

Braefoot Wood Old Map Report – part two: Early Estate Plans

At the time of writing the (Part 1) report on the sequence of old maps located on the NLS website under 'County Maps', the author was not aware that due to the groundbreaking work of the Dumfries archival mapping project (DAMP) a long list of mainly 18th and 19th C estate plans are now available on the NLS website under the section 'Estate Maps'. Our colleague Archie McConnel did let us know before the field work that two estate plans by Tait and Udny had indeed been added to that collection and would be available on the NLS website soon. In his notes to us he included small extracts, the latest of which was an 1807 copy of an earlier plan of 1767 which showed Braefoot as a single building but apart from a line of planted trees along the Braefoot Linn running west from the road, the adjacent fields to the north have no woodland shown at all. The map extract of Braefoot, and the introduction to the 1807 copy are shown on (Estate Plan) Fig EP 1 on the next page. Archie does draw our attention to the well wooded fields north of Braefoot shown on the 1st edition OS map at the 6inch scale which we have already studied (see Figs 1 and 19 of the map report), but he concludes that taken with this blank estate plan of 1807 that clearly the trees shown on the first edition OS published around 1860 must have been planted probably in the 1830s.

However, our project does not rely only on hand drawn early estate plans, and we feel that other evidence should demonstrate that Braefoot Wood is indeed some sort of relic ancient semi-natural woodland. Our first defensive comment must be that early surveyors and cartographers, especially in the late 18th and early 19th C were doing their work to assist land owners to change the social organisation of farming on their land and to suggest ways of improving the land and its income for the estate. In that context we can be sure that semi-natural scrub woodland had no particular value unless it was part of a large well-wooded hunting forest. We have seen in the map report that the early cartographers Pont and Blaeu liked to show the scattered remains of an old hunting forest at Ettrick Forest (Fig 2). However, small patches of natural scrub woodland in the centre of a prime agricultural district, which is now well enclosed by expensive stone dykes, clearly do not carry much weight with landowners, factors or surveyors, who actually still see them in the late 18th C as useful pasture and shelter for farm livestock. That is true over most of Scotland, but especially during an era when sheep farming in the Borders and particularly the Moffat area is the main focus of estate owned farms.

Also we have seen during the study of the sequence of old maps, that woodland is scarce in the old maps in north Annandale, and that new plantations and shelter woodlands suddenly appear on the county maps around the early 19th C when for example Granton House and garden were created, and the adjacent landscape entailed significant tree planting in its design, including avenues and hedgerows along the roadsides and shelterbelts along the lines of some field boundaries.

It is a great advantage to be able to examine the relevant old estate plans of our study area. The first one we can look at closely is one of two main plans held by the NLS, which was surveyed by James Tait in 1767 and added to by the draughtsman Joseph Udny for publication in 1778. The whole of this plan is shown below as Fig EP2, and then a close-up extract of the combined farms of Braefoot and Erioc-stane as it was then being named. Above all, this plan shows that Braefoot was indeed the centre of that part of the farm, which includes all of our main study area. By contrast Erioc-stane farm buildings are still in a cluster of two buildings well away from the 19th C farm, located in a field north of the Acre Burn and the Roger Gills which more or less divide Braefoot from Eriocstane.

Copy . Map
of
that part of the Innandale Estate
lying between the River of Innare
and the Water of Ems, West and
North West of the Village of Moffat,
August 1807

