

'Parallel Ditches'

a Stalkerpath Phenomenon contribution

accompanying a **NOSAS** Report
March 2026 revised May 2026*

		slides
PD 1	Druim na Sruidh Farrar	7 -25
PD 2	An Soutar	26 -47
PD 3	Sgurr a' Phollain**	48 -54
PD3A	Deanie Burn NE +neighbours	55 -81
PD 4	Gleann Meinich Conon	82 -84
PD 5	Glencarron Lodge Carron	85-104
PD 6	Am Bathaich Quoich	105-119
PD 7	Sron Lice na Fearna	120-121

* PD 2 approach; PD 3A now a major case
**PD 3 now a separate ppt - as unique
for PD extent

... why these mysterious ground marks ?

*guiding your Highland Season guests
to the heights of your estate
- **the summit vista** - (and picnic)
and safely back for a well-earned dinner
... is our best guess ...*

this pair of widely-spaced
narrow ditches extends from a
conventional stalkerpath head
to the hilltop above the Lodge

just visible now, they would
have been bold when cut

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location of all known **Parallel Ditching** sites (PD 1-7)
a tiny population, only found so far in this part of the West Highlands

GoogleEarth kmz has locations
marked up

Achnasheen

PD 4 Gleann Meinich

Strath Conon site

PD 5 Glencarron Lodge

Glen Carron sites

SP 10

PD 3A Deanie Burn NE

PD 3 Sgurr a' Phollain

Inverness

Strathfarrar group

PD 1 Druim na Sruidhe

PD 2 An Soutar

SP 20

Cannich

Kyle of Lochalsh

PD 6 Am Bathaich

short PD lengths within normal paths
are labelled by SP (stalkerpath) code

PD 7 Sron Leice na Fearnna

Invergarry

Glenquoich sites



Paths employing **Parallel Ditching (PD)** - the main cases

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
			path no	parent path no	full km	branch km	PD km %	sec -tions	bends	path top	date
PD 1	Druim na Sruidhe	NH355370	SP9.34	SP9.33	7.5	3.5	0.6 17	4	B D	660m	post-1901
PD 2	An Soutar NW	NH260360	SP9.37A	SP9.37	4.2	2.0	0.8 40	1	Z	640m	post-1907 # 1926 - 1939 ?
PD 3	Sgùrr a' Phollain	NH337440	SP9.45	-	6.25	2.65 *	2.25 85	5	B D C	767m *	post-1907 1926 - 1939 ?
PD 3A	Deanie Burn NE	NH327431	SP9.43A	SP9.43	5.3	2.5	0.55 22	3	B	725m	1901 -1907
PD 4	Gleann Meinich	NH215555	SP9.67	-	7.8	4.5	0.75 17	?	nil	430m	post-1907 1926 - 1939 ?
PD 5	Glencarron Lodge (W and E)	NH056516	SP10.xx SP10.xy	-	2.0 1.1	-	0.55 18	1	B	550m	? around 1907
PD 6	Am Bathaich Glenquoich	NG999075	SP7.27	SP7.26	2.65	1.4	0.22 16	1	Z	740m	1899 -1906
PD 7	Sron Lice na Fearna	NG987025	SP7.44	-	1.25	-	0.25 20	2	Z	450m	1899 -1906

NOTES - columns

- 3 gridref is an approx centre of the PD zone - see GoogleEarth kmz for location pins
- 4 path number per Stalkerpath Inventory (on NOSAS website)
- 5 where PD is within a branch from a (probably earlier) main path - to give true % of route achieved by PD
- 6 length of parent path to fork, plus branch (or of whole path if not a branch)
- 7 length of branch or extension (stage) containing PD
- 8 aggregate PD length (estimated from imagery), as % of total branch/stage length
- 9 number of sections of PD, if interspersed with conventional made SP
- 10 cases where PD sections include distinct, neatly set out, full Bends, Doglegs, Corkscrews or Zigzags
- 11 elevation attained by path or branch, not necessarily highest point of PD elements
- 12 date - bold - PD elements mapped (now or formerly) as integral parts of normal continuous path, thus more datable
- timespans - based on appearance of path including PD in OS map sequence - as qualified in ppt
 - ? : parent paths 1-3 1907 but odd mapping histories, could be earlier than 6-2 ~1901, or any time after 1907
 - # : fork never mapped, parent path predates 6-1 1875 but deleted 6-3, fork and PD extension probably post-date 6-2 and 1-3, thus post-1907, possibly postdate 1-4 thus post-1926-1939
- hybrid status - PD2/3/3A/4/7 have PD-type wide-spaced guide slots, but display some degree of levelling if across-slope, or raised surfacing; may resemble conventional stalkerpath within wider-than-usual ditches

PD 3 : SP9.45 was mapped in two stages - PD is 2.25 km of 2.65 km Phase 2 to Carn nan Gabhalach, beyond which, after an unmade gap (included in overall length), a flight of zigzags gains the final summit 855m*

PD3A : the parent SP9.43 has a similar short PD element near its head possibly 150 m long

PD 4 : length of 0.75 km is whole extension beyond conventional SP end at burn crossing - proportion of true PD impossible to determine from imagery / in field due to severe peat degradation, and probably hybrid PD - wide ditches with some surfacing

PD 5 : SP10.xx Glencarron Lodge comprises two adjacent paths to rim, linked along rim and to summit by PD



Poolewe-Kernsary-Carnmore path

what is **Parallel Ditching** ?

- a pair of narrow slot-ditches quite wide apart, typically 2.5-3.5 m, sometimes more, staying as parallel as they can in the terrain
- the space between them (medial strip) remains untouched - thus no change in level compared with ground outside the ditches - surface character the same
- if a path exists between them, as it often and confusingly does, it is a trod worn by people or deer

slide 1 is classic Parallel Ditching, cut across the slope with no levelling or surfacing

the two cases on this slide are paths with ditches on both sides - but are **NOT Parallel Ditching**

❖ this site is ditched on both sides, uniformly, but the path has clearly been surfaced - thus a conventional **stalkerpath** (*here in fact a Hill Path (HP) as it leads to an estate property, and was able to take small wheeled vehicles*)

❖ this site is ditched on both sides, uniformly, but the median strip is elevated and of contrasting vegetation type and texture - despite long falling into disuse : a causeway probably built up with the excavated peats and dressed with borrowpit material



SP9.35 Meall a' Mhadaidh Strathfarrar

these are *not* Parallel Ditching

- ATV track this side of burn (telltale 'railway junction')
- deer trod (inset) - they often walk side-by-side
 - ❖ not ATV as twin-track becomes single !

deer highway

junction

Parallel "Ditch" ?

as these are clearly not drainage ditches, and are narrower than such (barely spade width), is there a better term ?

- Parallel Slits no, slits are blade-width, as with sand-slitting, invisible ('guideslits' was tried in labelling an early slide set...)
- Parallel Slots better, but a 'slot' can suggest something as short as 'penny in the slot' – 'slotted in'
- Parallel Grooves usually a shallow incision in wood or perhaps stone ... or LP - groovy, man
- Parallel Trenches rather wider than these - and rather military
- Parallel Furrows best option, as if cut by a plough in a field - or in 'moor gripping' (Parallel Grips ?) - but, furrowed brow ?

twin-track
deer-trod

... becomes ...

single track



Parallel Ditching was unknown - unreported - largely unmapped* - until chance discoveries :

- late 2020 in the field - Farrar-Cannich watershed
- early 2022 on imagery - Glencarron Lodge (but after the NOSAS Stalkerpaths visit...)
- autumn 2022 - Sgurr a' Phollain (Strathfarrar)

unmapped* - except where links in a mapped conventional stalkerpath

Parallel Ditching looks like this on imagery...

- distinctive twin 'scalpel cuts'
- not like those parallel deer trods
- very different from typical stalkerpaths
- wider apart than ATV (quad) tracks

... and in the field

- very wide apart
- uniform spacing
- no change in surface level or character

- they are **"tramlines"** to guide you to the viewpoint - and back to the pathhead - or between cut path segments

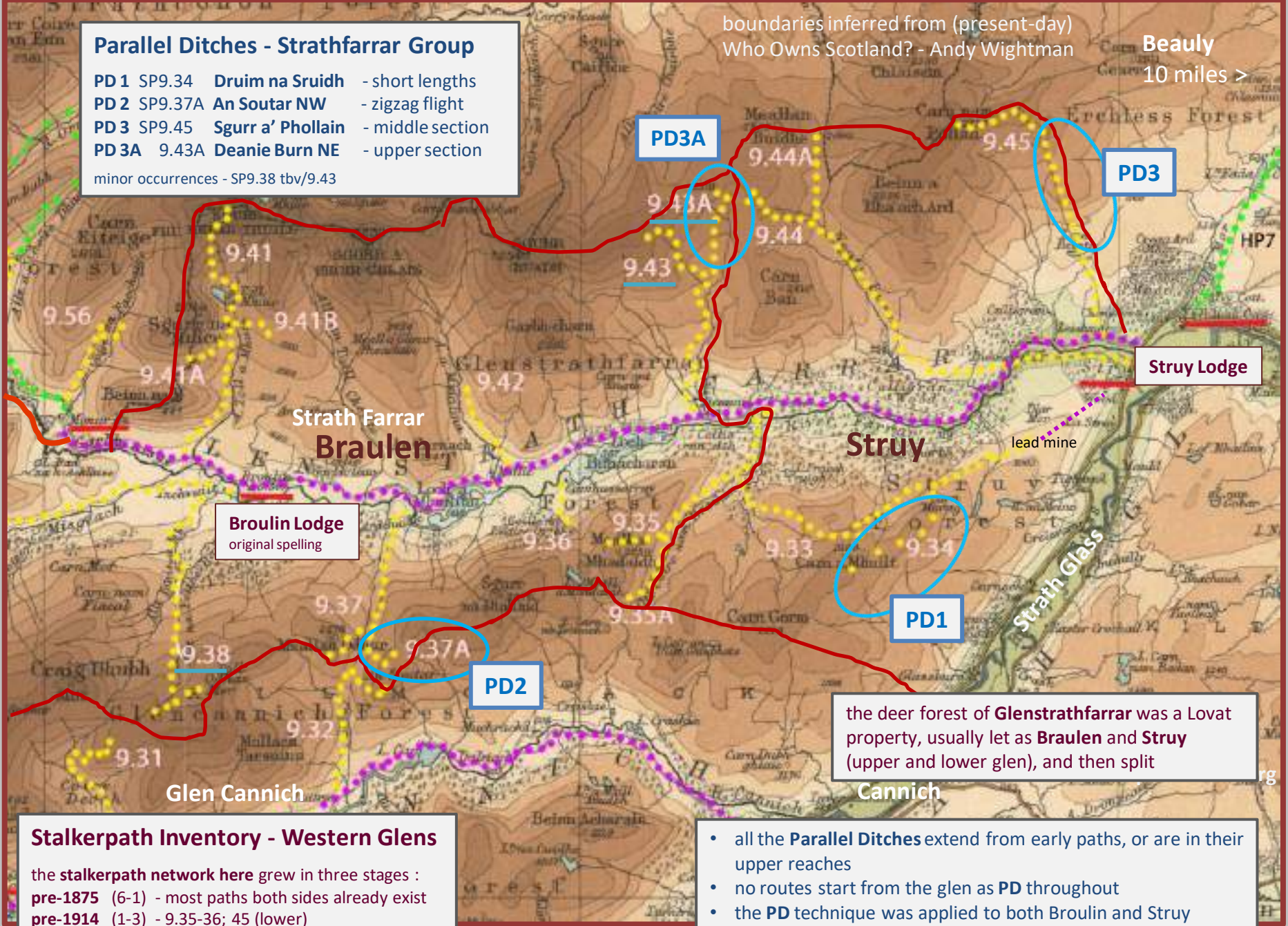


this ppt starts with the first discoveries -
the **Strathfarrar Parallel Ditches Group**

Parallel Ditches - Strathfarrar Group

PD 1 SP9.34 Druim na Sruidh - short lengths
 PD 2 SP9.37A An Soutar NW - zigzag flight
 PD 3 SP9.45 Sgurr a' Phollain - middle section
 PD 3A 9.43A Deanie Burn NE - upper section

minor occurrences - SP9.38 tbv/9.43



Stalkerpath Inventory - Western Glens

the stalkerpath network here grew in three stages :

pre-1875 (6-1) - most paths both sides already exist
 pre-1914 (1-3) - 9.35-36; 45 (lower)
 pre-1965 (6-3) - 9.41/45 extended to high summits

the deer forest of **Glenstrathfarrar** was a Lovat property, usually let as **Braulen** and **Struy** (upper and lower glen), and then split

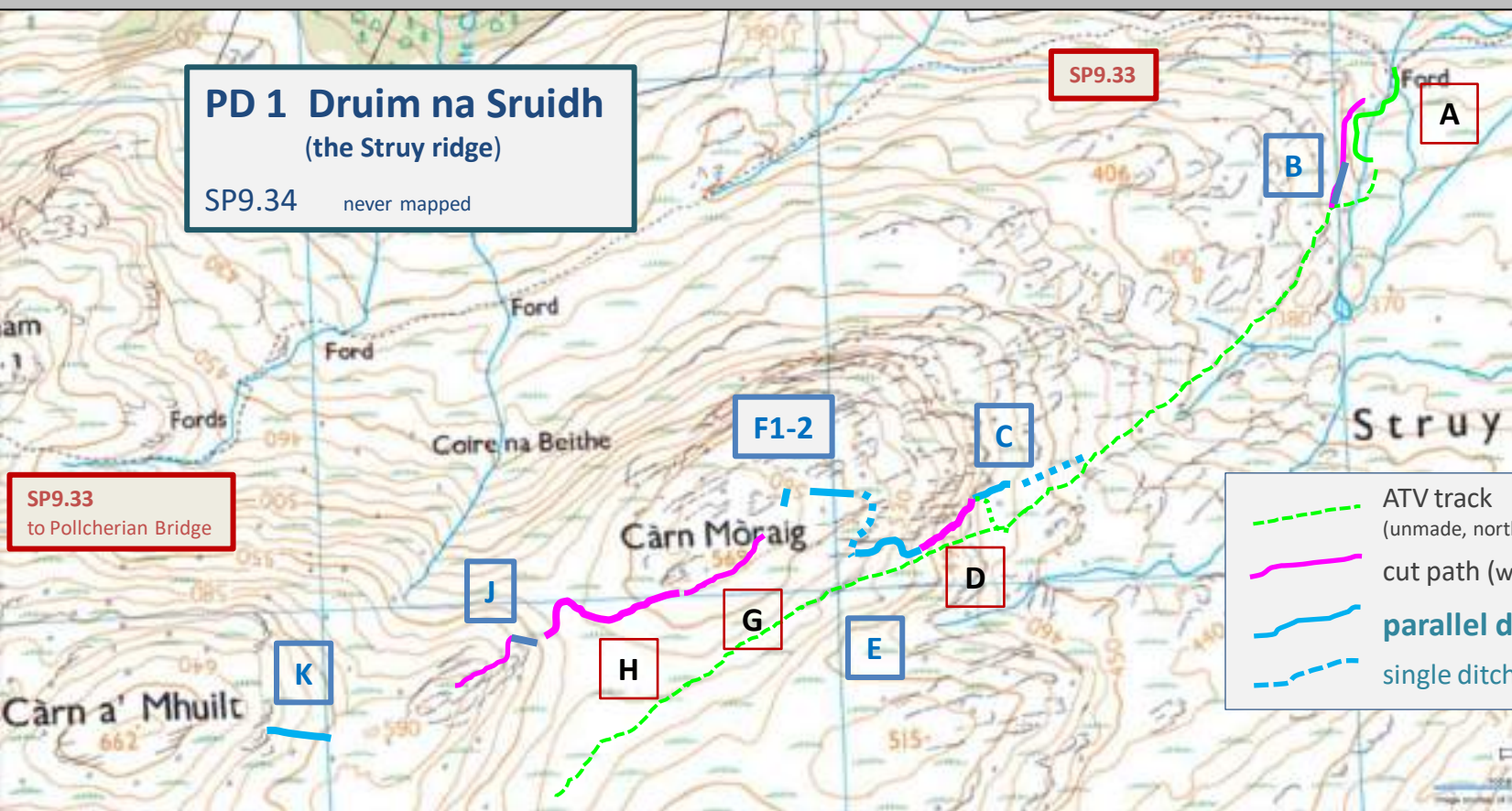
- all the **Parallel Ditches** extend from early paths, or are in their upper reaches
- no routes start from the glen as **PD** throughout
- the **PD** technique was applied to both Broulin and Struy
- 9.34 and 9.37A have never been mapped

PD 1 Druim na Sruidh (the Struy ridge)

SP9.34 never mapped

SP9.33

Struy
lead mine
400 m >>>



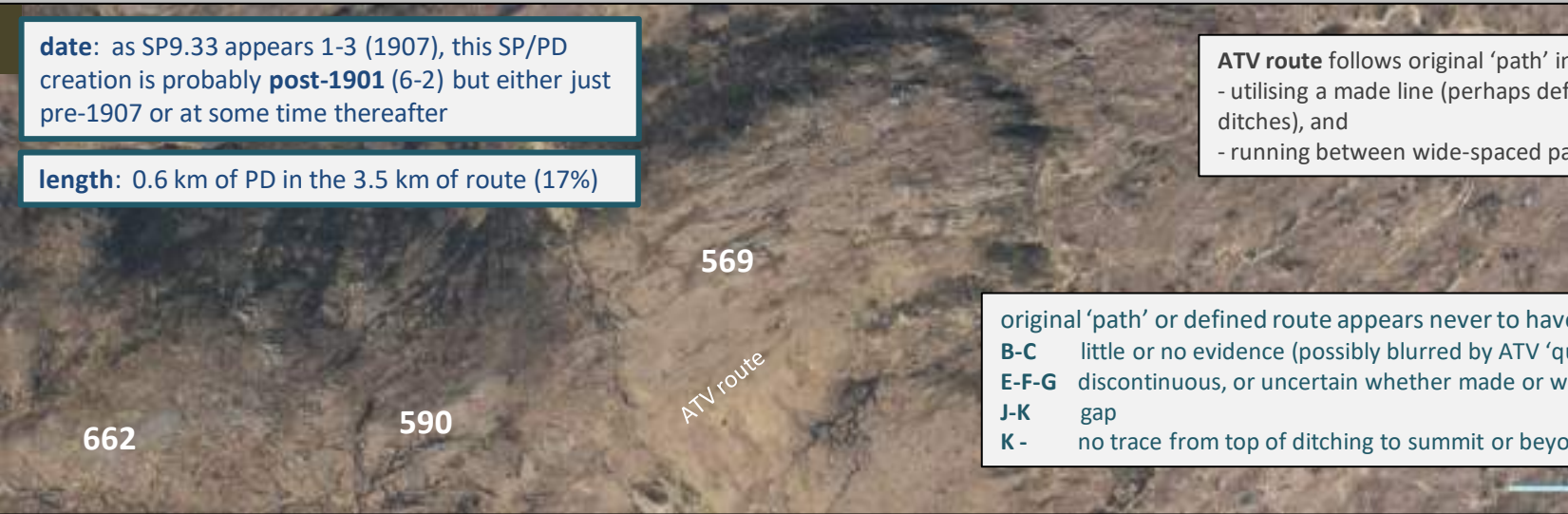
SP9.33
to Pollcherian Bridge

- ATV track
(unmade, northmost of several)
- cut path (wider/narrower)
- parallel ditches B-K
- single ditch

date: as SP9.33 appears 1-3 (1907), this SP/PD creation is probably **post-1901** (6-2) but either just pre-1907 or at some time thereafter

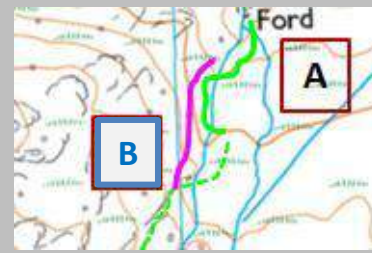
length: 0.6 km of PD in the 3.5 km of route (17%)

ATV route follows original 'path' in a few places, both
 - utilising a made line (perhaps defined by close-spaced ditches), and
 - running between wide-spaced parallel ditches



original 'path' or defined route appears never to have been continuous :

- B-C** little or no evidence (possibly blurred by ATV 'quadding')
- E-F-G** discontinuous, or uncertain whether made or worn
- J-K** gap
- K -** no trace from top of ditching to summit or beyond



imagery had suggested possible 'made lines' along or above the west rim of Allt Moraig (purple, above)

- during a yomp down through deep heather, a boot 'proved' the existence of such a line, by going into a hidden slot up to half-pole depth (yellow bar beside pole)
- this short section (left) is 'parallel ditching' not a cut path

actual path [B] is above dotted line

ATV track criss-crosses burn, comes in here



when descending from C (at the foot of the main eastern bastion of Carn Moraig), a pair of **Parallel Ditches** was picked out by snow traces

