

**Report of the Resurvey of a Shieling site in Upper Gleann
Goibhre, Inverness-shire - July 2016**



General view of the site from the SE with shieling 5 in the foreground

Background

In June 2002 three members of NOSAS visited the Gleann Goibhre shieling site, NGR centred on NH 4025 4800, with the intention of surveying and recording it. They identified the remains of 18 structures and produced a report of their findings the following year – see NOSAS website. The site is not on the record even though it was submitted to both the Canmore and HER databases therefore it does not have identification numbers.

A further visit to the site was made in July 2016 and the remains of an additional 15 shielings/structures and a possible enclosing bank were identified – it may be that the vegetation on the first visit obscured some of the features or possibly the recorders are now more adept at identifying them!

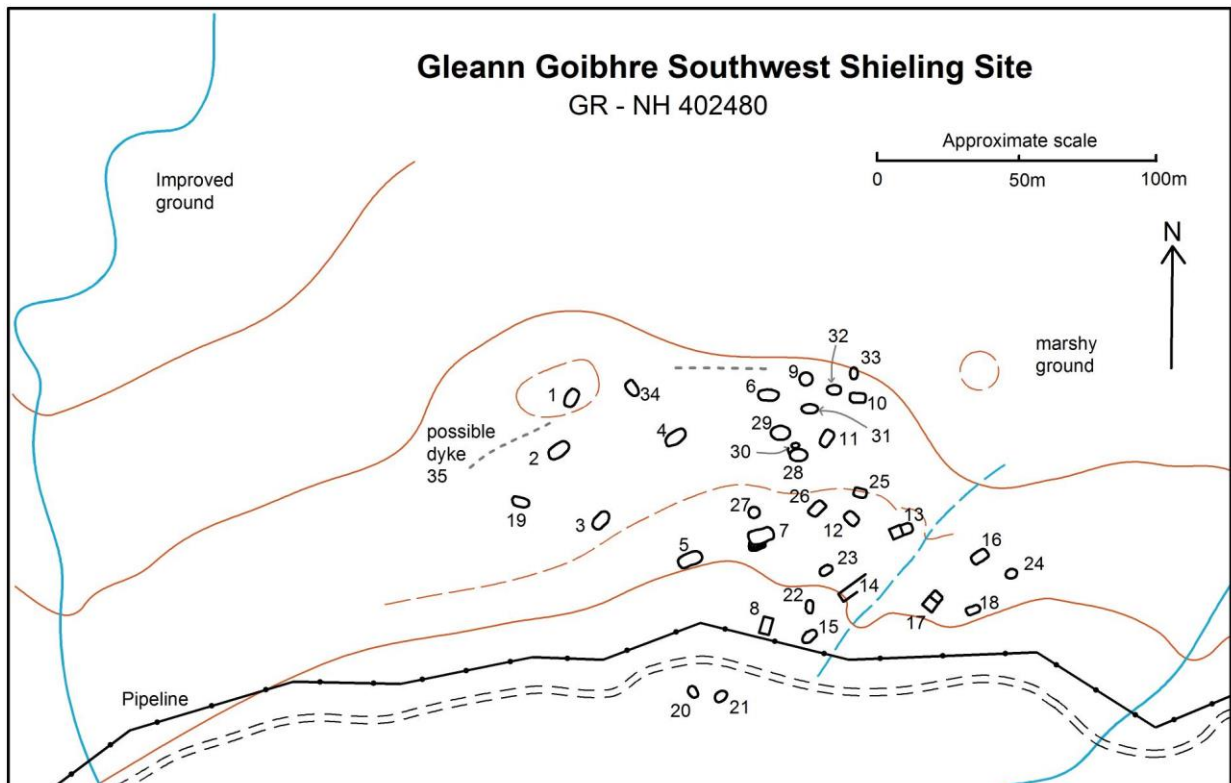
It is proposed here to rewrite the report of the site including both the original structures and the newly identified ones but not including many of the photographs. The original report of June 2003 is therefore still valid; it also includes a further shieling site to the NE.

General Description of the site

The site lies to the south of the Allt Goibhre, on a north facing terrace at a height of 300m. A pipeline with parallel track traverse the south part of the site and it may well be that some of the features of the site have been destroyed by the construction of these. The site comprises the remains of 34 structures and a possible enclosing bank. Most of the structures are huts or bothies but a few may be stores, enclosures or pens; they are situated in an area of fertile grass land, roughly 200m x 50m, surrounded by heathery ground. Extensive areas of relatively fertile ground are to be seen on the valley floor to the north, they contrast vividly with the landscape which is otherwise brown and heathery.

