



APRIL 2023

# HEATHERY HEIGHTS MONTHLY

*Articles, walks and news*



**NEXT ISSUE**

*Beinn Ghlas*

## **CRUACH TAIRBEIRT AND HIDDEN HERITAGE**

*Norse attack and Torpedos...*

Visiting Loch Lomond and taking a boat trip from Tarbet or driving over to Arrochar and Succoth to climb the heady heights of The Cobbler (Ben Arthur), Beinn Narnain or Beinn Ime may be familiar to many, as are the journeys that take you north to Crianlarich, west to Inveraray or up Loch Lomond's eastern shores to climb Conic Hill or Ben Lomond. Yet hidden just at the back of Tarbet another wee hill, Cruach Tairbeirt, stands in a position which affords some of the best views of most of these hills plus many of the northern Arrochar Alps to boot. An Argyll Marilyn at 415m, its moorland top allows for an impressive 360 panorama. Cruach Tairbeirt means conical hill of the isthmus, reflecting the narrow stretch of land between Loch Lomond and Loch Long.



View west along the Hidden Heritage Trail and Three Lochs Way



Arrochar Parish Church

You can also gain some cracking views both over Loch Long and across to Ben Lomond by taking in the waymarked Hidden Heritage Trail ([hiddenheritage.org.uk](http://hiddenheritage.org.uk)), which offers you the opportunity for a longer walk with woodlands and open vistas, maybe with a stop off for refreshments either in Tarbet or Arrochar en route. The walks are easily split or added together and can be undertaken from east, west or the railway station. For ease we have given directions from Tarbet Pier car park to include both the Hidden Heritage Trail (which mainly uses the Three Lochs Way) and Cruach Tairbeirt.

Of note is that Tarbet is where Norse forces heaved many of their ships over the narrow isthmus from Arrochar during the 1263 Battle with Alexander III of Scotland's forces, to enable attack via inland waters. The Norse King Magnus Barefoot had originally been granted the Western Isles and Kintyre in 1098, following an agreement that he could control what he could sail round – or, it turned out, drag boats over/round (he gained Kintyre by hauling boats from West Loch Tarbert to East Loch Tarbert, another narrow isthmus). By the 13th Century Alexander III had hopes that he could buy the lands back, but it seemed that Haakon IV, the Norse King of the time, was not happy with this and proceeded to battle instead, possibly exacerbated by Scottish attacks in the north. Eventually Haakon was defeated, dying in Orkney, and the Treaty of Perth in 1266 saw the Western Isles and Kintyre returned to Scotland (Historic Environment Scotland & Scotclans).

## Safety in the Outdoors

*Please exercise responsibly and use appropriate clothing and equipment for your chosen outdoor activity. Inform a contact about your route/whereabouts and don't forget your phone, snacks, drink, medication and first aid supplies. Check the forecast and mountain 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).*

[www.heatheryheights.co.uk](http://www.heatheryheights.co.uk)

## The walk

1. Leaving Tarbet Pier car park cross over to the Tarbet Hotel. Continue round the hotel up to the main road junction and turn right towards Arrochar. The road turns sharply left, from here continue along the pavement for nearly 300m, until you reach the first turning on the left across the road. This is clearly signposted for the Three Lochs Way as well as the Hidden Heritage Trail.
2. Take care crossing, pass through the gate and follow the easy wide track slightly up hill before bearing right. There are good views over to Ben Lomond. The track now keeps fairly level for the next couple of kilometres with lovely views to the hills either side and beyond to the

- Arrochar Alps and The Cobbler. Note the old sheep fanks about halfway along on your right.
3. As you approach the views opening out over Loch Long you will pass the turning right down to Arrochar which is signposted. However, it is worth continuing for another 300m to the lovely viewpoint and stone seat with fabulous views or, just a little further, down to Robert's Bridge to view the falls, particularly after heavy rain.
4. Whether you visit the viewpoint or not you will need to take the path down to Arrochar which dips (literally, mind your head!) under the railway.





Loch Long Viewpoint

4.cont. The path zigzags down, passing the playing fields (ignore the old sign taking you right) and continue down to Arrochar Parish Church. Built in 1847 this superseded an older church dating back to 1733 and offers a fine vantage point over Loch Long. An in-depth history of the church is documented in an interesting article by the Rev. Ian D. Reid, dating back to at least 1959, which can be found on the church's own website.