- they soon diminished to a single ditch - pecked line
- this took a slightly dog-legging course, of linked straights
- this faded out as the modern quad route took precedence in the shallow valley floor and through a gap

note - the ~1 km distance between C and B is much foreshortened here

B

C

photos down and up



the main eastern bastion of Carn Moraig is tackled by a bold cut **ramp** slanting up 30 m (470-500m asl) - segment D, the most 'conventional' path of the route

above this ramp, segment E is the most baffling and hard to trace - twisting up onto the rocky plateau



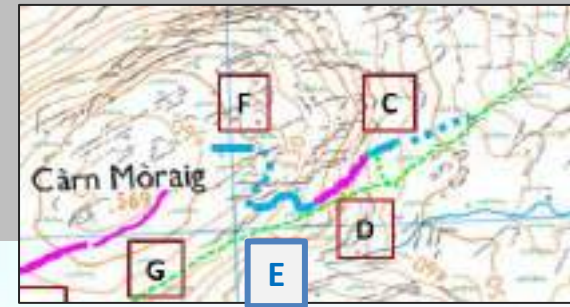
these **parallel ditches** survive in places a foot or two deep, sometimes acting as watercourses, but definitely not dug as 'moor gripping' land drainage

the cut ramp 'D' emerges onto a broad shelf, along which the quad routes continue, bypassing Carn Moraig summit

- satellite imagery had picked up hints of **Parallel Ditching** twisting up onto the rocky, knolly top

segment 'E' follows a natural **rake** across the quite steep, slabby face, with not much actual excavation

- why this convoluted, awkward route when a simple line along the shelf is followed by ATVs?
- there is a sense of a more scenic and challenging line being adopted - for recreation, not sport



the dogleg is defined by very widely spaced **parallel ditches**

- zoom shows short fat snow-patches marking inner one
- notice how the zig is a sweetly geometric **radiused curve** (which proves to be a hallmark)

without these snow remnants, the works might never have been spotted

- the rewards of early January in the field ...



broad shelf - quad route

E



the route up the rake is defined by the well-spaced **parallel ditches**

- some cutting into the bank, but medial strip has not been levelled
- the zag-back is a more tightly radiused curve (foreground and inset)

ATV tracks both within and alongside PD



the problematic **rake**

the dogleg - zigzag is clearly 'simple' PD with no excavation, just smoothly defining a route

the rake itself is almost as wide, but might have a little excavation - the upper ditch (blue) is offset and straighter, and may have served to drain it

a right-angle bend onto the plateau can just be 'sensed' (not yet found in field)

a single ditch can just be seen heading off north top left

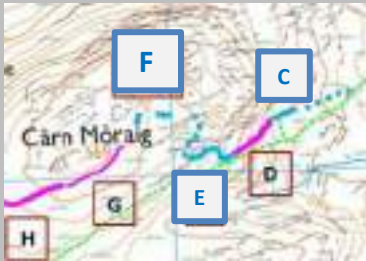
BING imagery, with greatly tweaked contrast/brightness to reveal features almost invisible on first scan





E

the baffling long double-back across the plateau
- just to reach the north-side viewpoint ?
- double ditches dashed, single ditch dotted (lines offset to E-N)

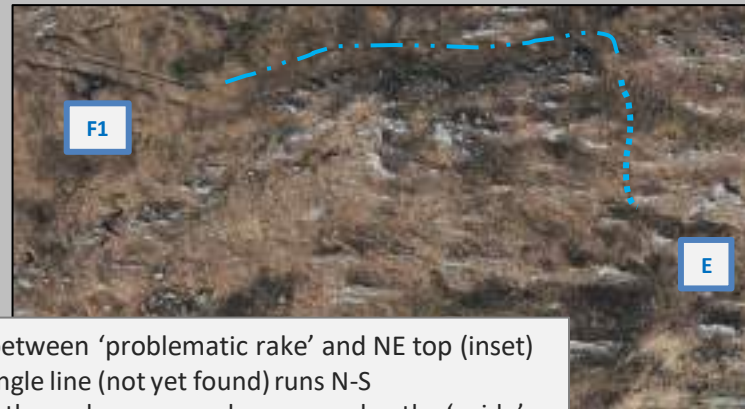


Carn a' Mhuilt beyond
Carn Moraig summit



very clear **parallel ditches** across a peaty stretch of the plateau (F1)

- at the **lower end**, they curve off and disappear (dashed line is speculative)
- at the **upper end**, they do not bear off beneath the summit tors, but invite rising across them
- they may have provoked deep erosion in the peat



obscure link between 'problematic rake' and NE top (inset)

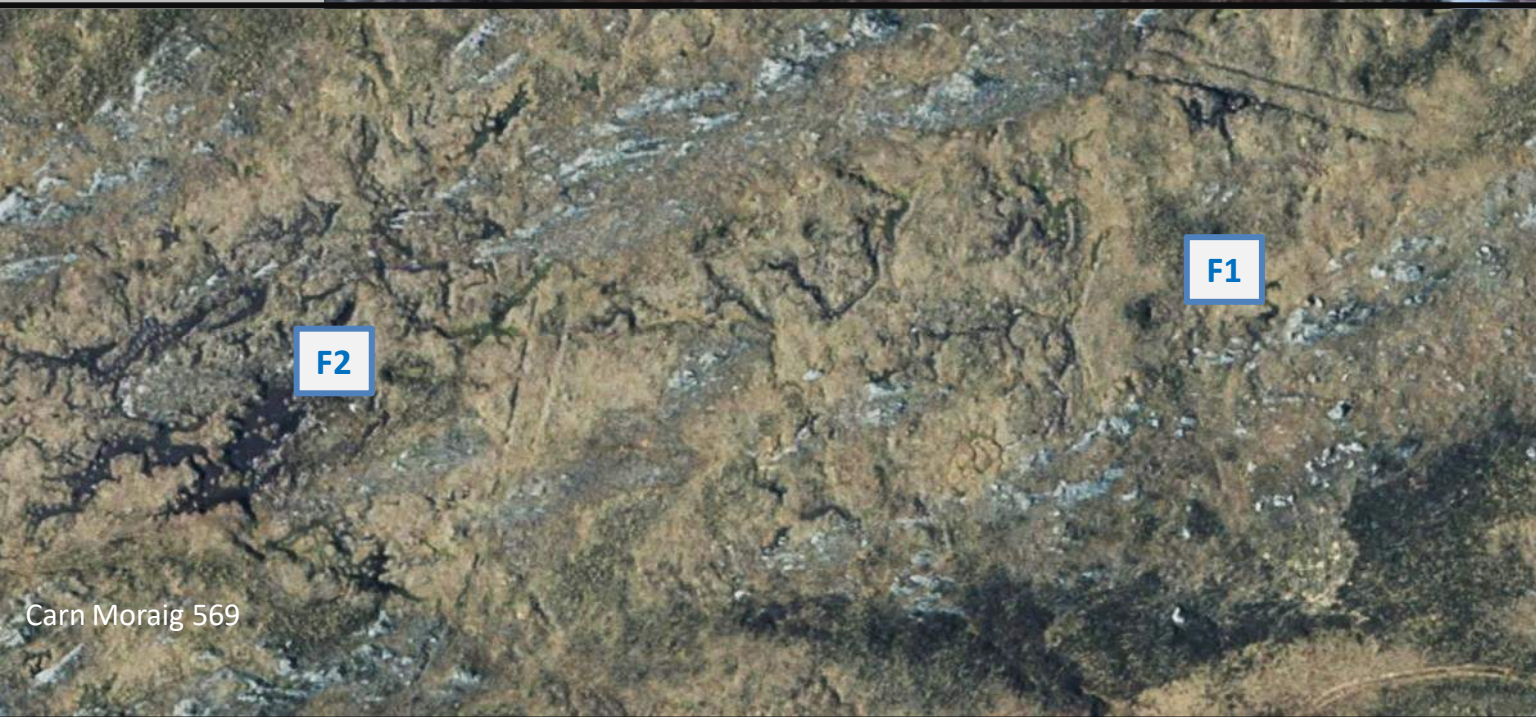
- the clear single line (not yet found) runs N-S
- the base of the rocky spur may have served as the 'guide'

Carn a' Mhuil 662

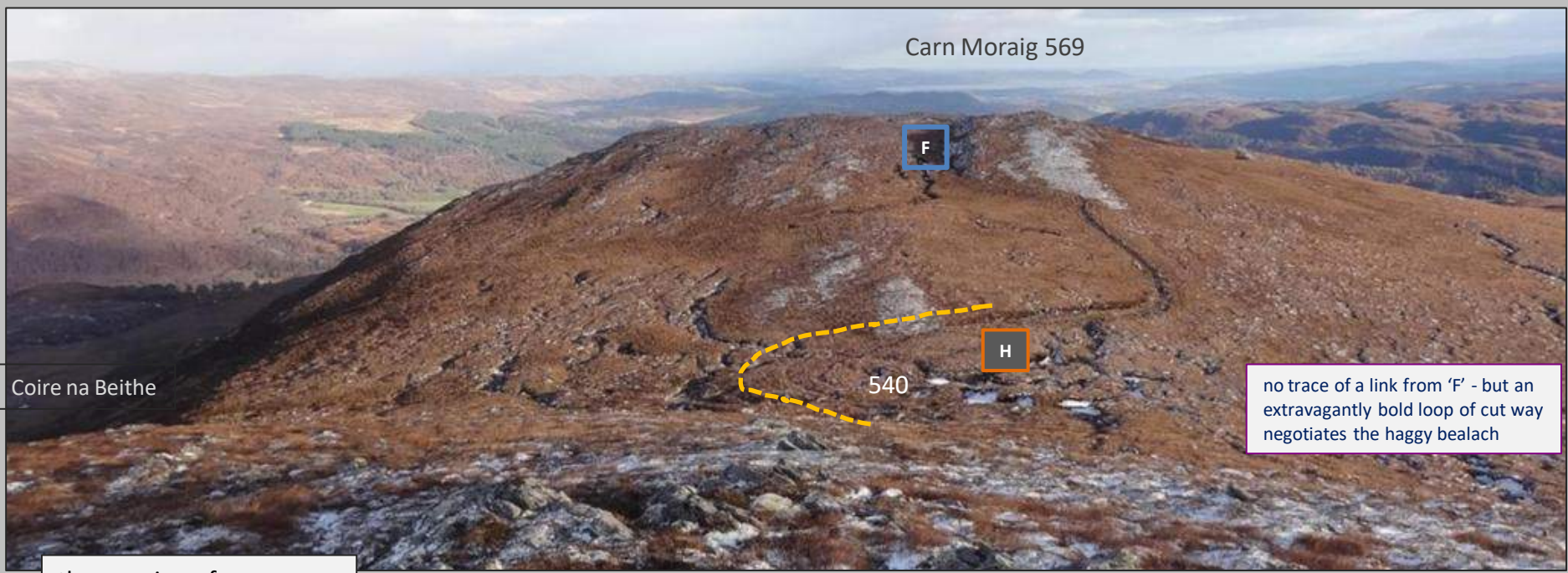


Strath Farrar

- Carn Moraig summit terrain
- a series of rocky ribs and knolls
 - unclear how the route crossed it, if defined at all



Carn Moraig 569



Carn Moraig 569

F

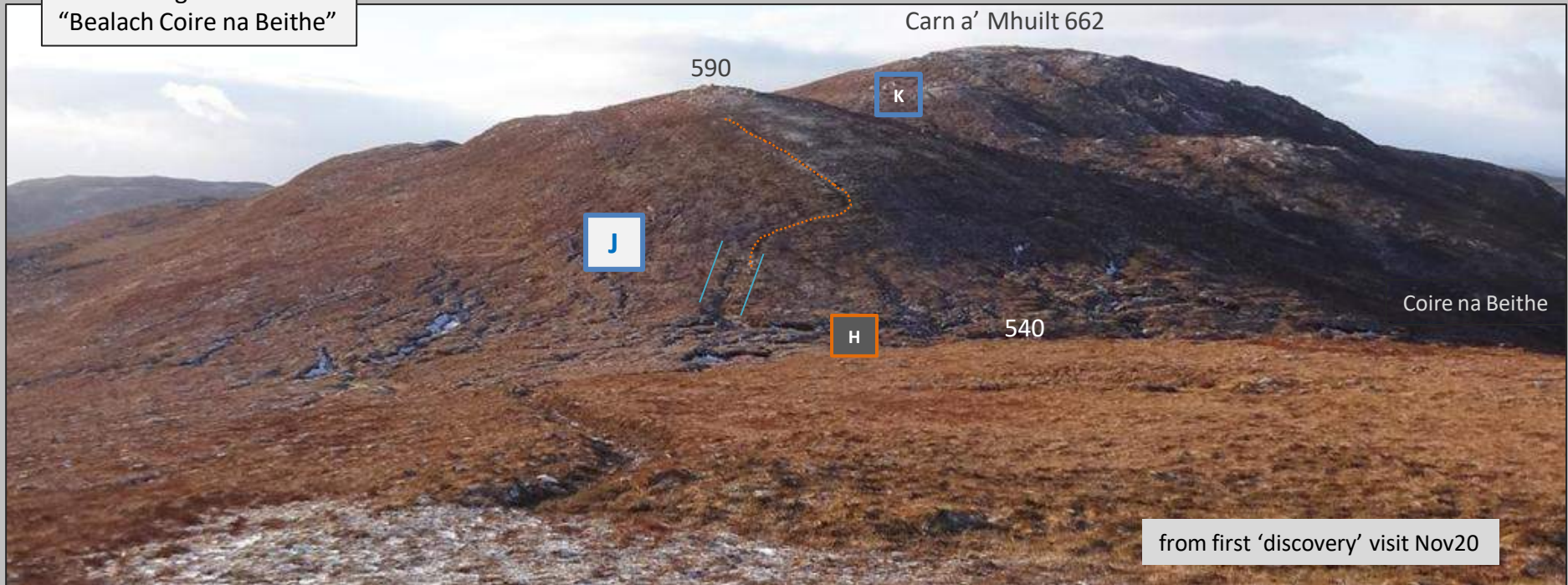
H

540

Coire na Beithe

no trace of a link from 'F' - but an extravagantly bold loop of cut way negotiates the haggly bealach

the crossing of "Bealach Coire na Beithe"



Carn a' Mhuil 662

590

K

J

H

540

Coire na Beithe

from first 'discovery' visit Nov20

590

Carn a' Mhuilt 662

J

H

curiouser and curiouser

- **H** : the bold loop of cut way becomes
- **J** : **Parallel Ditches**
- and narrows into a tight dogleg
- **orange dots** - closest thing to a conventional stalkers' path all route
- but very steep at the foot, a toil or plunge



G

H

J

curiouser and curiouser
- why the broad cut up the far side
and the narrow one this ?

Druim na Sruidh (the Struy ridge)

Struie — G. *an t-sruidh* ; *rathad na Struidh*, the road from Alness to Bonar, which attains its highest point at Cnoc na Struidh.
John Munro of Creich in his 'Oran Ducha' writes of crossing by "*an t-Sruidh*"
"**Struidh** appears to be best regarded as a contracted form of **sruth-aidh**, an extension of the root of *sruth*, stream ('t' euphonic) cf. **Struy** in Strathglass, which is also a place of streams" — Watson 'Place-names of Ross-shire'

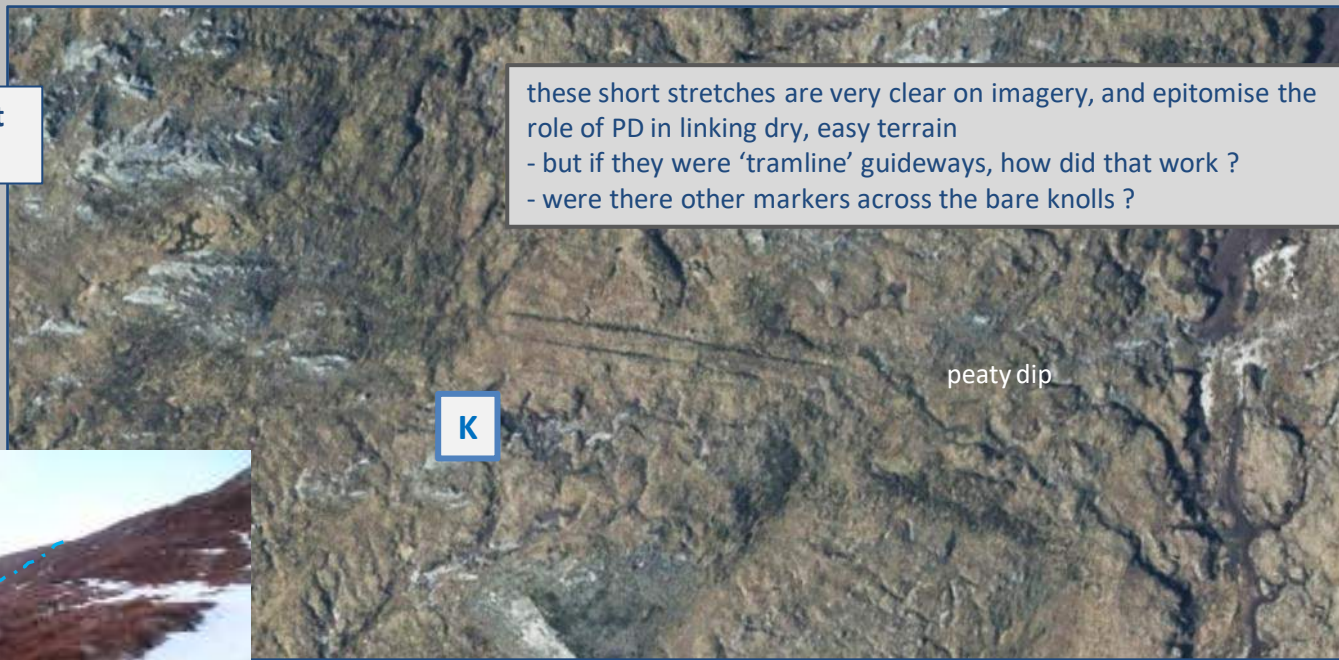
K

Carn a' Mhuil 662

the cut line 'J' ceases before the brow of this dry, heathy spur
- imagery showed a final short, isolated stretch of **PD** - but where ?
- needle in haystack...
- and looked level, but climbs steeply up
(line offset above on enlargement)

590

Carn a' Mhuil
east shoulder



these short stretches are very clear on imagery, and epitomise the role of PD in linking dry, easy terrain
- but if they were 'tramline' guideways, how did that work ?
- were there other markers across the bare knolls ?



this final, isolated length of **Parallel Ditching (K)** seems to extend straight down, rollercoaster, to the edge of the peaty dip

- no trace of any cut or marked way across the dip, unlike the Bealach
- no hint of thin path over or beside this spur, unlike G

the **Parallel Ditches** seem mostly shallow or infilled, but on this slight brow are almost pole-deep - treacherous in some conditions



K



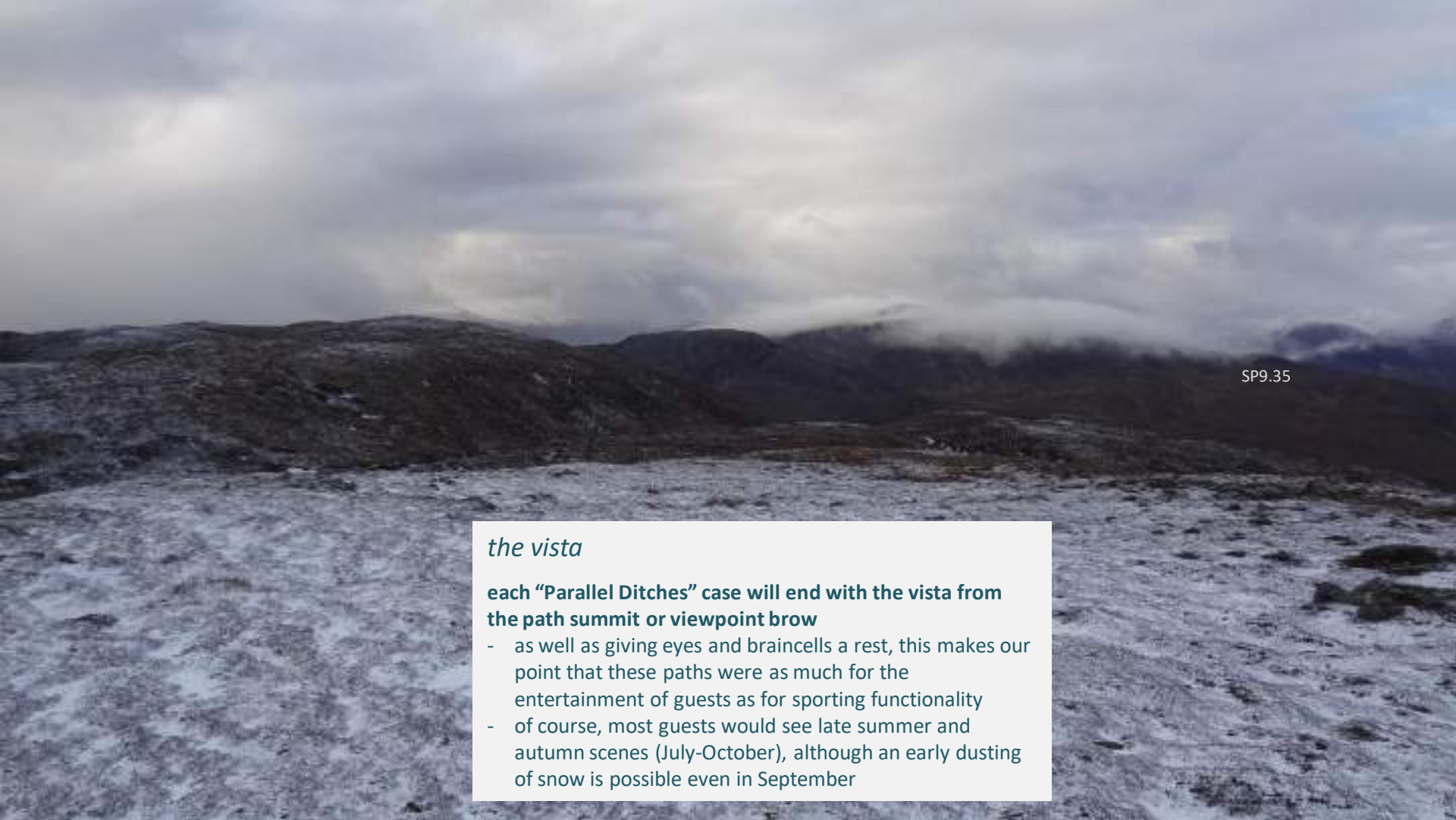
Carn a' Mhuilt 662

summit, looking west (and east, inset)

