

**Archaeological Remains of
two Shieling Sites in Upper Gleann Goibhre,
near Muir of Ord**

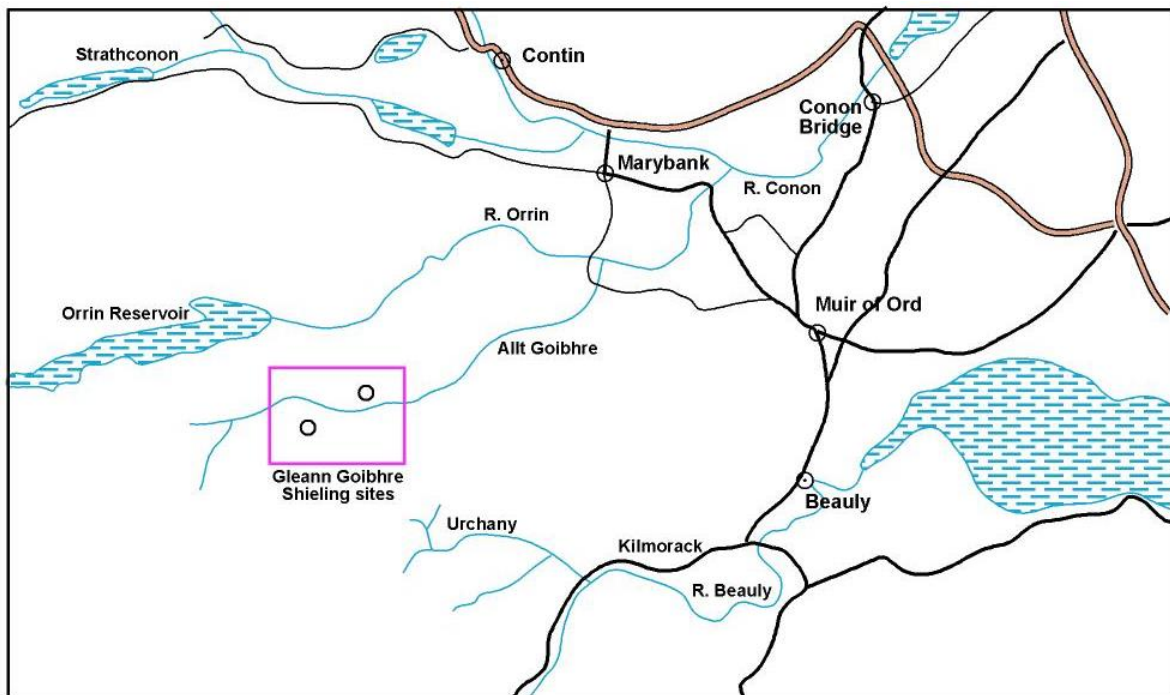
15th June 2003



Looking north from the SW shieling site with *Lub na Luachrach* in the foreground

