£1.20

Atholl
Estates

Waymarked Trails from Blair Atholl

View of Blair Castle from A9 (Paul Booth)

Welcome to Atholl Estates

Woodland, rivers and heather-clad hills make up the 145,000 acres that is Atholl Estates. The larger section of the estate is centred on Blair Atholl where Blair Castle, dating to the 1200s, was the historic home of the Earls and Dukes of Atholl. The smaller section of the estate lies between Pitlochry and Dunkeld.

The estate has a network of over 30 miles of waymarked trails for you to discover the fascinating history and wildlife of this working landscape. The trails cover a variety of distances and will take you along rivers and burns, through woodlands and onto wild moorland. For the quiet and observant visitor each trail has its own rewards.

In the woodlands, sightings of red squirrels and roe deer are common, while you may have the opportunity of seeing two of the most illusive inhabitants, the capercaillie and the shy pine marten. Majestic red deer roam the hills which are also home to mountain hares, and the noisy red grouse. Down at the riverside, tracks indicate the presence of otters. Dippers and wagtails search for insects on which to feed, while salmon battle their way through waterfalls on their upstream journey.

You are welcome to explore the estate, but please remember that the estate is a home and workplace for many people. Please respect their privacy and their livelihoods during your visit.

Banvie Burn (Liz Miller)

Red Squirrel (Ronald W Weir)

The Trails

A starting point is suggested for each walk but, as all the trails are circular, they can be joined at any point and linked to form longer walks. The map in the centre pages indicates how all the trails link together. They cover a variety of distances from a short stroll to a full day's hike. The distances are written in miles for each route, with the kilometres equivalent shown in brackets. The routes are denoted by waymarker posts with colour coded arrows as follows:

Red Squirrel Walk	1 mile (1.6km)	Red arrows
Banvie Burn Walk	3 miles (4.8km)	Black arrows
Farm and Forest Walk	4 miles (6.4km)	Green arrows
Woodend Walk	4.5 miles (7.2km)	Blue arrows
Glen Banvie Trail	9 miles (14.5km)	Orange arrows
Glen Tilt Trail	10 miles (16km)	Yellow arrows

Wherever you decide to go, plan your route carefully, take adequate clothing, food and drink. Choose a trail that suits the time you have available and your level of ability. Always wear sturdy walking shoes as even in summer, paths can be muddy and uneven.

Take care during your walk; many of our riverside paths have steep banks, and there may be working machinery, especially in farm and forestry areas. Please have regard for your own safety and ensure that children are supervised at all times. Whilst every effort is made to ensure public safety, Atholl Estates cannot accept responsibility for loss of personal effects or injury to visitors.

Red squirrel at feeder

Eaten Pine cones

Red squirrel with winter ear tufts

Squirrel drey

Red Squirrel Walk

Start point: Glen Tilt Car Park
Distance: 1 mile (1.6km)
Follow the red way-markers

This part of Atholl Estates is one of the best places for seeing red squirrels. There are lots of them about and they are used to seeing people and dogs. We have no grey squirrels at Blair Atholl (yet!).

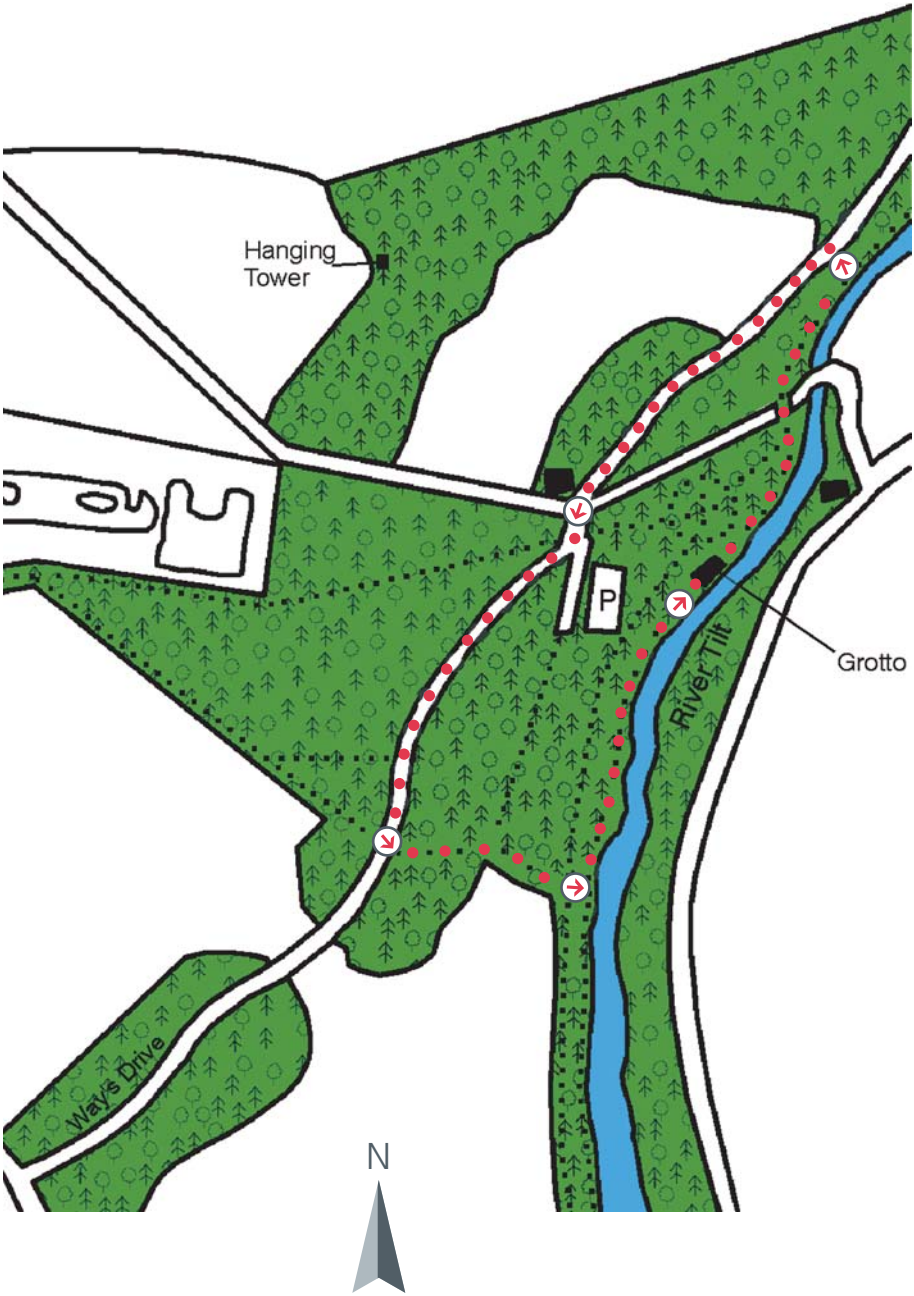
To spot red squirrels look up in the trees and also listen for the scratching sounds of their claws on the bark. If it seems to be raining bits of pine cone, this is a sure sign that a squirrel is above, having a feed.

