

Mayen House

Alexander Walker

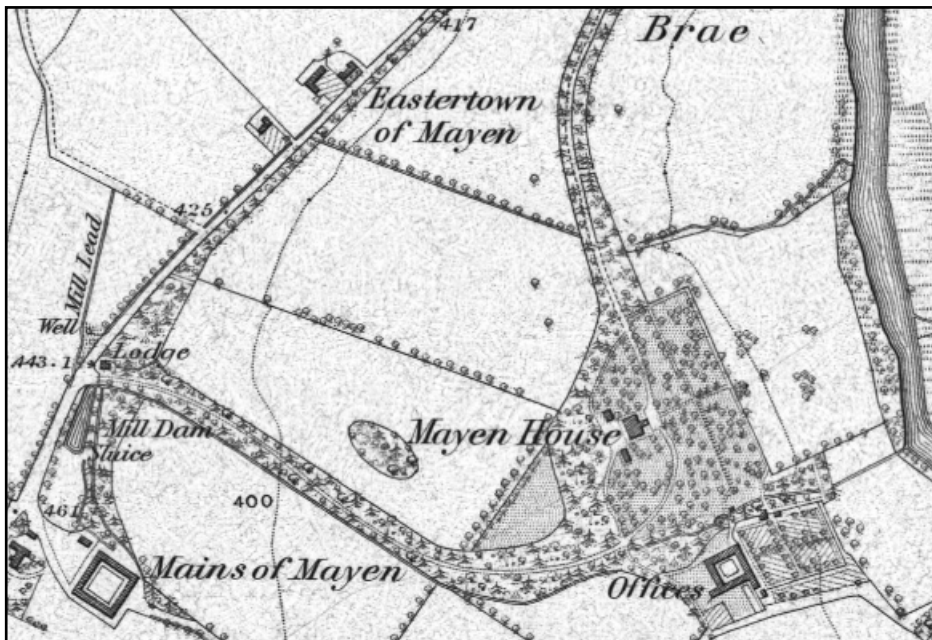
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MAYEN HOUSE.

Walker: *A Collection of Strathspeys, Reels, Marches, &c.*, 1866; No. 193, pg. 66.

Scottish Jig. G Minor, AAB.

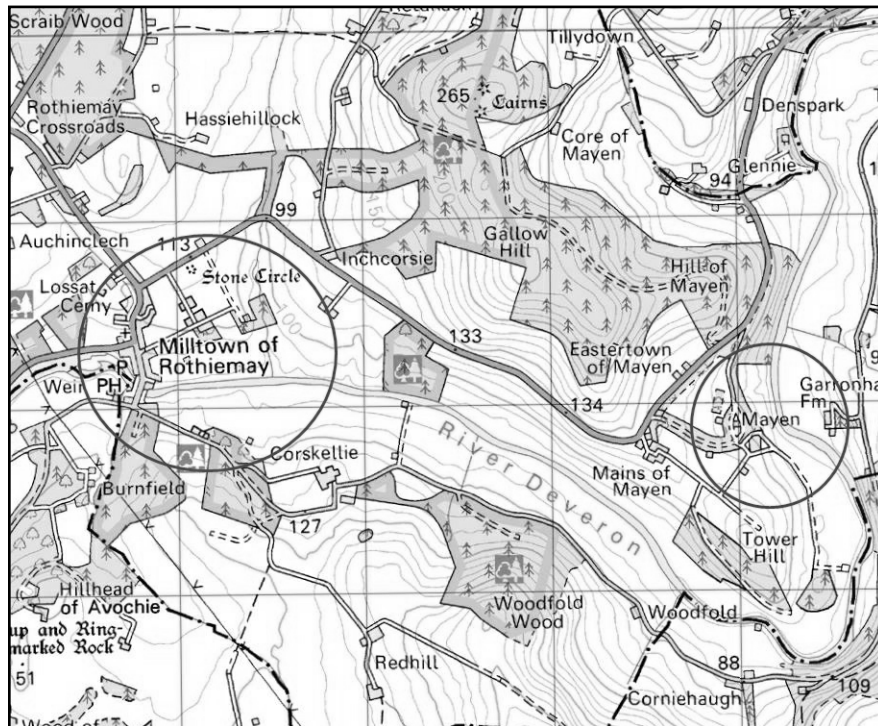
i. Paddy LeBlanc, LP, c. 1963



Mayen Map c.1850.

In the late 1840's there is evidence of Alexander Walker working at Mayen House. He is recorded as being a correspondent for the Banffshire Journal from 1848 – 1850 and was based at Mayen.

'Mayen House is in the parish of Rothiemay and the county of Banffshire. The parish belonged to The Earl of Fife except about one tenth part which is the property of Major Alexander Duff. His Lordship occasionally visits his property here but Major Duff constantly resides at Mayen in this Parish where he has built an elegant and commodious house.'



