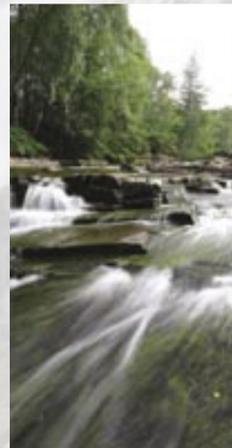


# Spectacular

Corrieshalloch Gorge shows the formidable forces of nature at their most impressive. It is a slot gorge, or box-canyon, cut by glacial meltwater between 2.6 million and 11,500 years ago. Through its narrow and steep-sided length flows the water of the River Droma, dropping 100m over the course of its 1.25km journey in a series of waterfalls, the most dramatic of which is the 45m Falls of Measach.



In Gaelic, the series of falls are called *Easan na Miasaich*, which means 'fall of the place of the platters'. This is a reference to the smooth, rounded boulders, or *platters*, which occur in the river bed above the falls. The name Corrieshalloch means *Ugly Hollow*, but today visitors from around the world marvel at this incredible site.

The reserve is owned and managed by The National Trust for Scotland.



## Life on the edge

The dark and dank gorge provides a haven for plants that enjoy poor light and high humidity. The treacherous landscape allows certain plants, such as sanicle to flourish whilst in other areas of the Highlands many of these species have disappeared due to sheep grazing and moor burning. Ferns and feather mosses such as mountain sorrel, germander speedwell and saxifrage thrive down in the lowest levels. Rotten logs provide habitats for such rarities as Swedish Pouchwort, and the more common liverwort.



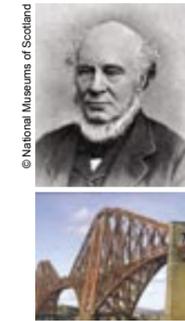
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Higher up, the ridges of the gorge support woodmillet, a plant rare in north-west Scotland. A narrow strip of woodland sits along the flanks of the ravine where native trees such as birch, rowan, oak, hazel, elm and pine grow, together with some non-native species. Shrubs like the goat willow, bird cherry and guelder rose are a common sight.

Soaring above the gorge are a variety of woodland birds, and ravens often nest in the ledge opposite the viewpoint. Far below trout live in the deepest pools of the gorge.



## Suspended Viewing



For many, the highlight of a visit is a walk across the bridge and the deep chasm below. Spanning just over 25m from ledge to ledge the bridge sways gently in the wind, providing an exhilarating experience! It was built in 1874 by Sir John Fowler, one of the designers of the famous Forth Rail Bridge.

A short walk further along brings visitors to a cantilevered viewing platform high above the gorge, offering unrivalled views (for those who can bear to look) of the Falls of Measach and the bridge above.



Corrieshalloch Gorge NNR  
Brae More, Ross-shire



The National Trust for Scotland is an independent charity with the aim of conserving, managing and promoting Scotland's cultural and natural heritage. We depend on our members and visitors to enable us to continue our work, both now and in the future. Please support the Trust by becoming a member.

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Scotland has over 50 National Nature Reserves for you to explore and enjoy. Click on [www.nnr-scotland.org.uk](http://www.nnr-scotland.org.uk) for some natural inspiration!

Front cover photos from left: Brown Trout, Germander speedwell  
Photography by Mike Bolam, Laurie Campbell

Corrieshalloch Gorge is a National Nature Reserve, a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Geological Conservation Review Site. In conserving this area The National Trust for Scotland would like to acknowledge the generous support of



# Corrieshalloch Gorge

NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE



'Ugly Hollow or Natural Wonder?'



# Corrieshalloch Gorge

NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE

How grand, 'tween Garve an' Lochbroom shore,  
To see an' hear wild torrents roar,  
Gushing on in their mad career,  
Enchanting a' that ventures near —  
'Mang mossy crags that overleap;  
Gazin' doon on that awfu' steep,  
Dazed wi' wonder, and giddy wi' fear —  
Wha to these dizzy clefts go near  
At the falls o' Corrie Sallach.

