

**SCOTTISH
NATURAL
HERITAGE**



No 37

**National programme of landscape character
assessment: Banff and Buchan**

Cobham Resource Consultants

1997

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Scottish Natural Heritage
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PREFACE

Cobham Resource Consultants were commissioned by SNH during the first week of November 1993 to carry out a landscape assessment of Banff and Buchan District. This study was one of three pilot studies carried out in 1993 as a precursor to the three year national programme of landscape assessment that commenced in 1994. This programme aims to improve our understanding of the landscape of Scotland by the detailed description and classification of landscape character at a consistent scale.

Due to circumstances beyond our control, the time available for the study was extremely short, with the final report due in the third week in February 1994. This left only 14.5 working weeks for the study, and meant that the fieldwork had to be carried out during the time of the year when days are shortest.

Despite these constraints, Cobham Resource Consultants have provided a very sound and readable report which is valuable in its own right as well as being useful in developing a suitable landscape character assessment methodology that can be applied across lowland Scotland.

SNH is grateful to all those individuals who provided assistance with this study. In particular, thanks are due to the following for the assistance they gave Cobham Resource Consultants at a busy time of year: Douglas Clark, Anthony Davies, Richard Leith, Keith Newton, Andrew Hill, Lesley McInnes, Nick Heynes, Patrick Ashmore, Andrew Geddes, Jill Demsey and Geordie Burnett-Stuart.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

General Description

- 1.1 The District of Banff & Buchan is situated north of Aberdeen and east of Inverness. Often described as the "cold shoulder" of Scotland, reflecting the influence of the North Sea, Banff and Buchan is characterised by expansive views, an impressive coastline, a wealth of fascinating settlements and a variety of mainly unspoilt landscapes. The location of Banff & Buchan, and the District boundary, are shown in Figures 1 and 2. This area will form part of Aberdeenshire, following Local Government Re-organisation in April 1996.
- 1.2 Land and sea have interacted on the coast of Banff & Buchan to produce dramatic cliffs, extensive sand dunes and beaches. Inland, the landform rises from the broad coastal-influenced agricultural plains in the east, through the gently undulating farmland incised by river valleys, to the bleaker uplands of the west, bordering Moray District. Woodland cover is sparse throughout the District, with most of the land being under intensive agriculture. The openness of much of the landscape and the proximity to the sea give rise to the "big skies" commonly seen as being characteristic of Banff & Buchan.
- 1.3 Man has made a living in Banff & Buchan since prehistoric times, with farming and fishing still being the most important economic activities in the District. The built heritage of Banff & Buchan is rich in castles, grand houses and planned settlements, indicative of the past prosperity of the area. The remnants of estate policies are evident in parts of the District, where beech avenues, hedgerows and small woodlands are distinctive features.

Study Brief and Aims

- 1.4 Although the landscape of Banff & Buchan is generally unspoilt and distinctive at present, it is constantly changing and evolving. There is a need to understand this development of the landscape, to assess which qualities and features are most distinctive, and to think about how the landscape may evolve in future. These factors led Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) to commission this landscape assessment - one of three pilot studies which form part of an ongoing programme of landscape character assessment. This programme will eventually provide coverage for the whole of Scotland.
- 1.5 The study has an important role, not only in Banff & Buchan, but in the development of a suitable landscape assessment methodology that can be applied to lowland landscapes across Scotland. The primary aims of the study are to:
 - increase awareness of the landscape character of the area and to identify its distinctive qualities through detailed assessment;
 - give advice on possible landscape change and how this can be sensitively accommodated;

- draw up landscape guidelines for the District, with recommendations for the conservation or enhancement of landscape character that builds on the local distinctiveness of Banff and Buchan.

1.6 This report, which summarises the landscape assessment findings and recommendations, is intended for use by SNH staff when considering planning applications and directing landscape management and other initiatives. One of the intentions of the report is to ensure that the key landscape issues are addressed when reviewing planning applications. It may also aid development control and help countryside management staff within bodies such as the new unitary authority, the Forestry Authority, and landowners and their advisers.

Methodology

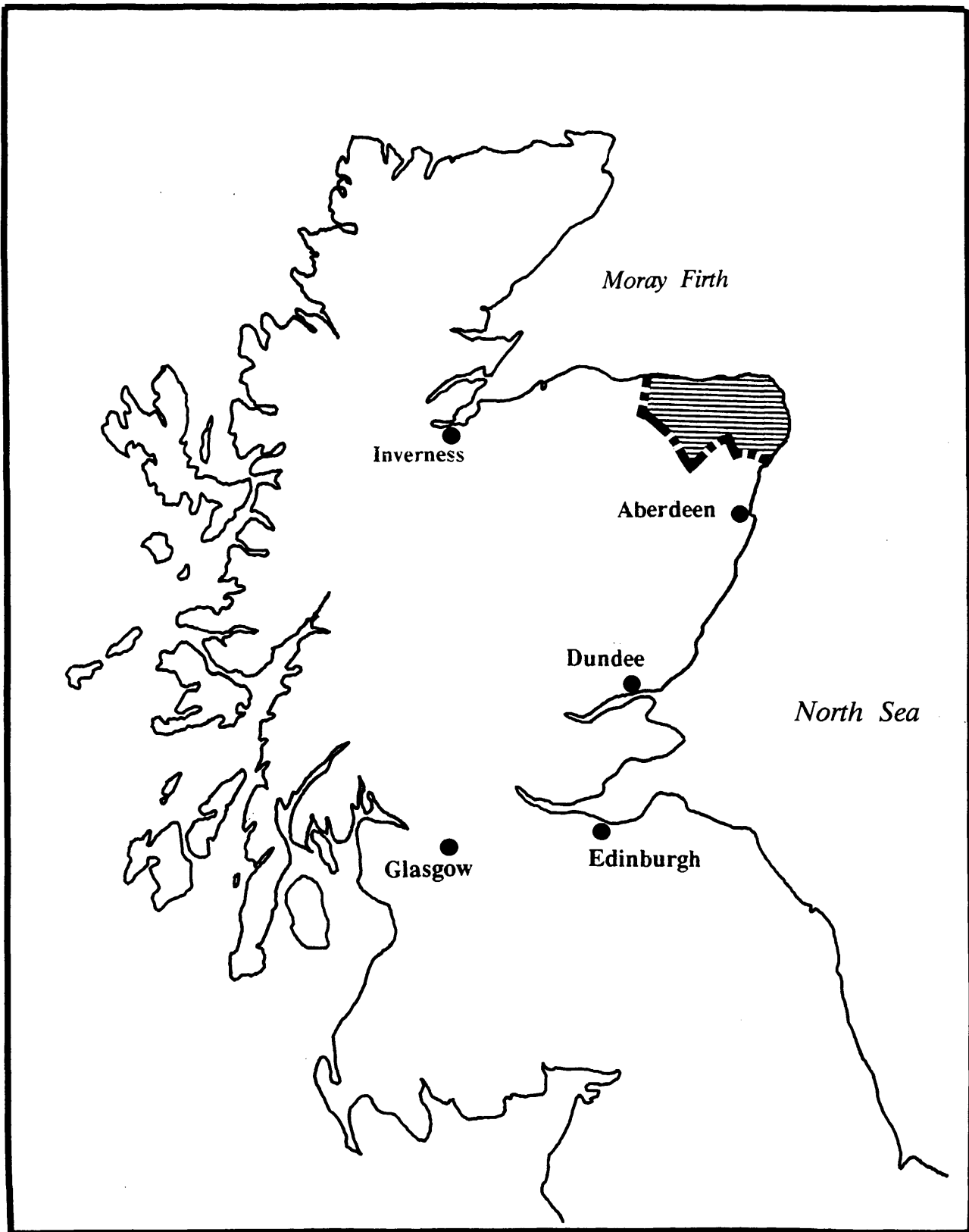
1.7 The study has comprised a review of the evolution of the landscape character of Banff & Buchan through research, analysis of map data and field survey work. Consultations have been held with local authorities, government bodies and acknowledged local experts to review pressures on the landscape and to assess possible future change.

1.8 A technical report of the landscape assessment is attached at Appendix 10.1. This lists the data sources used and includes field survey forms and a list of consultees. The time taken to carry out each stage of the study is recorded, along with the problems encountered. The conclusion to this description makes suggestions for future methodological development.

Structure of the Report

1.9 The report begins with an initial examination, in Chapter 2, of the role of geology, land use and historical factors in the development of the Banff & Buchan landscape. Broad landscape character areas are described in Chapter 3, and distinctive landscape features occurring in the District are focused upon in Chapter 4. Perceptions of the landscape of Banff & Buchan are explored in Chapter 5 through the work of writers, travellers and artists.

1.10 Present pressures and potential forces for change are outlined in Chapter 6, and their effect on landscape character gauged and guidelines for the conservation of distinctive aspects of the landscape, and for the enhancement and revitalisation of some areas of the District, is outlined in Chapter 7. A summary of the special qualities of the Banff & Buchan landscape, and of the challenges and opportunities facing this landscape in the future, concludes the report.



 Banff & Buchan District boundary

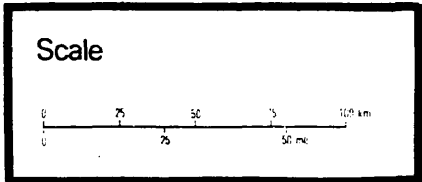
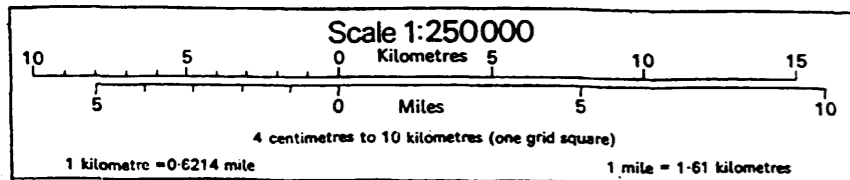
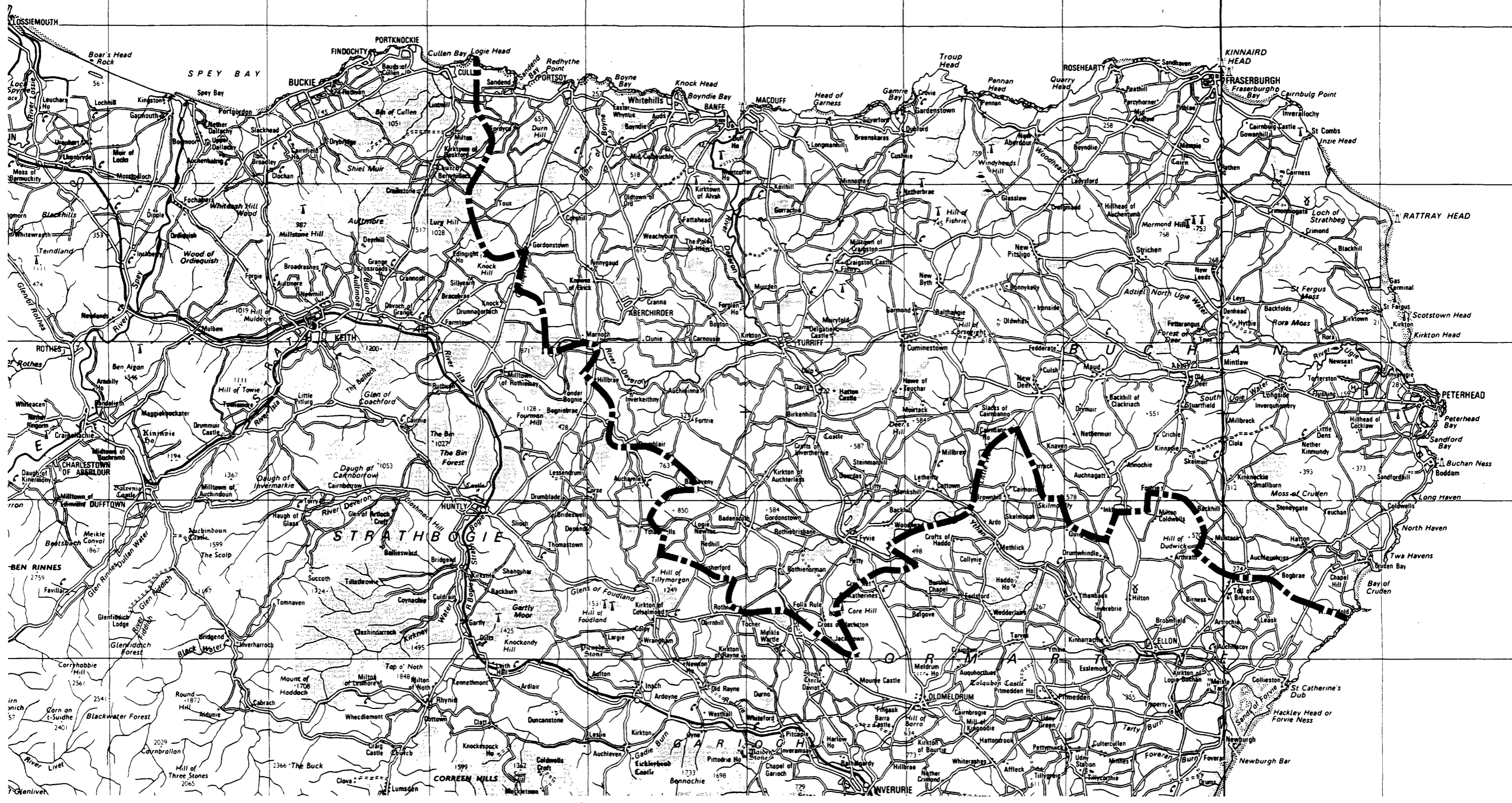



FIGURE 1
LOCATION MAP



 **Banff & Buchan District boundary**

**FIGURE 2
BANFF & BUCHAN
DISTRICT**

2.0 EVOLUTION OF THE LANDSCAPE

- 2.1 The District of Banff & Buchan lies in the north-east of Scotland, where the North Sea coast meets the southern shore of the Moray Firth. It is a lowland area, totalling 1526 square kilometres, bounded by hills on its inland western and southern edges. Depositional and erosional processes (the latter including glacial and marine sequences) have interacted to produce the basis of the landscape we see today. Subsequently, human beings shaped and altered the land as they settled and farmed the area. These processes are outlined below. Figures 3 and 4, which accompany this chapter, illustrate the geology and topography of the area.

Physical Influences

Geology

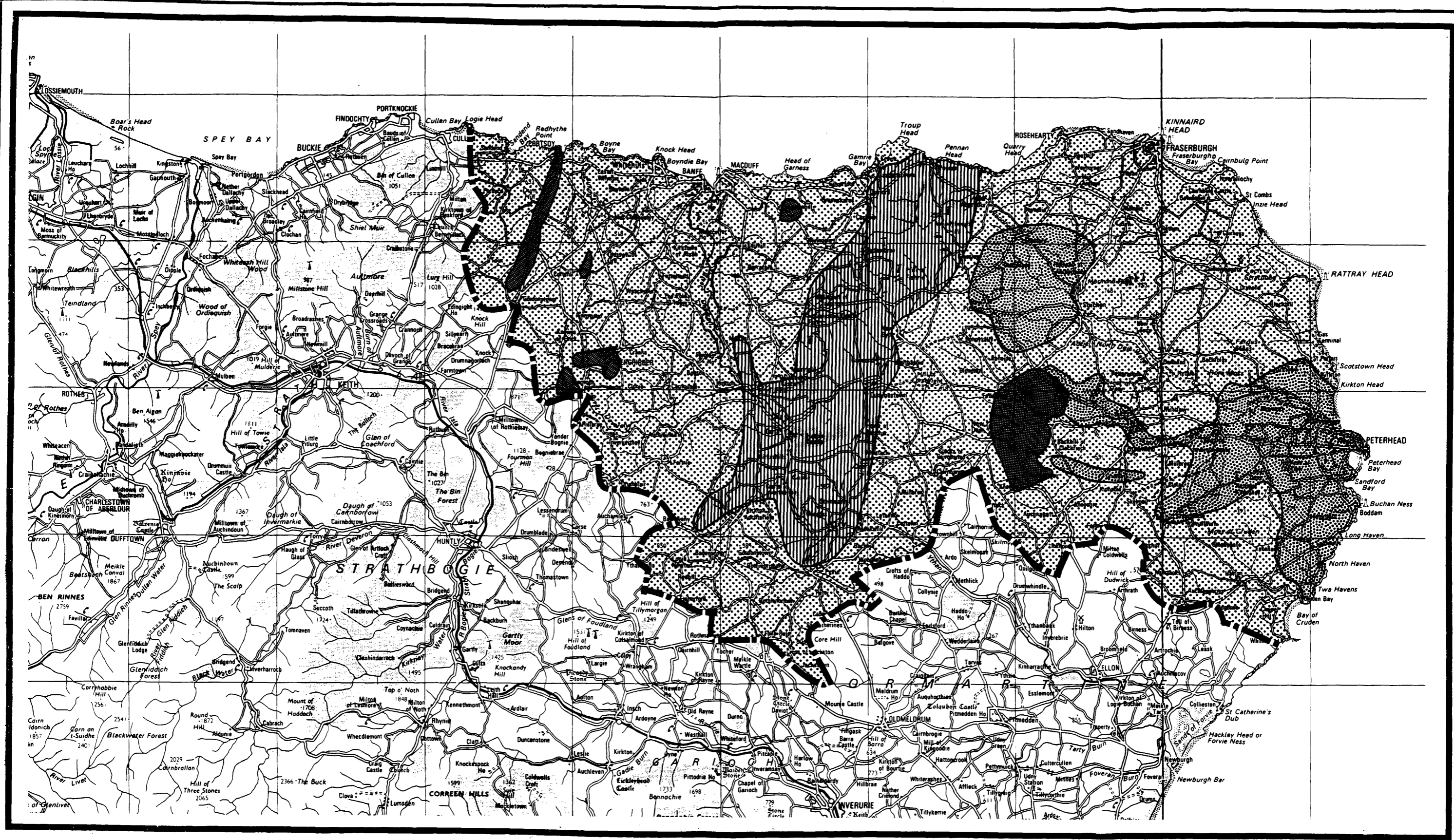
- 2.2 It is an interesting feature of Banff and Buchan that the same rocks which inland, in the Grampian mountains, produce some of the highest hills in the country, form low-lying coastal plateaux in the District, although the highest ground (i.e. Cairngorm) is underlain by granite. The Dalradian rocks of Banff and Buchan are ancient, having been laid down as sedimentary rocks in Precambrian times, about 600 million years ago. They have since been metamorphosed by intense heat and pressure to form rocks which are relatively resistant to erosional processes. It would be expected that they would therefore form a terrain more highland in character, considering also their location north of the Highland Boundary Fault. Instead, the fertile triangle of low-lying land which forms much of Banff & Buchan contrasts with surrounding, higher areas. It has been suggested (1) that the Dalradian rocks of the coastal plateaux may have been covered by a layer of more recent sedimentary rocks (Old Red Sandstone, laid down in Devonian times, between 345 and 395 million years ago). The low-lying lands of Buchan may, therefore, be "the exhumed surface of the pre-Devonian floor after the...Old Red Sandstone "veneer" has been stripped away" (1).
- 2.3 The Dalradian rocks which underlie much of Banff & Buchan form one of the major Dalradian groupings in Scotland. It is a classic area in which to study regional metamorphism, by which sediments are transformed by heat and pressure into more resistant rocks such as slates, schists and gneisses. Many geological sites in Banff & Buchan are listed as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for their research value.
- 2.4 The type of rock produced by metamorphism depends on the original composition of the sediments and also on the type of metamorphism applied to them. Where pressure was a greater influence than temperature, for example, slaty structures resulted. The durable Dalradian slates which occur in the area have been sporadically quarried in the Banff-Aberdeen area. In contrast, the metamorphism of quartz-rich sandstones produced quartzite, a highly resistant rock which invariably results in high ground where it outcrops today. Mormond Hill, for example, is formed from quartzite. This rock has also been important in forming parts of the cliff-edged coastlines of the county. Quartzite, which is lacking in soil-forming nutrients, results in infertile soils and patches of

moorland where it surfaces in the region. In addition, there are limestones in Banffshire which have been quarried for use in agriculture. The existence of lime in an area of acid soils was essential in providing a suitable environment for crop growth and forming the fertile triangle of this north-east corner of Scotland.

