

Changue Forest



The word "Changue" of Gaelic origin means: the large rounded hill-shoulder of the high impenetrable inner row of storm-swept mountains. This is certainly a lengthy meaning, but one which accurately describes this area, especially during winter.

Continuing up the Howe of Laggan there are excellent views over the Polmaddie Hill group, which rises to above 1800 feet. This is an area where sheep paths and folds are evident.

The track takes you through the heart of Changue, which is now a commercial forest. The main species which can be seen are Sitka Spruce, Norway Spruce and Larch, with some broadleaf trees including Oak, Ash and Birch.

Looking north you can see the well-known Galloway Mountain pass called "Nick of the Balloch". In olden times this was famous as a smuggling route. Men with packhorses would follow the perilous path and at the summit drink from the "brandy well", a spring which still flows with crystal clear water.

The Devil's Footprint



Legend has it that near High Changue, there is the site of a famous battle between the Laird of Changue and the Devil. The story goes that Changue was getting short of money and decided to make a bargain. He would sell his soul in return for great wealth.

The Laird's fortunes changed and he prospered for many years. When the time came for him to deliver his soul, the Laird reneged on his bargain and refused to go. The Devil proceeded to lay hold of him, but Changue laid his Bible on the turf and drawing a great circle around him, sturdily and, as it turned out, successfully defied his opponent.

The story must be true because on the hill above High Changue, you used to be able to see the Devil's footprints, the circle drawn by the sword and the mark of the Bible clearly visible in the grass. However, time and weather has now greatly reduced the visibility of these marks.

Dinmurchie Farm



The village of Barr is known by local people as "The Barr", which is thought to mean the confluence of the waters. If you are lucky, you may see some of the wildlife found in this area; including deer, foxes, hares, kestrels and buzzards.

A notable location on the outskirts of Barr is Dinmurchie Farm, which was the birth place of James Dalrymple (1619 - 1695) who became the first Viscount of Stair and was the author of the "Institutes of the law of Scotland."

From an historical viewpoint, the village is well worth exploring. The area has a considerable involvement with Covenanting. In the old churchyard there are two Martyrs' stones, one of which is to Edward McKeen who was arrested by soldiers at the farm of Dalwyne following suspicion that a prayer meeting was taking place. He was dragged out, and after some questioning, the officer in charge shot him twice through the head. One of the soldiers of the party thought he saw McKeen move, and shot him a third time.

This all happened in 1685 when such events were commonplace in the "killing times". You'll be pleased to know, though, that the area is now known for its peace and tranquillity!

Tracks & Paths

Other Forest

Nearly 20 miles of tracks and paths have been joined together to create various routes through the beautiful countryside near the village of Barr. Many are suitable for cycling and horse riding, as well as walking.

The routes will take you by riverside, forest and onto open hill, where there are spectacular views of the South Ayrshire countryside. As well as being rich in wildlife the area is steeped in history and legends.

Most of the routes can be described as moderate; however there are some sections which involve fairly steep climbing. Go prepared for muddy paths and wet weather. Stout shoes or boots and waterproofs are recommended. Whenever heading out into open countryside it is advisable to take an OS map of the area and be competent at reading it. Please follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. **NB** There is no mobile phone signal at the Trails around Barr, in the case of emergency it will be necessary to use a landline phone to contact services.



Cairn



2.25 miles / 3.5 km from the car park

Walk up the valley along the track to the Howe of Laggan, and you will find Kirstie's Cairn, just beyond the point where Lead Mine Burn joins the larger Laggan Burn. Christopher McTaggart (Kirstie to his friends), a 19 year old shepherd lad, set out on 11th January 1913, in a raging blizzard, to care for his sheep. Later that day he was found dying, by his twin brother David and two friends. Their efforts to restore heat to his frozen body were in vain. He died fifteen minutes later. In such terrible weather they were unable to carry his body back home. Kirstie's faithful dog, Wag, refused to leave his master. The following day, between 20 and 30 men set out for the Howe of Laggan to bring back the body of their friend. At Kirstie's funeral the Reverend John Angus charged the young men of the village to raise a memorial to the young shepherd; they did this by building a cairn a few yards from where he died. Returning walkers should look out for roe deer, and various wild birds - such as long-tailed tits, jays, siskins and bullfinches.