PD2 An Soutar is beyond the cloud cap on **Sgurr na Diollaid**

- no hint of a link between them along the Farrar march, on the ground or on imagery

paths or guided ways to summits, even of lesser hills, provided romantic, indeed spectacular views for guests (next) - as argued for next path west SP9.35 to the shoulder of Meall a' Mhadaidh



SP9.35

the vista


each "Parallel Ditches" case will end with the vista from the path summit or viewpoint brow

- as well as giving eyes and braincells a rest, this makes our point that these paths were as much for the entertainment of guests as for sporting functionality
- of course, most guests would see late summer and autumn scenes (July-October), although an early dusting of snow is possible even in September

PD 1 Druim na Sruidh
(the Struy ridge)

... closing with the vistas

inner Strathfarrar





Farrar Munros

Parallel Ditches in Glen Strathfarrar
PD 2 SP9.37A An Soutar NW - zigzag flight

Beaulieu
10 miles >



PD 3A

PD 3

Struy

PD 1

PD 2

Cannich

Strath Farrar

Glen Cannich

Sgyrr a' Phollain

Strath Glass

Echless Forest

Glenstrathfarrar

Glencannich Forest

Passdale Forest

9.56

9.41

9.41A

9.41B

9.43

9.43A

9.44

9.44

9.45

9.42

9.35

9.36

9.35A

9.33

9.34

9.37

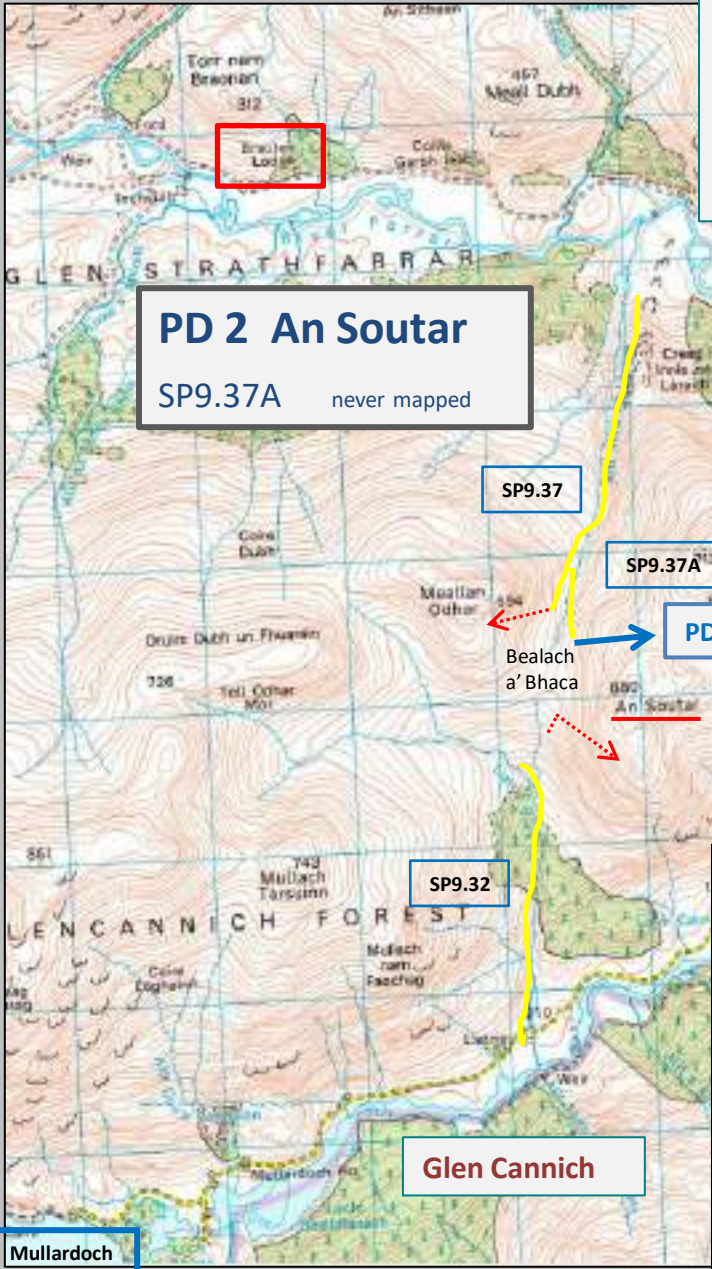
9.37A

9.38

9.32

9.31

- three readily followable made paths or guideways radiate from **Bealach a' Bhaca** (*next slide*)
- remarkably, not one of them has ever appeared on metric maps
- only that up Meallan Odhar has ever been mapped - from the earliest (1875 - inset) until last imperial edition (the map inspiration to go see its zigzags led to the discovery of this PD)
- the Cannich-side extension of SP9.32 (only spotted from M Odhar) is a delightful rising line
- both approach paths (yellow) have been lost to erosion or disuse, de-mapped
- no footbridge served that from Farrar (until the one now shown, metric era)



Strath Farrar
(see next slide for approaches)

713



PD 2 An Soutar

watershed (estate boundary)



Glen Cannich (no surviving lower path)

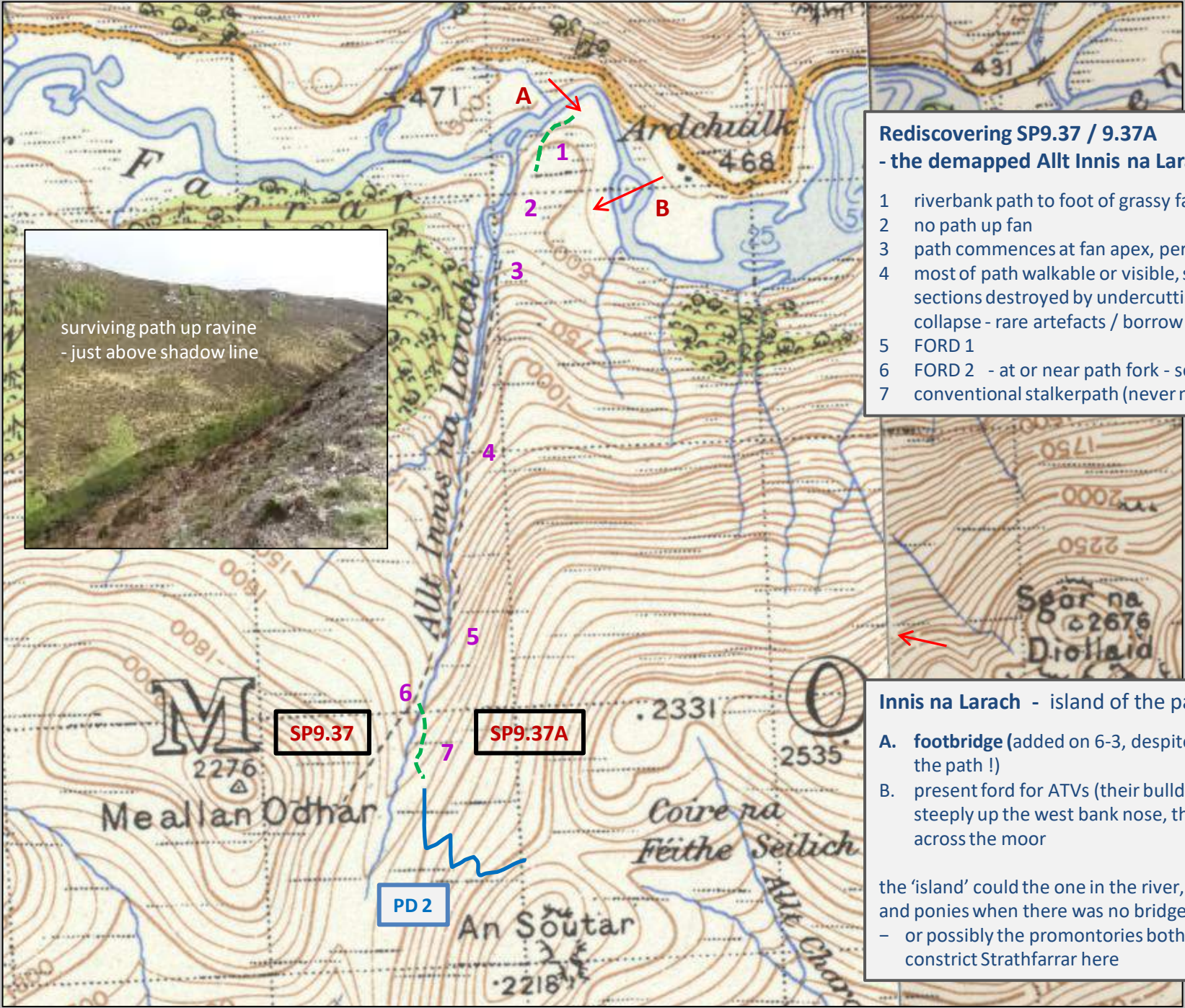
An Soutar is most easily approached from
Carrie in Glen Cannich, not Strath Farrar



surviving path up ravine
- just above shadow line

Rediscovering SP9.37 / 9.37A
- the demapped Allt Innis na Larach paths

- 1 riverbank path to foot of grassy fan
- 2 no path up fan
- 3 path commences at fan apex, per 6-1 to 1-7
- 4 most of path walkable or visible, several short sections destroyed by undercutting and slope collapse - rare artefacts / borrow pits
- 5 FORD 1
- 6 FORD 2 - at or near path fork - see later map slide
- 7 conventional stalkerpath (never mapped)



Innis na Larach - island of the pass (lairig)

- A. footbridge (added on 6-3, despite it demapping the path !)
- B. present ford for ATVs (their bulldozed track goes steeply up the west bank nose, then unmade across the moor)

the 'island' could be the one in the river, used by people and ponies when there was no bridge
- or possibly the promontories both sides which constrict Strathfarrar here



top row - location 1 - riverbank cut path from modern FB

SP9.37 / 9.37A (PD 2)
the Allt Innis na Larach approach



location 3 - fan apex, path visible heading into ravine

location 4 - long stretches of cut or cleared path visible heading into ravine



location 4 - local bank collapses, slumps and washouts in ravine

path buried by gully flow, contours round promontory at main ravine head

beyond promontory, ditch cut along flat haugh - to drain or define path ?



SP9.37 / 9.37A (PD 2)
Ford 1
paths marked above actual trace



map suggests path continues up burnside

person exiting by apparent zigzag - no path along rim or across moor

location 5 - approach to Ford 1 cut by small bank collapse



SP9.37 / 9.37A (PD 2)
the Allt Innis na Larach Fords

- 6-2 c. 1902
note B.R. 'Bridle Road' indicates
path suitable for ponies
- must have been made to a
good standard (pre-1875, 6-1)
 - top of zigzags becomes very
narrow, 1.5m bench cut into
rockface
 - may extend further than
mapped

- pre-visit assumption had been
that (unmapped) SP9.37A would
branch off at Ford 1
- no trace of path east side
(difficult thick peat/tussock)
 - a re-crossing at Ford 2 makes
sense on the ground and
compares with recrossings on
SP9.43A etc

5 - Ford 1

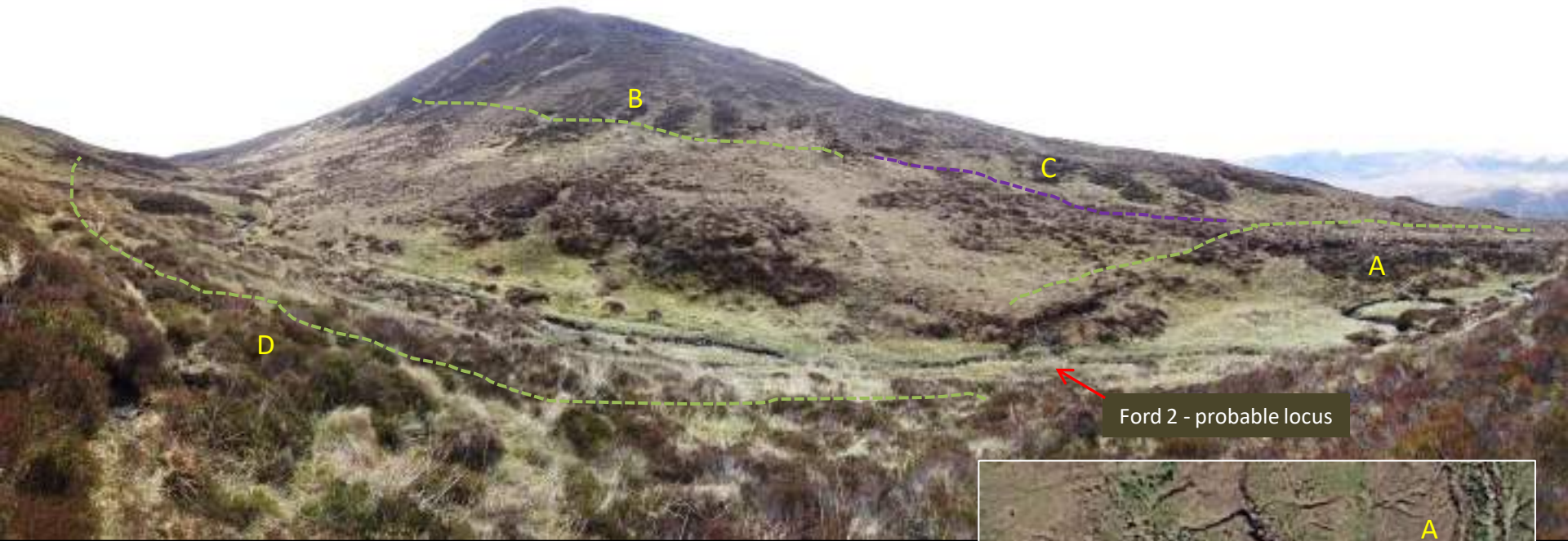
6 - Ford 2

7 - conventional
stalkerpath, rising curve,
ending in steep ramp



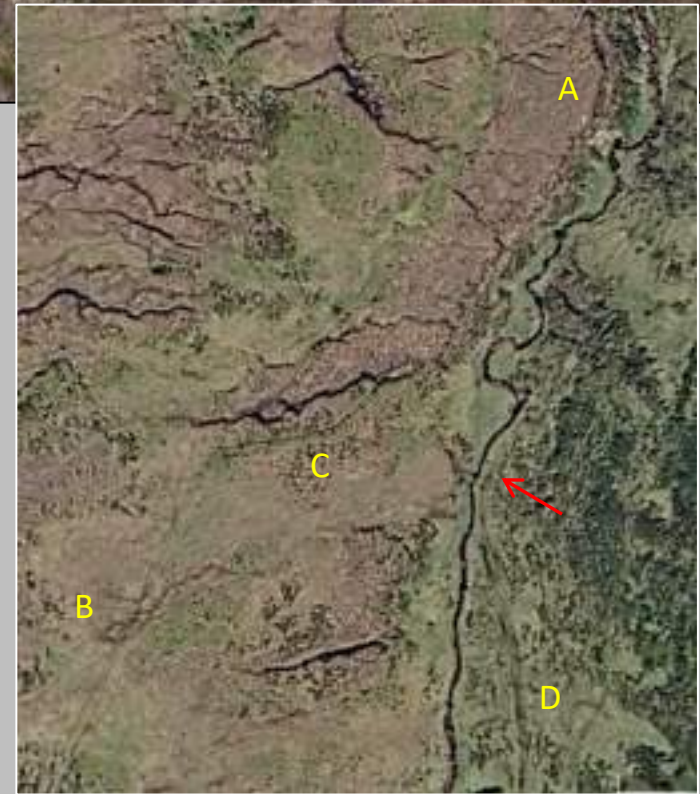
probable ford 1 locus
blue line at slab cundie (rare artefact)

Meallan Odhar



- A. berm cut into peat rim (inset) fits with 6-1 path close to burn
- B. SP9.37 - visible and followable lead in to zigzags
- C. inferred link, as per map and imagery, not obvious on ground
- D. SP9.37A - clear rising curve, ending in steep ramp to locus 0

lines are above feature on A-C,
below on D





upper pair - location 6 - approaches to Ford 2

location 7 - rising curve, conventional stalkerpath



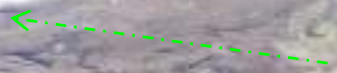
- conventional ditched path leads away up east bank

- looking down steep ramp, closely-ditched raised path



the chosen line selects a broad green swathe amidst the heather and peat

- continuation less clear, going onto that peaty shoulder



PD 2 An Soutar
the first sighting November 2020



* boggy corner - see next slides

note numerous deer trods - some pairs, mimicking PD - but splaying or reducing to single

borrow pit shelter

transition to PD

SP9.37A
made path

steep ramp

rising line from SP9.37
junction at Ford 2

from Meallan Odhar across Bealach a' Bhaca

the start of the PD

- over 5 m wide
 - and it becomes ever more bizarre and perplexing
- locus 0 as marked on next slides

transition SP > PD

green bar marks conventional cut-and-fill berm
red poles convey PD embracing path terminus
(as PD 4 Glencarron Lodge)

0





transition SP > PD

(a)

(b)

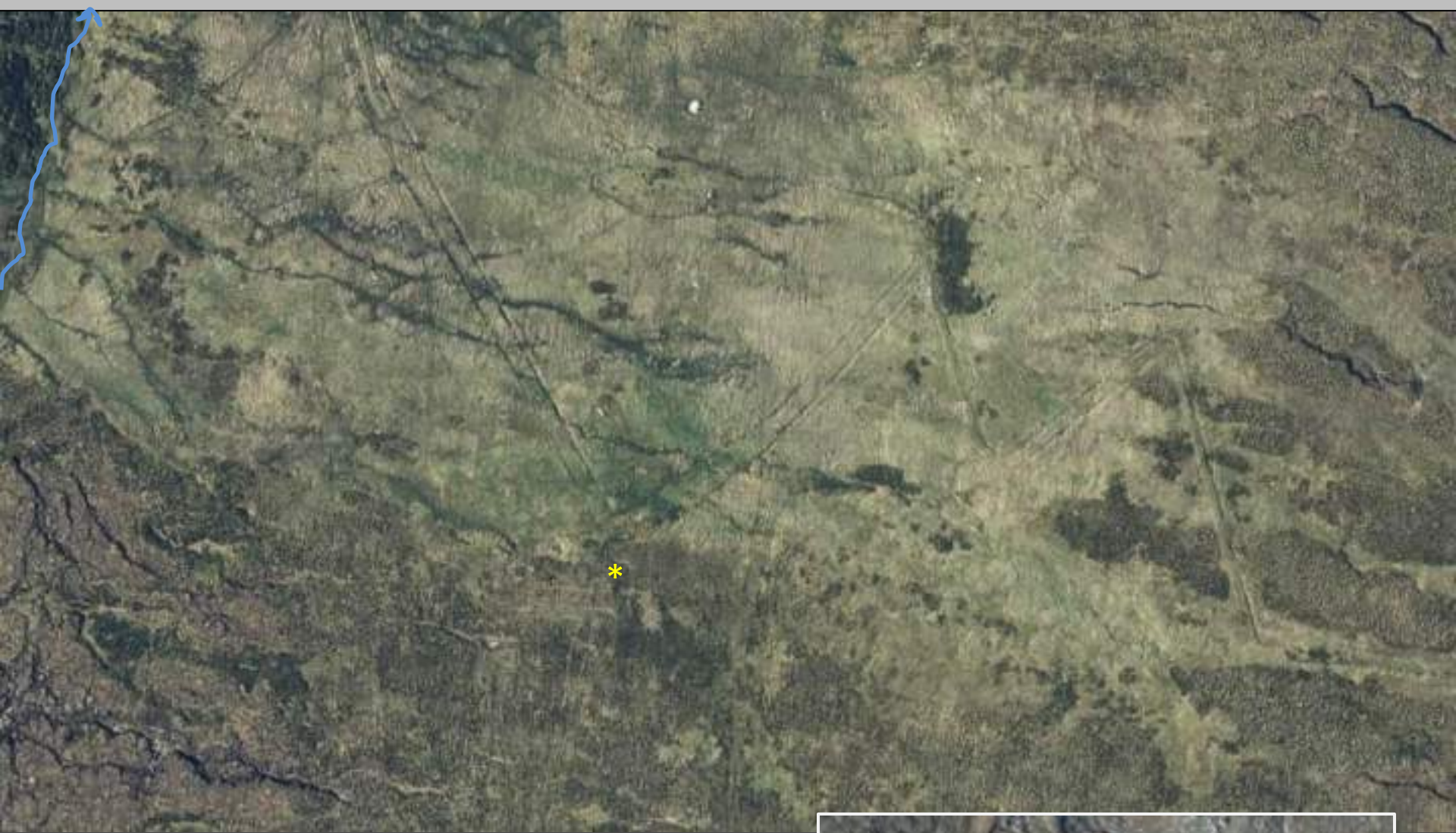
(c)

- a) steep ramp
- b) borrow pit shelter - messy transition with bog, heather outcrops, lost elements
- c) PD at 5.5m width (GEarth confirms)

the made path appears to continue for some distance between the fading PD slots

photos courtesy Jane Meek May 2026





there are some quirks and inconsistencies

- lower zigzag limbs widen out downhill
- angles vary in tightness and roundings
- upper half generally narrower and fainter
 - two limbs are not PD but cut paths
- but landscape imprint is as PD1 Druim na Sruidh (inset)





sequence from foot

1

broad, slight levelling, no drainage (or failed), no bottoming

slight cut-and-fill across gentle, drier grassy footslope



*

just behind viewpoint 2, the zag is routed through a hopeless rushy marsh - photoing impossible - where a bafflingly ill-conceived line cuts an obvious zone of springs and seeps; why, when it could easily have been held back a few yards ?

