



The Route - Glen Clova to Davey's Bourach (Craig Lunkard)

Start - Car park at visitor centre at Acharn, Glen Clova, grid NO283762

Destination – Davey's Bourach (Shelter), grid NO234778. Return to Acharn.

Distance – 12km / 7.5 miles **Time** – 3 - 4.5 hours of walking

Difficulty –The path has been improved and is suitable for reasonably fit walkers. There's a fairly steep ascent from the end of the glen up to the shelter.

OS Landranger Maps 43 and 44

Route description

Start from the car park at the head of Glen Clova where there is a ranger information centre and public toilets. Follow the signs for Forest Walks, along the road past Acharn Farm and keep straight on, following the signs to Corrie Fee for 1 mile/ 1.6 km. Turn up the track to the right signed to Jock's Road. Follow this up Glen Doll until you leave the shelter of the forest (1.5 miles/2.4 km) and continue up the glen with the slopes of Craig Damff on your right (approximately 1.5km). Steps have been added to make the steep climb at the end of the glen up to below Craig Lunkard a bit easier. Here you'll find the shelter built by Davie Glen and known as 'Davie's Bourach'.

The historic route continues along Jock's Road for another 9 miles, through Glen Callater to Auchallater near Braemar, but our walk turns back here. Retrace your steps down the glen until you reach the edge of the forest. Cross the footbridge (opened 2005) over the White Water and follow the path through woodland along the south bank of the river. After about 1.3 miles/2km you'll reach a junction where the path to Corrie Fee heads off to the right. Keep straight on for another mile to reach a junction where you turn left and cross a bridge over the river to Acharn Farm. Turn right down the road to return to the car park.

The full route (21km/13 miles) from Glen Doll to Auchallter, "the Tolmouth", crosses an exposed, featureless plateau and should only be tackled by experienced and well-equipped walkers. It is described in *Scottish Hill Tracks*, published by ScotWays.

Access Battles - The Glen Doll Right of Way Case – 1883 - 1888

Glen Doll was a key access 'battle' between representatives of the Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society and a landowner and is therefore very significant in the history of public outdoor access in Scotland. We know that the first confrontation of the day took place at a wooden bridge over the River South Esk on the route leading to Glen Doll. This is probably at the location of the present day bridge leading to the car park. The landowner's gamekeeper then accompanied, observed and occasionally obstructed the signing party all the way up the glen.

The route connecting Glen Clova with Braemar is one of the more attractive of the Mounth tracks across the Cairngorms. An old drove road, it was once an important link from Deeside into Glen Clova. The southern end is known as Jock's Road – reputedly after a drover called John (Jock) Winter who was involved in the fight led by the Scottish Rights of Way Society to keep the route open. However, the name Jock's Road pre-dates the 'battle' and there is some doubt as to Jock's identity, so he may be someone's invention!

The following account of the 'battle' was written by Walter Arthur Smith, an Edinburgh actuary, and Chairman of the Scottish Rights of Way and Recreation Society (as it was known then). In July 1885, a deputation of Directors from the Society set off to erect guideposts on hill tracks across the Cairngorms. They had spent a night at the inn at Clova.

Here's Walter's eye-witness account:

"The beautiful green hills of Glen Clova, which were covered with mist in the early morning, are becoming clear; and Mr Mackenzie, the excellent host of the 'Ogilvie Arms,' reports the day is to be fine. So, by 7.30 a.m., a cart is sent on to Acharn, at the foot of Glen Doll with two sappers and miners in charge of the guide-post. As the deputation followed three miles up the valley, which soon becomes very grand, they recalled the circumstances which brought them here.

The estate of Glen Doll, which extends from below the junction of the South Esk and the White Water, along both sides of the latter stream for nearly its whole course, formerly belonged to the Earl of Southesk, who built a handsome shooting lodge (Glendoll Lodge) overlooking the two rivers above their confluence. His lordship sold the estate a good many years ago to Mr Gurney, the Norwich banker, and from him it was purchased two years ago by Mr Duncan Macpherson, a gentleman originally from Inverness-shire, who is said to have

made his fortune as a sheep farmer in Australia. Mr Macpherson, however, keeps no sheep in the valley of Glen Doll. It is given up entirely to deer, and its present owner seems to attach undue importance to the occasional transit of a pedestrian. It is said that deer soon cease to notice harmless passers-by when accustomed to them, just as the grouse upon the solitary Highland moors have become familiar with the snort of the steam engine, and scarcely rise as the train passes. Be that as it may, the Society is credibly informed that, until Mr Macpherson's time, sheep drovers and wayfaring people, travelling to and from Braemar and Forfarshire, were allowed an undisturbed passage through Glen Doll and Glen Callater, which form the direct route, Braemar being only nineteen miles distant from Clova. ...

