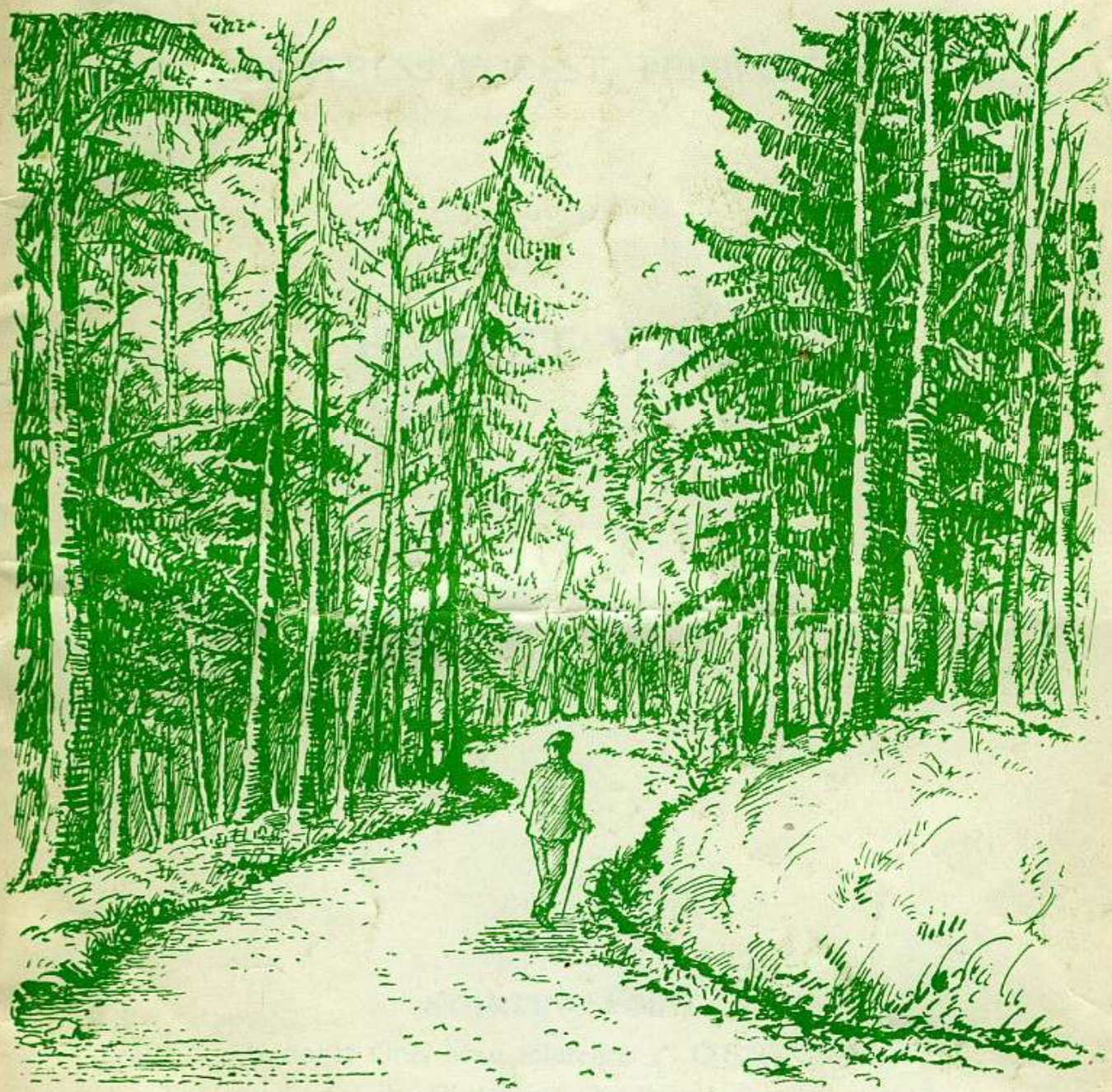
1967

FORESTRY COMMISSION

# GLENTRESS FOREST



# GLENTRESS FOREST WALK

**Price 5p**

GLENTRESS FOREST, PEEBLESSHIRE

# FOREST WALK

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**STARTING POINT**

National Grid Map reference 1″ O.S.69, 284396.

The entrance to the Forest and Car Park is 2 miles to the east of Peebles along the A.12 road to Innerleithen and Galashiels.

## WELCOME TO THE GLENTRESS FOREST WALK

Glentress is the oldest State Forest in the South of Scotland. The first Forestry Commission planting was done in 1921 and there are a number of older woods that were bought along with the open hill land. The total forest area is 4200 acres and at present it yields some 5000 tons of timber each year.

The walk has been laid out to show you some of the trees of the forest, its wild life, its plants and its geology.