- 2.5 Variations in the solid geology which can be discerned in the landscape of Banff & Buchan include deposits of younger sediments such as Old Red Sandstone, which have not been altered by metamorphism. These outcrop southwards from Troup Head and Pennan on the coast. The landform of this area, such as the steep-sided valley of the Tore of Troup, and the red soils which cover the lower parts of the area, have led to comparisons with the scenery of northern Cornwall and Devon, despite the different geology of the two areas.
- 2.6 There are also igneous rocks which were injected into the existing rock layers and subsequently revealed by weathering. Some were altered by metamorphism along with the older sedimentary rocks into which they were placed; an example is the vein of serpentine, known as "marble," at Portsoy. Other more recent plutonic intrusions avoided metamorphism and form a semi-circle of gabbro outcrops, extending from Portsoy and curving out of the District, before re-entering to terminate north-eastwards near Maud. These rocks weathered to form low-lying ground and fertile soils, due to their relatively high nutrient mineral content.

Geomorphology

- 2.7 Landform depends on erosion as well as deposition. While glaciation was the dominant process throughout much of Scotland, Banff & Buchan lay furthest from the centres of ice dispersal. Evidence such as peri-glacial activity and thoroughly weathered granite suggests that parts may have been free from ice during the last glaciation, although this is debated by some authors (1). Certainly, the overwhelming geomorphological character of the area is one that is little affected by glacial erosion, reflected in the absence of erosional landforms and the survival of weathered bedrock and Tertiary gravels, as on the Buchan Ridge. This pattern appears to reflect the diversion of the ice streams around the area and the probability that the ice was cold-based. In a national context, the lack of glacial erosion and the extent of survival of preglacial relicts in the landscape is exceptional.
- 2.8 The interaction of various ice streams in parts of the area resulted in the seaward parts of the District being covered in fresh glacial till or debris, but the inner part contains older, weathered till, overlying deeply weathered rocks. This meant that, as the District became settled and cultivated, fewer rocks had to be gathered from these fields, with a corresponding reduction in the number of stone walls for field boundaries.
- 2.9 The coastal geomorphology of Banff & Buchan is, in many places, spectacular. Both cliffs and sand dunes are found along the shores of the District. Raised beaches are also present, for example, between Cullen and Portsoy. These are thought to be the result of relative changes in level between the land and sea, typically after periods of glaciation, when the land may have risen as the ice burden was removed. The sea-cliff areas have been shaped by coastal erosion, forming features such as caves, arches and blowholes. West of



from:- Whittow, J.B. (1977)
Geology and Scenery in Scotland

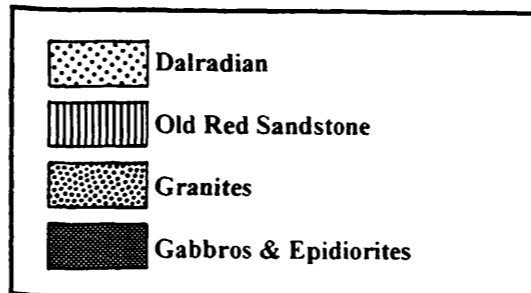
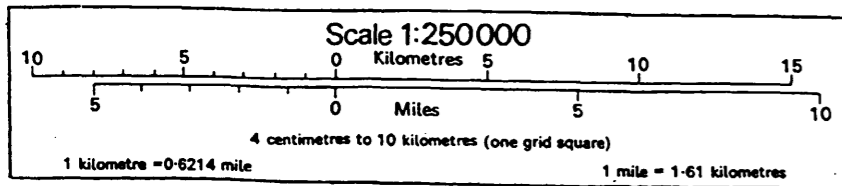


FIGURE 3
SIMPLIFIED SOLID
GEOLOGY MAP

Kinnaird Head, the rocky coastline has been called the "Banffshire Riviera"; it exhibits a variety of cliff scenery, from the red sandstone at Troup Head to the intricately-detailed erosion in the metamorphic cliffs west of Gardenstown, which reflect "the less uniform lithology of the metamorphic succession"(1).

- 2.10 The sand and dune areas in Banff & Buchan form some of the longest beaches in Europe. Near the Loch of Strathbeg, which is the largest dune lake in Britain, massive dunes provide one of the best examples of constructive dunes in the country. Erosional features such as blow-outs also occur, despite the relatively undisturbed location of the dunes.

Topography and Drainage

- 2.11 Banff & Buchan is a low-lying area, mostly below 200 metres in height, with much of the topography comprising gently undulating plateaux. Higher ground, above 200 metres, occurs at the south-western fringes of the District, where the land rises to the foothills of the Grampians. The highest point in the District, Knock Hill (430 metres), is located here. However, in the east of the county, Mormond Hill, which rises abruptly above the Buchan plain to a height of 234 metres, is a more conspicuous landmark.
- 2.12 Shallow river valleys are cut into the plateaux, most noticeably in the western part of the District, where the valleys of the rivers Deveron and Ythan form distinctive landscape features. In contrast, the Ugie rivers in the east cut less deeply into the landform, and their shallow valleys are much less pronounced. The patterns made by the rivers show that some streams eroded back into the hills around their source, occasionally "capturing" other drainage systems. The twisting Deveron, for example, probably includes stretches of what were once other rivers. It may at one time have linked with the Ythan to flow into the North Sea instead of the Moray Firth.

Soils

- 2.13 Despite the layer of boulder clay, many of the soils of the District relate to the underlying bedrock. Most of these soils are acidic, and it is their ability to drain which determines their worth for agriculture. Basic parent rocks such as the gabbro found near Maud and Portsoy also give rise to better quality farmland, with a more nutrient-rich soil. The thin, acidic soils produced on the quartzite outcrops at Mormond Hill, for example, are of little use for farming and generally support heather moorland.
- 2.14 The Macaulay Land Use Research Institute (MLURI) Land Capability for Agriculture map for the District shows a close correlation between topography, geology, and the usefulness of land for agriculture. The great majority of the District is classed as Grade 3, which is land capable of producing a moderate range of crops. The Macaulay map shows no Grade 1 and only limited amounts of Grade 2 land within the District. This good quality land is largely restricted to patches along the river Deveron. Areas of poorer grade land, Grades 4 and 5, occur throughout the District. It is most noticeable in the Red Sandstone area south of Troup Head, and also outcrops in moss areas, for example St. Fergus Moss in the east of the District.

Human Influences

- 2.15 Despite the exposed location of Banff & Buchan, the coastal lowlands have been cultivated and settled for centuries. This is a reflection, perhaps, of the relatively fertile soils and the comparatively dry climate. The District has, therefore, been highly influenced and shaped by human activity, the results of which are as noticeable, in many ways, as the physical features. In this respect, the area contrasts sharply with the Grampian mountains to the south and west.

Early Settlement

- 2.16 While more work needs to be carried out in Banff & Buchan to permit accurate assertions on the state of the environment during the prehistoric period, the District is likely to have supported groups of hunter-gatherers between 8,000 and 6,000 years BC. The necessary resources were all present: woodland cover for shelter and animals for hunting; rivers and sandy bays for fishing; and sources of flint for tools. Woodland would have covered most of the area, and species would have included oak, pine, birch and hazel. However, the activities of the people living here at the time have left no obvious traces in the landscape.
- 2.17 In later, Neolithic times (4,000 to 2,000 years BC), farming was first introduced to the area by incomers, whose origins lay amongst the farming communities of north-west Europe. This can be verified by the discoveries of pottery fragments and flint tools. Den of Boddam, just south of Peterhead, contains the only flint quarry pits so far discovered in Scotland. It is likely that the forests were partially cleared to permit cultivation of crops such as wheat and barley and the construction of enclosures for domesticated animals. These clearings were probably extended and cyclically abandoned; it is unlikely that the climax vegetation would have re-established itself. Forest clearance had a significant impact on the landscape, one which continued until the woodland cover was reduced to the extent it has reached today.
- 2.18 Certain Neolithic monuments survive today. Long cairns and barrows are presumed to be burial places and centres for ritual, and also to reflect a need to establish rights to land. It is thought that the primary function of recumbent stone circles, features unique to the Grampian region, was associated with ritual ceremonies at certain times of the year, for example when the moon rose or set. This implies that the sky was visible from these monuments, and that they were therefore not enclosed by woodland. Beaker cists and finds of early bronze metalwork also occur in the District. It seems likely, therefore, that prehistoric Banff & Buchan was a well-settled area.
- 2.19 Following the Neolithic period, the trend of human habitation was towards defensive sites and the establishment of small settlements, together with the development of early Christian monasticism and a hierarchical early mediaeval feudal society. Celtic monasteries were founded at Turriff, Old Deer and Aberdour (Dundarg), probably during the seventh and eighth centuries. Many remains, however, have been obliterated by subsequent intensive agricultural use, so that there is little evidence in the landscape today.

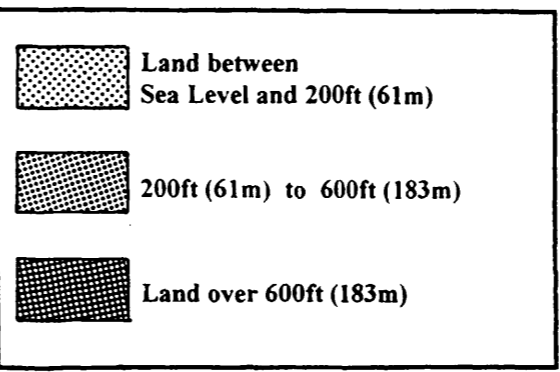
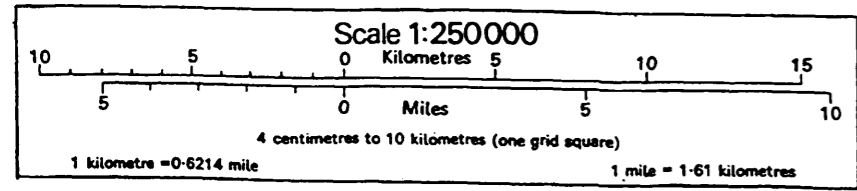
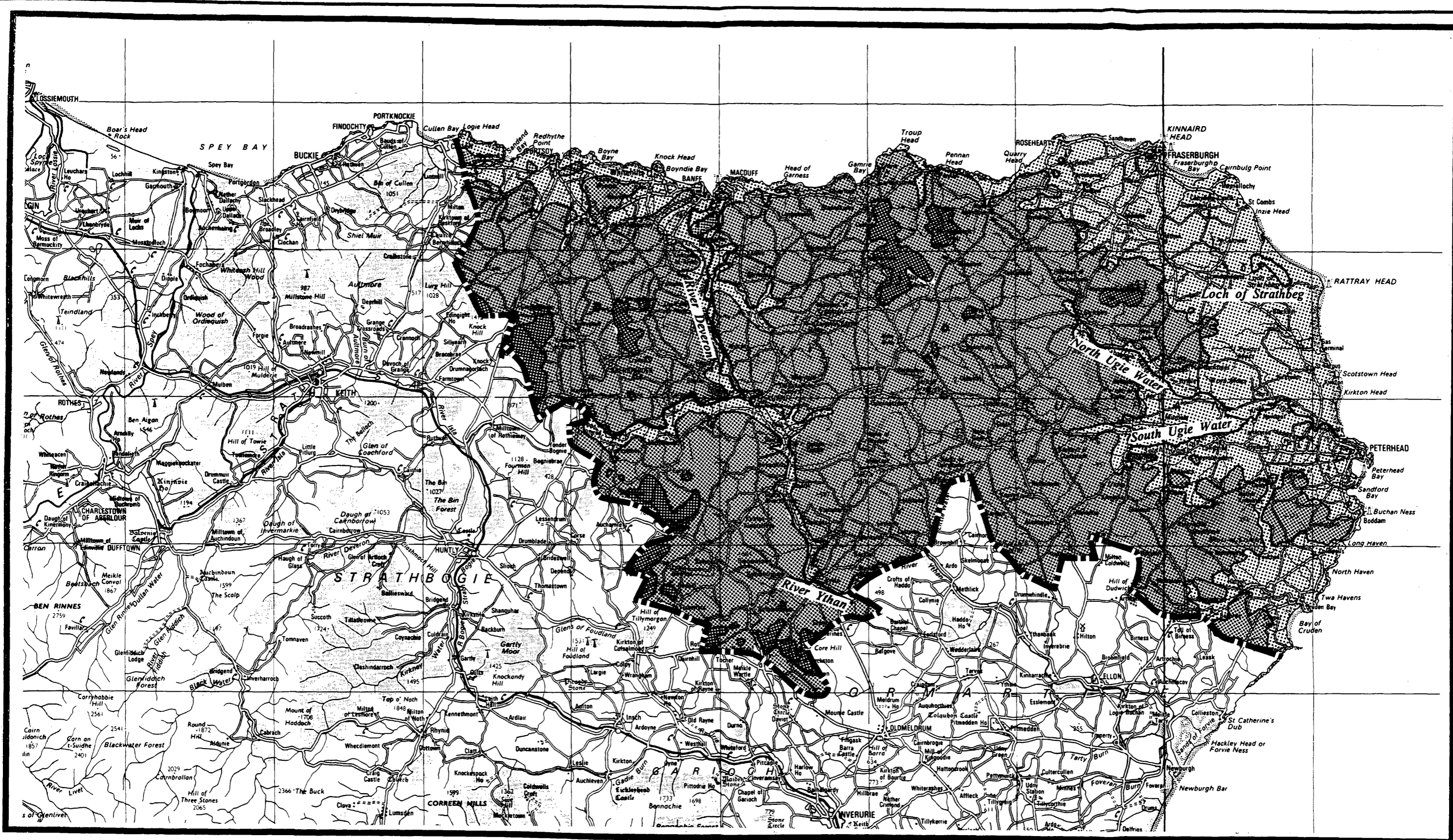


FIGURE 4
TOPOGRAPHY
AND DRAINAGE

The Mediaeval Period

- 2.20 In the mediaeval and post-mediaeval period, the development of Banff & Buchan was in many ways similar to that of the rest of northern Scotland. Sherifdoms were established in 1136, based at Aberdeen and Banff, both settlements being granted burgh status in the same century. Banff became a town, port and legal centre of renown, and a trading partner in the Hanseatic League. Agriculture at this time, in common with the rest of Scotland, would have been run on an infield/outfield system. Nucleated settlements, known as "fermtouns" were scattered across the landscape, each surrounded by an almost permanently cultivated "infield". This, together with the less intensively farmed "outfield" which lay beyond, produced a limited range of crops such as oats. Grazing was provided on common ground and on those parts of the outfield under fallow. In places, for example the Ythan valley, the old cultivation ridges which were formed to facilitate drainage, rather like modern forestry ploughing, can still be seen.
- 2.21 The troubled times of mediaeval Scottish domestic politics largely passed by Banff & Buchan, which lay out of the way of most military routes to Moray and the north from Aberdeen. A significant exception to this rule was the "herschip" or devastation of Buchan, which was carried out by Robert the Bruce after he defeated the Comyn Earl of Buchan, who was also an aspirant to the Scottish throne. Few major buildings survive from these times. A group of distinctive late sixteenth century buildings still survives in the District, however, for example Fordyce and Towie-Barclay castles. On a larger scale, Fraserburgh was founded in 1546, and a short-lived university was founded there in 1592. The town of Peterhead developed in the mid-seventeenth century as a spa town fashionable with Grampian iairds.