Mayen 2015 - On Right Village of Rothiemay on Left Mayen House

The Mayen Estate is in a very private location overlooking the Deveron Valley which forms a horseshoe around the Estate.

Mayen House, dating from 1788, forms the centre of the Estate, which extends to about 740 acres of agricultural land and woodlands. The property was originally part of the barony of Rothiemay, which David II bestowed on his faithful adherent William de Abernethy in the 14th century. In 1455 the then Abernethy laird became the first Lord Saltoun. The family held the property until 1612, when it passed to the Gordons. Later (1649) it was purchased by Alexander Hacket, whose daughter carried it to her husband Alexander Abernethy, a cadet of the Saltoun family again.



John Abernethy of Mayen was one of the Jacobites who surrendered at Banff in 1715. John's son James shot dead John Leith of Leith Hall in an Aberdeen street after an election meeting, was outlawed and had to flee abroad. James Abernethy died unmarried and intestate in 1785 and the property passed to Major Alexander Duff, husband of his elder sister Jane Abernethie. Major Duff built Mayen House and demoted the old house as the Mains of Mayen.

At the time of Alexander Walker working there, Mayen House was owned by a Mr John Gordon

Alexander Walker Connection

There is evidence from the Banffshire Journal that Alexander was working at Mayen at least from 1848 to 1850 when he moved to Castle Newe. During that time he provided articles for the Journal. He was also playing at functions in the neighbourhood. He also undertook some garden design work for the Portsoy Council.

Below is a report of Alexander playing at Grange to celebrate the birthday of the Earl Fife the local landowner.

bumpers of the juice of the grape were handed round, and Mr. Gordon, Muiryfold, in most appropriate terms, proposed the toast of the evening, "Long life and happiness to the noble and generous-hearted Earl, with many returns of this auspicious day," which was received with the most deafening and enthusiastic cheers. A number of other toasts were given; and the country dance and Highland reel were kept up with that spirit for which the district has so long been famed, until the dawn of morning. The band was most complete, conducted by Mr. Alexander Walker, Mayen.

**Saturday 23 October 1847, Grange
Earl Fife's Birthday**

CLOSE PRUNING WALL AND ESPALIER FRUIT-TREES.—
When I came here (Mayen House) in 1845, I found that the Apple, Pear, and Plum-trees, on walls and espaliers, had been allowed to extend their fruit-spurs some 18 or 20 inches from the walls, &c. The trees were old, having been planted in 1794; nevertheless, I was unwilling, at "one fell swoop," to root out the whole and plant young trees. In Jan., 1846, I therefore commenced pruning them in the following manner. Having procured good draw-cut shears (which are preferable to a saw or knife, and far more expeditious), I commenced with the branch next the ground, pruning the whole of the old straggling spurs close down to their base. I next took the third branch from the ground, and so on with every alternate one to the top of the wall or rail, leaving the others untouched, with the exception of removing the previous summer's young wood. After vegetation had commenced, a host of young acions burst from the branches whose spurs had been removed. I had the points of these shoots taken off with a pair of box shears, but not too closely. This treatment improved considerably both the size and flavour of the fruit on the unpruned branches. In the spring of 1847, I had the remaining branches pruned in the same way as the others, and the last season's young spray cut off the branches whose spurs were pruned off the previous year. Being aware that the soil in the borders was in good order, and that the roots were now capable of supplying more nourishment than the trees in their then almost denuded condition were capable of appropriating, in the end of March I had the roots cut carefully away by opening a trench round the tree at the distance of 4 or 5 feet from the stem, according to the sizes and age, &c. of the trees. After dressing the ends of the attached roots with a knife, the trenches were filled in again, putting a little leaf-mould next the roots. This had the effect of balancing the supply of sap to the demand. During the second year after pruning, there were a few Apples on the first pruned branches, which, being from young vigorous buds, and in close contact with the wall, were of large size and excellent in quality. In 1848 the trees covered the walls with fine healthy foliage, and there was a fair sprinkling of fruit on the branches first operated on, and this year an excellent crop of large fruit was gathered from them. A few trees of the same varieties were left in the state in which I first found them, and the contrast between the fruit on them and that on the thorough pruned trees was very striking. In very cold and dry weather in the early part of summer the quality of fruit is much deteriorated by the sap having to go through all the zig zag ramifications of old clustered spurs, and it is much more exposed to sudden changes of temperature by being at such a distance from the wall, to say nothing respecting the beautiful appearance of both fruit and foliage on close pruned trees.—A. Walker, Mayen, Banffshire, N.B.
—Gardeners' Chronicle.

Above is an article Alexander wrote in the Banffshire Journal in 1849 about pruning at Mayen.