

Walks Tulchan

1: Lettoch to Carn an Fhradhairc

On the B9102 just past Easter Lettoch, a hill track on Tulchan estate skirts the eastern flank of Carn na Doire to Glenmore Loch. The loch stocked with brown trout, is a man-made reservoir, now with added fishing facilities for the estate guests. Before reaching the loch, the track branches to the right, heading north-east and steadily climbs anti clockwise to Bad an Each (clump of the horse 469m, 1538 ft). The view over the River Spey starts to open up and just a little further the top of the aptly named Carn an Fhradhairc (hill of the good view 503m, 1650 ft) is reached. The track can be followed a little further towards the trig point on the slightly higher Carn na Loine (hill of the marsh 549m, 1801ft) and then drop down towards the marshy area, where the Allt Luchair (burn of rushes) rises. Beyond this, the return track can be joined north of Tom Mor, with the transmitter pylon on the summit. Follow the track just below the summit ridge, overlooking Glenmore Loch and the rocky southern, scree slope of Carn Fhradhairc back to the junction and route down to the main road.

2: Tulchan Circuit

Just beyond the wooden bridge over the Tulchan Burn and the cottages at Straan, there's an entrance to Tulchan on the left hand side. A circular walk returning to the same location can be made in either direction. Going through the right handside gate, the track rises through Straan Wood and the Hill of Dalchroy, overlooking Tulchan Lodge and the River Spey below.

Tulchan Lodge was originally called Dalchroy and built in 1789 as a residence for hunting and shooting. It proved popular with the proprietor, the 7th Earl of Seafield and Sir Phillip Sassoon. The latter, financial advisor to Edward VII frequently visited with the king, especially for the grouse season. The first lodge was destroyed by fire, and the current structure was built by George McCorquodale in 1906. Renamed Tulchan Lodge in 1938, it was sold after the death of the Countess of Seafield in 1969. The current owner is Russian billionaire, Yuri Shefler.

Soon onto the open hill above Glen Tulchan, the track continues to climb towards the summit of Geal Charn (white hill 456m, 1496ft) and its grassy western flank, standing out among the heather clad hills. Before the summit, a branch of the track leads right and after a short walk reveals Loch Mhadadh (loch of the wolf). Not so much a loch, rather a green patch where a burn of the same name rises.

Having reached the summit of Geal Charn, the track stretches out along the broad ridge running parallel to the Tulchan Burn below, and to the highest point on the walk, Carn na-Eige (hill of the notch 513m, 1683 ft). The track now descends towards the glen where a number of streams join to form the infant Tulchan

Burn. Beyond the confluence rises Larig Hill and an old route that descended to the Allt Dearg and Ourack Burn, where it meets with the Via Regia onwards into the lowlands of Moray.

Crossing the Tulchan Burn by a ford, a shooting hut, ruins and grassy knolls are all that remain of the former shieling of Ruighe Uain (lamb shieling). The track now heads downstream through pockets of pine wood and crossing the numerous burns coming off the hill. Here and there are further piles of stones, hidden among the heather, remains of former shielings: Corbuie, Shihan Bea, Cuchan na Heulre, Linaveach and Balnruich. On the right side of the track appears a large standing stone, standing guard with another round one perched on top. Surely of some significance, they appear of great antiquity, perhaps marking a boundary or a display of strength? No name could be found for the structure and on further enquiring alas, it appears to have been erected about forty years ago.

The people who lived and worked in the glen were not alone. Glen Tulchan has the highest number of place names associated with fairies in the whole parish. Partly as a result of the last ice age, deposits of debris formed moraines on the glen floor. Not hard to spot, looking like inverted Christmas puddings or shian (fairy hillocks), were the perfect residence for the little people: Shian Bea (fairy hill of the birch tree), Shihan-n-Luie (fairy hill of the calf) and Sithean Sron na Saobhaidhe (fairy hill of the fox's nose, promontory).

The track now begins to diverge from the burn to Culdarochmore with its rusty corrugated iron roof, nestling below its own Shihan of Culdorachmore, (fairy hill of the large dark back). Continue past the fields, avoiding Knocktulchan, ford the Tulchan Burn for the final time and shortly return to the start.