential, protestant clergy and of the common people. King James was not amused at losing the focus of the admiration of his subjects, nor were his advisers content to witness their influence evaporating, as their King poured scorn on the young upstart. The King owed the Ruthvens huge debts and although Gowrie was the King’s younger cousin, he had controversially sided with the Kirk ministers against the King’s latest tax reforms. By intervening between the Monarch and his subjects, the King felt that he had seriously overstepped his authority and needed to be made an example of.

The King’s enthusiastic advisers did not need much encouragement to plot young Gowrie’s downfall and avenge their King’s personal indignities. It was also a prime opportunity to acquire some of the wealth of one of Scotland’s richest landowners. The prospect left his advisers salivating and they rapidly developed a plan to assassinate Gowrie.

However, the King, as always, intervened directly, and astutely pointed out that a mere assassination was not good enough. Nothing, short of the complete annihilation of John Ruthven and all the male heirs of the Ruthven family, and the total confiscation of their entire estate, would stop them challenging his authority in the future, and that could only be achieved if the Ruthvens were involved in an act of “treason”. A much more complex plan needed to be developed.

So, the master plan was eventually conceived and it would be duly executed on the 5 August 1600. The King would be lured to Perth on some spurious pretext, he would appear to be the innocent victim of Ruthven treason. The King would then miraculously survive unscathed, while heroically saving the day. Thus, it would appear to the common people, that a vile conspiracy by the Ruthven family, and their accomplices, to assassinate the King in Perth, had completely backfired and the brothers had perished during their failed attempt.

And so it transpired. On that fateful day, John Ruthven and Alexander Ruthven were killed inside Gowrie House, Perth, by the swords of the King’s close advisers and protectors. As the news spread, the people of Perth were in turmoil, the curfew bell was sounded, and the citizens gathered in a crowd outside the gates of the Gowrie House. When they discovered that their Provost, and his younger brother, had been killed inside, their spontaneous anger was directed towards the King and his henchmen.

Suddenly, as if out of nowhere, scores of mounted armed men appeared in and around Gowrie House. This force consisted predominantly of members of the Murray clan, who immediately isolated the royal visitors within Gowrie House and protected the King and those inside. Some hours later the baying crowd was eventually dispersed peacefully by the Baillies of Perth and later still, the Murrays ensured that the King and his entourage slipped back to Falkland Palace as darkness descended.

Three months later, on 15 November 1600, the preserved corpses of the two Ruthven brothers were displayed on a table in the Privy Council Chamber, in Edinburgh. They were charged with treason, the detailed crown case against them was presented, but no defence was offered. They were duly found guilty of treason, their wealth and estates were forfeited by the Crown, and their family name expunged. They suffered the final indignity for those found guilty of treason. Their long-dead bodies were hung, drawn and quartered and those body parts were displayed in four Scottish Burghs until they rotted away.

One day the real truth will come to light and the guilty parties will be identified and exposed for what they truly were.

C.

*Picts*

Roman presence, virgin  
Tongue testing trapped  
Identities, Scotland had  
Not yet sung. Picts,  
The painted ones,  
Leader Calgacus.  
Trees and rivers of Perthshire  
A constant. The story  
Of Mons Graupius, do  
Ghosts haunt the wrong  
Battle.  
Abernethy watchtower, belfry  
And beacon. Witnesses  
Of Scotland's incarnations unifying into a whole.  
The distant caress of  
Viking calls.  
Scotland and its foes  
View each other through  
Either side of  
The needles eye as  
Perthshire is sewn into  
The Celtic soul.

## D.

*George Balfour, the Mobster Prior of Perth*

On 11 May 1560, the preacher John Knox started the Scottish Reformation by inciting a mob in the burgh of Perth to assault and destroy the burgh's friaries and monastery. The monastery was the only Carthusian community in Scotland and was probably located at the current corner of King Street and Hospital Street. It was known as the Charterhouse or the 'Valley of Virtue.' Eight years after these events, the now-defunct monastery and its extensive landholdings in the burgh came under the control of a commendator, a secular prior. The commendator handled the management of its properties, ensured tenants paid their rents and directed the funds to the projects assigned by the burgh council and kirk session. Furthermore, the position was a royal appointment. The man selected for this role was George Balfour.

