

Mills of EASTER ROSS Peninsula

By Douglas Gordon

All the mills from Tarbatness to Nigg from seaward side of A9 road.

Donald Ross said that the Balintore quarry produced millstone.

Alasdair Cameron said that in order to get a millstone. Select a rock with even strata and chisel out a track all round to the required depth and then chisel under it to hopefully split it from the bedrock. Once you have your millstone upright then put appropriate sized round wood axle through the middle of the millstone and with the men on either side wheel it out of the quarry and take to the mill. Only then does it get the final dressing before fitting as damage could occur either in the quarry or on route. Mill stones do not have to be the same rock and millers would often deliberately use contrasting stones.”

Alasdair Cameron who is related to Reid’s millwrights of Mill End Mills Dingwall

Told me that there was also horse driven mills as well. Reid’s of Dingwall produced thrashing mills from 1913 to 1950 and serviced many mills as well.

He has all the records they kept about every farm they made mills for and serviced them.

Lower Seafield farm (Portmahomack) with mill pond above it, only worked once pond was full of water Meal/flour it is on Roy Highlands map 1747-52.

Which means it would be working at time of Battle of Culloden or before.

Map of 1904 it says Disused which means Rockfield mills had taken over as main for Portmahomack by then.

Mill Lade went all the way to Wester Seafield and past it a bit too where there are springs which also flow down towards Ballone castle.



View: Ross and Cromarty Ross-shire Sheet XXX.13 - Ordnance Survey 25 inch 1st edition, Scotland, 1855-1882
<http://maps.nls.uk/view/75117160>



Lower Seafeld Mill from Shore taken 08/05/2015 by Douglas Gordon

Both these buildings are on Roy Highlands map 1747-1752

Rockfield Mills 2 Mills driven by steam then petrol engine driven due to shortage of water in area. Meal/flour and was also a saw mill from NLS map of 1843-1882

On NLS Map of 1888-1913 it shows the smithy which I remember also sold petrol it was beside the road and how there was never an explosion with petrol station one side and an open smithy's furnace on the other side.



Interesting to see that in Roy Highlands map of 1747-1752 there was mills below Arboll on Arboll burn called Mill of Arbo NH924/876, Dam NH923/874 and on burn between Geanies and Tarrel it was called Mills of Gynifs NH939848, Dam NH938/850

But after the steam Mill started at Rockfield Mills which would be more reliable than waiting till enough water were in the dams to start milling these 2 small mills are not in map of 1843-1882 and also as roads got better they could cart grain to Rockfield to be milled.

Tarrel Millstone probably came from Tarrel mill on Roy Highland maps of 1747



Millstone made of sandstone so could have come from Balintore quarry

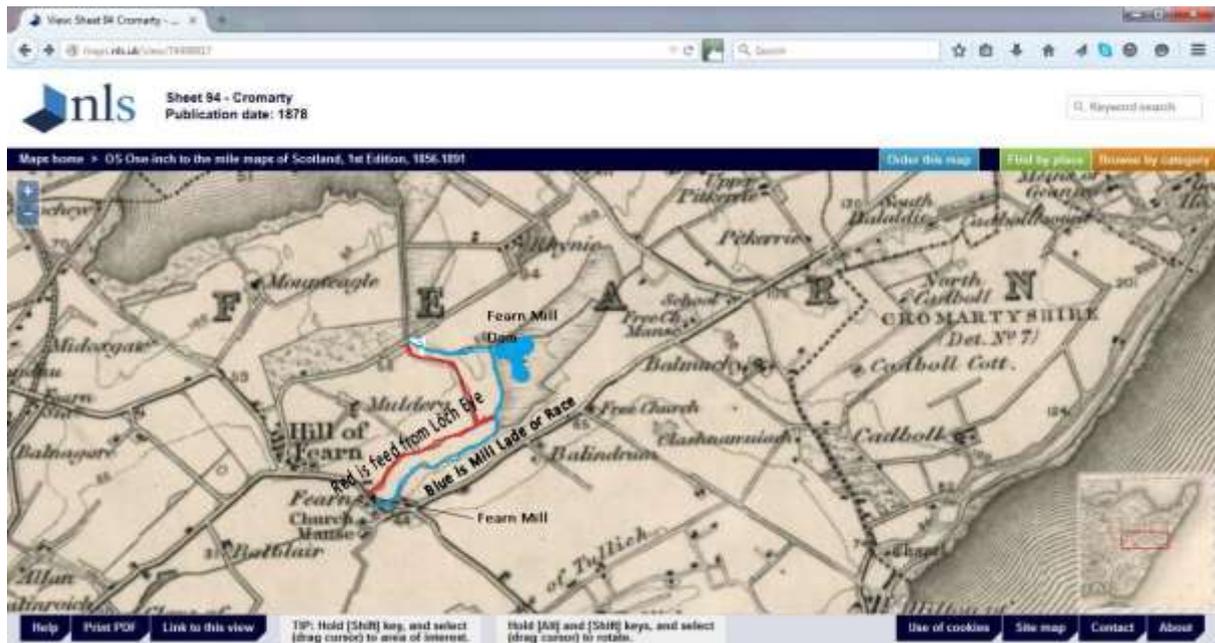
Tarrel Millstone showing shaft with cog splines where wood or metal cross bars to help stone turn to grind the corn to flour. This Millstone would have been going at Geanies Mill at the time of Battle of Culloden 1746 or before.



