A farmhouse near Gartmore

The life story of a farm near Gartmore
Drymen parish, Stirlingshire

A sample house biography by Rory J Dench

How to read this story

A farmhouse near Gartmore is a farm in the parish of Drymen, Stirlingshire, near Gartmore [HES LB48875, for the parish]. The farmhouse is not a listed building. Its story comes from the name, the land, one dated letter and the first edition six-inch map.

Each fact has a source tag in square brackets, and the sources are listed at the end. Where a story is only remembered, and no record has been read, the text says so.

This sample stops at 1925. The years after that belong to the family, and nothing about them goes in without their say-so.

1. The name and the ruined chapel

The name is Gaelic. Scholars read it as *caibeal làraich*, "ruined chapel" [JSNS].

The same study counts it as one of four chapels said to have belonged to Inchmahome Priory, the island priory on the Lake of Menteith [JSNS]. Two nearby names fit the picture:

- **Dalmary**, about 300 metres to the south-west, from *dail Màiri*, "Mary's haugh", the flat ground by the water.
- **Arns**, about 400 metres east, from *earrann*, "a portion", possibly a share of priory land.

The authors are careful on one point, and so is this book. No medieval document names a chapel here. The evidence is the name itself and what later writers recorded [JSNS].

Historic Environment Scotland keeps a site record for the place that lists a chapel, a burial ground and a house [HES site record]. In 1865 the map printed "on Site of Chapel" under the farm's name [OS VII].

2. Montrose land

The farm was Montrose land at one time [HES LB48875]. In 1716 the Duke wrote of Menteith as part of his "Highland estate". His factor came out each Martinmas to collect the rents from the tenants here [Montrose letters].

One structure on the farm has a listing of its own. The farm bridge carries the farm road over the Kelty Water. It is a single arch of rubble stone, probably early nineteenth century, and was listed at Category C in 2002 [HES LB48875].

Historic Environment Scotland links it, with some caution, to the improvements the Duke's estate was making at that time, which the New Statistical Account of 1841 mentions [HES LB48875].

A bridge like this is easy to walk past. It is still the only structure on the farm with a listing record.

3. November 1716: Rob Roy and the factor

The best-recorded night in the farm's history is told in letters the Duke of Montrose sent to the government on 21 and 28 November 1716. Walter Scott later printed them from the Duke's copies and the originals in the State Paper Office [Montrose letters]. Put briefly, in our own words:

- The Duke's factor, John Graham of Killearn, was at a country house here collecting the Martinmas rents from the tenants.
- On the Monday night, at about nine, Rob Roy MacGregor's men surrounded the house and put their guns to the windows. Rob Roy came in with his pistols cocked.
- They took Killearn prisoner, with £3,227 2s 8d Scots in rent money, the account books and the tenants' bonds.
- Rob Roy wanted his debts to the Duke written off and 3,400 merks paid to him in damages.
- Killearn was made to write to the Duke setting out the demands. His letter is headed with the farm's name and the date, 19 November 1716. It is the oldest document we have found that was written at the farm.
- He was let go the next Sunday evening and was back in Glasgow by 27 November. His books and papers came back. The money did not.

The letters call the building only "a country house". The house is **remembered locally as an inn**, and a record of the inn may yet turn up.