The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

- 2.22 General Roy's map, which was produced in the wake of the 1745 Rebellion and covered all of Scotland, suggests that farming townships, and therefore nucleated settlements, were a characteristic of the area. It was around this time that significant changes in the landscape began to occur because of the instigation of agricultural improvements, a process which continued into the nineteenth century. Crop rotation, tree planting and enclosure were the agents of change. Road dykes, walls, and farmsteads were introduced, as were new roads, dovecotes, ice houses, bridges and other features. Marshes were drained, field sizes were increased, and the land was cleared of stones, with the boulders subsequently being used as field boundaries or piled into the corners of fields in mounds known as consumption dykes. A map of the area produced in 1828 (Thompson) shows that by this time most farming townships had been broken up and replaced by single farms amongst the newly enclosed fields.
- 2.23 Also introduced during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was the planned village, a particular feature of the Banff & Buchan area. Planned villages were designed and laid out as a whole, and they were probably built to house some of the people moved from the land during a period of clearances and agricultural improvement. Harbours and fishing villages were constructed at Pennan, Gardenstown, Whitehills, Macduff and Buchanhaven. Inland, the villages of Strichen, Fetterangus, New Byth and Cuminstown are examples of

settlements newly constructed in this period which have a significant impact on the landscape of today.

- 2.24 Communications were also improved at this time. A canal was started from Pitfour to the sea, but it was never finished. Turnpike roads were built from 1798 onwards. The wealth generated by all these improving activities enabled mansions to be either built anew as at Cairness, or around existing castles as at Slains. The gardens and policies of these grand houses introduced a new element to the rural landscape, for example at Duff House and Pitfour.
- 2.25 Agriculture and fishing provided the dominant sources of income for the area, and this had an impact upon the landscape. Some villages, such as Turriff, grew into towns acting as market and service centres for the agricultural hinterland. The railways came, facilitating communications and the export of produce. Maud, conveniently located at a railway junction, grew from a hamlet to become the largest livestock market in the region. The fishing villages on the coast were much more self-contained, huddled into restricted gaps in the cliffs. Pennan is the best-known example of these settlements; Gardenstown has recently expanded uphill to spill out onto the ground above the cliffs. The town of Peterhead had become a thriving fishing port by the end of the seventeenth century, and between the 1780's and 1820's it was the main whaling station in Britain.

The Twentieth Century

- 2.26 Nowadays, agriculture is the main land-use of the District, with both arable and pasture being important. European Community subsidies now largely determine the crops which are grown. Set aside has had a high level of take-up in the north-east. Post-and-wire fencing forms the most common field boundary, stone dykes being more limited in extent. Forestry is localised, with relatively few large plantations in Banff & Buchan. Fishing has developed into a major industry in the area.
- 2.27 Quarrying the mineral resources of the area, for its hard slates, and sands and gravels, has been carried out on a small, scattered scale for many years. The quarries are largely concentrated in the east of the District. In the late twentieth century, the impact of oil and gas infrastructure has become significant in Banff & Buchan. The St. Fergus Gas Terminal dominates the coastal area between Peterhead and Rattray Head. Other new technologies with visual impacts include the masts and dishes of defence warning systems high on Mormond Hill, and civil aviation beacons to the west of Fraserburgh, for example at Windyheads.
- 2.28 Tourism has been present in the area for most of this century, but its impact on the landscape has been localised. At Cruden Bay, following the construction of the railway, a large and luxurious hotel was built with the intention of rivalling Gleneagles. The venture eventually failed, and the building was demolished. On the north coast, Macduff enjoyed some success as a resort (2) and Peterhead was frequented as a spa town; tourism here was fuelled by the presence of a railway service. Shooting on the moors, and fishing in the rivers and on the coast also attracted visitors to the area. Increasing car ownership and the loss of the railways led to a wider spread of tourist destinations, but the traditional fishing villages and the castles of Banff and Buchan remain popular attractions.

3.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

3.1 Bounded by the inland hill-ridges and peaks of Moray and Gordon on its southern and western boundaries, and adjoining the vast expanses of the North Sea to the north and east, the District of Banff & Buchan is a gently undulating lowland plain, intensively cultivated and infrequently wooded. The character of this landscape has been assessed in two stages: firstly, a desk-top study indicated possible physical differences; field-survey work then confirmed or altered these areas in visual terms. This has resulted in the identification of four very broadly similar types of landscape within the District:

- the coastal landscape;
- the coastal-influenced agricultural land;
- the inland, agricultural heartland;
- the river valleys.

Within these broad landscape types occur areas with subtly distinct and different characters, defined by landform and landcover. These landscape types and character areas are described below, and illustrated in plan in Figure 5, and by sketches in Figure 6.

The Coast

3.2 The immediate coastal landscape contains some of the most striking scenery in all of Banff & Buchan. The huge expanses of golden sand and billowing dunes which lie between Fraserburgh and Peterhead form a dramatic contrast to the coastline elsewhere, where high headlands give way to sheer cliffs, pitted by waves and shattering into jagged reefs.

Area 1 : Cliffs of the North and South-East Coasts

3.3 Along the entirety of the northern shoreline of Banff & Buchan, and on the eastern coast south of Peterhead, the coastal strip is dominated by cliff-edged headlands, frequently fissured and bitten into by narrow inlets and, more rarely, hugging sheltered sandy bays such as those at Cruden and Sandend. South of Peterhead, the sea has gnawed the pink granite into a ragged coastline of highly sculpted and fractured cliffs, broken and treacherous reefs, and dramatic features such as the Bullers of Buchan blowhole. Although of a similar height and precipitousness to those on the east shore, the cliffs of the northern coastline are relatively cohesive and form a more defined edge to the headlands, culminating in the 110 metre sheer drop from Troup Head to the sea. Despite the physical restrictions of this narrow rocky coastline, the overall impression is of an open, large-scale landscape, the wide expanses of sea and sky merging into one at the uninterrupted horizon line.

3.4 Perhaps surprisingly for such an exposed coast, even the most vertical cliff-faces are rarely free from vegetation. Short creeping grasses and occasional wind-pruned gorse bushes clamber down the faces, colonising every available sheltered area.

- 3.5 The wealth of the seas has, through the centuries, encouraged frequent settlement along this rocky coastline. These settlements vary in size from prosperous trading and fishing ports such as Peterhead and Fraserburgh, to the tiny fishing villages of Crovie and Pennan, which huddle at the base of the cliffs. Ruined castles and mansion houses, such as those at Slains, Pitsligo, and Dundarg, stud the grassy headlands.

Area 2 : Dunes and Beaches from Fraserburgh to Peterhead

- 3.6 Running in an almost constant stretch from Fraserburgh to Peterhead lies a dramatically different coastline: one of the longest stretches of beach in Europe, where huge sweeps of deserted sand are backed by rolling dunes. The ephemeral, wind-sculpted seaward dunes merge with ever-shifting sands to the east and the comparative solidity of the landward dunes to the west, forming a wider, gentler transition between land and sea than the cliffs elsewhere along the coast. Views from the adjoining low coastal plains out to sea are almost uninterrupted. The Loch of Strathbeg, which is enclosed by the dune system, lies north of Rattray Head.
- 3.7 Vegetation is limited to the spreading, knitted mats of coastal grassland and marram which hold together the shifting sands of the dunes and are themselves swept and combed by the wind, thus emphasising the strong sense of movement created by sand, waves and skies.
- 3.8 This unstable landscape is almost devoid of settlement, although one prominent man-made feature is that of the Ron lighthouse, which marks the jagged teeth of reefs submerged off Rattray Head. The flat coast also accommodates St. Fergus Gas Terminal, the high chimneys of which dominate the dune landscape and can be viewed from miles inland. Although an unexpected and startling development it is, like the lighthouse, a dramatic focal point in this smooth, flat landscape.

The Coastal Farmland

- 3.9 Although the apron of land which sweeps around the northern and eastern seaboard is formed from a variety of strikingly different landscapes, a common element in determining their landscape character has been the influence of the proximity of the sea. Defined by high, cliff-edged headlands and lower, dune-fringed coastal plains, these areas are cultivated wherever possible up to the outermost boundaries of the land, despite being exposed and windblown. Trees do manage to grow near the coast, although they are frequently contorted by the salt-laden winds. Even when views to the sea are not possible, one is always aware of its presence nearby.

Area 3 : Western Coastal Farmland

- 3.10 Lying south of Portsoy is a large-scale landscape of coastal farmland. Out of the vast, shallow basins, which form a broadly sweeping plain, infrequent and rounded hills such as Durn Hill and the Hill of Culburnie rise from the low ground to form gentle landmarks in this rolling terrain. These hills are of sufficient distance apart to allow glimpses of the sea, which never seems far away.

- 3.11 Many of the boggy parts of the plains have been planted with quite large-scale coniferous forestry. The blocky outlines are generally absorbed by the strong grid of the surrounding large fields. Sweeps of coniferous planting on hillsides are, however, more prominent as their harsh outlines fail to follow the rolling landform. Deciduous trees are infrequent, and tend to be associated with farmsteads and villages. Large fields of arable land occasionally give way to pasture. Scattered hedges, consisting of sparse trees and clumps of gorse, and post-and-wire fences tend to predominate as boundaries. Despite the proximity of this area to the sea, and the frequent views of it from the hillsides, the substantial amount of forestry lessens the coastal influence.
- 3.12 Farmsteads are scattered throughout the plains but are quite frequent. The only villages of note are the charming eighteenth century village of Fordyce, with a mediaeval church and castle, and the long, single-street farming village of Cornhill, distinguished by its heavily pollarded roadside trees.

Area 4 : Coastal Farmland East of Macduff

- 3.13 South of the high cliffs which edge the coast between Macduff and Gardenstown lies a small area of rounded hills emerging from the coastal plain. This open landscape has little change in height or definition until it begins to merge with higher ground at its landward boundaries.
- 3.14 The area is bleak and windswept, with an almost complete absence of woodland: broad-leaved and coniferous trees only rarely occur in small clumps near farmsteads, or as an occasional shelterbelt or hedge-line. The predominant means of enclosure of the large fields is by fencing, or by broken lines of gorse hedging.
- 3.15 There are no villages in this exposed landscape, and only a few scattered farmsteads are dotted along the narrow tracks which lead off the main roads. The dispersed nature of settlements, and the associated sparse tree planting and faintly defined field boundaries, combine to create a subtle landscape, the topography of which lacks strong definition or emphasis.

Area 5 : Sandstone Ridges and Valleys South of Troup

- 3.16 The striking form of the landscape south of the thrusting promontory of Troup Head results from the large outcrop of Old Red Sandstone which protrudes north-eastwards to the coast. It is a distinctively moulded landform of open hilltops and enclosed valleys. Higher and hillier than the surrounding plains, this dramatic saddle of land has been scoured by glacial meltwater to produce an area of ridges, long hills and incised broad valleys, over-sized for their watercourses, the most renowned of these being the ravine of the Tore of Troup.
- 3.17 Large areas of woodland are confined to the Tore of Troup - the valley sides of which are clothed with deciduous trees and shrubs, including gorse and broom - and a few blocks of coniferous planting, the most prominent of which lies below the high point of Windyheads Hill. Elsewhere, mixed tree groups frequently occur around farmsteads. Where topography allows, the area is well-farmed, although moorland occurs on the steeper slopes and, more extensively, on the hilltops near New Aberdour.

- 3.18 Farmsteads dot the valley slopes infrequently. The only village is New Aberdour, which consists of parallel streets of simple stone houses sloping downhill to the south.

Area 6 : North-Eastern Coastal Farmland

- 3.19 Stretching down from the coast to the village of New Pitsligo and the north-western slopes of Mormond Hill this open, high plateau is of uniformly and gently undulating ground. This area forms a transition in height and landform between the dramatic broken sandstone ridges to the west, and the flatter, lower, eastern coastal plain.
- 3.20 The large, open fields of more low-lying agricultural land nearer the coast give way to a more diverse landcover on the slightly higher ground inland. In areas of moss and moorland, agricultural use of the land has been restricted by the poorer quality of the soil. In these parts, the remaining expanses of moorland combine with small blocks of coniferous woodland, infrequent broad-leaved tree planting, and cultivated fields of crops and rough pasture, to form a more fragmented landscape of varying textures. The open nature of the area is emphasised by the subtle delineation of fences, scrubby gorse boundaries and an occasional overgrown stone dyke.
- 3.21 Widely scattered farmsteads are strung out along the minor roads which criss-cross the land and are often situated on small hillocks within the areas of moss and poorly drained land. The hamlets of Mid Ardlaw and Memsie are the only minor settlements in the area, some derelict and obviously abandoned farmsteads are also evident. Subdued paint colours tend to be used on the woodwork of buildings. The moorland character of the landscape is also evident in the naming of farmsteads such as Heath Hill, Moss-side and Cranbog.

Area 7 : Eastern Coastal Agricultural Plain

- 3.22 This low coastal plain is composed of a broad sweep of very gently undulating land bordering the eastern coast of Banff & Buchan. Generally open and windswept, almost constant views of the sea is a dominant feature of travel through this huge area.
- 3.23 The predominance of agriculture along this coastal stretch occasionally gives way to local variations such as at St. Fergus Moss, Rora Moss and the Moss of Cruden, where boggy land and coniferous plantations are interspersed. Medium-sized blocks of coniferous trees are scattered elsewhere throughout the area, which is in general quite sparsely wooded. Broad-leaved trees are restricted to occasional shelterbelts and groups around farmsteads, or as more substantial fringes on the outskirts of villages such as Hatton, which lies alongside the wooded valley of the Water of Cruden. The large and open fields are mostly bounded by post-and-wire fencing, with dilapidated and overgrown stone walls becoming more prominent in the north of this area than in other parts of Banff & Buchan.
- 3.24 The general uniformity of the topography has allowed a random network of farmsteads to become scattered across the landscape. Villages such as Hatton, Longside and New Leeds are a legacy from the nineteenth century.

The Agricultural Heartland

- 3.25 The interior of Banff & Buchan consists of a variety of diverse landscapes, ranging from higher and hillier land to the west, through open agricultural plains which typify the farmland of the District, to the wooded estates which line the South Ugie Water. Although visually dissimilar these areas are all landbound and their physical associations are with the interior rather than the coast.

Area 8: Knock Hill and Aberchirder

- 3.26 This area of low rolling hills and long ridges merges at the western boundary of Banff & Buchan into the foothills of Moray District, and is dominated by Knock Hill, the summit of which lies on the District boundary. Views from within the lower valleys are enclosed by the smoothly undulating landform. This part of the District has a greater physical resemblance to the more distinctively hilly landscape of Moray than the flatter agricultural plains which typify much of Banff & Buchan.
- 3.27 Curving fringes of shelterbelts and clumps of mature deciduous trees, including beech and sycamore, emphasise the distinctive topography of this area and frame settlements. Small blocks of coniferous planting have also been introduced more recently. Fields tend to be large, and are divided by post-and-wire fencing or hedges of gorse.
- 3.28 The main village in the area is Aberchirder. Built in 1764, the layout of this planned settlement is somewhat influenced by the rolling hillside which it occupies. Farmsteads elsewhere are scattered and infrequent.

Area 9 : Upland Ridges South of the Deveron

- 3.29 On either side of the river valleys of the Deveron, Ythan and their tributaries lie the convex slopes of hill-ridges. The broad hill-tops of these ridges are open and similar in height throughout this area, divided by the numerous yet insignificant streams which feed the neighbouring rivers. This part of Banff & Buchan also has a strong physical link with the hills of Moray District to the west.
- 3.30 Cultivation has been carried out up to the water's edge, and the establishment of marginal vegetation is not a characteristic of these minor water bodies. Tree-cover is sparse in this well-cultivated agricultural landscape, and the landform is rarely emphasised by trees, although scattered beech and other deciduous species occasionally fringe the skyline or cluster around farm buildings.
- 3.31 The tracks along the shallow valleys lead to scattered and infrequent farmsteads which nestle against hill-slopes or in dips in the valleys. There are, however, no settlements of any size in this area.

Area 10 : Agricultural Heartland

- 3.32 This large area typifies the characteristic agricultural heartland of Banff & Buchan. The gently rolling landform allows open views of the surrounding landscape, and on clear days the movement of clouds overhead forms patterns of light and shade across the broad plains.

- 3.33 The frequent scattering of broad-leaved trees in shelterbelts along hill-ridges, around farms and, more occasionally, in small coniferous blocks, combine to enliven the landscape and prevent any feeling of bleakness in this vast agricultural plain. Field boundaries vary, including fence-lines, beech and thorn hedges to the south and east, and the occasional stone walls and consumption dykes to the north near Strichen.
- 3.34 Farmsteads are frequent in this relatively well-settled landscape, as are small hamlets such as New Byth. Larger villages include Strichen, a fine example of a planned village, set in the sheltered North Ugie valley; New Deer, set on a ridge overlooking rolling farmland; and Cuminestown, the plan of which resembles the letter Z.

Area 11 : Wooded Estates Around Old Deer

- 3.35 The concentration of remaining estates which cluster in this pocket of land overlooking the coastal plain to the east give this area a very distinctive character. These estates are spread along gently rolling hills lying on either side of the South Ugie Water which, as it is little more than a stream at this point, is visually insignificant. Restricted views are channelled along the narrow twisting roads which follow the landform.
- 3.36 The comparative dominance of woodland, which is unusual in the District, adds to the enclosed, sheltered character and undulating landform of this area. Coniferous and deciduous planting is generally well-mixed and sensitively laid out, occurring along ridge lines, in valley bottoms and on hill-slopes. Hedgerows are a dominant and highly distinctive type of field boundary in this area; although beech is most common, some are of mixed hawthorn and beech. Many of these hedges are further emphasised by avenue planting of mature beech trees.
- 3.37 This is a well-settled area, with a concentration of planned villages such as Stuartfield, Mintlaw and Fetterangus, numerous farmsteads and prosperous manses and farmhouses. The old estates of Aden and Pitfour, and the ancient Abbey of Old Deer, add to the sense of a long history of settlement and prosperity (1).

The River Valleys

- 3.38 The major river valleys within Banff & Buchan tend to be well-settled, wooded and visually diverse areas. Although in some ways, this area is similar in character to the wooded estates around Old Deer, it differs as a result of the visual dominance of the Deveron and upper Ythan rivers.

Area 12 : Deveron and Upper Ythan Valleys

- 3.39 Incised through the plain of Banff & Buchan, the Deveron and upper Ythan rivers and their adjoining major tributaries meander through predominantly shallow valleys, bounded by broad and rolling hill ridges to either side. Occasionally these valley sides become steeper as the River Deveron flows northwards to the sea.