Upper Gleann Goibhre - Shieling sites

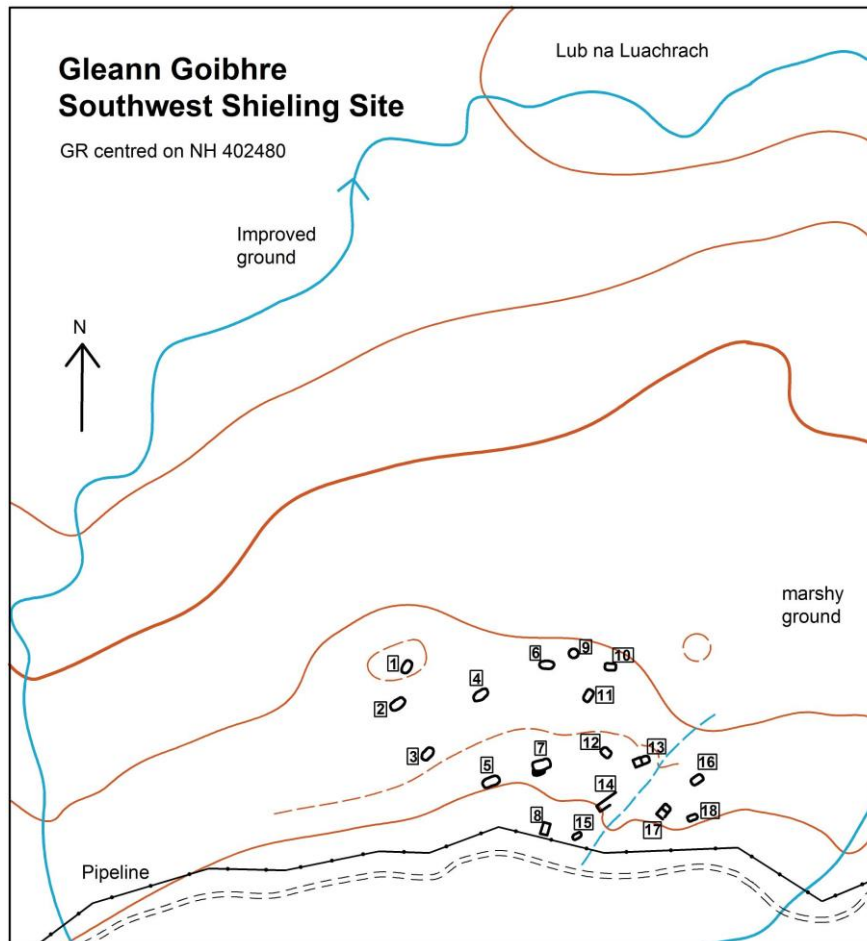
Two shieling sites in the upper reaches of the Allt Goibhre were visited and recorded by Meryl Marshall, Ann Coombs and Annette Jack, on 15.06.03. The sites are 12 km west of Muir of Ord in remote mountainous country at an altitude of 300m, although a pipeline, with attendant access track is nearby. The pipeline catches water from the hills to the south of Gleann Goibhre and feeds it into Loch Orrin to the northwest. The larger southwest site is on the south side of the river and centred on GR NH 4025 4800, the smaller site is 2 kilometres to the east on the north side of the river and centred on NH 4214 4844. The parish boundary between the 2 parishes of Kilmorack and Urray follows the course of the Allt Goibhre, so that the SW site would have been in Kilmorack and the NE site in Urray. The foundations of what is thought to be a shooting lodge were also recorded at the latter.



Southwest Shieling site – GR centred on NH 4025 4800

This, the larger of the two sites, lies on a north facing terrace and comprises the remains of 15 structures, 2 enclosures and a pen. Two different types of construction suggest two different phases to the site. On level grassy ground several oval grassy mounds with stone and turf banks represent the earlier phase, whilst the later phase comprises stone built structures on the sloping less fertile ground. Extensive areas of relatively fertile ground are seen on the valley floor to the north.

Comment - An early plan of 1797 shows a path connect the shieling site to the township of Urchany over the hill to the south. At a meeting of the Presbytery of Dingwall held at Kilmorack: "there was much discussion of the popishe "disdaunters of the Parish of Kilmoracke" and it was noted that in the summer of 1673 "they were dwelling at their shielings" (*Urchany and Farley 1700-1998, Kilmorack Heritage Trust, 1998*)



Shieling 1- NH 40168 48024 - Close to the summit of a small knoll and with a panoramic view of the valley, this structure appears as a depression, 0.3m deep, with a stone setting enclosing an area of 4m x 2m on a NNE-SSW alignment.



Shieling 1 looking towards the SW

Shieling 2 - NH 40164 48004 – This structure comprises an oval stone setting on an E-W axis enclosing an area measuring 4.5m x 2m internally. The surrounding stones are substantial measuring 0.5-1m



Shieling 2 looking towards the ENE

Shieling 3 - NH 40175 47955 – An oval stone setting of large boulders, some of 0.8m diameter, on a NE-SW axis defines this shieling. It measures 4m x 2m internally and is dished at its centre.

