

An Archaeological Survey for the Caorach Hydro Scheme, Wyvis Estate, Evanton, Ross and Cromarty, Highland

For Hydroplan UK

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1. Summary

Five archaeological sites were recorded in an archaeological survey of part of the Allt nan Caorach, on Wyvis Estate, near Evanton, Ross and Cromarty, Highland. All are associated with the 19th and early 20th century agricultural landscape. Two structures, **Sites 2a** and **3**, were constructed before 1875, the latter being out of use by that date and the former being roofed until at least 1902. The old track, **Site 5**, was also in use by 1875. The fence, **Site 1**, was constructed between 1875 and 1902 and the borrow pit, **Site 4**, is associated with the construction of the present track, at some time in the 20th century.

No scheduled ancient monuments, listed buildings or designed landscapes are situated within, or in the vicinity of, the survey area. Impact assessments and mitigations are summarised in the table in Appendix A.

2. Introduction.

An archaeological survey was undertaken, on behalf of Hydroplan UK, along part of the Allt nan Caorach on Wyvis Estate, near Evanton, Ross and Cromarty, Highland. (OS 1:10,000 Sheet NH56NW) prior to the proposed construction of a hydro scheme. (See Fig. 1: Location Map)

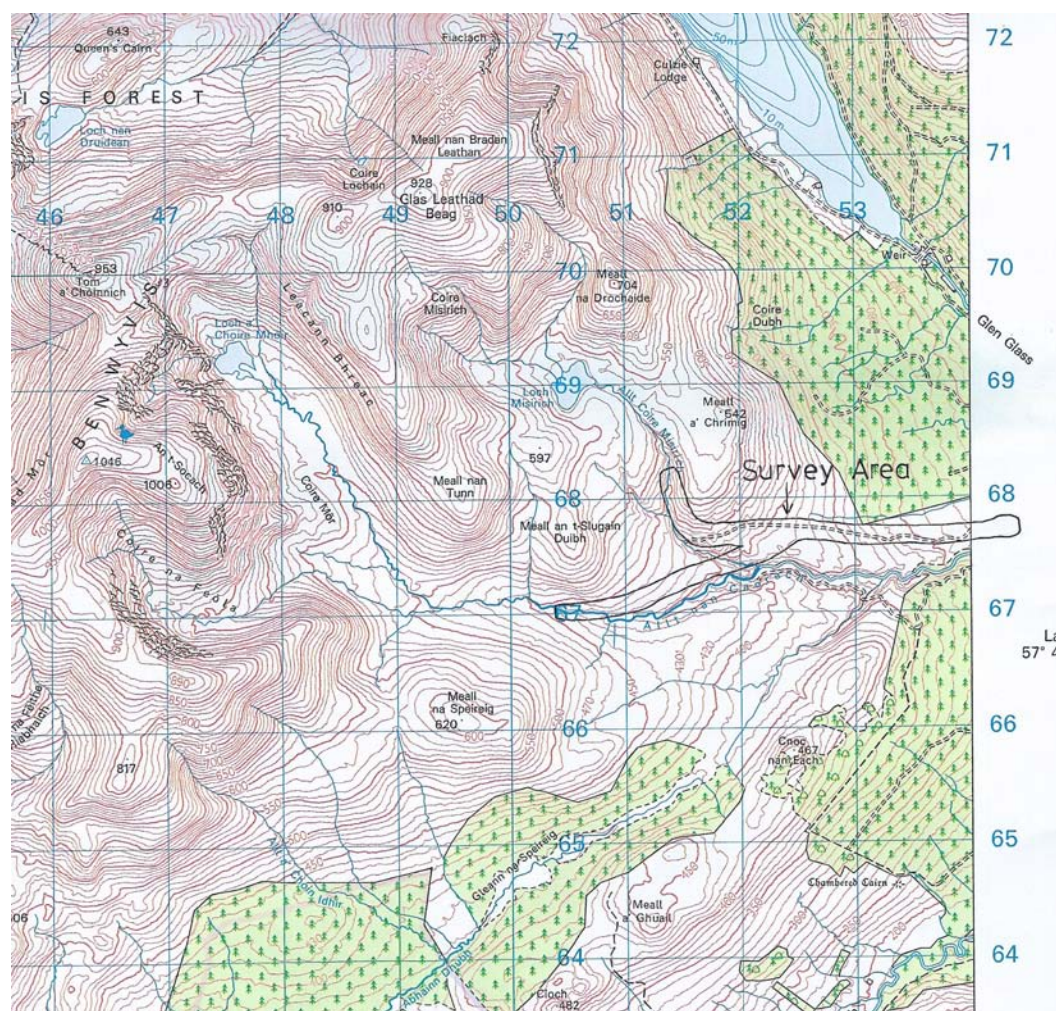


Fig. 1: Location Map of Area

(Extract from OS Landranger 20 Beinn Dearg & Loch Broom (©Crown copyright 2008. All rights reserved .Licence Number 10044103))