In many ways, George was similar to a twentieth century mobster: a man constantly caught breaking the law but always managing to evade punishment and hold onto power. This was possible through his well-connected family. He was the fifth of eight sons of the well-to-do laird of Mountquhanie (near Cupar). His father and four of his brothers were burgesses of Dundee, making them men of influence in the fifth largest burgh. His most famous brother was James Balfour of Pittendreich, who took part in the sensational murder of Lord Darnley and yet later served as Lord President of the Court of Sessions. Through his family's wealth and political connections, George gained his position as prior and remained shielded through numerous legal scandals.

In 1570, George, along with his brother James, was part of a group of nobility, lairds and officials who had their lands confiscated by the crown for being a part of the Queen's Party during the Marian Civil War. Even though he appeared before the privy council as requested, he still was put to the horn (declared an outlaw) in 1571 for 'his disobedience to our sovereign lord and his authority.' In September 1575, the courts summoned George and several of his servants for their role in the murder of one William Ogilvie. There was a reprieve issued a few months later, but in 1579 Balfour remained under warrant for not appearing in court to answer the charges of murder. Yet with both confirmed rebellion and accusations of murder on his record, George avoided punishment and kept his office.

Progressively during the 1570s and 1580s, George changed how he referred to the lands under his care in his official financial documents. While they had been "the lands formerly of the Charterhouse of Perth," they now became "my lands formerly of the Charterhouse of Perth." While the distinction was slight, it shows he began to view the lands as his personal property rather than under his care on behalf of the Crown and the burgh. In 1582, he collected rents 'for ourselves... and Jean Balfour our daughter.' This shows he redirected funds intended for the city's new hospital to enrich his family. As the decade progressed, his claims grew bolder. He soon claimed the income from the lands for Jean, 'her heirs... and anyone else who might have claim in the future,' clearly intending to make the Charterhouse lands an inheritance for his daughter (likely as a part of a dowry). Like a mafioso, he acknowledged his actions in the open; he either thought this was acceptable behavior or believed he could get away with it. Even while George was using lands in Perth to enrich his family, he was once again summoned before the Privy Council. This time it was for counterfeiting money. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century,

counterfeiting was a treasonous, and therefore potentially capital, offense. There are no records of how this situation was resolved, but he appears, once again, to come through unscathed and with his position as prior intact.

By 1588, the kirk session tired of George's flagrant skimming of the Charterhouse's incomes. They probably petitioned the Privy Council, for in that year a court arbitrated between James Balfour (George's nephew), named as commendator of the Charterhouse, and the Council and elders of Perth. The court ordered James to pay what George owed to the burgh and kirk from the Charterhouse lands. James was also a troublemaker. In 1592, George offered £1000 (roughly £25,000 today) as a guarantee for James' behavior because of his friendship with Francis Earl of Bothwell, who was found guilty of attempting to kill the king through sorcery. Documents issued after 1588 reveal James did not replace his uncle. Instead, he was a co-prior, presumably so he would provide oversight for his uncle. While this stopped the embezzlement (at least openly) George continued to get into trouble. In 1593, a laird made a guarantee for £2000 that a William Luvell would not harm George. Similarly, in 1602, a friend paid £500 in guarantee that George (in at least his mid-50s) would not harm Thomas Stewart, burgess of Dundee. These guarantees reveal a man capable of giving and receiving violence decades after his charge of murder. Both the local officials and the central government agreed that George blatantly mismanaged the lands under his care. And yet, he maintained his position as commendator until the end of the century; he served as Charterhouse prior for over 30 years.

Like the well-connected mobster of film and history, George leveraged his family and political connections to maintain his position as prior and avoid prosecution, despite his obvious criminality. His crimes and abuses of power were well documented, yet the burgh of Perth was powerless to control him or remove him from his position. In fact, he gained status in spite of his record. In 1588, the same year the privy council acknowledged George was embezzling from the Charterhouse, the city of Dundee, where his brothers were significant burgesses, made George a citizen 'for his counsel and help in public affairs.' George provides a powerful image of how corruption worked in early modern Scotland.

E.

*Lady Susan Murray*

The Murrays are a family synonymous with Perthshire history, however, it is usually the life of the men which receives most attention. During the Jacobite Risings, with three rebelling brothers, it was inevitable the life of Lady Susan would be neglected as she didn't raise a regiment or row a boat to Skye. Instead, in her short, tragic life, she fulfilled the roles society expected of her, that of a dutiful daughter, dependable wife and finally loving sister so that when Lord George Murray, the future Jacobite General, learned of his sister's dying request, he was both deeply moved and profoundly grateful.