The best time to see squirrels here is in late summer and autumn when the adults are active, hoarding food for the winter, and the youngsters are out and about. If you see 2 or 3 squirrels chasing each other around in the trees they are probably young ones. Baby squirrels are called kittens and most will not survive their first winter.

As you follow the walk, you can see other signs of squirrel activity. Piles of cone cores – the discarded middle of a cone, like an apple core, are found below branches where squirrels have been feeding. They pull the outer scales off the cone to get at the small but nutritious seeds inside. When they have finished, they just throw it away – watch out for your head! Their favourite cones are Scots pine, Norway spruce and larch.

Squirrels also like to eat seeds, nuts (look for split hazelnut shells), fungi, sap wood from trees and the occasional bird's egg.

You can see a lot of squirrel dreys (homes) on this walk, especially on the first section. Dreys look like birds' nests, but are round rather than cup-shaped, with one or two small entrance holes. Red squirrels are not such skilled builders as birds, so their dreys are usually built right next to the trunk of a tree to give some extra support. Squirrels usually have one main drey for their young and some others for shelter which may be shared with neighbours.



Red Squirrel Walk

Route

Rhododendron

Heather

Red Deer

The Whim

Banvie Burn Walk

Start point: Glen Tilt Car Park
Distance: 3 miles (4.8km) or shortcut 2 miles (3.2km)
Follow the black way-markers →

From the Glen Tilt Car Park, follow the road up to Old Blair. At the crossroads head straight on and then left into the woods with the Banvie Burn below you.

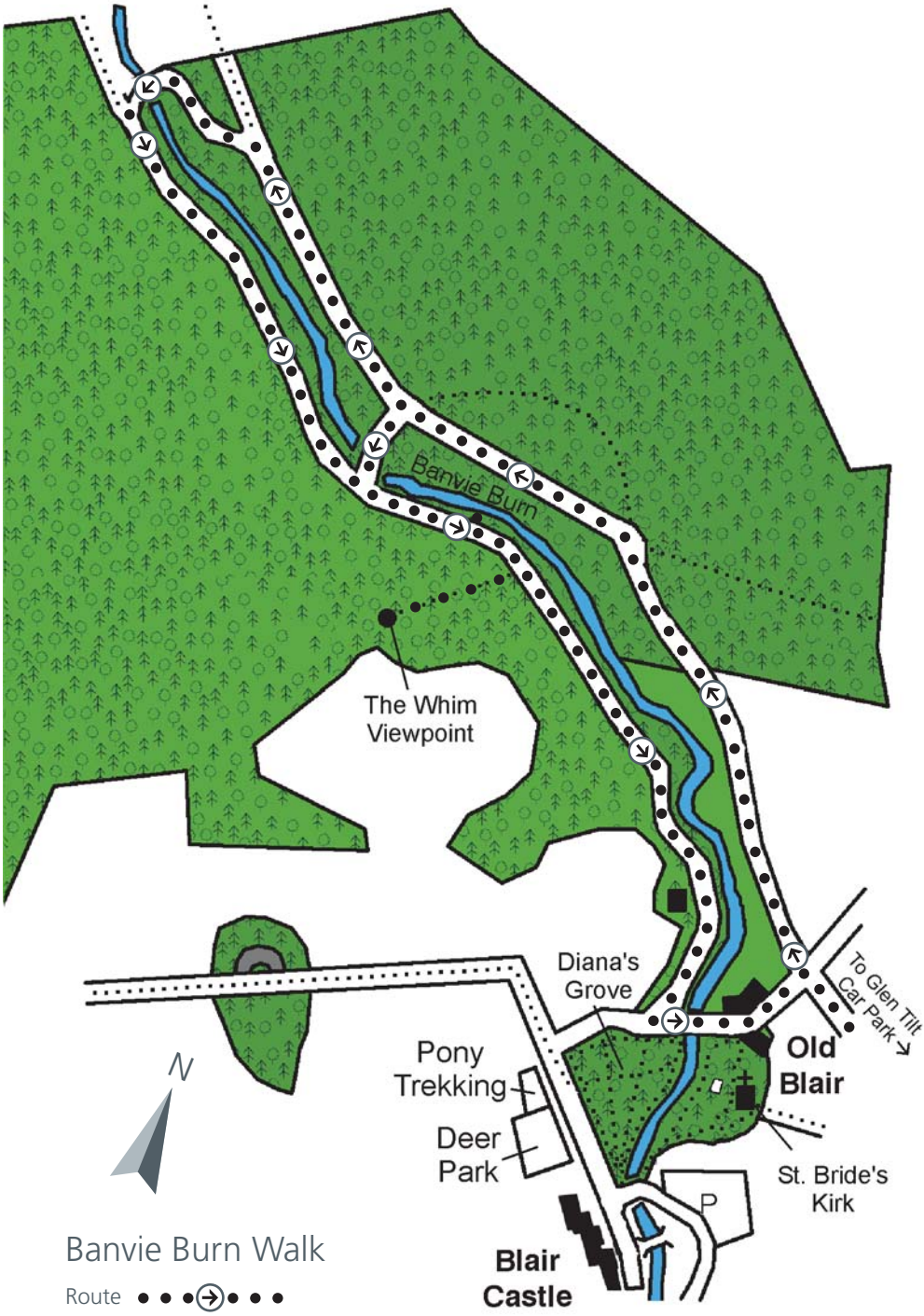
Rhododendron bushes hug the side of the steep gorge. These were planted beside the path in the 18th century, and have since spread vigorously. In other parts of this wood we have recently felled the rhododendron to allow more light and space for other plants and trees to grow.

