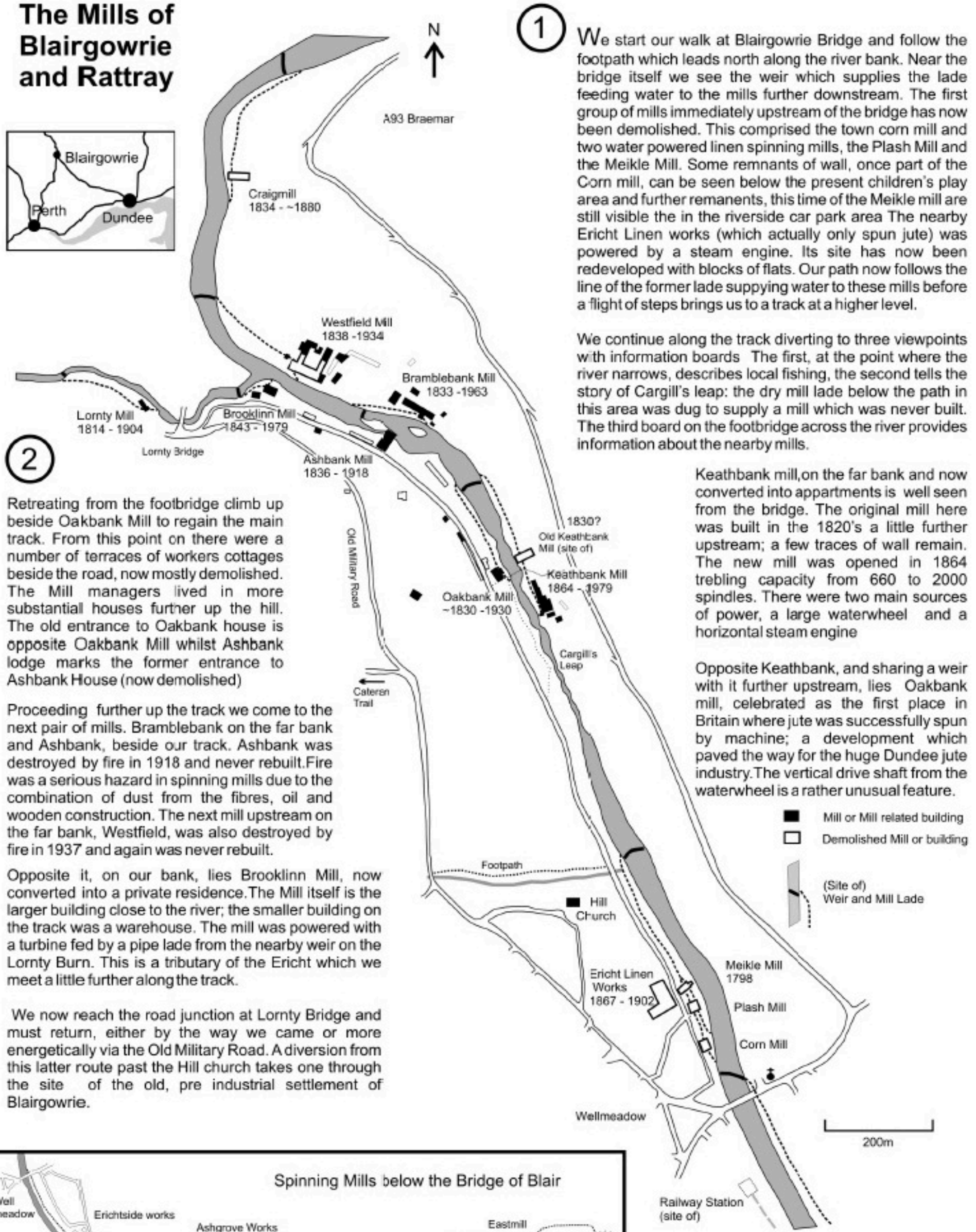
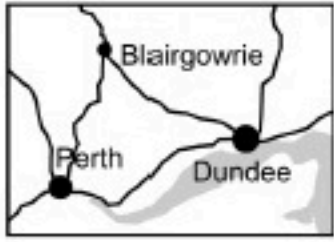


# The Mills of Blairgowrie and Rattray



1

We start our walk at Blairgowrie Bridge and follow the footpath which leads north along the river bank. Near the bridge itself we see the weir which supplies the lade feeding water to the mills further downstream. The first group of mills immediately upstream of the bridge has now been demolished. This comprised the town corn mill and two water powered linen spinning mills, the Plash Mill and the Meikle Mill. Some remnants of wall, once part of the Corn mill, can be seen below the present children's play area and further remnants, this time of the Meikle mill are still visible in the riverside car park area. The nearby Ericht Linen works (which actually only spun jute) was powered by a steam engine. Its site has now been redeveloped with blocks of flats. Our path now follows the line of the former lade supplying water to these mills before a flight of steps brings us to a track at a higher level.

