

Using maps to investigate Scotland's rural past

Detailed maps of Scotland have been created from the 16th century onwards and are a fantastic resource for charting the many changes that have taken place in the countryside, showing the rise and fall of particular places, regions and features through time. By comparing maps printed at different times we can find out a lot of clues to help us build a picture of how people lived in the past. We can find out where they built their houses, where they grew their crops and where they grazed and housed their animals. Maps show us the size of the communities they lived in and the sorts of environmental conditions they had to survive in.

When investigating a rural settlement site archaeologists will study a range of historic and modern maps to see if they can identify what the site looked like in the past, and observe how a landscape developed over time and record how settlements grew, changed and eventually became abandoned.

The following map showing the Spittal of Glenmuick has been used in this case study, along with suggested discussion ideas of how to use it.

- Ordnance Survey 1st edition – Aberdeenshire 1869, sheet cviii

Locating Spittal of Glenmuick

Use an Ordnance Survey map to locate the Spittal of Glenmuick. Its national grid reference is **NO308849**.

You can find Spittal of Glenmuick on the Ordnance Survey Landranger Map, sheet 44 Ballater & Glen Clova, scale 1:50 000, and on the Ordnance Survey Explorer Map, sheet 388 Lochnagar, Glenmuick & Glen Clova, scale 1:25 000

or use the following online resources:

<http://getamap.ordnancesurvey.co.uk>. This allows you to input the national grid reference to see a 1:25000 scale map of the site

Google maps: <http://maps.google.co.uk>

Google Earth: <http://earth.google.com>

Live Local: <http://maps.live.com/>

Multimap: www.multimap.com

Look at a modern map

- Talk about the kind of landscape the site is located in today. Has it always looked as it does now?
 - Spittal of Glenmuick now has forestry plantations close by. Prior to this the site was surrounded by moorland. Further back in time, when the township was occupied it would have sat within a farming landscape with cultivated fields, pasture and open moorland.
- Try to find the nearest modern settlement.
 - The nearest town is Ballater to the northeast of the Spittal of Glenmuick, but there are small settlements scattered throughout Glenmuick. In the past there were numerous townships throughout the glen on either side of the River Muick.

Ordnance Survey 1st Edition Map– Sutherland 1878, sheet xliv

The Ordnance Survey began mapping Scotland in 1843, at a scale of six inches to one mile. These maps are called the first edition Ordnance Survey maps. They are useful for tracing deserted rural settlements because they span a period when many old townships and farmsteads were abandoned.

The six-inch scale is large enough to show individual buildings and the maps distinguish between those which are roofed and those which are not: roofed buildings are shaded in dark ink and unroofed buildings shown in outline only. The unroofed buildings generally indicate houses and outbuildings that were recently deserted at the time of survey. Very decayed buildings were sometimes depicted as '*Ruins*', or not shown at all.