At the first bridge you can either take a shortcut across to the other side or continue up to the second bridge. After heavy rain you can hear the crashing of boulders being moved by the rushing water running under the bridge – known for this reason as the rumbling bridge.

At the second bridge you get a good view out to the open moor above. This view is gloriously purple with heather in July and August. Red deer can often be seen right at the edge of the wood here in winter, sheltering from the bad weather. In summer the deer herd will be grazing away out on the high tops.

On your return, the detour to the Whim is very worthwhile. This folly was built in 1761 to give an eye-catching view up from the castle. The view from the Whim back to the castle and beyond to Ben Vrackie is also lovely. The parkland and designed landscape around Blair Castle stands out very well from here. Much of this landscape was created in the 18th century by the second Duke of Atholl.

At the road, turn left back across the burn, and head back to the car park.



Banvie Burn Walk

Route

Greylag goose

Glen Tilt viewpoint

Buzzard

Small Cow Wheat (Scottish Wildlife Trust)

Farm and Forest Walk

Start point: Glen Tilt Car Park
Distance: 4 miles (6.4km)
Follow the green way-markers →

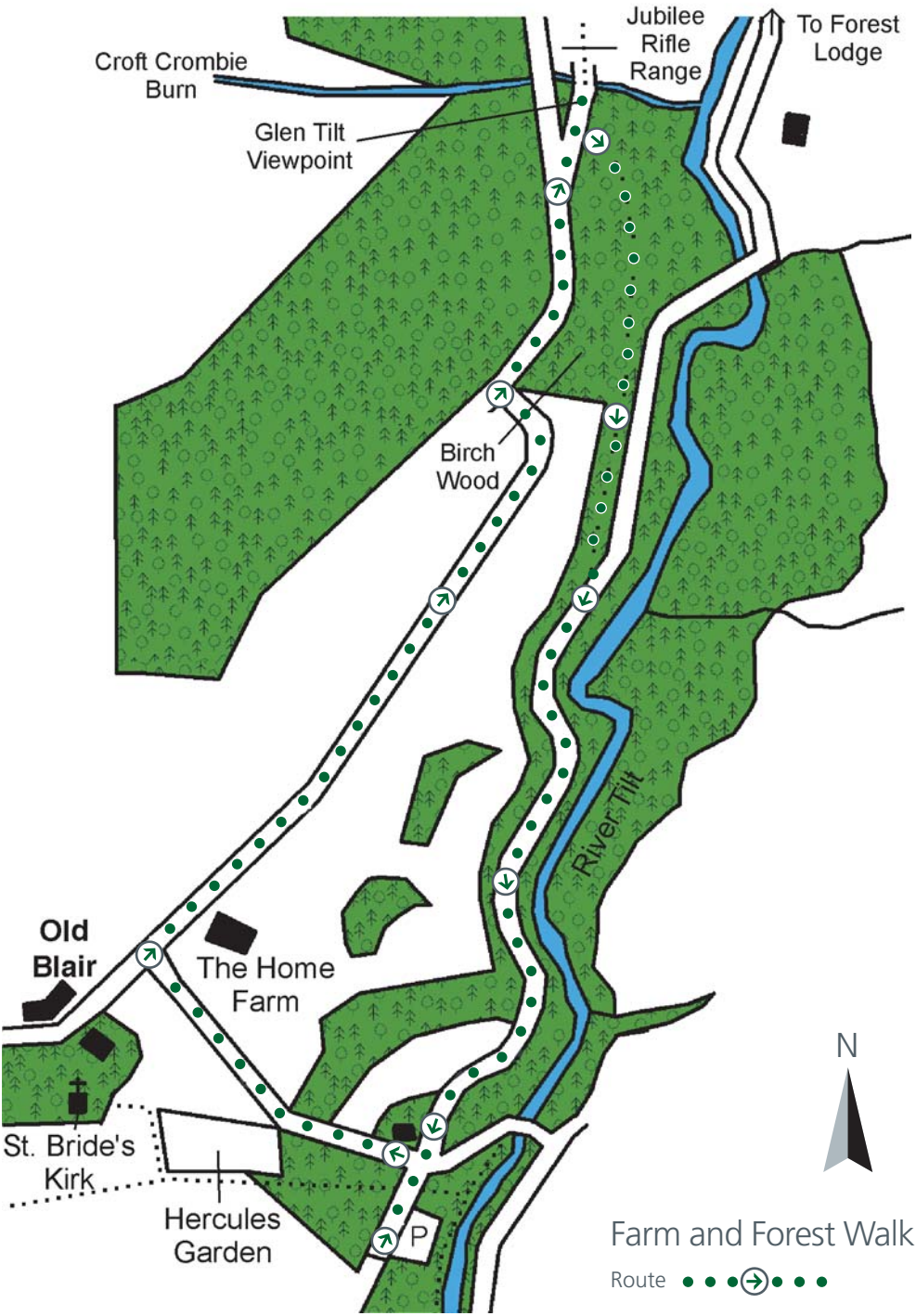
Follow the road from the car park up to Old Blair, and turn right at the crossroads, up the hill. The fields around you are part of the Home Farm, which once supplied meat and crops for Blair Castle. The farm buildings were originally sited at Blairuachdar, further up the road – far enough away from the castle for the farming smells not to offend people. The farm moved to its current site at Balanloan in Victorian times. The Home Farm today concentrates on organic beef and lamb production for Atholl Glens Organic Meat (mail order business).