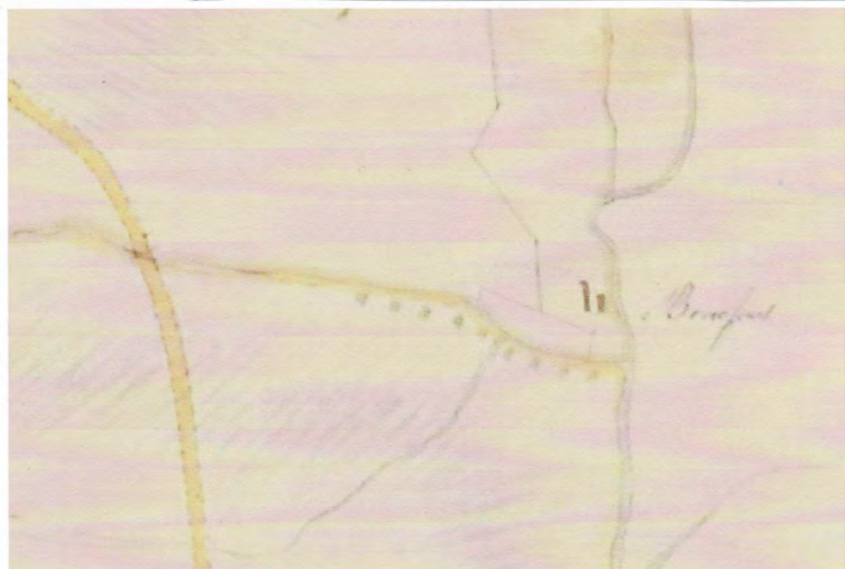


Fig EP 1 Copy in 1807 of an earlier plan by Tait and Udny surveyed in 1767 and 1778, but with no woodlands shown in the fields north of Braefoot, except for a line of planted trees on the south side of the Braefoot Burn.



Fig EP2(a) Plan of The Farm of Eriocstane and Braefoot; Tait and Udny 1767 and 1778

Below: Fig EP(2b) the accompanying survey table for the same map

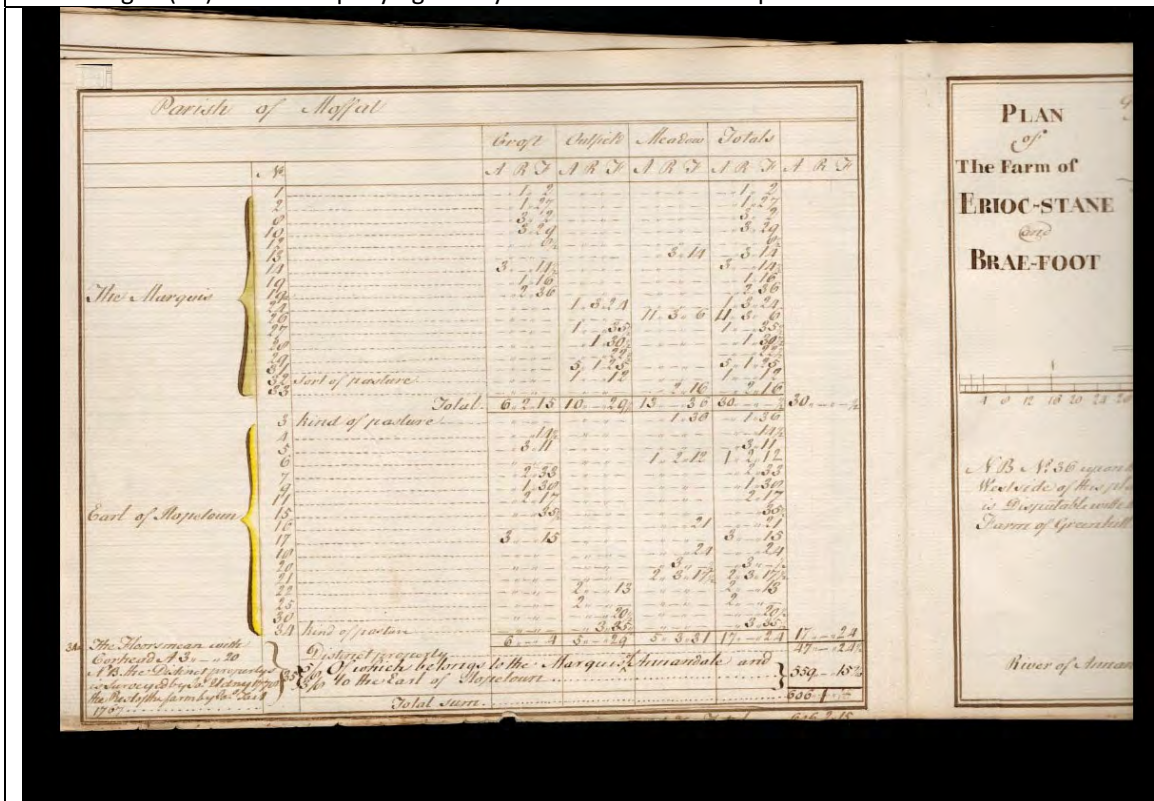




Fig EP 3. Tait and Udny 1767 and 1778, close up of Braefoot and Erioc-stane

The close-up of this remarkable estate plan shows that Braefoot comprised only two buildings within the partly enclosed yard currently occupied by Ericstane Farm. The plan does not name a water mill but maybe that is already part of Braefoot at the time of survey? The water supply for the mill is mainly from the Braefoot Linn adjacent but field survey showed that the whole woodland area is drained by a well constructed sloping mill lade which leads directly to the mill dam which is clearly shown on the first Ed OS, itself leading to the mill race and the water mill located in the farmyard.