The survey area is situated on the North side of the Allt nan Caorach, a tributary of the River Glass.

The hydro scheme consists of (See Fig. 2):

- a) Intake 1 on the Allt nan Caorach at NH 50425 67027.
- b) Intake 2 on the Allt Coire Misirich at approximately NH 51380 68202.
- c) an underground pipeline from the intakes along the North side of Allt nan Caorach to:
- d) a power house to be situated at approximately NH 54503 67686.
- e) Access will be by an existing track from Eileanach Lodge. The proposed pipeline follows along this track for c. 2.5km up to Allt Coire Misirich. Further tracks will presumably follow the routes of the pipelines beyond this to the Intakes on Allt Coire Misirich and across the latter to Intake 1 on Allt nan Caorach.

The survey area consists of 50m either side of the pipeline routes and 100m radius around the site of the power house. The area is situated mostly on the metamorphic schists, quartz and granulites of the Moine succession, apart from the eastern end, where the Lower Red Sandstone deposits of the River Glass extend into the Allt Nan Caorach valley. The ground consists of open moorland, and rises from a height of 240m OD to 440m OD.

3. Working Methods.

The survey consisted of a combination of a desk-based assessment and a rapid walkover survey.

3.1. Desk-based Assessment.

Desk-based research assessed the potential for archaeology in the area. The following sources were consulted:

3.1.1 Sites and Monuments Registers

a) The National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS), held by RCAHMS, John Sinclair House, 16 Bernard Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 9NX, available on www.rcahms.gov.uk

b) The Historic Environment Record, (HER) held by the Highland Council Archaeology Unit, Planning and Development Service, Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, IV3 5NX, available on www.am.baile.org.uk

No sites have been recorded on the above databases within the survey area. Four sites have been recorded within the vicinity:

1. St. Colman's Well at NH 52 67.

NMRS ref. NH56NW.2 (Canmore ID 12892)

HER Ref. MHG 8962

"There was a well dedicated to St. Colman in Kiltarn Parish".

[This has not been identified on the ground and has only a four-figure grid reference. Rev. Harry Robertson in The (Old) Statistical Account refers to St. Colman's Well as "a spring at Teinleod, above Fowlis Castle, which might correspond with a well marked on the OS 1st Ed. 6" map near "Teanord" at NH 595 649.]

2. Allt nan Caorach dykes at NH 53 67

NMRS Ref. NH56NW.5 (Canmore ID 89917)

HER Ref. MHG 18689

“Centred on NH 53 67, extends to NH 55 68.” “A dyke (or fence?) running along the northern border of the SSSI.”

3. Allt an Caorach Shieling Hut at NH 5212 6727 (**Site 3**)

NMRS Ref. NH56NW.7 (Canmore ID 103679)

HER Ref. MHG 20788

“What may be an unroofed shieling hut is depicted on the 1st edition of the OS 6” map (Ross-shire and Cromartyshire, 1881, Sheet lxiv) but it is not shown on the current edition of the OS 1:10,000 (1971).”

4. Eileanach Cairnfield, Hut Circle at NH 5508 6816

NMRS Ref. NH56NE.13 (Canmore ID 12876)

HER Ref. MHG 8977, 41606, 41631

“At NH 5508 6816 is a circular stone-walled hut measuring 11.0m in diameter between the centres of an ill-defined turf-covered wall. The entrance is in the SE and part of the NE arc is mutilated. To the South centred at NH 551 681 is a small field system marked by several stone clearance heaps”.

3.1.2 Maps.

Roy’s Military Survey of Scotland, 1747-55.

John Thomson: Atlas of Scotland: Northern Part of Ross and Cromarty Shires, 1826.