As you walk up the hill, the organic fields are a good place to spot wading birds in the spring or flocks of greylag geese in the winter. Buzzards are also often seen soaring over the fields hunting for prey such as rabbits. Listen out for their mewing call.

Before you head downhill on the grassy track, you may want to continue ahead for 100m to enjoy the spectacular view up Glen Tilt from the top of the rifle range.

Follow the track downhill and on into a birch wood. Birch trees provide a home for a wide variety of birds and insects, and once provided useful wood for the many people living up the glen, for making spoons and bowls. Birch branches were also used, for roofing houses and stuffing mattresses.

As you head back down Glen Tilt, you can see the River Tilt flowing down a steep gorge. Rare flowers, such as small cow-wheat and herb Paris, grow on the sides of the gorge, where sheep and deer have not been able to eat them. It is now a Site of Special Scientific Interest, one of a national network of nature conservation sites.


Croft Crombie Burn
Jubilee Rifle Range
To Forest Lodge
Glen Tilt Viewpoint
Birch Wood
River Tilt
Old Blair
The Home Farm
St. Bride's Kirk
Hercules Garden
P
N
Farm and Forest Walk
Route

Atholl Estates Waymarked Trails

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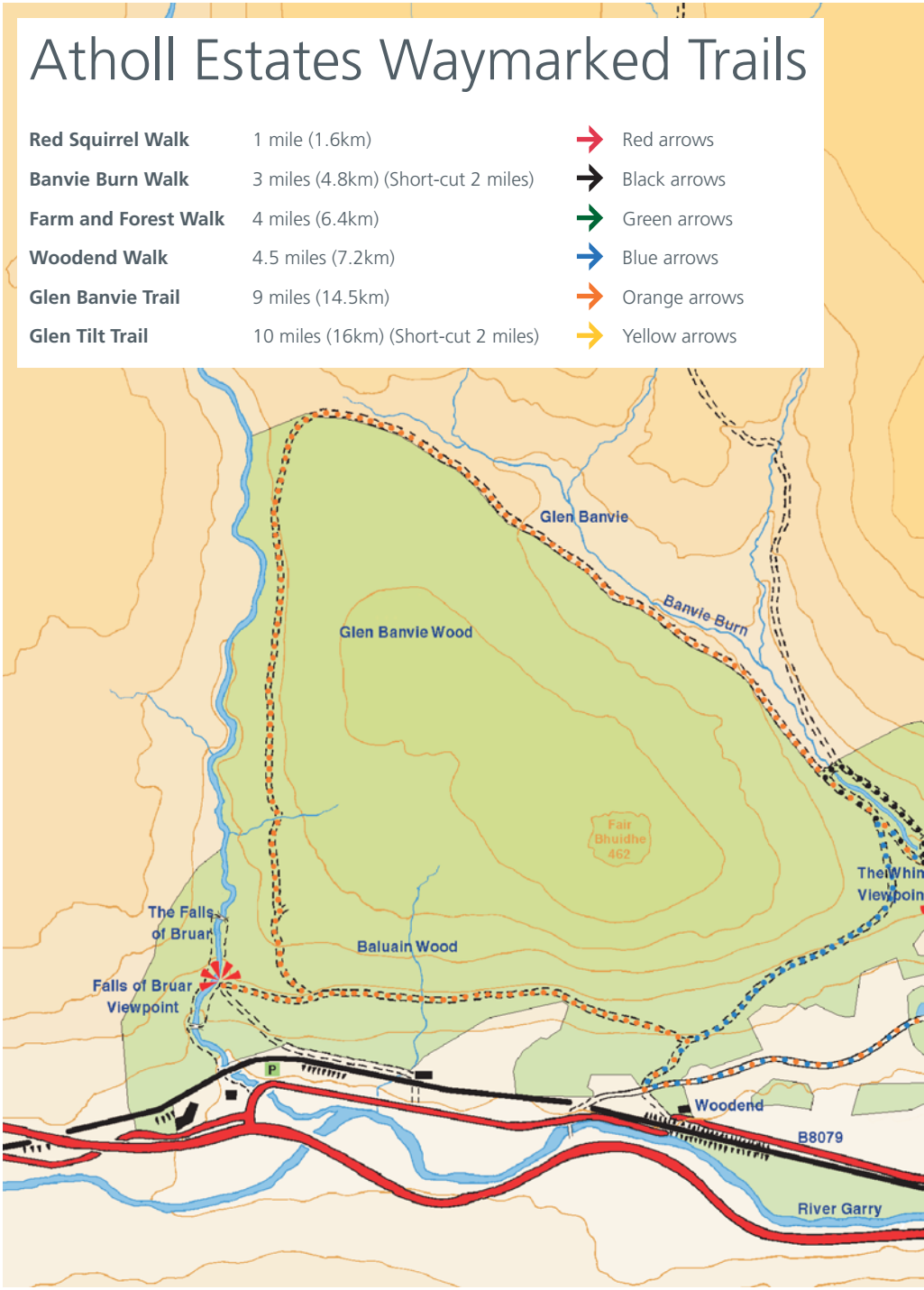
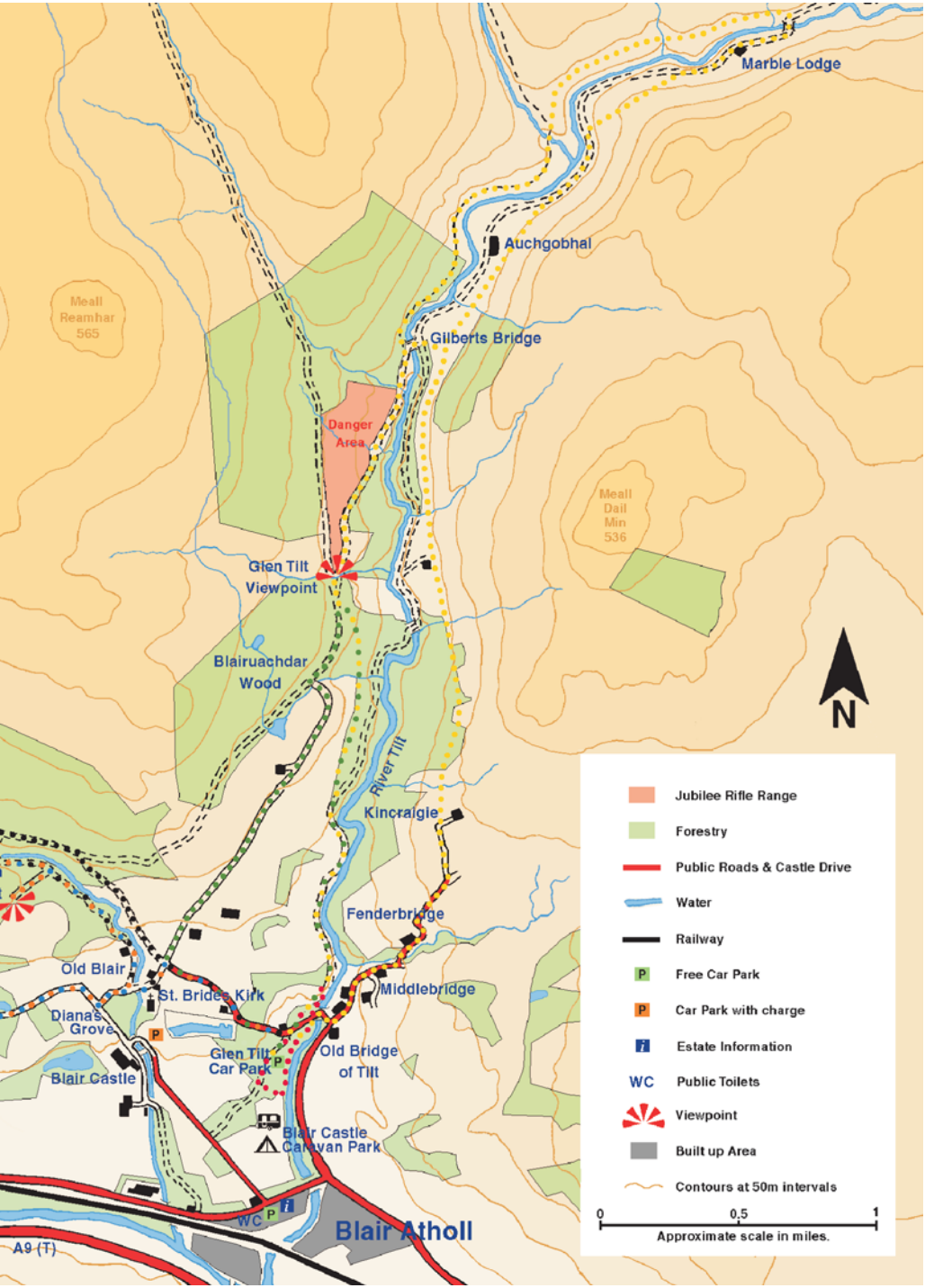



