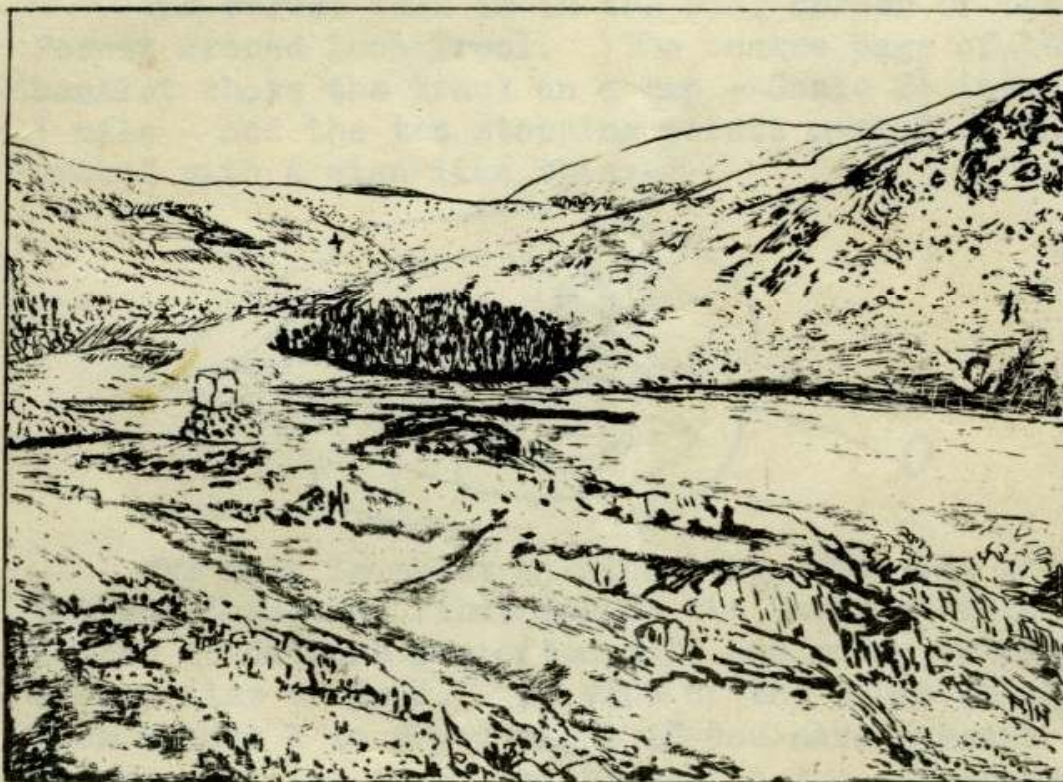


FORESTRY COMMISSION
◦ GLENTROOL FOREST ◦

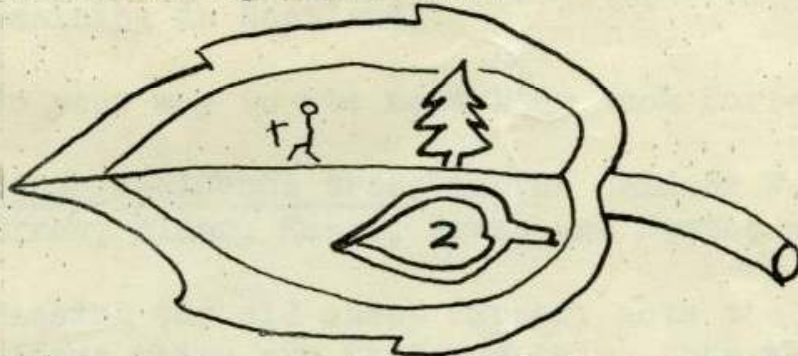


THE
LOCH TROOL WALK.

The Loch Trool Forest Walk

Glentrool Forest, one of nine State Forests which together form the Glentrool Forest Park, is the second largest of the Forestry Commission's properties in Scotland. Planting started in 1947 and the forest has steadily built up to some 22,490 acres now under trees in 1966 with approximately 2,800 acres still awaiting planting.

The Forest Walk is in the S.E. corner of the Forest around Loch Trool. The centre page of this booklet shows the track on a map - Scale $2\frac{1}{2}$ ins. to 1 mile - and the ten stopping points marked on the ground with a sign like this:-



The walk is about 4 miles long, starting at the Caldons House and finishing at the Martyrs' Tomb. Ground conditions are often soft and muddy, depending on the time of year. In view of the rough going from points 1 to 5 you might if you have a spare driver, arrange to be met by car at the parking-site near Bruce's Stone (point 8), this shortening the actual distance on foot to 3 miles.

