



MARCH 2021

HEATHERY HEIGHTS MONTHLY

Articles, walks and news



NEXT ISSUE

The Magic of Foraging

CASTLE DOUNIE, CREAG MHOR & CNOC REAMHAR

The convoluted ridge walks are rugged and wild...

Geology, glaciation, weathering and man have created much of the Knapdale landscape we see today. Sedimentary rocks were laid down under shallow seas over millions of years before being ruptured by magma intrusions some 60 million years ago. Vast masses of slow moving ice scoured the land in the ice ages that followed. When the ice receded man came and tamed the landscape, cutting back ancient forests, building forts, growing crops and bringing in livestock. In more recent times plantations of conifers have swallowed up gnarly knolls and ridges. The three walks given here touch a little on all these aspects.



View north from Cnoc Reamhar



Trig point views



Long shadows

From the shorter walk using tracks and paths to gain the lovely viewpoint of Castle Dounie, one can add in more challenging sections, where the terrain is tough underfoot and good route finding skills are required. All three start at Crinan harbour before climbing up through oak and birch woods to gain open vistas with long reaching views to Jura, Scarba and Mull.

The walks

1. At the car park a signboard shows a sign for a viewpoint. This will take you up to the knoll atop which the remains of Castle Dounie, a prehistoric dun, commands spectacular views over the Sound towards the Gulf of Corryvreckan, the world's third largest whirlpool. There it is said the Cailleach Bheur, a giant witch, once washed her plaid. Enjoy the vista before returning down to the junction and turn left. The path now meanders down to the forestry road. Turn right and head north round the coast above Adnoe Point and back to your path down to Crinan Harbour.
2. On reaching the road turn right, after 300m you will reach a bench and the first junction to your left. Here you have a choice; you will either be coming back from the track ahead or the track to your left. All the routes can be undertaken in either direction. I suggest for the longer routes you go straight on and for the Crinan Trail you go left.
3. For the Crinan Trail follow the waymark posts and arrows. After 1.5km the route turns right onto a path and winds up and down with glimpses of views to come. Turn left at
4. For the longer walks go straight ahead at the bench (towards Carsaig). Follow the track for nearly 2km, which leads you round a couple of hairpin bends and above Adnoe Point, before turning south. Keep your eyes open for the waymark posts and turn left onto a path. Head uphill for 500m. At the viewpoint sign turn right up to Castle Dounie and enjoy! To your south is the ridge that leads to Creag Mhor.
5. Immediately after dropping from Castle Dounie you will see a broken down wall on your right.

Safety in the Outdoors

Please 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, bylaws and laws that protect areas including National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and Sites of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

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Soft light in the woods between Cnoc Reamhar and Creag Mhor

Steep sides sweep down to the Sound of Jura where tides race and swirl. If you are lucky you may see pods of dolphins or even whales...

5. (cont.) Follow this for a short distance until you can start to work your way up onto the ridge to your right, by a couple of birch trees with conifers on the skyline above. The ridge walk is convoluted, airy, rough and summits numerous lumps and bumps with fantastic views. Keep to the crest or east side as the drop offs to the west are impressive but not to be dallied with. The highest rocky bump of Creag Mhor is parallel to the north end of the rocks offshore.