Marble Lodge
Auchgobhal
Gilberts Bridge
Meall Reamhar 565
Danger Area
Meall Dail Mhin 536
Glen Tilt Viewpoint
Blairuachdar Wood
River Tilt
Kincraigie
Fenderbridge
Middlebridge
Old Blair
St. Bride's Kirk
Dianas Grove
Glen Tilt Car Park
Old Bridge of Tilt
Blair Castle
Blair Castle Caravan Park
WC
Blair Atholl
A9 (T)
N
Jubilee Rifle Range
Forestry
Public Roads & Castle Drive
Water
Railway
Free Car Park
Car Park with charge
Estate Information
Public Toilets
Viewpoint
Built up Area
Contours at 50m intervals
0
0.5
1
Approximate scale in miles.

The Whim

Highland pony

View from The Whim

Larch trees in winter

Woodend Walk

Start point: Glen Tilt Car Park
Distance: 4.5 miles (7.2km)
Follow the blue way-markers

From the Glen Tilt Car Park, follow the road up the hill to Old Blair. At the crossroads turn left and follow the road round to the right, past Diana's Grove, a collection of exotic conifers with some of the tallest trees in Britain.

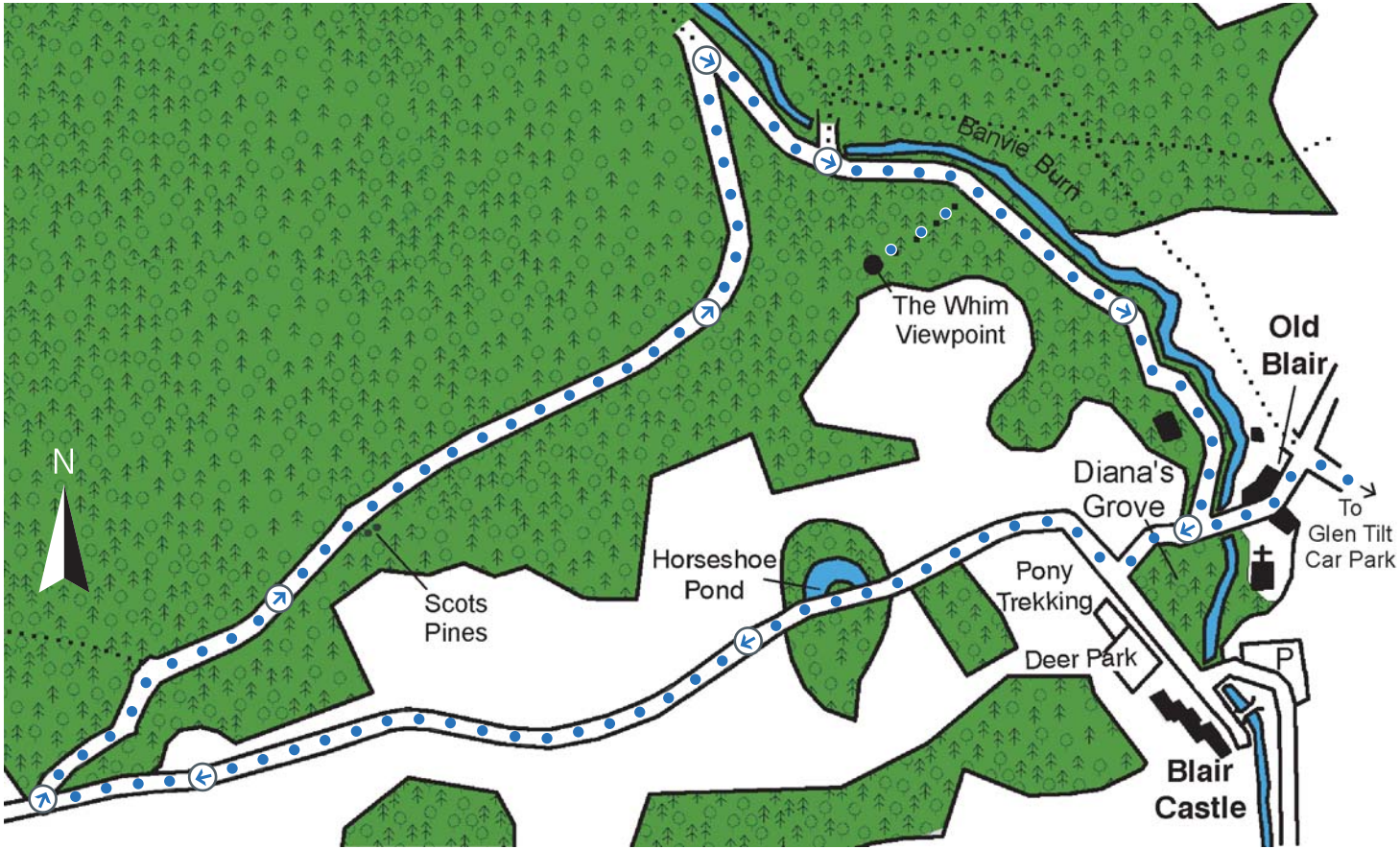
At the pony trekking centre turn right along the track. The highland ponies are very strong and sure-footed – very useful for both trekking and deer stalking (the ponies carry the deer carcass off the hill). They have a thick coat allowing them to live outside all year round.

Walking along the West Drive you get a lovely view of the parkland around Blair Castle. We have recently planted a lot of new parkland trees to replace the old and dying ones. Not only do these trees look attractive, they also provide important shelter for the farm animals in the fields.

Entering the woodland, the route takes you uphill. Gaps in the trees reveal striking glimpses of the valley below and Ben Vrackie straight ahead.

Much of the woodland here is larch – a deciduous conifer losing its needles in winter. The path is carpeted with soft, golden needles in the autumn. The larch tree has an indelible link with the Dukes of Atholl and Atholl Estates. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the second and fourth dukes were the first to plant larch commercially for timber, rather than just for decoration. The hybrid larch (a hybrid between European and Japanese larch) was also developed on Atholl Estates, near Dunkeld, and is the main larch species used in forestry today. The timber from larch is strong and extremely water resistant.

After reaching the top of the hill, you follow the tumbling Banvie Burn back to the road, and so to the car park.



Woodend Walk

Route

Black grouse

Scots pine

Red deer

Falls of Bruar

Glen Banvie Trail

Start point: Glen Tilt Car Park
Distance: 9 miles
Follow the orange way-markers →

From the car park follow the road uphill to Old Blair and turn left at the crossroads. Follow the road sharply right, over the Banvie Burn, and then take the track uphill on your right into the Banvie Woods. This woodland is a good place to spot a red squirrel; they enjoy the mixture of nuts and seeds which the different trees provide.