Fearn Mill was supplied by mill pond at Rhynie farm road near Loch Eye. Meal/flour. It stocked up with water from Loch Eye when there was plenty of water so they had a supply of water in summer or when Loch was low.

It came from Loch Eye, passed under road to Mill dam near Rhynie farm at Talich from there it went down a long lade or race to Fearn Mill which had another water holding dam before it entered the water wheel on the Fearn Farmhouse side of mill.

It has a large granary on first floor for storing grain in bags and they would have been moved with a sack trolley the Railway hessian sacks held 1.5 cwt (hundred weights) of wheat which is 168 lbs or 76.36 Kgs. I do not know what weight other bags would have been before the railway sacks came in 1 cwt is 112 lbs or 50.9 kgs.



Map of Loch Eye, Fearn dam and mill water flow coloured in by Donald Ross showing overflow in red from Mill Lade or Race

There were 2 mills at Fearn as seen in map of 1880, a school and small village at mill the school at Mill which would be Church of Scotland school as I see in Hill of Fearn, the Free Church School. After that both schools would be joined to run by the state school which in 1904 map you can see where the present school is situated. Fearn Abbey School is now a house and still survives and you pass it on way to Fearn Abbey.

The main road used to go round by Fearn farmhouse and I remember in winter it was a bad bend at this house where school was and could be slippery as it was in the shade, then I remember when they built the new road 1970s by passing Fearn Farmhouse and when you look at the old map it crosses over part of the old Mill dam.

Loch Eye used to be called Loch Slunn

Following information from Donald Ross Rhynie farm. Loch Eye was changed from Loch Slunn Slinn Slin mid C19 as our 1825 map of the farm is Loch Slinn. My mother thinks it got its name from the name of the farm on the north side i.e. Loch Eye House (its for-runner) gave the name to the loch. As the owner of

Loch Eye (Ae) also owned Mounteagle in the C18th giving him a fair lump of land around the Loch

(Information below from Keith Hart on Loch Eye name

The name Lochslin is Gaelic and derives from slinn, a weaver's slye. According to Place Names of Ross and Cromarty by William John Watson dated 1904, "Lochslin as a loch has disappeared, and survives only in the names Lochslin Farm and the ancient ruin of Lochslin Castle. It must have been a small loch, at the eastern end of Loch Eye."

He also has the following derivation of Loch Eye. "Gaelic, loch na h-uidhe; uidh, from the Norse eith, isthmus." So the name describes a Loch on an isthmus - a perfect description.

Note however that slinn is derived from a weaver's 'slye'. I think that we have the explanation here. How easy to confuse the names, remember that the mapmakers were either English or low-land Scots! The 'original' Loch(sl)eye was drained and 'slye' was confused with 'eye' and the names were transposed on the maps, Lochslin now becoming Loch Eye.)



2 Mills at Fearn from map of 1880



Fearn Mill 1904-1906 was reduced to 1 mill with smaller dam beside mill and village has gone and school shut, the public school was now in Hill of Fearn.



Map of Fearn Mill, Mill race or lade and burn from Loch Eye 1950 map. This map does not show overflow but Donald tells me there is a deep hollow between Mill Lade or Race and Burn from Loch Eye and you can still see small dam at Fearn Mill as well.



Fearn Mill inside



Fearn Mill Inside.

Alastair Cameron told me with 2 shafts, one would be for fine flour and the other for course flour, but only one shaft would be used at one time.



Fearn Mill showing Mill dam and where water came from Loch Eye



Fearn Mill



Fearn Millstone

Clays of Allan Mill and Dam used the water after Fearn Mill the Lade or race carried on down to Clays of Allan Farm mill. By 1904 map it shows dam with rushes in it and sluices but does not mention mill probably gone by then.



Clays of Allan Mill and dam 1843-1882 map

Hilton Mills near Tain

There were 3 mills here near Aldie burn and were supplied by Aldie burn, it supplied Aldie Mill first then under A9 to the first Hilton Mill which was corn and saw mill then further down was another mill, a woollen mill then water went back into Aldie Burn after that. But by 1904 the map only shows Corn mill as saw and woollen mill must have closed by then.

