

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Water of Tanar-Knockie Hill-Queen's Road (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

A hugely enjoyable little hike, with gentle ascents, in the varied and visually stimulating special natural environment around the braes of Glen Tanar, taking in the pretty riverside, tranquil lochs, old pine forest, and open farmland.

Duration: 2.5 hours.



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: No public transport nearby. Pay parking at the NNR car-park at the start/end of the walk. (£3 in 2019).

Length: 7.810 km / 4.88 mi

Height Gain: 178 meter.

Height Loss: 178 meter.

Max Height: 234 meter.

Min Height: 155 meter.

Surface: Moderate. Good paths, forest roads and farm tracks. Not suitable for off-road mobility scooters due to steps between Waypoints 2 and 3. To avoid, and shorten the walk, take the estate road between Waypoint 2 and Waypoint 7 (St Lesmo's Chapel).

Difficulty: Easy/Medium.

Child Friendly: Yes, if children are used to walks of this distance and overall ascent.

Dog Friendly: Yes, on lead on public roads and around farm animals (likely between Waypoints 14 and 15).

Refreshments: Options in Aboyne.



Description

This is an excellent walk through a scenically beautiful natural environment at the Glen Tanar Estate, near Aboyne. In the first section of the route, after an informative diversion to the Visitor's Centre, we follow a path by the wooded banks of the tumbling Water of Tanar, a tributary of the River Dee, before heading into the pine forest. On our way to the historic St Lesmo's Chapel we pass the delightful Fairy Lochan, busy with Damselflies and Dragonflies in summer. From the Chapel, the walk heads uphill on a section of the old Firmouth droving road to the Knockie Viewpoint overlooking the 3rd largest area of Caledonian Forest in Scotland. Dropping again to the river, the route then circles around the pretty tree-lined Trout Loch to take the old Queen's Road track onto farmland above Glen Tanar House, where the open views are wonderful. The glen is designated by Scottish Natural Heritage as a national nature reserve and part of the area is publicly owned. Glen Tanar lies within the Cairngorms National Park and is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Glen Tanar was historically part of the lands of the Marquis of Huntly. In 1865 the estate was bought by William Cunliffe Brooks, an English MP, barrister and merchant banker who initiated a major programme of improvements including building a large house, St Lesmo's Chapel, many estate buildings, bridges and landscaped policies. In 1905 the estate was bought by George Coats, who became Baron Glentanar, owner of the Paisley based thread manufacturer J & P Coats Ltd. The estate remains in the ownership of his descendants.



For more info, see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glen_Tanar

Waypoints

(1) Start walk from Glen Tanar car-park

(57.05691; -2.85938) <https://w3w.co/total.standards.snappy>
Start the walk from the Glen Tanar car-park, off the Glen Tanar Road. Walk downhill from the car-park to the tarred road, turn left, then immediately right, to cross the stone bridge over the Water of Tanar, then left again for the clearly signed Braeloine Visitors Centre.



(2) Braeloine Visitor Centre

(57.05651; -2.85759) <https://w3w.co/spooked.steer.listening>
In about 150 m, you will have arrived at the Visitors Centre. It is small but packed with useful information and attractive displays and exhibits. When you are ready to move on, carry on around the building to pass the toilets. Go all the way around the back of the building, then head across to the riverside path. Turn right and follow the riverside path, with the river on your left side, for about 1.35 km. (141 m)



(3) Turn right away from river

(57.05949; -2.83914) <https://w3w.co/reclined.flashing.pile>
After 1.25 km, at a walks post, turn right to leave the riverside path and follow a path gently uphill towards a forest road. (1.5 km)



(4) Right along forest road

(57.05869; -2.83913) <https://w3w.co/districts.younger.piper>
In 100 m, or so, when the path meets a forest road, go right along the forest road. Towards the end of this section, just before the next waypoint, you will pass the Fairy Loch, where there are a couple of "swing out" information boards. (1.6 km)



