

The Fetteresso, a guide for TGO Challengers.

Many TGO challengers pass through the Fetteresso forest on their way to the coast, typically to Stonehaven or Dunnottar Castle.

The area has developed a bit of a reputation for confusing tracks and logging roads weaving through endless dense commercial conifer stands. When I moved into my current address I wondered who the tatty, sometimes slightly smelly, ragtag people were limping and hobbling past each year with floppy hats, big packs and trekking poles, so I asked and have followed the TGOC ever since.

For the purposes of this guide I have included the wooded areas known as Drumtochty and Durris forests in the “the Fetteresso” as well as the privately-owned commercial forests to the East of the B974 Cairn o’Mount road and around the Durris TV transmitter which are all contiguous with the Forestry and Land Scotland owned forest.

The following information is provided in good faith, based on my personal experience and information available in the public domain. I cannot accept responsibility or liability for any incidents occurring as a result of readers using this material.

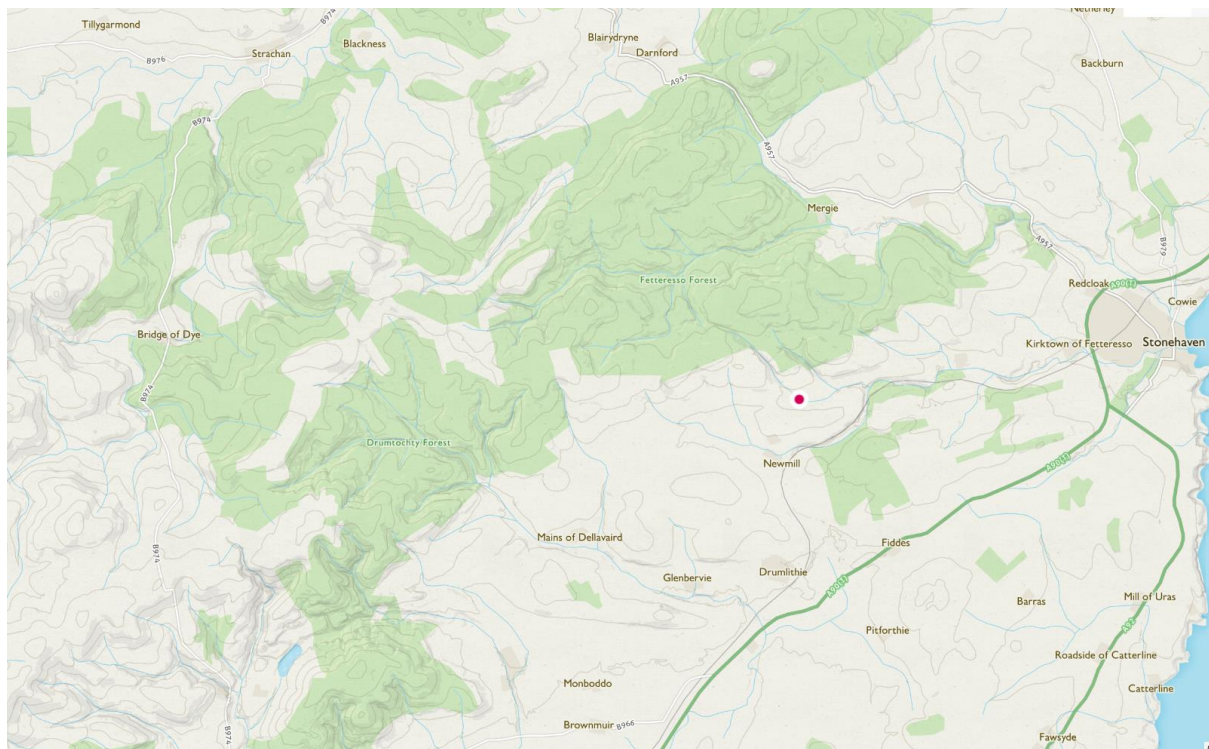


Figure 1 Fetteresso Forest Red dot is where I live.

Overview

The Fetteresso is a large commercially forested area to the west of Stonehaven. The easternmost exit from the forest is a very short downhill walk into Stonehaven. Forestry and Land Scotland, a

state-owned enterprise, own and operate the vast majority of the forest.¹ Three small areas around the Durriss TV transmitter mast have been divested and are privately owned. Areas in the north west of the forest to the south of the distinctive cone shaped Kerloch are owned and managed by the Fasque and Glen Dye estate and the area to the north east of Clatterin' Brig is owned by the James Hutton Institute and operate as an agricultural research farm known as Glensaugh.² Because of the freedom to roam in Scotland, these distinctions between ownership are not particularly an issue for challengers and the entire area is open access and wild camping is permitted. Challengers are nevertheless reminded of the responsibilities that they have under the outdoor access code <https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/> Challengers should be aware that there may be activities such as forestry work, stalking or wind farm maintenance ongoing and should be willing to make a detour if required.

The forest is generally bounded to the south by the Highland Boundary Fault (HBF), a geological feature separating the old rocks to the southeast (Ordovician and Devonian) from the very old Precambrian rocks to the northwest. The Ordovician and Silurian rock produce a flat plane of productive farmland known as The Mearns. The Precambrian rocks produce a hillier topography with poor soils known as 'The Mounth'. The poor soils are why the area is used for forestry, a wind farm and grouse moor. The HBF meets the North Sea just north of Stonehaven and trends generally NE-SW with the outcrop being further and further from the sea the further south you go in Aberdeenshire and Angus. Using the Fetteresso, challengers can remain in "wild country" the longest and limit the amount of walking through agricultural areas compared to, for example, following the well-used TGO route from Edzell to Montrose.