We continue along the track diverting to three viewpoints with information boards. The first, at the point where the river narrows, describes local fishing, the second tells the story of Cargill's leap: the dry mill lade below the path in this area was dug to supply a mill which was never built. The third board on the footbridge across the river provides information about the nearby mills.

Keathbank mill, on the far bank and now converted into apartments is well seen from the bridge. The original mill here was built in the 1820's a little further upstream; a few traces of wall remain. The new mill was opened in 1864 trebling capacity from 660 to 2000 spindles. There were two main sources of power, a large waterwheel and a horizontal steam engine

Opposite Keathbank, and sharing a weir with it further upstream, lies Oakbank mill, celebrated as the first place in Britain where jute was successfully spun by machine; a development which paved the way for the huge Dundee jute industry. The vertical drive shaft from the waterwheel is a rather unusual feature.

2

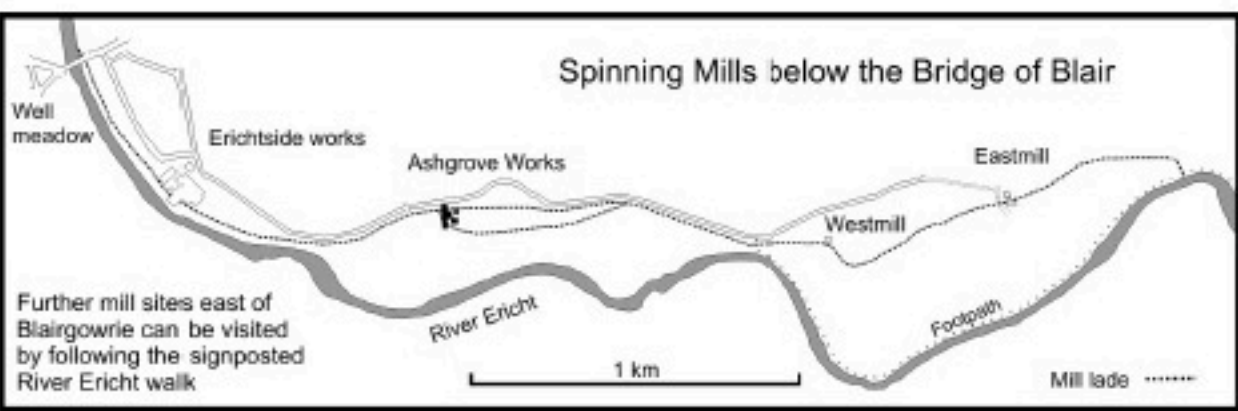
Retreating from the footbridge climb up beside Oakbank Mill to regain the main track. From this point on there were a number of terraces of workers cottages beside the road, now mostly demolished. The Mill managers lived in more substantial houses further up the hill. The old entrance to Oakbank house is opposite Oakbank Mill whilst Ashbank lodge marks the former entrance to Ashbank House (now demolished)

Proceeding further up the track we come to the next pair of mills. Bramblebank on the far bank and Ashbank, beside our track. Ashbank was destroyed by fire in 1918 and never rebuilt. Fire was a serious hazard in spinning mills due to the combination of dust from the fibres, oil and wooden construction. The next mill upstream on the far bank, Westfield, was also destroyed by fire in 1937 and again was never rebuilt.

Opposite it, on our bank, lies Brooklinn Mill, now converted into a private residence. The Mill itself is the larger building close to the river; the smaller building on the track was a warehouse. The mill was powered with a turbine fed by a pipe lade from the nearby weir on the Lornty Burn. This is a tributary of the Ericht which we meet a little further along the track.

We now reach the road junction at Lornty Bridge and must return, either by the way we came or more energetically via the Old Military Road. A diversion from this latter route past the Hill church takes one through the site of the old, pre industrial settlement of Blairgowrie.

- Mill or Mill related building
- Demolished Mill or building
- ▬ (Site of) Weir and Mill Lade



Further mill sites east of Blairgowrie can be visited by following the signposted River Erich walk