- 3.40 The river valley slopes are well vegetated. The layout of the mixed deciduous and coniferous trees is generally responsive to the landform and provides a major contribution to the character of these valleys. Fences, and hedges of beech and thorn, divide the agricultural land which almost invariably leads up to the river's edge. There are few significant areas of marginal vegetation along the water courses, although woodland approaches the riverbanks in more inaccessible areas, such as at the Bridge of Alvah, and at Fyvie and Gight.
- 3.41 The hill ridges overlooking the valley bottoms are well settled by frequent farmsteads. Settlements include villages such as Fyvie, which lines a bank above the Ythan, and the large and prosperous market town of Turriff. Built of red sandstone, it occupies a bluff enclosed by the burns of Putachie, Knockie and Turriff, above the Deveron river. Castles and mansion houses, such as Delgatie, Fyvie, Forglen and Duff House, contribute to the architectural diversity of this area.

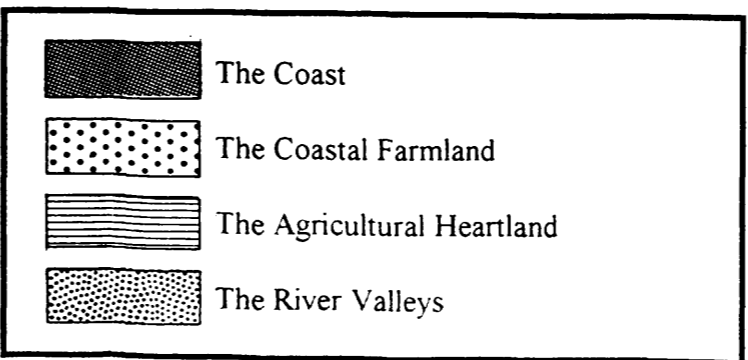
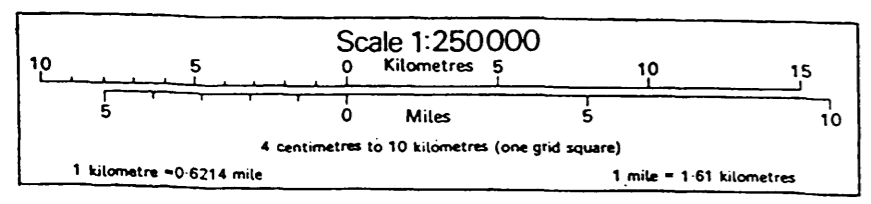
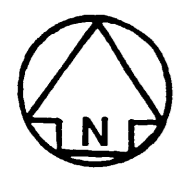
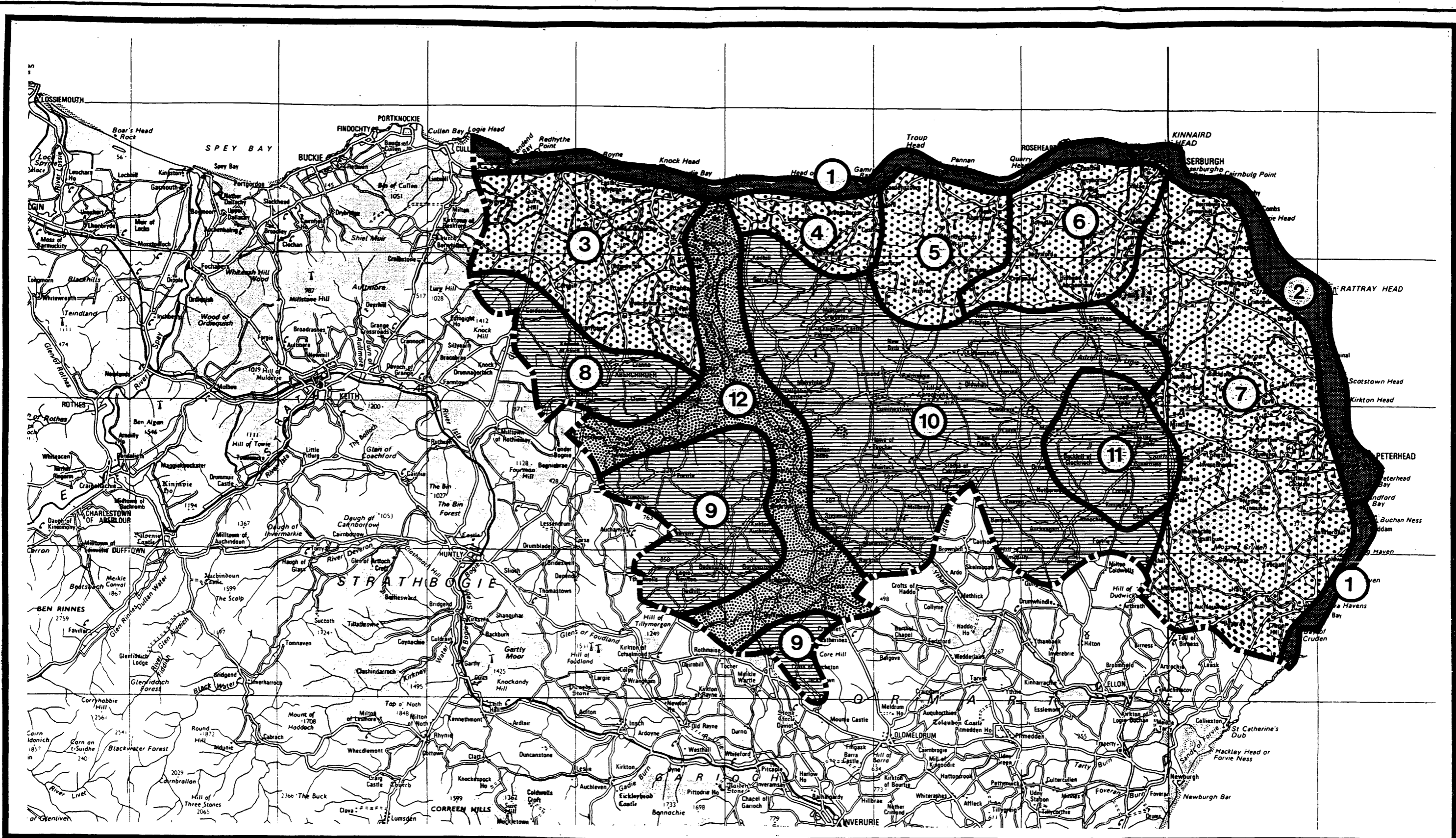
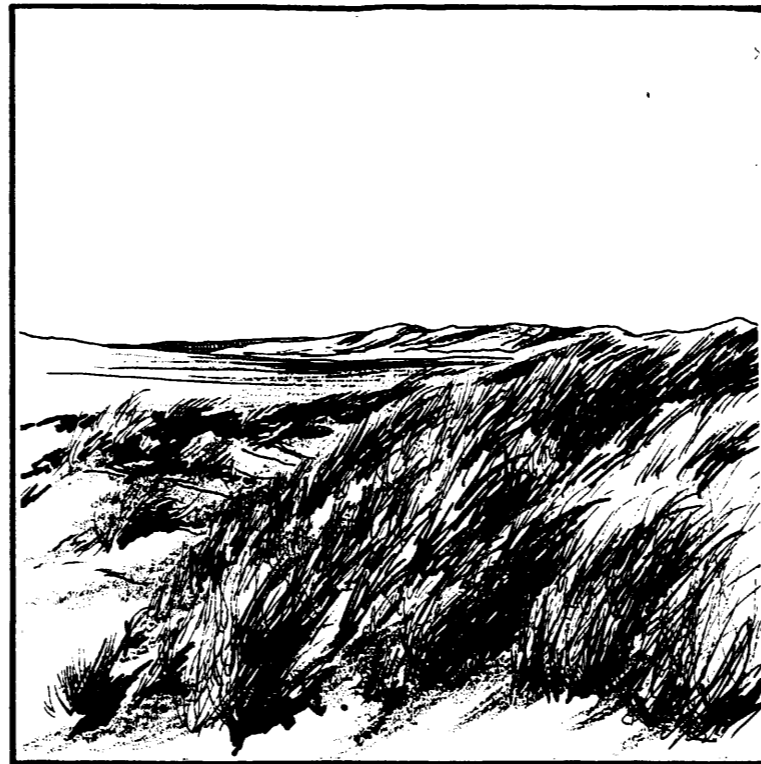


FIGURE 5
LANDSCAPE
CHARACTER AREAS



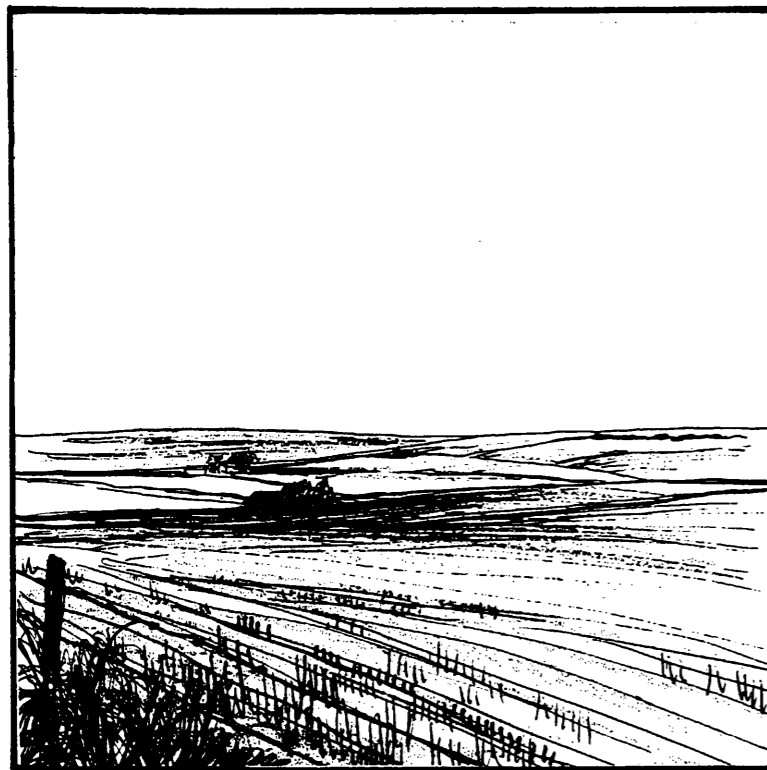
Area 1 : Cliffs of the North and South-East Coasts



Area 2 : Dunes and Beaches from Fraserburgh to Peterhead



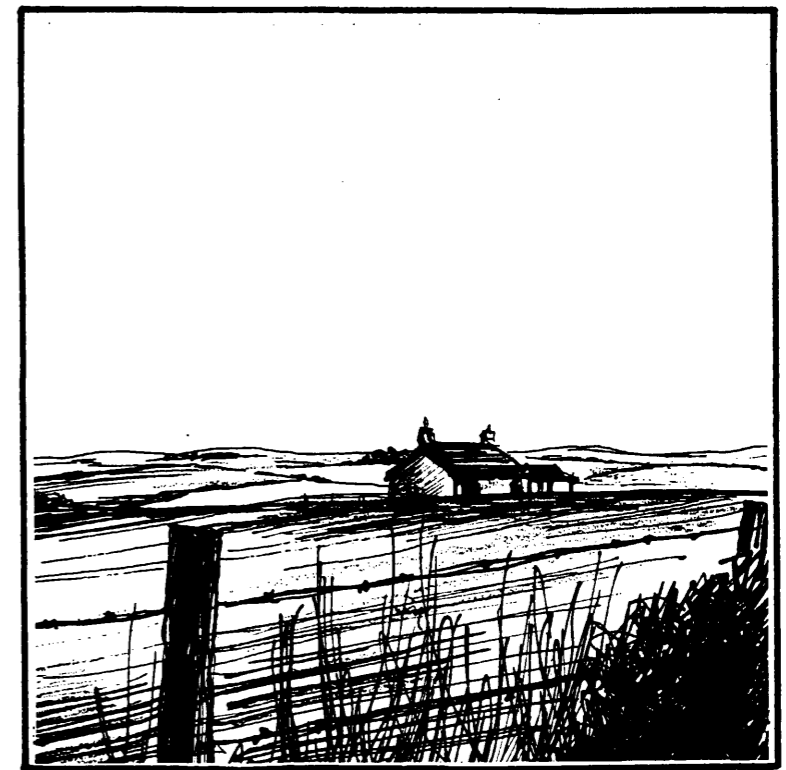
Area 3 : Western Coastal Farmland



Area 4 : Coastal Farmland East of Macduff



Area 5 : Sandstone Ridges and Valleys South of Troup



Area 6 : North-Eastern Coastal Farmland

**FIGURE 6A
CHARACTER SKETCHES**



Area 7 : Eastern Coastal Agricultural Plain



Area 8 : Knock Hill and Aberchirder



Area 9 : Upland Ridges South of the Deveron



Area 10: Agricultural Heartland



Area 11: Wooded Areas Around Old Deer



Area 12: Deveron and Upper Ythan Valleys

FIGURE 6B
CHARACTER SKETCHES

4.0 LANDSCAPE FEATURES

4.1 Having reviewed the development of the Banff & Buchan landscape, and the overall variations in landscape character which occur within the District, this chapter aims to highlight those features that are most distinctive and contribute most to the landscape of Banff & Buchan. Both natural and man-made features affect the visual character of the District. However, the long history of cultivation has had a profound effect, resulting in a landscape in which the influence of nature is perhaps less obvious than that of man. Figure 7 illustrates, through photographs, examples of natural and man-made landscape features, and Figure 8 shows the location of selected features which have merited designation.

Natural Features

4.2 The predominance of agriculture in Banff & Buchan has meant that, compared with many other parts of Scotland, only a very small area of natural and semi-natural habitats remains in the District. These areas are found mainly on land which has been difficult to cultivate, for example cliff edges, steep river valleys and areas of bog. The most important natural habitats within Banff & Buchan are:

- cliffs, dunes and beaches;
- freshwater;
- bog and moorland;
- woodland.

4.3 Only 8% of the land-cover falls into these categories, a figure comparable with urban areas such as Aberdeen (1). Although this figure implies a low level of nature conservation interest overall, it also highlights the relative ecological importance, in a District context, of the surviving habitats and features. Thus, where natural and semi-natural habitats do occur, such as wooded river valleys or bleak expanses of moorland, they assume a greater visual prominence due to their relative scarcity throughout the farmland of Banff & Buchan.

4.4 Within the District there are a number of sites of acknowledged national and international significance. These include statutory sites of nature conservation importance such as Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Ramsar Sites and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). A high proportion of the SSSIs have been designated for their geological rather than their nature conservation interest. A number of sites are of regional importance, resulting in the identification of 39% of the area of remaining semi-natural habitats as Sites of Interest to Natural Science (SINS) by Grampian Regional Council.

Cliffs, Dunes and Beaches

4.5 Banff & Buchan has the highest proportion of semi-natural coastal habitat within Grampian Region, a coastline which varies dramatically between areas of both hard and soft shoreline. Most of the soft coastline lies to the east, between

Fraserburgh and Peterhead, and consists mainly of dunes, although saltmarsh and shingle are also to be found. The main areas of hard coastline are found along the north shore of the District, with a shorter stretch along the east coast running southwards from Peterhead. The importance of the coastline for nature conservation is apparent from the fact that 68% of the identified semi-natural and natural coastal habitats have been classified as SINS (1).

- 4.6 The towering headlands and plunging cliffs which are part of the coastal landscape form the most dramatic scenery in the District, and include features such as the reefs known as the Scaurs of Cruden, and the "monstrous cauldron" of the Bullers of Buchan blowhole. Many of the sheer cliff faces which edge the coast are designated as SSSIs, and are important for both their nature conservation and geological interest, for example, the Bullers of Buchan, and Gamrie and Pennan Coast SSSIs.
- 4.7 These cliffs support large numbers of coastal breeding birds, and along some parts of the rocky coastline internationally important colonies are found. The Bullers of Buchan SSSI is particularly remarkable for colonies of cliff-nesting seabirds which include kittiwakes, guillemots, razorbills, fulmars, shags and puffins. The sight, sound and smell of these seabirds, as they wheel and screech overhead, or nest in crevices in the rock faces, contribute to the experience of this coastal landscape.
- 4.8 Cliff-edge vegetation is also important. In spring, the cropped grassland along the headlands is studded with flecks of colour from low-growing coastal plants, a number of which are unusual within the north-east. The Gamrie and Pennan coast SSSI has a varied flora, including some species which are rare in eastern Scotland, such as spring squill (*Scilla verna*), and oysterplant (*Mertensia maritima*) (2). Areas of heath, acid peatland and brackish flushes are found at the Bullers of Buchan, all communities which are rare on the coast of north-east Scotland (2).
- 4.9 The extensive stretches of golden beaches, wind-sculpted dunes and deserted marshes form a striking contrast to the rocky coastline elsewhere, increasing the diversity of the range of plant and animal species to be found. The Cullen to Stake Ness coast SSSI, for example, contains a number of areas which have a range of fresh, brackish and salt marshes. These are among the habitats on this coast which give sanctuary to over-wintering wildfowl and waders.
- 4.10 The distribution of plant species along this part of the coast is affected by both the rock type from which the sand has been derived, and by grazing pressure. Many of the dune systems are base-rich and are characterised by the presence of calcium-loving plants, such as the kidney vetch (*Anthyllis vulneraria*), which can be found at Cruden Bay (3). In spring and summer, the flowering plants of the dunes and beaches add visual interest to the landscape at a detailed level.

Freshwater

- 4.11 There are few areas of freshwater within Banff & Buchan; only one large body of standing water, and three main rivers. Those areas which are present have assumed comparatively greater importance for nature conservation interest than would be the case elsewhere. Where the rivers support marginal vegetation, they may also form valuable landscape features.

4.12 The three main rivers of the area are the Deveron, Ugie, and Ythan. The rivers often act as a focal point in the landscape, especially in the western half of the District, and provide a variety of habitats for plants and animals. The Ythan and Ugie are typical lowland rivers, with broad valleys used for agriculture. They tend to have meandering and slow flowing sections with muddy substrates, although the Ythan does have some sections with faster flows and stony substrates. Both of these rivers are thought to be experiencing increased levels of nutrient and silt loading which could effect changes in their character. Sections of the Ythan have been canalised, for example around Fyvie, thus reducing the area of fringing vegetation and affecting the quality of habitat available for fish and invertebrates. The Ythan has a reputation for its population of sea trout, but this has declined in recent years. By contrast, the Deveron has a greater proportion of upland within its catchment and is more uniformly fast-flowing. The river has an important salmon fishery and is home to otters.