Born in Huntingtower Castle in 1699 Susan Murray; the daughter of the Earl of Tullibardine and his wife Katherine, was the first of their female children to live to adulthood, her three elder sisters having died by the age of three. Before modern science infant mortality was very high, but it was also a dangerous time for the mothers too, no matter what their social status.

Growing up with five elder brothers, Susan was a bright and determined child. In letters to her husband, the now Duke of Atholl, Katherine commented on Susan's behaviour, saying she had had to discipline her, but their daughter reminded her of him, which didn't make her less fond.

After the sudden death of her mother in 1707, Susan and her younger sister Katherine, went to live with their grandmother the Duchess of Hamilton. The Hamiltons' was the premiere peerage of Scotland and Anne, the Dowager Duchess was a significant, strong role model. However, in 1710 the young girls both caught a fever from which Katherine died, Susan then joined her father in Dunkeld.

At this time her brothers were gaining military commissions; her now eldest brother William in the navy, James in London and both Charles and George in the army in Flanders. But one major unifying factor for these brothers was that they all struggled for money. Despite his high status and property wealth, the Duke of Atholl had debts, but was also particularly frugal when it came to his sons. Due to their rank and personal expectations, it was almost inevitable they would run into financial difficulties and in fact all of them, frequently, sent letters home pleading for money. After the Risings of 1715 and 1719, this situation grew increasingly difficult when both William and George were in exile.

By 1724 it was clear the duke's health was failing, however Lord George was determined to see his father before he died. The duke for some time had been trying to secure a pardon for his son but, at great risk to his personal safety, George returned to his father at Huntingtower, without it. It was the right decision as his father passed away two months later.

George was then in desperate financial difficulties and at a loss as to what he could do. The allowance he had received from his father's will, after paying off his debts abroad, meant he was left with only £50 a year to live on and still had debts at home. Traditionally it is thought Lord George now went into hiding in Perthshire, to wait for his pardon to come through, but in fact, during some of this time, he went to stay with his sister Susan, living at Kelly, (now Haddo house) near Aberdeen.



On 24<sup>th</sup> April 1716 Susan had married William Gordon, Lord Haddo, eldest surviving son of the Earl of Aberdeen, at Huntingtower Castle. Pro primo banns had been proclaimed on 15<sup>th</sup> April, her 17<sup>th</sup> birthday. The timing and use of Huntingtower Castle was intentional as, not only was it her place of birth, but the duke needed to reassert his authority on both the building and the area after its use by the Jacobites (including his sons) during the 1715 Rising. The month before the wedding Atholl had also entertained Lord Cadogan there demonstrating his support for the General in his task to re-enforce government control, especially in Perthshire.

In 1720 Susan's husband had succeeded to his father's title as Earl of Aberdeen and by 1724 she was the mother of three young children and pregnant with a fourth. She was kept informed of all her brothers' circumstances though and was clearly sympathetic to George, as she allowed him, a fugitive, to stay at her home after the death of their father.

In June 1725 Susan's baby arrived three weeks early and she developed complications, it soon became clear neither she nor the baby would survive. After saying her goodbyes to her husband, children and servants she died, aged 26, with, what Lord George described, a great deal of calmness, resolution and piety.

The previous day Susan had spent some time alone with her husband, who she described as the best husband ever a woman had and said she had no trouble leaving her children with such a father. However, it wasn't until after her death that George learnt what Susan and William had discussed. It had been her dying request that the bond of debt George owed for the sum of money they had lent him, a not insubstantial £260, be dropped. When Susan made her request, William had said he was willing to do anything which showed his respect and fondness for her and wanted to inform George immediately, but she had asked he wait till she had died.

Due to the nature of society at this time it is inevitable that the men are acknowledged for making a political stand, or being heroic and brave in battle. But recognition should also be given to the women who do simply what society expects of them, particularly when all too often it was, sadly, quite perilous; being dutiful daughters, wives and mothers and also, as in this case, a loyal sister.

Sources are the Papers of the Maule Family, Earls of Dalhousie, National Archives Edinburgh and Chronicles of the Atholl and Tullibardine Families.

F.

*Murder at Kenmore*

The village of Kenmore is an idyllic spot. Extolled in rhyme by Robert Burns in 1787, it is a gem of Highland Perthshire and not readily associated with violent crime. But seventy five years ago the area was the scene of one of the most gruesome murders Perthshire has ever known.

Tower Cottage on the Tombuie Estate, about two miles south east of Kenmore, was so isolated at the top of a steep hill that Peter and Catherine McIntyre who lived in the cottage and worked on the estate rarely locked their door.

