

# The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

## Glen Tanar - Gairney Bridge Circuit (Aberdeenshire)

### Route Summary

This is a good walk in old pine forest and open farmland close to the banks of the fast-flowing Water of Tanar, and within the special natural environment of Glen Tanar, a varied and scenic national nature reserve that lies within the Cairngorms National Park.

Duration: 3 hours.



### Route Overview

**Duration:** 3 hours.

**Transport/Parking:** No public transport nearby. The Glen Tanar Braeolaine visitor centre and car-park is up the Glen Tanar Road, off the S Deeside Road, near Aboyne. Pay parking at the NNR car-park at the start/end of the walk. (£3 in 2020).

**Length:** 9.500 km / 5.94 mi

**Height Gain:** 210 meter. **Height Loss:** 210 meter.

**Max Height:** 234 meter. **Min Height:** 160meter.

**Surface:** Moderate. Good paths, forest roads and farm tracks. Suitable for off-road mobility scooters. However, the diversion along the riverside track at Waypoint 9 has been damaged by flooding, and is very rough and narrow in places. We advise staying on the forest road (which the track eventually rejoins).

**Difficulty:** 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 near farm animals.

**Refreshments:** Options in Aboyne.



### Description

This is a good leg-stretching forest walk in open, mature pine woods, but with a long and satisfying section in farmland overlooking Glen Tanar House and the wider valley. The fast-flowing Water of Tanar is crossed twice on old stone bridges at very scenic spots. At the beginning and in the final sections, the route follows the Firmouth Road, an ancient drover's road which crosses the Mounth, an old route over the high hills between Aberdeenshire and Angus, connecting Deeside with Glen Esk. The main section on the early part of the route takes the Queen's Road, now a farm track, running gently downhill in pasture-land above Glen Tanar House and Equine Centre. The wonderful open views were famously enjoyed by Queen Victoria when visiting the estate. Dropping down towards the Water of Tanar, the route then skirts the pretty tree-lined Trout Loch. After walking deep into the forest, at the mid-section on the route, we cross two rapidly flowing watercourses in short order: the Water of Tanar and the Water of Gairney, a tributary. The next point of interest is the Knockie Viewpoint overlooking the 3rd largest area of Caledonian Forest in Scotland. Heading down the old Firmouth Road from there, we arrive at the historic St Lesmo's Chapel before returning to the start-point over a very photogenic single stone arch bridge. Glen Tanar 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. The Glen 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](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glen_Tanar)

## Waypoints

### (1) Start walk at the top of the Braeloine car-park

(57.05742; -2.85942) <https://w3w.co/stitching.bottom.door>

Start the walk from the Braeloine car-park, off the Glen Tanar Road. Walk uphill to the top of the car-park on the east side. Here, there is a walks post for the Juniper Trail at the start of a path going uphill through the trees. Soon, that path joins a slightly broader path\*. Continue uphill, ignoring any turn-offs. The path soon leaves the trees and proceeds uphill through an area of bracken before meeting a pedestrian gate onto a narrow tarred road. Go left up the road for a short distance looking for an opening on your left.



*\*Note: This is a short section of the Firmounth Road, an ancient drover's road which crosses the Mounth between Aberdeenshire and Angus, connecting Deeside with Glen Esk. The later sections of our walking route, from Waypoint 11, returning to Braeloine car-park, also follow the old Firmounth Road.*

### (2) Left along Queen's Road track

(57.05962; -2.86299) <https://w3w.co/intention.jubilant.saga>

In 350 m from the start-point in the Braeloine car-park, go left off the narrow surfaced road onto a grassy road, known as the Queen's Road\*. Go through the field gate, closing it carefully behind you. You may meet farm animals in this section of the walk, so ensure dogs are on lead. (349 m)



*\*Note: the old Queen's Road runs gently downhill in farmland above Glen Tanar House. The wonderful open views were famously enjoyed by Queen Victoria.*

### (3) Right onto forest road at sawmill junction

(57.04707; -2.86797) <https://w3w.co/encoded.strictly.ghost>

After 2km, the Queen's Road descends to an angled x-roads, having passed the Glen Tanar sawmill on the left side. Facing a wood-clad cottage, turn right to follow a forestry road into the woodland. The road soon gently descends, with glimpses of the Glen Tanar trout loch on the left side. (2.4 km)



#### (4) Follow road veering right - signed Glen Esk by the Mounth

(57.04264; -2.86439) <https://w3w.co/pumpkin.crate.dried>  
In 500 m, arriving at a wide y-junction, go right along the forestry road, signposted for Glen Esk by the Mounth. (2.9 km)



