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LONFLIUCH CROFT, EVELIX VALLEY, DORNOCH

Lonfliuch Croft – Gaelic for ‘The wet field’ is one of the uppermost abandoned crofts on the right bank of the River Evelix, in its lower third of its course, and the last one on that side before the ‘Kung’, or escape point of the river through receding terminal moranic material which had dammed the prehistoric river into a one time long shallow loch – which could be called the ‘Achormlarie Loch’ – and which is still liable to extensive flooding in serious rainfall.

The site, of group Grid Reference NH 7215.9395, consists of an old house, with two animal sheds under its roof at the east end, end to end with a more modern building which, outwardly intact, has been converted into a farm implements shed by the slapping through of the front wall; and an outlying little stone building high up the hillside to the south west about a hundred yards distant from the more recent building. Also to the south west, and opposite the old house, there is a system of well built dry stone dyke construction sheep fanks, more recently modified by the construction of a tin sheep dipping trough and concrete diving pen. An old cart track recessed into the hillside, winds up from the back of the sheep fanks to the hillside house, and a large system of dry stone dyke cum post and wire fencing defines the arable land of the croft.

The modern, probably early to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, croft house is built of large, partially dressed stone, and had at some stage been harled. It was finished with a corrugated iron roof, still intact, and was lived in well within living memory, and the upstairs floor is more or less intact though the staircase, doors, etc., have been removed. The rafters appear sound but in places wormed.

The older previous house, of long narrow design, was of solid construction using large partially dressed block of granite and schistose material up to 3 feet by 15 inches at the corners. It was not of the traditional construction of central dwelling with two gable animal sheds but had two small separate front entrances at the east end of the building, probably separated by internal walls but of which there is now no trace in the scatter of internal building stones from the destruction of the walls. Both these houses are recessed into a small hillock behind, rising to about roof height, the older one being completely derelict.

The lands of this croft are of good soil – mostly silt deposit in the bottom of a long gone glacial deposit retained loch, and are now in use as sheep farming by one of the existing working farms on the left bank (sunny side) of the Evelix, rising from the level by the river up the north facing slopes of the hills on the right bank.

Finally, the diminutive one room dwelling, roughly 12 x 26 feet by the centre lines of its 2 feet thick walls, up the hill to the south west of the main building was again of solid large stone construction, though now laid waste to about knee height. There is no trace of windows and the east facing doorway is all but concealed by the scatter of stone from the destroyed walls. It was reached by a well defined cart track, recessed into the hillside,

and built up on the outside, that wind from the rear of the stone sheep fanks in 'S' fashion. The whole croft was once well built and probably prosperous. The River Evelix lies behind and to the north of the croft houses, at a distance of some 125 yards, and is here for a long stretch very still and deep – to a depth of 5 – 6 feet in midsummer, and where fishing is productive, mostly of eels, though trout and salmon run the river. There is a ford some 200 yards or so above the croft, at point NH 7197.9407, some 3 – 4 inches deep in midsummer, where the Achavaich Burn joins the river. The flat base of the valley is here about 300 yards, or just under 1/5<sup>th</sup> of a mile wide, and the enclosing hills rise to 170 metres (558feet) on the south, and to 270 metres (885feet) on the north flanks of the river, so that the winter sunshine barely reaches the site.

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