4.13 The main body of standing water in Banff & Buchan is the Loch of Strathbeg, which is managed as a nature reserve by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). It is the largest water body in the north-east lowlands, the largest dune lake in Britain, and a valuable landscape element within the coastal dune landscape character area.

4.14 The conservation value of this site is well documented. Its importance for a number of wildfowl species such as wigeon and goldeneye, and also for passage and wintering wildfowl, is recognised by the recent designation of the Loch as a SPA and Ramsar Site. There are also sporting interests associated with the Loch, principally wildfowling, although there is also some pheasant shooting in the surrounds. Areas of wetland associated with the site are also floristically rich, and the aquatic flora of the site is important. However, the site is known to be suffering from nutrient enrichment. Recent studies suggest that the majority of the nutrient enrichment comes from agricultural sources, although the geese which use the Loch also contribute significantly (4).

Bog and Moorland

4.15 There are some notable peatland sites within Banff & Buchan, and parts of the District contain some locally important areas of lowland raised bog. The significance of this resource is not currently recognised in the SSSI designations, although it is likely that further peatland sites will be designated as SSSIs in future. The Local Plan notes the nature conservation interest of raised peat bogs and states that they will be protected from further commercial development (5). In certain character areas, such as the coastal farmland areas, raised bog contributes to the open and rather bleak appearance of the landscape. The gradual improvement of many of these boggy areas has occasionally led to the discovery of archaeological remains.

4.16 The peatland resources of Banff & Buchan have traditionally been exploited. However, over time the emphasis has shifted from traditional peat cutting by hand to provide fuel, to mechanical extraction on a commercial scale to provide peat for both fuel and the horticultural industry. Indeed some of the best remaining areas of lowland raised bog in the area are covered by existing planning permission for extraction.

4.17 Peatland SSSIs include the Moss of Crombie, which is one of the few remaining areas of blanket bog in Banff & Buchan, and the location for a

number of regionally rare peatland plants such as greater sundew (*Drosera anglica*) (2) and Reidside Moss, which is an area of valley bog and central raised bog, important for containing plant species which are characteristic of eastern bogs, (such as a variety of lichens) and others characteristic of western bogs, (such as bog asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*)) (2). Rora Moss was designated as a SSSI in April 1995. Other notable peatland sites which have been identified include St. Fergus Moss and Lochlundie Moss. Although not receiving statutory protection as SSSIs, all of these sites are identified by the Regional Council as SINS, and collectively constitute a significant peatland resource within the District.

- 4.18 Moorland was probably an important habitat and landscape feature, especially in the west and south of Banff & Buchan, until the first half of this century. Today there is little remaining heather moorland and the few areas that do still exist tend to occur where cultivation has been difficult.
- 4.19 Although the landscape of Banff & Buchan has been intensively managed, often to the detriment of natural habitats, in certain areas this has had a positive contribution to nature conservation interest. For example, near New Aberdour an area of moorland has been managed for shooting, creating a mosaic habitat of varying heights of heather which form a patchwork of different textures.

Woodland

- 4.20 Although the present-day landscape of Banff & Buchan is far from being treeless, there are no substantial amounts of woodland in the area. A Forestry Commission census found that only 6.7% of the land area of Banff & Buchan was wooded, in comparison with a national average of 13% for other Districts (6). Most of the woodland of highest nature conservation interest is confined to the relatively steep sides of river valleys where it has been difficult to clear the land.
- 4.21 An inventory of ancient, long-established and semi-natural woodland in the area (6) has established that there are 168 hectares of ancient woodland and 257 hectares of long-established woodland, of which 72% is semi-natural. This amounts to 0.2% of the land surface of Banff & Buchan. Of the remaining woodland, much has been modified by, for example, the introduction of exotic species as part of the landscape schemes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and, more recently, by the planting of conifers.
- 4.22 The ancient woodlands of Gight represent some of the least disturbed native woodland in the Grampian lowlands. Many of the plant species found in the wood are those of undisturbed, long-established woodlands, and include a number of species which are scarce in north-east Scotland, such as three-nerved sandwort (*Moehringia trinerva*) (2). The Gight woodlands contain a variety of tree species including ash, oak, birch and cherry. The SSSI schedule for this site comments that this type of woodland was formerly more widespread in river valleys of the region. Other fragments remain today at the Tore of Troup. However, it has been noted that areas of woodland at Troup House have been "greatly modified" by the introduction of new species (6).
- 4.23 Comparatively more recent plantings are often associated with the estates, and include avenues, policies, and shelterbelts. The habitat survey of Grampian (GRC) identified mixed broad-leaved as the most common type of woodland in



Cliffs near Pennan



Dunes at Rattray Head



Farmland along the Deveron



Moorland on Windyheads Hill



Woodland near the Bridge of Alvah



Loch of Strathbeg

FIGURE 7A
LANDSCAPE FEATURES

the Banff & Buchan District. The most commonly planted broad-leaved tree in the region is beech, followed by birch (1).

Man-Made Features

4.24 Since the forests of the post-glacial era that extended across Banff & Buchan were removed to make way for early settlements and agriculture, the use of the landscape has little changed. Instead, it is the intensity of this use that has altered, and resulted in the landscape of today. Although Banff & Buchan has been cultivated since its earliest habitation, it was "the agricultural improvements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" which "wrought such changes on the landscape of Buchan", so that today there is "scarcely a single man-made feature - road dyke, farmhouse, field, even whole towns and villages - that is older than the beginning of last century" (7). The most distinctive man-made elements which form visually significant features in the landscape are:

- archaeological remains;
- chateaux, castles and palaces;
- estate policies;
- traditional farmed countryside;
- planned villages;
- coastal settlements;
- industry.

Archaeological Remains

4.25 Although a number of archaeological remains do survive in today's landscape, these are presumed to be the last vestiges of a more extensive distribution, swept away by the needs of agriculture over the millennia. Those features which do remain form subtle reminders of past centuries of settlement within Banff & Buchan.

4.26 The earliest remains which have left a visual legacy date from Neolithic times. Evidence of small-scale yet permanent changes to the landscape dating from this period can be found at the flint quarry pits at Den of Boddam, south of Peterhead, where distinctive depressions in the landform can still be seen. However, most remains from the Neolithic period are ceremonial or funerary in nature. Surviving long cairns and barrows of earth or stone can be found forming low distinctive mounds on the skyline, as at Longmanhill near Macduff or on terrace edges, as at Cairn Catto north of Cruden Bay. Frequently, these burial mounds are further emphasised by long shelterbelts of beech trees, often planted in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Recumbent stone circles are a type of megalithic monument unique to the Grampian region, and can be found throughout the District. These "druidical circles" are found on the crests of terraces or hills. The standing stones form a circle whose two tallest members lie to the south-west, flanking a huge, horizontal slab. They are concentrated around the North and South Ugie, and the middle stretches of the Deveron, for example at Loudon Wood, Old Deer. Other burial or ritual monuments from the later Neolithic/early Bronze Age remain as landscape features, such the four-stone setting at North Burreldales, Alvah, or the

glistening white quartzite kerb cairns at Logie Newton, Auchterless. The huge bare stone cairn at Memsie is typical of the Bronze Age cairns of Grampian.

- 4.27 Much of the evidence for prehistoric Bronze Age and Iron Age farming seems to have been destroyed during the more recent agricultural improvements, although some vestigial remains have been recorded through aerial photography. A few sites have survived in ruinous form, for example the unenclosed house platforms near Fordyce, and the promontory forts of Cullykhan near Pennan and Cleaved Head east of Macduff. However, these features do not impinge upon their surroundings to a noticeable degree.
- 4.28 Although archaeologists presume a continuity of settlement in the District by the Picts, evidence in the form of symbol stones (as found elsewhere in the coastal swathe of eastern and northern Scotland) is scant. While this is possibly a result of the difficult farming conditions, it could also be due to the destruction or re-use of the stones. Symbol stones incised with animals do, however, remain in Fyvie and Tyrie kirkyards, indicating that these were once Pictish burial sites. Early Pictish forts have been excavated at Cullykhan (which has been settled since the late Bronze Age) and Dundarg.
- 4.29 Little is known of the origins of Christianity in north-east Scotland. St Drostan's Well, near Aberdour, is reputed to mark the spot where the Pictish saint landed when he brought Christianity to Buchan. Although Celtic monasteries are said to have been founded at Turriff, Old Deer and Dundarg during the seventh and eighth centuries, it was not until the twelfth century that the Church was fully developed in the District. The round-arched ruins of Deer Abbey, a Cistercian foundation established in the thirteenth century along the banks of the South Ugie, are a famed and atmospheric visitor attraction.
- 4.30 Few major mediaeval buildings still survive in Banff & Buchan, apart from those which are now in ruins, or have been incorporated into post-mediaeval structures, such as Fyvie Castle. However, the mediaeval layout which forms the heart of the royal burgh of Banff is still intact, and is perhaps the most lasting legacy from this period. One burgh which has now all but vanished under sand is at Rattray, north of Peterhead, after the inlet to the sea on which it stood silted up following a great sandstorm in 1720.

Chateaux, Castles and Palaces

- 4.31 Prior to the agricultural improvements which were initiated in the eighteenth century, the landscape of the north-east of Scotland would have been dominated by the residences of the ruling classes. A variety of sixteenth and seventeenth century buildings can still be found throughout the Banff & Buchan landscape, principally located on coastal headlands, or on the banks of the rivers running through the District. These were built by ancient lairded families such as the Gordons of Gight and Barclays of Tolly (or Towie), as following the Wars of Independence only the Earl of Errol at Slains and the Earls Marischal at Inverurie remained as native aristocrats.
- 4.32 In the sixteenth century a number of distinctive tower-houses, such as those at Towie-Barclay, Craigston, Delgatie, Gight and Carnousie, were built. Mock-fortified rather than truly defensive establishments, they resemble "chateaux" rather than castles in plan, as one enters through a groin-vaulted vestibule and passes through a series of vertically separated processional rooms. Although Gight is in ruins, others which remain are still intact and inhabited, their rubble

walls harled in soft shades of white, pink or cream. Craigston and Towie-Barclay, which are located near Turriff, are further emphasised by the use of locally available red sandstone as dressings.

- 4.33 The construction of a number of courtyard palaces in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries indicates the peace and prosperity of Banff & Buchan at this time. These palaces differed in plan from the tower-houses, exemplifying the Scottish Renaissance tradition of creating a courtyard of principal apartments, which was usually extended from an existing tower. Although Auchmedden, Slains, Philorth and Iverugie are now ruinous, the House of Boyne and Pitsligo are still sufficiently intact to convey an idea of their past importance. Fyvie Castle may be a similar adaptation upon an earlier quadrangular castle of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Estate Policies

- 4.34 The increasing momentum of agricultural improvements in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was accompanied by the extension of existing estate policies, and the creation of a number of new estates and mansions. However, fewer exist in Banff & Buchan than in surrounding parts of Grampian Region.
- 4.35 Extensive tree planting was undertaken around existing buildings such as Fyvie Castle, and new mansion houses such as Cairness House, and Duff House at the mouth of the River Deveron. Artifacts such as the Bridge of Alvah over the Deveron, the Icehouse, the Fishing Temple, and the Mausoleum at Duff House; the Observatory, Temple of Theseus and Chapel at Pitfour; and the magnificent stables at Aden, all survive as testimony to the wealth of families who founded the estates. The greatest concentration of estate policies lies around Aden and Pitfour, which adjoin the South Ugie Water, and to a lesser extent along the Deveron valley. Some of the most diverse and distinctive scenery in Banff & Buchan occurs in these areas. Mature deciduous trees provide a dominant feature, including dense woodland, avenue trees and shelterbelts curving along the hill sides. Beech and hawthorn hedgerows frequently line the narrow winding roads and demarcate field boundaries. Hilltop copses of beech and, sometimes, Scots pine emphasise the land form in many areas.

Traditional Farmed Countryside

- 4.36 Before the 1770's, farm buildings in Banff & Buchan were humble clay and thatch, one-storey houses, with a barn adjoining the farmhouse at one end, and a byre and stable at the other. These farmsteads disappeared during the period of the agricultural improvements, giving way to the one-and-a-half and two-storey houses that are characteristic of the landscape today.
- 4.37 Traditional farmhouses are of a similar vernacular style: stone built, with slate roofs, and arranged with larger steadings in the form of a three-sided or four-sided courtyard for compactness, convenience and shelter. Building stone varies in colour according to the part of the District from which it was quarried - pink granite in the south-east, grey granite in the north-east, and red sandstone west of Cuminestown - and doors and windows are frequently painted in rich colours such as ox-blood red, deep green or blue. The cottages and farm buildings to the east tend to be slightly larger than those to the west, perhaps reflecting the increase in size of the farm unit (8).

- 4.38 These old farmhouses, surrounded by a compact arrangement of farm buildings, tend to nestle in the dips of hill slopes or in the valley bottoms of this undulating landscape. They are visually "tied" to the land by associated clumps of mature trees, frequently deciduous such as beech and sycamore, or more occasionally coniferous species. Although gardens are bounded by clipped beech or hawthorn, hedges of either species are only to be found as field boundaries alongside the river valleys or in old estate farmland. Gorse is the most commonly occurring hedge plant elsewhere. Stone dykes were once commonly used as field boundaries around the coast of the District where glacial moraine was deposited, and therefore consist of a variety of stone types. These are now mainly overgrown and dilapidated, and post-and wire fencing is rapidly replacing them. A feature which is most frequently found in the north-east area of Banff & Buchan around Strichen is the consumption dyke. These large mounds of stones and boulders in the corners of fields were removed from the ground as rough terrain became progressively improved and made fertile. The large square fields which characterise the farmed landscape of the District have now almost completely obliterated any traces of the sinuous ridges of pre-improvement cultivation.

Planned Villages

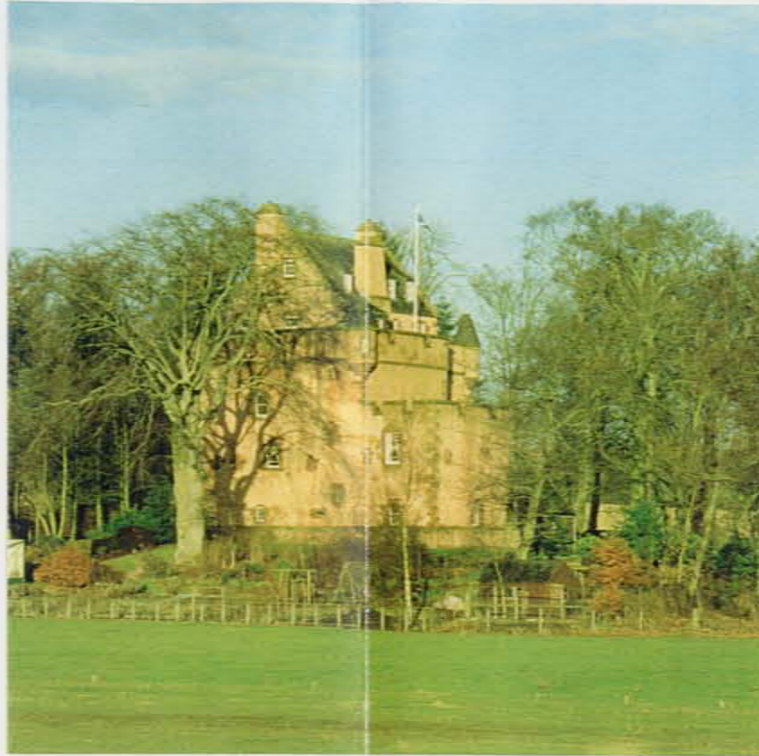
- 4.39 The transformation of the countryside, through the increase in the scale of fields and the draining of marshes, was accompanied by the establishment of communication routes and the construction of new buildings. Prior to these changes, settlement in Banff & Buchan had consisted of small, nucleated "fermtouns" and "kirktoouns". This settlement pattern was dramatically altered in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by the development of planned villages.
- 4.40 Small towns and villages were established as new settlements within a new landscape, although some, such as New Deer, were founded around existing hamlets. Inland, villages such as Fetterangus (1752), Cuminestown (1763), New Byth (1763), New Pitsligo (1787), New Leeds (1798), New Deer (1805), and Mintlaw (1813) sprang up, many of them housing the displaced cottars or crofters from small farms, who had been affected by the consolidation of the Improvement Age. Landlords often expected these new villages to become centres for local industries such as spinning and the weaving of flax and wool.
- 4.41 The strict, regimented layout and architectural integrity of these villages is characteristic of the District. Villages were often built along a street, in a square or rectangle, with a small depth of grid layout. This regular layout was intended to cope with further development resulting from the expansion of trade from within the village. Front gardens were discouraged; consequently, small, double-fronted, single-storey houses facing right onto the street are very typical. The location of these villages determined whether they were built from grey or pink granite, or red sandstone. The linenworks or watermills which were often part of the village were built on the outskirts, and are frequently fringed by trees. Numerous churches were built or rebuilt during this period; the church spire therefore tends to dominate the skyline of the planned village.

Coastal Settlements

- 4.42 The riches of the sea, whether through the opportunities they afforded to trade with other countries, or because of their harvest of fish, have ensured that the



Ruins of Old Deer Monastery



Towie-Barclay Castle



Ruins of Pitsligo Castle



Beech Avenues and Hedges



Duff House and Policies



Traditional Farmstead

**FIGURE 7B
LANDSCAPE FEATURES**



Stone Dykes and Fencing



Beech Shelterbelt



Planned Village of New Byth



Pennan Village



Portsoy Harbour



Peterhead Power Station

FIGURE 7C
LANDSCAPE FEATURES

shores of Banff & Buchan have been settled for as long as its agricultural heartland has been farmed. The early wealth of the District derived from the seas. Settlements such as Portsoy and Banff originally developed as trading ports, and the fishing towns of Peterhead and Fraserburgh continue to expand. Some of the most striking buildings of these towns survive around their harbours.

