

## Glen Buck

Two NOSAS members visited Glen Buck on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2023 to identify and record archaeological remains previously identified by one of them in 2016.

As the exit of the Calder Burn from Glen Buck is via a steeply descending gorge, the usual approach to the Glen is up and over a 245m pass, an ascent of 200m from Aberchalder in the Great Glen. The glen is therefore not easily approached, perhaps explaining why there is no recorded archaeology on Historic Environment Scotland's Canmore database or the Highland Council HER at the time of the visit.

There were no structures in the glen on the Roy map (1747-53). Consideration of the 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Ordnance Survey maps show buildings at the settlement area called Glenbuck, towards the head of the glen. The maps also show sheepfolds on the eastern flank of the glen, which were not visited during this visit.

The roofed buildings shown on the 1876 1<sup>st</sup> edition map were identified during this visit as ruins, described in detail later. By the time of the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition in 1899, the northern building was still roofed. However, the southernmost building had fallen out of use to be replaced by a new building approximately 100m to the east. That new building is now an openly accessible mountain bothy.

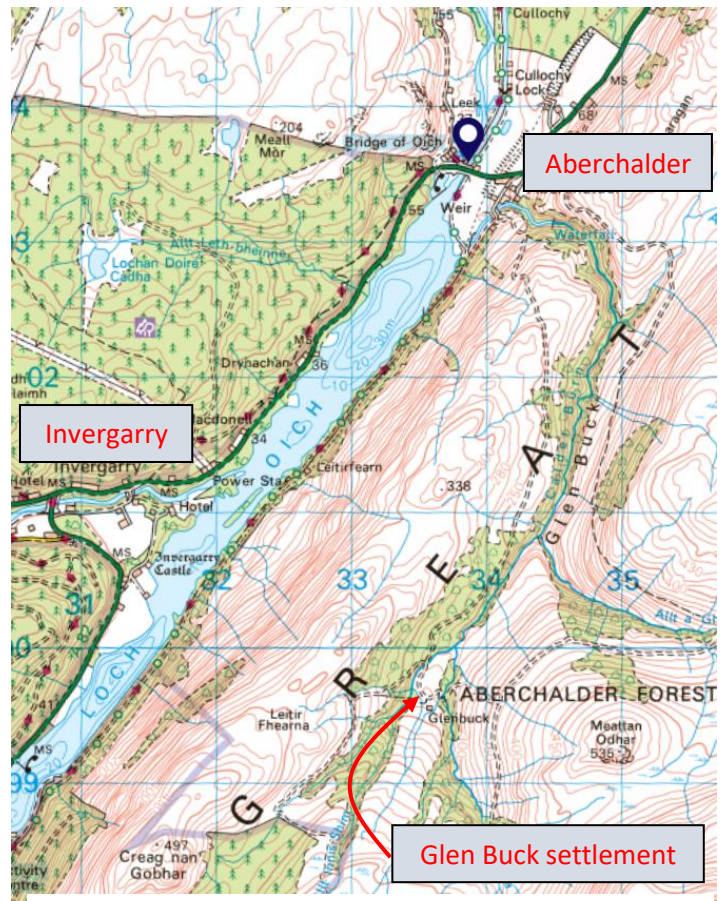


Fig 1: Current 1:50000 OS Map of Glen Buck

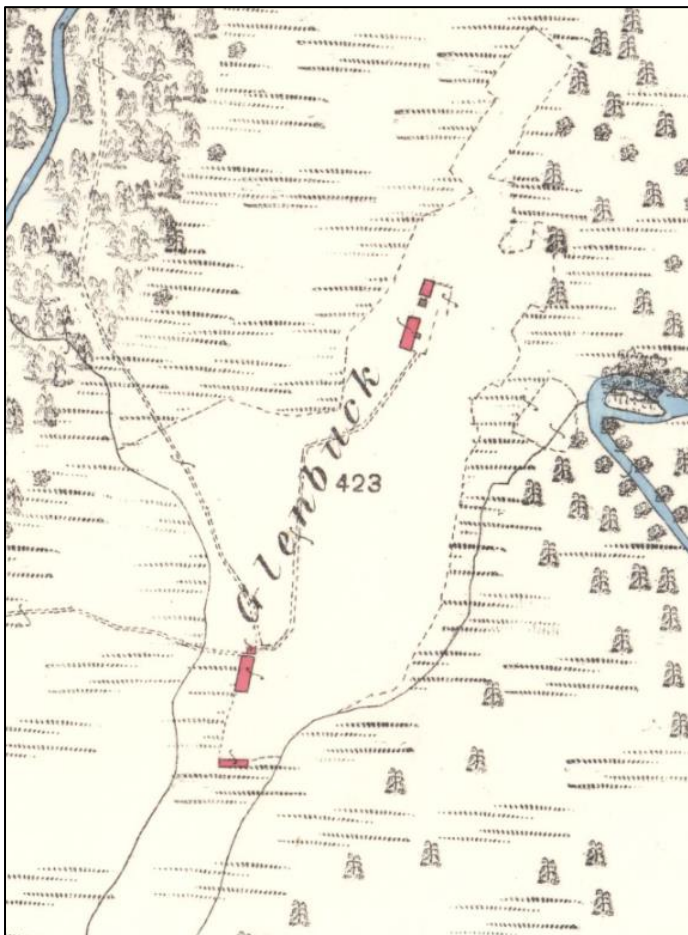


Fig 2: 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 25'' OS Map, 1876

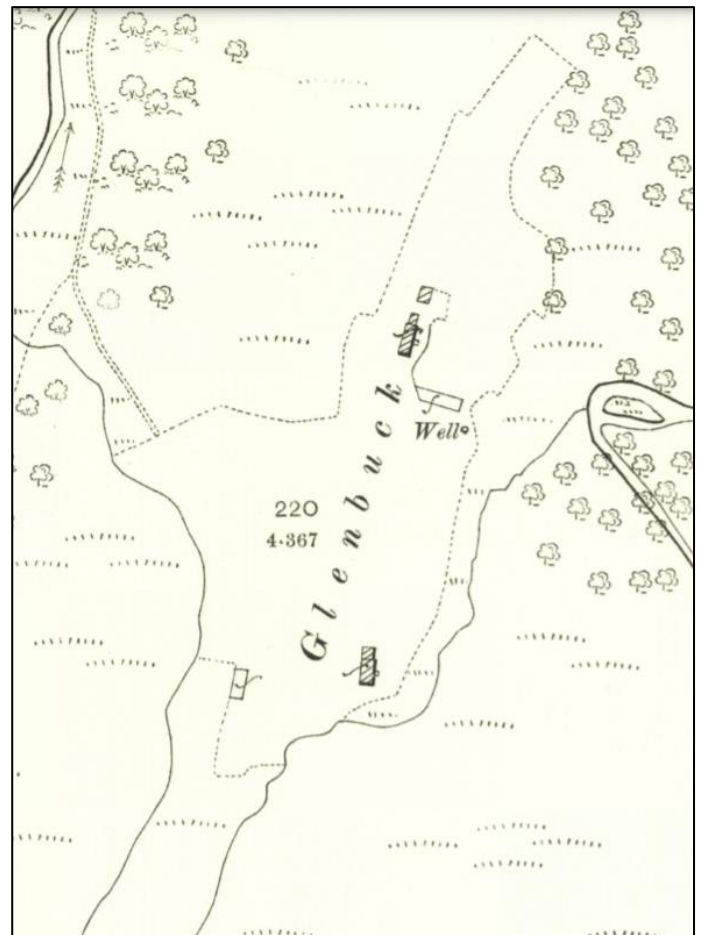


Fig 3: 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 25'' OS Map, 1899



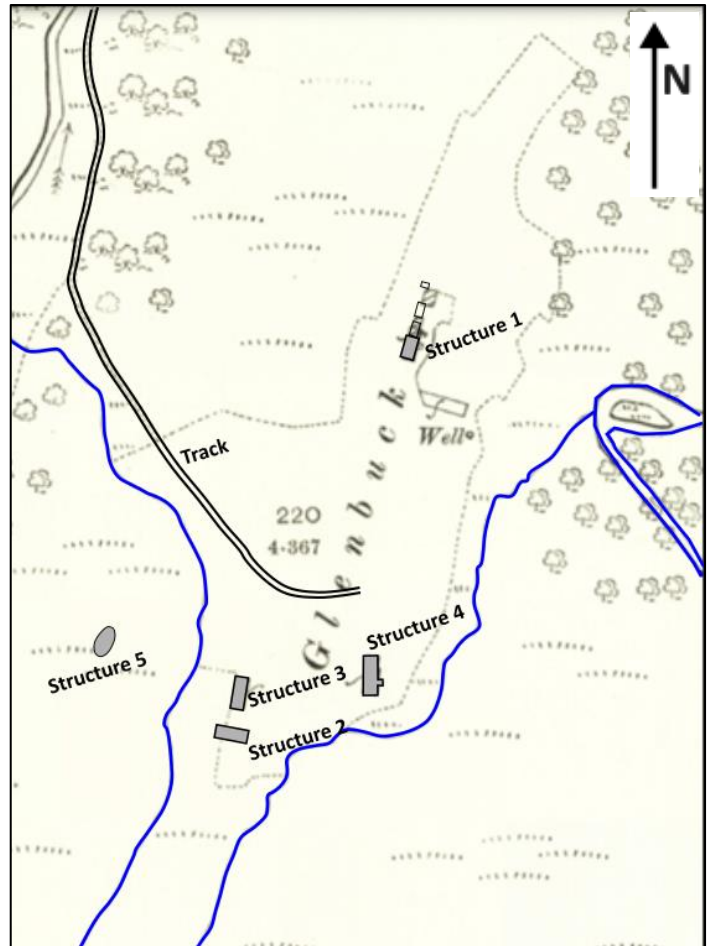
The head of Glen Buck, at its southern end, contains a flat area of ground, 290m asl, bordered by the Calder Burn to the west and an un-named burn to the east, with higher ground up to 800m to the south. The burns flow north along Glen Buck, exiting the glen steeply to the west down a gorge above Aberchalder. The buildings shown on the map to the right are the only obvious buildings seen in the glen during the visit.

### Structure 1 centred on NN 33639 99648

The 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> OS maps both show this building as roofed. When visited it was in ruins.

A composite structure it appears to have three components:

The larger, southern, component is a rectangular building constructed with large rounded boulders, external dimensions 8.5 x 5m, orientated N-S. The 0.6m thick walls stand up to 1.3m, highest in the NW corner. There are no obvious chimneys in the gable ends. All walls are surrounded by considerable tumble, the tumble being mixed with slate inside the building. The 1m wide entrance is in the middle of the E wall. The relatively small size, the dimensions and the massive walls suggest that this may not have been a dwelling. It may have housed animals or been used as a store/outhouse.



Adjoining this tumbled ruin to the N is a platform representing the base of a further building. It continues the line of Structure 1 but, at 3m x 2.5m, is considerably narrower and smaller. The base platform is approximately 0.3m high, delimited by a single course of stones. The line is deficient at the southern end of the E wall, probably representing an entrance. The platform may have supported a less substantial building than the main Structure 1, possibly of wooden construction.

4m north of this platform, and in line with it, is a second, similar, low platform, 5m x 2m, of similar design.

20m north of the second platform, and slightly out of line to the W, centred on NH 33628 99696, is a small 1m x 1.5m building of rounded boulders standing to 0.6m high. This has the appearance of a shed, outhouse or even privy.



Fig 4: Structure 1, from the N.



Fig 5: Structure 1, from the E.



Fig 6: Interior of Structure 1, from the S.



Fig 7: Structure 1, from the W.