Aldie Mill corn Mill. Hilton Mill Corn and saw, then 2nd Hilton Mill woollen mill.



Arabella Farm had its own dam and mill this map of 1872 shows, even the map of 1904 shows dam still intact just a small bit at far end has grasses growing in it otherwise it looks as if it is still working. Our forebears farmed this farm till

1917 when it was sold to Board of Agriculture for death duties and was broken up into small holdings, for soldiers returning from First World War



Cullisse Farm had its own mill pond, meal mill

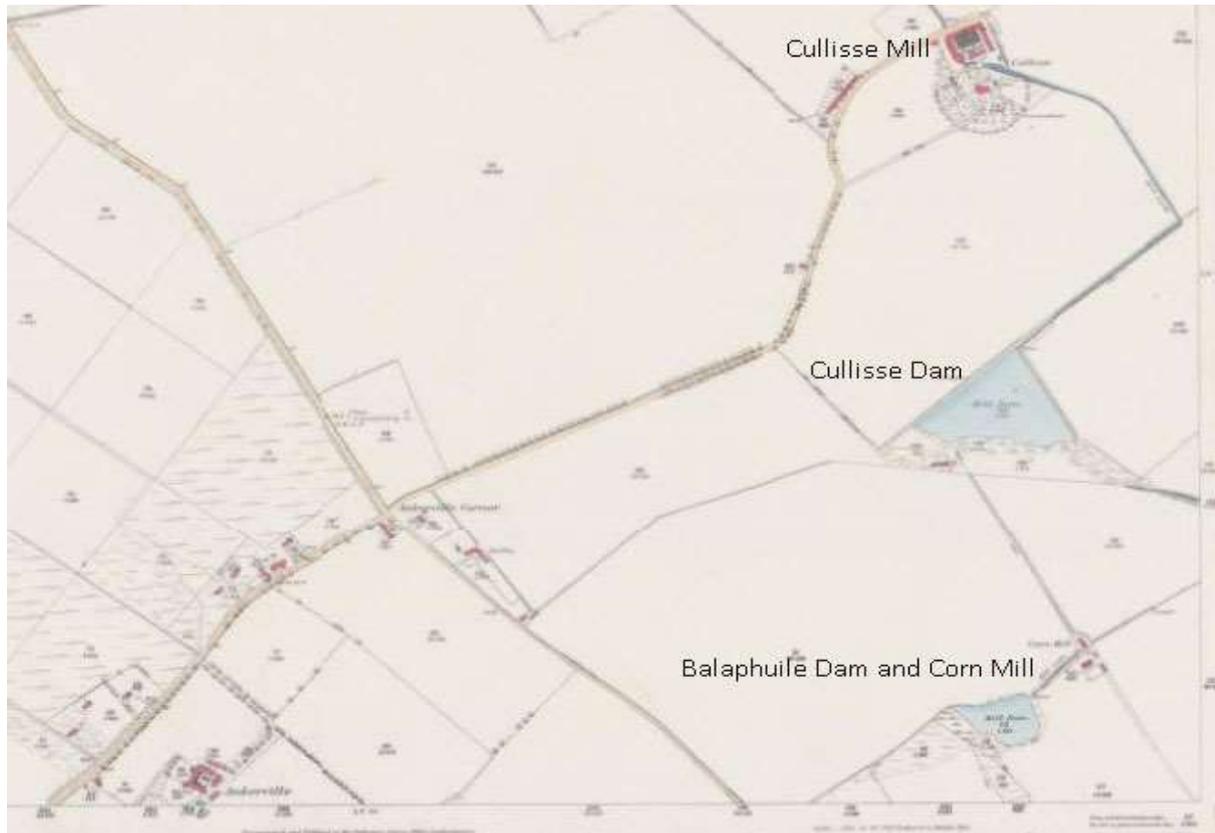
In the book of Nigg-A Changing Parish (1977) by Anne Gordon (my aunt Anne) on page 10 it says that there was a Millne of Culless dated 1563.



Cullisse Mill dam and Race to farm from farm map dated 1872 which I had as my forebears farmed there till 1921 then they moved to Bindal Farm. I handed the map to Mackenzie's of Cullisse. But by 1904 the dam has grass showing in it again, I think steam powered mills were coming in which were more reliable.

Instead of having to wait till your mill dam was full to run the mill and in very dry weather not being able to mill, not good news if you needed flour for bread or porridge.