2

wide-spaced sub-parallel grooves across marsh, no path-making

narrow, well-cut path, retaining wall



3



4



third and fourth bends up
- both appear 'dropped
onto the slope' as if
surveyed off a 2-D plan,
with no effort to shape let
alone build a landing for
turning, as would be usual

parallel grooves with minimal
levelling, yet still relatively
easy to walk, better than plain
slope (in descent, but also
reascending upper reaches -
psychological ?!)





at the fifth and final bend
- and it becomes ever more bizarre and perplexing

the top slant reach (7) is like a causeway, perhaps with the groove material cast up - very pleasant walking, on firm grass between heathery wastes, both ascending and descending

at the top of the final zag, the PD heads almost straight uphill (8)

- so steep that you cannot walk straight up, but want to zigzag it
- it follows a final green tongue up between heather moors
- and a wintrier revisit takes over the narrative



foreground dome may be a little landslip, not a made causeway



this path aims for entertainment and excitement, rather than the easier open slopes on the south



the long traverse rises gently toward the col, contouring in

- middle reach rounding the slight shoulder is another stretch of made path
- showing up as a skyline bench



viewpoint for
final slide



the long traverse into the col ends obscurely in eroded peat hags
- PD may have reached to watershed col (estate march)

An Soutar N Top



apart from its several design aberrations, this 'path' lacks

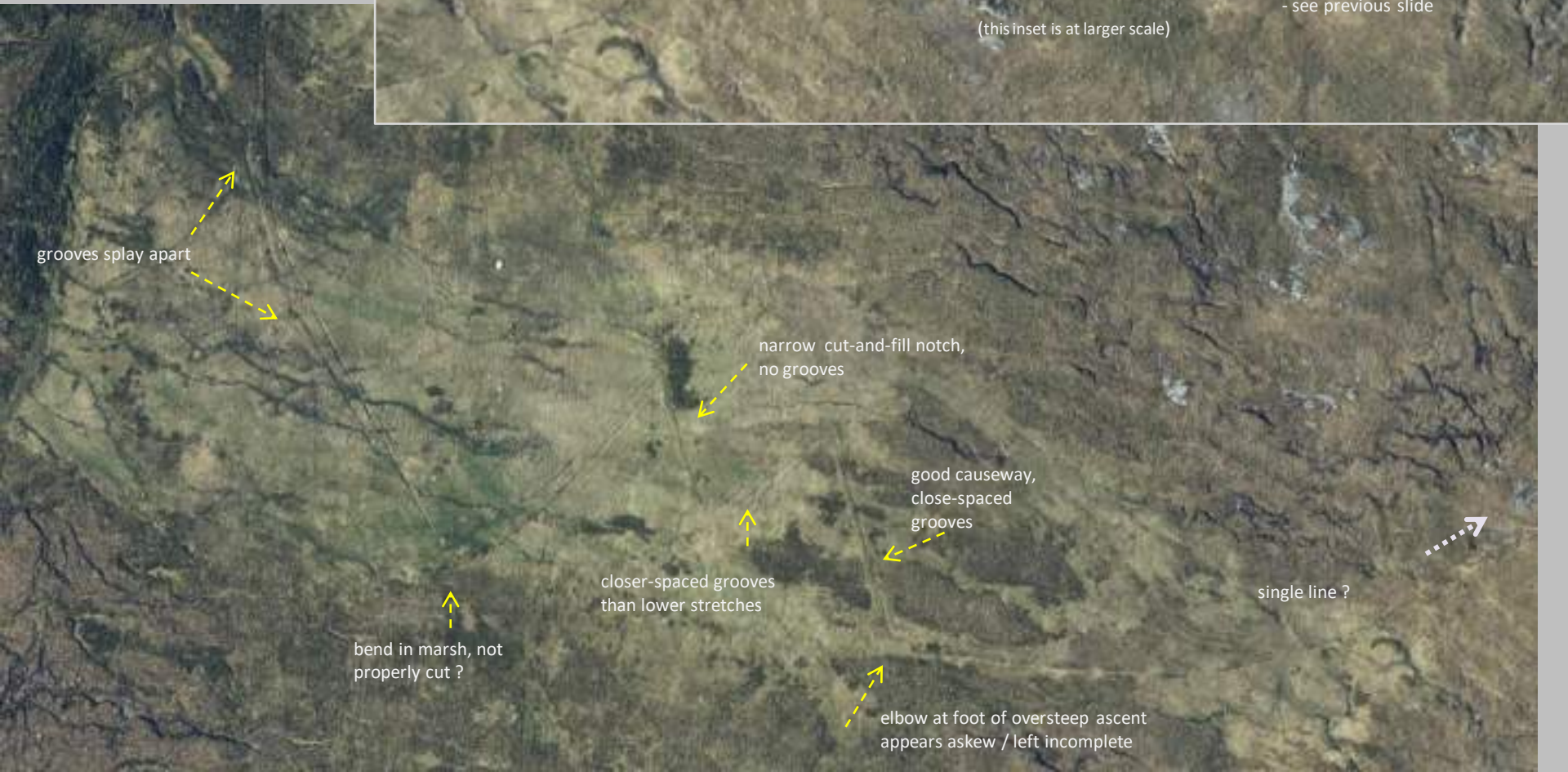
- **drainage** - no cundies, no cross-drains, no fords, no run-offs at bends; the upper groove is not a conventional ditch targeted on intercepting specific threats
- **surfacing** - no borrow-pits, no trace of gravelly fabric

the design feels alien, imported from elsewhere and other purposes - like a road laid out by a military engineer

645m col



BING imagery suggests twin grooves continue, less geometrically, across the peat wastes to the firm bony col - see previous slide
(this inset is at larger scale)



grooves splay apart

narrow cut-and-fill notch, no grooves

good causeway, close-spaced grooves

closer-spaced grooves than lower stretches

bend in marsh, not properly cut ?

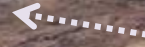
elbow at foot of oversteep ascent appears askew / left incomplete

single line ?

Sgurr na Diollaid
(glimpse - see next slide)

An Soutar N Top

continuation into 645m col



why ?

why not a conventional stalkerpath
- as opposite, on same estate, from
same starting point ?

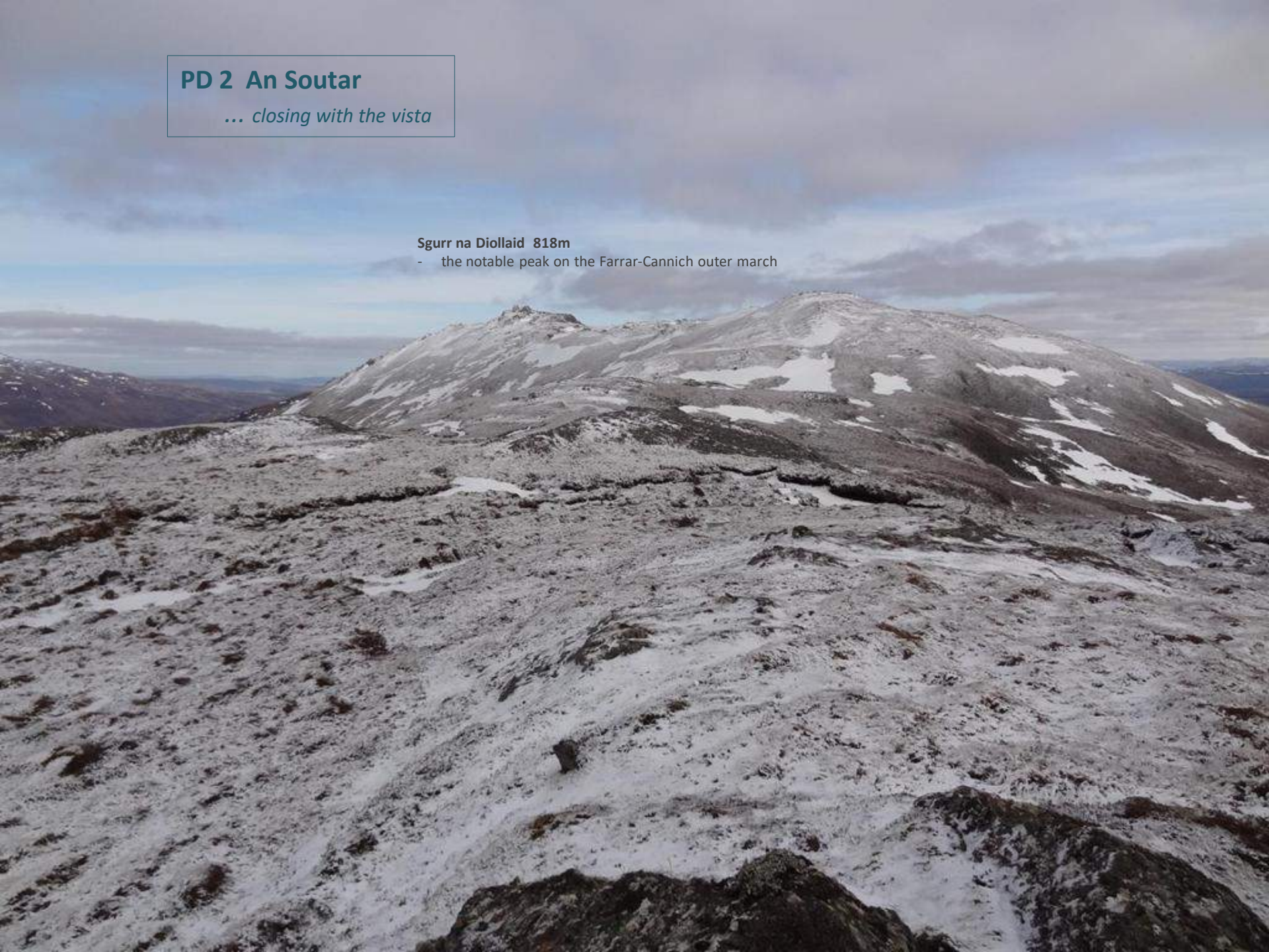


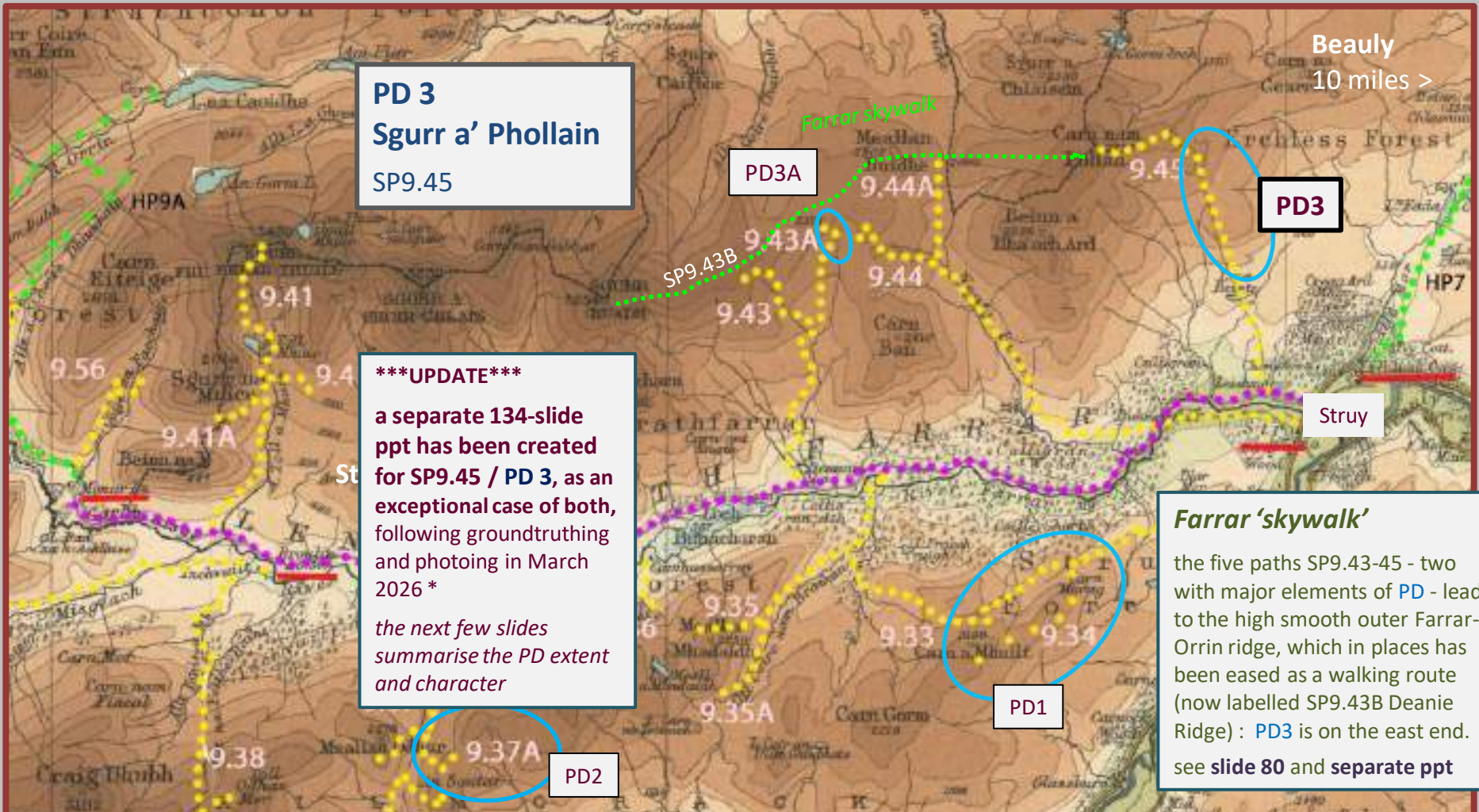
PD 2 An Soutar

... closing with the vista

Sgurr na Diollaid 818m

- the notable peak on the Farrar-Cannich outer march





PD 3
Sgurr a' Phollain
 SP9.45

PD3A

PD3

*****UPDATE*****
 a separate 134-slide ppt has been created for SP9.45 / PD 3, as an exceptional case of both, following groundtruthing and photoing in March 2026 *
 the next few slides summarise the PD extent and character

Farrar 'skywalk'
 the five paths SP9.43-45 - two with major elements of PD - lead to the high smooth outer Farrar-Orrin ridge, which in places has been eased as a walking route (now labelled SP9.43B Deanie Ridge) : PD3 is on the east end. see slide 80 and separate ppt

PD2

PD1



Beinn a' Bhathaich Ard
 862

Sgurr a' Phollain
 855

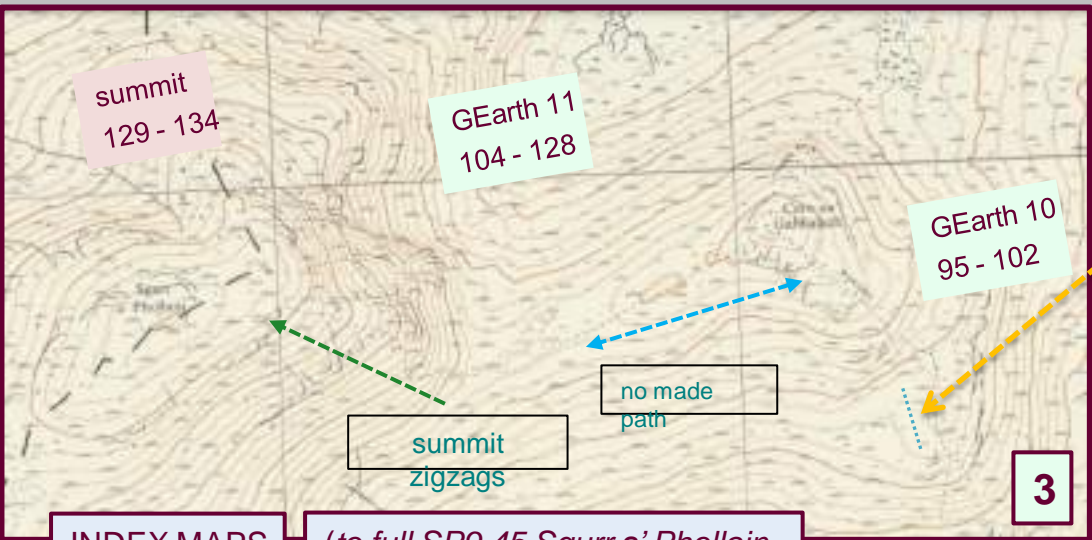
SP9.45 - part conventional stalkerpath, part parallel ditches PD3

summit zigzags

Phase 2
 post-WW1 hybrid SP/PD

Phase 1
 pre-WW1 path to loch

* SP9.45 PD3 Sgurr a' Phollain MAY26 150dpi n=134



INDEX MAPS (to full SP9.45 Sgurr a' Phollain ppt)

date - this is one of the later 'pony paths' to be made, by the mapping history:

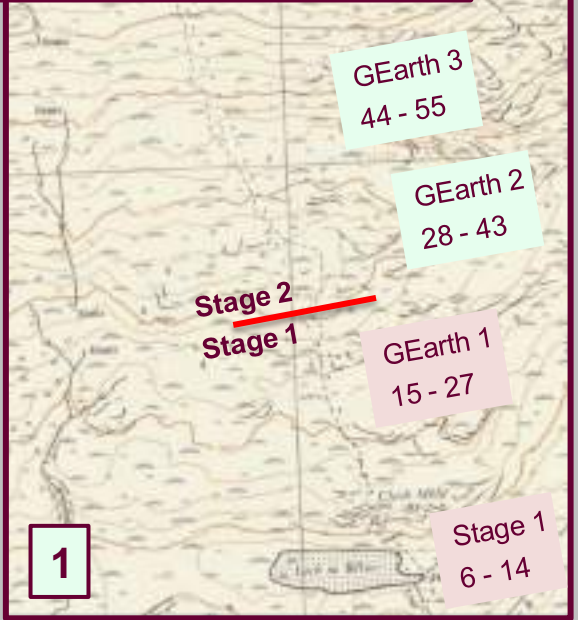
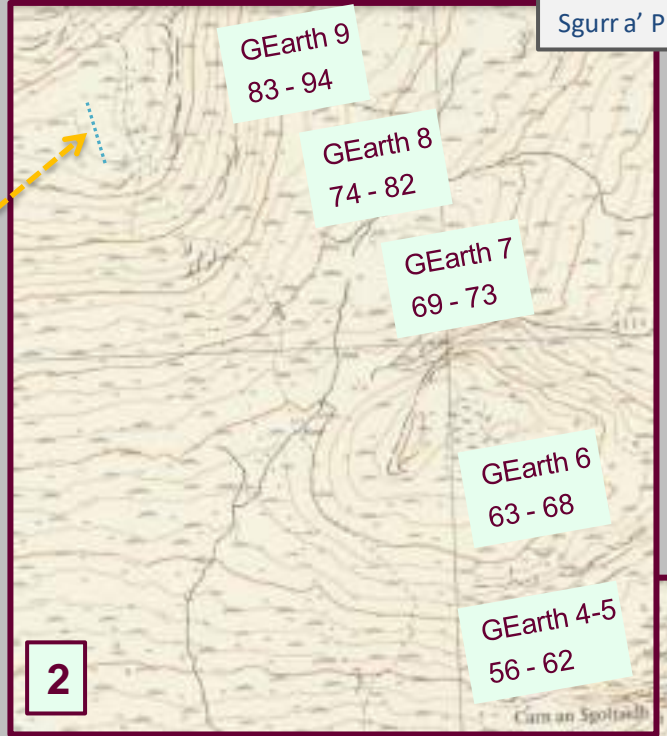
- Stage 1 - Inchmore (Farrar gate) to above Loch na Beiste 1" 3rd (1-3) 1907
- Stage 2 - above Loch na Beiste to near summit 6" 3rd (6-3) 1966