There is a long walk of $4\frac{3}{4}$ miles, or $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours leisurely walking, and two shorter walks — A. of $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles or 2 hours, and B. of 2 miles or $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours.

The three walks are shown on the map on the centre page. There are seven numbered stopping points linked by white painted arrows.

If you want to walk back to Peebles instead of returning to the car park, follow the sign " To Peebles " which, if you have been on the long walk, you will see shortly before reaching Stop 5. If you have been on either of the short walks follow the " To Peebles " sign taking you on beyond Stop 6.

Most of the walking is over forest roads but sometimes you will need to go through the plantations and it is recommended that boots or strong shoes should be worn.

You may need a mac as the only shelter is from the trees.

Birds and animals are plentiful but shy, so stop, listen and look every now and again to the sounds of the forest. 86 different kinds of birds have been recorded and among the many animals which have found a home in the shelter of the forest are the fox, otter, badger, roe deer and the red squirrel.

**On your way please help by:**

Preventing forest fires.

Be careful what you do with cigarette ends and matches.

Better still, in very dry weather leave your cigarettes and pipes at home for you may be asked not to smoke when in the forest.

Keeping to the sign-posted routes.

Leaving no litter behind you.

Taking nothing but photographs—there will be lots more folk following in your footsteps who will want to enjoy the wild flowers too.

Keeping your dog on a lead.

## STOP 1 — Car Park

This is the forest control centre where the Forester-in-charge has his office in which all the forest plans and records are kept. There is also a garage and workshops where forest machinery is serviced and repaired, and stores for tools and fire-fighting equipment.

Follow the white arrows up the forest road and note the typically rounded hills of the Upper Tweed valley. On the road verges are many kinds of wild flowers — dandelion, coltsfoot, ragwort, groundsel, foxglove, wood violet, chickweed, daisy, dock, forget-me-not, sheep's sorrel, lady's mantle, creeping buttercup, herb Robert and several different grasses. Can you identify them?

## STOP 2 — Douglas Fir and Sitka Spruce Plantation

There are two kinds of trees here—Sitka Spruce and Douglas Fir, both natives of north-west America. They grow very well in this country, producing large quantities of useful timber more quickly than the European conifers.

How old do you think they are? If you count the dark rings on the end of the nearby log you will find out, for each ring denotes one year's growth.

Feel the foliage of the Sitka Spruce and you will find that the needles, which are silvery on the undersides, are sharp and prickly

compared to those of the Douglas Fir. There is a difference too in the bark if you look near the foot of the trunks. That of the Douglas Fir is thick and rough with zig-zag fissures but on the spruce it is thin with loose round plates or scales.

As you continue your walk you may note a change in the atmosphere on entering the forest. In stormy weather it is sheltered compared to the open hill and in hot weather it is relatively cool.

Keep a lookout for Goldcrests and Treecreepers. The Goldcrest is the smallest British bird; it is yellowish-green in colour with a tiny flash of golden-yellow on its head. The Treecreeper is a small brown and white bird which is often seen creeping spirally up the tree trunks looking for insects in the cracks of the bark. The largest bird likely to be seen is the long-necked heron which occasionally fishes in the forest streams.

### STOP 3 — The Parting of the Ways

Up to this point you have been walking through trees which are all very much the same size and shape. In front of you the forest is more irregular, the trees varying greatly in size and shape.

The larger trees immediately below the road are the remnants of the purchased woods and are now over 60 years old. Beneath them are trees about 10 years old of several different kinds; all identified by white signs.

Above the road is a stand of Scots Pine which is the only conifer native to Scotland capable of producing timber on a commercial scale. The foliage of the pine is less dense than that of the spruce or fir and more light reaches the forest floor so that the ground vegetation is more abundant and varied. It includes heath bed-straw, blaeberry, ferns and grasses. Under the spruce and fir only wood sorrel is common.

Have you noticed white paint spots on some of the trees? The white spots indicate the best trees which have been chosen by the

Forester to form the final crop in 20 to 30 years' time. Meanwhile every four years a proportion of the other trees are removed in order to allow the spotted trees to grow at the fastest possible rate. This operation is called " thinning." The stumps left after thinning must be coated with sodium nitrate in order to prevent the growth and spread of wood-rotting fungi. Stumps which have been treated with sodium nitrate are faintly purple in colour—you may have seen some of them.

If you have decided to take the long walk turn right up the forest road and head for Stop 4, but before setting off, read the notes on the short walks. You might find something of interest to you and, if so, it would be worth while to make a short digression as far as Glentress Burn Bridge.

If you have chosen the short walks keep on the lower road and head towards Glentress Burn Bridge.

## Short Walks A. and B.

On leaving Stop 3, look below the road for small thickets of naturally sown trees. When this " natural regeneration " consists of the right kind of trees it is welcomed by the Forester as it may save time and money by making replanting unnecessary.

