

Slochd Pass accommodates several routes both old and new; 4 roads and a railway jostle for position through the narrow defile. We are all familiar with the current A9 and the old A9, a Telford or “Parliamentary road, constructed in 1834. This walk follows sections of the 2 earlier roads

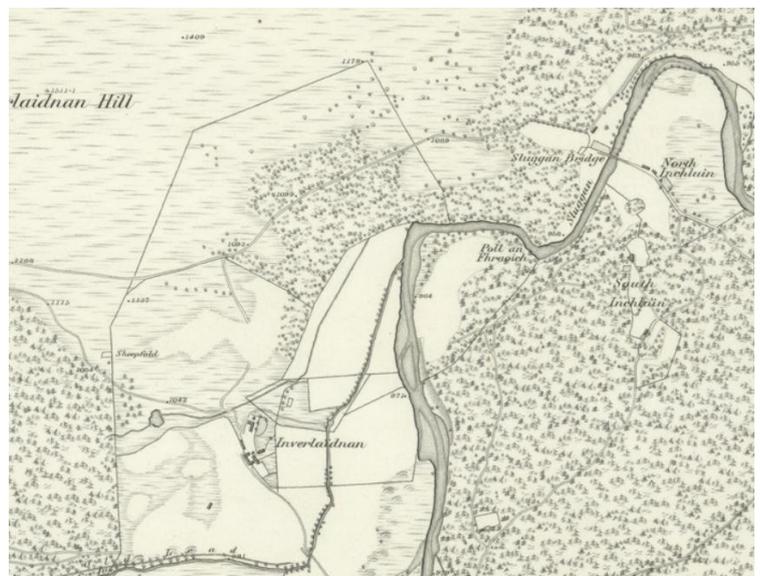
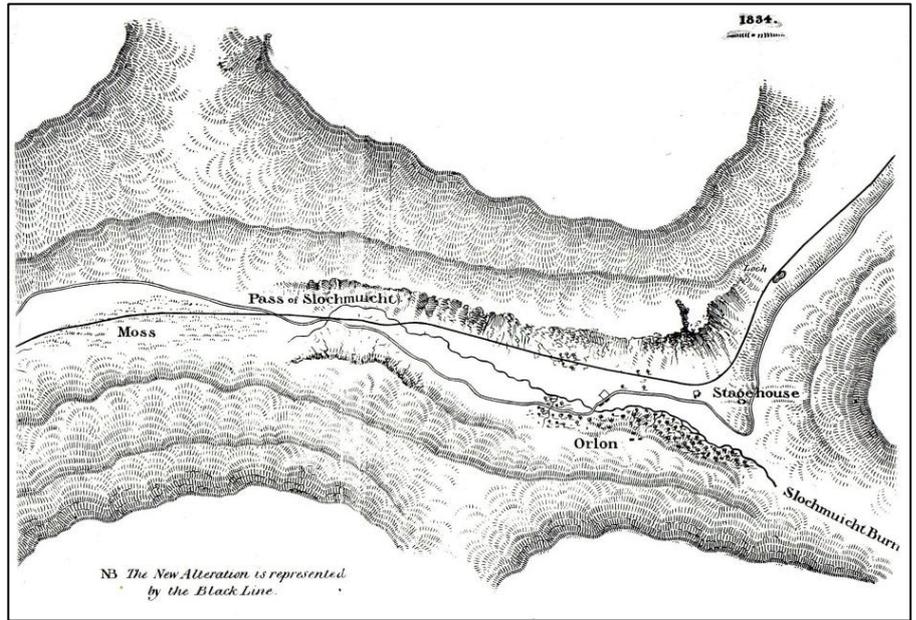
The Military road of 1803 (shown, right, on the plan of the proposed line of the 1834 road) was built by James Donaldson in order to avoid some of the steeper sections of the original Wade military road. The road descends into the glen from our starting point at Slochd Cottages (Stagehouse on this map) and crosses the Allt Slochd Muick at “Donaldsons Bridge” GR NH 843241. This bridge survived intact until the 1960s and has now been replaced by a wooden

structure; a further bridge 200m to the north which crosses a side burn has also fallen recently. Of this 1803 road Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus in *Memoirs of a Highland Lady* Volume 1 (p346) writes (in 1814) “a new road has been engineered along the sides of this “pass of wild boars”, Slough Mouich, thought a wonder of skill when viewed beside the frightful narrow precipitous pathway tracked out by General Wade, up and down which one could scarcely be made to believe a carriage with people sitting in it! had ever attempted to pass. My mother had always walked those 2 or 3 miles, the new route not having been completed until some years after.....”