5. Keep left of the church and drop down to the road before turning right. This takes you along the seafront, passing the community centre (another point you can start from if going west to east) and hotel before reaching the main road junction.

You will also pass the old pier which was in use from the early 1800s and used by old wooden paddle steamers and, much later, by the familiar paddle steamer, the 'Waverley', the last seagoing paddle steamer in the world, launched in 1946. Back in the 19th and early 20th centuries excursions and cruises were incredibly popular and an efficient means to get around compared to the slow rigours of travelling via the Old Military Road built in 1743 (the current main road, the A83, was not constructed until the 1930s). There was also a fair bit of competition between the steamer companies offering excursions with grander and more comfortable steamers vying for trade.

Across the water you will see the remains of another pier/jetty and old buildings. Built in 1915 this was used as a Torpedo Testing Station. The loch was used to fire and test unarmed torpedoes manufactured in Greenock and the range was used right up until 1986 (Canmore ID 135114). It has only fallen into complete disrepair in the last couple of decades. My family told me the story of when, many years ago, a torpedo went astray and gave a forestry commission worker quite a fright when it zipped out of the water and up onto a lochside forestry track!

Continue left towards the head of Loch Long. You will pass the old telephone box on your right and just ahead, before the Fish and Chip shop, cross the road to take the signposted path up some steps next to a lamppost.



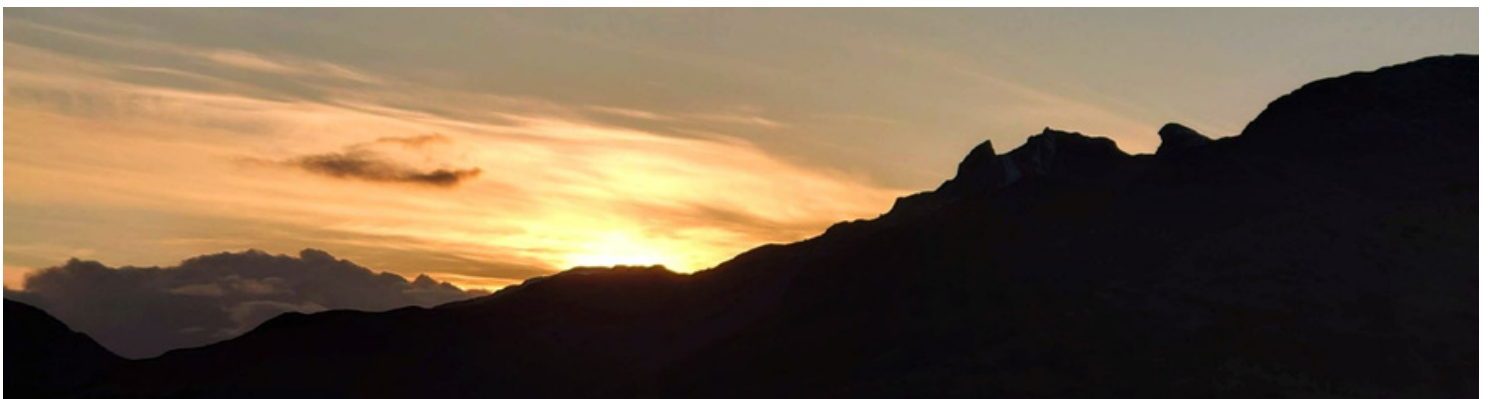
The steps up from Arrochar

6. The path now climbs back up hill through woodland on a long zigzag before reaching a bench and the main track of the Three Lochs Way. Continue for nearly 1 kilometre where you will meet a recently resurfaced forestry road.

7. If you do not wish to ascend Cruach Tairbeirt take the path directly across which will take you down to the station, to the main road and back to Tarbet. Otherwise turn left, noting you will most likely need to return to go down from here (the other path down to Tarbet has been closed for some time).

8. Continue up the forestry road for 500m until you reach a path that will take you directly up the hill on your left (opposite the closed path). Be aware there may be forestry traffic as harvesting is currently underway.

9. The path heads steeply upwards for 100m, initially through felled woodland, before crossing a small burn then directly up into the plantation. Keep the burn on the left for 200m, in line with the stances of trees. You may spot the small stone cairns between the trees but if not keep a close look out for the path veering to the right and the fallen trees that have been partially felled to keep the path accessible.