The McIntyre's son, Archie, didn't even possess a house key and was surprised to arrive home one afternoon in late September 1947 to find the cottage locked. He knew that his father had left early that morning to attend a market in Perth but assuming that his mother was working at Tombuie House, about a mile away, to prepare the house for the weekend homecoming of the laird and his family, he sat down to await her return. It was when the local gamekeeper arrived and said that he was worried about Archie's mother as he had called at the big house and found it locked and no work done, that Archie became concerned.

Using a ladder from the barn, Archie forced his way through an upstairs window to find a scene of devastation and chaos. Cupboards were lying open, drawers emptied and furniture overturned. When he found his own bedroom locked (something that never happened) and now frantic with worry, he hacked the door down with an axe. There on the bed and covered by a mattress lay the body of his mother, seventy-three year-old Catherine McIntyre. Her mouth had been gagged with a scarf, her hands and feet tied together with black bootlaces and she had been battered to death.

When the police arrived at the horrific scene and with Peter McIntyre back from Perth to the tragic news, it was ascertained that Catherine had been murdered during the morning and over £80 in five pound notes, a considerable amount in 1947, had been stolen.

The police quickly realised that they were looking for someone in bloodstained clothing and almost certainly a stranger to the area. In these post-war years there were many lost souls wandering the back roads of the countryside and the initial thoughts were that they might be looking for a tramp who was down on his luck but with a violent streak. Such a man would be extremely difficult to catch and could turn up on any rural doorstep at any time with evil intent. The local and terrified public were now locking their doors.

There was no sign in the cottage of a murder weapon and a thorough search began of the surrounding area. Two days after the murder and about four hundred yards from the cottage, the police discovered a flattened space in the high bracken which contained a man's used shaving razor, a blood-stained handkerchief and boiler suit and a sawn-off shotgun with the butt smeared in blood. The hairs on the razor blade were carefully scraped off and a further search revealed a return railway ticket of a type issued to soldiers in uniform and dated the day before the murder.

During the late 1940's, nearby Taymouth Castle was being used as a settlement for eight hundred Polish soldiers who had decided to remain in Britain. The inmates were interviewed without success but witnesses in Aberfeldy spoke of a Pole about thirty five years of age and

of slim build, a pointed clean-shaven chin and a bad cough who had taken a taxi to Perth on the morning of the murder.

When a description of the murder weapon was circulated to the public it was recognised by a gardener in Old Meldrum in Aberdeenshire who said he had lent the gun to a Polish farm labourer. The gun had then disappeared when the labourer, a Stanislaw Myszka, had suddenly left the area to seek work further south. When interviewed by the police, the gardener's wife identified the blood-stained handkerchief as one which she had given to Myszka who was a deserter from the Polish Army in Exile that was based in Scotland. The police now had their prime suspect, the net was closing fast but they had to circulate the man's name and description before he killed again.

The next breakthrough came when another Polish exile, Wladystow Szewc, who had settled with his Scottish wife at Upper Kinknockie Farm north of Aberdeen contacted the police to say that Myszka had visited them the day after the murder and had asked to stay for a while. The couple had read reports of the murder while Myszka was there and said he appeared totally ill at ease when he heard the details and had left their home without warning.

Following a tip-off to the police about a strange man seen hiding at a disused airfield near Peterhead, Myszka was arrested. When searched, Mrs McIntyre's gold wedding ring was discovered hidden in his shoe.

At the High Court trial in Perth in January 1948, Myszka's lawyer submitted a plea of insanity but three independent psychiatrists, one a Pole, examined him and all pronounced him sane. He then changed his plea to not guilty of murder but guilty of theft.

Myszka's defence counsel battled well. However the forensic evidence when the hair from the razor blade found at the scene of the crime was found to be consistent with a sample of Myszka's hair, along with further evidence provided by the blood-stained shotgun, boiler suit and handkerchief, was difficult to dispute. It only took the jury twenty minutes to reach their verdict of guilty.

The following month the famous hangman Albert Pierrepoint made the trip north to Perth Prison. On February 6th he executed Stanislaw Myszka, the last person to be hanged in Perth and the only foreign national to be hanged in Scotland during the twentieth century.

G.

### Rivers of Improvement in Lower Strathearn

In 1786 Sir Walter Scott made the journey from Edinburgh to Invermay over the Wicks of Baiglie on the Wallace Road. His view of Perth recounted in his *'Fair Maid of Perth'* was of 'one of the most beautiful points of view which Britain, or perhaps the world, can afford'. The view of Perth from West Dron Hill Farm would have been striking, but five and a half miles distant. However, looking to the east along the Tay, the parishes of Rhynd and Abernethy were more immediately laid out for the observer.