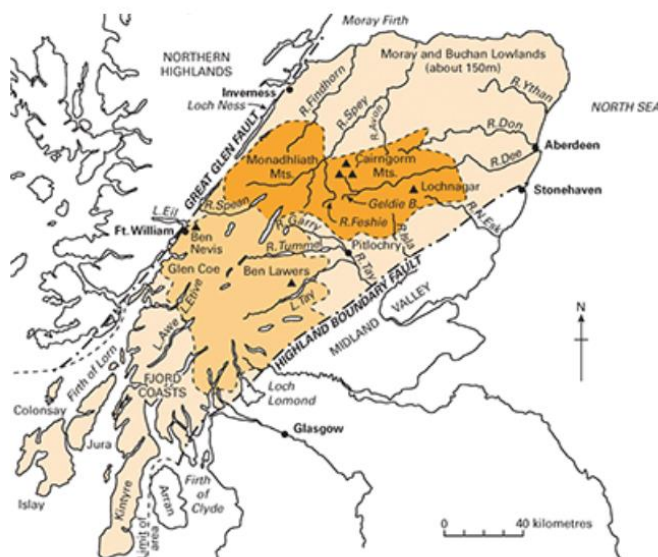


Figure 2 Highland Boundary Fault

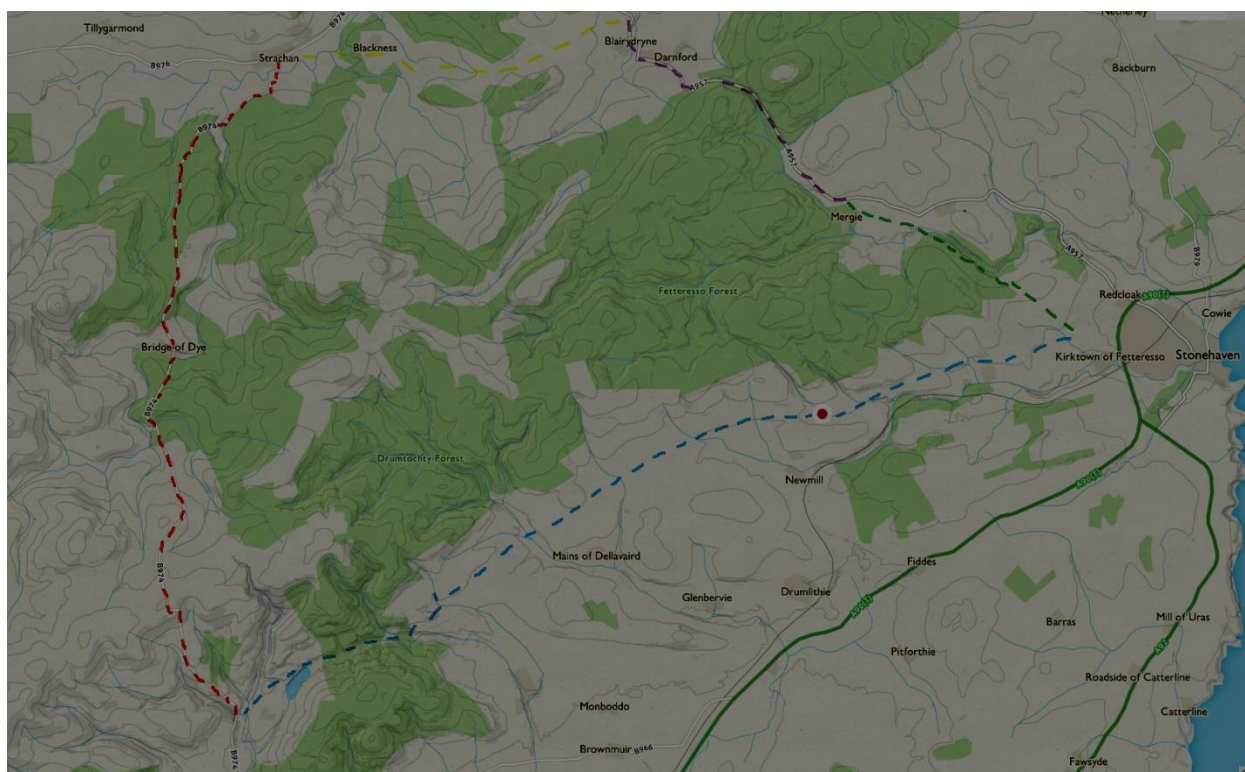
The forest contains the large Mid Hill windfarm, the Durriss TV mast (which confusingly isn't in Durriss Forest or near Durriss) and a group of telecommunications masts on Cairn Mon Earn in the Durriss Forest north of the Slug Road. To add to the confusion there is a large electricity interconnect used to connect the power from the windfarm to high tension power lines and the national grid located on a totally different Mid Hill to the one that the wind farm is on. The underground power cable

¹ Technically speaking, from 1-Apr-2019, Forestry Commission Scotland no longer exists and has become Forestry and Land Scotland <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/> but some signage etc still relates to FCS

² <https://www.hutton.ac.uk/about/facilities/glensaugh>

from the windfarm to the interconnect station runs alongside the southern edge of the forest over Leechie hill before entering the forest west of Quithel and alongside the logging road running along the southern edge of the forest. Apart from a marker post at Leechie Hill, there is very little indication of the route used by the power cable on the ground. Several high pressure gas pipelines are also buried in the forest, again around Leechie Hill and at Swanley at the eastern end of the forest. Oh, and there are lots and lots of trees. **Update April 2024 SSEN have announced plans to build a line of 60m high 400kV pylons and a massive 291 ha (720 acres) substation in the forest, with more substations and connections to follow.**

A minor, but sometimes busy, unclassified road runs along the southern edge of the forest, generally parallel and close to the HBF. This road runs from Stonehaven and eventually turns towards Auchenblae but connects with another minor road continuing parallel with the HBF past Drumtochty Castle towards Clatterin' Brig (Blue on the map below). This means that challengers always have an 'escape route' out of the forest (using one of several escape points that I will identify later) and the ability to continue along a tarmac road. I happen to live on this road. The Northern side of the forest is marked by a minor public road going from Strachen towards a junction with the Slug road at Lochton, (Yellow) along the Slug Road (Purple) eastwards towards Rickarton and then a minor road (Green) from near Rickarton past Mergie towards Stonehaven. This means again that there is always a way of getting onto a public road if required. Durris Forest forms an outlier north of the Slug Road. The A957 Slug Road (from the Gaelic 'Slochd' = slot or pass, as in the Slochd summit on the A9) follows the route of an old drove road from the River Dee near Banchory to the coastal plane at Stonehaven. The Cairn o' Mount Road is also the route of an old drover's road which has evolved over the centuries into becoming a toll road and eventually a public road.



In the main the forest is dense conifer cover. Most of the timber is Sitka Spruce or Larch planted very densely to encourage strong straight growth. This kind of forestry may seem somewhat oppressive to challengers visiting from overseas more accustomed to more natural forestry particularly in Scandinavia or North America. Some areas of the forest particularly in Drumtochty are more open

including Scots Pine or hardwoods such as oak, beech or sycamore. Most of the trees were planted in the 1960's & 70's and are currently mature. Due to the current, in my mind totally illogical, government policy that seems to imply that burning wood doesn't produce CO₂, there is a large amount of felling occurring in the forest due to the high value of wood pulp for electricity generation.

Hazards

There are no longer wolves and brown bears in the forest, the greatest hazard you will face is much bigger than any bear, the giant logging trucks that move around the forest hauling timber out to the main roads and beyond. It is my experience that the drivers of these trucks are very responsible and stick strictly to the speed limits and show due care and attention. They also tend to be quite noisy on the logging roads and you are likely to hear one before you see it. Nevertheless, challengers should be aware that these monsters, as well as other logging vehicles and trucks, are roaming about. There are also vehicles associated with the windfarm and the electricity interconnect as well as friendly Forestry and Land rangers patrolling around in their little vans. There is no access to the forest for any form of motorised transport driven by the public, only walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

The only time I have ever seen an adder near the Fetteresso was on the Slug Road and that was dead. I'm sure that they exist in the forest, particularly the more open grassy areas as they are very common further west around Glen Dye and Cairn o'Mount. The European adder doesn't present a serious hazard to an adult human anyway. A bigger health risk comes from ticks which can carry Lyme disease.