Beyond the thicket you will see a ladder with a small platform on top. This is a " high seat " and is used in the control of deer.

If there are too many roe deer in a forest they can cause serious damage to young trees by fraying (rubbing their antlers against the trees) or browsing (eating the young shoots).

In control work the stalker sets up high seats on chosen sites and watches the deer so that he can prepare a map and make an estimate of their numbers.

When selective shooting is necessary a high-powered rifle equipped with a telescopic sight is used from a high seat. In good hands it is certain, quick and humane. In the simplest terms the object

of control is to maintain a sensible balance between this remarkably graceful and beautiful animal and its environment—the forest.

See if you can spot fraying damage on some of the young trees close to the path leading to Glentress Burn Bridge.

## Glentress Burn Bridge

Close to the footbridge are one or two old stumps covered with lichens, fungi and mosses. Together with bacteria they are all playing a part in the rotting of the stump and its eventual return to the soil as plant food.

The dam above the footbridge provides a source of water for mechanical pumps in the event of a forest fire. If you look carefully you will see small brown trout darting under the banks.

On crossing the footbridge you enter a thicket-stage stand of Norway Spruce. This is the sort of thicket roe deer lie in during the day. See if you can see any roe deer tracks (called " slots ") in the soft mud or in the sand on the roads.

## Rest Point

Seats are provided here for you to take a breather.

While you are resting, look around at the forest and see if you can see the fire tower. It is always manned when there is fire danger and it is connected to the Forester's office by field telephone.

Notice also the fire beaters which are used to beat out grass and heather fires.

If you want to follow Short Walk B. turn left now and follow the forest road leading downhill to Stop 7.

If you have chosen Short Walk A. follow the road leading uphill to Stop 6.

Short Walk B. keeps to the road all the way from now on but A. takes you through plantations and has, in one place, a fairly steep but not really difficult descent through the trees.

## The Long Walk

On leaving Stop 3 you will find Scots Pine on your right-hand side for a short distance before the species changes to Douglas Fir which you have already seen between Stops 2 and 3. After you have passed the Douglas you reach a stand of Japanese Larch. Larch has a light crown and allows plenty of ground vegetation to grow underneath it. You will see more Japanese Larch on your walk as well as its close relative, the European Larch. Other species which you have not seen before will be identified for you along the way. On your way notice the windblown area on your left which was cleared and replanted in 1963.

Keep your eyes open for golden pheasant, grouse and blackgame.

What difference did you observe between Japanese and European Larch?

## STOP 4 — Upper View Point

You are now standing at nearly 1500 feet above sea level and are at the highest point of the walk. From now on the going is all downhill.

Take a look at the view over the great series of rounded hills stretching away in front of you. Once they were clothed with the trees of the ancient forest of Ettrick — for long a favourite hunting ground of the Kings of Scotland.

Notice the forest of Cardrona in the middle distance to your left and the plantations on Cademuir Hill to your right.

See if you can spot the ruins of Horsburgh Castle resting on the top of a small rounded hill in the valley of the Tweed.

You may have noticed places where small patches have been cut out of the rather poorly grown larch and replanted with different kinds of trees. These form part of an experiment designed to replace the larch over a period of 60 years, a tenth part of the crop being treated every six years. The experiment has been running for about fifteen years so in 45 years' time the larch crop will have been completely replaced by an uneven-aged crop of

differing species. This crop will then never have to be clear-felled all at once in the way that even-aged stands are usually cleared, and the all-important forest environment will thus be preserved. You will see a lot more of this experimental area as you go on your way to Stop 5.

### STOP 5 — Ancient British Fort

Notice the remains of the old earth ramparts which can still be clearly seen.

Rejoin short walk A. at Stop 6.

### STOP 6 — Lower View Point

Look out over the Tweed Valley and beyond to the rounded hills of Ettrick. Cardrona Forest lies to your left on the opposite side of the valley and the plantations on Cademuir Hill to your right.

See if you can spot the ruins of Horsburgh Castle in the valley bottom.

Follow the road downhill for two hundred yards and then turn right into the plantations. At first you will be passing between Japanese Larch on your left and Scots Pine on your right, but soon you will come under the much darker canopy of a stand of Sitka Spruce. Look on the ground for the cones of the Sitka Spruce and see if you can find any that have been nibbled down to the stalk by red squirrels. If you look very carefully and are very quiet you may even see a red squirrel looking at you from behind one of the trees or scampering swiftly up the trunk.

### STOP 7 — Quarry

In this quarry, where materials were once obtained for the making of forest roads, can be seen the Silurian rock formation common to much of the Southern Uplands. Over 400 million years ago when this part of Scotland was covered by sea these Silurian

sediments were laid down in horizontal beds and in the course of time solidified to form the rocks you see. As a result of the buckling of the earth's crust the beds now dip at an angle of about 60 degrees and wherever the rock is cracked or broken various plants have established themselves. There is also some natural regeneration of Larch and Scots Pine—can you see it?

