

## 3·4 Spittal of Glenshee to Kirkton of Glenisla

45 49

**Distance** 14.6 miles 23·5 km

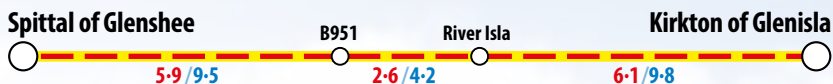
**Terrain** mainly on rough moorland path with boggy bits and stream crossings, then heading east along at the B951 for 2·5 miles, followed by 5 miles off-road on farm tracks and paths

**Grade** moderate gradients, with a steady ascent above Auchintaple Loch to 425 m, then gentle descent to Loch Shandra

**Side-trips** Diarmid's Tomb, Mount Blair

**Food and drink** Spittal, Kirkton

**Summary** a varied day that combines scenic rough walking in Glens Shee and Isla, linked by a short road section; see pages 68 to 69 for a wilderness alternative



- Turn left along the minor road to pass the 1·5-mile driveway to Dalmunzie Castle and estate. Then cross the Old Brig, built in 1748 as part of the military road from Edinburgh to Fort George: there's an information board on the far side of the bridge. The Kirk with its interesting graveyard is just beyond. Finally, pass Gulabin Lodge: its cafe, when open, is for non-residents as well.
- At the T-junction, cross the A93 with care and go left along the grassy verge for 80 m to the stile, which takes you over the fence of Old Spittal Farm.
- Cross the stream by timber footbridge, bear left through a gate and pass farm buildings as you head uphill. Just after a cattle grid, look for an isolated dead tree above you to the left. About 50 m later, look up to the left for a patch of grey rocks.
- To detour for Diarmid's Tomb, leave the Trail to walk steeply uphill towards the rocks. At the top, you will see a grassy mound with four standing stones. NB: the Tomb is at grid reference 116 702, i.e. 500 m west of the Tomb shown on OS Explorer OL52.



### Diarmid's Tomb

The Tomb is the legendary and atmospheric sixth century burial place of Diarmid, the great warrior nephew of King Fingal. His love of Fingal's queen Grainne recalls the Arthurian legend in which Lancelot's love of King Arthur's wife Guinevere brings about the fall of Camelot. In an echo of Wagner's Ring Cycle, the jealous fight was resolved in the hunt for a wild boar. Although Diarmid managed to kill the boar in a desperate battle, he was poisoned by its spines. Fingal refused him the antidote, and Diarmid is buried, according to legend, under this mound. Its four stones create the shape of a spearhead which points to where the boar died. Clan Campbell consider themselves to be descendants of Diarmid, and their badge is the head of a wild boar.

Diarmid's Tomb



- Return from the Tomb across the hillside to the undulating farm road. After passing through another gate, the road approaches the renovated farm buildings, but turns left uphill in front of them (mile 24·8).
- Follow the S-bend uphill to and through a deer fence by a metal gate, but immediately turn right offroad, down a faint path that descends to a timber footbridge (mile 25·2). It climbs again to a small gate and continues to a tall metal gate where you go right, downhill on a grassy road.
- Turn left to pass above a large stone ruin, and follow waymarkers carefully for the next mile, through some seriously boggy bits and across several streams. The Trail swings left as you approach Westerton of Runavey (mile 25·8).