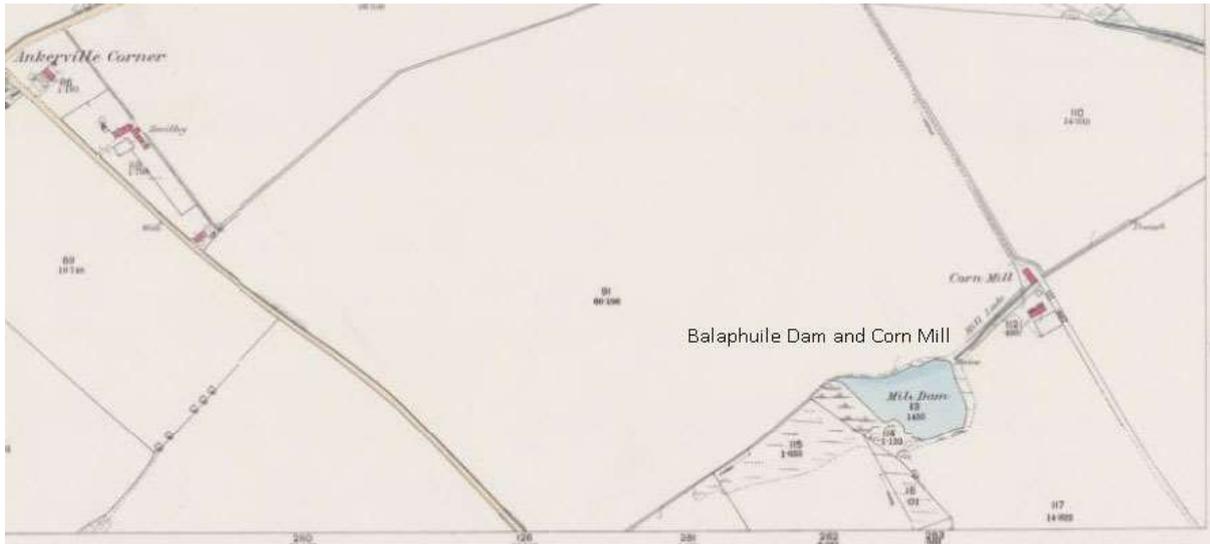
Scale 25 inches to 1 mile Map of 1872



Cullisse Dam and Corn Mill also showing Balaphuile Dam and Corn Mill 1872

Balaphuile Mill Dam and Corn Mill which then flowed down to Cullisse Dam

In the book of Nigg-A Changing Parish (1977) by Anne Gordon (my aunt Anne) on page 11 it says that there was a reference to mills in this area dated 1583. The name Balaphuile comes from Bail a phuile meaning pool town applies to Lower Rarichie.



Scale 25 inches to 1 mile Map of 1872

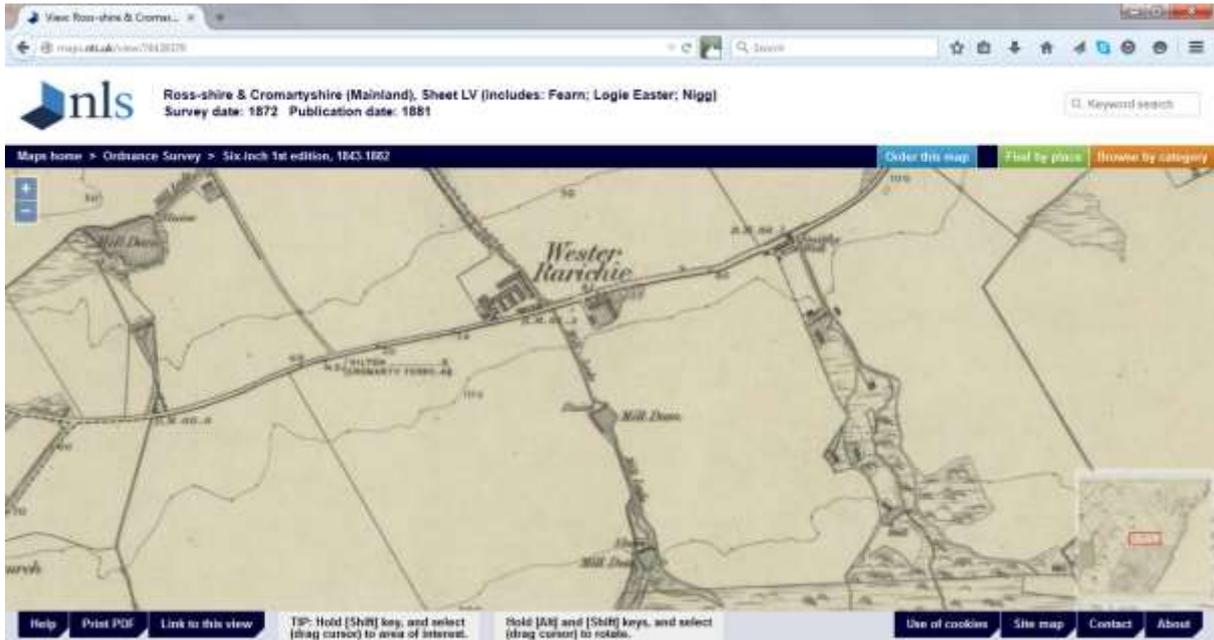
Strath of Pitcalnie shows mill dam in map of 1880