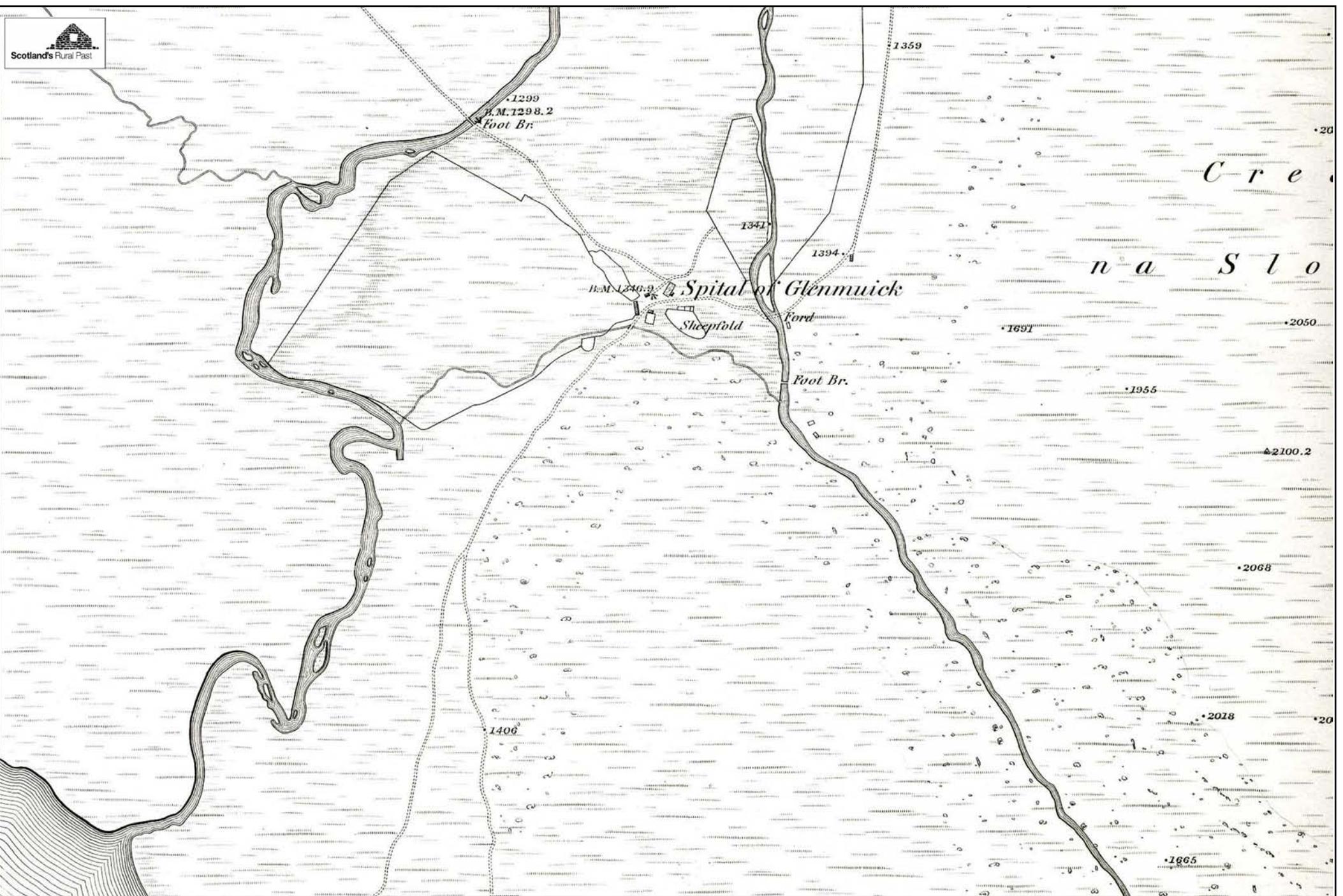
Use the Ordnance Survey 1st edition map to study the site and compare it with the aerial photographs and archaeological plan. The following questions give ideas for discussion with your class.

Examples of how to use this resource

- How many buildings are shown on this map?
 - There are seven buildings and five enclosures, one of which is annotated as a sheepfold shown on the Ordnance Survey 1st edition map.
- Are the buildings roofed or unroofed?
 - Four of the buildings have been drawn as shaded rectangles, the symbol for an unroofed building, and three buildings are drawn as unshaded rectangles, the symbol for a roofed building. The roofed buildings are located in a cluster with the enclosures. The unroofed buildings are to the east, across the river. One is below the letter "F" in Ford, and a further two are nestled in a bend in the river below the words "Foot Bridge".
- Why have these buildings lost their roofs?
 - The buildings have lost their roofs because sometime before 1869, when the map was drawn, the people who once lived in them abandoned them. Without anybody to live in them and repair them they soon decay and lose their roofs.
- Where have all the other buildings gone?
 - The mapmakers only drew the remains of buildings which survived above a certain height. Anything less than 1 foot in height was not surveyed and drawn. The mapmakers were not archaeologists wanting to record ruined buildings, so they only drew a few of the buildings in Spittal of Glenmuick to give a flavour of the site. Also, they could only survey what they could see – perhaps the site was covered in bracken when they went there.