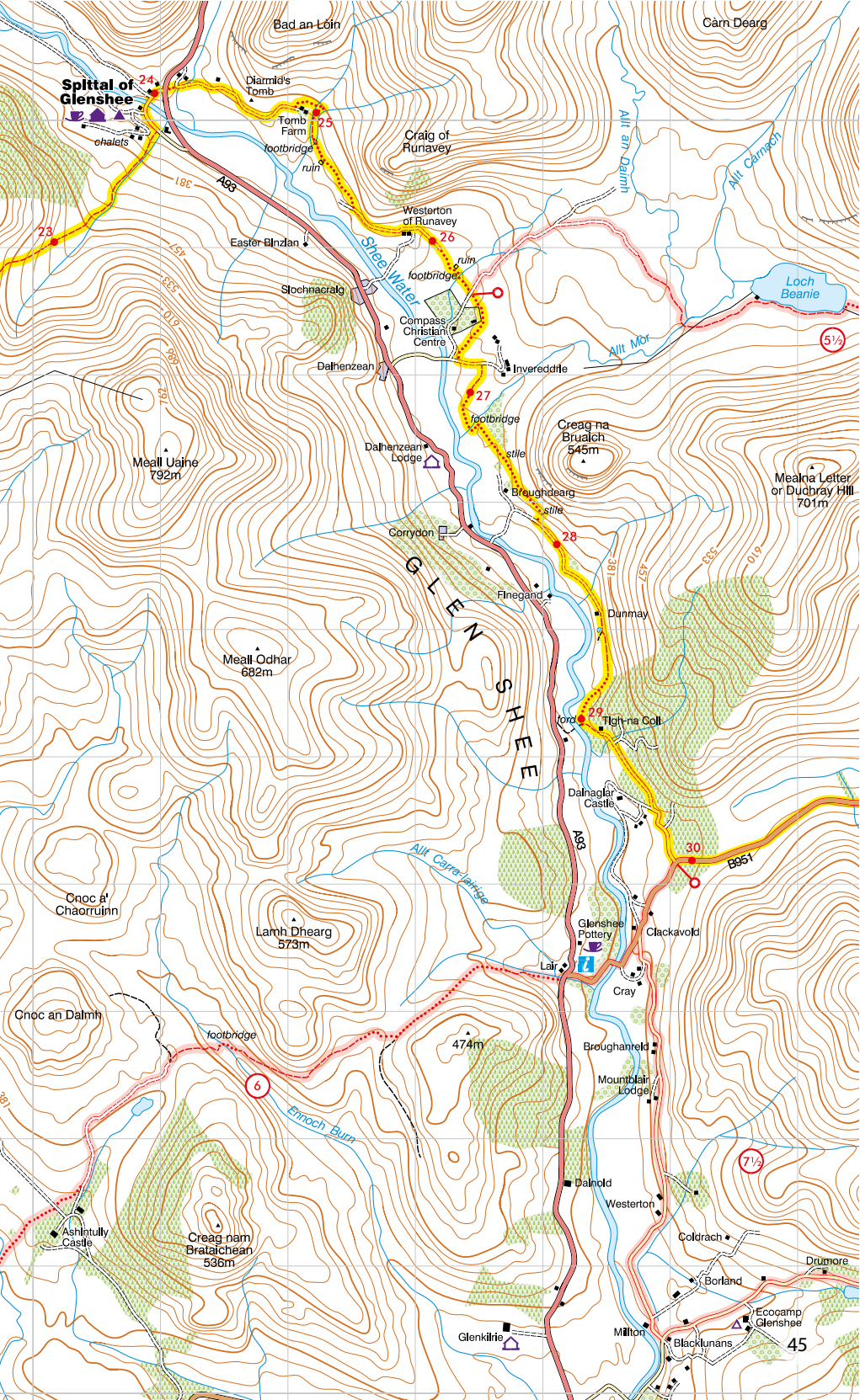


*Waymarker, Westerton of Runavey*

- Enter the farm by the stile uphill of its main gate and follow waymarkers through the farm, turning right into a channeled section between fields. Exit into another field and bend left around a ruined sheepfold.
- The Trail descends to cross a stream on a footbridge and goes through a boggy bit. Ahead to your right is a well-defined 4x4 track leading straight to an obvious gate, but don't be tempted by it: this is an unmarked entrance to the Compass Christian Centre. Instead, head steeply uphill across the 4x4 track to a waymarker (in 2015 lying on the ground).
- The junction between your faint path and the 4x4 track is the departure point for the off-road alternative via Glen Beanie. To take this option, turn left to follow the 4x4 track: see page 68.
- From the waymarker, aim for the top corner of the Centre's fence, and turn right along its top fence. Go around the perimeter of the Compass Christian Centre, descending over broken ground where waymarkers can be hard to spot. Aim for one to the left of the Centre and its trees, standing beneath the telegraph wires.
- Then aim for a stile where you turn left to reach the private road to Inverreddrie at a T-junction: turn left to continue the Trail. (To detour instead for Dalhenzean Lodge, turn right here, then left at the A93.)
- After 200 m of private road, turn right on a path. Above you and to the left, there is a stone memorial cross next to a tree. At mile 27·3, cross a river by timber footbridge.