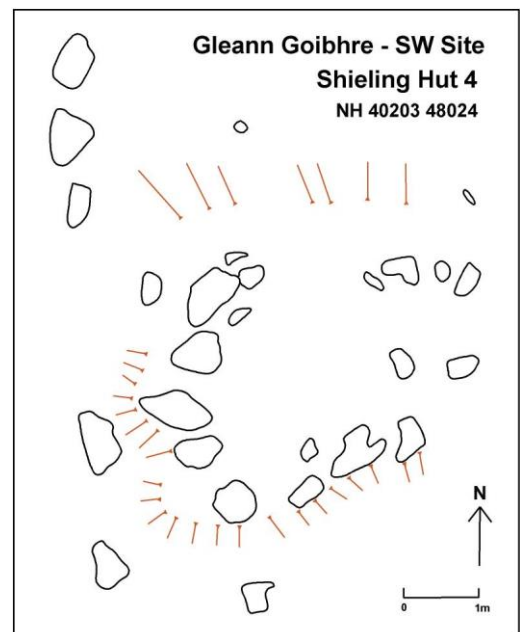


Shieling 3 looking towards the NE

Shieling 4 - NH 40203 48024 – An oval mounded structure on a NE-SW axis, defined by a setting of large well-bedded stones more evident at west end, measures 3.5m x 2m internally. (Planned)



Shieling 4 looking towards ENE



Shieling 5 - NH 40217 47954 – A grassy rectangular structure on a SW-NE axis measures 4m x 2m internally is defined by turf and stone banks to 0.2m in height and 1m in width with rounded corners.

Shieling 5 looking towards the WSW



Shieling Hut 6 - NH 40242 48021 - An oval structure on a raised grassy mound of 0.4m height with a dished central area. It is on an E-W alignment and measures 4m x 2m internally. Remnants of a stone setting surround and a depression 1m in diameter and 0.3m deep is seen at the NE corner.

Shieling 6 looking towards the east



Enclosure/Pen 7 - NH 40246 47959 – A rectangular structure on an E-W axis, measuring 4m x 3m internally. It has been constructed using a large in-situ boulder 3m x 1.5m in height as part of its south wall. The other walls are constructed of rough boulders; they are generally 0.3m in height and of 1-1.5m thickness

Enclosure/Pen 7 looking towards the SE



Shieling 8 - NH 40251 47930 – A rectangular structure on a slight raised area and abutting the pipeline at its south end. The structure is on a NW- SE alignment and measures 4m x 2.5m internally. It is defined by stone walls 0.3m in height and 1m in thickness at north end, but less distinct at the south. The corners are squared and there is much tumbled stonework internally.

Pen 9 - NH 40257 48025 – A circular stone setting enclosing a grassy area 4m in diameter and sloping to the north.

Pen 9 looking towards the ENE



Shieling 10 - NH 40279 48013 – A rectangular platform on a raised knoll, 0.5m above surrounding ground. A stone setting, more evident at west end, defines an oval area of 5m x 4m

Shieling 11 - NH 40268 47994 - Situated on a raised knoll 0.4m above surrounding levels at south end, 0.8m above at north end, this oval platform on a N-S axis measures roughly 4.5m x 3m. There is little evidence of defining banks.

Shieling /Platform 12 - NH 40278 47962 – A rectangular platform on a NW-SE alignment and measuring 4m x 3m is defined by a well bedded stone setting. The structure is slightly raised, grass covered and has rounded corners.

Shieling/Platform 12 looking towards the SE



Shieling 13 - NH 40296 47959 - A rectangular building on a NE-SW alignment and measuring 5.5m x 2.5m (2m at north end) overall is on an enhanced spur. Substantial remains of stone walls are 0.8m thick and at the south end variable in height from 0.3m to 0.5m at south. There is evidence of an internal partition which perhaps indicates a later building within an earlier one, but this is not conclusive.

Structure/?Enclosure 14 - NH 40275 47936 A rectangular structure on a NE-SW axis which measures roughly 10m x 2m; it slopes towards a small stream at the north end, but there is no end wall here. The NW wall is recessed into the slope and the wall on the southeast side is 0.3m in height and more obvious at its south end. Two large boulders form S end.

Shieling/Enclosure 14 looking towards the NE



Shieling/Store 15 - NH 40266 47925 – This oval stone setting on a small enhanced knoll is on a NE-SW alignment. It measures 3m x 1.5m internally and there is a possible entrance at the SW end.



