



AUGUST 2020

HEATHERY HEIGHTS MONTHLY

Articles, walks and news



NEXT ISSUE

In search of sunsets

WALK THIS WAY

Loch Coille Bharr and the Faery Isles: Tranquil lochs and magical isles.

This delightful walk – and the accompanying extensions for those who wish to walk further – encompasses calm tranquillity, intriguing history and a wonderful array of plants and wildlife. The area is famed for its beavers, first released here in 2009, whose amazing dam work and evidence of activity can be clearly seen; watch out for these elusive creatures as the light fades. Additionally the area's woodlands and incredible geology – its knobbly ridges and flooded dales that create the fresh and salt water lochs – are rich with life, its folded and scoured rocks a reminder of the fierce forces that created the landscape we see today. It is as beautiful in winter light as it is on a balmy summer's day.

Historical points of interest include the old settlement, cross and well at Kilmory Oib and the ruins of Coille Bharr (Kilmory) Mill. The latter is thought to date back to at least the late 15th Century. Purportedly Lady Catherine Campbell, the 2nd Earl of Argyll's daughter, took a night's shelter there whilst escaping to Inveraray. The well-known tale tells of her rescue by fishermen from 'Lady's Rock' off the south tip of Lismore, where her then husband Lachlan 'Cattanach' Maclean of Duart had sought to drown her. But revenge was meted out and Lachlan himself was later murdered.



Safety in the Outdoors

Please continue to adhere to current guidelines as set out by the government, exercise responsibly and use appropriate clothing and equipment for your chosen outdoor activity. Consider informing a contact about your route/whereabouts and don't forget your phone, snacks, drink, any medication/first aid supplies you may need and to check weather conditions. Please keep your dog under close control, especially around livestock and wildlife, and be aware some open areas of moorland may have snares in use. Please follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

www.heatheryheights.co.uk

The walk

To make the most of the walk it is worth visiting the Faery Isles section when the tide is out and the fresh water lochs later in the day if you wish to have the chance of spotting a beaver. The walk directions go anticlockwise to optimise this but can be undertaken either way. A visit to the Argyll Beaver Centre will provide you with further useful information.

1. Turn south along the track from the forestry car park (NR783906) on the west side of Loch Coille-Bharr. After a short distance you will come to the ruined township of Kilmory Oib to your right, worthy of exploration. Note the cross and well at its centre, often a mass of watercress*.

2. Continue on the track south for ½ km until you reach the ruined Coille Bharr Mill, note the fine arch and different ages of masonry. A tiny detour on a path to the left of the mill takes you to stunning views over the Loch and to where your exploits will take you later in the day. And what a mill pond! Returning to the track head south for 150m, passing fine waterfalls on your right.

3. At the Y-junction keep right, signposted the Faery Isles. You will be returning to go back up the other fork later. Continue down the track for 600m until you reach the next Y-junction. Here you have a choice.

*(best not eaten raw due to liver fluke)

4. i) To extend the 9km walk and explore the west side of the Faery Isles and gain views to the southern end of Loch Sween the right hand fork (signposted Faery Isles) will give you an out and back walk of 6.5km (keeping LEFT all the way towards Rubha na Stuire). The extension is also very useful if you are waiting for the tide to go out before exploring the next section.

ii) To continue the 9km walk keep left following the track to its end. To your right you will see a tiny shore side path, which veers through the undergrowth to the most north-easterly of the Faery Isles. The views are stunning. You can walk out to the end of a stone jetty or cross to explore this beautiful isle if the tide is fully out. Take care to keep to the stonier sections and avoid the mud.

5. Return back to the Y-junction at the start of '3' and immediately turn right. The track will veer left to the southern end of Loch Coille-Bharr and a fine view point. The path now keeps left and rises over a small ridge before heading closely up the eastern shores of the Loch. Clear signs of the beavers can be seen where they have chewed through trees, dragged them down the loch's banks and built dams. Those first created at Dubh Loch can be seen to your right from the wooden platform on Loch Coille-Bharr. The old forestry road is now flooded by their dam and the drowned trees still stand, eerily proud. The habitat created is rich in wildlife.



Beavers are best seen at dusk

6. Continue north from Dubh Loch onto the Achnamara road until you reach the Barnluasgan car park. Here you have a further choice.

7. i) If you wish to add on the short 1.5km circuit of Loch Barnluasgan or the 2.5km circuit that includes pretty woods the route is well marked out from the north end of the car park with the steeper woodland walk incorporated into the circuit on the loch's eastern side. The beaver centre is just north of Loch Barnluasgan and is also well worth a visit (if you do this it is worth doing this part of the walk first).

ii) To continue the main circuit it is merely a case of crossing the road to the small gate opposite the car park. It is then a 10-15 minute walk along the path back to the start.

The described route and accompanying information are there to be used as a guide and do not replace the use of map and compass and the skills required to use them. Whilst every effort is made to ensure the route is accurate at the time of going to print please be aware that track and path closures can happen at any time. All walks are undertaken at your own risk.

Walk Information

Route: Loch Coille-Bharr, Dubh Loch and the Faery Isles

Distance: 9 to 18km (see extensions below)

Ascent: 185 to 440m

Time: 3-6 hours walking; allow 2+ hours for exploration and stops

Terrain: tracks, short road section and paths; some steep & uneven sections

Map/s: OS Landranger 55 (1:50 000)
OS Explorer 358 (1:25 000)

Start/Finish: Forestry car park

Grid Reference: NR 783906

(or NR 790909)

Parking: Loch á Coille Bharra (or Barnluasgan; the route passes both)

Public Transport: limited bus service (425/426)

Toilets: No (unless visiting the Beaver Centre)

Argyll Beaver Centre - seasonal