There appears to be three types of hut, possibly indicating three different periods. On the flat grassy area there are several oval mounds up to 0.5m in height (notably structures 10, 11, 28, 29, 31, 32, also 16, 20 and 24) and several platforms outlined by stone settings (2, 3, 4, 5, 16 and 19). Structures with more rectangular form and stone construction are generally on the sloping less fertile ground (1, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17 and 26). Site numbers 1 to 18 are the features originally recorded in 2002, site numbers 19 to 35 are the structures recorded in July 2016.

This shieling site is very much at the northern edge of the parish of Kilmorack, and may be associated with the townships of Urchany which lie over the hill 5 kms to the southeast. A path, marked on the First Edition OS map of c1872 and on the current OS map and which also appears on an early map of 1797, links the two. Interestingly a burn immediately to the west of the site is marked as Allt an Ruigh Gruamaich (*Burn of the Gloomy Shieling*) on the First Edition OS map . At a meeting of the Presbytery of Dingwall held at Kilmorack: "there was much discussion of the popishe "disdaunters of the Parish of Kilmorack" 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)



Structures recorded in the original survey of 2002 are numbered 1 to 18, those recorded in 2016 19 to 35

Shieling Hut 1 - NH 40168 48024 - Close to the summit of a small knoll and with a panoramic view of the valley floor. Appears more as a depression (0.3m deep), although there is a defining stone setting enclosing a rectangular area on a NNE-SSW axis, measuring internally 4m x 2m.

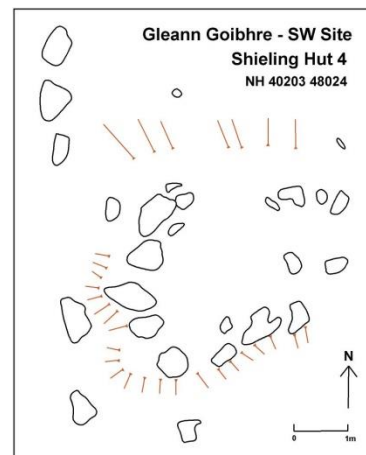
Shieling Hut 2 - NH 40164 48004 - Oval stone setting on an E-W axis enclosing an area measuring internally 4.5m x 2m. Substantial stones surround, some 0.5-1m across and 0.3m above general level of ground.

Shieling Hut 3 - NH 40175 47955 - Oval stone setting on a NE-SW axis, measuring internally 4m x 2m. Defined by large boulders some 0.8m across, most raised 0.2m above general level of ground. Dished at its centre.

Shieling Hut 4 - NH 40206 48007 - Oval structure on a NE-SW axis and on a slight mound. Measures internally 3.5m x 2m. Defined by setting of large well-bedded stones more evident at west end.

Shieling Hut 5 - NH 40217 47954 - Rectangular structure on a SW-NE axis measures 4m x 2m internally. Defined by turf and stone banks to 0.2m in height and 1m in width with rounded corners. Grass covered.

Shieling Hut 6 - NH 40242 48021 - An oval structure on an E-W axis and on a raised mound of 0.4m height. Measures internally 4m x 2m. It has a dished internal area and is surrounded by a discontinuous stone setting. Hollow depression 1m in diameter and 0.3m deep at NE corner.



Enclosure/Pen 7 - NH 40246 47959 - Rectangular structure on an E-W axis, measuring internally 4m x 3m. Constructed to the north of and using a large in-situ boulder 3m x 1.5m in height (at the south end of its southeast wall). Other walls are roughly constructed of boulders and are generally 0.3m in height and with a width of 1-1.5m (with tumble).

Shieling Hut 8 - NH 40251 47930 - Rectangular structure on a NW-SE axis and on a slight raised area. Measures internally 4m x 2.5m and is abutting the pipeline at its south end. Defined by stone walls 0.3m in height and 1m in width at north end, less distinct at south but with much tumbled stonework, squared corners. Rushes internally.

Pen 9 - NH 40257 48025 - Circular stone setting, 4m in diameter and sloping to the north. Grass covered.

Shieling Mound 10 - NH 40279 48013 - Rectangular platform on a raised knoll, 0.5m above surrounding ground. Stones, more evident at west end, defines an oval area of 5m x 4m

Shieling Mound 11 - NH 40268 47994 - An oval platform on a N-S axis measuring roughly 4.5m x 3m. This shieling hut is situated on a raised knoll 0.4m above surrounding levels at south end, 0.8m above at north end. There is little evidence of defining banks.