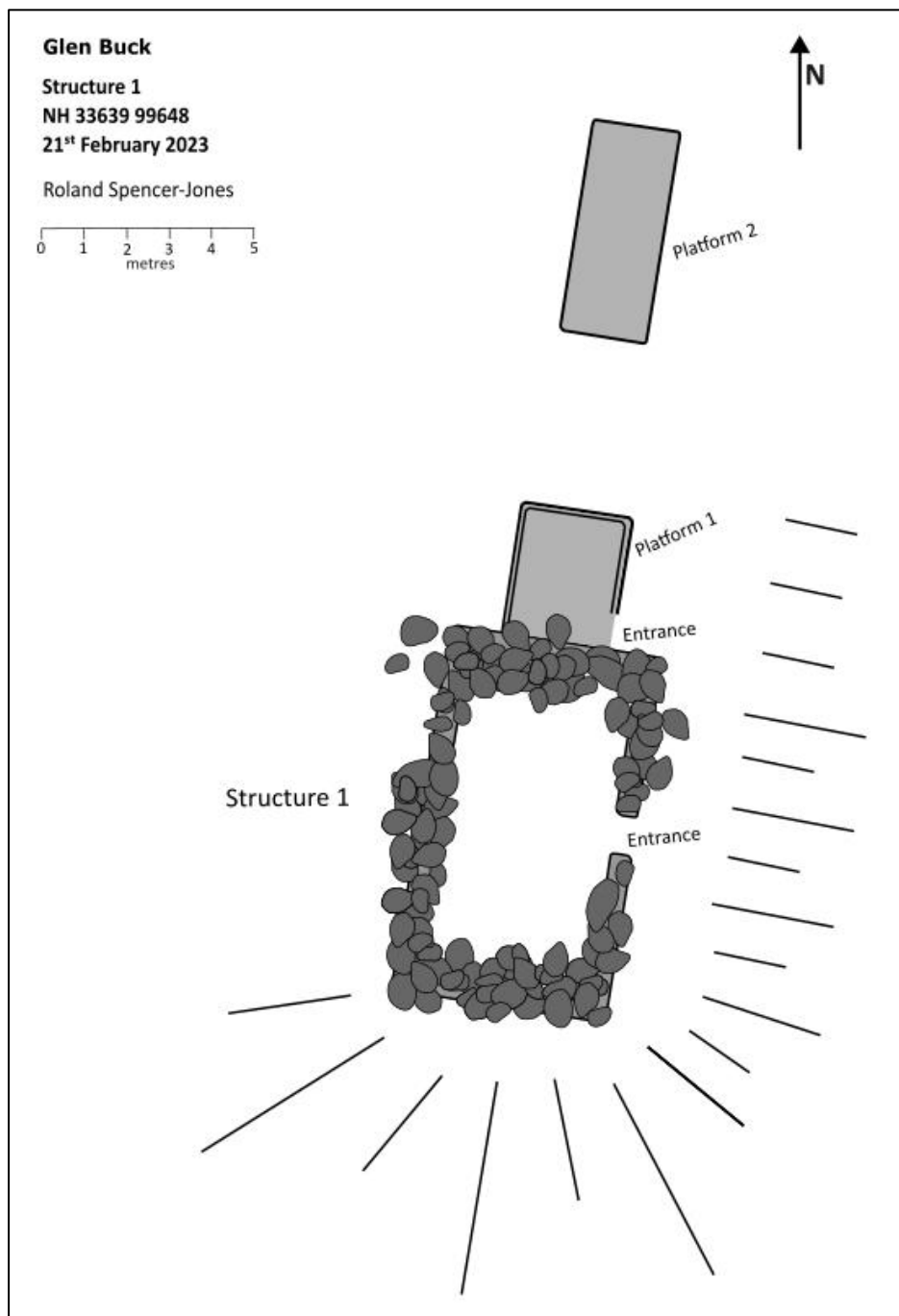


Fig 8: Measured Diagrammatic Plan of Structure 1

## Structure 2 centred on NN 33546 99532

This structure is shown as roofed on the 1877 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS map where it is associated with another roofed building, Structure 3, albeit orientated at 90 degrees different. Structure 2 is missing altogether on the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1899 map.

When seen during the field survey it was represented by a low building, orientated ESE-WNW, 12m x 5m, externally. The remaining walls were turf- and heather-covered, up to 0.4m high. There was a suggestion of a stone base below the turf and a probable entrance towards the E end of the northern wall.

Interestingly for an E-W orientated building there is a small hillock immediately to the S. This would have obscured all but the highest of suns. Maybe that means this was a steading or store, rather than a dwelling.