OS 1st Ed. 6” Map Sheet Ross and Cromartyshire lxiv surveyed 1875, publ. 1881

OS 2nd Ed. 6” Map Sheet Ross and Cromartyshire lxiv, revised 1902, publ. 1907

OS 1:10,000 Sheets NH56NW, 1971.

OS 1:25,000 Explorer 437 Ben Wyvis & Strathpeffer, 2007.

3.1.3 Archives.

a) RCAHMS:

Ordnance Survey Name Books, c. 1870, available on www.scotlandsplaces.gov.uk
Sites and Monuments of Scotland Series 6: Easter Ross, Ross and Cromarty District, Highland Region, 1979

Wordsworth, Jonathon: Inventory of Archaeological Features on SSSI’s in Easter Ross district, 1993 (MS/842/1)

3.1.4 Aerial Photographs.

Aerial photographs, held by the Air Photo Unit, RCAHMS, Edinburgh, were consulted.

a) 106G/Scot/UK 61: Date 23.5.46; Scale: 1:10,000; Frames 3394-3397, 4414-4416

b) CPE/UK/0184; Date 9.10.46; Scale 1:10,000; Frames 2108-2110; 5109-5110.

c) 541/A/0543; Date 12.6.50; Scale 1:10,000; Frames 4001-4004.

d) OS 65-014, Date 6.4.65; Scale 1:10,000; Frames 010-012; 027-031.

3.1.5 Published Sources.

The following contained information relevant to the survey area:

Anon: “Excursion to Glenglass” in Trans. Inverness Scientific Society and Field Club, vol. 3, 30-33, 1884.

Grimble, A.: The Deer Forests of Scotland, 1896.

Miller, Hugh: Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland or The Traditional History of Cromarty, 2nd Ed. 1850 (1st Ed. 1834)

Munro, Rev. Thomas: “Parish of Kiltarn” in The New Statistical Account of Scotland, 1834-45, Vol. 14, 313-332, (1839).

Robertson, Rev. Harry: “Parish of Kiltarn” in The [Old] Statistical Account of Scotland, 1791-99, Vol. 1, 259-300, (1791).

Watson, WJ.: Placenames of Ross and Cromarty, 1904.

3.2 Fieldwork.

A walkover survey was undertaken by the writer on 16th April 2014 in dry weather. The entire survey area was walked and investigated. All the archaeological sites were recorded, measured and photographed. Their locations were established with a GPS receiver and marked on a map.

The survey area consists of open moorland, covered in rough grass and heather. The heather cover was mostly sparse and relatively low, apart from the side of the Allt Coire Misirich valley, so that, generally, the conditions for archaeological investigation were good.

4. Historical Background.

“For a considerable distance it runs through a precipitous gulf of great depth, and so near do the sides approach each other, that herd-boys have been known to climb across on the trees, which, jutting out on either edge, interweave their branches over the centre. In many places the river is wholly invisible: its voice, however, is ever lifted up in a wild sepulchral wailing, that seems the lament of an imprisoned spirit”.

(Miller, 1850, 168)

Thus, Hugh Miller describes the Black Rock Gorge, downstream from the Allt nan Caorach, on the Allt Graad (River Glass). As well as attracting considerable attention from geologists, the deep very narrow gorge is also the subject of a local legend, concerning the Lady of Balconie, who was lured into the gorge by a mysterious man, thought to be the Devil, and whose wails can still be heard from the top. (Miller, 1850, 168-173) The gorge continues to resonate in contemporary culture, forming the backdrop for a scene in James Robertson's 2006 novel, The Testament of Gideon Mack, and for a dragon chase in the 2005 film, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*.

While the tributary, Allt nan Caorach, cannot quite compete with the main river, the Allt Graad, it may still be said to be dominated by its geology and topography. The river rises on the eastern slopes of Ben Wyvis, a 1046m giant, which presides over the valley and may occasionally live up to its name, derived from *Beinn Uais*, meaning “Hill of Terror”. Its great height results in a year-round presence of snow in the corries and traditionally the Munro clan held their land from the king in exchange for a snowball on any day of the year. (Robertson, 1791, 262) Robertson adds that “a quantity of snow was actually sent to the Duke of Cumberland, when at Inverness, in 1746, to cool his wine” (ibid.)