Shieling Hut/Platform 12 - NH 40278 47962 - Rectangular platform on a NW-SE axis, measuring 4m x 3m. The hut is defined by a well bedded stone setting, slightly raised, grass covered and with rounded corners.

Shieling Hut 13 - NH 40296 47959 - On an enhanced spur. A rectangular building on a NE-SW axis measures 5.5m x 2.5m (but 2m at north end) overall. Substantial remains of stone walls at south end, variable in height, 0.3m (but 0.5m at south end) and 0.8m in width. Evidence of an internal partition could indicate a later building within an earlier one, but this is inconclusive.

Shieling/ Enclosure 14 - NH 40275 47936 - Rectangular and on a NE-SW axis, roughly measuring 10m x 2m, it slopes towards the north where it opens onto a small stream, no end wall here. NW wall is recessed into the slope. Defining wall on the southeast side is 0.3m in height and more obvious at its south end. Two large boulders form S end.

Shieling Hut/Store 15 - NH 40266 47925 - An oval stone setting on a NE-SW axis and atop a small enhanced knoll, this structure measures internally 3m x 1.5m. There is a possible entrance at SW end.

Shieling Mound 16 - NH 40319 47949 - A raised platform on a NE-SW axis and sloping slightly to the north. Measures 5m x 3m. Some stones evident.

Shieling Hut/Pen 17 - NH 40306 47933 - Substantial ruined walls of a square structure measuring internally 2m x 2m, lying on top of an enhanced knoll. The walls are roughly constructed of stone and rise to 0.5-0.6m in height, 1m in width and 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 Hut/Store 18 - NH 40317 47931 - Defined by earth banks with some stones, 0.2m in height and 1m in width. Encloses an internal area roughly 3m x 1.5m. Grass covered.

Shieling Hut/Bothy 19 - NH 40157 47973 A circular structure c.4m in diameter internally with walls indicated by large intermittent boulders.

Shieling Mound 20 - NH 40198 47899 A sub-rectangular structure c.6m N-S by c.4m externally on a slight grassy mound with a slightly dished centre suggesting walls c.0.10m high. Walls are indicated by intermittent stones beneath the turf. One of 2 shielings found to the S of the track this one sits on a flat topped grassy knoll in an area of heather.

Shieling Hut or Bothy 21 - NH 40224 47888 A sub-rectangular structure butted into the slope at the SW end measuring c. 4.5m SW-NE by c.3m externally. There are 2 large boulders at the SW end and 3 visible stones at the NE end set into the turf. The walls are c.0.20m high and c.0.75m in breadth. The ground slopes away from the structure. As site 20 this shieling lies to the S of the track on a grassy area within the heather.

Shieling Hut 22 - NH 40268 47931 A roughly oval structure c.5m N-S by c.5m E-W at its widest externally this structure is visible as a very slight bank c.0.10m high around a hollow in a grassy area.

Shieling Hut 23 - NH 40279 47943 A structure with walls indicated by a several large boulders and measuring c.6m SW-NE by c.4m internally.

Shieling Mound 24 - NH 40330 47938 A circular mound with overall dimensions of c.7m and c.0.7m higher than the general ground level. The mound has a hollow in the centre of c.2.5m E-W by c.2m.

Shieling Hut 25 - NH 40284 47974 This structure is set into the bottom of the break of slope. It is c.7.5m E-W by c.3m externally and has no visible stone but the walls are defined as a slight bank c.0.15m high and c.0.70m in breadth. Generally grass covered there is heather covering the back (S) wall.

Shieling Hut 26 - NH 40267 47971 As 25 this structure sits into the break of slope. The walls are indicated by boulders. The boulders are recessed into the bank on the SE corner. It measures c.5m SW-NE by c.2.5m internally, there is little sign of the N facing wall. The wall (boulders) appear to extend beyond where the N facing wall should be suggesting a possible shelter.

Shieling Mound 27 - NH 40253 47966 A grassy mound is c.8m N-S by c.4m externally with walls c.0.5m high and c.0.75m in breadth indicated by a hollow in the middle.

Shieling Mound 28 - NH 40261 47991 A grassy mound c.9m E-W by c.6m and c.0.50m high with a slight hollow in the centre.

Shieling Mound 29 - NH 40257 48003 A large grassy mound c.9m E-W by c.7m and c.0.5m high with 4 hollows in the mound.