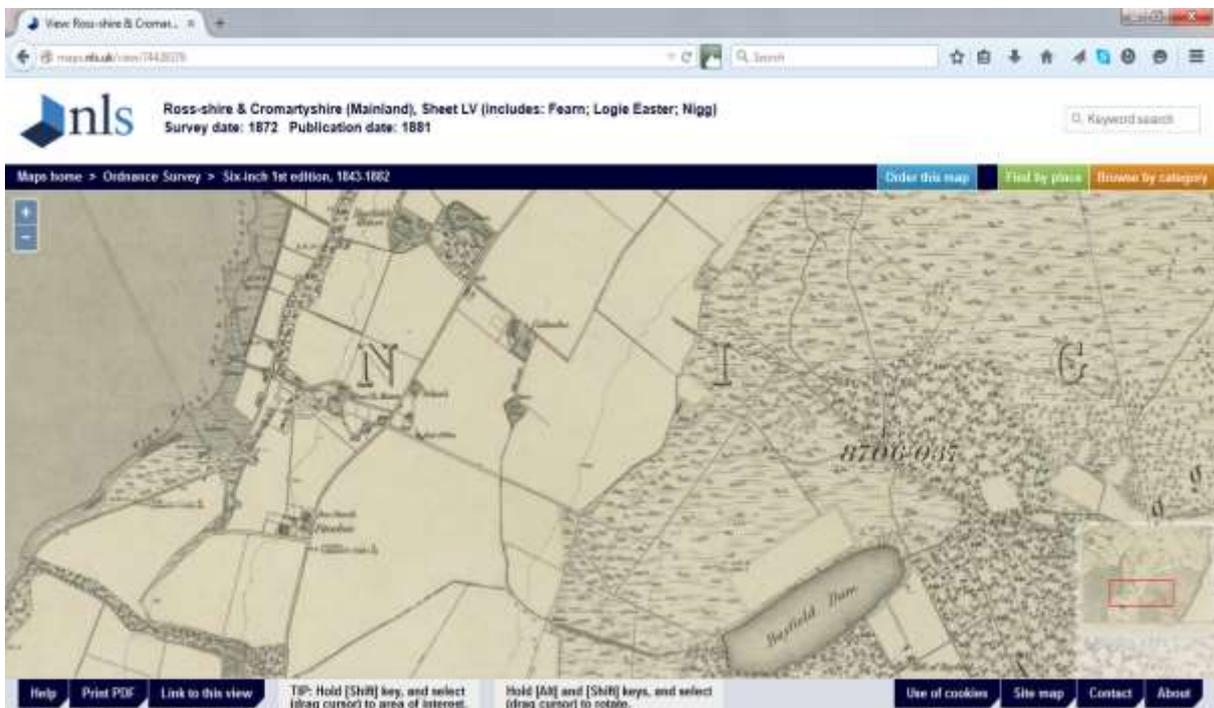
In the book of Nigg-A Changing Parish (1977) by Anne Gordon (my aunt Anne) on page 12 it says that there was a reference to mills in this area. It mentions Strath of Pitcalnie mill lade and dam leading to a mill.

This mill race or lade then went on to Balaphuile dam and mill then to Cullisse dam and Mill

Wester Rarichie Mill and the dams above it were fed straight off Nigg hill then it went to Cullisse dam. There is no mention of mill at Wester Rarichie but then there is no mention of mill at Cullisse on map, but mill lade runs beside farm buildings(Steading).