In summer, normally a good while after the TGOC, very annoying black flies appear, they don't bite but drive you crazy. Horse flies, bigger and flatter than the black flies, also appear which do bite. They have an amazing ability to land on you undetected and slice into you very painfully with scissor like jaws injecting anticoagulant. Most people then experience a very irritated lump for several days. There isn't any major health risk but they sure smart. The infamous midge can also be very annoying but fortunately they aren't seen in the mass clouds experienced further west, they tend to appear after the TGOC and are normally kept down by breezes. The forest tends to be breezy, there is a reason that the windfarm is there. If they are around, they are most likely to be concentrated in sheltered areas especially around dusk and dawn, in other words just when and where you are likely to be pitching your tent and trying to cook a meal.

There are no major hazardous water courses in the forest. Even the bigger burns like the Bervie and the Cowie are normally easily forded except on very rare occasions in winter after days of continuous heavy rain. The River Dye can get impossible to cross in spate, but it is unlikely that challengers would need to do that. Because of the extensive network of logging roads which have bridges over the burns, there shouldn't be much need to cross any water without there being a bridge. One exception to this is crossing the Burn of Sheechoch on the Stockmount route, NO 721875, but this is normally 50cm wide and 30cm deep and you are likely to hop over it without realising. The Builg Mounth route crosses the Bingly Burn at NO 670891 and the Builg Burn at NO 686866. These crossings aren't normally enough to get your boots wet.

With one notable exception, there are no hazardous crags, cliffs or gorges. The exception is upper Slack Den which is a steep sided gorge centred on NO 671805. There are no paths or tracks in this area and it is surrounded by a very high electric deer fence more like something from a concentration camp. My route, discussed later, up Goyle Hill passes close to the head of Slack Den

but doesn't go near steep ground and stays north of the electric fence. In comparison lower Slack Den presents perfect camping and a route across the forest. As an item of interest, the British Geological Survey maintain a seismic monitoring station in the area, presumably because of the HBF. If you see something glinting in the sun in the area it is probably a solar panel for the seismograms.

There are several small quarries around the forest which have been dug to produce roadmaking aggregate but nothing that presents a hazard.

Despite the telecoms masts in Durrus Forest, there are very large areas of the forest with no mobile phone coverage on any network. Please don't assume that as you are getting close to civilisation you can rely on online maps for navigation. Other areas, in by far the minority, have excellent 4G phone cover. There are plans to improve mobile phone coverage in the area with the installation of new transmitted masks shared by all the network providers. Because of dense tree cover GPS signal can also be affected, this typically reduces the radius of uncertainty from the usual ~3m to possibly 10-15m sometimes. In other words, a pain if you are geocaching but good enough to navigate through the forest.



Figure 3 Cairn Mon Earn telecoms masts.



Figure 4 Durrus TV transmitter

Travelling through the windfarm is generally unrestricted, as long as you stick to the roads. Be aware of any activity involving cranes etc. Wind turbines can create hazards with ice throw from the blades but that is highly unlikely in May. The turbines can also generate very annoying noise. Low frequency amplitude modulation noise can easily travel 2km in certain atmospheric conditions, so you may

want to make sure that you camp well away from the windfarm. The areas around the electricity interconnect and telecoms mast are fenced off but don't provide any obstruction to navigation and you can get surprisingly close to the TV mast. The area around the TV mast has warning signs about ice falling from the mast and guy lines, but again this is presumably a winter hazard.

I haven't heard of any forest fires in the Fetteresso in the last 15 years, but it is nevertheless a potential hazard and the recent dry summers appear to have increased the number of wildfires. Given that challengers are probably planning on overnighing somewhere in the forest, they are more likely to be the cause of a fire than a victim. Forestry & Land Scotland prohibit open fires in the forest, but I have seen plenty of evidence of fires being lit, often accompanied by a barbeque grill and pile of empty beer cans. Please be careful using gas/meths/paraffin stoves.

Routes through the forest

Talking to challengers and vetters, it is very obvious that there is a favourite route. This route provides a fairly direct course from near Spittal of Glen Dye where many challengers emerge from the hills to the west, passes through the windfarm and leads to a camping area at the confluence of the Cowie and Finglennie. Most challengers then use logging roads past Stonehouse towards Mergie stables on the single track road between Rickarton & Swanley and then tramp along this road towards Stonehaven. Until spring 2018 this narrow bendy road had very dense growths of thick gorse on the verges giving pedestrians nowhere to get off the road and limiting driver's visibility. I was actively discouraging challengers from using this road because of the risk. Aberdeenshire council did a good job of cutting back the gorse and the situation became much better. I used the road myself to escort a challenger who was struggling into Stonehaven. I can understand why this choice is popular as it is nearly all on hard top logging roads and is straightforward to navigate. It is also easy for vetters to be confident that first timers in the forest aren't trying something too difficult. I shall refer to this as the TGO trade route.

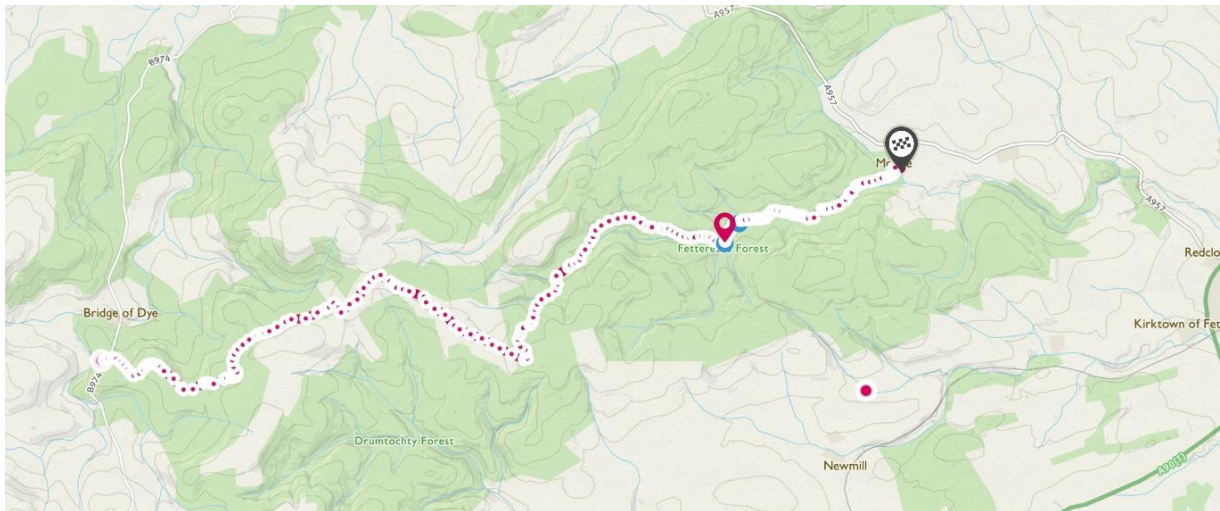


Figure 5 TGO Trade Route

I have stored a copy of this route on the OS website

<https://osmaps.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/route/3311680/TGO-Fetteresso-trade-route> A gpx file can be generated from this page as well.

There seems to be a convention amongst challengers to camp near the bridge over the Cowie but if you are continuing along the trade route towards Stonehouse and Mergie Stables, I recommend going on a bit further before camping in the grassy meadows just after a metal gate before reaching Stonehouse. This area offers flat grassy terraces, water from the Cowie and some seclusion amongst the trees. NO 76785 87789.