4. The parish

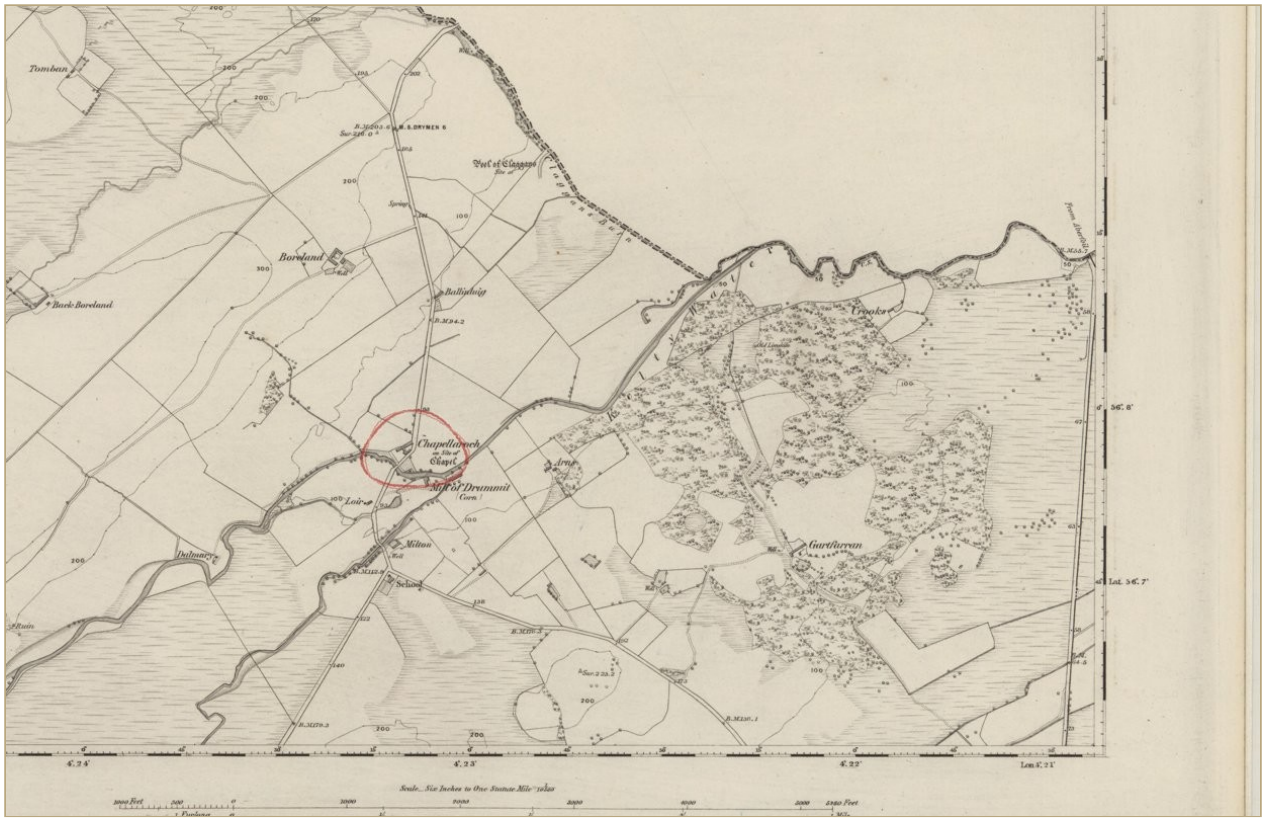
The farm lay in the parish of **Drymen** [HES LB48875]. Baptisms, marriages and burials before 1855 would be in the Drymen parish registers.

In 1869 a plan of the Gartmore estate and part of Drymen was drawn for the Teind Court. It is held by National Records of Scotland [NRS RHP4359].

Gartmore House nearby was the seat of the Grahams of Gartmore. No record read so far ties this farm to their estate, so this book does not claim it.

Today the farm sits inside Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park, which is the planning authority [HES LB48875].

5. On the map, 1865



Ordnance Survey six-inch 1st edition, Stirlingshire Sheet VII (1865). Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland, maps.nls.uk (CC-BY)

The first edition six-inch map was surveyed in 1860 and published in 1865 [OS VII]. It names the farm, with "on Site of Chapel" printed beneath. The farm, circled, sits near the south-east corner of the sheet, with Dalmary about 300 metres to the south-west [OS VII].

Setting the 1865 buildings beside the house as it stands today would show which parts were already there.

What a finished book can include

A finished life story adds what only the people who know the farm can supply, always with their say-so:

- **Deeds:** the earliest title deed or search sheet, summarised, showing when the farm left the Montrose estate.
- **The inn:** what the family remember of the house as an inn, checked against the 1841 census and the map surveyors' name book.
- **The chapel:** any worked stone, old burials or field names that point to where it stood.
- **The records:** the census and valuation rolls up to 1925 read in full, naming each household.

Timeline

Date	Event	Source
Medieval	Chapel said to belong to Inchmahome Priory; the name means "ruined chapel"	JSNS (name and later tradition)
19 Nov 1716	Rob Roy seizes the Duke's factor and the rents	Montrose letters
27 Nov 1716	Factor back in Glasgow; papers returned, money kept	Montrose letters
Early 1800s (probably)	Farm bridge built over the Kelty Water	HES LB48875
1841	New Statistical Account notes the Duke's estate improvements	HES LB48875
1860	Farm surveyed for the six-inch map	OS VII
1865	Map published, marking the farm "on Site of Chapel"	OS VII
1869	Teind Court plan of the Gartmore estate and part of Drymen	NRS RHP4359
2002	Farm bridge listed, Category C	HES LB48875

Sources

- **[HES LB48875]** Historic Environment Scotland, listed building record for the farm bridge, portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB48875. Facts put in our own words; no listing text is copied.
- **[HES site record]** Historic Environment Scotland site record: chapel, burial ground, house, Drymen.
- **[JSNS]** "Place-names and the Medieval Church in Menteith", *Journal of Scottish Name Studies*, clog.glasgow.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/JSNS.
- **[Montrose letters]** Letters of the Duke of Montrose, 21 and 28 Nov 1716, with Killearn's letter of 19 Nov 1716, printed in the appendix to Walter Scott's *Rob Roy*. University of Glasgow STELLA project.
- **[OS VII]** Ordnance Survey six-inch 1st edition, Stirlingshire Sheet VII (surveyed 1860, published 1865), maps.nls.uk/view/228780946. National Library of Scotland, CC-BY.
- **[NRS RHP4359]** National Records of Scotland, RHP4359, plan of the Gartmore estate and part of Drymen parish, 1869.

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