- 4.43 Many of the smaller fishing towns and villages originated in the mid-seventeenth century as huddles of clay and thatch houses, and were transformed into planned settlements during the following century. Crovie and Pennan, crammed at the base of sheer sandstone cliffs, are no more than a row of fishermen's cottages, "like a brood of young seafoal nestling with their head under the dam" (7). The gable end of almost every house faces onto the sea, the other end thrusting into the cliff face. In comparison with the planned inland villages, these fishing settlements are riotously colourful - white-washed walls contrast with red pantiled and grey slated roofs, and the bright blue and green paintwork of doors and window frames.

Industry

- 4.44 One of the most notable characteristics of the District is the comparative lack of industry within the area. However, the combination of the relative rarity of industrial developments, and the flatness of much of the landscape, has had the effect of emphasising the few areas of industry which do exist.
- 4.45 Along the eastern seaboard lie two of the most prominent landmarks of Banff & Buchan. The crisply detailed geometry of the St. Fergus Gas Terminal, combined with planting and mounding, contributes to the integration of the development with the surrounding low undulating coastal plain. In the evening the flares from the terminal form a spectacular and eerily futuristic sight even from a considerable distance inland. The solid mass of the electricity power station on the outskirts of Peterhead also manages to avoid clutter and ugliness.
- 4.46 Mormond Hill, the highest point in the east the District, has been the site for several obtrusive installations, such as the North Sea Oil Communications System which sprouts from its summit. Much of the hill is now a military establishment. The Civil Aviation Authority installation near New Aberdour also has a large visual impact in this landscape. Small-scale quarries and other mineral extraction developments are scattered throughout the District, with a predominance in the east. Despite their frequency, these are generally unobtrusive.

KEY TO FIGURE 8

SITES OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST

1. Bullers of Buchan coast
2. Cairnbulg to St. Combs coast
3. Cullen to Stakeness coast
4. Gamrie and Pennan coast
5. Geordie Crags
6. Gight Woods
7. Hill of Longhaven
8. Kirkhill
9. Loch of Strathbeg
10. Moss of Crombie
11. Moss of Cruden
12. Philorth Valley
13. Reidside Moss
14. Rosehearty to Fraserburgh coast
15. Tore of Troup
16. Whitehills to Melrose coast
17. Windy Hills

AREAS OF BOG AND FEN

Includes the following, as identified by Uplands and Peatlands Branch, Research and Advisory Services Directorate, Scottish Natural Heritage, 13th January, 1994:

- Blanket bog
- Raised bog
- Intermediate bog
- Fen

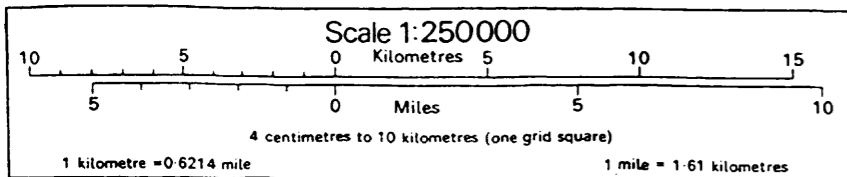
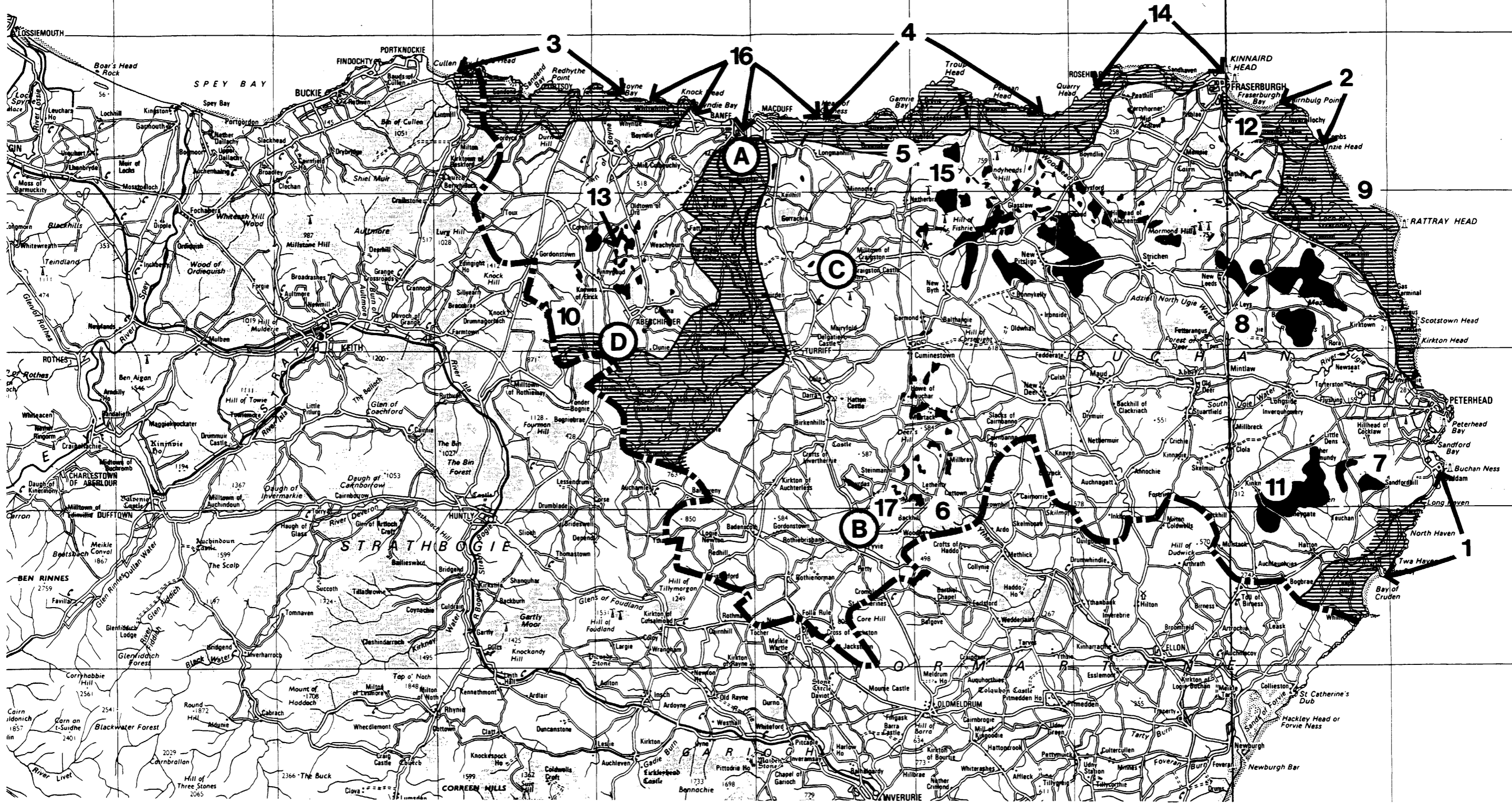
HISTORIC LANDSCAPES

These are included on the *Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes*, published in 1987 by the Scottish Development Department & Countryside Commission for Scotland.

- A. Duff House
- B. Fyvie
- C. Craigston
- D. Old Manse of Marnoch

AREAS OF SPECIAL LANDSCAPE VALUE (ASLV)

These are areas identified in the Banff and Buchan District Local Plan 3 Deposit Copy.



- ① Sites of Special Scientific Interest (See key)
 - ▨ Areas of Bog and Fen (See note)
 - Ⓐ Historic Landscapes (See key)
 - ▬ Areas of Special Landscape Value
- Please see key on following page for further information

FIGURE 8
LOCATION OF
LANDSCAPE FEATURES

5.0 PERCEPTIONS OF THE LANDSCAPE

- 5.1 Few travellers passed through the open agricultural landscape of Banff & Buchan in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries. Those who did, such as Johnson, seemingly had little interest in the terrain: "Our way afforded us few topics of conversation. The ground was neither uncultivated nor unfruitful; but it was still all arable. Of flocks or herds there was no appearance. I had now travelled two hundred miles in Scotland, and seen only one tree not younger than myself" (1). The main points of interest for artists such as Charles Cordiner, James Giles, and J.C. Nattes, and topographers such as Daniell seem to have been the ordered landscapes around the castles, mansions and towns of the District or, more occasionally, dramatic coastal features such as Troup Head and the Bullers of Buchan. Legends associated with the coast and its castles were also the inspiration for Bram Stoker, who wrote "Dracula", his most famous novel, after his stay at Slains Castle.
- 5.2 The transformation of the countryside through the agricultural improvements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries wrought great changes on the landscape. However, it is the influence of man upon the land, and the associated harsh lifestyle, that seems to have interested the writers, painters and musicians born in Banff & Buchan in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, rather than the purely scenic qualities of the landscape.

Artists, Photographers and Film-Makers

- 5.3 The wide open agricultural lands of Banff & Buchan provided solace for Sir George Reid (born in Aberdeen: 1841-1913) who, although renowned as a portraitist, regularly returned to the north-east to produce fine colour or pen-and-ink landscapes, particularly of snow or evening scenes. George Wilson (born near Cullen: 1848-1890) also gained inspiration from the landscape for his water-colours. Perhaps the most successful in translating his feelings for the Banff & Buchan area, and its coastline in particular, into "fresh, colourful, yet delicate" (2) views, was the artist William Grant Murray (born Portsoy: 1877 - 1950). Of great importance in the development of Scottish painting was James Cowie (1886-1956), one of the best known painters to have worked in Scotland this century. He was born at Netherton of Delgaty, and it was the countryside of the Idoch valley in the heart of Buchan that formed the background to many of his paintings.
- 5.4 Trained as an artist, George Washington Wilson (born Forglen area: 1823-1893), mastered the techniques of photography in the early 1850's, for which he is widely known today. Although most of his work consisted of portrait photography, there is a certain amount of information in the background of his pictures which could be of interest to landscape historians. However, all too little of his work relates to Banff & Buchan, concentrating instead on the Aberdeen and Deeside areas. He gradually diversified his trade, and by the 1880's he was probably the largest producer of topographical views in Britain. A few of these views were taken in Banff & Buchan but, like the artists of the preceding hundred years, he seems to have concentrated on the more highly designed landscapes of the District.

- 5.5 Other photographic or postcard collections of note include the Bodie Collection, which focuses on the towns and people of Banffshire, rather than the agricultural and coastal landscapes, and those held in the local museums of the District, for example at Aden Heritage Centre.
- 5.6 Most recently, in 1983, much of the filming of "Local Hero", which was produced by David Puttnam and directed by Bill Forsyth, took place in the little fishing village of Pennan on the north coast. The appeal of the village to tourists has increased dramatically since the release of the film, and the red telephone box which featured as a "prop" is now a popular photographic subject for visitors to the area.

Authors

- 5.7 For a writer, whether of prose or poetry, it would seem that an upbringing in Banff & Buchan had a profound effect. Whether written in Doric - the dialect of the area which is almost a language in its own right - or in English, the pieces that have been published are steeped in the difficulties of life rather than an appreciation of the surrounding landscape.
- 5.8 Fictional writings were penned by Lorna Moon (born Strichen: 1886-1930), and Flora Garry (born New Deer: 1900-?). The former emigrated to the United States and wrote scripts for Hollywood; she also wrote of Buchan village life as she remembered it, "behind lace curtains", in *Doorways in Drumorty*, and *Dark Star* (3,4). The latter wrote poems in Buchan Doric, also concentrating on the people rather than the places, and the farming way of life. However, some poems do refer to the agricultural and landscape changes that took place last century. For example, Flora Garry's *Bennygoak and Other Poems* (5) describes the reclamation of heather and whin to agriculture:

"It was jist a skelp* O the muckle furth,
A sklyter* roch grun,
Fin granfadder's fadder bruke it in
Fae the hedder and the funn*.
Grandfadder sklatit* barn an byre,
Brocht water to the closs,
Pat fail-dykes* ben the bar braeface,
An a cairt road tull the moss".

* *skelp* - large area; *sklyter* - expanse; *funn* - whin;
sklatit - slated; *fail-dykes* - low turf walls.

- 5.9 Other authors have continued the tradition of Banff & Buchan writings. John C. Milne, for example, found the inspiration for much of his poetry in the corner of "yon braid Buchan lan" near Memsie where he was born, drawing upon memories of his childhood and impressions of man's influence upon the landscape, such as the "muckle heap o'stanes" that formed Memsie Cairn, and the furrows which ran "straucht and clean fae Tyrie Burn te Pickerstane" (6).
- 5.10 George Bruce (born Fraserburgh: 1909) had various collections of poems published in the late 1960's and early 1970's, including *Landscapes and Figures : a selection of poems* (7). His words conjure up the landscapes and rugged seascapes of his native Buchan, as well as the durable qualities of the people. David Toulmin (born Rathen: 1913) has also published late in life. His recollections of farm labouring life in the "wet, clarty soils of Buchan" (8), as

mentioned in his book of short stories, *Hard, Shining Corn*, are austere and stark. However, they have been favourably compared with the writing of Lewis Grassie Gibbon, a native of Banff & Buchan, whose family moved when he was young to live in the Mearns, from where he produced classics such as *Sunset Song* (9).

- 5.11 Peter Buchan (born Peterhead: 1917-1992) wrote poems and short stories about the fishing folk, not of drunkenness or religious fanaticism, but of the middle ground of the life he knew so well. Believing that there was more to the District than the farmed land, he declared that : "Buchan a thoot the sea is jist like tatties a thoot salt!" (6). His first book of prose, *Fit Like Skipper* (10), was followed by a collection of short stories and poems. However, he is best remembered as "the caretaker of the Doric language", producing *Buchan Claik: a Dictionary of the Doric* (11) with David Toulmin.
- 5.12 It is, perhaps, in the Doric language that one can best gauge the relationship of those who lived in Banff & Buchan, prior to the 1950's, with the land and the sea. It is a hard, clipped dialect, with so many seemingly foreign words that an outsider could be forgiven for thinking that here was another country. The Reverend James Forrest, a Lomnay minister who wrote about the Buchan dialect in *The Book of Buchan*, had his own curious theory on why Buchan people speak as they do. He thought that they preferred clearer vowels "owing to their windswept fields, as well as from their nature" (6). The survival of the Doric is a reflection of the out-of-the-way nature of the land, the independent spirit of Buchan folk, and an extremely difficult way of life. Those who spoke this language may well have had little time to marvel at the transformation of this hard, stony plain into fertile and productive farmland, or the contrasting bounty and cruelty of the sea.

Musicians

- 5.13 The Reverend John Skinner of Longside (?-1807) was a songwriter known to Robert Burns, and it was he that was responsible for "Tullochgorum" and other ballads much praised by the poet. Peter Buchan (born Peterhead: 1790-1854) collected ballads of the north-east, and is famed for his publication of over forty such songs in 1828, *Ancient Ballads and Songs of North Scotland*. However, it is the joint work of Gavin Greig (schoolmaster at New Deer: 1856-1914), and the Reverend James Duncan of Lynturk (1848-1917), that is of most renown. They collected, separately, all that they could of surviving oral tradition in the later nineteenth century. Most bothy and cornkister ballads, including "Mormond Braes" and "Barnyards o'Delgaty", were collected by them, and in total they preserved some 3500 songs and 3300 tunes.
- 5.14 Thus these ballads have survived, and the Banff & Buchan fiddle and accordion clubs thrive once again. The Buchan Heritage Festival, held in Strichen every May, is a reflection of the wish to preserve a living history of music and song, the Doric language and a distinct identity. But it is the way of life which is recorded in these ballads, not the natural environment in which the songsters worked : it seems that it is the people who influence the landscape, rather than the other way round.

6.0 LANDSCAPE CHANGE

- 6.1 An appraisal of how the landscape of Banff & Buchan has changed in the recent past forms an important aspect of this study. Anticipating future changes, and how these may affect the landscape character of the District, will assist in the formulation of guidelines for influencing and accommodating that change. Not all future changes will be detrimental, and some will present opportunities for enhancing landscape character and increasing local distinctiveness throughout the District. Information on possible future change has been obtained from the National Countryside Monitoring Scheme, Scottish Office Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries Department (SOAEFD) statistics, and through discussions with local authorities, the Forestry Authority, local landowners, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish Agricultural Colleges.

Landscape Change this Century

- 6.2 Much of Banff & Buchan has been important for agriculture since early times. Although there is some historical evidence of extensive woodlands and forestry covering the District in the distant past, much of the land has, since the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries at least, been cultivated or under pasture. Today, broad expanses of intensively farmed land are occasionally intersected by pockets of policy plantings on estate lands, for example in areas close to Old Deer, the Ythan valley at Fyvie and the north Deveron valley.
- 6.3 In the western part of the District, some change has occurred between 1940 and 1970 as a result of the planting of coniferous forest on hill land, with 700km² under commercial forestry in the whole of the District by 1970 (1). Since the 1970's however, little new coniferous planting appears to have taken place in the District as a whole; this is possibly a reflection of the price of agricultural land and the tax changes of 1986, inhibiting potential investors. Woodland Grant Scheme applications over the five years prior to 1994 increased, but according to the Forestry Authority the majority are for less than 5 hectares of planting.
- 6.4 Changes in agriculture have initiated the greatest impacts on the landscape of Banff & Buchan, particularly in the past forty years. Fiscal and strategic policies aimed at increasing yields, improvements in farming technology, and fluctuations in economic markets, have all contributed to this change.
- 6.5 It has been shown in Chapter 2 that the pattern of small farm units probably diminished after the agricultural revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with the population being encouraged to move to new planned settlements, thus clearing the land for large scale agriculture. The domination of a few large estates during this period resulted in a high proportion of tenant farmers throughout the District. By the early twentieth century many of these large estates became unprofitable and were dismantled and the land sold. The agricultural collapses during the early 1970's and poor harvest in 1985-87 resulted in many farms being sold, often to incomers, and a general amalgamation of units. Today a pattern of larger scale farm units in the east, and smaller farms in the more upland and less favoured areas to the west, has emerged.