Look out for adders and TAKE CARE NOT TO START A FIRE. Every year many hundreds of thousands of young trees are destroyed just because someone is careless with a match or cigarette, or a picnic stove.

And please give heed to the points on the back cover.

Caldons Wood
(Caltuinn - the Hazels)

Stop 1.

There are many hazels in the Caldons Wood, so time your walk for the Autumn if you want to collect nuts and perhaps be fortunate enough to see the Red Squirrel.

Beside the first stop is a fine example of a Sessile Oak. This type of oak is to be found around the mouth of the Caldons, Gairland and Buchan burns, and is said to be some of the best natural Sessile Oak remaining in Scotland.

On your way to the next stop look for:-

Other deciduous trees in the Caldons Wood, i.e. Ash, Birch, Alder, Hazel, Rowan and Hawthorn.

Passing the old sheep dipper, note the change to conifers which are faster growing than the hardwoods; Japanese Larch on the bracken slopes, Sitka Spruce in the peat hollows (at Glentrool peat varies in depth from 6 ins. to 15 ft.) and Scots Pine on the rocky heather knolls.

If your walk is in the Spring, note the fresh green of the Larches. Larch is one of the few conifers to shed its needles in the Autumn.

Old Scots Pine Wood

Stop 2.

Although this wood was planted it is quite typical of much of the old Caledonian Forest, Scots Pine being the only tree conifer native to Scotland. As such it is worthy of more than a passing glance. In mixture with the Scots Pine are to be found European Larch and European Silver Fir. In the lower canopy look for Holly, Rowan and Willow. This wood is about 80 years old. In the past it has been neglected because of its inaccessibility and the result is many rotten and blown trees lying about. This enables us to see fungus with fructifications, and by encouraging wood boring insects, it brings into the wood many kinds of birds such as chaffinches, wrens, blue tits, coal tits, robins, pheasants, wood pigeons, and occasionally a greater spotted wood-pecker or a tiny firecrest.

Note the natural regeneration of Larch, Fir and Pine, and the typical woodland flora of mosses, tormentil, wood sorrel, wood violet etc.

Crossing the Pulharrow Burn, proceed along the track to the next stop and look for:-

Forest rides or roads dividing the wood up into workable blocks;

Fire beaters, for extinguishing fires which readily occur in the purple moor grass and heather in the spring when everything has been dried out with the cold north-east winds;

The vegetation on the way which is mainly moor grass, bog myrtle, heather and heath;

The striking difference between the light green Norway Spruce (Christmas Tree) and the bluish green of the Sitka Spruce, as you climb up the side of the Torr.

Buzzards, issuing their usual plaintive cry, may often be seen high up among the hill tops. This is also a favourite hunting ground for foxes which may occasionally be seen slinking amongst the trees in search of hares, voles etc.

Loch Trool

Stop 3.

At this stop, on a clear day, one gets a panoramic view of the loch and circle of hills. See if you can pinpoint Eschonan, Merrick (the finger or point), Buchan Hill, White Bennan and Drumnaminshoch. Planting has been carried out to a height of 1200 to 1500 feet. Above this it is either too exposed or the soil too shallow over rock, which in this locality is mostly Silurian shales - many millions of years old.

Geese and ducks frequent the loch and often find a safe spot for their nests on the Maiden Isle.

Here and at other points on the walk damage by Red Deer and Roe Deer may be seen. Unfortunately they can do a lot of damage by eating the young trees and scraping the bark off with their antlers. Numbers are reduced by skilled deer stalkers using rifles; they take out the sickly animals leaving the better ones.

On your way to the next stop look out for:-

The different species planted along the lochside i.e. Lodgepole Pine, Noble Fir, Hybrid Larch, Beech, Oak, Ash, Sycamore, Norway Maple and Western Hemlock.

Different rocks uncovered by the water eroding the top soil down the steep hillside i.e. shales, greywackes and granite.