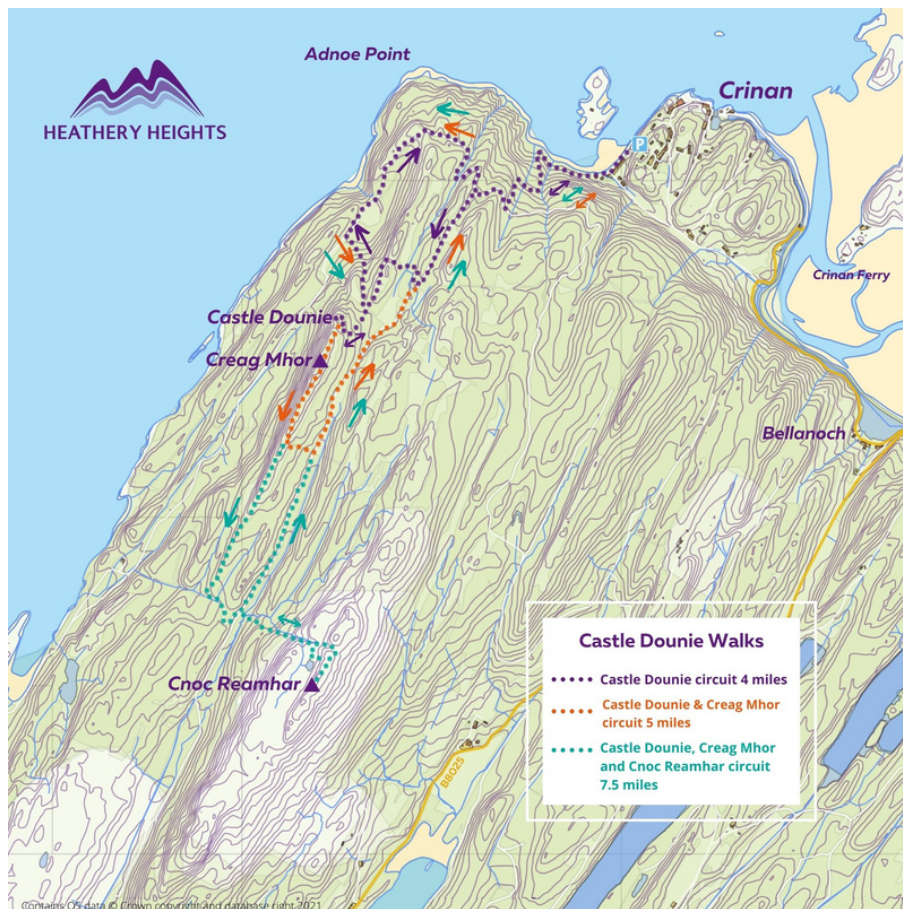
6. After 15 minutes of knobbly and exposed ridge walking - if you do not fancy tackling navigation along walls in woods - this is now the time to keep an eye out for an obvious wide firebreak (gap) in the trees, below to your left. This leads you at a 90° angle straight to a forestry track in the valley below. To check you have the right point look across from the firebreak and you should see a wall continue the line on the other side. Head down the firebreak to the track and turn left. This will take you back to the junction by the bench where you can turn right on the forest road then left to return down the path to Crinan harbour.

7. If you wish to adventure on* and are confident with your route finding then continue south on the ridge - crossing over an old wall not on the map - to where it suddenly drops to a tiny col with forest directly ahead. Ahead is a steep little rise with walls on it. One drops to the right but it is the one going southwest into the forest you need to follow, for the next 500m. Keeping the wall directly on your right, circumnavigating the odd boulder and ducking the odd branch, you will see that the deer have created quite a path and that the way is often clear. Eventually it drops you very steeply down to a stream with another wall directly ahead. Turn left, southeast, up the stream with the wall on your right - it is boggy - until you reach a quaint waterfall on your left. A small break in the wall to your right allows you to escape the trees that have fallen across the wall higher up. Continue with it on your left across a tree harvested area and up the bump ahead. You will pop out onto a track end.

8. Follow this short track down to the forest road below. Turn right and almost immediately turn left onto a grassy track that crosses a stream and heads east up into the forest. After 200m you will come to a sharp left-hand bend. Directly in front of you a wall goes steeply up into the trees. This is your route up to Bealach na Moine. It leads up slippery, mossy rock for 100m, over a barbed wired fence (sit mats are good for protection), up a very rough and eroded track for nearly 150m, past a spring hidden with fallen trees, then over more pleasant grass and moss to the col. This last section makes you realise why it is worth the effort as views open up east and west. Turn right over a couple of steep little hillocks on the ridge. Suddenly ahead you will see your goal, the trig point and the summit of Cnoc Reamhar, also known as Gallachaille Hill and a Marilyn to boot. It really is a fantastic view.

*You can also drop down the firebreak and turn right on the track to join the route up to Cnoc Reamhar, if continuing along the ridge does not appeal.

9. To return either descend the way you came or drop down from one of the breaks in the ridge to the north end of the small lochan on the west side of the summit, and follow the faint Landover track north to the spring. Re-join your ascent route, taking care on the way down. Turn right (north) at the forest road; it is now an easy 3km back to the junction with the bench. Turn right then left after 200m, following the path back to Crinan harbour.



Walk Information

Route: Castle Dounie circular from Crinan Harbour. Additional options for Creag Mhor and Cnoc Reamhar.

Distance: 6.5km (4 miles)/ 8km (5 miles)/ 12km (7.5 miles)

Ascent: 280 – 670m

Time: 2.5 – 5hrs (allow extra time to savour the views)

Terrain: paths, tracks and road on the short circuit with some uneven, steep and muddy sections. The longer options include rough, steep, exposed and pathless terrain requiring good navigation skills, best undertaken when the bracken has died down.

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

OS Explorer 358 (1:25 000)

Start/Finish/Parking: Crinan Harbour (or Crinan Basin, less than 1km away)

Grid reference: NR783941

Public Transport: Bus route 425, 426 (Crinan Basin & Cottages)

Toilets: Nearest toilets are at Crinan Basin

OS Map links

[Castle Dounie Route](#)

[Castle Dounie & Creag Mhor](#)

[Castle Dounie, Creag Mhor & Cnoc Reamhar](#)

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.