Figure 6 Ozzie showing the grassy terraces before Stonehouse

The biggest downside of the trade route is the fact that a big chunk of it now involves marching through the industrial wasteland of Mid Hill windfarm. Some people like windfarms, personally I feel that anyone like that is either on drugs or needs to be on drugs, but each to his own!

A discussion on the TGOC forum site in 2017 centred on this issue and I said that it should be possible to cross the Fetteresso without viewing the windfarm. I was challenged by Colin Crawford, one of the TGOC vetters, to publish such a route.

I just about managed it, with a couple of small exceptions where turbines were visible for a hundred metres or so on Goyle Hill and near Leechie Hill.

My initial iteration of this route involved starting on the Cairn o'Mount road and climbed over trackless grouse moor up to Goyle Hill. This is quite difficult ground, especially for someone carrying a full pack. The route then essentially sticks to the southern edge of the forest all the way to the eastern end. Following the southern boundary results in a longer route because there are numerous valleys cut into the slope by burns and rivers. The logging roads tend to reduce the slope by switchbacking upstream and down again on the far side.

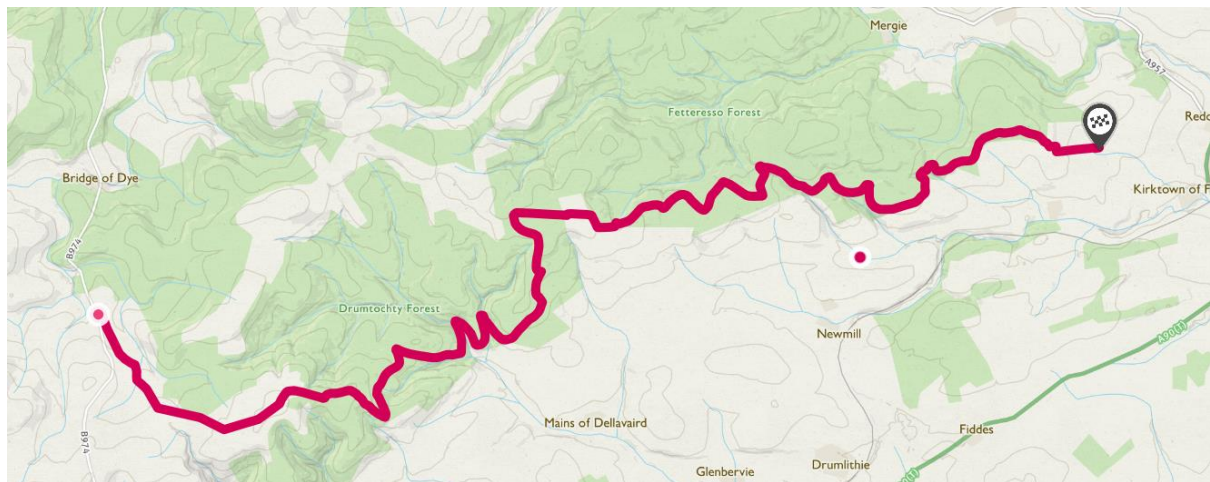


Figure 7 Southern Route via Goyle Hill

The route is available on <https://osmaps.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/route/1760528/Fetteresso-West-to-East> and route notes and photos can be downloaded from

<https://www.keepandshare.com/doc9/20779/fetteresso-route-pdf-515k?da=y> and

<https://www.keepandshare.com/doc9/22543/fetteresso-route-pictures-pdf-4-3-meg?da=y>

I then looked for alternatives to Goyle Hill and started talking to Donald Barrie, the manager at Glensaugh research farm. He suggested several routes across his manor which could be useful. They all focus on Slack Den which, I have mentioned earlier, offers superb wild camping opportunities.

The alternatives enter the Den from three different locations on the Cairn o' Mount Road, two from North and South of the cairn and the third from Clatterin' Brig.

I feel that the Clatterin' Brig option offers very interesting alternatives to the traditional Glen Dye trek for challengers. It is possible to follow the Water of Charr from in front of Charr Bothy and over to Back Burn of Arnbarrow and Clatterin Brig café. Slack burn is then directly across the road from the café. <https://www.facebook.com/ClatterinBrig/>

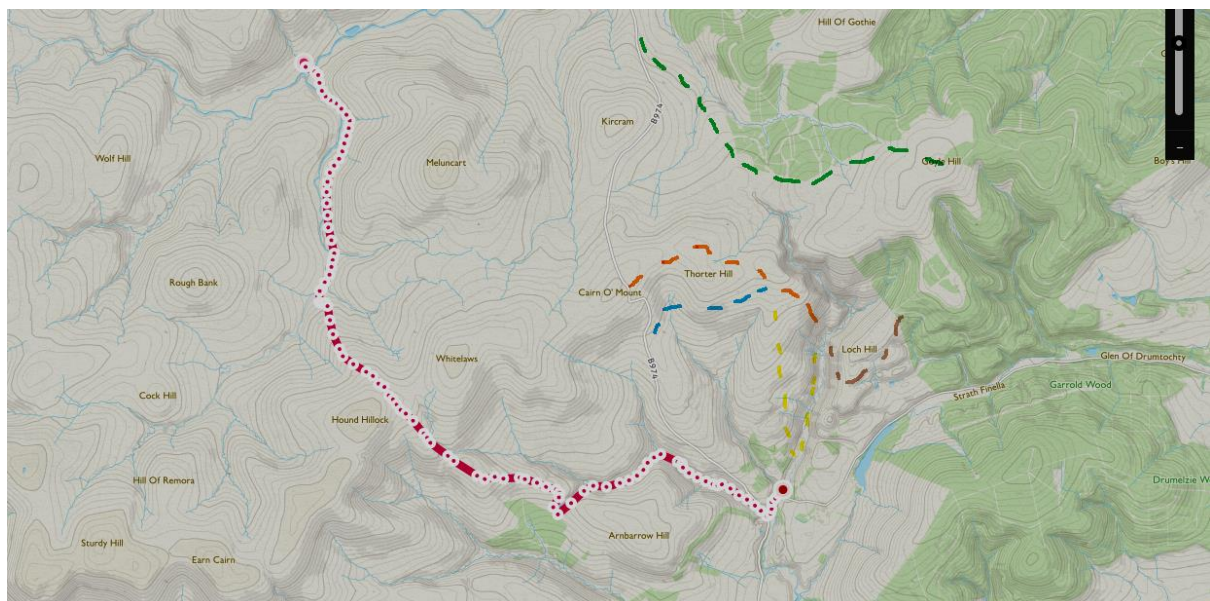


Figure 8 Different starting points. Red =Charr Bothy route Blue & Orange from Co'M and Green via Goyle Hill. Yellow=Gentle descent into the Den.

This map can be downloaded from <https://www.keepandshare.com/doc9/20841/different-starting-routes-png-1-0-meg?da=y>

The various options converge at a point where an old pony track gently climbs up the East side of the den onto open moorland. The start of the track is marked by a waymark post, and this is the centre of what I feel would make an ideal meeting place for challengers.