#### (5) Keep going - ignoring road veering right

(57.03619; -2.87941) <https://w3w.co/rebounds.titles.defend>  
In 1.2 km, carry straight on, ignoring a forest road veering right. (4.1 km)



#### (6) Left for bridge over the Water of Tanar

(57.03517; -2.88967) <https://w3w.co/smelter.stray.shrugging>  
In another 600 m, veer left to cross a stone bridge over the Water of Tanar, at a very scenic spot. (4.7 km)



#### (7) Keep going - ignoring road veering right and uphill

(57.03358; -2.88360) <https://w3w.co/dynamics.splice.unfilled>  
In 500 m, keep straight on, ignoring a road veering right and uphill. (5.2 km)



### (8) Cross bridge over Water of Gairney and then go left

(57.03221; -2.88158) <https://w3w.co/proven.serious.dentures>

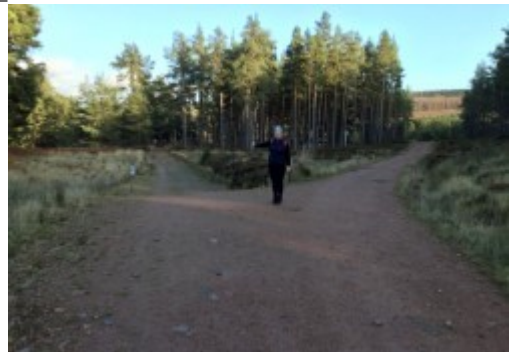
In 200 m, cross another stone bridge, this time over the Water of Gairney, a tributary of the Water of Tanar. The Gairney, itself, is joined by the Water of Allachy a little upstream of the bridge. After crossing the bridge, follow the forest road going left. (5.4 km)



### (9) Veer left to take riverside track

(57.03723; -2.87457) <https://w3w.co/horizons.pursuing originals>

In 700 m, veer left off the main forest road to take a rough road that is closer to the Water of Tanar, on your left side. Eventually, this more scenic track, rejoins the main forest road. (6.1 km)



### (10) Sharp right and uphill for Knockie Viewpoint

(57.04571; -2.86136) <https://w3w.co/layover.sunflower.embraced>

In 1.6 km, approaching another stone bridge over the Water of Tanar on your left side, go sharp right at a walks post to take a rough track going fairly steeply uphill towards the Knockie Viewpoint. After about 110 m ascent, go right onto a path that fairly obviously takes you to a viewpoint area. (7.7 km)



## (11) Knockie Viewpoint

(57.04481; -2.85878) <https://w3w.co/frostbite.paddock.shirt>  
In about 200 m you will have arrived at the Knockie Viewpoint area overlooking the 3rd largest area of Caledonian Forest in Scotland, where there are 3 information boards about Glen Tanar. When you are ready to move, on, follow the path gently uphill towards a forest road, where you turn left and go gently downhill\*. On your left, before you reach the forest road you may notice a special post\*\* where you can align your camera to take a photo of the view for possible upload to the Cairngorms National Park website. (7.9 km)

*\*Note: this forest road is part of the ancient Firmouth Road (see Waypoint 1 for details).*

*\*\*Note: this is the Cairngorms Scenic Photo Post for the Knockie Hill Viewpoint. See Cairngorms Scenic Photo Post #17: <https://cairngorms.co.uk/photo-posts/photoposts/17/>*



## (12) Go straight over x-roads and gently downhill

(57.05058; -2.86023) <https://w3w.co/exits.ridiculed.redefined>  
In 700 m, at an angled x-roads, go straight over the x-roads and carry on gently downhill, with the trees soon giving way on your left to open views of the grassy valley of the Water of Tanar. (8.6 km)



## (13) St Lesmo's Chapel

(57.05233; -2.86013) <https://w3w.co/thin.starring.galloped>  
In 200 m, having deviated left off the forest road to take a short grassy track through a field gate to St Lesmo's Chapel\*, we suggest you take a little time to check out the graveyard and chapel (if it is open). In the graveyard there is 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 left towards a pedestrian gate and back on to the old Firmouth Road where you turn left to head back towards your start-point, with a field on your right side and a grassy area on your left, eventually crossing the impressive stone arch bridge near the Glen Tanar visitor centre (cottage on your right at the bridge). (8.8 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 ...' See: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St.\\_Lesmo\\_of\\_Glen\\_Tanar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Lesmo_of_Glen_Tanar)*