Sunset over The Cobbler

10. The right turn will take you out onto the open hillside, the path becoming increasingly evident as you leave the trees behind. It is now just over 1 kilometre to the summit, with the path meandering ever upwards, sometimes quite steeply. Do tread softly where possible to avoid further erosion of the peat on those steeper bits. The summit trig point views are quite a treat, and it is worth spending time wandering across the flattish top to get spectacular views up and down Loch Lomond. Note the true summit is a rock just 6m west of the trig point ([hill-bagging.co.uk](http://hill-bagging.co.uk)).

11. Return down your ascent path until you once more meet the forestry road. Assuming the shorter path opposite is still closed turn right and follow the forestry road for 500m until you come to the turning left. This path will now take you down (with a wee roller coaster style up) to the railway station.

12. Go through the underpass and take the road left down from the station. This will lead you back to the main Tarbet Arrochar road, where you turn left to get back to the car park with opportunities for refreshments on the way.

## Walk Information

Route: Cruach Tairbeirt and Hidden Heritage

Distance: 8 to 11.75 km (5 to 7½ miles)

Ascent: 240 to 580 m

Time: 3 to 5 hours

Terrain: Mixture of road, tracks and paths with some steep uneven sections

Map/s: OS Landranger 56 (1:50 000) and OS Explorer 39 (1:25 000)

Start/Finish/Parking: Tarbet Pier car park

Note: you can also start/finish from the railway station, Tarbet or Arrochar bus stops or Arrochar Community centre car park

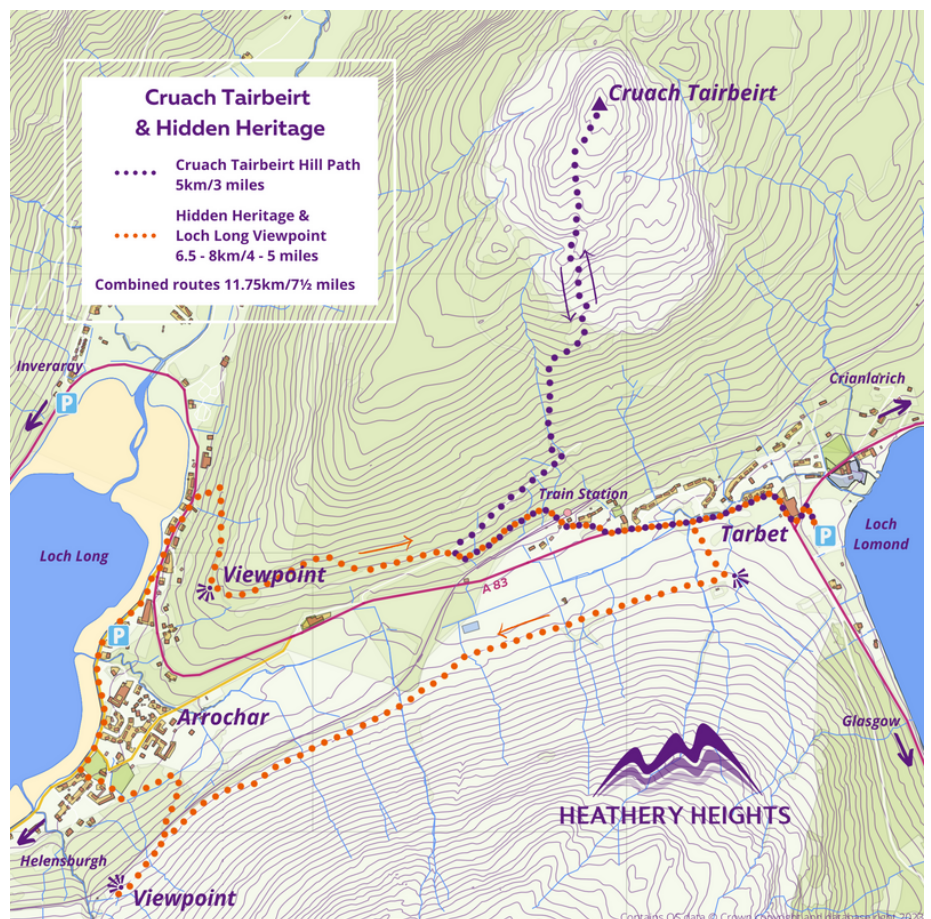
Grid reference: NN 319 044

Public Transport: Buses 302, 914, 916, 926, 975, 976

Trains from Glasgow, Oban and Mallaig

Ferry across Loch Lomond

Toilets: Tarbet Pier car park



*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. Further information on routes and updates from Forestry & Land Scotland can be found [here](#)*