

Ordnance Survey 1854

No present day farmhouse. At this time Earnest Cottage was probably the farmhouse. Note the building to the right & left of the site of the present farmhouse.

Note. Ainslie's map of 1775 indicates the mill with a O as per the map key.

Thirlage

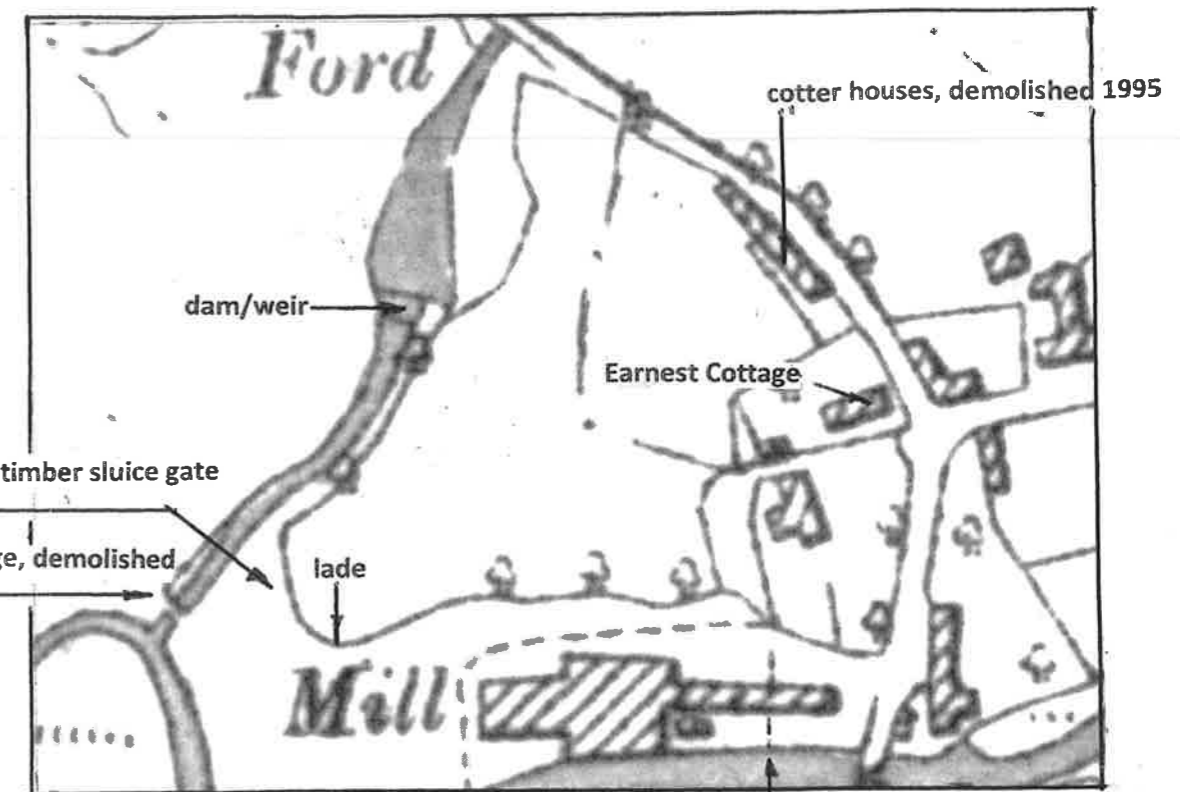
Thirlage was a feudal servitude under Scots law, by which the Laird (superior) could force all of those vassals living on his lands to bring their grain to his mill to be ground. The law ensured that all the grain the vassals produced could be measured and thus taxed. The area over which the mill had thirlage was called the sucken and the vassals called suckeners.

Suckeners were also tied to assist with the repairs to the mill, its lade and weir or dam, such trees as Beech & Hornbeam were grown as crop for repairs to the mill machinery. Suckeners would assist with the conveying of new millstones, often an arduous job requiring a minimum of 4 men to transport the stone on a wooden axle called a mill wand. Local roads were often built of a width suitable for such a job.

The income of the miller was based upon a portion of the tenants grain which he was legally entitled to and this was called multure. Often an unscrupulous miller would take more than his entitlement hence the country proverb "the miller's sow is aye well fed" Suckeners who refused to take their grain to their mill would be fined.

The miller under the law had the right to search out and break hand querns which he suspected were being used to avoid the grain being brought to his mill, hence why so many broken querns have been discovered during archaeological digs.

Suckeners would also often donate a small amount of their grain to help the poor by placing it in a bag at the mill.



Ordnance Survey 1893

Present farmhouse built (circa 1870)

French Burr millstone & timber sluice gate found 1995
single arched stone bridge, demolished 1996

The 1799 Thirlage Act gave suckeners the right to buy themselves out of the practice with a one off payment, however not all could afford this and the practice remained enforce for many years after. Many mills fell into disuse due to the tenants freedom to choose a cheaper or perhaps closer mill. Thirlage in Scotland was only finally abolished on the 28th November 2004 by the Abolition Of Feudal Tenure etc (Scotland) Act 2000.

Water rights in Scotland

The law of private water rights in Scotland became settled in the 18th & 19th centuries. Scots law never allowed owners unlimited rights to consume, divert or affect the flow of water through their lands.

However the exact legal nature of the limitations took centuries to establish. Due to the use of water powered mills which peaked between 1730 & 1830 a robust system of water rights was necessary which stated in law that no mill could be built where it was powered by a source of water diverted from another mill. Water for domestic use was the only exception to the rule.

This is why the three mills :- Lundin Mill Farm, Flour Mill, Mill Wynd (the oldest) and the Flax/later Oil Mill by Largo harbour all had the benefit from the same flow of water, with the tail race from Lundin Mill farm depositing the water back to the Keil Burn on the upstream side of the weir/ waterfall which fed the lade to the Flour Mill, the tail race from which deposited the water back to the burn above the weir which supplied the lade to the Flax/Oil mill.