Figure 9 One of the large grassy terraces in the Den.

In very dry weather the burn can dry up, but very conveniently a spring feeds the burn a few hundred metres downstream of the suggested camping area and the burn always flows freely from this point.

The old pony track climbs gently diagonally up out of the Den onto open well grazed heathland. There is a deer fence enclosing the area which is used by the farm as an area for keeping hinds over the winter. There are two obvious gates through this fence which are always closed but unlocked. I suggest heading for the gate at NO 675798. You are then heading for another gate at NO 678803. This gate is normally locked, but I have negotiated to have the gate unlocked for the duration of the period when challengers may be passing through. The deer are moved further up the hill before the challenge, so the area should be empty of livestock. If you use this gate, please make sure that it is closed and chained before you move on. Once through this gate you are in Forestry & Land estate in Drumtochty Forest. Following the route through Drumtochty eventually brings you to a junction, north of Bogburn Farm which meets my original route coming down from Goyle Hill.

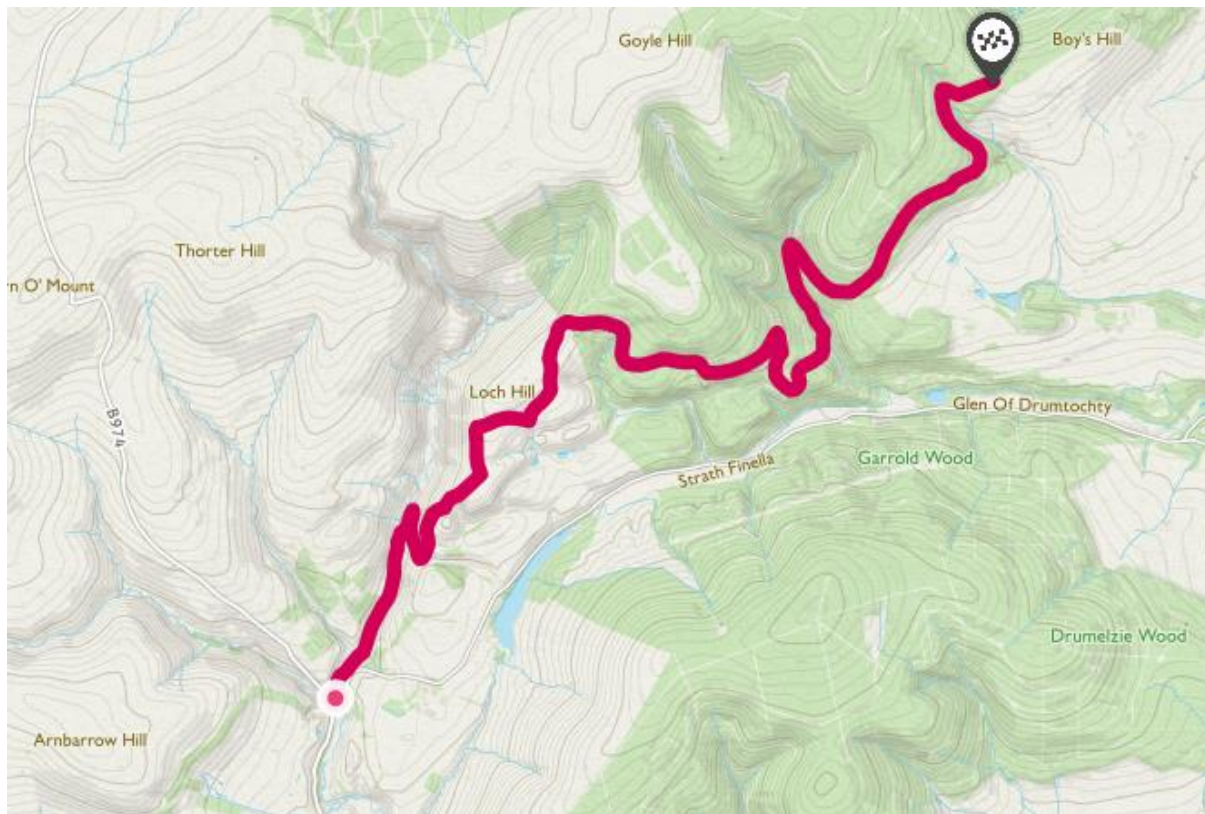


Figure 10 Route from Clatterin' Brig via Slack Den joining Goyle Hill option.



Figure 11: Soon after entering the forest you have a choice of routes, a longer route that contours round or a shorter down & up again option.

There is an escape route down to the farm, and then the public road near this junction, but it does involve climbing over a barbed wire sheep fence. While in Drumtochty Forest it is also possible to get to the public road at a gateway at NO 686795 and the car park at NO 696798. This could be useful to those heading towards Auchenblae and places on the coast like Inverberrie.

Drove Roads

Now we come to a favourite topic of mine, the old drove roads.

Both the trade route and my southern route travel from the western to the eastern margins of the forest, a lot of challengers enter the forest from the northern margin, this may be because they have come down Glen Aven (not the Glen Avon in the Cairngorms), along the Feugh via Finzean (pronounced Finin) or from Deeside. There is a good commercial camping & caravan site at NO 642925.

Historically there were multiple routes used by drovers to get their cattle from the highlands to markets in the lowlands. Some of these traditional routes have become public roads and others remain hilltracks. Challengers may be aware of routes further over to the west. The Braemar to Blairgowrie road via Spittal of Glenshee has become a public road, other well used drovers' roads further west include the Fungle road, the Tolmounth (or Jocks) Road. The Firmounth Road and Capel Mounth. All of these routes are popular with challengers. Let's face it, the priorities of the drovers in ancient times were to get safely over high ground with minimum effort and exposure to bad weather to the warmth and comfort of a camp or pub on the far side, sound familiar?

In the Fetteresso area the drovers were historically heading for a large fair held annually near Auchenblae. The market known as St Pallidus's Fair or St Paldy's Fair was held on Hersha Hill, just on the southern margins of the forest. It is not difficult to imagine these hardy folks driving their beasts, and I imagine the odd barrel of whisky, from places in the north. A lot of them probably came into Deeside through the Lairig Ghru, Larig An Laoigh and Tomintoul-Braemar, just like today's challengers. They most likely took back essentials like grain, woven cloth, tools and pots and pans and I guess the odd girlfriend. Towns like Auchenblae heavily relied on the sale of woven cloth, produced as a cottage industry in the local farms and crofts, to the travellers.

I really recommend challengers to visit the Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society's Heritage Paths webpage <http://www.heritagepaths.co.uk/mapsearch.php#zoom=11&lat=57.0154&lon=-2.3660>

The Society, known as Scotways, have done an excellent job waymarking and protecting the four drove roads through the Fetteresso. It is almost certain that any challenger passing through the forest has used at least a part of one or more of the old drove routes. The TGO trade route uses sections of the Builg, the Stockmounth and the Cryne Corse route. The old routes have been heavily incorporated in the network of logging and wind turbine service roads and in the case of Cryne Corse a service road and powerline for the TV mast.