Verse from *Corrie Sallach* Charles MacKinnon, c.1900

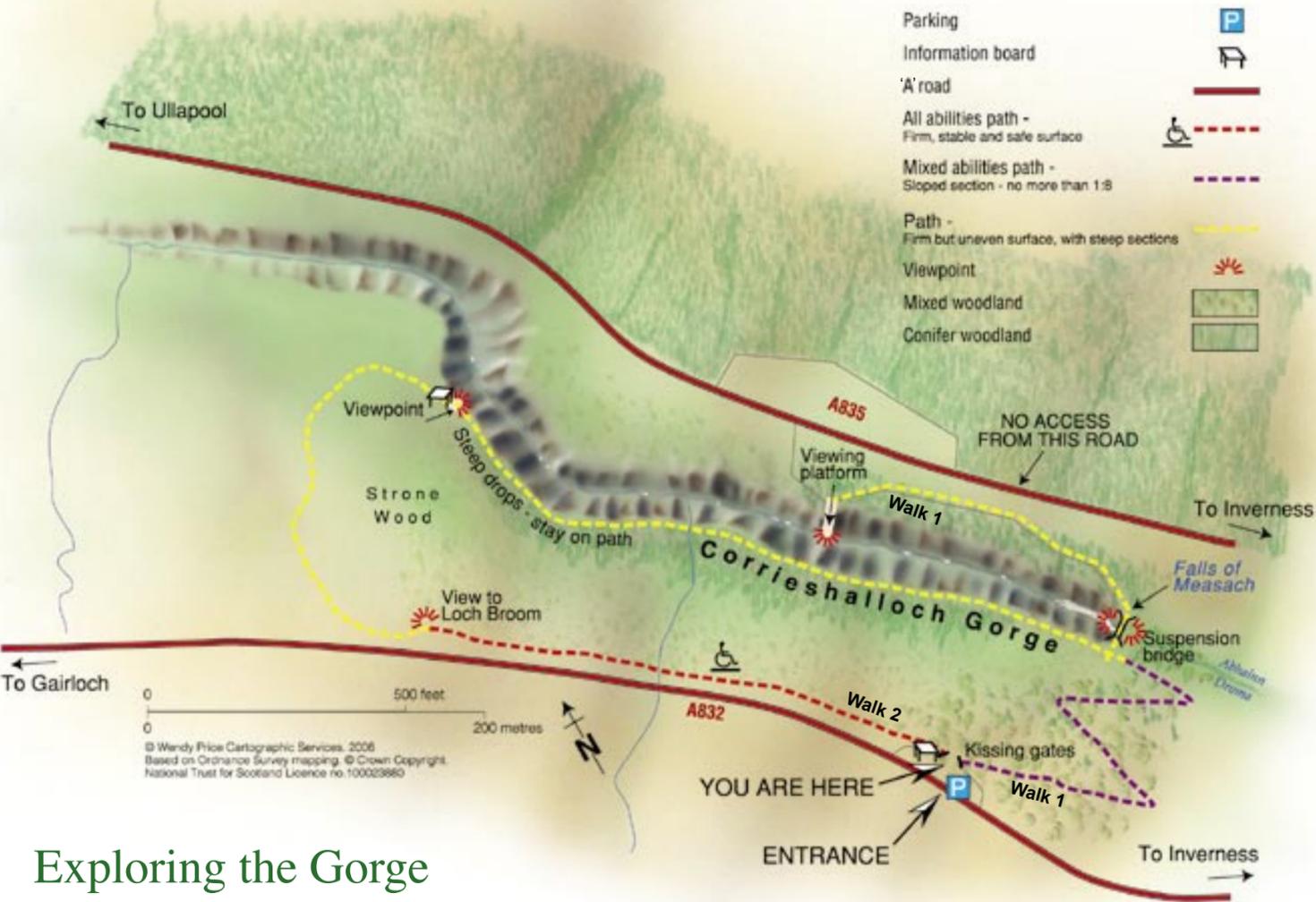


# A Rocky Foundation

The rocks that form the gorge are 'Moine' rocks, originally sands and muds laid down in an ancient sea around 1000-870 million years ago - when life on Earth had not yet evolved beyond simple life forms such as algae. Moine rocks underlie much of northern Scotland – but despite their impressive age are not the oldest. The sands and muds of the Moine were laid down on a landscape made of some of the oldest rocks in the world. These are Lewisian rocks, named after the Isle of Lewis where they are abundant, and are up to a staggering 2950 million years old.

Over time compression and heating of the original sandy and muddy sea floor turned the Moine sediments into hard 'metamorphic' rocks. Layers of mud hardened and formed *schists* – which have a shiny surface due to the large amounts of shiny crystals of the mineral *mica* on the surface. The sandy sediments became more massive brown-grey rock, which form most of the rock you can see here. The rocks were folded and heated during a series of continental collisions, which eventually brought England and Scotland together around 425 million years ago.

Cutting through the horizontal rock layers at Corrieshalloch are what look like white lines. These are veins of quartz formed by hot fluids circulating through cracks in the rock, often during the late stages of continental collisions.