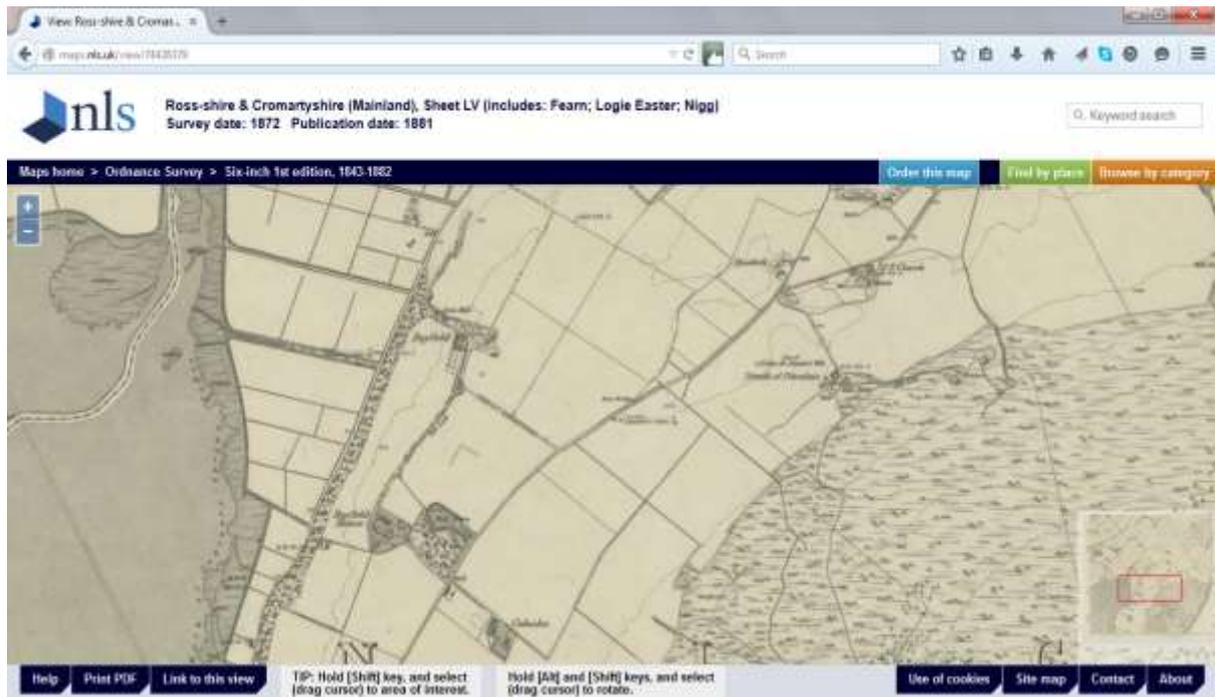
Culnaha Mill and Dam was fed from Bayfield dam but modern maps say Bayfield Loch



In the book of Nigg-A Changing Parish (1977) by Anne Gordon (my aunt Anne) it says Culnaha mill dam was there in 1841 on page 11

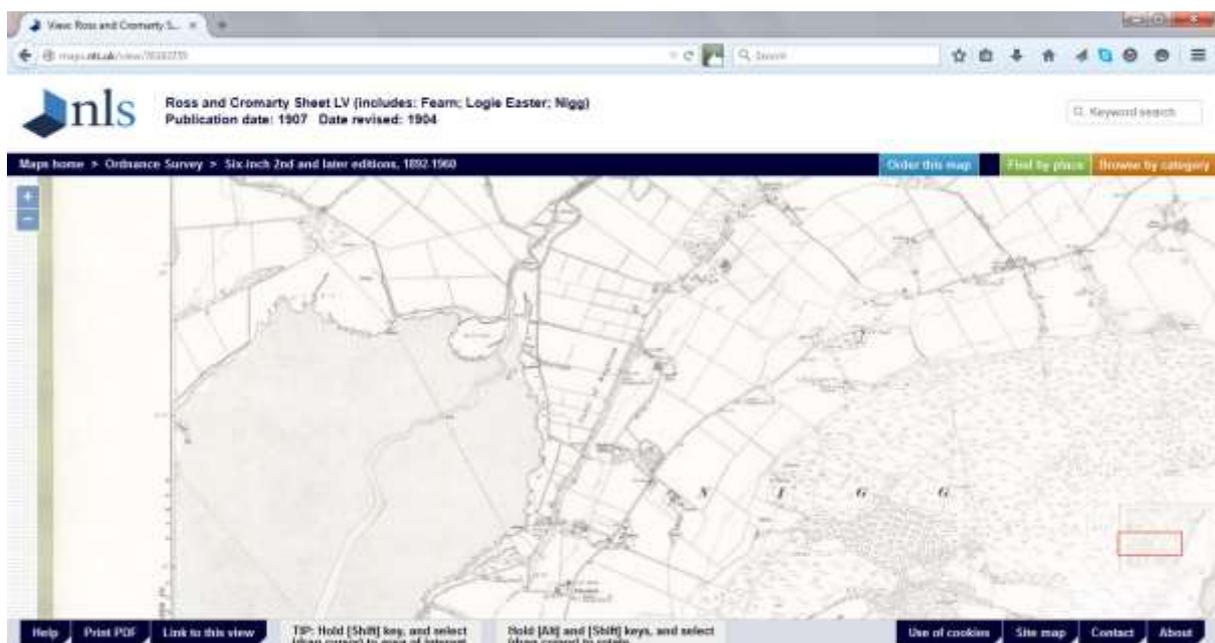
Then from Culnaha to Bayfield dam at Bayfield house then to Bayfield farm