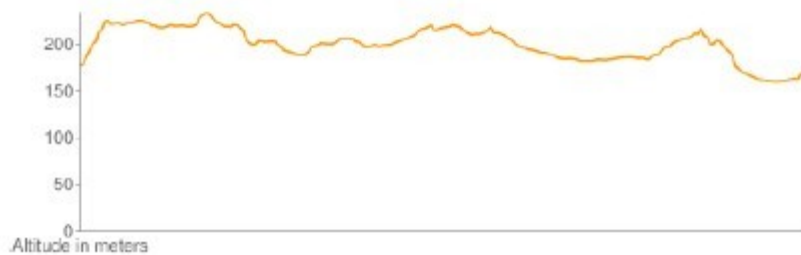
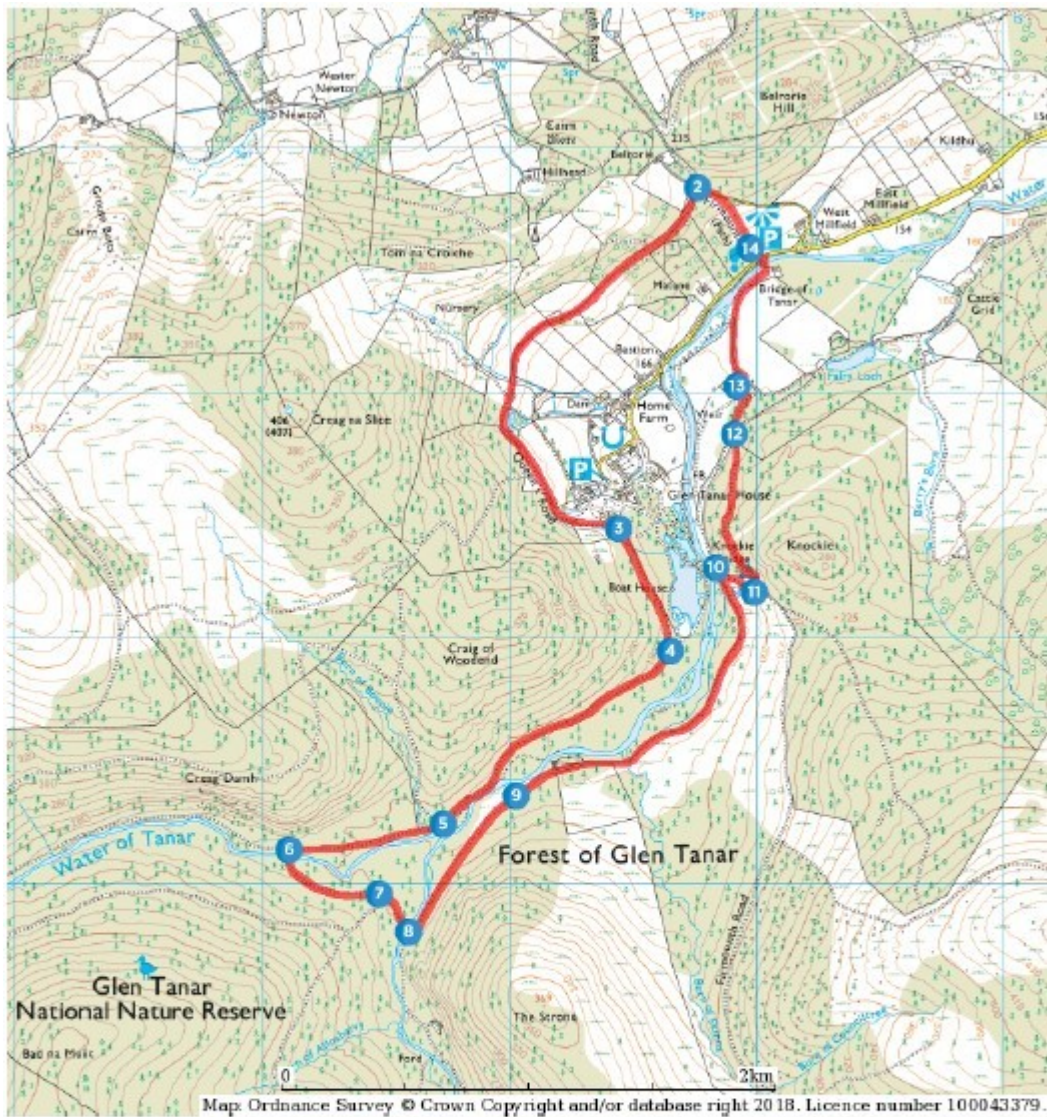
## (14) Finish walk back at the Braeloine car-park

(57.05737; -2.85937) <https://w3w.co/stitching.bottom.door>

In 700 m, after crossing the stone bridge over the Water of Tanar by the Visitor Centre, you will have arrive back at your start point in the Braeloine car-park. (9.5 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](#)