

Walks Cromdale

1: Cromdale Church, Haughs of Cromdale, Lethendry Castle and Pipers Stone

Starting at the lay-by opposite Cromdale kirk, cross the fence and walk along the river bank towards the road bridge. A sandy patch on the grass bank, which used to be more obvious, marks the site of St Ma Luaig's well. An Irish saint and contemporary of Columba, he helped spread Christianity amongst the Picts in the 6th century. He established religious centres at Mortlach near Dufftown and Rosemarkie on the Black Isle. The spot gives a good view of Cromdale Church, which has served the parish for centuries despite the problem of access for many parishioners. 'It was by no means convenient to the great bulk of the population', for until a wire suspension bridge was built in 1881, the only way was by ferry. The Boat of Cromdale, where the ferryman lived is a short distance downstream on the left.

The first bridge did not last long, being washed away in 1894. A second bridge had a similar fate in 1921, so a more substantial bridge of girders from World War I surplus was erected in 1922. The piers of the earlier bridge can still be seen.

The church is of simple plain construction dating from 1809, built on a much earlier site. There are many interesting gravestones with a preponderance of Grants!

Continue along the road past the impressive former manse and on approaching the bridge over the former railway line, look left at the restored Cromdale Station. Now a private residence, it sits on a stretch of the Strathspey Way. Turn left at the crossroads (Achroisk, field of crossing) and over another bridge that crosses the Burn of Cromdale. At the junction beside the former school built in 1877, turn right and walk up the straight road past Balnaboddach (farmstead of the old man) and Croftindam.

As the road bends to the left, take the side road on the right to Easter and Wester Lethendry. Information boards give historical background about the Battle of the Haughs of Cromdale and way markers point the direction to the Pipers Stone and Lethendry Castle.

A circular walk from here can be taken to Wester Lethendry and the castle. Beyond the farm steading, the ruins of the 16th century castle rise above later farm buildings that have been built into its walls. The castle once belonged to the Nairn family and formed part of the Barony of Cromdale. The lands were later purchased by the Lairds of Grant. After the Battle of the Haughs of Cromdale, some Jacobites held out here, but were eventually captured.

Return to Easter Lethendry and turn right past the farm house and follow the track as it hugs the west side of Claggersnich Wood, following it uphill to the top of the wood. Just as the track begins to descend on the left side, there are a few solitary pine trees and a metal pole indicating the Pipers Stone. The Battle of the Haughs of

Cromdale was fought here on 1 May 1690, between Jacobite clans and government troops. The surprise attack of mostly mounted dragoons was more a rout than a battle, ending the Jacobite campaign until the next rising of 1715. Whether true or Victorian romance, a piper playing to encourage his comrades was killed standing by the stone, the Gaelic place name however suggests there was more than one piper.

Follow the track downhill over the site of the battle and make for the road below. Reaching the road, turn left back to Lethendry and Cromdale.

2: Speyside Way and Cromdale Hills

The full length of the right bank of the parish, from Cromdale to Tormore can be walked along the Speyside Way. It follows the old railway line at the start followed by sections, through forestry at Tom an Uird, Knockfrink and Garvault. The Way is well sign posted and is never far from the main road. For the more adventurous, the Cromdale Hills offer great views over Strathspey and Strath Avon. The undulating ridge can be accessed after a steep climb from Bridge of Shennach or near Achvockie Cottage via the track to the transmitter pylon at Tom a'Chait. Carn a Ghille Chear at 710 m (2229 ft) is the highest hill in the parish. Further west along the ridge, Creagan a'Chaise 722 m (2368 ft) with its cairn to commemorate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887, is the highest of the Cromdale Hills, but lies just outside the parish.

3: Advie to Tulchan

The small village of Advie offers a short walk off the A95. Formerly a parish, it comprised the Barony of Advie on the right and Barony of Tulchan on the left banks of the River Spey. It was united with Cromdale in 1593. The church now closed for worship is adjacent to the main road. Built in 1874 it was frequently visited by Edward VII during his hunting, shooting and fishing holidays to Tulchan Lodge. The fragments of a Pictish Class 1 stone found at the site of the original church are built into the vestry wall. Return to the junction and walk down the quieter road passed the hall and the repositioned war memorial, which formerly stood at the apex of the bend. Advie once had its own school, post office and railway station, all of which have now closed. The station was closed in 1965 and had been a busy line serving the numerous distilleries in Speyside. A sign points the way to the cemetery and former site of the original parish church by the banks of the Spey or cross the bridge over the former railway line and continue through the village to Advie Bridge. Opened in 1922 by Mrs McCorquodale of Tulchan Lodge, the concrete single track bridge replaced an earlier wooden one. It over looks Tulchan Pool, one of the many famous salmon pools on this stretch of the Spey.