(5) Veer right at y-junction after Fairy Loch

(57.05286; -2.85469) <https://w3w.co/pupils.flame.broads>

In 1.2 km, at a y-junction in the forest road, take the fork veering right. (2.8 km)



(6) Veer right for St Lesmo's Chapel

(57.05215; -2.85865) <https://w3w.co/crew.clarifies.issues>

In 200 m, or so, take the road veering right to St Lesmo's Chapel. When you come to the information board and gate, go left into the chapel grounds/graveyard. (3.0 km)



(7) St Lesmo's Chapel

(57.05242; -2.86017) <https://w3w.co/drizzly.clutches.teams>

In 200 m, you will be outside St Lesmo's Chapel*. There is a graveyard with an impressive Celtic cross-slab (Sir William Cunliffe Brooks' grave). The little church is still used for wedding ceremonies. When you are ready to move on, with your back to the Chapel door, walk across the grassy area towards the trees where there is an opening to the Firmounth forest road. (3.2 km)

**Note: [thanks to Wikipedia] "...In the early 1600's a family named Garden, acquired property in Glen Tanar. In c.1639 they took up residence in what was called the House of Braeloine. In 1869 Sir William Cunliffe Brooks became tenant of the Glen Tanar estate. Braeloine House was in ruins and Cunliffe Brooks undertook an extensive building programme. He built a chapel from the ruined walls of the old Braeloine House ..."*

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Lesmo_of_Glen_Tanar



(8) Right at forest road after the Chapel

(57.05193; -2.85945) <https://w3w.co/oldest.chill.treaty>

In about 100 m, go through the gate opening onto the Firmounth forest road and turn right, walking gently uphill into the trees. (3.3 km)



(9) Veer left and up Knockie Hill road

(57.05059; -2.86030) <https://w3w.co/also.courts.impresses>
In another 100 m, or so, veer left to take the Firmounth forest road ascending through the trees onto the shoulder of Knockie Hill. (3.4 km)



(10) Right for path to Knockie Viewpoint

(57.04532; -2.85870) <https://w3w.co/warned.budget.dreading>
After walking gently uphill for 700 m, at a wide clearing, turn right for the downhill path that quickly deviates to the left at the Cairngorms Scenic Photo Post* for the Knockie Viewpoint where there are benches and information boards. (4.1 km)

*Note: Cairngorms Scenic Photo Post #17.
See: <https://cairngorms.co.uk/photo-posts/photoposts/17/>



(11) Knockie Viewpoint

(57.04515; -2.85874) <https://w3w.co/slick.jetted.rejoiced>
Just over 30 m downhill is the Knockie Viewpoint where there are benches and information boards (and, of course, a wonderful view!). When you are ready to move on, return to the main track going downhill. (4.1 km)



(12) Right then left over bridge

(57.04569; -2.86140) <https://w3w.co/doormat.eagle.invisible>
In 200 m, or so, at the bottom of the track, where it meets a forest road running parallel with the Water of Tanar, go right then almost immediately left to cross the stone bridge. Once over the bridge, turn left to follow the forest road on the other side, with the river below you on your left side and with glimpses of the beautiful Glen Tanar Trout Loch on your right side. (4.3 km)



(13) Right for Aboyne direction at signpost

(57.04257; -2.86443) <https://w3w.co/pizza.sprains.theory>

In 500 m, at a junction in the forest roads where there is a Rights of Way signpost, turn sharp right and gently uphill to follow the route marked for Dinnet and Aboyne. (4.8 km)



(14) Veer left and uphill onto Queen's Road at Sawmill

(57.04707; -2.86797) <https://w3w.co/still.pounces.pull>

In 600 m, at a junction in the forest roads near the Glen Tanar Sawmill, veer left and uphill to follow the Right of Way sign onto the Queen's Road*. Keep going on this rough road now for about 2 km, ignoring any options to go left or right. You will go through some closed farm gates further along the way. Be aware that there are likely to be horses and cattle in the fields around you as you follow this very scenic part of the route, looking down on Glen Tanar House. (5.4 km)