There is no evidence of prehistoric activity in the survey area but the rich farmland on the lower slopes of Strath Glass was occupied from at least the Neolithic period. A chambered cairn is situated at Balnacrae at NH 533 646, another at Swordale at NH 5788 6614 and another at Carn Liath near the Black Rock Gorge at NH 5893 6655.¹ Further examples are found on the lower slopes NE of Alness, including Carn na Croiche at NH 6562 7221 and Millcraig at NH 6585 7102.² Occupation in the lower valley continued into the Bronze Age; pottery, which may have been a beaker, was found at NH 556 677 on Cnoc a' Mhargadaidh, to the SE of the survey area, while,

¹ NMRS Refs. NH56SW.1, NH56NE.8 and NH56NE.6 respectively

² NMRS Refs. NH67SE.11 and NH67SE.24 respectively

on the same hill, two hut circles and the probable remains of a third were found within a cairnfield, covering an area of about 3ha, at NH 557 669.³ Another group of about 30 cairns was recorded at NH 526 649 on Cnoc nan Each, accompanied by the dilapidated remains of a hut circle. (NMRS Ref. NH56SW.19) Cup marked stones and outcrops occur at Swordale at NH 5764 6594, NH 5747 6563 and at NH 5786 6614 and another associated with a kerb cairn at Redburn at NH 5751 6680.⁴

Bronze Age occupation may well have extended further uphill and the remains of a hut circle were recorded, again with a group of small cairns, just downstream from the survey area in the Allt nan Caorach valley at NH 550 681. (NMRS Ref. NH56NE.13)

The area was traditionally the home of the Munro clan. In the 11th century, King Malcolm II granted lands in recognition of service in expelling the Danes and the area between Dingwall and Alness was given to the Munro clan. (Robertson, 1791, 267) The Munros remained in control for centuries and by the end of the 18th century, Sir Hugh Munro, 29th Baron of Fowlis was proprietor of about two-thirds of Kiltarn parish. (ibid.)

By the mid-18th century a string of settlements was recorded on Roy's map, spreading along Strath Glass up to Loch Glass. These included *Patty Garvie* to the NE of the survey area at NH 5397 6871, still a large township in the 19th century, when it was known as Badgharbhaidh, and now a scheduled ancient monument. Another township, labelled *Aldganoch*, was situated at the lower end of the Allt nan Caorach valley, downstream from the survey area. This seems to have been abandoned well before the late 19th century, as it is not recorded, even as a group of roofless buildings, on the OS 1st Ed. 6" map. No settlement was depicted on Roy's map within the survey area.

At the time the local minister was preparing his Statistical Account of the parish of Kiltarn in 1791, the agricultural economy was still dominated by black cattle. (Robertson, 1791, 266) The vegetation in the valleys was more suited to producing store cattle for fattening elsewhere and around 1000 head of cattle were to be found in the parish. (ibid.) A drove road from Sutherland passed through the parish and a market may have been held on the prominent hill, Cnoc a' Mhargadaidh (Market Hill) on the South side of Allt nan Caorach near its confluence with Glen Glass. (Watson, 1904, 91)

The minister, in 1791, noted that "the number of sheep at present is very inconsiderable ... and mostly inferior quality. The rearing of sheep has been rather discouraged for some time past, being found so destructive to young plantations of timber". (ibid.) However, his following remarks proved prophetic: he added that "it is not doubted that, in a few years, the rearing of this useful animal will become a principal object" and the first sheep farmers arrived in the same year as his report. (ibid.) Kildermorie, to the North of the survey area, was leased to Lowland sheep farmers in 1791 and the valley of Allt nan Caorach was presumably also devoted to sheep around this date. The place-name, *Allt nan Caorach*, meaning "Sheep Burn", suggests that sheep had some significance in the area over a long period of time. It is possible that Allt nan Caorach was a relatively late name, coinciding with the arrival of large-scale sheep farming and replacing an older name. The burn was previously recorded as Altnagerrack in 1608 and Aldganoch on Roy's map. (Watson, 1904, 90) However, the latter could easily be a scribe's or surveyor's interpretation

³ NMRS Refs. NH56NE.14 and NH56NE.1 respectively.

⁴ NMRS Refs. NH56NE.18, NH56NE.3, part of NH56NE.8 and NH56NE.15 respectively.

of Allt nan Caorach, in a similar manner to the corruption of Badgharbhaidh into Patty Garvie on Roy's map.