The Fairy Knowe Trail

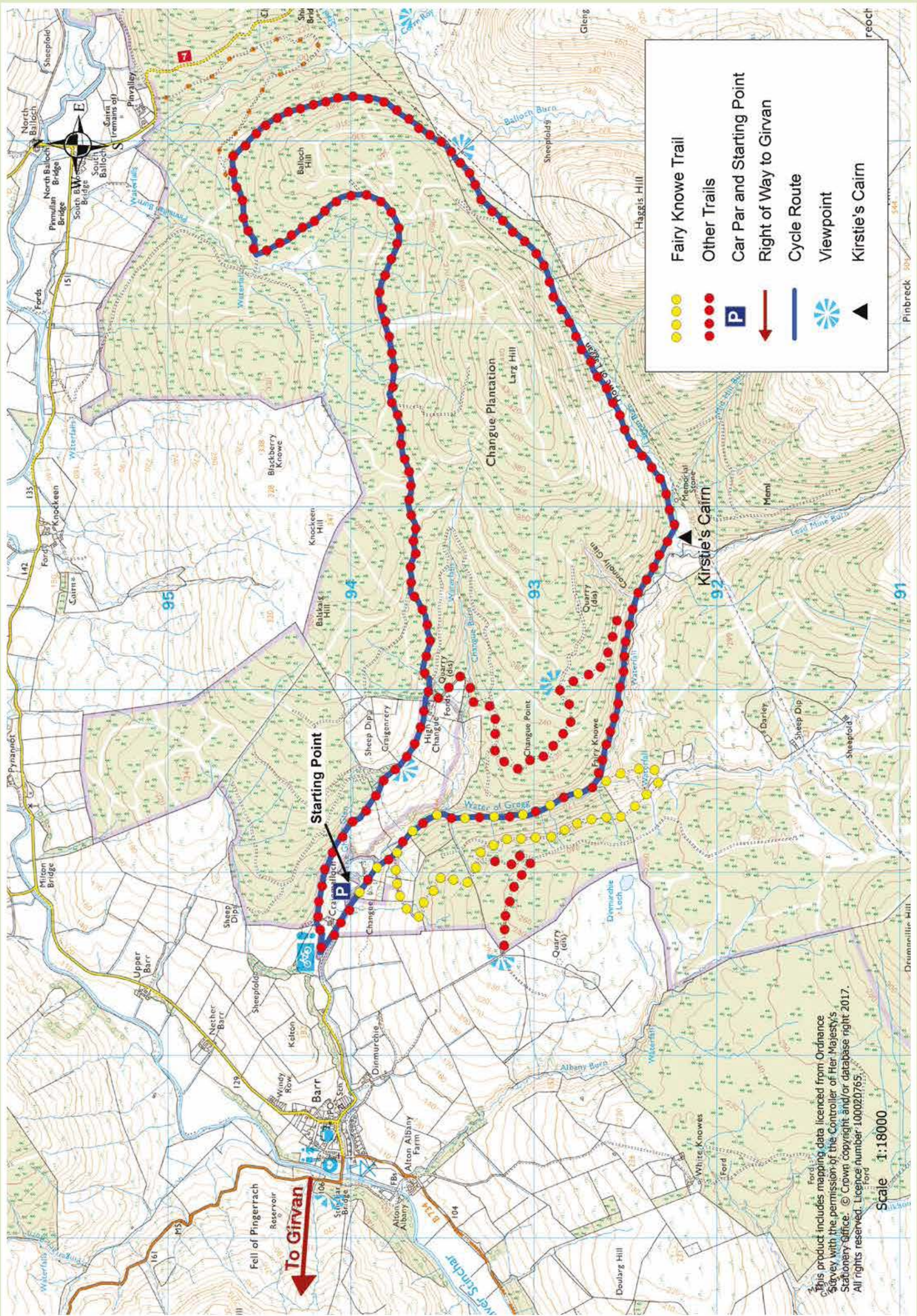


3.75 miles / 6 km circular route

All trails start and finish at the car park, which is just over 1km east of Barr village (see map). Down the track from the car park the Fairy Knowe trail follows the Water of Gregg past Changue House to a point where the track forks sharply right and ascends to the forest. Continuing through the trees for 450 metres the route bears left along a woodland trail. From this elevated route overlooking the Gregg valley occasional views are glimpsed through the trees over the Changue Forest to the hills beyond. Once clear of the trees and on to the open hill an impressive vista opens up to the east. Hagis Hill, Rowantree Hill and Pinbreck Hill form an impressive backdrop, and beyond the Nick of the Balloch, is an exciting hill pass on the road from Crosshill and Barr, which meets the Straton Road at the Rowantree Toll. Descending to a wooden footbridge the burn is crossed at an attractive waterfall, the way continues down along a narrow ridge to the valley below. Care should be taken when negotiating this ridge as the path is steep and often slippery. Traversing the burn you reach a delightful spot called the Fairy Knowe, where it is worth pausing for a minute and looking back up the gully to where the burn rushes down a spectacular cleft in the hills. At this point you have the option to either walk back down the Gregg Valley to the start or, if you feel energetic, to turn right and continue along other trails to make a longer yet rewarding excursion.

Map with routes inside...





- Fairy Knowe Trail
- Other Trails
- P** Car Park and Starting Point
- Right of Way to Girvan
- Cycle Route
- ★ Viewpoint
- ▲ Kirstie's Cairn

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Scale 1:18000