**Note: we can't find evidence, but assume that the "queen" referred to in the name of this scenic old road was Queen Victoria, who, of course, enjoyed travelling around Deeside and appreciating the fine views.*



(15) Right and downhill at tarred road

(57.05961; -2.86303) <https://w3w.co/pity.tango.finally>

After 2 km on the Queen's Road track you will arrive at a t-junction with a minor tarred road. Go right and downhill here, looking for a pedestrian gate on your right side in about 100 m. (7.4 km)



(16) Right through gate and downhill

(57.05929; -2.86155) <https://w3w.co/loaning.supposing.quack>

In about 100 m, walking downhill, you leave the tarred road and go through a pedestrian gate on your right side. Follow the path downhill which soon joins the waymarked Juniper Trail above the Glen Tanar car-park where you started the walk. (7.5 km)

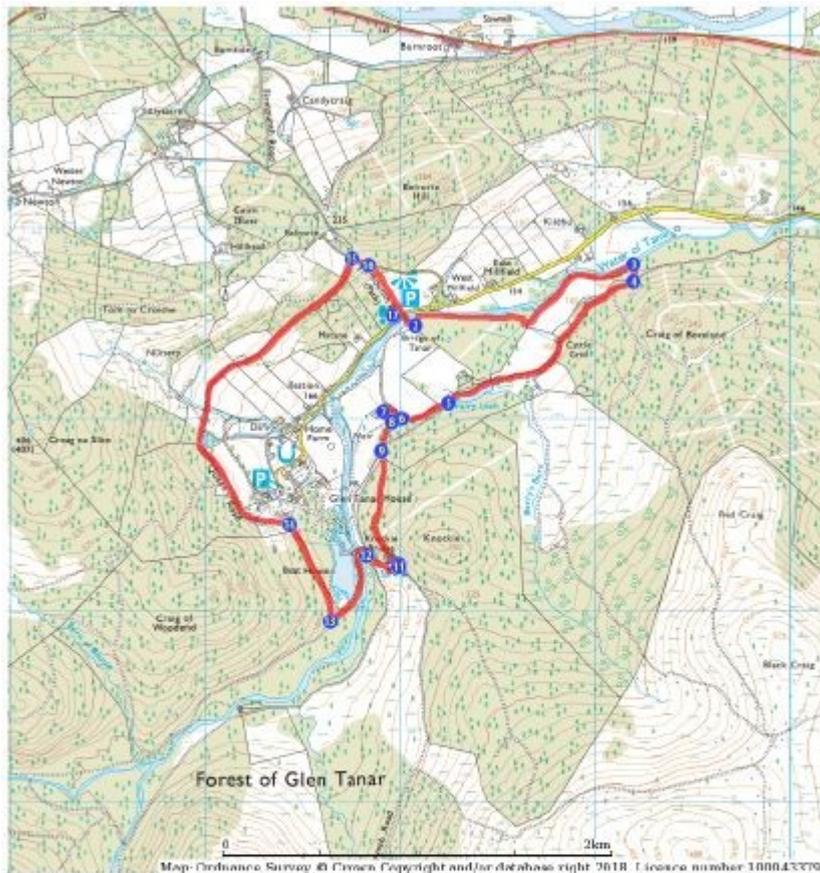


(17) Finish walk back at car-park

(57.05697; -2.85950) <https://w3w.co/amber.lurching.galaxies>
In about 300 m you will have arrived back at the car-park
where you started the walk. (7.8 km)



Route Map



Links:

[Photos from walk](#)

[Download Route Guide](#) (PDF with illustrated Waypoints)

[Download GPX file](#) (GPS Exchange Format)

[Access Walk on OutdoorActive](#)

[Access Walk on OsMaps](#)

[Access Walk on Alltrails](#)

[Access Walk on Wikiloc](#)