General Wades Military road constructed in 1728-29 is joined after 1km at one of its better preserved sections. To the north the feint remains of an earlier road can be seen taking a direct line over a hill, while to the south the line of the road has been interrupted by the later railway constructed in 1897. The Wade Bridge at Ortnan was reconstructed relatively recently and that at Insharn built of dressed stone may not be the original. From Insharn southwards the Wade road is part of the National Cycle route. The first 1.5kms has seen severe estate use and nothing remains of the original road; however after the junction with the track to Inverlaidnan it improves and a possible **five-mile marker stone** is seen at NH 8553 2181 **Canmore ID 139468** “This stone, on the S side of the track, is possibly that mentioned (Salmond 1938) at the top of the ascent as being one of those marking a 5 mile stretch. However, that marker stone is more likely to be the one visible 118m further W”

<https://canmore.org.uk/site/139468/inverlaidnan-hill-stone>

Inverlaidnan has a number of interesting archaeological sites. We will be visiting the old laird’s house (see below), a horse gang and (if time allows) an unrecorded township and a possible hut circle. We will not be visiting a WW1 camp <https://canmore.org.uk/site/332704/inverlaidnan-prisoner-of-war-camp> which was built to accommodate 400 German POWs who were to provide a labour force for the Canadian Forestry Corps; this site is for a future visit I’m sure. However note that the 1st edition OS map of 1882 has much more extensive forest cover around Inverlaidnan than we see today





Left - an 18th C Lairds House at Blairhill in Fife, and right a rather grander version at Allangrange on the Black Isle

Inverlaidnan Old House - GR NH 861 214, <https://canmore.org.uk/site/14968/inverlaidnan-old-house> This Scheduled site comprises the upstanding ruins of an 18th-century laird's house built almost certainly by John Grant of Dalrachney sometime between 1717 and his death in 1736. He was succeeded by his son, Alexander, but the house was extensively damaged by fire in 1739. It was rebuilt by 1746 and Bonnie Prince Charlie is thought to have stayed there one February night. The Grants continued to occupy the house for some time thereafter, but by 1851, the roof of 'the old house of Inverlaidnan' had fallen in. The remains of the house at Inverlaidnan today consist principally of the W and N walls, which stand to full height, and the E and N corners of the S elevation. The outbuildings survive as turf-covered footings and the enclosure as a substantial bank, in parts spread to 3m across, and ditched along its W side. The laird's house was originally rectangular in plan, of two storeys and garret, and aligned N-S with subsidiary buildings to its E. The house measures about 16m N-S by 11.5m E-W over walls about 0.9m thick. The original entrance was located probably midway along the E elevation; at a later date a doorway was inserted at the N end of this same elevation. Each floor would have been two rooms deep with a stairway located centrally along the W elevation. Windows were positioned between the flues at attic level on the end gables and two small fireplaces would have provided warmth to each of the four principal rooms on the first floor. The large W-facing first floor windows had inner relieving arches behind their lintels. The house and outbuildings stood in the centre of a walled enclosure which measures approximately 65m N-S by 40m E-W over all. One of the outbuildings probably housed the kitchen. Evidence of some re-building survives, in particular at the NW corner. (Bibliography supplied if needed)

Quote from HES Scheduled Monument record *"This laird's house is of national importance as a good example of the layout and architecture of a type of monument about which little is presently known. Its importance is enhanced by its potential, together with the contemporary documentary sources available, to improve our understanding of the social structure and culture of landed families in the 18th century. Given its early abandonment and lack of later disturbance, the monument also has high archaeological potential"*.

Note – permission to approach the house may be sought from Seafeld Estate 01542 840777. The building is in an unstable condition; most of its features can be seen from outside so it is not recommended that one enters it.

Rejoining and continuing along the Wade road we come across a **cairn and cist**; this site is almost certainly the one noted in 1875 as being at *"Inverladnin House"*! and recorded on Canmore; ID 14962, <https://canmore.org.uk/site/14962/inverladnin-house> . More recently Ann Wakeling has recorded it <http://her.highland.gov.uk/SingleResult.aspx?uid=MHG25012> . Close by is a site comprising several stone built "plinths", these are thought to be supports for a temporary sawmill and possibly date to the early 1900s. As the Wade road descends towards Sluggan Bridge an alternative line taking an easier gradient is seen in the heather to the north.

Sluggan Bridge NH 870220 Canmore ID 14972, <https://canmore.org.uk/site/14972/sluggan-bridge> carries the road across the River Dulnain. The Roy map of c1750 has a ford here and Bishop Forbes when he travelled north in 1762 describes fording the river. The original bridge at this site was erected in 1764 with two arches and a central pier; this pier was demolished and the bridge washed away in the flood of 1768; it was replaced a year later by the present single soaring arch "the builder being resolved that the same accident should never happen again" (*Sir Eneas MacIntosh, 23rd Chief of the Clan*). The bridge is reported by Sir Thomas Dick Lauder as being destroyed in the flood of 1929 but it clearly still stands. A settlement on the north bank of the river at the junction with the Grantown road (Roy 1750) may have been an inn.

