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HEATHERY HEIGHTS MONTHLY

Articles, walks and news



NEXT ISSUE

Sutherland's Grove

CRUACH BREACAIN AND THE STILL LOCH VIA ROBBER'S DEN

From deep gorges to open hilltop

This walk from Ardrishaig and the Crinan Canal offers a real mix from canal side to hilltop. Starting from the waterfront of Ardrishaig and still calm of the canal with views across Loch Gilp, the walk ascends through pretty woodland, passing the stunning gorges and waterfalls surrounding Robber's Den. Above forestry tracks meander upwards past Kilduskland Reservoir to The Still Loch before open moor beckons towards the rugged heathery slopes and summit of Cruach Breacain.

The views from Cruach Breacain are well worth the effort on a clear day with several Knapdale Marilyns, including Stob Odhar, Cruach Lusach and Cnoc Reamhar, in sight as well as better known hills including the Paps of Jura. And, for those into hill bagging, Cruach Breacain is a 359.8m 'Tump'.



The Still Loch



Robber's Den Woods

To undertake the whole walk does mean being prepared for bog and some rough walking through heather but The Still Loch can also be accessed via forestry tracks and the quiet woodland paths of Robber's Den by staying on the north side of the Kilduskland Burn.

Robber's Den, and the remains of an old fort and longhouse, top a steep promontory where two of the burns meet. It is said a young MacVicar hid here and may also have fallen to his death after being trapped by a rival family who he had spotted thieving cattle. Although there is a mention of MacVicar on the Canmore heritage site there is no mention of when other than it may have been tied in with the Battle of Carse.

The walk



1. The walk starts from either one of the Chalmers Street car parks. Heading south you reach Pier Garage, the Kelpie Maquettes and the swing bridge over the entrance to the Crinan Canal. To the east the breakwater is headed by a small lighthouse opposite the pier where timber boats collect their cargo. The Canal itself was officially opened in 1801 but had not been properly 'finished' and suffered several mishaps and partial collapses, which became a huge money drain. In 1811 major disaster struck when the main reservoir burst causing untold damage. In the end Thomas Telford came to its rescue; his previous reports had not been given sufficient consideration by other parties, who appeared to show general incompetence.

3. Turn left then immediately right into Glen Fyne Park and follow the road through the houses for just over 200m. At the corner take an unobtrusive path on your left that cuts up into the woods past a garage. It soon opens out and becomes more obvious with signage announcing you are entering Robber's Den.

4. Continue over a small footbridge and up through the woodland, a delightful mix of beech, birch, oak and alder, initially keeping the burn to your right. The gorge becomes steeper as you approach the confluence of the two larger burns with some impressive drops.

5. After crossing a second bridge take the path leading up to your left through a broken wall. The trees thin as you get higher, and you will pass a ford* to your right. Soon you enter an open area which can get quite boggy; be prepared for a few muddy sections as you head up the hill to the forest track above.

6. Turn right onto the track. There may still be works for the new Pylons so take care and follow any safety directions. Follow this track for the next mile (1.6km), passing two tracks on your right.

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).

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6. (cont.) The first track is your return route and the second is the new pylon road. Ignoring both your route does a complete U-bend from north to south leading you to a fork just before Kilduskland Reservoir.
7. Bear right at the fork and stay on the track that leads along the reservoir's north side, passing another minor path to your right opposite the quarry on a left-hand bend. This will lead you all the way up to The Still Loch a couple of kilometres away.
8. The Still Loch has its own pleasant views and may be as far as you wish to go – but for those wishing to reach the summit of Cruach Breacain be prepared to walk through some deep heather and over rough ground. If the loch is low, you can follow the shoreline to the northern corner, but the sharply layered rocks can be algae covered and slippery.
9. To gain the summit follow the loch round to its northern corner then bear northwest up the hill's steep slopes. Grassy sections of stream and bog intermingle but allow easier ascent than through the rougher heather. Skirting under a couple of rocky sections brings you up to a small flat area with the final ascent ahead drawing you to the summit. A couple of spots beckon for a rest to take in the views.
10. To return to the track it is easiest to descend to the hill's base just north of the loch then use deer tracks to cut across in a south-easterly direction over the small stream to the heathery rise. Keeping the plantation well off to the left now veer in a southerly direction to meet the road before it descends back down the hill. A lone pine acts as a useful marker to keep on your left.
11. Return down the way you came, passing the new pylon road on you left. You may have noticed that there are red marker posts leading down from the quarry near the reservoir. Take the next track to your left and you will soon see that these red markers continue.
12. Follow the track for 900m down through the plantation, keeping right at a fork.
13. At a T-junction turn right onto a path (you can also head down the lefthand track past Brackley to the road if you prefer). This will take you down through the conifer woods, first south then southeast to a rickety broken stile. Cross this and turn right, down to a small bridge.
14. A faint steep path goes up the slopes to meet the main path ahead. Keeping left you will pass the path coming down from the ford on your right before crossing another bridge. After the bridge the promontory between the two burns on your left is where the remains of the fort, longhouse, and Robber's Den lie. Take care if you wish to explore as there are very steep drops and remember MacVicar's fate!
15. To continue the path will soon meet your original route of ascent where you can descend back to the canal.
16. Return along the canal and cross over at the first lock. After a short distance you will see a route down to your left which drops you down to the main road, car parks, local shops, and the excellent [Rumblin' Tum café](#).

*If you don't wish to do the higher circuit you can cross the ford if not in spate. The path will take you back down into Robber's Den past some very impressive gorges – you can follow the smaller path near the gorge for better views or take the main path down, both will lead you back to your path of ascent.

Walk Information

Route: Cruach Breacain –

360m (Argyll Tump)

Distance: 14km (9 miles)

Ascent: 440m

Time: 4½ - 5 hrs

Terrain: Paved, woodland paths, forestry tracks; open hillside, boggy and uneven.

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

OS Explorer 358 (1:25 000)

Start/Finish/Parking:

Chalmers Street, Ardrishaig

Grid reference: NR 852 855

Public Transport: West Coast

Motors and City Link

Toilets: Yes

[OS MAP LINK](#)