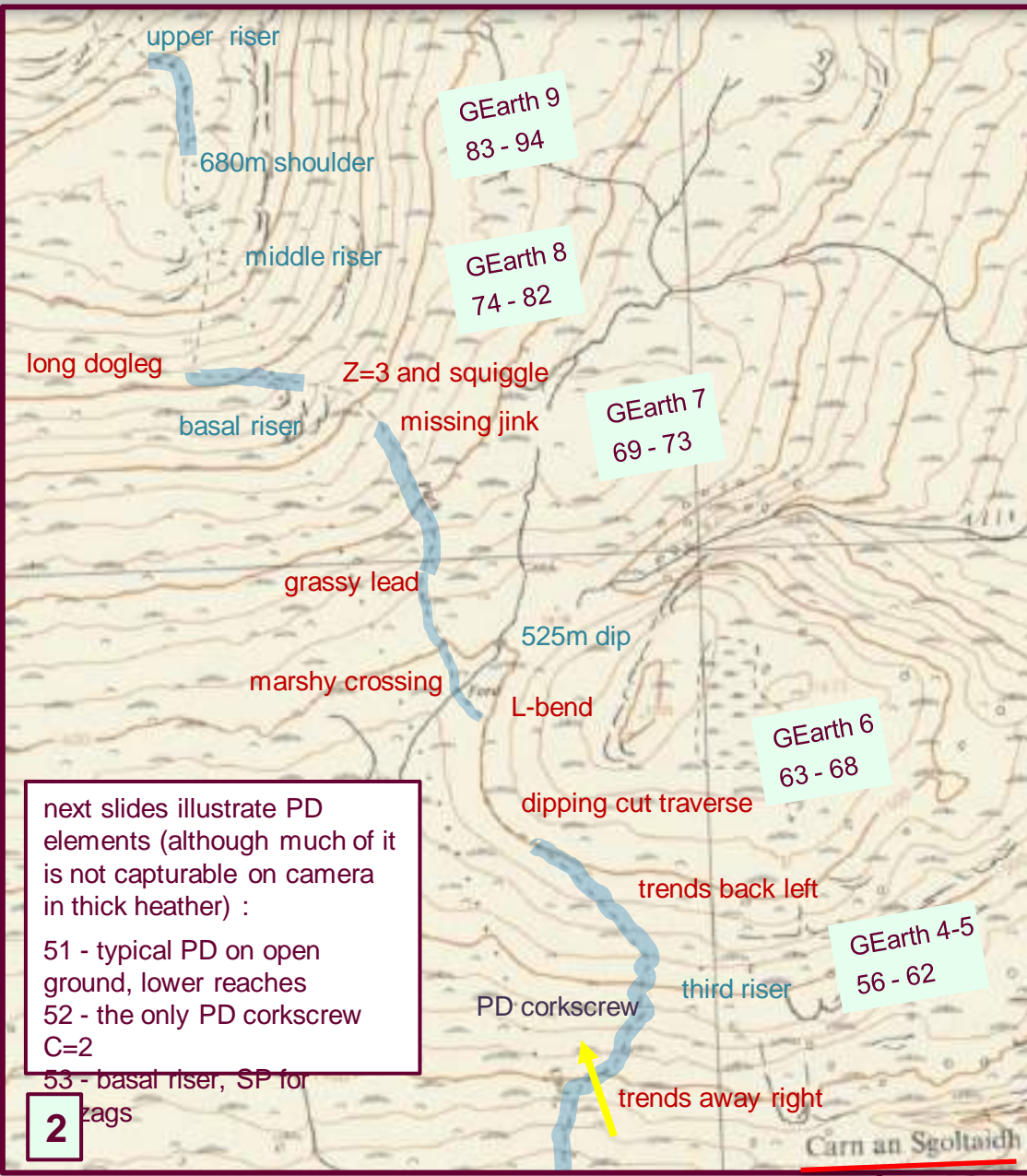
1-3 implies **Stage 1 made between ~1894 and 1907**
6-3 implies **Stage 2 made after 1907, probably after 1926 (1-4) and pre-1938**

Parallel Ditching (PD) - the main stretches are marked with blue bars (next slide) (as improbable during 1950s-60s) - dates discussed in separate

not slides 20-22
Stage 2 to Carn na Gabhalach 2.65 km
of which **Parallel Ditching ~2.25 km 85%**
none of the other 6-8 paths with PD attain 1 km or 50% - **PD 3 is unique**

in the full SP9.45 ppt, the route is described in the 11 stages marked (with slide numbers) - each is introduced with an annotated **GoogleEarth** image from the various Historical Imagery options, none of very helpful quality.
BingMaps is sombre, but some fine detail can be seen.



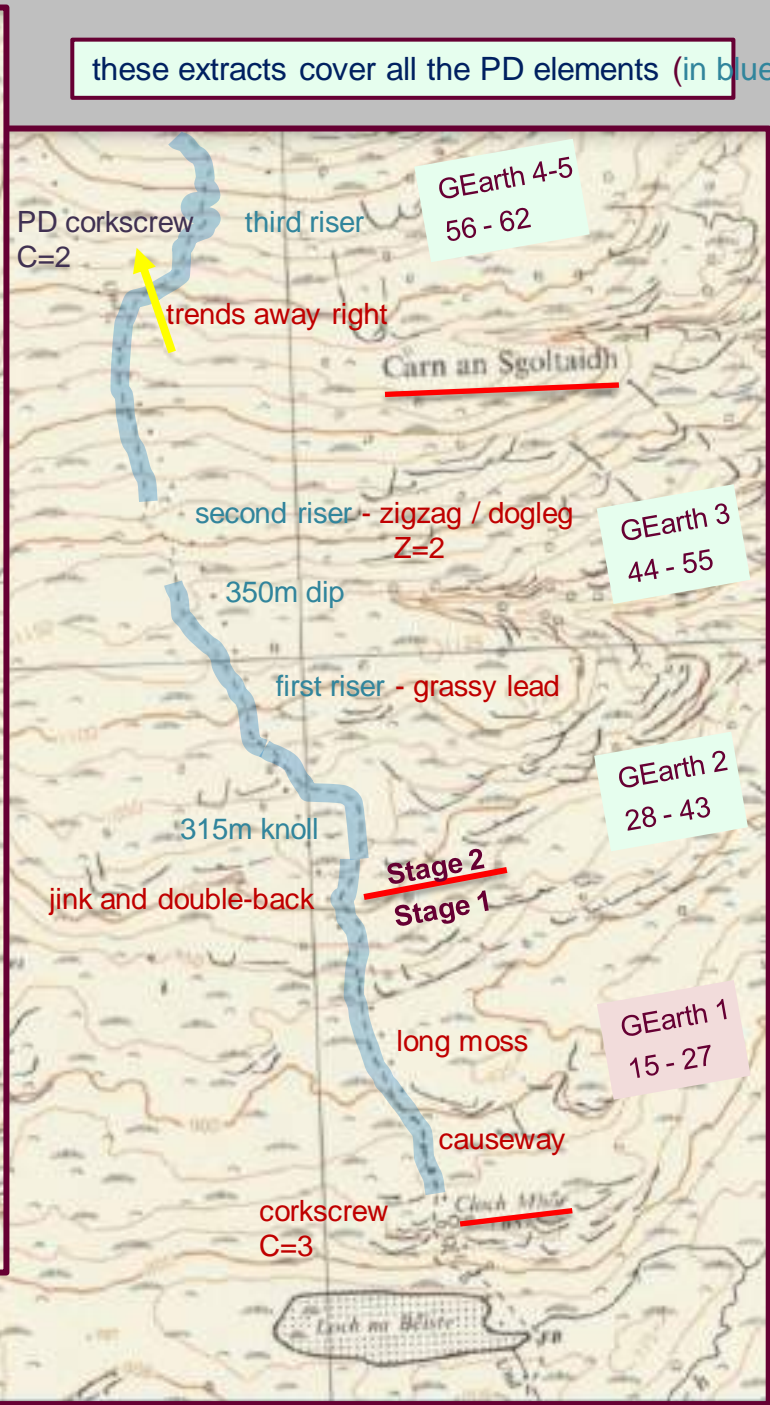


next slides illustrate PD elements (although much of it is not capturable on camera in thick heather) :

- 51 - typical PD on open ground, lower reaches
- 52 - the only PD corkscrew C=2
- 53 - basal riser, SP for zags

2

suite of extracts from 6-3 of 1960s



these extracts cover all the PD elements (in blue)

1

end of Stage 1
as mapped 1-3 / 1-4

why end Stage 1 here, at the 1000' contour ?

- the idea of a launch-pad beyond the bogs still leaves much rough, awkward terrain to ascend;
- could the 1907 (1-3) date allow for a continuous path-making project, extended annually in the off-season as make-work (as per McPherson's Diary at Glen Feshie)?
- **1-3 1907 could just be a snapshot of progress to that date**
- the progressive adoption of PD may reflect experience on other Farrar paths (see PD ppt) - or cost-saving eg. after WW1

but Stage 2 is not on 1-4 1926

- only 4 SPs are added in that edn.
- two are trivial - but one is SP9.23 to a high plateau rim above Glenuaig Lodge

best guess for Stage 2 and PD
1926-1939

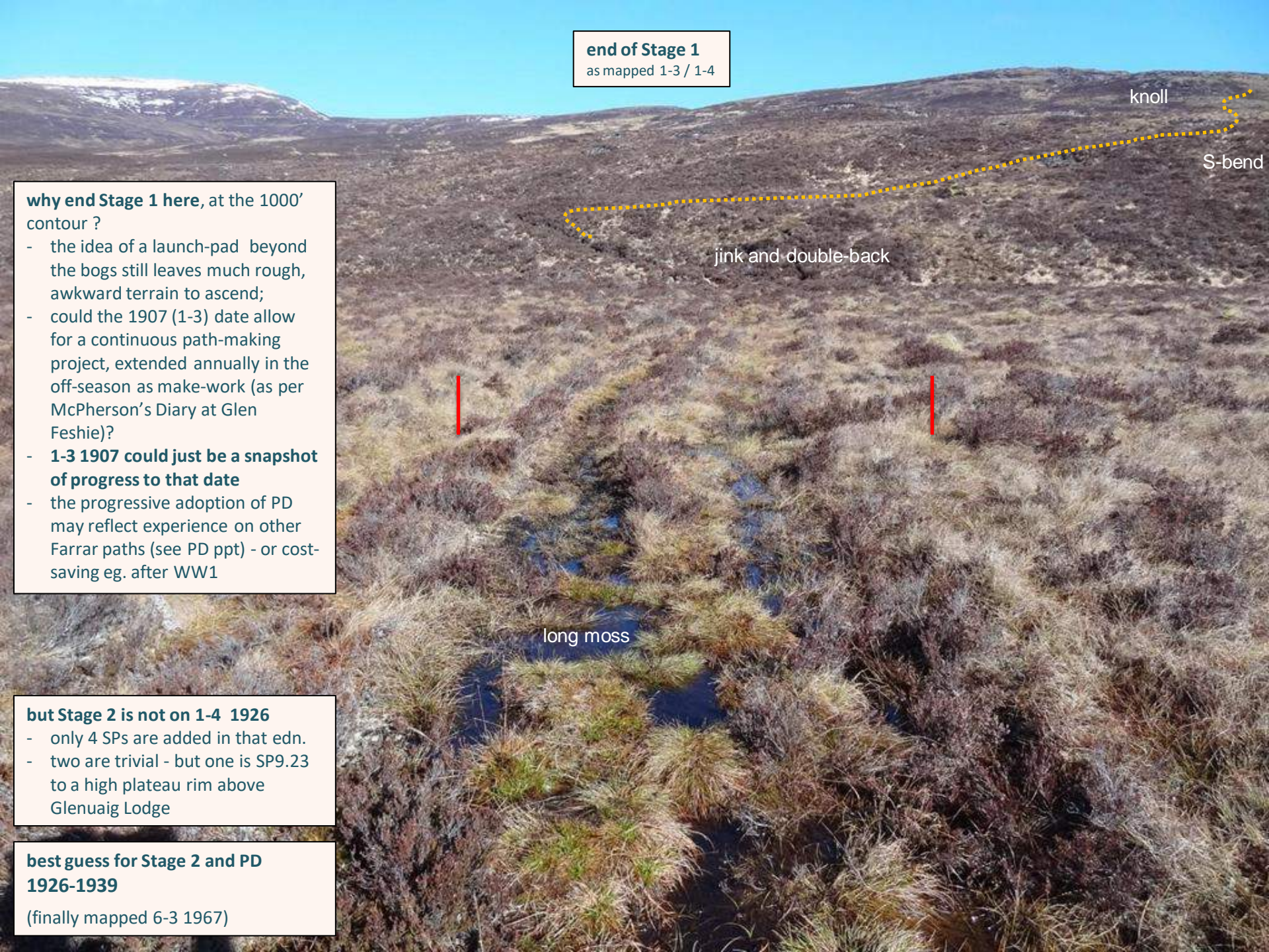
(finally mapped 6-3 1967)

knoll

S-bend

jink and double-back

long moss

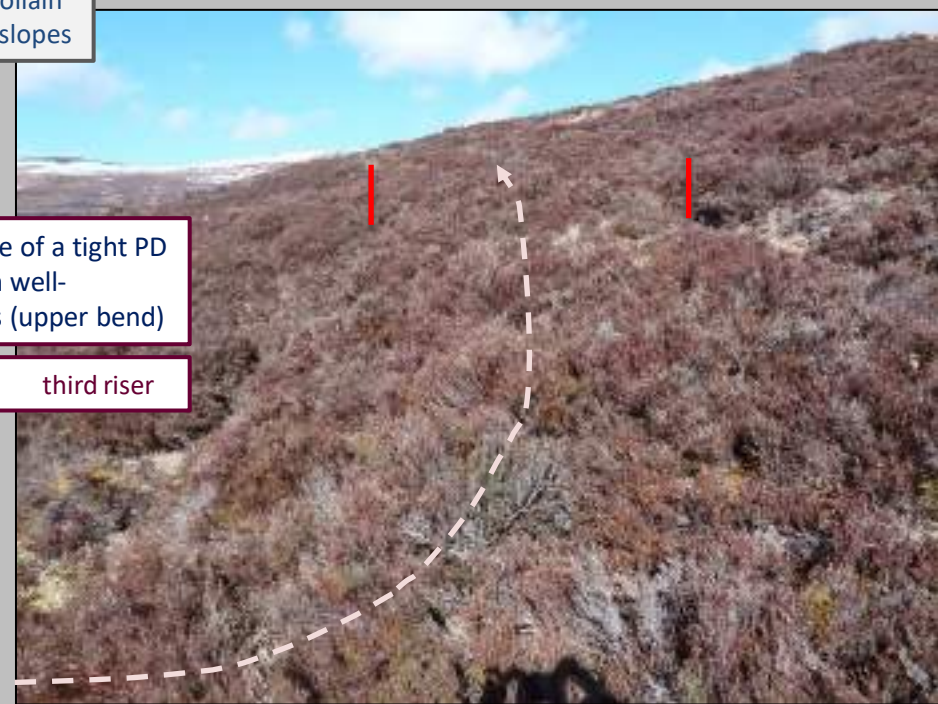
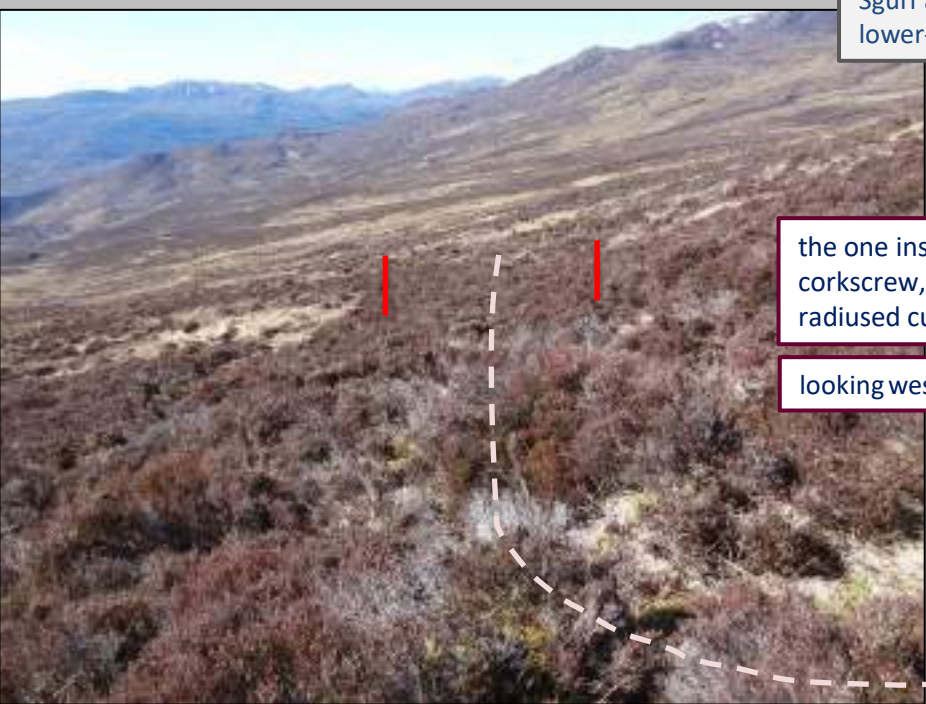


closely-spaced poles mark a lone **stone cundie** (small slab-spanned culvert or slot) - still in Stage 1, but hybrid PD character

little if any cut-and-fill excavation even across this slope, little evidence of surfacing



PD 3
Sgurr a' Phollain
lower-mid slopes



the one instance of a tight PD corkscrew, with well-radiused curves (upper bend)

looking west third riser



conventional
stalkerpath
zigzags up the
final nose

PD3
Sgurr a' Phollain
upper slopes

these good quality images were on BingMaps
(since replaced)
GoogleEarth is very poor here



PD 3 Sgurr a' Phollain

... closing with the vista



the main ridge from Loch na Beiste



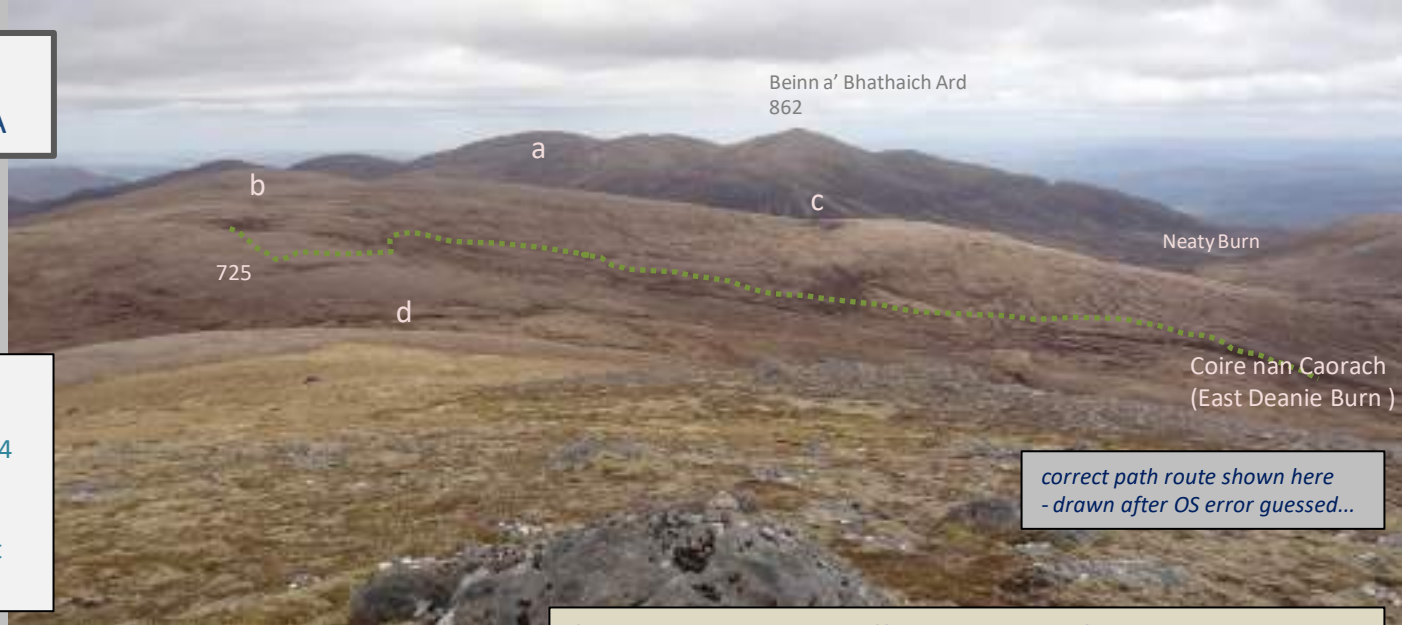
distant Fannich, under the lid

PD 3A

Deanie Burn NE SP9.43A

location seen from east end of Sgurr na Ruaidhe summit ridge (shoulder of Aonach na Reise)

- a. Sgurr a' Phollain 855m (PD 3)
- b. Carn nan Gearran Bana 764m
- c. glacifluvial nick 690m where SP9.44 emerges from Neaty Burn
- d. main col 719m, with glacifluvial overflow nick (SP9.43A emerges at higher nick beyond, 725m)



for historical interest - difficulties in identifying PD ...

first visit May 2025 (in descent) failed to locate main features / misinterpreted them (*quoting from original*):

1. possible made path along rim (tbc) - *confirmed, see later slides*
2. narrow glacifluvial overflow notch (nb. just beyond the main notch in the col) - *wrong notch descended due OS error! - next*
3. peculiar bench across shallow Coire nan Caorach, in the field appeared more like an ice-marginal erosional berm than cut - *wrong bench found, inset lower left*
4. path of conventional width between drainage ditches - *wrong*
5. Parallel Ditching - *suspected on imagery, not seen in field, and only a third of the total length*
6. probable one-sided drainage ditch - *wrong*

(route yet to be groundtruthed, as initial visit only located 2 and start of 3 (*no it didn't, found similar to west*) - no conventional path observed per map - PD would of course not be visible from any distance)

revisit May 2026 (in ascent) now follows, with acknowledgements to Jane Meek for spotting the PD start, tracing its route, and demonstrating scale



green - actual route up higher nick
pink - OS error 1-3 to 1-7

6-3
1960s

Aonach na Reise

PD

PD

PD?