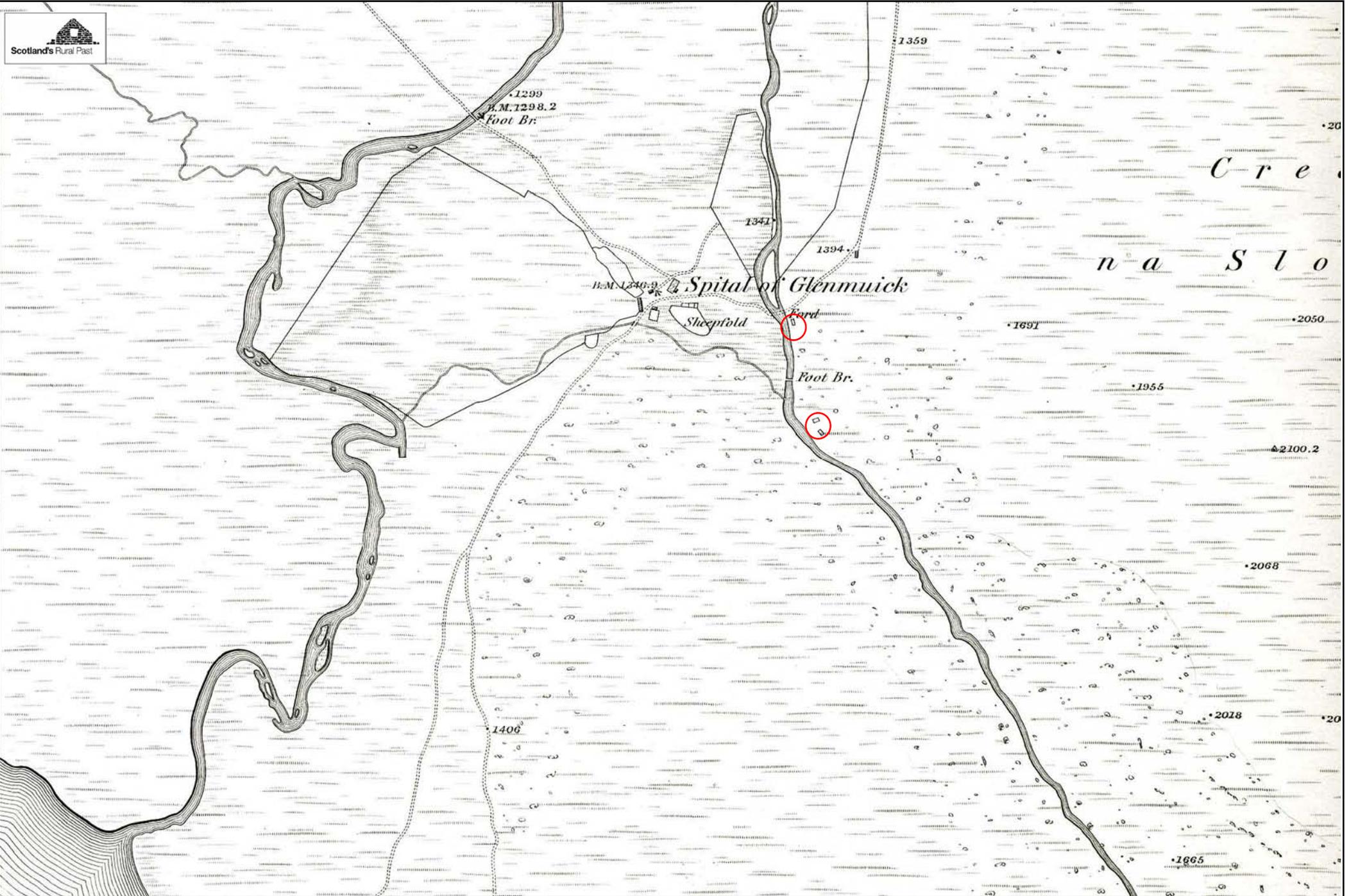
Further ideas

- Use the National Library of Scotland's maps website to find Glenmuick on two other historic maps
 - Gordon <http://www.nls.uk/maps/early/gordon06.html>
 - Blaeu http://www.nls.uk/maps/early/blaeu/blaeu_graphic_index_scotland.html
 - Robertson <http://www.nls.uk/maps/early/570.html>
- Use <http://www.oldmaps.co.uk> to see what the area around your school looked like in the past.
- Draw a map of your school and surrounding area as it looks now, and as you think it might look in 250 years time. Design an appropriate key to go with the maps.



Spittal of Glenmuick

Map base First Edition OS Aberdeenshire 1869, sheet cviii



Spittal of Glenmuick - locations of unroofed buildings

Map base First Edition OS Aberdeenshire 1869, sheet cviii