The rocks are deeply fissured and easily dislodged and therefore unsafe to climb.

Carry on down the forest road to the car park and the end of your walk.

We hope you have enjoyed this walk. If you have any comments or suggestions which will help to add to its enjoyment, please write to:

THE DISTRICT OFFICER,
FORESTRY COMMISSION,
GLENTRESS,
PEEBLES.

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*For further reading:*

**"KNOW YOUR CONIFERS"**

(Forestry Commission Booklet No. 15)

Price 25p

Obtainable from Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

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*Printed at "Peeblesshire News" Office.*

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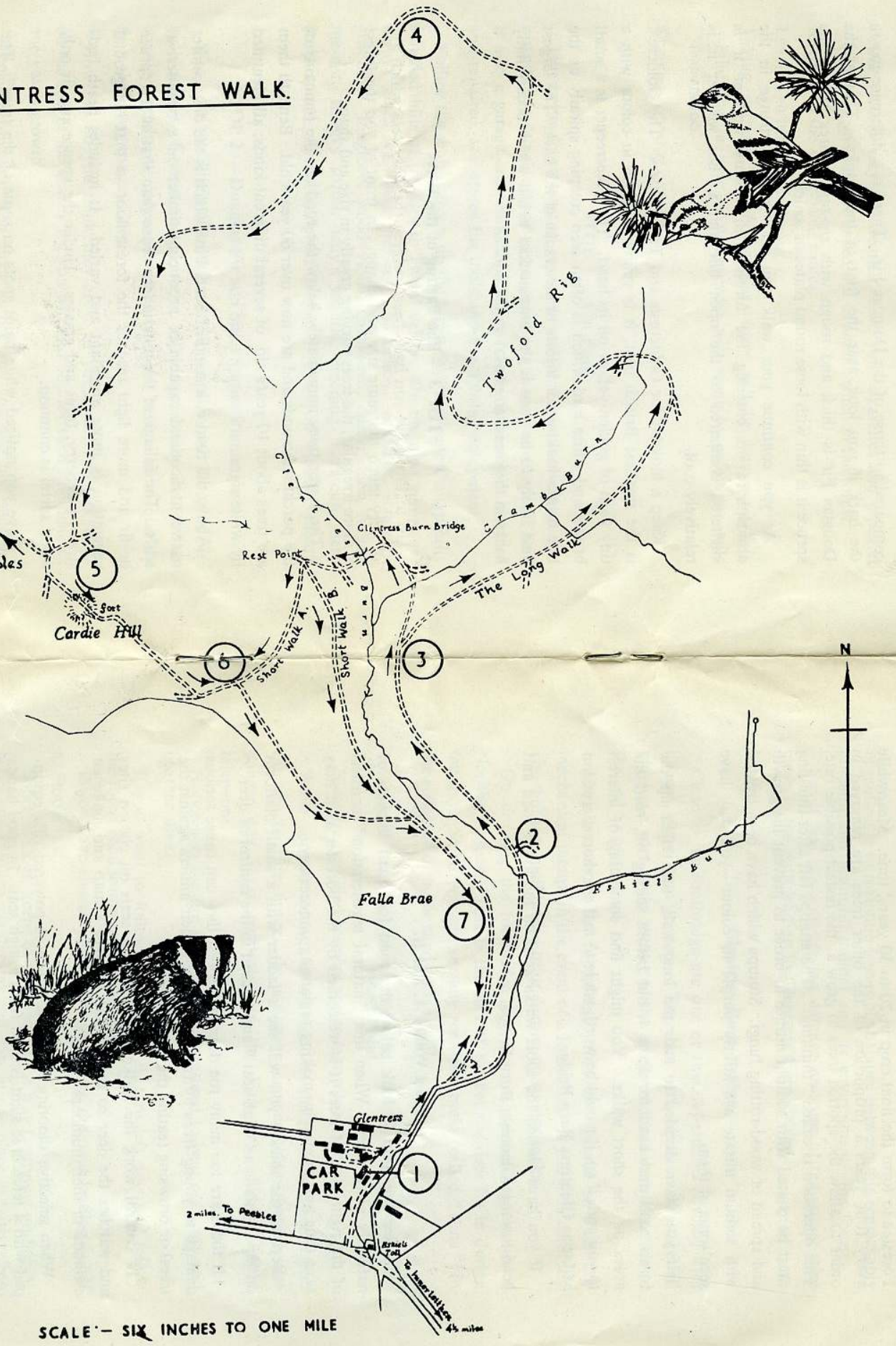




SCALE:— SIX INCHES TO ONE MILE