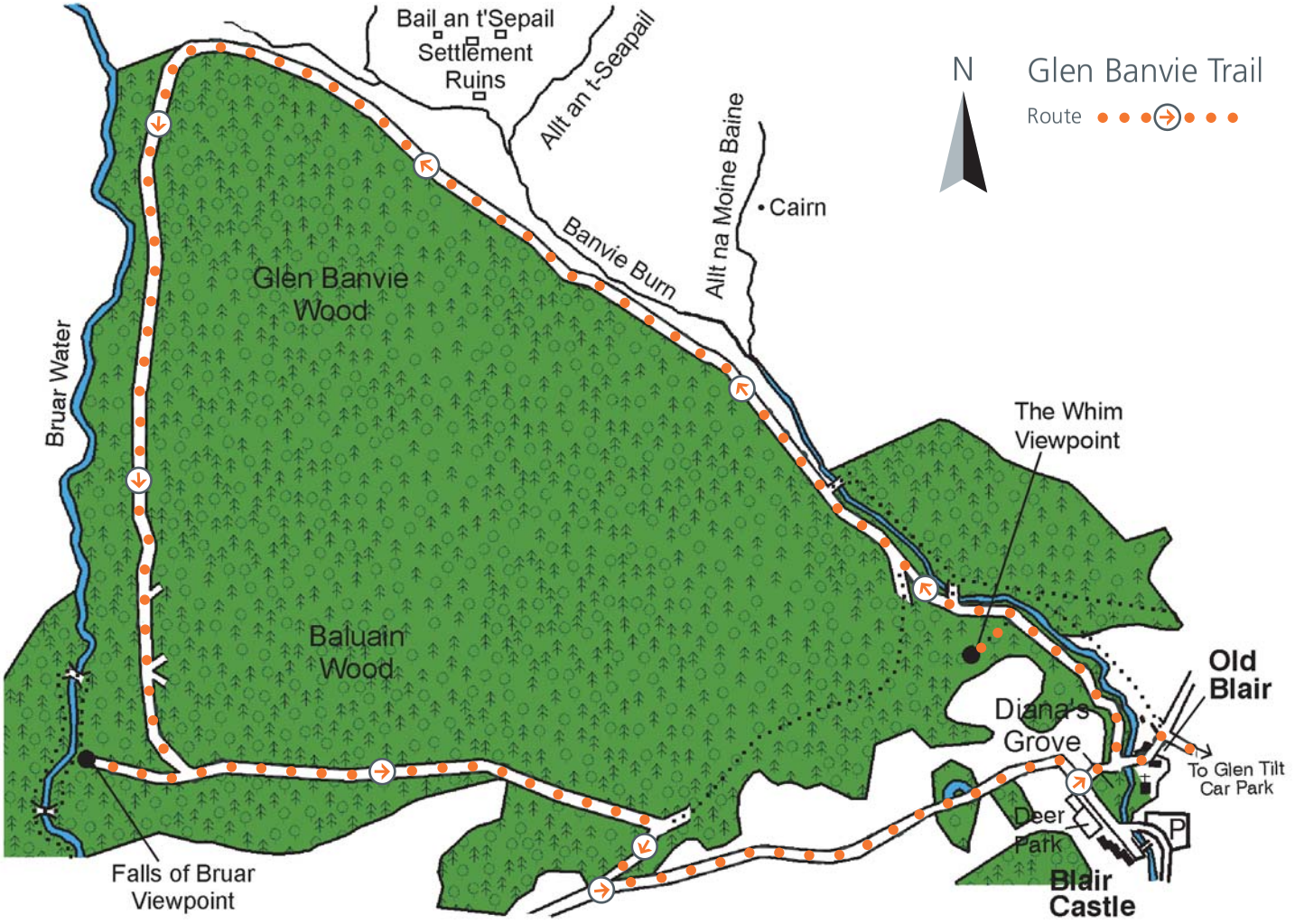
As you head out of the woods to the open moor, look out for black grouse. These large game birds live on the woodland edge. The males are a spectacular sight with black bodies, white tails and red eyebrows. Black grouse are declining severely in Britain, but we have a good population here in Perthshire, which are doing well. Further out on the moor you may see, or more likely hear, their cousin the red grouse, as they tell you to 'go back, go back, go back'.

Further up the track on your right is a grassy area with stone ruins – the remains of Bail an t'Sepail (Chapel Town), which was settled until the 1850s. Now it is a good spot to see red deer enjoying the sweet grazing.

Entering the wood at the top of the hill you can see that lots of the Scots pine trees have been rubbed and de-barked. This is done by red deer; they like the resinous smell of some of the trees and rub them vigorously. They also eat the young shoots on the trees – compare them to the trees on the other side of the fence, which are protected from the deer.

At the bottom of the hill, a detour to the Falls of Bruar viewpoint will reward you with stunning views over this series of waterfalls.

As you return towards Blair Castle, views of the River Garry and Ben Vrackie, above Pitlochry, fill the scene.


Glen Banvie Trail
Route
N
Bail an t'Sepail
Settlement
Ruins
Allt an t-Seapail
Allt na Moine Baine
Cairn
Banvie Burn
Glen Banvie
Wood
Bruar Water
Baluain
Wood
The Whim
Viewpoint
Old
Blair
Diana's
Grove
To Glen Tilt
Car Park
Deer
Park
P
Blair
Castle
Falls of Bruar
Viewpoint

Glen Tilt

Allt Mhairc bridge

Common blue (Butterfly Conservation)

Scotch argus (Butterfly Conservation)

Glen Tilt Trail

Start point: Glen Tilt Car Park
Distance: 10 miles (16km) or shortcut 6 miles (9.6km)
Follow the yellow way-markers

The River Tilt follows a geological fault through the hills for much of its length. This has created a steep gorge in places, but also makes an excellent route for travelling through the hills with little climbing. Glen Tilt was once a busy route linking Braemar and places north of the Cairngorms to markets further south.

This walk enjoys the variety of the glen, starting through the woods and then heading out to the open hillsides. Keep your eyes peeled for buzzards, eagles, wheatears and skylarks.

After a steep climb up to the top of the rifle range you reach the Glen Tilt viewpoint, giving a fantastic view of the glen ahead. Consult the rifle range timetable to check for shooting – a red flag shows when shooting is taking place. (This timetable is also available in advance at the Glen Tilt Car Park or on the ranger service website.)