A later minister of the parish and author of the New Statistical Account in 1839, described large-scale clearances of the local population to make way for sheep between 1811 and 1821:

“During that period, numbers of small tenants were ejected in order to make way for farmers from the south, possessed of some capital, who, by their superior management, were able to afford higher rents. The more elevated districts of the parish, which were altogether unsuitable for cultivation were converted into sheep- walks.” (Munro, 1839, 322)

However, the sheep farming episode was relatively short-lived and a collapse in wool prices resulted in a conversion of sheep-walks into deer forests. Grimble notes that Ben Wyvis deer forest was “cleared” in 1857, 1869 and 1881, presumably of sheep rather than people.

It is not clear which phase of agricultural history is associated with the archaeological sites recorded in the survey area. The stone building, **Site 3**, has been interpreted as a shieling hut in the NMRS database, suggesting that this dates to the pre-sheep farming phase. However, this interpretation was a result of map evidence rather than field evidence. The location of this structure on a river bank is typical of a shieling hut and the situation is certainly sheltered. However, the hut lies at the bottom of a very deep, steep-sided valley and would be out of sight of the grazing area. Sheltered positions would normally be favoured for shieling sites but would still be situated within the summer pasture. The hidden location of **Site 3** is perhaps suggestive of an illicit still.

The situation of the structure, **Site 2a**, is more appropriate for a shieling hut. The rudimentary construction is also typical. However, this structure, unlike **Site 3**, was still roofed and in use in 1875 and 1902. The structure has possibly been re-used for a number of purposes over a relatively long period of time. The old path, **Site 5**, was also in use in 1875 and presumably provided access to the upland grazing. The fence, **Site 1**, dates to between 1875 and 1902 and is therefore presumably associated with the deer forest.

5. Results.

Five archaeological sites were recorded in an archaeological survey of part of the Allt nan Caorach, on Wyvis Estate, near Evanton, Ross and Cromarty, Highland. All are associated with the 19th and early 20th century agricultural landscape. Two structures, **Sites 2a** and **3**, were constructed before 1875, the latter being out of use by that date and the former being roofed until at least 1902. The old track, **Site 5**, was also in use by 1875. The fence, **Site 1**, was constructed between 1875 and 1902 and the borrow pit, **Site 4**, is associated with the construction of the present track, at some time in the 20th century.

Site 1. Site of Old Fence.

NGR (E end of old route) NH 51850 67380

A fence is depicted on the OS 2nd Ed. 6" map running along the North bank of the Allt nan Caorach. This may have been an iron post and wire fence but no trace of it was recorded in the present survey. In this consistently managed landscape, the old fence may have been removed prior to the construction of a wooden post and wire fence, which is still extant on a slightly different alignment. The old fence followed roughly the same route westwards as the present fence from approximately NH 53325 67405 and ran past the buildings, **Sites 2a** and **2b**. However, at approximately NH 51850 67380 it turned southwards and followed a course on the northern edge of the river.

Two other old fences are depicted on the OS 1st Ed. 6" map: one running northwestwards from the Allt nan Caorach near its confluence with Allt Coire Misirich at approximately NH 52245 67400 and another running northwards from the Allt nan Caorach at approximately NH 53995 67500. Again these fences are no longer extant.

Impact Assessment: This site is not of any great antiquity and is recorded for information only. It is no longer extant.

Mitigation: No action is required.

Site 2. Building and Site of Building

Site 2a. Building.

NGR NH 51914 67369



The grass-covered remains of a rectangular building, 7.30m N-S by 4.50m, are situated on the edge of the high, steep-sided bank on the North side of the Allt nan Caorach. It was depicted as a roofed building on the OS 1st Ed. 6" map of 1881 and was still roofed in 1902. It was presumably roofed with corrugated iron sheets, remains of which survive within the interior. The stone walls, now completely overgrown, have slumped to a width of 1.50m and height of

0.50m. A pile of rubble is situated at the North end of the interior. The original entrance was probably within the 2.20m wide gap in the East side, facing down the valley.

(Photo from E)

Site 2b. Site of Building.

NGR NH 51926 67366

12m to the East of the building, **Site 2a**, is a level platform, rectangular in plan and measuring 6m N-S by 3m. It has been cut into the slope. The East side and South end are defined by a slight earthen bank, 1.10m in width and 0.30m in height. This platform may have been the stance for a structure, associated with the building, **Site 2a**. Two other areas of relatively level ground further East, centred on NH 51939 67363 and 51953 67358, may also have had some purpose, associated with **Site 2a**.