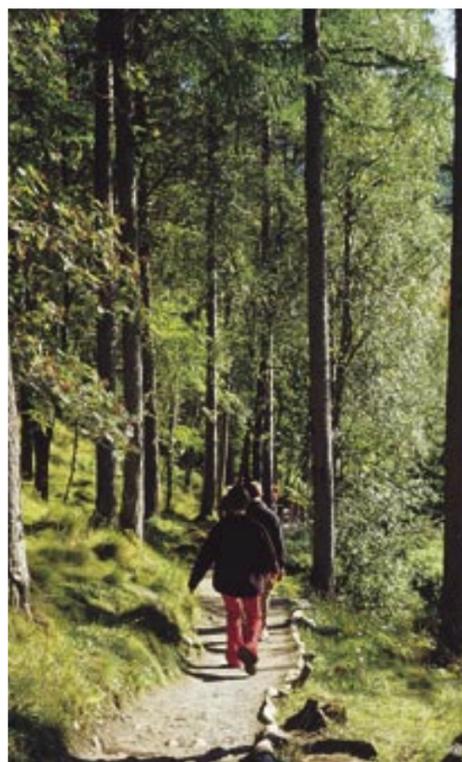


## Exploring the Gorge

### Two walks leave from the car park:

**Walk 1:** Turn left and through the kissing gate for a short route (320m) to the historic suspension bridge and across the gorge to the viewing platform. The path has a steep incline.

**Walk 2:** Turn right and through the kissing gate for a longer route (1.1km) along the top of the gorge offering spectacular viewpoints along Strath Broom towards Ullapool. This section is relatively level and suitable for wheelchair users. The path then descends to join Lady Fowler's Fern Walk, part of the original designed landscape at Braemore Castle, running along the gorge edge towards the suspension bridge, before returning to the car park.



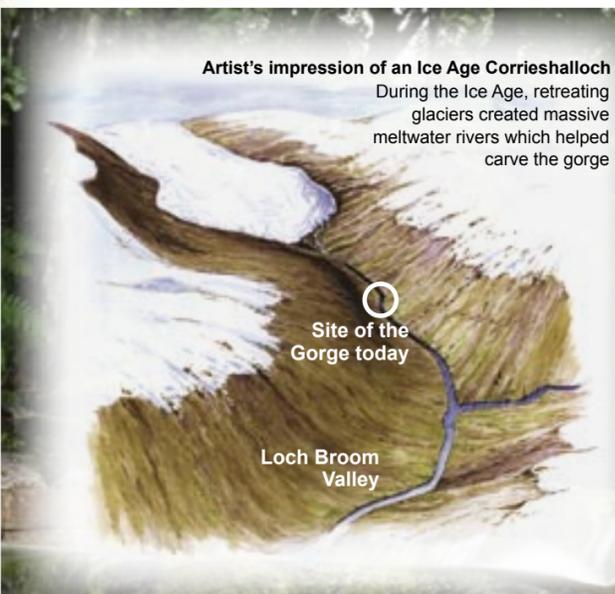
## Watch your step!

The landscape of the gorge can be treacherous. Visitors should keep to the paths at all times for their own safety. Children and dogs must be kept under close supervision.



## Glacial Action

**Artist's impression of an Ice Age Corrieshalloch**  
During the Ice Age, retreating glaciers created massive meltwater rivers which helped carve the gorge

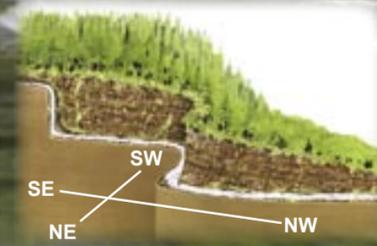


The gorge was not carved by the present river running through it – this is not large or powerful enough. Instead it is likely that it was cut by powerful rivers flowing beneath a glacier occupying the Loch Broom valley. High water pressure caused by the ice confining the water may have helped carve the gorge.

During the Ice Age, which began around 2.6 million years ago, ice advanced and retreated across Scotland many times as the climate periodically cooled and warmed. In warmer periods, when the glacier here melted back to stand in Dirrie More (the valley south east of the Braemore Junction) massive meltwater rivers emerging from the front of the melting glacier would also have helped to carve Corrieshalloch.

### Cross-section of Corrieshalloch Gorge

Over thousands of years the valley was eroded along lines of weakness in the rock, creating the narrow and steep-sided gorge



It is likely that the gorge was cut deeper during successive periods of ice cover (glaciation), and was eroded along lines of weakness in the rock, known as 'joints'. Joints are usually 'sets' of parallel fractures in the rock. At Corrieshalloch there are two sets of joints cutting vertically down into the rock, one running southeast-northwest and the other southwest-northeast. The gorge has eroded along these two sets of joints, with sharp bends in the river occurring where it switches from following one joint set to the other. Erosion along the vertical joints also tends to deepen the gorge rather than widen it. The result is an incredibly deep, narrow gorge – just 10m wide in some places.