SP9.44

SP9.43

SP9.43A

for historical interest - difficulties in identifying PD

*wrong notch descended, wrong bench found,
due to OS error*

most unusually, and presumably as SP9.43A was a latecomer not accurately mapped at Six-Inch scale, its head is shown emerging (understandably) in the lowest and most obvious skyline nick (719)

in this closely-spaced Deanie-Neaty group, the focus is on

SP9.43A Deanie Burn NE PD 3A slides 57-73

with additional mentions of

SP9.43B Deanie Ridge 74-76

SP9.43 Deanie Burn (PD element) 77

SP9.44 Neaty Burn (poss PD) 78

1-7
1950s

Deanie Lo.

Cave

Coille an Ath

764

PD 3A
Deanie Burn NE

this ppt starts with the ravine section (slides 56-57) as this builds to the purpose of the higher PD-based extension to the rim

SP9.43A

(PD 550m within this)

Coire nan Caorach

SP9.43A

The Deanie Burn stalkerpaths (SP9.43 - 43A) present another mystery - *why* ?
➤ both utilise **PD** in their upper reaches, in open 'corrie' bowls

SP9.43

(PD 150 m within this)

Coire na Ba Baine

dating the paths is complicated:
• SP9.43 is there from start (6-1) (but **PD** later ? see slide 77)
• **SP9.43A** is on 1-3 but not 6-2 (1901) so **presumably 1901-07**

for almost 2 km, the path (with branch) penetrates the recesses, with several recrossings - in places spectacular, hard to imagine it will 'go'.

Aonach na Reise
910

SP9.43

PD length - in the moorland route-making toolkit
➤ SP9.43 120-150 m minor role
➤ **SP9.43A ~ 570m of the 2.5 km branch is PD (23%)** - rather than conventional made path - in two main sections and some short links

for guests, this would be a walk to remember and repeat - and not with aid of a pony (6-2 labels the start as F.P. not B.R.)

Corry Deanie is one of the least obviously attractive parts of the Glenstrathfarrar Forest, dreary moors with mostly rounded hills
- so **why** invest hugely in a path to the rim, pre-1875, and then a branch to the same rim, longer and bolder, 30 yrs later ?
- maybe because the East Deanie Burn has one of the most dramatic and lengthy **ravines**, just open enough to walk up the floor (as cut into thick glacial deposits)

path descends into ravine here, then follows floor

gorge inaccessible, series of fine waterfalls, prettily wooded (today)

hydro weir

Deanie Lodge at foot

Bing Maps

Google Earth



(c) Jane Meek



inaccessible gorge, waterfalls, good path benched into rim
ravine fork (right edge) - SP9.43A follows floor into distance



approaching fork, path rises over an awkward nose
ravine fork - ford - SP9.43A goes right (and is surprisingly easy)



SP9.43





SP9.43A is followable up the floor, with some skipping around and aid of trods as ravine reduces and floor widens, **occasional short lengths of apparent PD**



cut berm just above floods

head of incision and transition from cut/made path to PD predominance



PD zone
Coire nan Caorach

rare exposure of possible original 'hoggin' surfacing (from moraine borrowpits)

on first visit (in descent), these were the first traces of path found



viewpoint
next picture

SP9.43A emerges from the reducing
incision into the staircase of upper basins



the crucial locus for wayfinding -
author was heading up easy grass
lead on right when attention
drawn to 'slots' (first arrow)



PD commences here



the skyline nick where SP9.43A
ends - but not by a direct line

the beginnings of a curve
- classic PD hallmark

PD 3A Deanie Burn NE
lower segment



above the ravine, the route has to cross the open peaty upland basins of 'Coire nan Caorach' (corrie simply means valley or hollow) - the lower one aims for the little gully (arrowed) - but the line has been well chosen to weave through the hags, with elegant curves





lower basin of
'Coire nan Caorach'



PD transitions back into SP
at foot of gully



the peat bogs to be
negotiated

trying to locate the PD across the lower basin, even zoomed from close above, is almost impossible - yet it proved easily and naturally followable underfoot

SP9.43A up Deanie Burn NE ravine

initial 'slots' - hybrid form ?



PD 3A
lower
segment

- 1 initial tight curve, finding hag-free 'bridge' cf. PD3 Sgurr a' Phollain
- 2 - 3 - 4 bends through hag-free zone
- 5 run in to gully foot - may reduce to single ditch





orange arrow - possible single ditch transition to crossing point to conventional SP (and inset)





PD 3A
Deanie Burn NE
upper segment

1. conventional SP path benched into gully rim
2. **PD along wide shelf**, sweeping onto upper moor
3. **PD route up moor**, here eaten into by peat collapse
4. **PD weaves through hags** (*next slide*)
5. **PD ends at jink**
6. engineered way across peat-runnelled escarpment foot
7. **PD hybrid** benched into corner
8. meltwater channel, conventional path inside it on east side
9. skyline path SP9.43B (see later slides for intersection)
10. short breakout onto plateau

note central furrow in much of PD



PD 3A Deanie Burn NE
upper segment



conventional path up gully floor rises steeply, continues benched into rim

PD resumes along broad shelf rising beside upper gully





PD continues along broad shelf, then sweeps elegantly left out onto upper basin



central line - deer trod - often confuses PD on imagery

collapsed peat-hole has eaten into the PD route





this is a baffling choice of route :

- a clear path does follow the skyline, as suspected from imagery
- why not zigzag up these easy treads-and-risers to join it ?
- the long traverse left skirts above the peat hag zone - but has required phenomenal earthworks ...

PD extends to foot of escarpment and west to the jink





top of PD upper segment





➤ the baffling traverse left and the phenomenal earthworks ...



this appears to be a wide excavated trench, surprisingly still firm to walk up beneath the slime veneer

- easier to dig out the deep peat than cut into the slopefoot (as further on - top left) ?
- the upcast bank is now the more obvious line to walk...

end of PD upper segment



hybrid PD round corner into nick



benched path becoming **hybrid PD**
(top left picture at *)

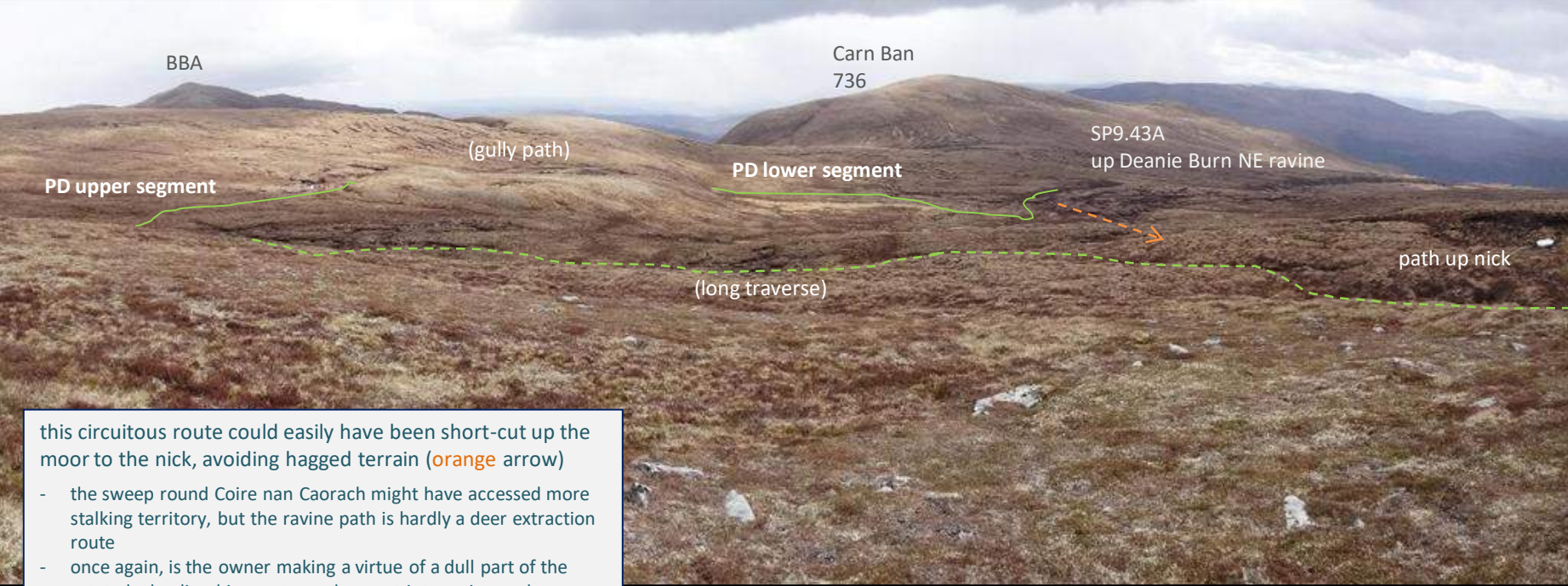


'processional way' clockwise from top left
- guests must have enjoyed this finale



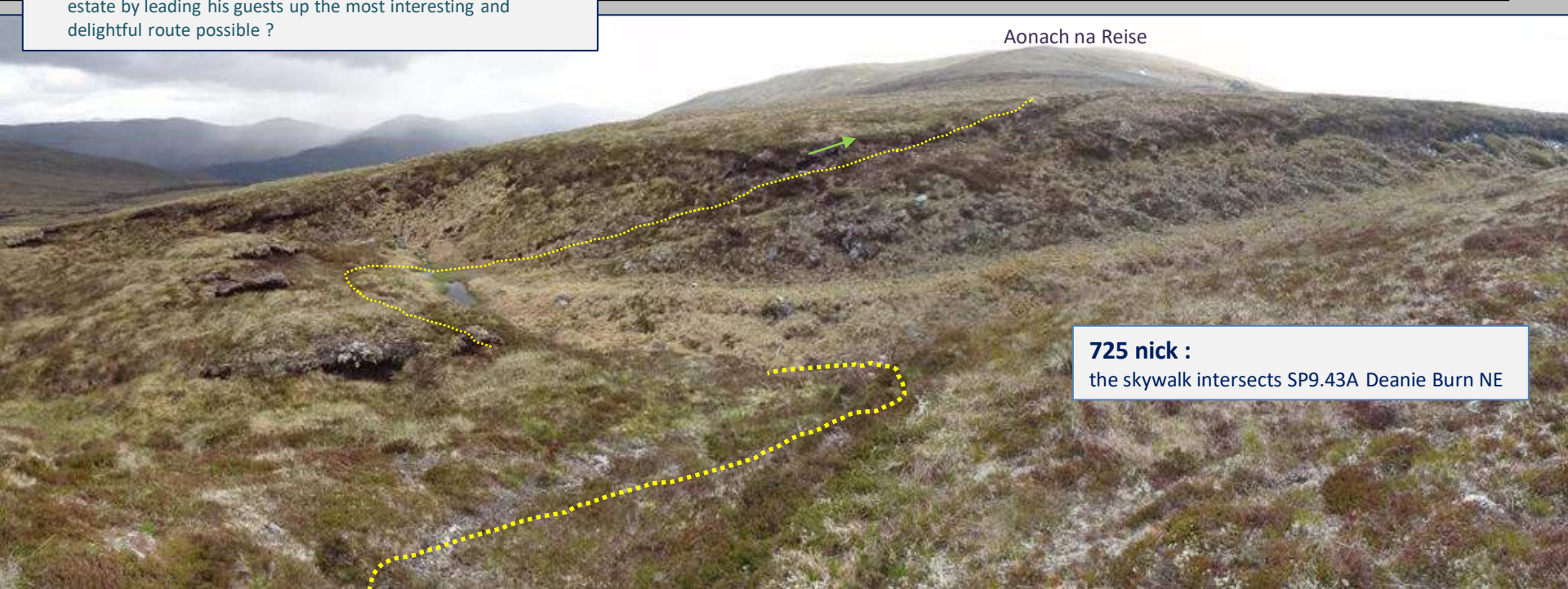
end of **hybrid PD**,
becomes conventional
bench up glacialfluvial
nick to 719 col





this circuitous route could easily have been short-cut up the moor to the nick, avoiding hagged terrain (orange arrow)

- the sweep round Coire nan Caorach might have accessed more stalking territory, but the ravine path is hardly a deer extraction route
- once again, is the owner making a virtue of a dull part of the estate by leading his guests up the most interesting and delightful route possible ?



725 nick :
the skywalk intersects SP9.43A Deanie Burn NE

SP9.43A path-head
intersection with
SP9.43B Deanie Ridge



path continues thro' nick to end at 725m col
- and a picnic hut / deer-watcher's shelter /
signal post, partly excavated from peat bank



path up nick



SP9.43B skyline path (yellow arrows)
- initially stone clearance with
limited benching or levelling
(below)
- becoming a heroic excavation (l/r t)





suspected for a while but only now verified (2026), this rare ridge route links the heads of SP9.43 - 43A - 44 - 44A -45, with a combination of made path, stone and peat clearance, and cairning - tho' the smooth bare plateau is uncairned and unmarked, curiously

BING maps

SP9.43B Deanie Ridge
(west from 725m nick)

Aonach na Reise
913



a cleared way through a tract of peat hags is a valuable aid to ridge walking - here twisting and turning marvellously thro' (last corkscrew almost missed)



the exit from the **peat maze** looks like straight ahead, and as messy as the entrance - but no, a final sharp dogleg right has a neat debouchure onto that delicious bare heath



apart from 'doing the skywalk' (almost) the main reason for returning to the **peat maze** a month later is that this final dogleg had escaped photoing - not surprisingly, given the poor conditions seen in the gallery

this dogleg is now named '**Jane's jinxed jink**' - for the discoverer of the two extraordinary Parallel Ditching segments in the upper reaches of SP9.43A, co-worker Jane Meek, spotted this chicane and tugged the head-down writer's sleeve as he ploughed straight on ahead

the revisit was blessed by a last moment of sun before the showers broke through from the west ... and cursed as yet another step-up onto a peat hag vantage point induced a dire inner thigh cramp - soaking wet elbows and thighs from writhing on the soggy moss

725

719

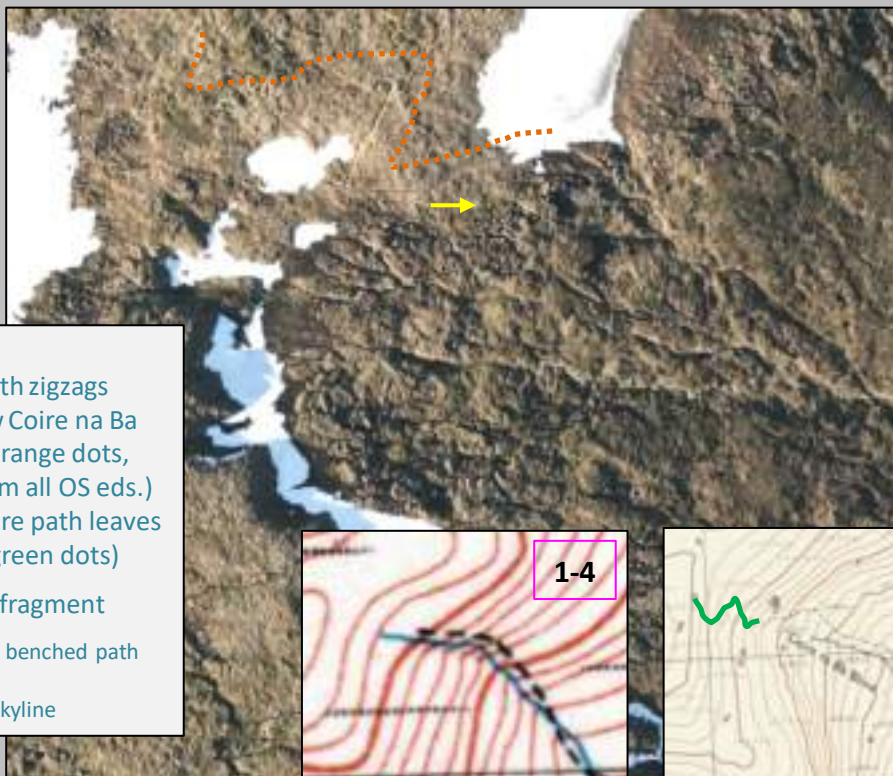
cleared way entrance/exit





SP9.43 Deanie Burn

this largely abandoned early path (from 6-1) has a short PD stretch near the head, just traceable
- possibly 120-150 m



BingMaps image shows

- conventional stalkerpath zigzags climbing out of shallow Coire na Ba Baine onto the ridge (orange dots, displaced - omitted from all OS eds.)
- **short PD segment** where path leaves ravine/ burnside line (green dots)

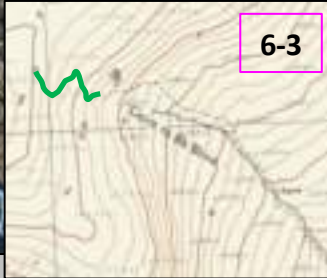
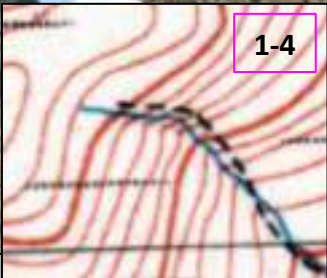
top right photo shows **PD** fragment

main photo-pair from bend on benched path (yellow arrow)
- Beinn a' Bhathaich Airde on skyline

if this path existed from 6-1 (before 1874), to the extent shown down to 1-4 (inset), does that mean the PD technique was in use then ?

the resurvey for 6-3 shows it extending further (while still missing the final zigzags) - and possibly on a fresh line further away from the burn, to which 6-1 adheres - so the PD element could date from the same interwar period inferred for PD3

or is this not PD but a made, raised path ? - inset



SP9.44 Neaty Burn - SP or PD ?