The four routes from west to east are the Builg (pronounced boolg), the Stockmounth, the Cryne Corse Mounth and Elsie Mounth

Builg Mounth

This useful road as marked by Scotways starts at Bridge of Bogendreip (NO 663910) and exits the forest near Corsebauld at NO 719829. It has recently come to my attention that TGO vetters have been advising that parts of this route are impassable. This is not the case. The route is normally passable to those on foot for the entire crossing. One section, immediately south of the windfarm, can be a bit soggy at times and the route has several windblown trees crossing it, but all the obstructions can be passed under, round or through. The route initially follows a major logging route before turning into a forest path. Just after crossing the Bingly Burn (stepping stones) do not be

tempted to turn left uphill at the next junction (NO 670891). Carry on straight ahead and follow the route through pleasant pine forest and open moorland. If you follow the uphill option, you end up using a stark logging road and an unnecessary climb over Hare Hill. Halfway across the open moorland the track meets another track coming up from Heatheryhaugh. The path and logging road meet again at NO 672872. The Builg route leaves the logging road again at a well-marked junction at NO 682867 crossing a recently clear-felled area towards a crossing at the upper Water of Builg. The burn should be easily crossed at this point. The path climbs up the far side of the valley towards the wind farm and the highest point of the route. This section can be boggy. The Builg path meets the TGO Trade route at NO 691863 giving challengers the option to use this route to head eastwards through the windfarm. Carrying on the Builg route southwards following waymarked wind turbine service roads eventually brings you to forest again at NO 696850. The track, as mentioned previously, is a bit overgrown and soggy for a few hundred metres, but it is passable and soon becomes a good Landrover track and then a surfaced logging road. This pleasant trail down alongside the West Burn of Builg and the River Bervie is one of my favourite dog walks. Eventually the route meets the southern route at a bridge over the Bervie at NO 716834. You then have the choice to continue using the southern route to cross the forest towards Stonehaven or after about 100m stay on the Builg route which continues to follow the Bervie. Look for a Scotways marker pointing to the path as it kicks off the logging road. The path continues down towards an unlocked steel gate which marks the end of the forest.

There are a few places to pitch a single tent while following the Bervie but I think the best camping opportunities are in the pasture the other side of this gate where the terraces along the river are grazed grass, so less lumpy than the bracken the other side of the gate. Note that sheep are sometimes kept in this field. Keeping close to the gate will keep you away from Corsebauld itself. Only the cottage on the far side of the derelict farm is occupied, by a nice friendly guy. As of 2024 this pasture has been planted with trees and some of the gorse bushes along the side of the river rooted out but it still makes a good camping spot.

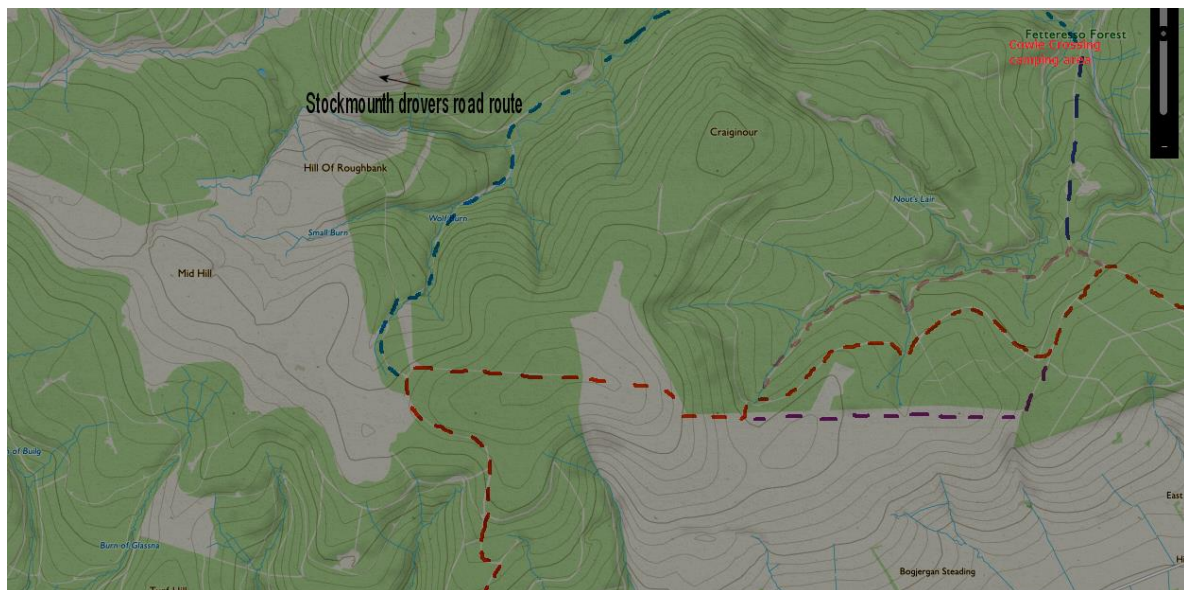


Figure 12 Lexie showing flat grassy terraces near the gate and the Bervie.

To get to the public road you cross the field to another unlocked gate and then follow the farm road past the front of the abandoned farm towards Mains of Dellavaire or Tippetty.

Stockmounth Route

This route emerges from the southern edge of the forest very close to that where the Builg road emerges, this is because they were both heading towards St Paldy fair. It enters the north side of the forest from a car park close to the Knockburn outdoor activity centre. NO 699916 The activity centre has a café. The track starts as a fenced off single track private road heading off across relatively flat ground. Eventually the slope starts to rise and you enter the forest. There is an alternative rougher track leading to this gate from a parking area further to the West at NO 692914., going through Pitreadie Farm. Don't worry about a sign warning of stalking. I have chatted with the stalker and he hasn't shot anyone yet. The route is very obvious and passes an interesting derelict hut at NO 704890. Not long after the hut there is a junction, keep straight ahead and soon afterwards a path leaves the logging road and heads along the edge of the forest. The track re-enters the forest and follows a well-marked route to meet a logging road and continues SE towards the Sheeoch Burn. Just before the burn the logging road turns sharply left but the waymarked path continues straight on to cross the burn. Keeping on the logging road instead of crossing the burn provides a route following Sheeoch Burn towards the Slug Road at Spyhill. After crossing the burn and following the path through the forest eventually meets a logging road, turn right at this junction and after a hundred metres you meet the logging road used by the TGO trade route. Turning left allows challengers to use the trade route to head eastwards. Turning right at the junction and staying on the waymarked Stockmounth route heading southwards takes you along the eastern edge of the wind farm. At NO 727854 the Stockmounth route meets the southern route as it turns off along a service road for gas pipelines and the underground cable. This service road and the southern route head eastwards towards Leechie Hill. Continuing southwards the road meets a junction where the southern route comes in from the west and, carrying on further downhill, the route exits the forest at a normally locked, but passable gate near Chapelton. Following the single track public road to the right leads past the exit from the Builg route and onwards to the main road.



Cryne Corse Road

This is the highest of the mounth routes and passes very close to the TV mast. The route starts at a sharp corner on the Slug Road near Spyhill Cottage at NO 762916.