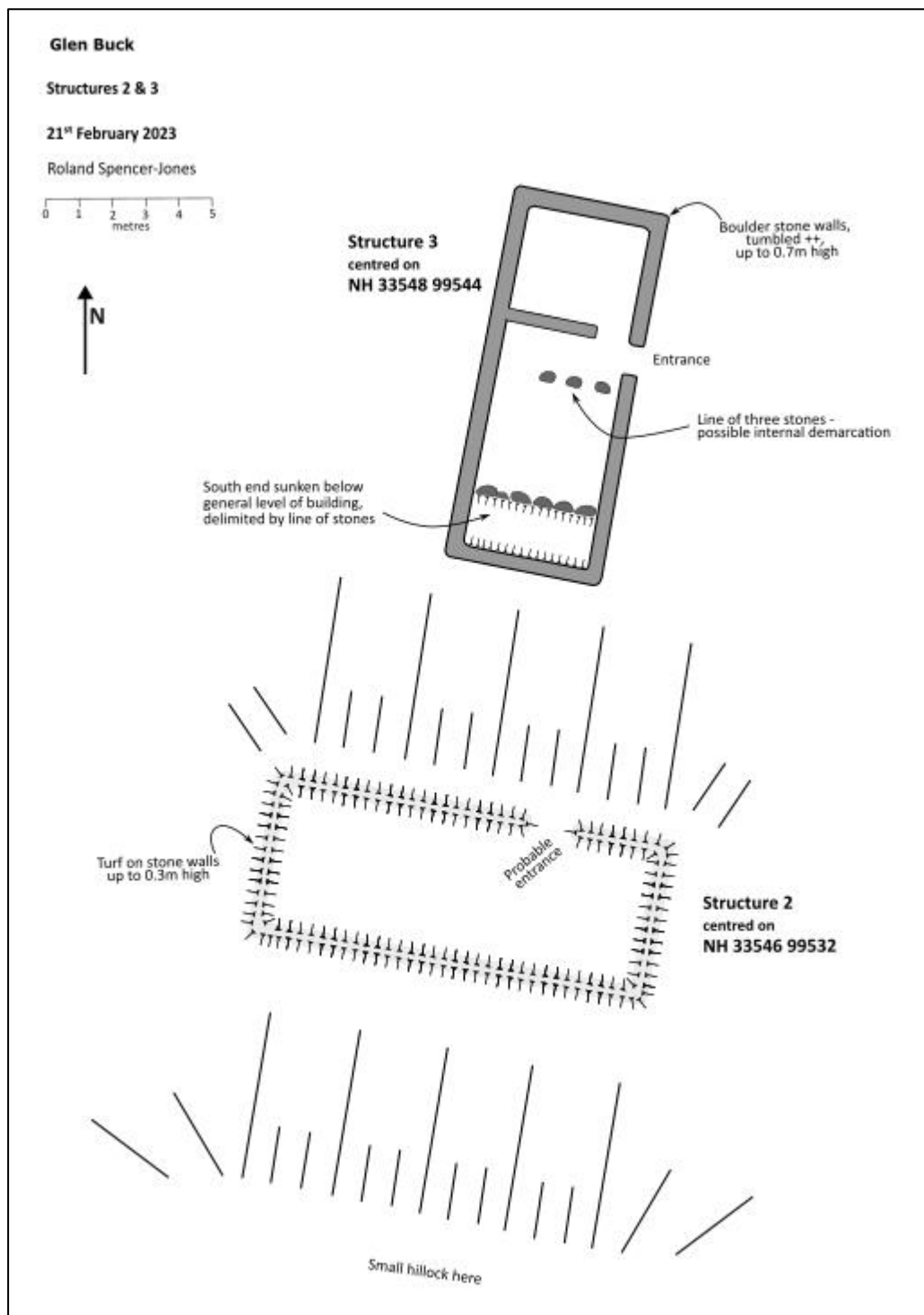


Fig 8: Measured Diagrammatic Plan of Structures 2 & 31





*Fig 9: Structures 2 & 3, from the S*



*Fig 10: Structure 3, from the W,  
the MBA bothy, Structure 4, at L background*



*Fig 11: Structure 3, from the E*



*Fig 12: Structure 3, from the N.  
Note the hillock behind.*



### Structure 3 centred on NN 33548 99544

This structure was shown as roofed on the 1877 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS map and un-roofed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1899 map.

It is a composite structure of three, possibly four, compartments, with tumbled walls of rounded boulders, 11m x 4.75 externally. Orientated NNE-SSW, the 0.6m wide walls stand up to 0.8m tall, highest in the NW. There seems but one entrance to these compartments, evident in the SSE facing wall, 4m from the NE corner.

The northern compartment is 4m x 4.75 externally, separated from the rest of the building by an internal dividing wall, 0.5m wide, standing up to 0.5m high. The wall stops 1m from the E building wall, probably representing an entrance. There are the remains of a cast iron fire surround in the rubble at the northern end of this compartment, although it is not now possible to identify a chimney or fireplace in the north gable wall.

1m south of the internal dividing wall stand a line of three prominent stones. It is possible that these represent a further internal dividing wall, although it is not clear then how animals would reach the building south of this.

The main compartment of the building is 7m x 4.75m externally. 2m from the S gable is a line of stones in the floor, forming an edge, south of which is a sunken trough, the width of the building. This may represent slurry drainage from animals in the main compartment.



*Fig 13: Structure 3, looking NE*



*Fig 14: Structure 3, looking E*



*Fig 15: Structure 3, looking NW*





*Fig 16: Looking S,  
towards the northern end of Structure 3,  
on a prominent knoll*



*Fig 17: Looking across Structure 3, looking E,  
with the MBA Bothy, Structure 4, in the background*



*Fig 18: Looking E across the southern end of Structure 3,  
showing the edge of stones on the left of the image  
and the sunken trough to its right.*



*Fig 19: Looking E across Structure 3,  
showing the internal dividing wall  
and the line of three stones (just to L of waking pole)*



#### Structure 4 centred on NN 33602 99546

As this is an openly accessible bothy, owned by the Aberchalder and Glengarry Estates and managed by the Mountain Bothies Association (MBA), it is possible to inspect the inside of the building.