- 6.6 Agricultural improvements since 1940 have resulted in 95% of heather moorland being converted to improved/unimproved grazing land and occasional commercial forestry, leaving just 1.59 km² by 1970 (1). Much of this moorland would have provided rich habitats and been a significant feature on the upland fringe areas, increasing the visual diversity of the landscape. Likewise, the intensification of agriculture, bringing about new cultivation techniques and drainage schemes has had a dramatic effect on the extent and quality of lowland mosses which were, until comparatively recently, a feature of the landscape of the District. Some areas of lowland moss have been, and still are, cut for both domestic and commercial use, and although this has not occurred on a large scale, poor cutting techniques have led to localised degradation of mosses.
- 6.7 Hedgerows are present in some parts of the District, with many localities displaying a variety of species: beech and holly on lands owned by estates; gorse in the western uplands and more marginal areas close to the northern coastline. In many areas, farm boundaries were traditionally marked by ditches and stone walls. As farms have amalgamated and changed hands, and field sizes have increased, hedgerows have been removed - almost a third have gone since 1940 (1), and walls have been left to decline. Fences have often replaced lost hedgerows and these have diminished diversity and affected the landscape character of many areas.
- 6.8 Road-widening schemes and other developments have also brought about further loss of hedgerows, avenues and individual trees, with many of these distinctive features not being appreciated until they have disappeared. (A notable exception has been the fight to retain a beech avenue near Mintlaw, resulting in the formation of the Buchan Countryside Group). General neglect has resulted in the decline of distinctive beech hedgerows, for example, in the Turriff area, while the management of road verges and roadside hedgerows by both roads authorities and farmers has, in many areas, reduced the habitat value of these semi-natural features.
- 6.9 The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), however, has brought about the most significant recent change to the landscape. Farmers now need to respond quickly to changes in subsidy by growing new crops. This has introduced significant changes to the appearance of the Banff & Buchan countryside, with crops such as oilseed rape and linseed being the most obvious. The recent introduction of the set aside scheme has also initiated a strong visual impact on the landscape, with many farmers in Banff & Buchan taking up a scheme with a set aside component. In the summer months, the appearance of fields under set aside, will have a strong visual contrast to adjacent, intensively farmed land.
- 6.10 There has been relatively little new built development in the District, mainly because of its isolated location away from major industrial centres, and its relative lack of major communication links. Fishing and agriculture have been, and still are, the principal employers within Banff & Buchan. Recent industry has been largely restricted to processing relating to these activities centred at Peterhead and Fraserburgh, and the gas terminal complex on the coast at St. Fergus. Mineral extraction occurs on a small and scattered scale mainly within the coastal farmland to the north and east.
- 6.11 The demand for new housing has been relatively small in the District, with local requirements being prevalent. Since the 1940's, new housing development has

not been extensive but it has, nonetheless, brought about some adverse visual impacts in many parts of Banff & Buchan. Development on the fringes of existing settlements has often been insensitively sited with little screening by landform or vegetation. The form of some planned villages has also been compromised by poorly located and designed housing, for example, recent housing that has been set back from the road, disrupting the hard front edge so characteristic of these settlements. Recent housing development in exposed and, therefore, highly sensitive locations may disturb the perception of a remote landscape with strong traditions and links to the past. This is particularly evident within the coastal areas and around towns, where traditional patterns of settlements have not been followed in some instances.

Current Initiatives

- 6.12 Current initiatives which have the potential to enhance landscape diversity in Banff & Buchan include the Woodlands Grant Scheme (WGS) administered by the Forestry Authority, and the joint initiative by Banff and Buchan District Council, Grampian Regional Council and SNH known as the East Grampian Conservation Project. The latter provides enhanced grant aid for small-scale countryside conservation projects below the minimum size requirement for WGS. Small-scale environmental work is also undertaken by the Buchan Countryside Group. This is, however, presently limited to the south-east of the District and mainly involves projects aimed at improving recreational facilities.
- 6.13 Policy and development controls are formulated by the local authorities. Areas of Special Landscape Value (ASLV) are designated along much of the coastal strip of the District and in the broad swathe of the Deveron valley. Within these designated ASLVs, the District Council policy is to ".....give priority to maintaining the character of the landscape" (2). Conservation areas have been designated for nineteen planned historic settlements and parts of Fraserburgh and Peterhead. In these designated areas ".....new development.....will be carried out in a manner in-keeping with the established character of the area" (2). Advice on the siting, form and design of new building in the District is given in the Local Plan.
- 6.14 Grampian Regional Council has prepared a draft Forestry Strategy and has a policy of encouraging appropriate woodland cover and commercial forestry, as a means of diversifying land-use and employment opportunities in Banff & Buchan.

Potential Future Change

- 6.15 Continued changes to the CAP are likely to affect the rural economy and have a visual impact on the landscape. The regulations governing the set aside scheme have recently changed in favour of long-term conservation projects and woodland planting. The initial five year set aside scheme has now come to an end, but to be eligible for the current Arable Area Payments Scheme, most farmers have to set aside a proportion of their area of arable crops. This proportion varies year on year. Farm diversification schemes are generally limited within the District; an increase in outdoor pig raising is occurring at present, but few non-agricultural opportunities on set aside land are likely under present policies.

- 6.16 Changes in market returns, subsidy payments and interest rates have all affected the potential profitability of farming in the District, which in turn has influenced the stability in land ownership and land-use. Because of recent financial pressures some of the smaller farms have tended to be worked as part-time holdings, while the larger businesses appear more financially stable due to increased aid from the EC. While some farms are expanding due to amalgamation, there has been an increasing trend in recent years for large farms to be sold in lots in order to maximise returns. Due to recent financial pressures, combined with the housing boom in the south-east of England, a number of farmers sold plots or larger areas to incomers, to form small, part-time units. Although, with the decline in the housing market in the south, this practice is less common than it was, it is still continuing and a large number of small croft type units have been created. With the shortage of farms coming onto the market, those that are sold demand a premium, and there has been an increase in the price of land as a result.
- 6.17 Positive management of agricultural land conservation and amenity is not presently a significant factor in Banff & Buchan. Although WGS applications and applications for grants under the East Grampian Conservation Scheme have increased, the majority are small-scale and taken up primarily by smallholders rather than full-time farmers. Forest cover is only likely to increase in the District if land prices drop to a more attractive level for private investors, as there would appear to be a reluctance on the part of farmers, at present, to diversify into woodland. Reasons for this reluctance would appear to centre on the attachment felt towards "hard-won" farmland, little cultural association with trees and possibly a lack of realistic financial incentives.
- 6.18 All Forestry Enterprise holdings in the District will be sold in the near future. Although the sale of these woodlands may affect public access and possibly affect conservation management in some areas, they should not present any major landscape changes, provided that effective control is exerted by Felling Licence and WGS conditions. Opportunities for ameliorating existing poorly shaped and scaled commercial woodlands, particularly on the hill slopes to the west of the District, will be presented as various rotation ages are reached. Likewise, in sheltered areas like the Deveron valley, broad-leaved woodlands may be encouraged, replacing coniferous species.
- 6.19 Although housing demand is not great in the District, there are likely to be continued applications for housing in the south and east of the District, within commuting distance of Aberdeen. This type of housing will, in the main, be concentrated within existing settlements. More important for the potential impact on the landscape, however, is the constant local demand for rural housing spread throughout the District.
- 6.20 Pressures for industrial development may not be significant in scale, but nevertheless some types of development may bring substantial changes to the countryside. Grampian Regional Council's Structure Plan supports further mineral extraction, mainly of sand and gravel deposits in the District. The District Council has a three-tier plan for mineral extraction, with a presumption against development in the majority of the coastal area, within designated landscapes and on high grade agricultural land.
- 6.21 The development of wind power generation facilities is also supported in principle by the Regional Council. The advent of the Scottish Renewables

Order (SRO) may produce interest in Banff & Buchan from potential developers of windfarms, because of the area's high wind speeds.

7.0 KEY ISSUES

Overview of Issues

7.1 The previous chapter considered the effect of past change on the present appearance of the landscape of Banff & Buchan. Potential pressures for change and development in the landscape were also assessed and a number of interrelated issues arising from these pressures can be identified. The key issues affecting the landscape of Banff & Buchan can be summarised as:

- **The changing character of the agricultural landscape.**

The visual impacts of set aside land and, to date, the inhibiting effect of the policy on positive schemes aimed at improving landscape diversity are important issues in Banff & Buchan, where uptake is relatively high. Future agricultural policy changes will be vital in determining the appearance of the countryside in the long term.

- **Continued threats to semi-natural habitats throughout the District.**

It has been shown that characteristic landscape features such as hedgerows, heather moorland and lowland mosses have been dramatically reduced in the past. Threats continue to be posed to the remaining mosses, areas of sand dunes, rivers and some areas of semi-natural woodland, as a result of pressures for peat extraction, coastal recreation, continuing trends towards agricultural intensification, and over-maturity and/or lack of management of policy woodlands.

- **A lack of landscape diversity and distinctiveness within intensively farmed land in many parts of the District.**

As farm units have increased in size, and agriculture has become more intensive, hedgerows, woodland and semi-natural vegetation have diminished, leaving much of the Banff & Buchan landscape uniform in appearance.

- **A gradual deterioration and erosion of existing distinctive features.**

Features which make a great contribution to landscape character in some parts of Banff & Buchan include stone walls, beech avenues and hedges, and mixed species roundels. Many of these are under threat of decline due to a lack of management, or removal for development. Distinctive architectural details, for example traditional colour finishes and indigenous building materials, are not generally used in new buildings, which reduces landscape distinctiveness in some areas.

- **The impacts of present and potential new housing development on the fringes of existing settlement and within the countryside.**

Poorly sited and designed housing detracts from and diminishes landscape distinctiveness. The demand for new housing in rural locations throughout Banff & Buchan is likely to continue and there is a need for any further development to reflect more closely local traditions in settlement layout and built form.

- **The potential pressure for new rural development.**

There is likely to be future pressure for the development of windfarms and large-scale forestry. The potential for increasing mineral extraction has also been identified in the Structure and Local plans, but this is likely to be on a relatively small scale, given the distance from major markets.

Guidelines for Landscape Conservation and Enhancement

7.3 The main objectives in recommending landscape guidelines for Banff & Buchan should be the **conservation** of landscape features which make a positive contribution to landscape character, together with the **enhancement** of those landscapes which lack diversity and distinctiveness, or where there has been an erosion of character. In addition to these objectives, future development needs to be appropriately planned and sensitively accommodated without detriment to landscape character. Landscape priorities and issues throughout the District include:

- the protection and revitalisation of distinctive landscape features in the District;
- the encouragement of appropriately sited and well-designed new woodlands and forestry planting, particularly in areas where there are opportunities to reinforce or enhance existing landscape character;
- the encouragement of farm conservation schemes on a larger scale;
- the promotion of good design practice in the siting and detail of new development within rural settlements and in the countryside;
- the direction of large-scale rural development, such as windfarms, to the less visually sensitive areas of the District.

Each of these themes is developed below.

The Conservation of Existing Landscape Features

7.4 The distinctive landscape features of Banff & Buchan have been previously outlined, and these include natural elements such as the coastal landscapes, rivers and the lowland peat mosses. Man-made features include estate plantings, hedgerows and stone dykes.

7.5 While the protection of much of the coast of Banff & Buchan from large-scale development and detrimental change has largely been assured through the planning policies of the District Council, the gradual decline of other landscape

features, such as estate woodlands, distinctive hill-top copses, hedgerows and avenues is occurring as a result of a lack of management and restocking. These features are prominent in areas such as Turriff, the northern Deveron Valley, and around New Deer/Mintlaw, and are important in contributing to a sense of place and landscape distinctiveness. The instigation of a programme of management and restocking is therefore vital to ensure that the features are not ultimately lost. In addition, the conservation of stone dykes should be encouraged in areas such as the northern coastal strip, where they are sufficiently intact to make a valuable contribution to landscape character.

- 7.6 Lowland mosses, although considerably reduced in area since 1940, make an important contribution to the landscape character of the District, for example, within the St. Fergus area and near Mid Ardlaw. It is likely that an increase in the designation of some of these mosses will occur, following a current review by SNH. More sympathetic farming methods need to be encouraged at the perimeter of these mosses to ensure that nutrient run-off and changes to drainage do not affect their condition in the long term. Where peat is extracted from mosses, traditional extraction methods should be used to minimise the impact on the habitat value of the mosses, and to conserve the visual characteristics of these valuable features.

Opportunities for New Planting

- 7.7 The likely future increase in woodland cover in the District can be seen as a positive opportunity, as sensitively located and designed woodlands and forests have the potential to enhance the character of the landscape by increasing diversity. The promotion of forestry is viewed by Grampian Regional Council as a way forward in counteracting agricultural decline and encouraging new landuses and processing industries into the District. Much of Banff & Buchan would be well suited to growing coniferous species on a commercial scale. Broad-leaved species are unlikely to attain a high economic value, because of climatic restrictions, although they would bring important amenity benefits.
- 7.8 The planting of new woodlands and forests could provide opportunities for reinforcing existing landscape character and for enhancement in areas where the landscape lacks diversity. The location and scale of new planting will need to be carefully considered in order to protect landscape features such as valuable moorland or other areas of nature conservation importance.
- 7.9 There is scope for medium to large-scale coniferous and mixed woodlands to be sensitively located on the large-scale open coastal agricultural land. Well-designed and scaled woodlands in these areas could add diversity to this agricultural landscape and, provided that the correct proportion of open space is retained, it should be possible to conserve the broad open character and long views which are positive features of this area. The design of the forest edge will be particularly important in these flatter landscapes and should include a high proportion of broad-leaved species.
- 7.10 In the more undulating agricultural heartland small-to-medium scale mixed species woodlands and shelterbelts could be planted, linking with fragments of estate plantings in the Turriff area, for example, and with hedgerows and copses occurring in localised areas, such as near Cuminestown. This would not only reinforce the existing landscape character, but also optimise the visual benefits of the new woodland.

- 7.11 Towards the west of the District, for example to the north and west of Aberchirder, where coniferous woodlands are more evident in the upland landscape, new planting should be located to visually link with these, to help resolve problems of poor scale or design. Some existing woodlands lack diversity in this area, and extended planting of both coniferous and broad-leaved species could rectify design problems and make these woodlands more positive landscape features.

Farm Conservation Schemes

- 7.12 As much of the Banff & Buchan landscape is under intensive agriculture, farm-based conservation schemes offer a major opportunity for introducing diversity into landscapes requiring some enhancement. Recent improvements to the set aside policy could encourage larger scale and more widespread conservation schemes than those currently being undertaken. This could provide opportunities for farmers to establish a range of habitats; for example broad-leaved woodlands, species-rich grasslands, wetlands and hedgerows. The visual significance and conservation value of these new features could be maximised by linking with existing hedgerows, riverbanks, and semi-natural vegetation, and by integrating conservation proposals for adjoining farms where possible.
- 7.13 Priority should be given in farm conservation schemes to the management and restocking of existing woodlands and avenues, where these make a positive contribution to the landscape. The planting of new, medium-scale, broad-leaved and mixed woodlands would have a dramatic effect on the landscape in the future and should also be given an important emphasis in any guidelines. The main water courses of the District could be enhanced further through waterside habitat creation on land taken out of production, and should also be seen as a priority within the promotion of farm conservation schemes.

Housing in the Countryside

- 7.14 Future pressure for new housing is likely to continue to be concentrated in the countryside, although limited housing development will be located in some of the towns and smaller settlements.
- 7.15 New housing should be sensitively located, corresponding to the traditional patterns of settlement found in each character area. In rural areas traditional houses are often isolated and situated in dips or sheltered pockets of land. Exceptions to this occur for example, in the mosses south of Mid Ardlaw, where farmsteads tend to occupy elevated sites, often on hummocks. New housing in prominent locations should be avoided, for instance, on exposed sites above small coastal villages which are traditionally "contained" at the base of cliffs.
- 7.16 Many settlements in Banff & Buchan make an important contribution to landscape distinctiveness, serving as focal points with views across the countryside. These views should not be compromised, and new development should therefore be restricted to sites where landform, and existing as well as new planting offer opportunities for screening. The District Council's own planning guidance is clear in discouraging ribbon development in the countryside and the placing of buildings on prominent hilltop sites. Integration could be achieved by locating new development close to existing buildings,

shelterbelts, hedgerows and trees, wherever possible, or by planting native trees to replicate the copses traditionally planted for shelter around farmsteads. Coniferous hedges and fencing used for the plot boundaries of many new housing developments can be very intrusive in rural locations.

- 7.17 The detailed design of new building should reflect the distinctive forms and materials used locally. The simple forms of single and one-and-a-half storey farmsteads and village houses should be adhered to, although modern yet sensitive interpretations of these forms can provide opportunities to create attractive living spaces that do not adversely affect landscape character. The traditional proportions and style of windows and doors present examples of good design, while the building materials used should correspond to the differences found in the District, for example rendered wall finishes in and around many coastal villages, and the use of stone detailing in some inland areas. Opportunities for accentuating local distinctiveness should be encouraged and this might include the use of traditional colour details on new farm buildings and the construction of new stone dykes on roadside boundaries.

Other Built Development

- 7.18 New large-scale development in the countryside is likely to be confined to windfarms, mineral extraction and a limited extension to the St. Fergus Gas Terminal. While it is expected that the latter two developments will be limited in extent and have a fairly localised effect, the development of windfarms could have major implications for character.
- 7.19 Large-scale windfarm development would be inappropriate in Banff & Buchan, the overall landscape character of this medium-scale, settled and strongly agricultural area being unable to visually accommodate large numbers of turbines. If carefully sited, smaller farms could be accommodated in some parts of the District without detriment to landscape character. Any such development should be directed away from the character areas 3, 5, 10, 11 and 12. These landscapes are settled by small scale farms and clustered villages and, being more "domestic" in character, are thus highly sensitive to the intrusion of large-scale elements. The natural features and seascapes of the coastal landscapes would also be diminished by such a large-scale feature. Smaller numbers of turbines could, however, be accommodated in the more open, larger scale parts of character areas 4, 6 and 7. Overhead transmission lines providing connections between windfarms and the national grid could potentially have a significant negative visual impact in the generally uncluttered, wide and open landscapes of Banff & Buchan.
- 7.20 It is recommended that the building of additional radio masts, particularly in the Mormond Hill area, should be resisted, as a "saturation" level has already been reached in terms of their adverse effect on landscape character.