1. (*inset*) conventional made path up burnside to ford where this section rises away west
2. centre strip looks elevated - a causeway
3. most PD-like - if narrower than usual (2 m)
4. contrast vegetation - dry, surfaced ?
5. foreground could be PD, tho' ATV tracks emphasise narrowness - background is cut through a peat bank - beyond, a cut path

1

2

3

4

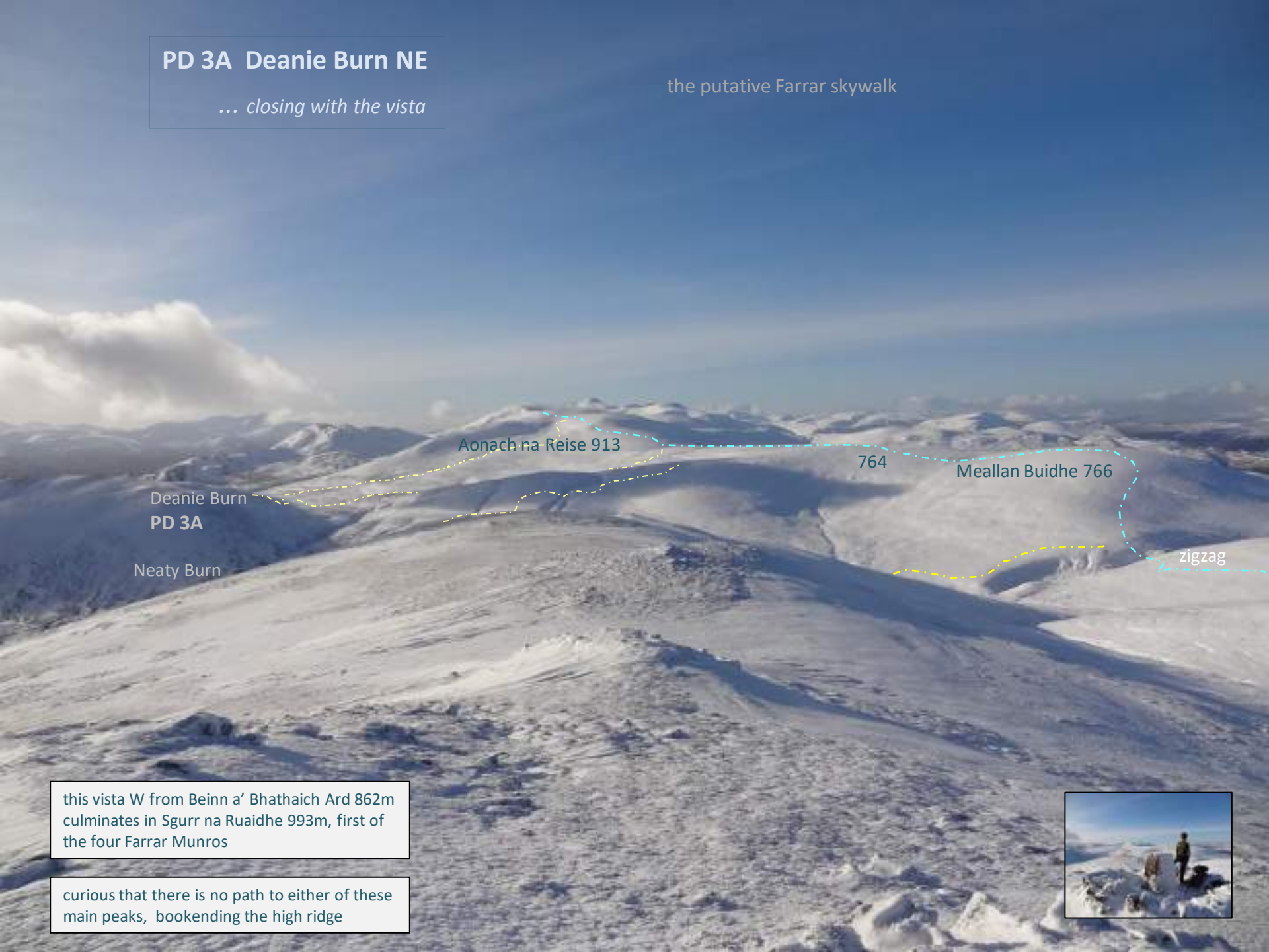
5

as Neaty Burn is mapped from 6-1, on this line, that makes it less likely to be PD : it does look more 'Victorian' in thoroughness

PD 3A Deanie Burn NE

... closing with the vista

the putative Farrar skywalk



Deanie Burn
PD 3A

Neaty Burn

Aonach na Reise 913

764

Meallan Buidhe 766

zigzag

this vista W from Beinn a' Bhathaich Ard 862m
culminates in Sgurr na Ruaidhe 993m, first of
the four Farrar Munros

curious that there is no path to either of these
main peaks, bookending the high ridge



never mapped beyond forest end
- implies not seen as a 'proper path'

PD 4

Gleann Meinich

SP9.67

Strathconon Estate

has a fairly limited stalkerpath network, mostly lower-level up side glens or over modest passes

- with the exception of the handsome circuit of **Bac an Eich** and its branches up onto the heights (SP9.58-60)
- this path SP9.67 is in the unassuming mould

SP9.67 Gleann Meinich

most of the original stalkerpath has been lost to forestry roading

- near the end of the forest, it can be found (1) and followed out up the ravine (2) onto the moor (3), as conventional stalkerpath
- on the moor, it seems hybrid SP-PD

the map begs the Q whether it was intended to go **through to Achnasheen ?**

- compare HP9-15/16 - former 'carriage roads'

PD 4

forest



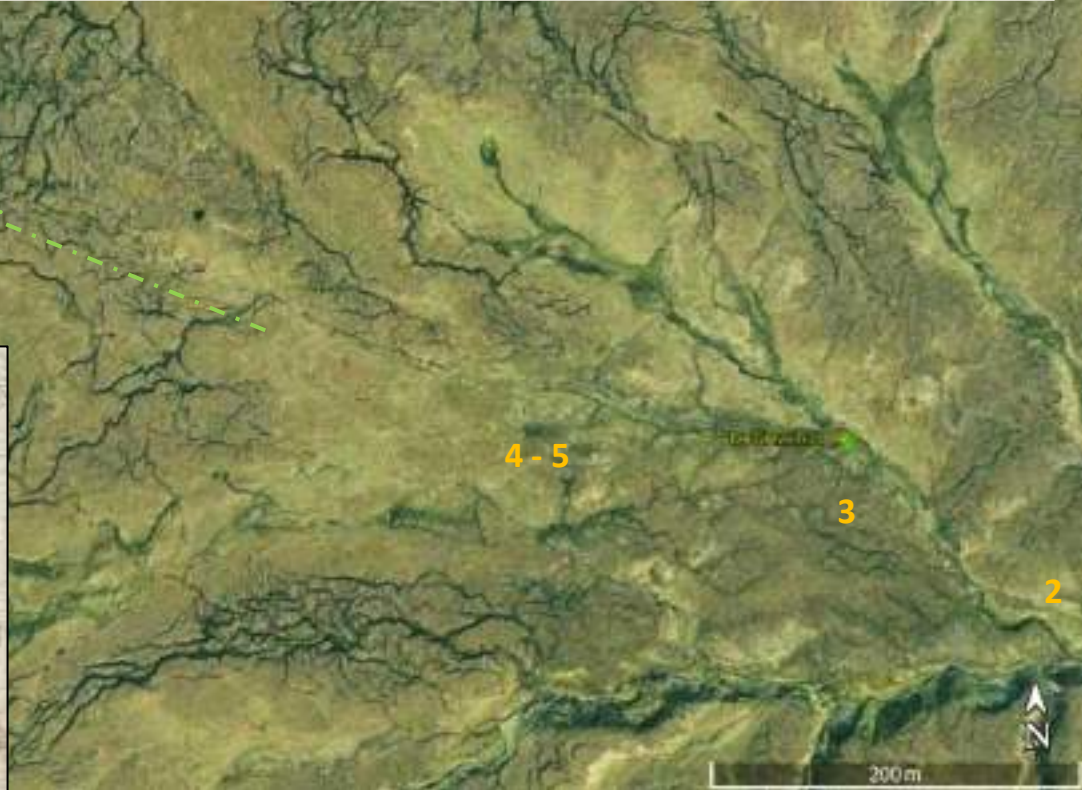
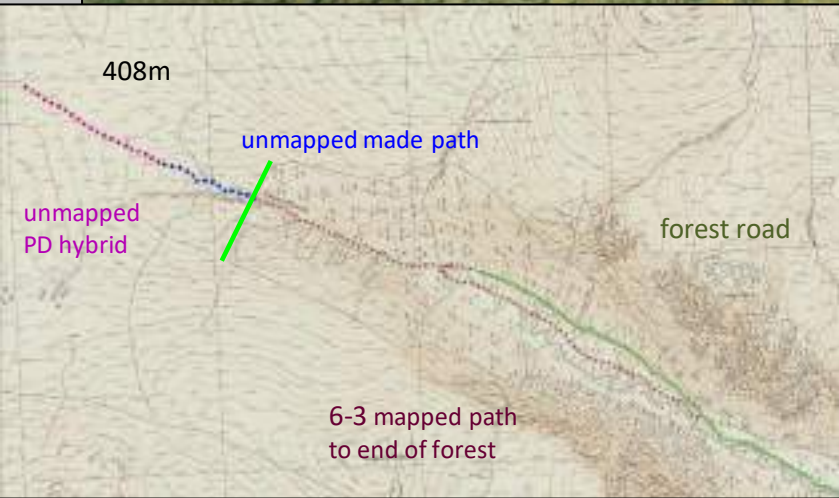
PD4 Glenn Meinich

on the moor, it seems hybrid SP-PD (next slide) :

4-5 widely-spaced ditches, no obvious surfacing - **PD**

6 cleared strip through peat hags (cf. Farrar skywalk)
with small borrowpits and some surfacing

7 terminus - peters out as if abandoned in progress





4



5

PD4 Gleann Meinich

on the moor, it seems hybrid SP-PD (next slide) :

- 4-5 widely-spaced ditches, no obvious surfacing - **PD**
- 6 cleared strip through peat hags
 - small borrowpit, surfacing
- 7 terminus - ditches less widely spaced, hint of surfacing
 - as if meant for ponytraps to continue to Achnasheen

PD 4 the vista... 😊

this is not a path hosts would have brought guests to for scenery or views



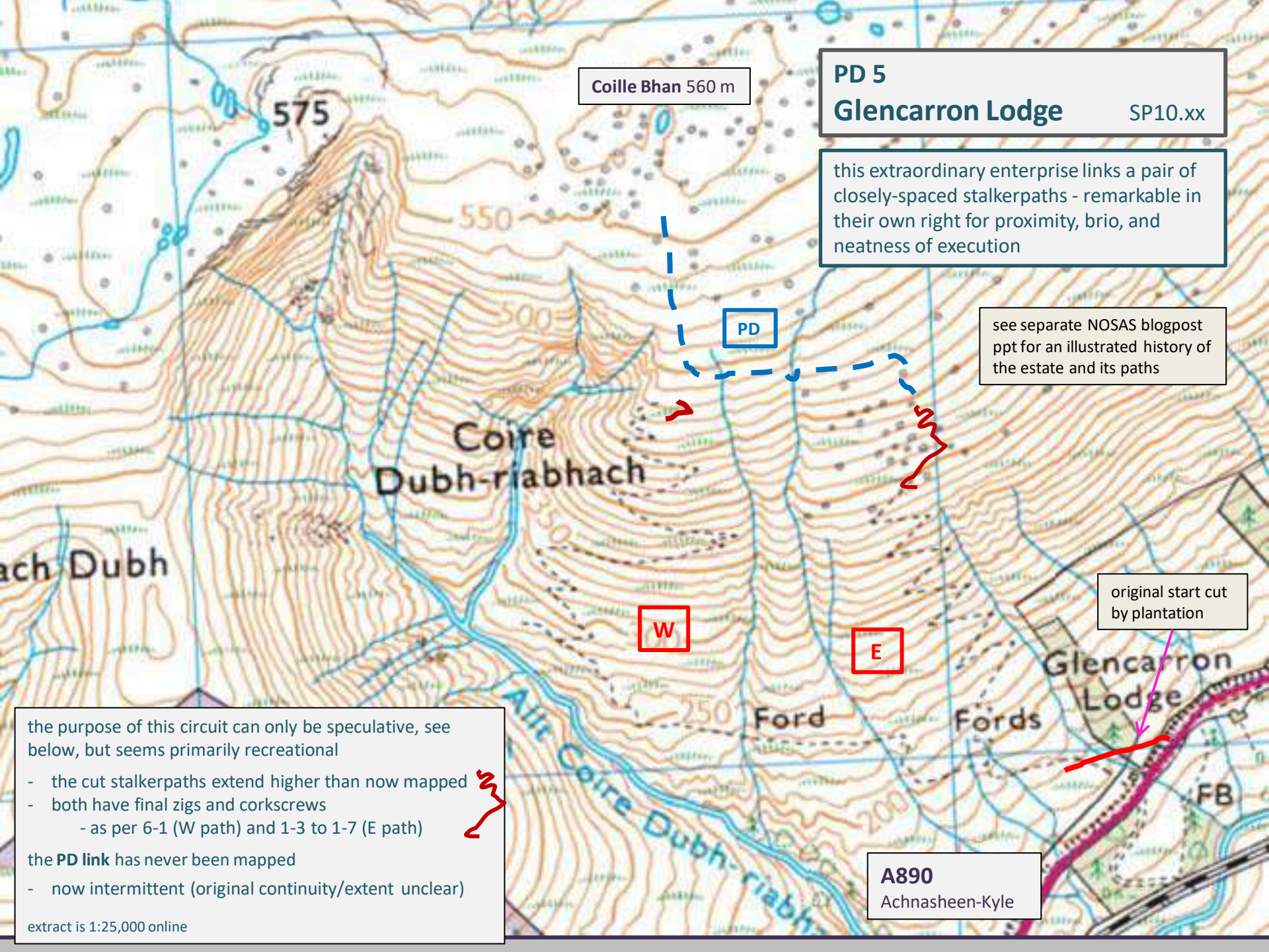
6



7

the 'path' fizzles out on the top of a vast and miserable wet peat-moor (which is not the estate march) with a couple of enormous grouse butts to suggest some purpose

- but imagery hints at possibilities of a way-cut route down through little grassy ribbons and eventually across Strath Bran to Achnasheen



Coille Bhan 560 m

PD 5
Glencarron Lodge SP10.xx

this extraordinary enterprise links a pair of closely-spaced stalkerpaths - remarkable in their own right for proximity, brio, and neatness of execution

see separate NOSAS blogpost ppt for an illustrated history of the estate and its paths

PD

W

E

original start cut by plantation

the purpose of this circuit can only be speculative, see below, but seems primarily recreational

- the cut stalkerpaths extend higher than now mapped
- both have final zigs and corkscrews
 - as per 6-1 (W path) and 1-3 to 1-7 (E path)

the **PD link** has never been mapped

- now intermittent (original continuity/extent unclear)

extract is 1:25,000 online

A890
Achnasheen-Kyle

PD 5

6" 1st edn 1875 (6-1)

Glencarron Lodge paths

enjoy a mysteriously erratic OS mapping history :

6-1	1875	W	
1-2	1894	nil*	
6-2	1902	nil	
1-3	1907		E
1-7	1955		E
6-3	1967	W	E
metric	1976	W	
metric online		W	E

* early 1" editions :

- 1-1 (~1874) has the W path, as per its 6"
- 1-2 has no paths, as per the following 6" but *the line of the W path has evidently been erased and hill-hatched in to blend - as is not uncommon on this edition (reasons unknown)

Glencarron Estate - an 'accordion history' of expansion, contraction and decline ...

1. Achnashellach Estate bought by Sir Ivor Guest ?1871 after break-up of Applecross Estate
2. Glencarron Estate bought by Guest before 1875 from Mr Shaw of Birkenhead
3. Coulin Estate bought by Guest before 1875 from Lord Elphinstone, Guest resold it c.1890
4. Glenuig Estate bought by Guest after 1875 from Mackenzie of Coul Trustees
5. Achnashellach Estate sold by Guest - now Lord Wimborne - 1890s
6. **Glencarron north of road sold to Coulin Estate, presumably after 1890** (or 1896 ? source unknown)
7. Glencarron & Glenuig Estate since 1890s

Sir Ivor Guest had inherited enormous wealth from South Wales coal and iron - and spent lavishly on Lodges on these estates, and (presumably) on the extensive stalkerpath networks - some of the densest; he entertained generously, and good paths may have been an attraction

PD length - about 0.5 km

PD date - a conundrum:

- from experience elsewhere, this PD link might well never have been mapped, as it is not a segment within a conventional path, but an extension
- but the PD link cannot have been made until E path (from which it extends) was complete, which was pre-1907
- as 6-2 is usually reliable, absence of E path implies made between 1902 and 1907 - but deletion of W path and its absence from 6-2 could suggest a deliberate withholding of public awareness of both paths, so E path might be earlier than 1902 (but post-1875)
- if E path and PD link were made after ~1896 , a path circuit from Glencarron Lodge would have been of little benefit to a purchaser based at Coulin Lodge - unless the 'sale' was an arrangement which allowed for some continued enjoyment of this hill by Glencarron
- ❖ **PD 5 could thus be (a) between Guest purchase and sale ~1871-1890, or (b) with or soon after E path completion pre-1907**



(PD added at last minute to 2023 presentation, when just identified - and just space)

PD 5

odd jink where extension starts
numerous deer trods confuse picture
- and deer use paths, carrying on at zigzags - as here, joining a West path Z:

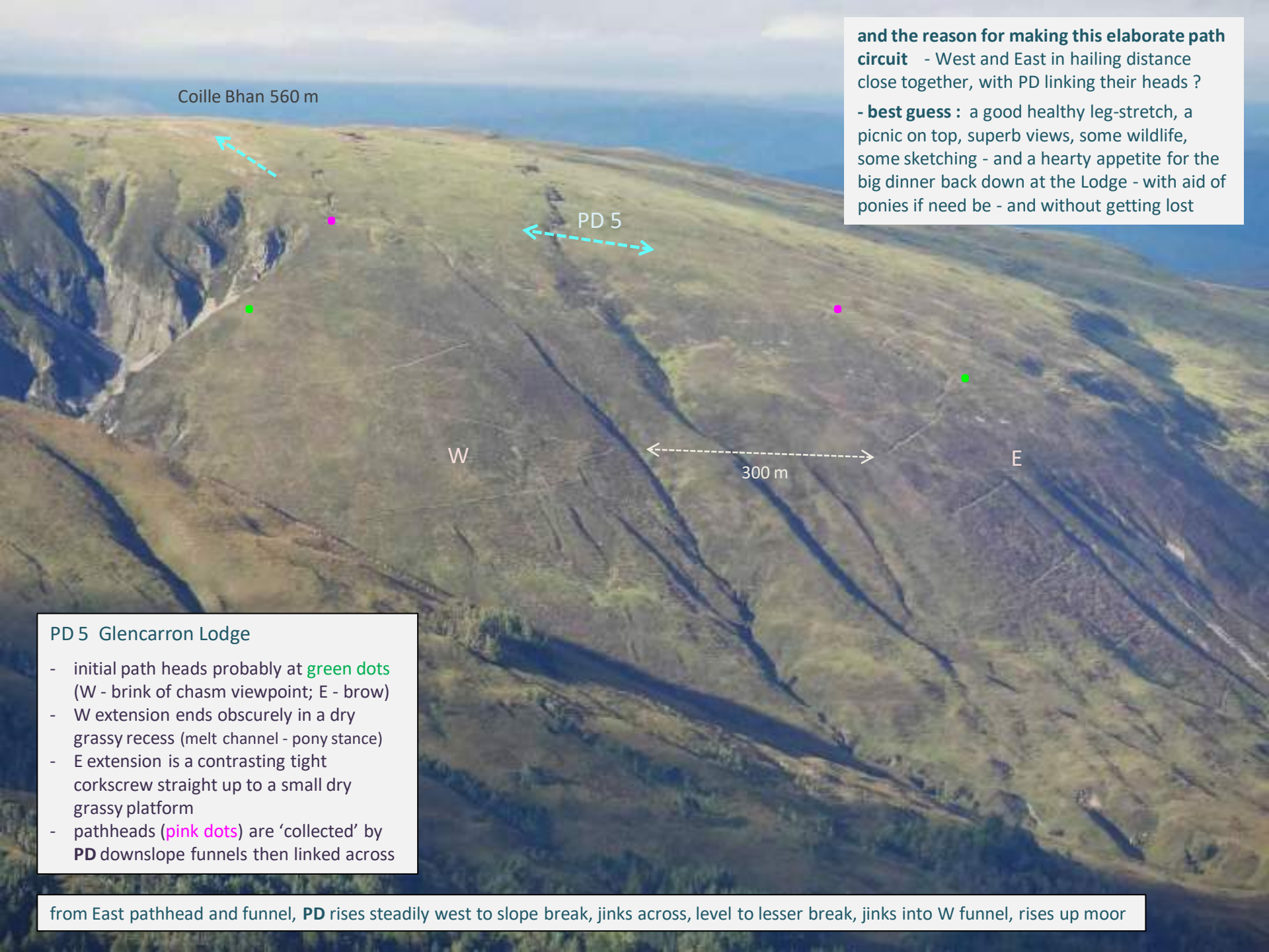


West path Z=7

East path Z=10

the paths are distinct on imagery and in photos from hills opposite - but were cut as narrow notches into the steep dry slope, no drainage ditches required, and have degraded to lines rather than paths (not helped by deer habit of walking on outside edges)

guests probably did the 'circuit' clockwise - to better appreciate the dramatic ravines
(but PD is best described and photoed from east end, ascending)



and the reason for making this elaborate path circuit - West and East in hailing distance close together, with PD linking their heads ?