Shieling 15 looking towards the NE

Possible Shieling 16 - NH 40319 47949 - A raised grassy platform on a NE-SW axis which slopes slightly to the north measures 5m x 3m; some stones are evident.

Shieling 17 - NH 40306 47933 – The substantial remains of a square stone built structure measuring 2m x 2m internally are on the summit of a small knoll. The walls are roughly constructed of stone 0.5-0.6m in height, and 1m in thickness; they have squared corners. There is an entrance in the SE corner. This structure is possibly lying on top of an earlier rectangular structure, evidenced by a platform lying adjacent and to the NE, this is 3m x 2.5m and outlined by a substantial stone kerb, making the earlier building roughly 5m x 2m.



Shieling 17 looking towards the north

Shieling/Oval structure 18 - NH 40317 47931 – This grassy structure is defined by earth banks with some stones. The banks are 0.2m in height, 1m thick and enclose an internal area roughly 3m x 1.5m.



Shieling 18 looking towards the SE

Northeast Shieling site at NH 4214 4844

This shieling site is situated on a south facing slope on the north side of the Allt Goibhre. The site is surrounded by steep heathery terrain but is centred on a sheltered scooped area; in the upper part there is a large enclosure and lower down a fertile, grassy area. The site comprises 4 shieling huts, 2 possible stores and 2 enclosures.

A general view of the NE shieling site looking south. The south wall of the main enclosure is in the foreground and Shieling 1 is on the grassy knoll in the middle distance.



Main enclosure - is in the upper part of the shallow scooped area; is roughly 30m x 30m and surrounded by a very tumbled stone wall.

The largest enclosure looking north



Small Enclosure - Within the large enclosure and at its east edge there is the remains of a D-shaped enclosure or shelter 4m x 2m; it is set against an in-situ boulder and has an entrance at its west end.

Possible Store - NH 42118 48434. Also within the enclosure there is a circular stone setting recessed into the slope; it is 1.5m in diameter. No photograph.

Shieling 1 - NH 42126 48389. An enhanced grassy platform or mound on a prominent ridge or spur. Stones define an oval shape roughly 4m x 2m on a NW-SE axis, although it is difficult to determine the extent.

Shieling 1 looking towards the NE



Shieling 2 - NH 42107 48439. The substantial remains of a rectangular structure are on an E-W axis and measure roughly 4m x 2.5m internally. The structure is recessed into slope at north edge and there is a small entrance in the SE corner. The walls are 1m in thickness and rise to 0.3m generally but 0.8m in NE corner and at the W end.

Shieling 2 looking towards the north



Shieling 3 - NH 42081 48435 A rectangular structure on an E-W axis measuring 3m x 2m internally. It appears as a grassy depression but there is evidence of surrounding earthbanks with some stones; 0.2-0.3m in height, 1m in thickness and covered with heather. No photograph.

Shieling 4 - NH 42060 48444. A rectangular structure on a E-W axis in deep heather on the west side of the site. It appears as a depression with much tumble internally, roughly 3.5m x ?2.5m (difficult to discern south wall). The north wall is recessed into the slope and is 1m in height. Photograph from east.

Shieling 4 looking towards the west



Small Shieling/Store - NH 42123 48399. This small heather covered structure is on an east facing slope to the south of the main enclosure. It measures 2.5m x 2m internally and is defined by roughly constructed stone walls 0.5-0.6m thick and 0.4m in height (west wall 0.7m),. Photograph from east.

Shieling/possible Store looking towards the west



Shooting Lodge or Shelter at NH 42702 48490

The mortared stone foundations of what was probably a wooden L-shaped building are to be found on the north side of the stalkers track 500 metres to the east of the NE shieling site. The foundations consist of an outer course of stonework, 0.5m in thickness, and four E-W aligned stone "joists" forming a platform for a wooden floor. Overall measurement of the platform is roughly 6m x 6m, but it has a recessed area 3m x 2m in the SW corner. A stone step 1m x 0.6m situated at this inner corner, almost certainly indicates an entrance. Remains of a cast iron stove and its pipes are scattered about.



The foundations of the shooting lodge, probably a wooden structure, looking south