(Photo of Site 2b from West)

Refs: OS 1st Ed. 6" Map Sheet Ross & Cromarty lxiv, surveyed 1875, published 1881 – shows one roofed building.

OS 2nd Ed. 6" Map Sheet Ross & Cromarty, lxiv, revised 1902, published 1907 – shows one roofed building.

Impact Assessment: These sites, particularly **Site 2a**, are close to the proposed route of the pipeline from Intake 1 but can probably be avoided.

Mitigation: These sites are to be avoided and should be marked on the ground to avoid accidental damage.

Site 3. Shieling Hut.

NGR NH 52120 67270



The remains of a dilapidated stone building are situated on the South bank of the Allt na Caorach, just upstream from its confluence with Allt Coire Misirich. This site was not visited in the field but was viewed from the North bank of the river. It is outwith the survey area but is recorded here as a verification of the existing database, which was created from map evidence only. The location of this structure on a river bank is typical of a shieling hut and the situation is certainly sheltered.

However, the hut lies at the bottom of a very deep, steep-sided valley and would be out of site of the grazing area. Sheltered positions would normally be favoured for shieling sites but would still be situated within the summer pasture. The hidden location of **Site 3** is perhaps suggestive of an illicit still.

(Photo from N)

Refs. NMRS Ref. NH56NW.7 (Canmore ID 103679)

HER MHG 20788

OS 1st Ed. 6" Map Sheet Ross & Cromarty lxiv, 1881 – shows one unroofed building.

Impact Assessment: This site is not at risk.

Mitigation: No action is required.

Site 4. Old Quarry.

NGR (midpoint) NH 53851 67603

A hollow, horseshoe-shaped in plan and measuring 40m N-S by 15m, is situated on the South side of the estate track. It reaches up to 2m in depth and was presumably used in the construction of the present track.

Impact Assessment: This site may be affected by the proposed pipeline.

Mitigation: This site is not of any great antiquity and is recorded for information only. No action is required.

Site 5. Old Track.

NGR (W end) NH 54051 67746

E end (within survey area) NH 54652 67793

An old track is depicted on the OS 1st and 2nd Editions of the 6" map running ENE-WSW from the Allt nan Caorach at approximately NH 54785 67795, before petering out at approximately NH 54135 67720. Remnants of this track may be traced along this route, petering out at NH 54252 67704 but possibly continuing to the present estate track at NH 54051 67746. The track consists of a level channel, c. 2.50m in width, slightly cut into the slope to a depth of 0.20m to 0.30m. The channel is often waterlogged and, in places, resembles a watercourse more than a track. This track was superseded by the present estate track along the Allt nan Caorach valley.



Track, Site 5, at NH 54363 67707, from W. Track, Site 5, at NH 54652 67793, from W.

Refs: OS 1st Ed. 6" Map Sheet Ross & Cromarty lxiv, surveyed 1875, published 1881

OS 2nd Ed. 6" Map Sheet Ross & Cromarty, lxiv, revised 1902, published 1907

OS 1:10,000 NH56NW, 1971 – labelled "path".

Impact Assessment: Situated close to the pipeline and powerhouse.

Mitigation: This may be an old route as it is marked on the OS 1st Ed. map. It should be preserved as a feature in the landscape and avoided during construction.

Appendix A: List of Archaeological Sites

Site No.	Grid Reference	Impact Assessment	Mitigation
Site 1 Site of Old Fence Other fences	NH 51850 67380 (E end of old route) NH 52245 67400 (SE end) NH 53995 67500 (S end)	This site is not of any great antiquity and is recorded for information only. It is no longer extant.	No action is required
Site 2 2a: Building 2b: Site of building level area level area	NH 51914 67369 NH 51926 67366 NH 51939 67363 (midpoint) NH 51953 67358 (midpoint)	These sites, particularly Site 2a , are close to the proposed route of the pipeline from Intake 1 but can probably be avoided.	These sites are to be avoided and should be marked on the ground to avoid accidental damage.
Site 3 Shieling Hut	NH 52120 67270	This site is not at risk.	No action is required.
Site 4 Quarry	NH 53851 67603 (midpoint)	This site may be affected by the proposed pipeline.	This site is not of any great antiquity and is recorded for information only. No action is required.
Site 5 Old Track	NH 54051 67746 (W end) NH 54652 67793 (E end within survey area)	Situated close to the pipeline and powerhouse.	This may be an old route as it is marked on the OS 1 st Ed. map. It should be preserved as a feature in the landscape and avoided during construction.
Possible township (Aldganoch) Hut circle and cairn field (Eileanreach)	Approx. NH 5486 6797 NH 5508 6816 (hut circle)	These are well outside the survey area and should not be affected.	While these lie outside the survey area, it is worth noting them here, to avoid any accidental damage. Not to be used as a laydown area.