Further Design Information

7.21 More detailed design guidance applicable to the landscape of Banff & Buchan can be obtained from the following published sources:

- **Landscape/Woodland Design:**
 - Lowland Landscape Design, Forestry Authority 1992
 - Community Woodland Design, Forestry Authority 1992
 - Farm Woodland Planning, MAFF/Forestry Commission 1988
 - Forest Landscape Design Guidelines, Forestry Commission 1989
 - Conservation on Farms - Case Studies of Good Practice in Scotland, FWAG 1988
- **Windfarm Planning:**
 - Landscape Impact Assessment for Wind Turbine Development in Dyfed, Chris Blandford Associates, 1992
 - Planning Advice Note (PAN) 45 - Renewable Energy Technologies, Scottish Office (1994)
 - Wind Energy Development and the Landscape, Countryside Commission 1991
- **Rural Building Design:**
 - Housing in the Countryside, Design Guidance Booklet, Moray District Council 1993
 - Landscape and Building in the Countryside, Mainstream Publishing 1991.
 - The Siting and Design of New Housing in the Countryside, PAN 36 Scottish Office 1991.
 - Fitting New Housing Development into the Landscape, PAN 44 Scottish Office 1994.
 - Farm and Forestry Buildings, PAN Scottish Office 1993.

Mechanisms for Change

7.22 Planning authorities, land-use agencies and conservation bodies all have an important role to play in devising mechanisms which will influence the future appearance of the Banff & Buchan landscape. The main mechanisms operating at present fall mainly under development control, and countryside management and enhancement. Future CAP reforms, favouring long-term conservation schemes on land taken out of production, offer the most scope for diversification and enrichment of the agricultural landscapes which form much of the District. There also appears to be scope for partnership initiatives to be instigated, using limited resources and directing more wide reaching landscape enhancement projects.

7.23 The landscape of Banff & Buchan has been shown in this study to display a range of different characters and have many distinctive landscape features. In parts of the District, however, intensive farming has diminished landscape

diversity and some new development, although limited in scale, has also adversely affected landscape character. A broad vision for the future of Banff & Buchan landscape should therefore aim to:

- maintain and enhance the traditional farm, estate and village landscapes, whose origins lie mainly in the eighteenth and nineteenth century settlement of the District;
- conserve the special natural character of the coastal area and traditional settlement patterns of the District by directing new development to build on existing visual and architectural character;
- sensitively site any new large-scale development so as to minimise impact on landscape character;
- encourage landscape enhancement through the expansion of natural habitats on farmland and through the creation of a more wooded landscape, particularly in the agricultural heartland.

7.24 Further discussion with countryside management staff within bodies such as the new unitary authority, the Forestry Authority, landowners and their advisors is now required in order to develop more detailed measures which can be undertaken in order to achieve this vision for the future.

9.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 The variety of landscapes in Banff & Buchan, has been formed as a result of both physical and human influences. The fertile, low lying land of the District contrasts with the highlands of much of northern Scotland, and this factor led to its attraction for settlement from early times. The original woodland cover of the area was gradually eroded as land was cultivated, giving rise to the notable openness of the farmed landscape which is characteristic of the District today. Human influences also had a strong effect. Banff & Buchan has a wealth of architecture stemming from its past prosperity in agriculture, fishing and trading.

Local Distinctiveness

- 9.2 The present-day landscape of Banff & Buchan has subtle variations, although the overall characteristics include wide views and a general openness. Towards the west, rounded hills form the edge of the uplands of Moray District and beyond, while the interior is undulating farmland and the east of the District is flatter and broader in scale. The coastline is a special feature of the Banff & Buchan landscape, with a dramatic mix of rocky cliffs, dunes and long beaches. It is important for both its scenic qualities and its nature conservation interest. Other natural features which stand out include the well-wooded river valleys of the Deveron and Ythan and the lowland mosses, which remain as isolated pockets within farmland, mainly in the east of the District.
- 9.3 Man-made features make an important contribution to the landscape of parts of the District, particularly the rich legacy of policy plantings, such as beech roundels, avenues and hedges. Strong field patterns formed by hedgerows and stone dykes are also characteristic of agricultural landscapes in some areas. The planned settlements, originating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, are an acknowledged feature of the Banff & Buchan landscape, and these are complemented by a rich architectural tradition of farmsteads, grand houses and castles. The integrity of many of the settlements and the undeveloped nature of the landscape, suggest that the area has been, to some extent, by-passed by the modern world.

Landscape Change

- 9.4 The traditional character of the landscape has evolved through time, with the agricultural reforms of the late eighteenth century acting as a dominant influence. Significant change has also occurred since the Second World War. Intensification of agriculture has led to the enlargement of farms, a reduction in semi-natural landscapes such as mosses and heather moorland, and the decline of woodlands and hedgerows. More recently the CAP has effected change in farmland. New built development has also occurred, both within villages and in the countryside, and some of this has had an adverse effect on the landscape of the District.
- 9.5 Future pressures for change will centre on the agricultural landscapes of Banff & Buchan and will be largely dependent on national policy changes. Further decline in agricultural incomes would force some farmers to sell land, and this may encourage forestry on a larger scale than has previously occurred, with

further amalgamation of farm units. Demands for new housing development is likely to arise from local needs. Pressure for new large scale industry will probably be limited but may include significant windfarm development.

9.6 The main issues associated with trends for landscape change include:

- the gradual erosion and decline of some landscape features, for example, hedgerows, policy plantings, stone dykes, mosses;
- the need to accommodate significant new forestry planting;
- the lack of landscape diversity and distinctiveness within the intensively farmed lands in many parts of the District;
- the changing character of the agricultural landscape brought about by national policies such as set aside;
- the existing and potential visual impacts of poorly sited and badly designed housing and other built development.

Landscape Guidelines

9.7 The main objective in recommending landscape guidelines for Banff & Buchan should be to protect and build upon local distinctiveness. This would be realised through:

- an emphasis on local distinctiveness through, for example, the reinstatement of lost features and the encouragement of this aspect in the design in new buildings;
- the conservation of special features which make a valuable contribution to local landscape character through revitalisation and better management;
- the protection of positive landscape character through the sensitive location and design of new development;
- the enhancement of less visually diverse landscapes through woodland planting and the creation of new habitats on a more permanent basis.

9.8 Specific guidelines should now be developed for the different character areas within Banff & Buchan, with the aim of giving advice to all concerned with the preparation of development plans and in directing initiatives for landscape conservation and enhancement. This guidance should be based upon the ability of each landscape character area to accommodate change without visual detriment.

9.9 The strengthening of existing policies and introduction of new initiatives will be important in accomplishing this broad vision for the future. Collaboration between SNH, local authorities, SOAEFD and the Forestry Authority will be vital in guiding development plans and directing funding towards priority schemes for both landscape enhancement and conservation. Landowners and land managers, working within the constraints of national and EU agricultural policy, will also have a key role to play.

9.10 In summary, the landscape of Banff & Buchan has a distinctive and special character. It is a stimulating landscape because of its wide views, its

impressive coastline, and its variety of unusual landscape features. We hope that this report will help the landscapes of Banff & Buchan to enjoy greater recognition in future, and trust that efforts will be made to build upon and reinforce their traditional character. Action can be achieved through the sensitive planning and design of new development, by the positive conservation and management of the finest landscape features and through creative initiatives to restore and enhance the agricultural landscapes of the District.

10.0 APPENDICES

10.1 TECHNICAL REPORT

Cobham Resource Consultants were commissioned by SNH in November 1993. The study was one of the first in a series for different parts of Scotland and was, therefore, important in developing a suitable landscape assessment methodology that could be applied across lowland Scotland.

The method used was based upon the Countryside Commission's landscape assessment approach (1), and on guidance from the Countryside Commission for Scotland (2).

The study team was composed of four landscape architects; a Partner in Charge, a Project Manager and two assistants. An ecologist and an archaeologist/historian with a knowledge of the District also formed part of the team.

In planning the assessment, two members of the team briefly visited the area to gain an initial impression of the general character, scale and degree of landscape variation. Desk study and field survey work then followed, to define and assess the landscape character of the District.

Desk Study

Two team members produced a series of map overlays, which were used to identify broad landscape types and character areas. Three map overlays were produced showing:

- geology
- topography/drainage
- vegetation.

Geology at 1:50,000 was found to be too complex to be useful, and coverage of the District was incomplete. The 1:250,000 maps produced by the British Geological Survey (BGS) were used, although only solid geology maps were available. The BGS handbook for the Grampian Highlands, which is a useful aid in interpreting the maps, could not be obtained as it is out of print. More research was therefore needed to supplement the information shown on the maps.

Topography/drainage overlays were prepared at 1:50,000 scale, using information from the Ordnance Survey.

The vegetation overlay was compiled using the Landcover of Scotland (LCS 88) information at 1:50,000. This was purchased from the Macaulay Land Use Research Institute. Monochrome aerial photographs at 1:24,000 scale were provided by SNH, these were used selectively where there was a need to check detailed landcover and recent changes in the landscape.

Four broad landscape types and thirteen landscape character areas were defined in draft using the map overlays. The former primarily reflected geological and topographical influences and the landscape character areas represented more localised areas which appeared to have distinctive combinations of landform, landcover and patterns of settlement.

Research

Considerable research was undertaken as part of the desk study, using textbooks, maps and guidebooks. The literature review was wide in scope, to help understand the physical and human influences shaping the landscape of Banff and Buchan. Some of

the issues and potential changes facing the District were identified at this stage, although later consultations were more important in this respect. Different aspects of the study were allocated to individuals within the team and research into physical influences on the landscape, for example, was carried out separately from the human influences.

Bibliographies and map references supplied by SNH at the start of the project were useful, and data sources were found to be both good and accessible, being mostly based in Edinburgh. The more general geographic guides describing the north-east of Scotland were particularly useful and texts on the geology of Scotland provided information of adequate detail for this study. Architectural guides specific to Banff and Buchan were especially useful, giving a complete picture of the settlements and building traditions. The archaeological and historical texts used were necessarily detailed in order to obtain an informed overview of the evolution of the landscape.

Field Survey

Two landscape architects planned and carried out the field survey over the last week in November 1993. Thirty-four viewpoints were assessed by both surveyors using survey forms.

Two elevated viewpoints were initially identified for each character area, although this was supplemented by additional viewpoints in order to give a more even spread throughout the District. A structured survey form, based on the survey sheet described in Landscape Assessment Guidance (1) was restricted to two pages to allow field survey from the maximum number of points within the timescale of the study. The survey form was adapted to include aspects such as beech hedgerows, avenues and planned settlements, that are characteristic of Banff and Buchan. Greater emphasis was also placed on the definition of coastal features.

The survey form was arranged into an initial section to record the location and viewpoint of the surveyor. Space for a brief written description of the landscape character area was provided, which was to be supported by a photograph of the view. A brief list of landscape elements specific to Banff and Buchan was also provided for the surveyor to judge the dominance of each. Aesthetic factors such as scale, colour and diversity were also assessed, and any detractors or attractors noted. The final section of the survey form required the surveyor to consider guidelines for the conservation or enhancement of the landscape character of the character area. A sample of the form is included below.

The field survey allowed verification of the character areas initially identified during the desk study. In the field, it was apparent that the landform of Banff and Buchan is particularly subtle, and that character differences are influenced more by settlement patterns, vegetation types and the extent of enclosure afforded by field boundaries and woodlands than had previously been anticipated. Some redefinition of the draft character areas followed, with a consequent reduction in the number of areas to twelve. Each of these twelve was considered to have a clear geographic identity, and was given a name that describes very briefly both its location and its dominant landscape characteristics.

Analysis

Consultations

Consultations followed after the field stage, in order to ensure that the field survey team had gained sufficient understanding of the landscape to be able to ask informed

questions. All team members undertook consultations, but consultees were generally allocated to team members in accordance with the areas of research carried out previously. From a list of twelve consultees, nine were met personally and the remaining three were contacted by phone.

List of Consultees:

- Geordie Burnett-Stuart, landowner
- Douglas Clark, Forestry Authority
- Anthony Davies, Grampian Regional Council
- Richard Leith, Banff and Buchan District Council
- Keith Newton, Banff and Buchan District Council
- Andrew Hill, Aden Country Park
- Lesley McInnes, Historic Scotland
- Nick Heynes, Historic Scotland
- Patrick Ashmore, Historic Scotland
- Andrew Geddes, SOAEFD
- Jill Demsey, East Grampian Conservation Project
- Morag Smith, SNH
- Kenny Steel, SNH

The consultations explored:

- the ways in which the landscape may be unusual or special
- specific conservation interests
- issues of change in the landscape
- current initiatives for conserving or enhancing landscape character.

Identification of Landscape Change

Both past and potential future change in the landscape of Banff and Buchan was gauged through a combination of consultations, field survey work and data analysis. Statistical data produced by the National Countryside Monitoring Scheme was particularly useful for this task. Threats to specific landscape features were identified as were more positive changes that might bring potential benefits in terms of landscape character and distinctiveness.

Preparation of Guidelines

The guidelines prepared for Banff and Buchan addressed the issues affecting the landscape and made recommendations for the conservation or enhancement of landscape character. General advice was given on the conservation of existing landscape features, opportunities for new planting, farm conservation schemes, new housing in the countryside and other built development. Mechanisms for change were also identified and this included looking at both present and possible future initiatives, such as partnerships between local authorities and land use agencies.

Problems and Issues Encountered

Consultations

Closer involvement of local authorities, land use agencies and landowners at an early stage would have helped to encourage full participation in the study and acceptance of the findings and recommendations. Both Grampian Regional Council and Banff and Buchan District Council expressed concern that they had not been given the opportunity to comment on the study brief.

Early consultation and a partnership approach, between SNH, the local authorities and land use agencies may have helped to tailor the study to provide a useful basis for other future environmental initiatives. For example, the landscape assessment might be used for the preparation of a more detailed Indicative Forestry Strategy, provided that the Forestry Authority and Grampian Regional Council had previously been consulted.

Field Survey

The survey was carried out in the last week in November, presenting the study team with considerable logistical difficulties associated with short daylength and poor weather. Consequently the survey took longer than anticipated as work was interrupted by periods of sea fog and snow. Low light levels made photography difficult. Vegetation types, specific crops and evidence of set aside were also difficult to make out during the survey. The team were also conscious of not having seen the landscape at its best.

Maps and Illustrations

Although the inclusion of historical maps and plans of settlement, suggested by SNH at a later point in the study, would have been of use in illustrating landscape change, these could not be included due to the restrictions imposed by low budget for the study.

It was felt that the distribution of SSSIs and other landscape designations, while interesting, did not relate particularly well to the landscape classification component of the study in contrast to the geological, landform and landcover overlays, which did relate well.

A clear base map for the study was difficult to obtain. Additional time was spent redrafting plans after SNH supplied a good quality base map.

Lessons for Future Assessments

Future landscape assessments should have greater input from local authorities and land use agencies at an early stage. The parameters of the study should be agreed, particularly in terms of exploring specific design issues in more detail. The report illustrations should be clearly defined in the brief, if possible.

The timing of the study needs to be arranged to allow fieldwork in spring or summer. The programme should allow 12-16 weeks for carrying out an assessment of an area of comparable size and complexity (Banff and Buchan is 1526km²).

Future Methodological Development

In conclusion, the method used in the study proved to be workable. The basic overlay mapping generated during the desk study provided a valuable basis for the fieldwork. The importance of the fieldwork element cannot be stressed too strongly,

however, as it provides information about how the landscape is perceived at ground level. The use of two landscape architects for the field survey, and the subsequent discussions that took place between the team study members, allowed a consensus of opinion to evolve during the project.

The use of GIS would be most useful at the desk study stage. It should be limited to the collation of data on the physical components of the landscape, to provide a basis for the field survey, where the essential ground level experience of the landscape can be assessed.



10.2 GLOSSARY

Blow-out	A breach in a dune or dune system.
Dalradian	The youngest stratigraphic division of the Precambrian in Scotland and Ireland (Whitten & Brooks).
Devonian	A (geological) time period extending from 395 to 345 million years ago (Whitten & Brooks).
Dovecote	A structure for housing pigeons (Collins English Dictionary).
Epidiorite	A granular metamorphic rock derived from a basic igneous rock (Whitten and Brooks).
Estate Policies	The improved grounds surrounding a country house (Collins English Dictionary).
Exhume	To reveal; disclose; unearth (Collins English Dictionary).
Fault	A fracture in the earth's crust resulting in the relative displacement and loss of continuity of the rocks on either side of it (Collins English Dictionary).
Gabbro	A coarse-grained (plutonic) basic igneous rock (Whitten & Brooks).
Glacial Meltwater	Water resulting from the melting of a glacier or other body of ice.
Gneiss	A term applied to banded rocks formed duringregional metamorphism (Whitten & Brooks).
Ice House	A building for storing ice (Collins English Dictionary).
Metamorphism	The process by which changes are brought about in rocks within the Earth's crust by the agencies of heat, pressure, and chemically active fluids (Whitten & Brooks).
Peri-	(Prefix) around, beyond (Whitten & Brooks).
Precambrian	That period of time from the consolidation of the Earth's crust to the base of the Cambrian (600,000,000 million years ago) (Whitten & Brooks).
Schist	A regionally metamorphosed rock characterised by a parallel arrangement of the bulk of the constituent minerals (Whitten & Brooks).
Sedimentary Rocks	Rocks formed from material derived from pre-existing rocks...together with material of organic origin (Whitten & Brooks).
Sill	A sheet-like body of igneous rock which conforms to bedding or other structural planes (Whitten & Brooks).
Slate	Regionally metamorphosed...rocks which have developed a well-marked cleavage but suffered little

recrystallisation, so that the rocks are still very fine-grained (Whitten & Brooks).

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