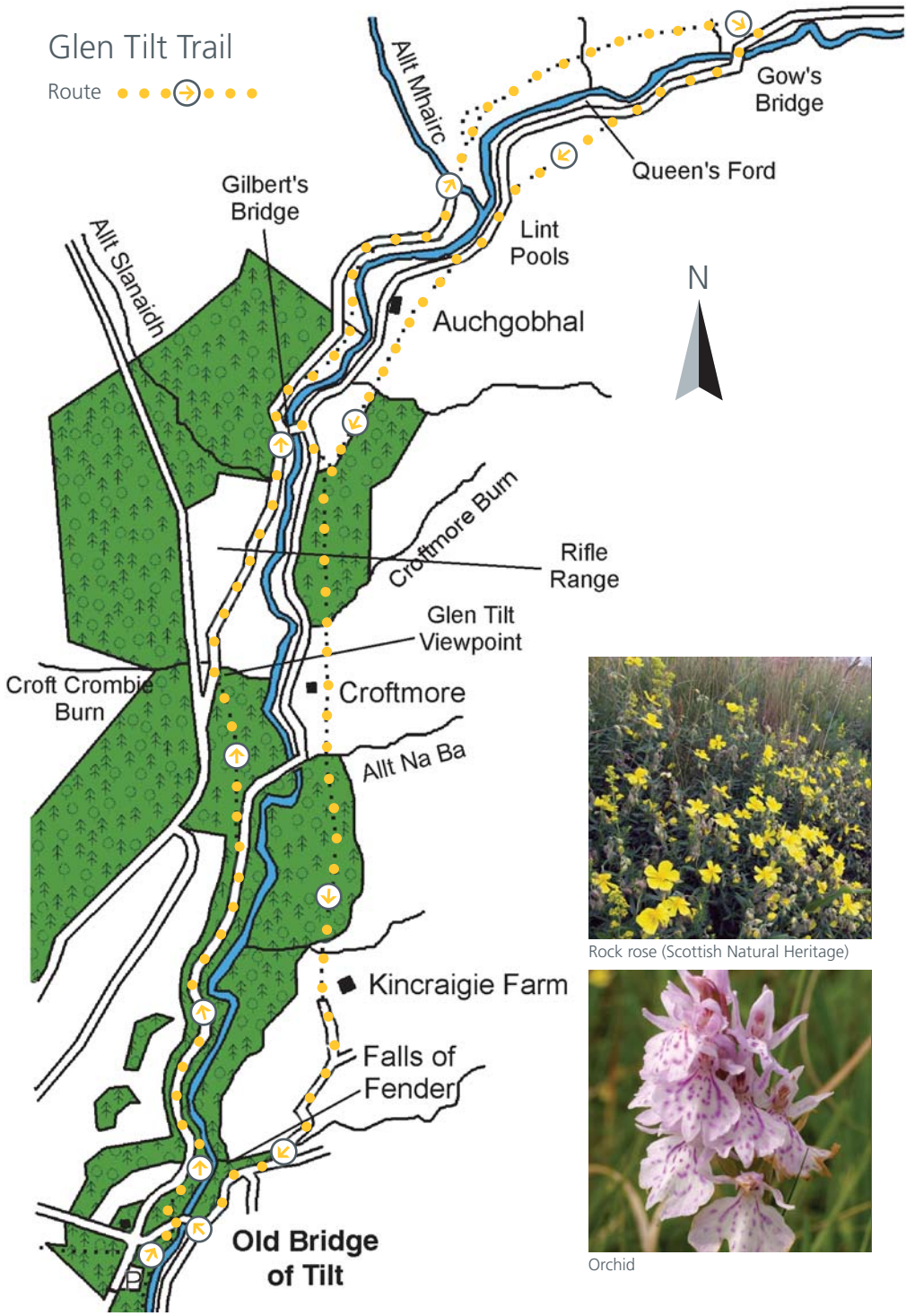
Back at the bottom of the hill you have the option to shortcut across Gilbert's Bridge for the 6 mile walk.

The longer trail continues through the gate. We are aiming to regenerate the birch wood on this side of the river, inside the electric fence, getting young trees to seed and grow amongst the old ones. Deer and sheep love to eat young trees, so we need to keep them out until new trees are established.

After crossing the small bridge over the Allt Mhairc, take the small detour to the viewpoint and ruins above. Hundreds of people used to live in the glen in settlements like this, farming cattle and sheep and growing potatoes, turnips and barley.

At Gow's Bridge, your walk turns to head back down the glen.

On your return, enjoy the variety of flowers such as common rock-rose, milkwort and various orchids, which thrive on the lime-rich soils in the glen. On a sunny summer day lots of different butterflies feed on these flowers. In August, clouds of orange and brown Scotch Argus can be particularly striking.



Rock rose (Scottish Natural Heritage)

Orchid

Walkers in Glen Tilt

Visitors' Code

For a safe and enjoyable visit please remember that Atholl Estates is a place of work. Be considerate towards other users of the countryside and follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code:

Take responsibility for your own actions.

- Enjoy the outdoors, but take care and watch out for natural hazards

Care for our environment

- Please take your litter home. Litter and food scraps attract scavengers
- Guard against fire at all times
- Please don't feed our farm animals or animals in the wild
- Please leave wild flowers and plants for everyone to enjoy
- Please keep your dog under close control and do not allow it to harass wild animals

Help us to work safely and effectively

- Follow advice given on signs about forestry and farming operations
- Do not block gateways or access tracks – park in designated areas
- Keep dogs on a lead or under close control in fields or hill sheep areas to avoid distressing farm stock

Peacock butterfly (Jack Murphy)

Blackface sheep

Atholl Estates Information Centre

Visit the information centre for information on local wildlife, estate management, and what to see and do in the area. The centre is in Blair Atholl, opposite the Blair Castle Caravan Park and next to the fish and chip shop. It is open daily from Easter to October, with ranger staff available between 3.30 and 4.45pm.

Hillphone

For information on hillwalking and access during the stag stalking season – 12th August to 20th October – please phone our Hillphone on 01796 481740 or check the notice in the Glen Tilt Car Park. The information is updated by 8.00am every day.

Ranger Events

Atholl Estates Ranger Service runs a wide variety of countryside events for adults and children between Easter and October. Check the events page of our website or pick up a local countryside events leaflet.

Atholl Estates

You can find out more about the estate's activities including Blair Castle, pony trekking, farm and land rover wildlife tours, events and much more by visiting our website at www.atholl-estates.co.uk or by picking up one of our many brochures. The estate also has a range of accommodation options including self-catering lodges and Blair Castle Caravan Park. More information and booking details can be found on the website. The full range of Atholl Estates' brochures is available at the Atholl Estates Information Centre (see above), at the Blair Castle Caravan Park reception or at Pitlochry Tourist Information Centre.

Atholl Estates Ranger Service is part-funded by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH).

Atholl Estates

Getting Here

By Train

There is a train station in Blair Atholl, with a regular connecting service from all the major Scottish cities. A daily express service to and from London's Kings Cross stops at Pitlochry Station, and the Caledonian Sleeper to and from London Euston stops at Blair Atholl.

By Car

Blair Atholl is located just off the main A9 road in Highland Perthshire, approximately 35 miles (56km) north of Perth. The village is approximately 90 minutes drive from Glasgow, Edinburgh, Inverness and Aberdeen.

Contact us

We warmly welcome enquiries and booking for ranger service events by telephone, fax, email, or in person.

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