The arrival of the guidepost created considerable curiosity in the district, and there was a unanimous testimony to the uninterrupted existence of Jock's Road until Mr Macpherson's time, and much sympathy was expressed with the objects of the deputation. Accordingly, when the wooden bridge across the Esk leading to Glen Doll was reached, quite a considerable party was found assembled around the cart. Mr Macpherson, whom the deputation had seen the day before at the little Church of Clova, and to whom they had sent due intimation as to their purpose, and on whom it had been their intention to call, had unfortunately left early in the morning for Aberdeen, but his nephew and his gamekeeper were in attendance. There was already a guide-post at the place, with two tickets (signs), one to the left bearing '*Private Entrance to Glen Doll*,' and the other to the right bearing '*Road to Braemar*', (via Bachnagairn, a more circuitous route). But the Society's guidepost, '*Public Path to Braemar*,' with its arrow pointing *up Glen Doll*, was duly erected, to the great satisfaction of the assembled crowd.

In the company of young Mr Macpherson and the gamekeeper, the deputation now crossed the bridge and continued to walk up Glen Doll. Both were courteous, and the gamekeeper pleaded the Laird's case as skilfully as any advocate could have done. He pointed out that, wherever the old road had gone, it was not up his master's avenue. When the wish was expressed to avoid any intrusion and take the old path, he said it was not his business to point it out. In point of fact, the old drove road kept up the bank of the Esk and along the boundary wall, but Mr Macpherson has planted over this part of the old road, and so effectually closed it, and therefore only one possible passage is left at present, which passes round the back of the lodge. The gamekeeper, however, did his duty here.

He ran to the front and called a halt, and when he objected to the deputation proceeding further, he was referred to the Society, whose prospectus had previously been handed to the nephew. At this stage, one of the party protested against the interruption of the Right of Way, and took instruments in the hands of a notary public there present. This ceremony was too much for the gamekeeper, and the party proceeded by the bridle path which extends 4.5 miles up Glen Doll.

A short distance from the lodge there is a deer fence with an iron gate across the path, which was padlocked. The gamekeeper was asked to open it, but as he had brought the wrong key, the deputation had to squeeze their protesting persons through the wires of the deer fence. Towards the summit of the Glen the path is very steep and rugged, but the gamekeeper still accompanied the party, explaining that he did so '*to see what track they would take*.' In point of fact, the path is, very obvious, being on the north side of the stream all the way till you reach the watershed, when, passing between the Tolmount (3145 feet) on the left and the Knaps of Fafernie (3059 feet) on the right, you soon come in view of the

Loch and Glen of Callater, surmounted beyond by the splendid Cairngorm range - a mass of blue relieved only by patches of snow. As the gamekeeper left, a splendid eagle flew down the valley, on the ridges of which deer had been seen through his telescope. The worthy gamekeeper was loyal to his master to the last, and left with the respect of the whole deputation.”

What happened next is based on research carried out for ScotWays in the 1980s by Professor A. E. Anton.

The systematic obstruction continued and shortly afterwards, the Society and various local people raised an action in the court of Session against Duncan Macpherson and Colonel Farquharson of Invercauld, the owner of the Callater side of the Tolmount, to have it declared that there was a public road or right of way on foot and on horseback and for driving cattle and sheep from Auchallater through the Glen of Doll to Braedownie in Glen Clova. To his credit, Colonel Farquharson decided not to contest the action.

Macpherson, on the other hand, fought the action tooth, nail and claw, using every procedural device in the law books in an attempt to have the action dismissed. Eventually, the Court directed that the proof should proceed before Lord Kinneir without a jury.

The Society called 57 witnesses which must have sorely tried the patience of the eminent judge, but he gave judgment in favour of the Society. He held that the earlier use of the route was not due merely to the tolerance of previous proprietors and that, while the evidence of use – particularly during the winter months – was slender, it was what might be expected on a right of way, given the nature of the country and its sparse population. The Glen Doll route was shorter than the route via Bachnagairn and was the natural and direct route from Braemar and further north to the fairs in the south.

Lord Kinneir’s judgment was upheld by the Court of Session on appeal on 6 July 1887. Macpherson appealed to the House of Lords and the appeal was rejected in May 1888.

The Society was awarded judicial expenses against Macpherson and the proceedings must have cost him some £5,000, but the Society had to pay its own extra-judicial expenses, i.e., those not allowed by the Court, and it is understood that these amounted to some £650, a huge sum in those days. But thanks to the courage of the Society, walkers of present and future generations may freely use one of the more interesting and exhilarating of Scottish hill tracks.

More route and historical information about Jock’s Road can be found on ScotWays’ Heritage Paths website www.heritagepaths.co.uk including:

“It is said that in 1746 some 700 Highlanders took Jock’s Road on their way to fight at Culloden. ... In the aftermath of the battle, refugees fled to the hills around Jock’s Road, particularly the glens of Clova and Esk. Cattle thieves and whisky smugglers also reportedly used Jock’s Road in times of restlessness. Other travellers were said to include folk heading to the Braemar Gathering, a tailor, botanists and tourists.”

“On New Year’s Day 1959, five experienced hillwalkers were caught in a horrendous storm on this old route and all lost their lives. Davy’s Bourach, the well-known landmark on Jock’s Road in Glen Doll, was built by Davie Glen in their memory in 1966. It is maintained by Forfar & District Hill Walking Club and underwent a major repair in 2019.”