Bayfield Dam and Mill



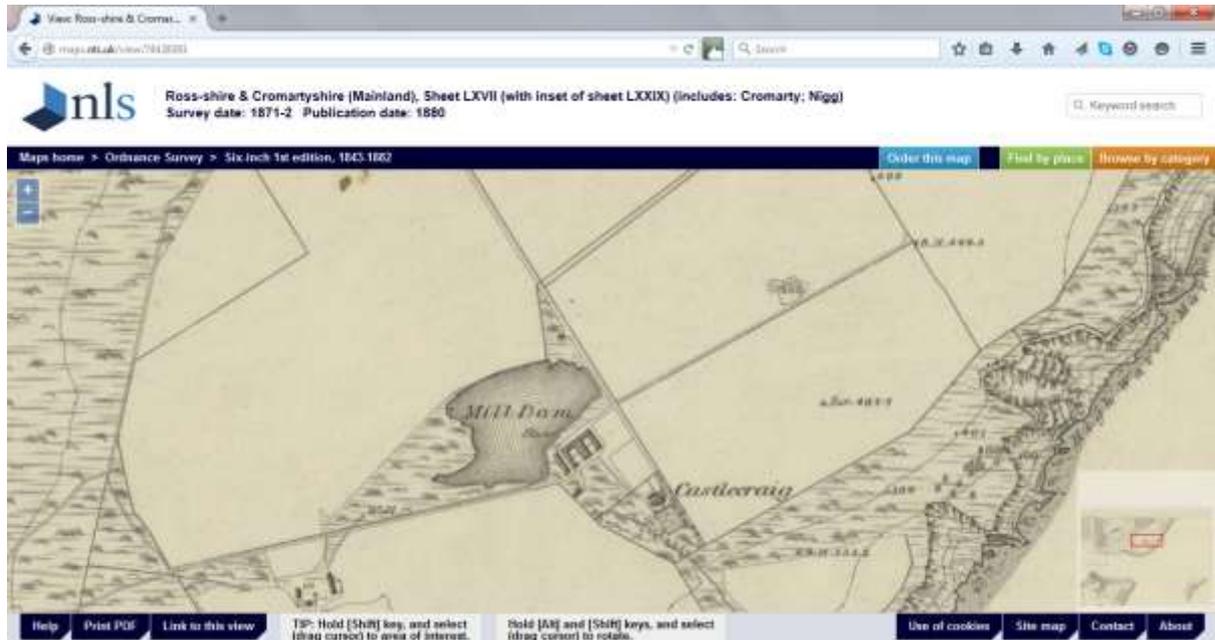
In the book of Nigg-A Changing Parish (1977) by Anne Gordon (my aunt Anne) It says Miln of Kindeace (Bayfield) was certainly established by 1732 on page 11 of the book it mentions that Culnaha mill had to notify Bayfield when they were going to open sluices so they could open their sluices and mill too and no water would be lost for milling. Bayfield Meal Mill closed 1912, then meal was fetched from Milton Mill by carts crossing the Ford on Nigg Bay to Meddat.

Nigg Bay 1904 showing track across Nigg bay and ford when tide was out.