Essentially, two up and two down, the central doorway is protected by a wooden porch facing north. There is a pantry on the E side of the ground floor, under the stairs, and a landing either side of the stairs on the upper floor. There are fireplaces in all four rooms.

The [MBA website](#) says that the building was “was first renovated in 1981”.



Fig 20: Structure 4, the MBA Bothy, from the E

#### Structure 5 - A probable shieling bothy, centred on NN 33508 99559.

40m WNW of Structure 3, aligned N-S along the line of a low ridge, is an oval structure, 5m x 3m, orientated N-S. The rounded turf and heather walls are up to 0.4m high. The oval is open to the N. Approx 5m to the N of it is a shallow round 2m diameter depression in the surface of the ridge, which appears to be artificial. It is not clear what function this may have had – perhaps related to the dairy activities of the shieling, perhaps a “tatty pit”.

Structure 5 has the appearances of a shieling bothy. Nearby, there are artificial shallow pits on the ridge forming the hillock S of Structure 2, which may have represented another site of shieling activity.

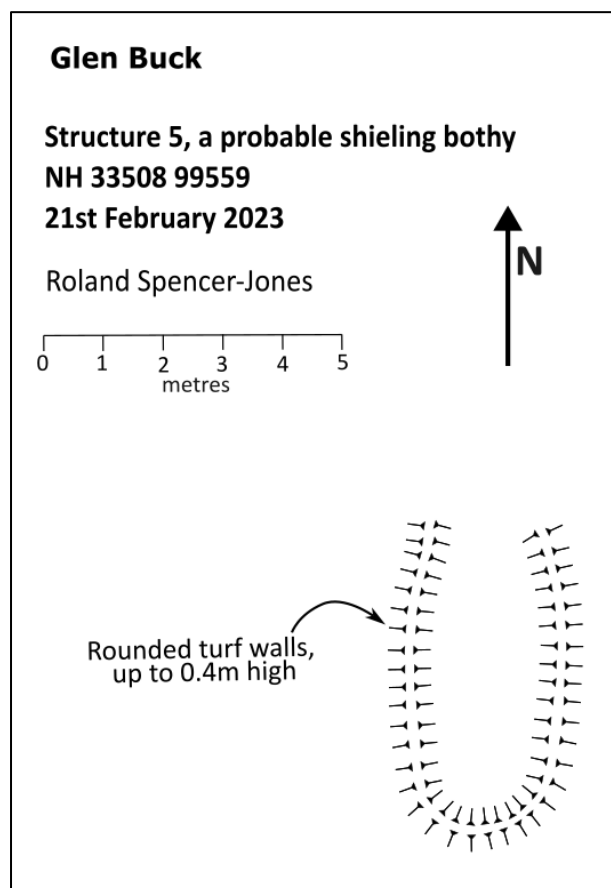


Fig 21: Looking N along the line of the shieling bothy

Fig 21: A measured plan of Structure 5, probable shieling



## Conclusions

Glen Buck is a quiet glen, perhaps because of the difficulty of approach as the outlet of the Calder Burn is through a deep gorge. The usual access track is either over the 245m high ridge SE of Aberchalder, or steeply up and over the Druim Laragan to the north. Perhaps for this reason there seems to be no evidence of pre-historic habitation of the glen, nor farming settlement, before the dwellings identified on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS map were built. Roy records no buildings or settlement in the Glen in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. However, shieling activity would have been expected and in that light it is important that we identified at least one shieling hut in the area of the current buildings.

The Chalder Burn sits in a V-shaped river-bed, above which is a platform of flattish land before the high ground starts. On the steep SE slopes of the glen are the remains of at least two sheep folds. Do the buildings we have recorded relate to sheep in the glen, rather than previous agriculture?

Lastly, apart from Structure 2 which may not have been a dwelling, the other buildings at Glen Buck are orientated roughly N-S, with entrances in the E. Even the shieling bothy is orientated N-S, with an entrance in the N. This suggests that the prevailing wind in the glen comes from the S, rather than the SW, perhaps as a result of the configuration of the hills around it.

We are committed to return to the Glen to record the known sheepfolds and any other structures on the SE side of the glen.

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