The late eighteenth century was a period of extensive agricultural improvement in Scotland and a major requirement for rural development and prosperity was an accessible countryside. Local economics and infrastructure had to be able to support improvement to accommodate the movement of goods; to bring necessary materials in, and to take surplus produce out to market. Transportation needs increased and rivers supplied a ready-made route where roads needed substantial labour, and time, to build and maintain.

Liming was one of the first improvements to be adopted almost universally, and without suitable stone, or coal to burn it available locally, lime had to be brought into much of Perthshire. The rivers were the ideal route inland for substantial quantities of lime being brought from Fife. Statistical accounts suggest it was even brought from the north of England, up the east coast and into the parishes on the Tay. The number of boats carrying lime into the harbour at Perth increased more than four-fold in the ten years between 1781 and 1791. The importance of river access to farming is evident in its inclusion in newspaper advertisements placed to attract new tenant farmers.

*FARM to LET. Upon Wednesday the 8th May, 1771, the FARM of NETHER ABERARGY... N.B. The Farm lies five miles from Perth, three from Newburgh harbour, and about a quarter of a mile from the river of Earn, which is navigable for barks with lime and coal, for two miles above the farm, and the tide comes up the water of Farg to the foot of the lands, so that manure and fuel may be carried by water to the farm*

*Caledonian Mercury - Wednesday 03 April 1771*

In the 1790s single masted sloops brought 50 ton cargoes of lime up the Earn to Bridge of Earn. Redistributed to smaller boats, it shipped as far upstream as Forgandenny. The landing site at Bridge of Earn was founded around 1769 when John Gilloch obtained a 99 year lease from Moncrieff estate with rights to levy duty where ships unloaded. From at least 1730 the Ferry from Carpow linked the parish of Abernethy to the carse of Gowrie, an easier trip than by poorly maintained road. By 1836 this was a significant port with a Public House, and rights to load and unload goods and produce. Ferryfield of Carpow lay within the mouth of the Earn, ideally positioned to transfer goods coming down the Earn Valley into the Tay for further carriage to Perth or Dundee. These officially recognised ports were a conscious act of estate improvement by landowners such as the Earl of Kinnoull; encouraging enterprise and were of great advantage to their estates. Alexander Moncrieff, the landowner at Culfargie, was well aware of the advantages of having a small port on his estate. In 1756 tenants of the old Waulkmill on his estate were instructed to build and maintain a stone pier on the bank of the

Earn, unfortunately, there is no evidence that this was ever built.

The River Tay and the lower reaches of the River Earn were strewn with small landing places and ferries. The Castle at Elcho would have been long served by the small pier there which later became one of the 'Tattie Piers', but there are more places on the Earn and the Farg where a shallow draft boat could have easily been landed. Ferry routes to Inchyra and Cairnie on the opposite bank of the Tay were as important as the roads to the parishes of Rhynd and Abernethy. Social science often ignores maritime connections with riverside settlement, mainly concerned with commercial enterprise such as salmon fishing. This disregards the close community connections enabled by a short boat trip. Regular routes for the traffic of goods and people, but also influence. The multiple ferry routes across the River Tay meant that the communities on either side were closer than today when transport and community links are dependent on the road network. Rivers are seen as a barrier, but in the eighteenth century they were the path of least resistance. Rural areas now considered to be 'backwaters' were places where people brought goods to be shipped elsewhere and to board ferries to places which are now many miles away by road. Culfargie to West Rhynd is less than 100yards across the Earn by boat, but almost seven miles by road!

With the introduction of the turnpike trusts in the 1820s, adoption of roads and improved wheeled transport reduced the reliance on rivers for everyday transport. The small ports and harbours along the Tay and Earn became less of a lifeline to those living along their banks. Parts of the landscape better served for access by the rivers than the roads, may have developed differently if river transport had been maintained longer.

Due to their proximity to the river the parishes of Rhynd and Abernethy, were the most agriculturally advanced in lower Strathearn. The Tay, Earn and even the Farg were routes for the exchange of goods and ideas key to development. Materials such as lime and fertiliser came to those places most easily accessed by river transport first, and the landowners were quick to realise the commercial opportunities to be had. Using the presence of, and access to, the rivers to entice forward thinking new farmers keen to implement progressive ideas.