*Footbridge north of Broughdearg*





- Climb the next stone wall by ladder stile to skirt around and above Broughdearg Farm over broken, bouldery ground with some boggy bits – a 1-km section that makes for slow going. There are two prominent communications masts above this section, one near the start, the other near the finish.
- It may be with relief that you finally climb an 8-step ladder stile and descend to easier going on a farm road for 1 km to Dunmay farm.
- Just after the farm buildings and duck pond, look left for a waymarked timber gate through the deer fence. Follow the path as it bears right to skirt the edge of a forest.
- At mile 29, the Trail turns left uphill through the forest: first make a tiny detour to the right for the splendid ford across the Water of Shee. This is a lovely spot to stop for a rest, to paddle in the river or to watch wildlife. The ford may still be passable by some vehicles; the remnants of stone pillars are survivors from a former bridge.
- Once inside the forest, head uphill, at first on a rough bouldery track that soon becomes the pleasant private road past the walled estate of Dalnaglar Castle. Mount Blair is prominent ahead.
- At mile 29.6 you reach a T-junction at the minor road, with fingerpost: turn left and follow the road uphill around a couple of bends to reach the B951.
- Here there's a choice. The main Trail heads east, on road for 2.5 miles (4 km), then offroad in a scenic loop around Auchintaple Loch, described below. In very poor conditions, or under extreme time pressure, you may prefer to head south on the road route through Cray and Blacklunans: see page 66.
- At mile 29.9, the minor road meets the B951 and the Trail turns left along it. Within about 400 m, shortly after the 'Welcome to Angus' road sign, you reach the ascent track for Mount Blair: see panel.



#### **Mount Blair**

*Follow the B951 easterly for 1 km as far as a gate on your right leading to the mobile telecom mast at the summit. Climb the gate and follow the rough access road which ascends steadily, sometimes steeply, at first south-easterly. After it veers right, cross a deer fence at the gate and continue to climb steeply. Your effort is soon rewarded by a panoramic view from the summit: on a clear day you can see up to 37 Munros, including Ben Nevis, 62 miles away. The low circular shelter features a superb engraved viewfinder showing mountain shapes, altitudes and distances off, commissioned by a local resident. From leaving the Trail, allow at least 2 hours for the round trip (2 km road walk plus 380 m altitude gain).*

*North from Mount Blair*





Forter Castle

- After 2 miles (3 km) on the B951, bear left on the minor road towards Little Forter, passing Forter Castle: see panel.
- After a further 0.4 mile, at the T-junction turn right and descend to cross River Isla by the Bridge of Forter, with its charming inset pillarbox. Follow the road for a further 100 m to a fingerpost pointing sharp left up a rough Glenisla farm road.
- Follow the track uphill, and at mile 33 bear left off the main track (which turns right direct to Auchintaple Loch) on a 4x4 track. About half a mile after this junction, after some great views north over Glen Isla with the mountains of Glen Shee distant, you reach a high point of 425 m (1400 ft). Here the route turns right, keeping to the 4x4 vehicle track for about 500 m, with views over the loch on the right.



#### Forter Castle

Built in 1560 by the Ogilvy family, this castle was destroyed (along with the Ogilvys' other home at Airlie Castle, near Alyth) in a violent raid by the Campbells in 1640. This act of revenge followed the death in a fight of four Campbells, and was instructed by the Duke of Argyll. The castle stood in ruins for the next 350 years, but its fortune changed in 1988 when it was bought and sensitively restored using traditional materials. It now offers self-catering accommodation (at a price), with a small chapel for weddings and christenings.

[www.scottishcastles.co.uk/forter/](http://www.scottishcastles.co.uk/forter/)

Mountains of Glen Shee, from the ascent



- At mile 33.9 there's a junction where the Trail turns right (south) and descends to a plantation through another gate/stile. You join a forest road that meanders downhill to emerge through open gates.
- Pass through a gate/stile to enter open woodland with Scots pine and scattered juniper and birch. After the next gate/stile, the Trail bears left uphill on a stony road.
- Look ahead to the right for your first glimpse of Loch Shandra between the trees. Just before reaching a fence, the Trail turns right on a grassy track towards this loch, descending through heather for 300 m to pass through a gate/stile.
- Continue to follow the rough heather track for 1.5 km, finally descending to a stone wall. Pass through the heavy metal gate, then walk alongside Loch Shandra (from mile 36.4). There's a further 2 miles (3 km) before you reach Kirkton of Glenisla.
- At mile 36.9, the Trail bears right uphill on a good farm track for half a mile, passing some small plantations. Follow this track through gates as it bears left, makes a dogleg and descends through a larger plantation.
- At mile 38, as you approach East Mill Farm, turn sharp right down a rough road. There's a beehive-shaped war memorial up to the right, among larch trees. (To reach West Freuchies B&B, instead turn left, then left again.)
- Very soon you meet the B951 road: turn right, and walk for about 500 m to reach the village, which is centred on the Glenisla Hotel.

*Auchintaple Loch*