Steps of Trool

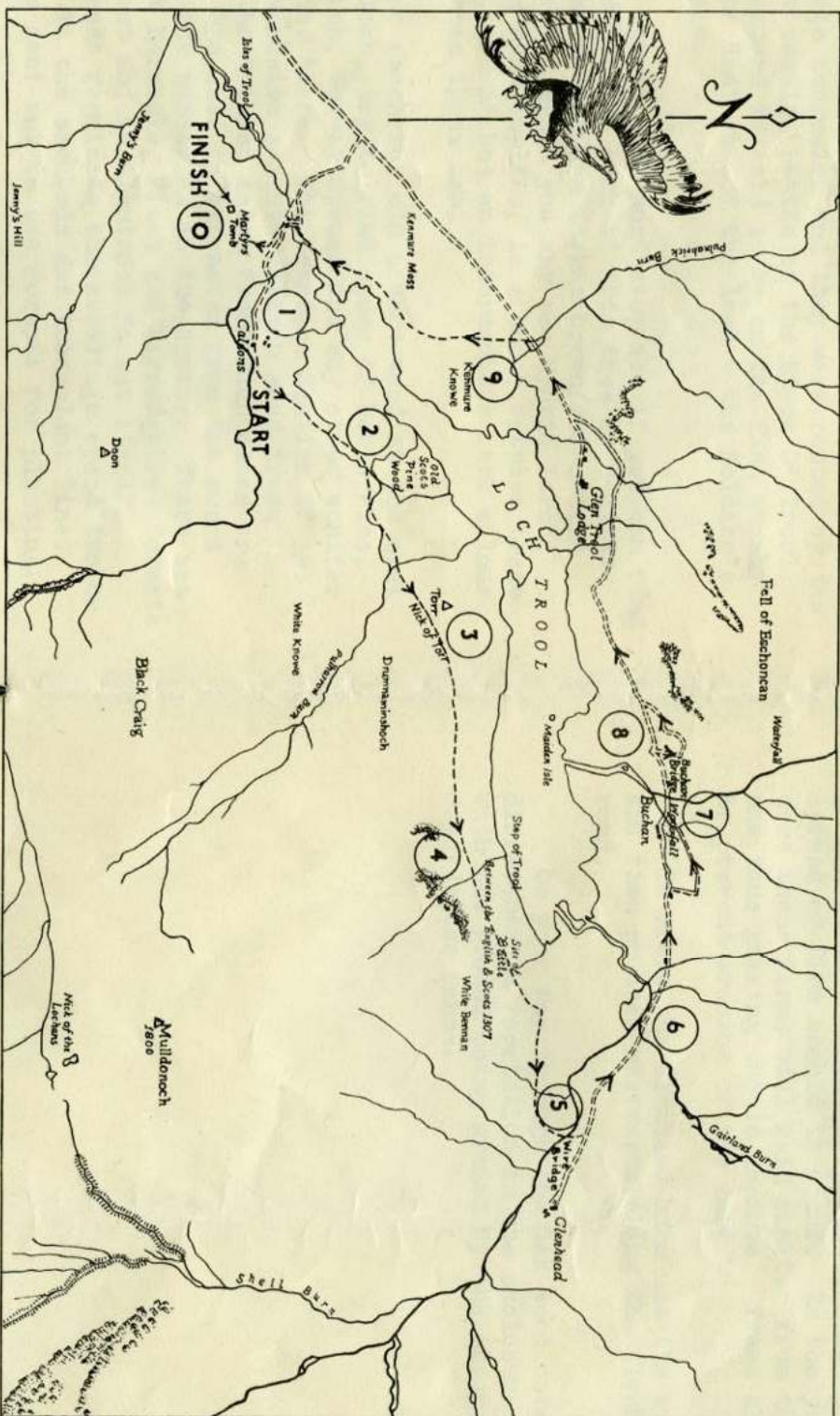
Stop 4.

In the year 1307 Robert the Bruce sprang a surprise on an English force making its way along the rock-strewn shore of the Loch. The Scotts, positioned on the Drumnaminshoch ridge above you, rolled great boulders down from the crags. This threw the survivors into confusion and they were routed by the Scots at the ensuing Battle of the Steps O' Trool. The burial ground is said to be on the flat marshy ground at the East end of the loch - the Soldier's Holm or meadow.

On the way to your next stop see if you can find European Larch. The bark of this tree is a straw colour compared with the darker brown/red of the Japanese Larch. Again you may see Hybrid Larch. This, as its name implies, is a cross between these two parents, and it has an intermediate bark colour ranging between these two.

When you reach the old 4 acre wood at the east end of the loch, try to find cones of Scots Pine, European Larch, Norway Spruce and any other conifer you may notice there. The Genetics Section of the Forestry Commission selects certain good trees throughout the British Isles from which cones are collected. The seed is extracted from the cones and sown in our nurseries in the Spring. There are nurseries at Bareagle, Fleet and Kirroughtree forests quite near but not in Glentrool forest itself. After the seeds germinate the seedlings spend two or three years in the seedbeds and transplant lines before being sent out to the forests for planting.

LOCH TROOL WALK



SCALE: - TWO AND A HALF INCHES TO ONE MILE.

Glenhead Burn

Stop 5.