Store 30 - NH 40261 47995 A structure indicated by and oval setting of stones in the turf c.3m SE-NW by c.1.5m on a slight mound c.30cm high.

Shieling Mound 31 - NH 40258 48013 A circular grassy mound c.8m in diameter and c.0.5m high with a slight hollow in the centre.

Shieling Mound 32 - NH 40274 48022 A grassy mound c.6m E-W by c.5m with a hollow c.3m E-W by c.1.5m in the centre.

Shieling/Pen 33 - NH 40279 48025 A structure indicated by boulders set into the turf measuring c.6m N-S by c.5m externally.

Shieling Hut or Bothy 34 - NH 40202 48029 An oval structure measuring c.4m E-W by c.3m and indicated by stones set into the turf

Enclosure Wall/Bank 35 - NH40141 47990 (west end) and NH 40242 48026 (east end) Remains of a possible enclosure wall to the north of the shielings is indicated by occasional boulders.

In addition several other structures were noted in the vicinity:

Allt na Creagach

Shieling hut - NH 4129 4794 Sub rectangular structure measuring 6.9m x 5.4m overall. A turf mound nearby at NH 4129 4797 probably marks the site of a smaller hut (unrecorded buildings identified by MBJ)

Building/?shieling - NH 40615 48196 Rectangular stone footings of a building on the east edge of boggy ground. It is on a N-S alignment and measures 5m x 2m internally

Lub na Luachrach

Building/Possible Shooting Lodge (MBJ's house) - NH 40542 48537. The remains of a sub-rectangular building measuring 6.9m x 4.1m on a grassy platform lie at the foot of a steep S facing slope on the north side of the Allt Goibhre. A stalkers track passes a few metres to the north

Building/?Pony shed - NH 39996 47935 A rectangular building on a NE-SW alignment and measuring c4m x 2m is recessed into a N facing slope and has earth banks to 1m height. An entrance to the west is 1m in width. The structure is adjacent to the remains of a fenced enclosure (GR SW corner NH 39926 4791) and both appear on the OS map

Selected Photographs



General view of the site from the SW showing relationship to the pipeline and the track (2016)

Shieling Hut 1 photographed from the NE (2002)



Shieling Hut 2 Photographed from ENE (2002)



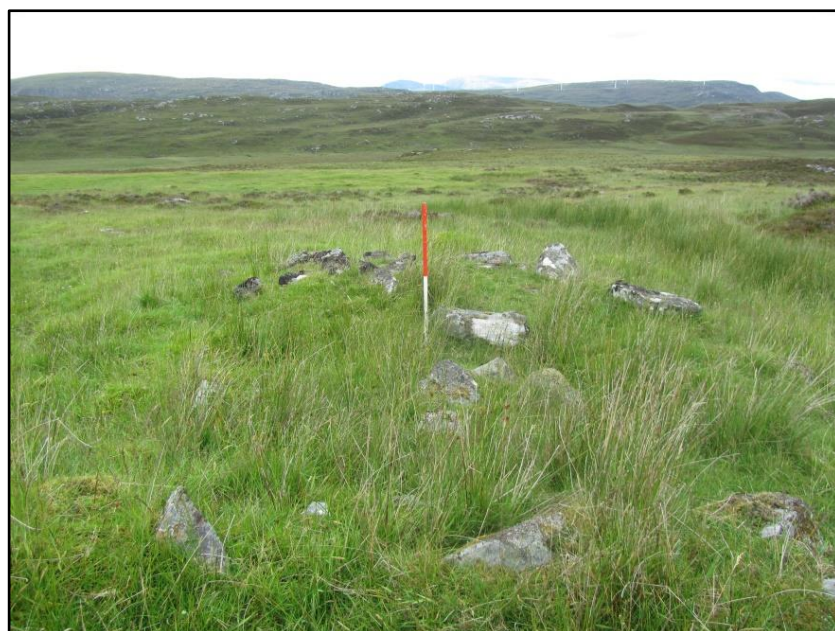
Shieling Hut 4 photographed from WSW (2002)



*Shieling/Enclosure 7
photographed from SW (2016)*



*Shieling Hut 8 viewed from S
(2016)*



*Hut/Oval structure 15 viewed from
southwest (2002)*



*Sheiling Hut 17 viewed from south
(2002)*



*Shieling 18 viewed from SW with
16 and 24 in background (2016)*



*Shieling hut 21 viewed from NE
(2016)*



*Shieling mound 28 viewed from NE
(2016)*



Lub na Luachrach



Possible shooting lodge - at NH 40542 48537 viewed from the W (2016)