Follow the road past Spyhill Cottage and you come to a junction with a small informal parking area. Going straight on at this junction brings you to Sheecho Burn and the Stockmount route mentioned previously. The Cryne Corse route goes left and up a steep tarmac road straight towards the TV mast. The road services the TV mast and is always kept open even in the worse of weather. At the top of the road you will go through a normally open barrier and then past a fenced off enclosure holding a SEPA environmental monitoring station. There are springs close to the road in this area known as Blackbeard's well named after a highway man who is supposed to have used the area for holding up travellers using the route. It would be a good place to collect drinking water. Just after the monitoring station you will see an old disused pair of gateposts on the left with a more modern gate just behind. There is one of the anchor points for one of the TV mast guy lines just before the gate. Go through the gate and continue past a disused quarry until you come to a set of power cables in a fire break with a Scotways marker post. Turn right and follow the power lines down the hill. Shortly you will come to an old fence which marks the boundary between the privately owned forest and Forestry & Land Scotland forest. A Scotways marker on a post shows you where to keep left and leave the power lines for a while. Carry on downhill and you will meet the power lines again. Follow them downhill, crossing a logging road and down to another logging road. A Scotways sign points you along the logging road towards the bridge over the Cowie traditionally used as a camping area on the trade route (I recommend camping closer to Stonehouse). This logging road is also used by the trade route to head past Stonehouse and Mergie.



Cross the bridge over the Cowie and continue uphill. After 200m you will come to a Scotways marker post. In the wooded area across from the post there is a good sheltered camping area in front of

some abandoned buildings (reputed to have once been an inn). There is no fresh water here so it would need to be brought up from the Cowie.



Figure 13 The camping area near the bridge is a bit rough but there are some flat grassy areas close to the river. The road can be seen climbing up towards the skyline, the alternative camping site is in the taller trees next to the road.



Figure 14 The alternative camping area in the trees, bring water 200m from the Cowie.

Continue climbing slowly up the logging road and you will come to a disused sand quarry. This again could be used for camping, but the only water is in a pond, not good for drinking but great for watching dragon flies. Water would need to be brought up from the Cowie.



Figure 15 Pond in the quarry, low water levels in the summer. Full of newts & dragon flies (and daft dogs). The area is also very popular with red squirrels.

After the quarry the road swings round to the left. At this bend a track coming in from the right is the Finglennie option on the Southern route. A bit further up the hill another Scotways marker post indicates a junction where the other option for the Southern route emerges. Carry on up the hill which eventually flattens out and continues to a T junction. The righthand option is towards the Quithel car park where the Cryne Corse route exits the forest. The Southern route turns left at this junction and continues along the edge of the forest. The road down from the car park passes a wind turbine and a small stable before reaching the main Stonehaven to Auchenblae road at a crossroads. Going straight on leads to Carmont and Drumlithie and then on to the coast at Catterline (good pub), Kineff or Inverbervie. Turning left, the road passes my gaff, it's the white cottage in a group of four (I'll be upset if you don't stop for a brew & a chat) and then on to Stonehaven. Halfway along the road to Stonehaven it is possible to turn right at Tewel Farm and take a backroad to Dunnottar Castle. Leaving the forest at Quithel is the last easy opportunity to get down to the public road before the end of the forest at Swanley. A track marked on the OS map descending via Elfhill isn't usable on the ground, being badly overgrown with impenetrable gorse.

Elsick Mounth Road

Unlike the other three drove routes, this one is on the north side of the Slug Road. I can't imagine the route being too useful to challengers, except if they are travelling from Durris to Stonehaven. Going south the route starts at a small parking area on the edge of Durris Forest. NO 807945 (See route description for crossing Durris Forest below). The route follows a direct line southward, crossing a pair of logging roads before emerging from the forest at NO 810921. The route then continues along farm tracks and a single track road, passing an old Roman camp and an interesting

standing stone with ogham writing on it, before reaching the Slug Road at NO 838892 near Crawton. A more detailed description is available at <http://www.heritagepaths.co.uk/pathdetails.php?path=122>

Other routes

Durris Forest west to east

Not a drove road but used by challengers to get through Durris Forest. It is possible to leave the main Fetteresso Forest and join the Slug Road near Spyhill Cottage (or if coming from Banchory and Crathes using the Slug Road) continue up the Slug Road to a junction with a distinctive newly built house at NO 774916. Turn northwards off the Slug Road and follow the minor road for about 200m.

A parking area and a gate mark the start of a route through the forest. This route is not waymarked but easy to navigate. Go through the gate and follow the logging road. At the first junction NO 783926 go straight on, turning right would lead you to the summit of Cairn Mon Earn. Soon after passing under some power lines turn right at a T junction. Follow this logging road to another junction at NO 804933. Turning left at this junction you can follow the logging road as far as the car park at NO 807945 which marks the start / end of the Elsieck mounth road mentioned above. The public road at this carpark can be used to travel onwards to the coast at Muchalls, Newtonhill and Portlethen.

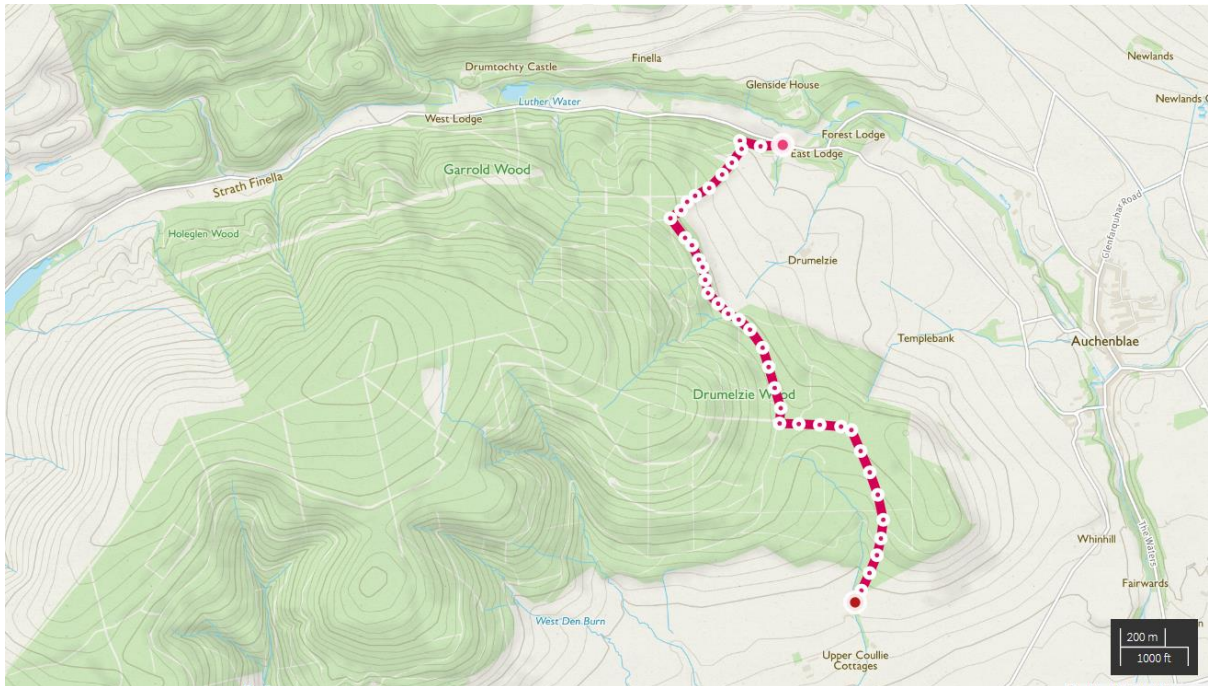
South Drumtochty

On the south side of Strath Finella is an outlying forested area known by Forestry & Land as South Drumtochty. This can be used to get to the coastal plane if heading towards Catterline, Inverbervie, Johnshaven etc. There are several routes up from the public road used by mountain bikers but the easiest to find is a parking area near a gate. Travelling eastwards along the road the parking area is ~400m after a very interesting church (St Palladius).