The area which is woodland on the first edition OS is shown on Fig EP3 to be arranged into narrow strips of field alternating with brown strips which are all given separate numbers in the table at Fig EP2b above. This pattern must reflect old, perhaps now abandoned rig and furrow, and the author wonders if the brown strips represent scrub woodland, while the yellow strips are still growing crops, or may be better pasture for livestock. Further to the north (the RHS of this map) the strips break up into small sometimes rectangular plots, again, some of which are brown. It could be that the largest brown block shown is in fact the southerly Roger Gill, and the smaller block to its NE is the northern and shorter Roger Gill, both of which ravines have presumably always been key survival sites for seminatural woodland relicts. Those trees alone could account for the natural regeneration that must have occurred over the whole Braefoot study area, probably after abandonment of the old crofters' rig and fur cultivation. The mill lade indeed runs parallel to the rigs shown on Fig EP3.

Also, at the time of this survey the dividing E-W stone dykes shown on the first ed OS, (see Fig 1 of the Map Report), which cut off the south end of Braefoot Wood are not yet built.

Meanwhile Erioc-stane farm is placed well away from Braefoot and the Mill and presumably is the centre of an extensive sheep farming enterprise. At some time in the early 19th C the two farm buildings were united at the Braefoot yard and there is no trace now of the old Erioc-stane buildings.

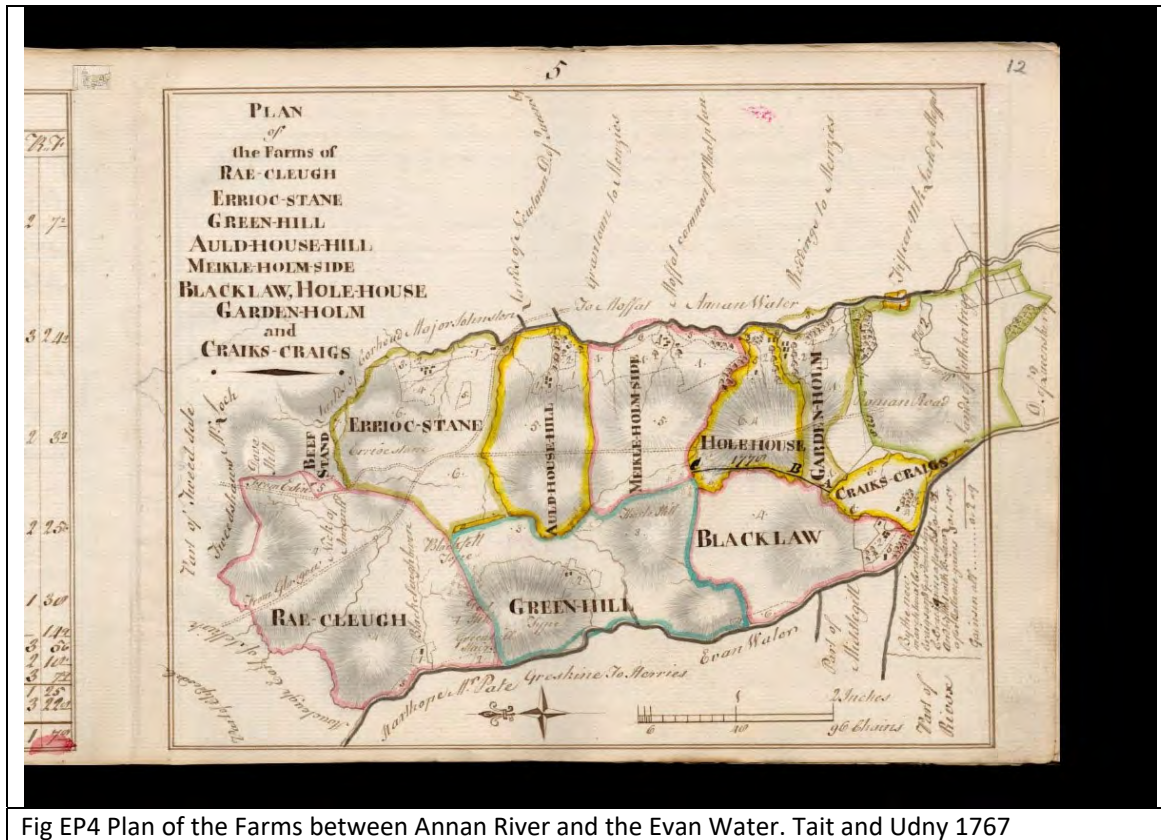


Fig EP4 Plan of the Farms between Annan River and the Evan Water. Tait and Udny 1767