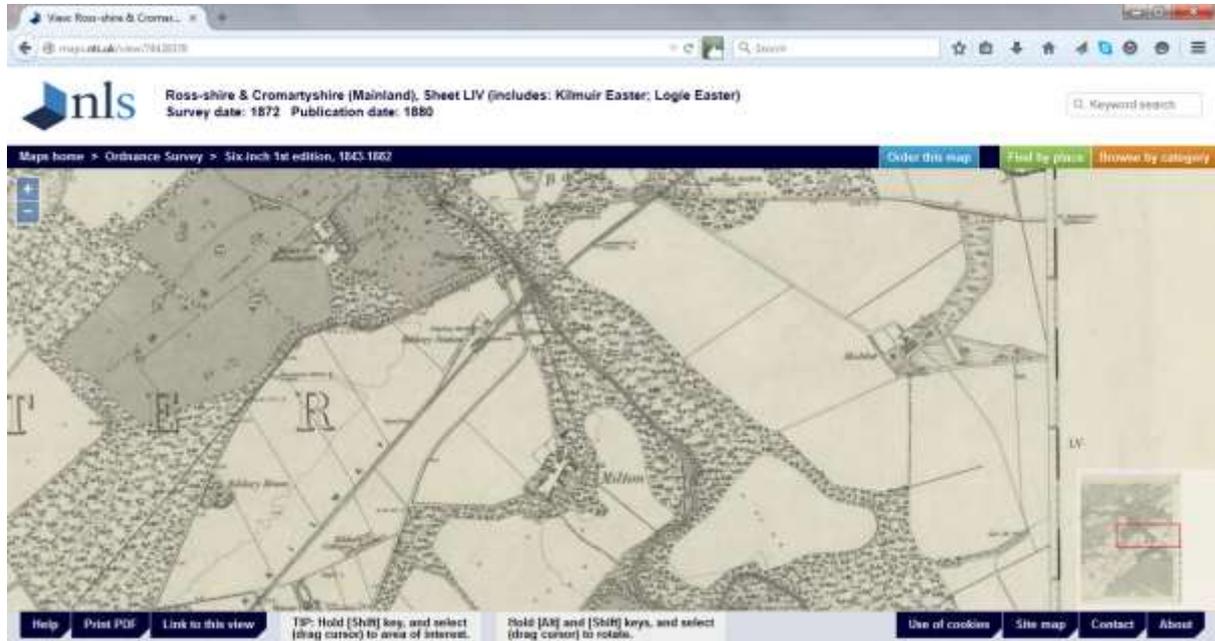


I remember my father talking about crossing Nigg bay on cart when he lived at Arabella house where all his brothers and sisters were born, his father A P Gordon farmed Arabella, Cullisse and Balmuchy farms.

CastleCraig Dam & Mill map of 1871-1872

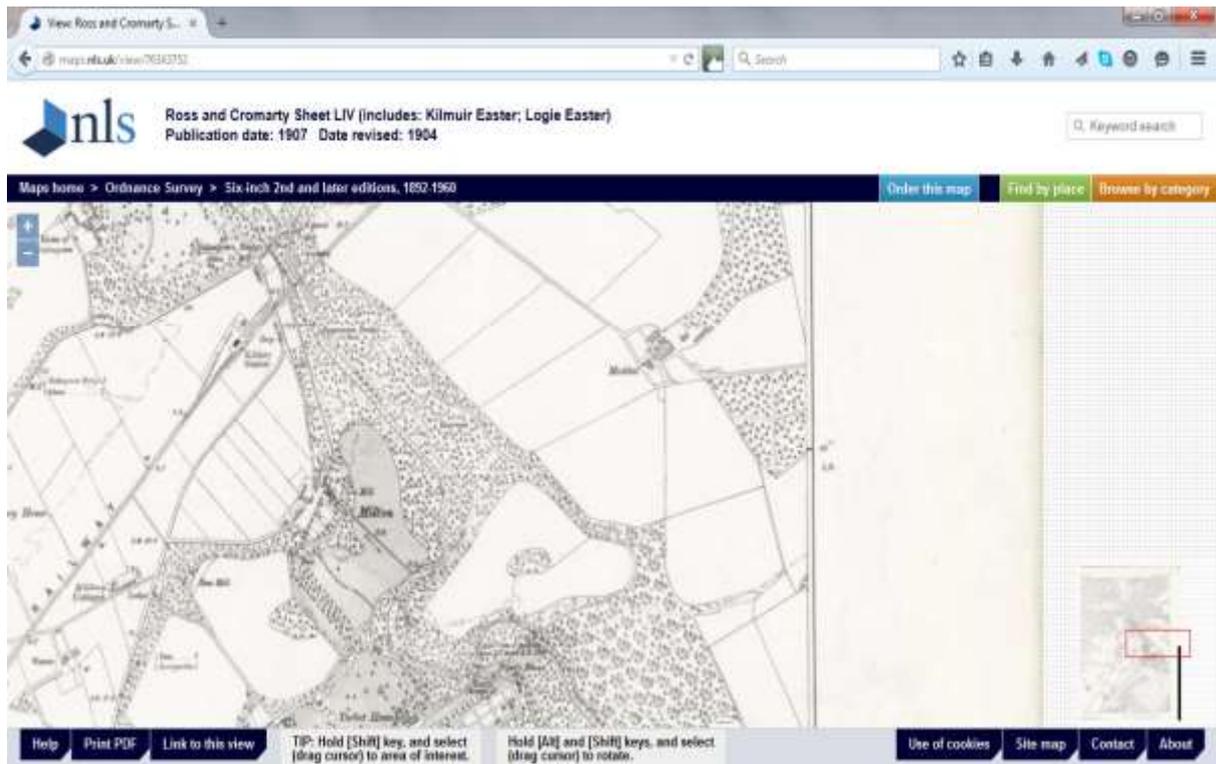


Milton Mill did not need a dam as it was fed from Balnagown River from just below road bridge at Kildary under railway along Mill lade to Mill which was quite high above the river at this point, it was still going till 1960 I was told as with better transport and roads it was easy to take grain to Milton.



Map of 1872 survey date of Milton Mill

Interestingly the 1 inch to 1 mile map of Milton 1878 does not show a mill or lade.



Map of 1904 Milton Mill