This is the halfway stop and you are now on one of the several permanent farm units of Glentrool Forest. Glenhead and Buchan are both sheep farms. They help to split up the large blocks of forest and give a certain amount of protection against the spread of fire should it occur. In the years to come these farms will gain shelter from the trees and thus grazing should improve. Trees also help to prevent erosion of the soil.

To cross the Glenhead burn use the wire bridge and then proceed westwards along the Glenhead/Buchan road.

On your way through the Oak wood note the difference in vegetation in the enclosure compared with the ground being grazed by the sheep just outside the fence.

Gairland Burn

Stop 6.

There are many fine walks in the Glentrool Forest Park and you can find them detailed in the Forest Park Guide. One of these walks starts here and takes you up the Gairland burn to Loch Valley, Loch Neldricken (passing the Murder Hole) and to Loch Enoch. This is the rugged country that Crockett uses in his novel 'The Raiders'.

The road then leads you towards the Buchan farm. There you have to take the signposted track around the back of the farm and finally emerge at the Buchan Falls where there is plenty of scope for the keen photographer.

Buchans Falls
'Land of the Mountain and the Flood'

Stop 7.

A few years ago, during gale-force winds, several large oaks were blown down here and you will notice a small area beside the Buchan burn has been enclosed by a high fence. This is an attempt to encourage the growth of new oaks by preventing wild goats, deer, hares and rabbits from eating the young seedlings. If protected in this way sufficient seedlings should develop from the acorns which fall from the oaks still standing to restock the blown areas naturally.

Good seed years for acorns occur every four or five years and a certain amount of light is necessary before the acorns will germinate.

See what seedlings you can find in the enclosure besides Oak.

Bruce's Stone

Stop 8.

You cannot do this walk without stopping for a while at Bruce's Stone. This memorial was erected on the sexcentenary of the death of King Robert the Bruce and commemorates the opening of his campaign for independence.

From this viewpoint you can see the path you have taken on the other side of the loch, and examine the way the planting has been done on the slopes so as to preserve their beauty. You should now try to identify the various species on the loch slopes.

The face of Eschomoran above you has been left unplanted in an attempt to preserve the rugged aspect.

Follow the road down to the lower level of the Kenmure Moss.

Kenmure Moss

Stop 9

In Batsford and Fry's book, 'The Face of Scotland', there is an interesting plate (No. 102) taken presumably at the beginning of the century. This photograph shows the north-east end of Kenmure Moss as partly cultivated and partly wooded. The trees would possibly have been felled during the First World War.

While crossing this Moss, (a "moss" is an area where drainage has been poor resulting in an accumulation of peat built up over the years), look for the old tree stumps on the driver knolls and note the new species introduced. The Lodgepole Pine and Sitka Spruce, both introduced from the western seaboard of Canada and the U.S.A., have been planted in mixture on the poorer peat areas. You may wonder why we have planted these two species in mixture. The reason for this is that Sitka Spruce, which is a high volume producer of timber, in its early years is prone to frost damage and will not grow in competition with strong heather. The Lodgepole Pine, which is a fast grower and is not affected by frost to the same extent as Sitka Spruce is therefore mixed with it and soon smothers the heather. Thus the Sitka Spruce is established on areas of poorer peat where it would not be possible to do so without the help of the Lodgepole Pine.

Note:-

This Moss was ploughed with a crawler tractor and special ploughs which turned out large furrows and made it possible to drain off the surplus water, so creating suitable conditions for the growth of young trees.

Martyrs' Tomb

'Grey recumbent tombs of the dead in desert places.'

Stop 10.

Back to the Caldons and the final stop at the Martyrs' Tomb.

The Galloway Covenanters and their families, despite fines and threats of execution, held regular prayer meetings in these remote parts of the Forest Park. The grim end of such a meeting is recorded on the Martyrs' memorial.

You will notice that the Oak in the vicinity of the tomb is coppiced, with several stems coming away from the one stump. This wood will be preserved in its natural state where possible in order to regenerate itself naturally in the way described on page 8.

March, 1967

FOR FURTHER READING:-

'GLENTROOL FOREST PARK GUIDE'

PRICE:- SIX SHILLINGS

'KNOW YOUR CONIFERS'

(FORESTRY COMMISSION BOOKLET NO. 15)

PRICE:- FIVE SHILLINGS

BOTH OBTAINABLE AT WARDEN'S SHOP-CALDONS

PLEASE OBSERVE THE COUNTRY CODE.

1. LIGHT NO FIRES.

2. WATCH YOUR CIGARETTE
ENDS AND MATCHES.

3. LEAVE NO LITTER.

4. KEEP YOUR DOG ON
A LEAD.

5. SHUT ALL GATES.