In the close-up extract of this 1767 map (see below at Fig EP5) a similar layout to the previous plan by Tait and Udny can be recognised in the close up of Braefoot and Erioc-stane studied above at Fig EP3.

While Braefoot is now shown as one single building (perhaps the mill), Erioc-stane is a collection of five small buildings and one assumes this must be based on the pre-improvement settlement which is last shown on the Roy map (see Fig 7 in Part 1 report).

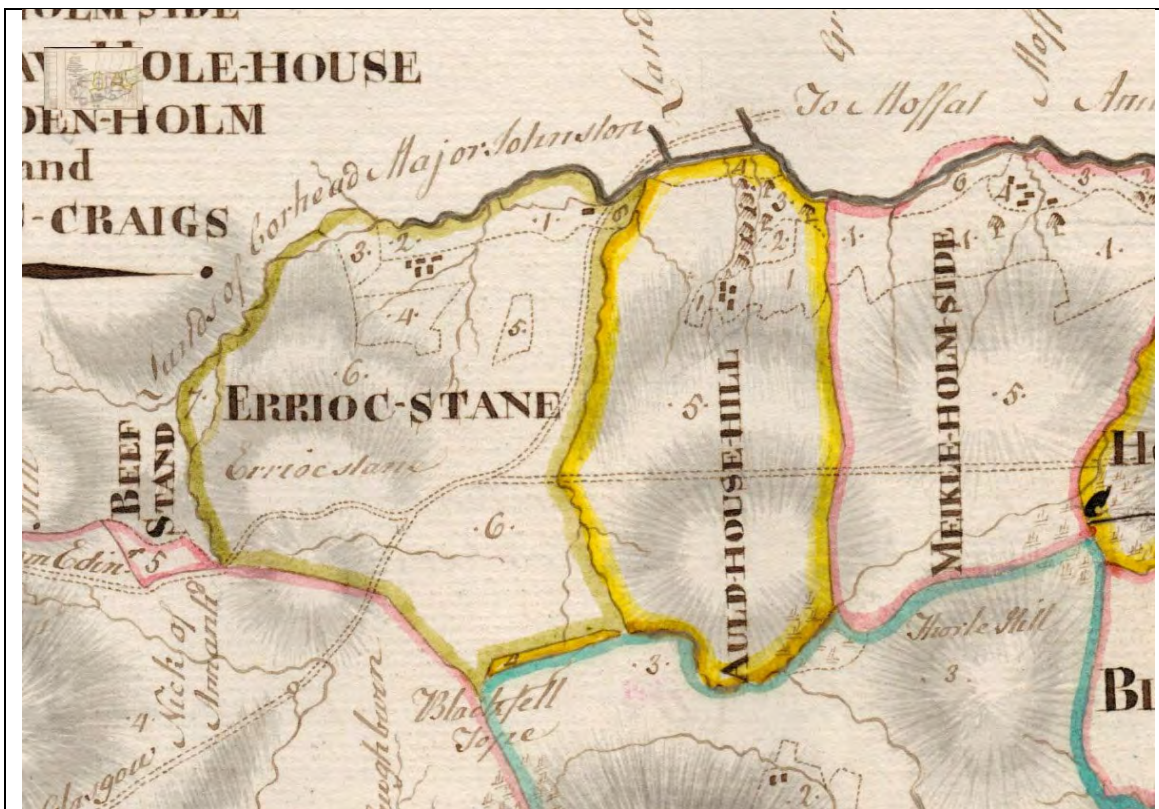


Fig EP5a Plan of the Farms between Annan River and the Evan Water. Tait and Udny 1767. Focus on Errioc-stane Farm (which includes Braefoot). Fig EP5b below is an even closer focus.



Peter Quelch, rev 15.5.2024