(Map from Hydroplan)

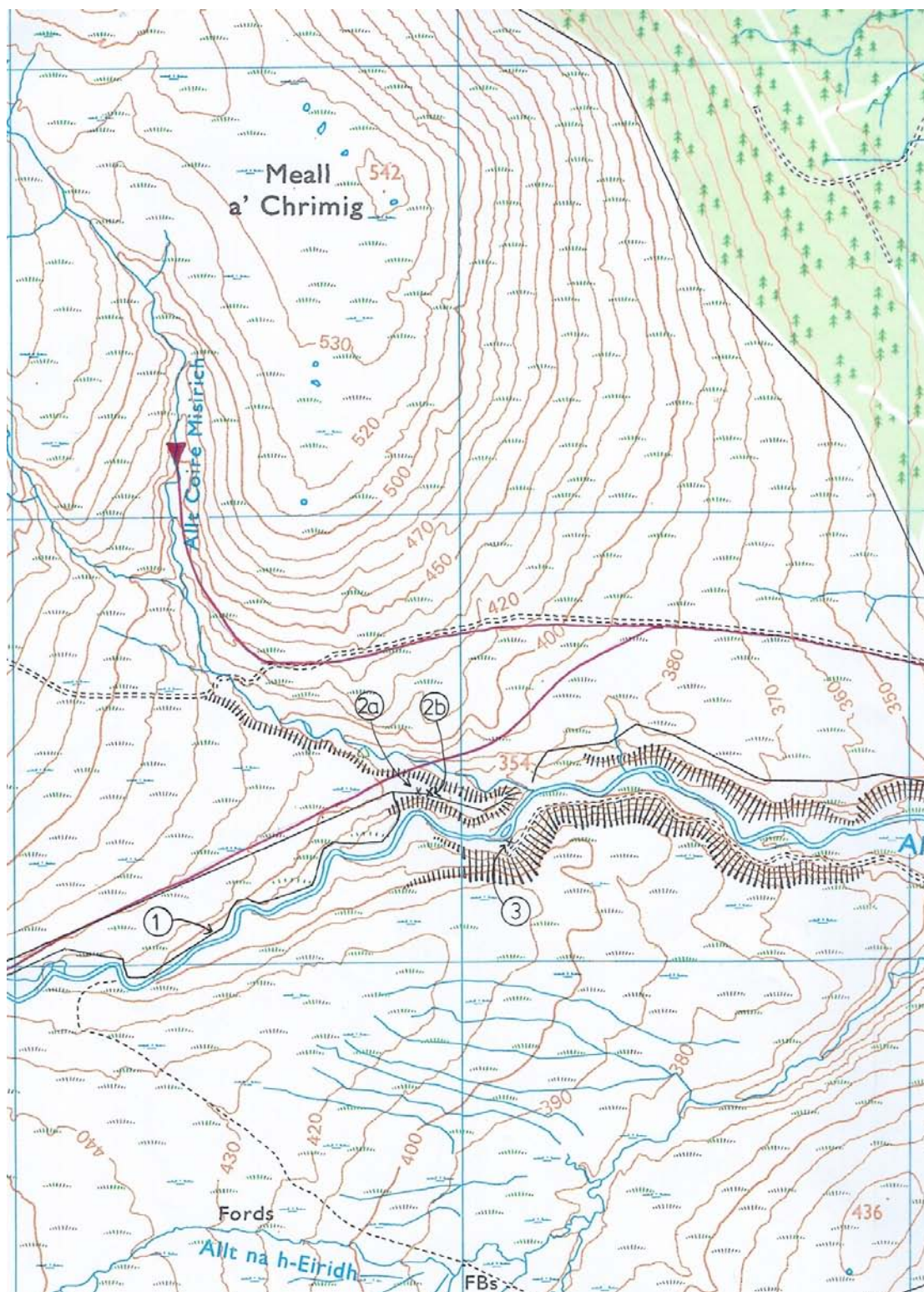


Fig. 3: Plan of Archaeological Sites 1 -3

(Extract from OS Explorer 437 (©Crown copyright 2007. All rights reserved .Licence Number 10044103))