Go through the gate and follow the logging road uphill. At the first junction turn onto an abandoned logging road on the left which heads towards a pylon. Continue under the power lines and you will see a mountain bike trail climbing up through the trees. Follow this track and it will meet the logging

road again. Turn left at the logging road, ignoring a junction that heads uphill and continue on the flat with the open fields, normally full of farmed red deer, on your left. Follow the logging road, ignoring a track which kicks off to the left at the end of the fields, until you reach a junction at NO 712784 where you turn left and follow the road down to a gate with a parking area and access to the main road at NO 715776.

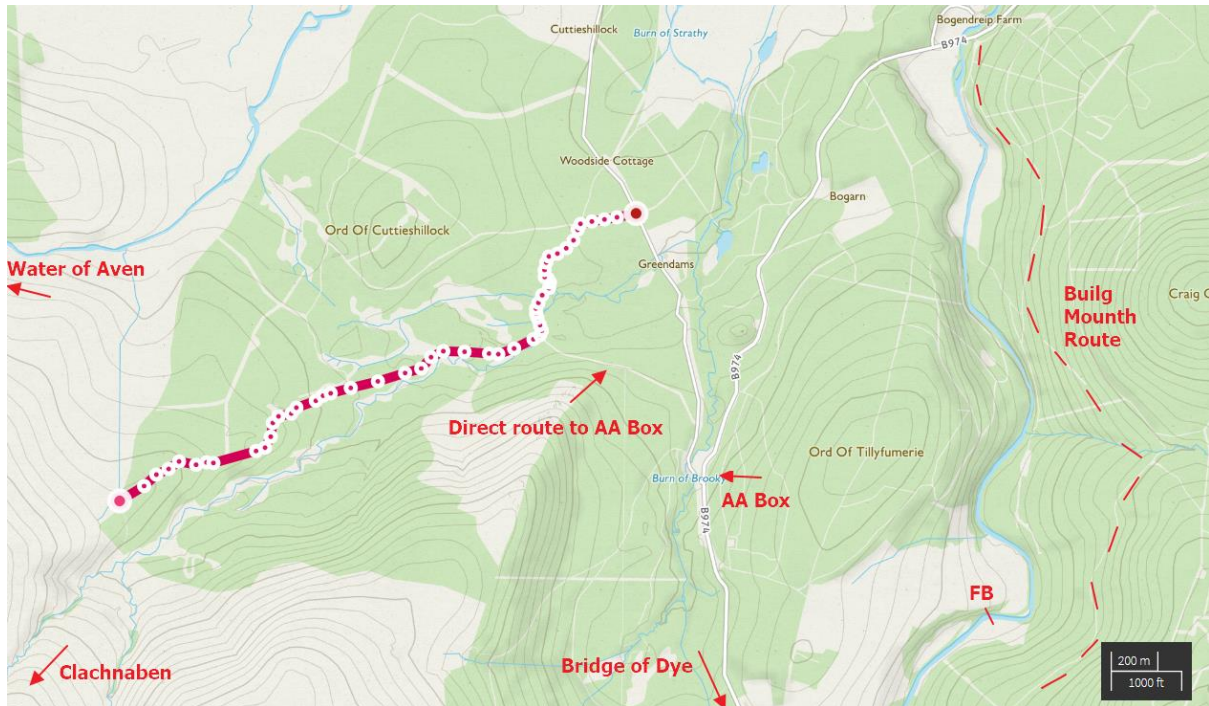


Do not be tempted to climb up towards the trig point, it is buried in dense conifer forest with no views.

It is unlikely to be on anyone's route but there is good camping in the clearing centred on NO808871. This was the location of an old, deserted croft called Burn of Day. The ruins were bulldozed and totally removed a few years ago but it remains a flat grassy area sheltered by the surrounding trees and with a reliable water supply.

Not strictly in the Fetteresso but forming an excellent approach route to it is one of my favourite areas, Trekkers coming down from Clachnaben or along the really attractive, but little visited Water of Aven can enter the forest at an unlocked deer gate at NO 625889. Follow the logging road downhill past a disused quarry until you reach a left-hand bend with a path going straight on at NO 635894. Follow the path and it opens up into a flat area which would provide good camping alongside the river. Carrying on a bit further the path comes to a footbridge. Ignore the footbridge and a waymarked path going left but carry on straight ahead following the stream. Along this route there used to be a perfect small camping area at a bend in the stream, but it was washed away in a storm when the burn changed course. Continue to follow the path alongside the burn, eventually it moves away from the stream and reaches a waymarker post. Turn right at the post and follow the path until it reaches the logging road at NO 646901 close to where it meets the old military road near Greendams. This road is the branch of the Cairn o'Mount road which heads off towards Finzean. Turning right along this road brings you to the other branch of the Co'M road which heads towards Strachen at a well-preserved AA box. It is possible to take a shortcut towards the AA box by crossing the footbridge mentioned earlier and following a less attractive but more direct path which emerges onto the Old Military Road closer to the junction. The Co'M road can then be used to head north towards Bridge of Bogendreip and the start of the Builg Mounth drovers road. It should be

possible to take a more direct route from the gateway near Greendams towards Bridge of Bogendreip using paths past Woodside Cottage and Pitdelphin Farm but I have never done it myself. Rather than heading to the start of the Builg Mounth route, to take a shortcut, turning south at the AA box leads to a farm road after 300m going to Tillyfumerie and a choice of two footbridges over the Dye that do exist³ Getting to them does involve crossing a high fence. Staying on the Co'M road southwards leads to Bridge of Dye and the trade route



Geocaching

There are a few geocaches hidden in the Fetteresso, some of which I have placed. Geocaching handle "Prawn Cracker". <https://www.geocaching.com/play>

From 2022 there has been a lot of work going on upgrading the existing power lines and substation at the eastern end of this forest, these works have not had any significant effects on using the forest but there are plans for SSEN to build a new line of monster pylons and an absolutely massive substation in the area, this project will also include other substations and infrastructure built by other operators. As of November 2024 the project has not received planning consent and hopefully that will remain the case.

³ Beware that 1:50k OS maps continue to show a footbridge to west of Heatheryhaugh at NO 655867. Anyone intending to use this bridge will be disappointed, it is a cable & basket arrangement, locked to prevent public use. Only one of the two bridges at Tillyfumerie is marked on the 1:50k OS map.