



Property in Care (PIC) ID: PIC248

Designations: Scheduled Monument (SM90171)

Taken into State care: 1973 (Guardianship)

Last reviewed: 2004

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

OLD BRIG O' DEE



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OLD BRIG O' DEE

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

- Old Brig o' Dee (also known as Invercauld Bridge) is a well preserved military road bridge built in 1752 to cross the River Dee. The monument includes the bridge and short stretches of original military road to the north and east of the bridge.
- The bridge is one of the largest and finest of Major William Caulfeild's bridges

CHARACTER OF THE MONUMENT

Historical Overview

- The bridge was built in 1752 as part of Major Caulfeild's road-building scheme to link Blairgowrie (and the South) to Fort George and parts of Aberdeenshire. The project was undertaken between 1749 and 1754.
- The road building campaign throughout Scotland was a response to the '45 Jacobite uprising and followed on from General George Wade's road and barrack building programme undertaken between 1725 and 1744. For Wade (whom Caulfeild assisted) road construction was a necessary element in controlling the Highlands of Scotland by easing the movement of troops between garrisons and barracks through difficult terrain. Caulfeild was responsible for a far greater mileage of roadway and far more bridges, which saw the opening up of the Highlands, not just to government forces but also to economic activity.
- At the time of the construction of the road and the bridge, Corgarff and Braemar Castles, both of which were served by the road, were being converted into small garrison posts.
- The bridge was built by four companies of Holm's Regiment of Foot, two of Lord George Beauclerk's and one of Lt. Gen. Shelton's.
- Some time during its use, the bridge was lengthened at each end, with the addition of two flood arches on the north approach and one on the south. The cutwaters also seem to be additions and appear to also serve as buttresses, particularly toward the ends of the bridge.
- Between 1859 and 1864 the Ballater turnpike road was built and Old Brig o' Dee was superseded by the present road bridge (know as Invercauld Bridge) a little upstream. The new bridge was paid for by Prince Albert, husband of Queen Victoria
- The bridge was taken into care in 1973.

Archaeological Overview

- The road surface was excavated in 1973 and 1980/1 as part of a water proofing exercise, and revealed an earlier cobbled surface, similar in character to that found on lesser bridges on the same route.
- The bridge itself is unlikely to contain much of archaeological interest although works below the cobbling may disturb earlier surfaces and evidence of the build up of fill. As the piers of the bridge are built on rock outcrops there will have been no need for timber piles or grillage in the river bed.
- The overgrown section of road to the north is less likely to have been disturbed and should be treated as archaeologically sensitive.

Artistic/Architectural Overview

- The bridge is made up of a series of rubble built arches with little elaboration; the parapets are simple and the cutwaters still have in places their original stepped profile. However, this simplicity, together with its length and the span of the two great middle arches, combines to produce an extremely elegant and impressive structure.

Social Overview

Not assessed.

Spiritual Overview

Not assessed.

Aesthetic Overview

- The appreciation of the bridge is greatly increased by its spectacular landscape setting. The bridge crosses the Dee when it is still young and turbulent as it issues from its source in the Cairngorms; to the south lies Lochnagar and to the north Ben Avon. To many this typifies the romantic notion of what a Highland landscape should be.

What are the major gaps in understanding of the property?

- The exact nature and date of the alterations to the bridge are not clear, and as a consequence neither is the precise form of the original bridge.

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Key points

- The bridge is one of the largest and finest of Major William Caulfeild's Bridges.
- The bridge was part of a much wider attempt by the British Government to control the Highlands during the 18th century, when it faced successive uprisings against the Hanoverian succession.
- Caulfeild's role in the campaign to effectively police the Highlands is overshadowed by his senior colleague, General Wade, who is generally associated with the road building campaign. However, Caulfeild's supervision of the works from 1743 to his death in 1767 saw the construction of the majority of the military roads and bridges and was instrumental in the opening up of this area of Scotland.
- The bridge is located in a spectacular Highland landscape setting.

Associated Properties

Fort Augustus (and the earlier barracks), **Fort George**, **Fort Charlotte** Fort William, **Corgarff Castle**, Braemar Castle. Ruthven, Bernera and Inversnaid Barracks. Well of the Lecht.

Keywords Caulfeild, Wade, Jacobite, 1715, 1745, Lecht Road, Outpost.