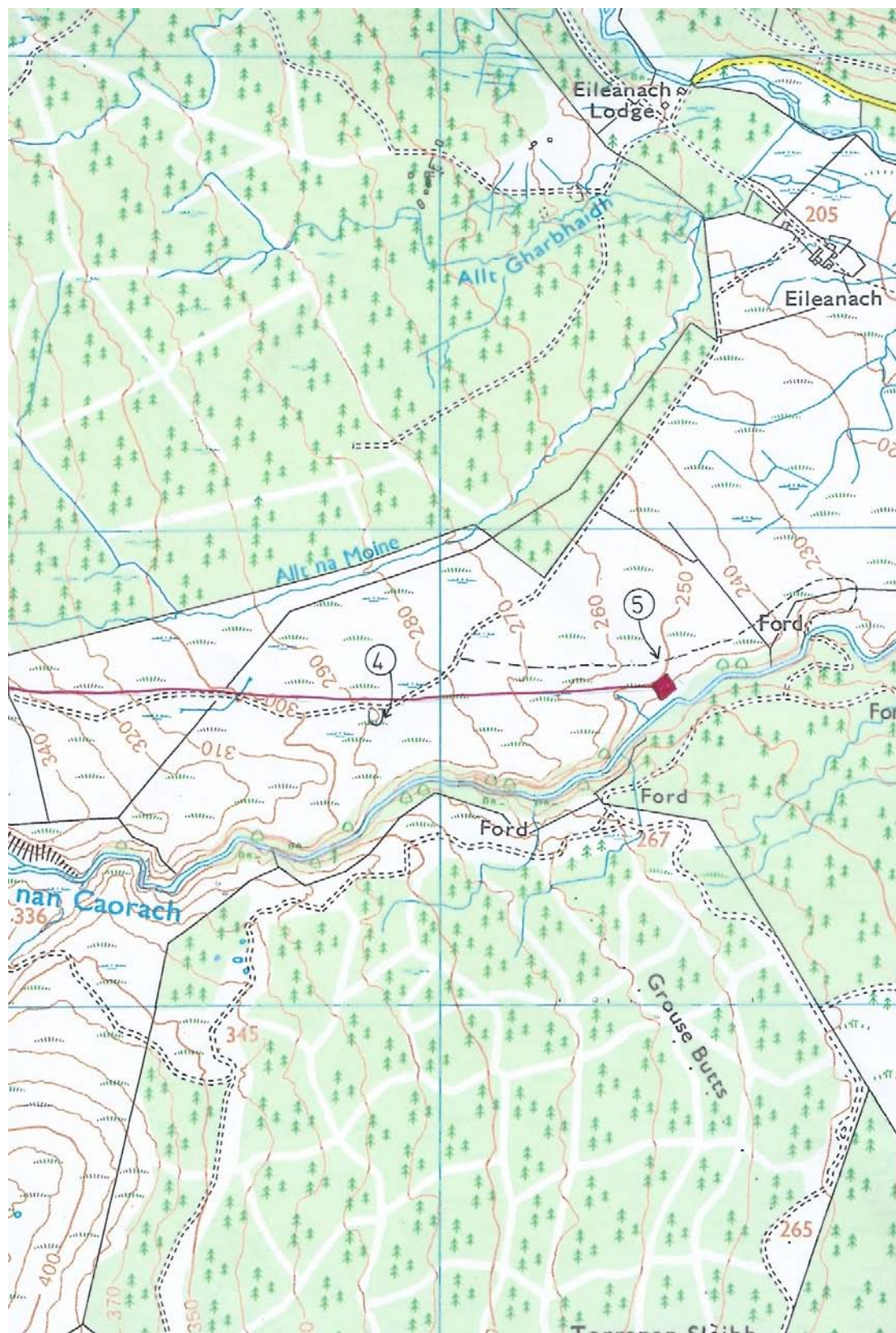


Fig. 4: Plan of Archaeological Sites 4 – 5.

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