- **best guess** : a good healthy leg-stretch, a picnic on top, superb views, some wildlife, some sketching - and a hearty appetite for the big dinner back down at the Lodge - with aid of ponies if need be - and without getting lost

PD 5 Glencarron Lodge

- initial path heads probably at **green dots** (W - brink of chasm viewpoint; E - brow)
- W extension ends obscurely in a dry grassy recess (melt channel - pony stance)
- E extension is a contrasting tight corkscrew straight up to a small dry grassy platform
- pathheads (**pink dots**) are 'collected' by **PD** downslope funnels then linked across

from East pathhead and funnel, **PD** rises steadily west to slope break, jinks across, level to lesser break, jinks into W funnel, rises up moor

PD 5 Glencarron Lodge
revealed on imagery - 1 (traverse)

despite poor image quality, the PD remains
distinct for most of the way across :

1. E funnel generous curve and 8 m width,
splays to embrace pathhead
2. jinks across step-scarps
3. W funnel similar splay, curves straight up
brow - not discernible on image, R of
arrow



ravine heads

W

E

Coille Bhan 560 m

PV

lochan

4

6

4

4

5

PV

4

3

ravine heads

PD 5 Glencarron Lodge revealed on imagery - 2 (ascent to ridge)

- 3. initial W funnel similar splay, **PD** curves straight up brow - not discernible on image, to R of blue arrow
- 4. deer trods (often 'twin track') - false trail bearing away NW to main ravine rim
- 5. final short **PD** - aiming for lochan
- 6. possible cut path - or trod ?

PV - dry knoll "picnic vistas"

4/6 provide context for the PD route - and add to the mystery of its purpose





Lodge

c

SP.10.xy Glencarron Lodge E stalkerpath

- a. final zag of original path
- b. awkward jink up to extension of final zag
- c. corkscrew up from final zag terminus
- d. final leg of corkscrew, curving right to grassy bench in PD funnel foot



d



Lodge

a



b

BING shows extravagant angle at top of funnel more clearly



PD 5 Glencarron Lodge

- BINGmaps image shows chain of grassy benches along this brow
- choice of this one unclear - small, not very flat, nor sheltered (as pony stance)



East path head and PD funnel



East path head - narrow entrance marked by poles
PD funnel - rucksack by east ditch





pathhead

PD funnel - base splays out, at first assumed to be drainage ditches for stance, now read as 'shepherding' into non-made route



PD funnel (from earlier, duller visit)

1. looking down initial steep slant left onto grassy bench
2. looking up easier slant right to funnel-top angle
3. elegant curve of inner angle ditch (joined by outer twin)
4. ditto (looking along upper twin)
- note main PD link crosses a considerable sideslope



the walking-pole markers - going in deep

...these were placed adjacent to the PD trace - but quite often would go a foot or two into the slot, which remarkably can survive more or less as cut after a century, with minimal water erosion - or debris / vegetation infill
- potential ankle-twisters or even leg-breakers, especially when hidden in heather

the step-scarp as a geomorphological indicator (skyline, with deer)
... is an incipient upper extension of a vast Rock Slope Failure (RSF) which occupies the slopes above Glencarron Lodge for 800 m

- this minimally-disturbed upper zone, with its diamond pattern of such scarps, is a Rock Slope Deformation
- lower down, it has progressed into a rockslide, creating a wedge cavity 10-20 m deep

the deer are abundant here, as the fractured terrain is both dry and mineral-rich

see Jarman and Harrison (2019) Geomorphology - RSF in the British Mts

the great ravine of 'Coire' Dubh-riabhach

... has no source or river remotely large enough to cut it, and so is a glacialfluvial meltwater incision, carved in days or hours during the last catastrophically rapid deglaciation



PD link (west of step-scarp)

1. short abrupt rise beyond step-scarp curves across slope
2. continues across slope, obscure in tussock grass
3. tramlines - typically 3 - 3.5 m wide
4. approaching west funnel (beyond dry grassy gully)





PD - west funnel

1. link turns steeply uphill beyond dry grassy gully
2. neatly radiused curve (as at east end)
3. viewpoint is opposite ditch
4. looking down the final uphill PD to west funnel locus





PD - west funnel

it is unclear whether this funnel also splays out to embrace the west pathhead - left image could suggest a parallel 'tramlines' curve (above silhouette)



- nor does the west path extend up to this point, instead terminating in the 'pony stance' (next slide) with a dry grassy conduit to follow up to meet the PD



West path terminus
the west path extension finishes with a neat corkscrew (lower right) into this pleasant, dry, grassy, sheltered south-aspect 'pony stance' - the grassy conduit carries on up behind main photo





Glenuaig

Glen Carron

PD ascent to Coille Bhan

the 'grassy conduit' is in the sights
- tramlines just discernible bearing
left (east) behind arrow

Monar

the vista across Glen Carron is always stunning (if often *contrejour*)
- and of course the proud host could wave an arm across much of it
as 'all his' (east of the entrance to Glenuaig / Gleann Fhiodhaig)



PD ascent to Coille Bhan - stage 1

the initial steep rise eases out to a brow, where no trace exists on map or in field across bare stony ground

width between tramlines is unusually reduced up the steep, but then widens again (right)



Coille Bhan 560 m

PD ascent to Coille Bhan - stage 2

... and then, mystifyingly, after that gap, the tramlines resume across a slight depression (just visible on GEarth image at '5')
- heading towards the lochan over the final brow

PD 5 Glencarron Lodge
the vista

Carn Breac

vista from Coille Bhan

on a clear day, the view is stupendous, despite being a glimpse from an intermediate height

- this picture has Beinn Eighe (Torrison) - Slioch - Fisherfield
- to the right would come Beinn Dearg and Fannich

the fitter guests might continue up the moor onto Carn Breac for a fuller prospect (similar to lower picture)

Glencarron

Coille Bhan

Sgurr nan
Ceannaichean

Glen Shiel

Cluanie Inn

PD 6 Am Bathaich

Wester Glen Quoich

SP7.27

Wester Glen Quoich

Kinloch Hourn

SP7.27

Alltbeithe

Easter Glen Quoich

Glenquoich Estate

- one of the densest and finest collections of stalkerpaths, many with long flights of zigzags in this high mountain relief
- the existence of a short stretch of PD on Am Bathaich was unknown (despite having walked that ridge) until 2024 - when spotted on imagery, checking the number of Zs for a club show...
- **no other PD** has yet been identified in recording most of these paths, save for short passages and the termination to SP7.44 (see **PD7** below)

Glenquoich Lodge *
(drowned)

SP7.44

Dam

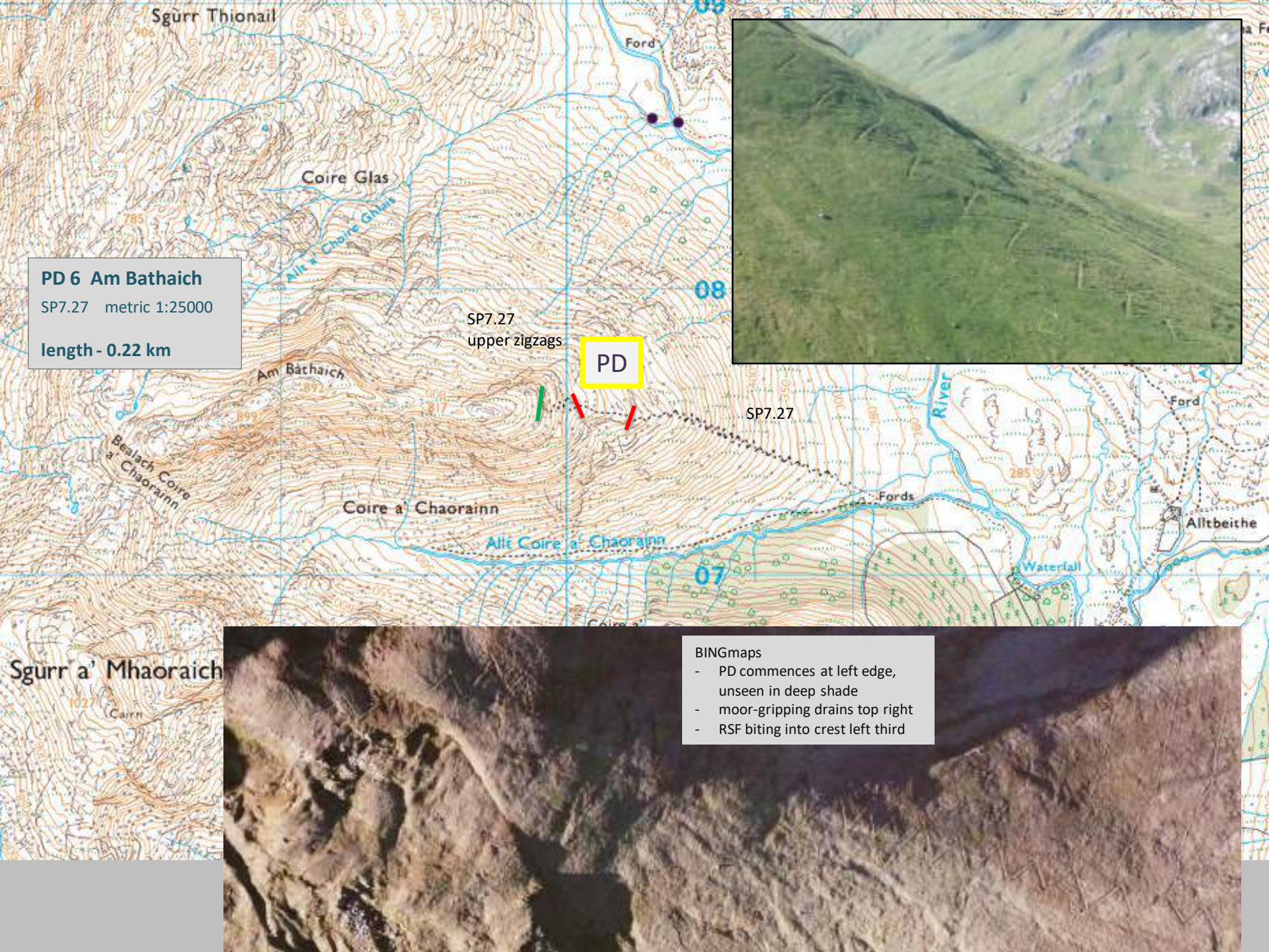
Invergarry

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PD 7 Sron Leac na Fearna

Loch Cuaich

SP7.44



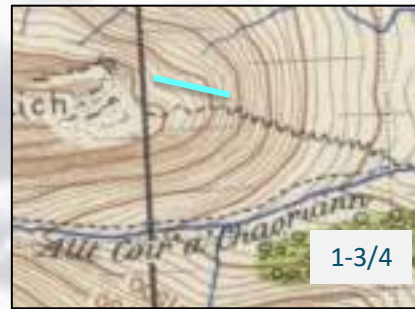
PD 6 Am Bathaich
SP7.27 metric 1:25000
length - 0.22 km



BINGmaps
- PD commences at left edge, unseen in deep shade
- moor-gripping drains top right
- RSF biting into crest left third

PD 6 Am Bathaich - date

- SP7.27 not mapped at 6-2 (1899)
- first mapped 1-3 (1906) but only to red bar
- PD is included (blue bars)
- ❖ PD presumably made between 1899-1906



one stage or two ? a rare OS mapping error ?

- the map history was for a long time interpreted as indicating a two-stage path
- but close rescrutiny reveals that the red bar is at a main grid line, so at 1-3 the cartographer may have accidentally omitted the final Zs
- at 6-3 (1967) the final Zs appear - green oval
- it makes little sense to take the PD to the base of a steep rise, then add a short Z flight years later - especially as the PD meshes with the SP (slide 114)
- on the other hand ... the extra Zs fizzle out only half-way up the steep bluff, hinting at an incomplete addition

conventional stalkerpath

- the double lines are the cut-and-fill banks of a made path on a slope
- typically six feet wide, can be less where ponies not taken
- worn trods are single lines

PD 6 Am Bathaich

1. main zigzags
2. edge of RSF - made path crosses flank scarp and incipient wedge hollow
3. made path continues half-way along easy-going open shoulder
4. **PD extends** to right of giant boulder - arrowed (*invisible on photo, from Gleouraich SW ridge*)
5. far edge of RSF - made path resumes across flank scarp
6. top of upper zigzags - on minor brow, with steep awkward ascent still to negotiate



RSF

6

5

4

3

2

1

PD 6 Am Bathaich

3. transition from made path to PD not very clear
4. giant boulder k/m/x - small marker boulders
5. far edge of RSF - made path resumes across flank scarp

inset - oblique up shoulder shows how far PD deviates from natural axis and desire line to summit ridge





PD6 Am Bathaich

- 2. edge of RSF - path crosses flank scarp, crosses incipient wedge hollow
- 3. made path continues half-way along easy-going open shoulder
- 4. **PD extends** to right of giant boulder

the transition from made to PD is unclear, but probably beyond "x" here (left photo)



made path goes round this corner





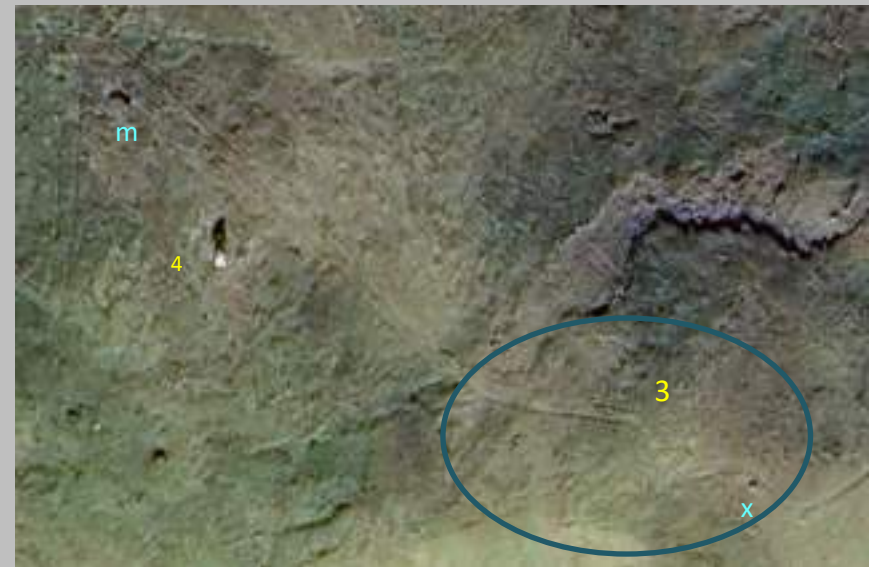
the transition from made path to PD is unclear, but about here, probably just beyond the low step-scarp - conventional path width, perhaps scraped rather than surfaced

(upper pictures taken standing beside/on boulder "x")
(next slide is below/above '3')



transition :

- below, ascending low step-scarp, still conventional path width, possibly cleared
- above, widens out, central strip same character as tussocky moor



(boulder "m" marks first zig in PD)

classic PD bearing away to right

(upper picture taken beside giant boulder 4 heading towards boulder "m")



deep cavity at angle of incipient RSF extension

- must have opened after path set out
- pole spanning it: if it had fallen in, it would have been irretrievable





the PD now describes a remarkable double zigzag (GEarth image)

- hard to capture on site (no photo of middle bend)
- purpose obscure, since gradients are gentle
- indeed, the zags become almost horizontal*
- if intended as 'guidelines' a straight or sinuous tram-track would have been easier to adhere to

(picture pair taken turning sharply round "m" - corners are neatly radiused, whereas next bends are more acute)

*the main flight Z=26 is set out in straight zigs, not allowing for the convexity of the nose, thus some zags level out and even dip down as they traverse right - evidently set out from a rigid plan, not by eye - compare PD5 Glencarron Lodge West Path, where the long zags curve elegantly up across the convex slope



final PD zag

- the marked section crosses the natural irregularities of terrain and vegetation with no effort to clear a line
- the uphill leg has an increasing cross-slope and transitions into a conventional cut path again (a) before the final Zs commence



a
in next slide

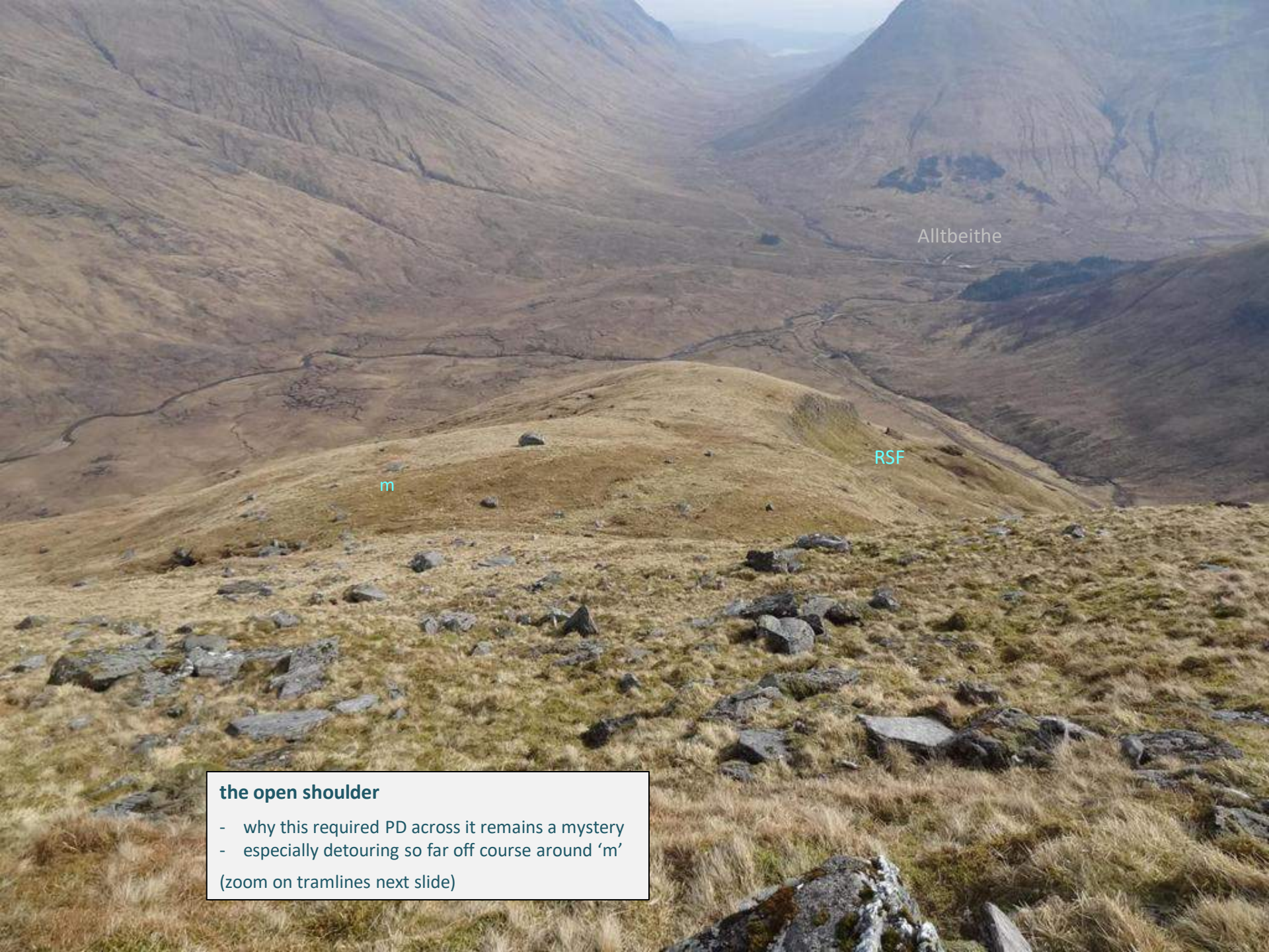


transition PD > SP

PD section reverts at '5' into conventional made path, tortuous Z=4



the path top is only half-way up this steep awkward bluff - why end there ?



Alltbeithe

RSF

m

the open shoulder

- why this required PD across it remains a mystery
 - especially detouring so far off course around 'm'
- (zoom on tramlines next slide)



the open shoulder

- the two nearer sharp bends can just be seen
- the lowest bend angles round boulder 'm'
- transition back to made stalkerpath at 5

PD 6 Am Bathaich

the vista

Sgurr a' Mhaoraich
1027

Sgurr Thionail
906

Am Bathaich 899m (2950') prime views :

- west down inner Loch Hourn to Ladhar Bheinn on Knoydart
- east inland along the airy but easy crest to Glen Quoich

this is one of the most readily attained viewpoints from the Lodge, in the heart of the Estate, by pony and trap to the foot

- continuing left or right over the adjacent hills links with fine paths down, making for excellent circuits



PD 7 Sron Lice na Fearna

Loch Cuaich

(Glen Quoich Estate)

SP7.44

for map see slide 104

- a - conventional stalkerpath branches off former estate road to Kinlochquoich
- b - classic zigzags up the nose
- c - short PD passage

photos **Jane Meek**





PD 7 Sron Lice na Fearna

probable PD elements marked blue
(orange - superseded by cut zigzags ?)
path head top left



length

PD elements 0.25 km (20%)

date - mapped 1-3 (1906)

probably made 1899-1906