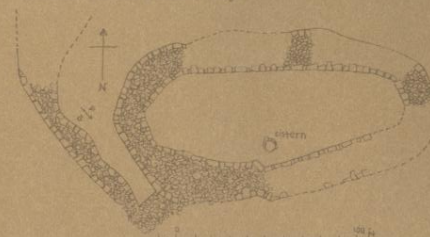


Abernethy Circular Walk

The best route to take in order to appreciate the views on this scenic walk is to begin at Kirk Wynd, to the south east of the Round Tower, and follow the gently sloping road that leads up to Loanhead Quarry. Here there are seats where one can stop and enjoy the view before continuing along the Witches Road. This path, also provided with seats, traverses the wooded hillside with the Ballo Burn down below on the right. The route then passes through a kissing gate and down larch stepping to the edge of the Bum to follow it upstream along a shady and picturesque path that leads to the Glenfoot — Strathmiglo Road. Following this road down the Glen to the right one comes to a signposted stile on the left which the more energetic walker can cross and then climb up and along the hill towards the Law, guided by waymarkers. (Those wishing a more sedate stroll should continue on their way, down the Abernethy Glen road, ignoring the temptation offered by the Castle Law Fort and View Point direction sign). The path passes the Preaching How, the King's Armchair and under the Witches' Hole, a shallow, flat-bottomed cave hewn out of the rock. There is then a steep climb up to the ruins of the fort on Castle Law. All that now remains of the fort is a mass of rubble and grass-covered embankments but the view from this point is superb, covering lower Strathearn, Moncreiffe Hill, the Braes of Carse with the Grampian mountains beyond and down towards Dundee and the Firth of Tay.



Plan of Abernethy Fort

Returning to the Glen Road the walk continues downhill passing Bogles Quarry (another reference to the supernatural, Bogle meaning goblin) on the left and Quarrel Knowe, once used for archery practice, on the right. (Quarrel coming from the old French word for diamond shape, as in the head of an arrow). Just off the road a kissing gate by a seat leads into the Rough Glen

which was once the old public road. It is marked by large rocks and trees forming a shady avenue back to the Main Street at Abernethy.

This scenic walk covers a variety of ground and takes the walker from shady wooded paths to bare windswept hilltop providing some marvellous views. The walker is reminded, however, that very little land is nowadays left unfarmed in one way or another and that resentment is caused to landowners if he strays carelessly from the path, disturbing livestock or crops. Dogs in particular can be the worst offenders; many may be thought of as well controlled but the call of the wild can be too much, especially for dogs normally confined to town parks. So please exercise every care in your use of the countryside and thus keep it enjoyable for everyone.

Follow The Country Code

Always keep to the path.
Fasten all gates after you
And do not damage hedges or fences.
Keep all dogs on a leash.
Protect the wild life, wild plants and trees.
Respect all water supplies and facilities.
Guard against all risk of fire.
Take all litter home
And go carefully on country roads.
Walkers are requested not to take dogs up the Castle Law path.

We acknowledge with gratitude the considerable assistance rendered to us in organising the Circular Walk by:
Abernethy Community Council
Dr. M. M. Shepherd, Blairgowrie.
Mr. W. T. Smith, Carpow.
Mr. M. & R. Duff, Glenfoot Farm.
Mr. W. J. Morton, Craigden,
And The Perth and Kinross Footpaths Improvement Team.

With assistance in the leaflet by:
Mr. N. Peddie, Abernethy.
Dr. Margaret Stewart.

For further details of this area see:—
Ordnance Survey Maps:—
1:50,000 First Series, Perth & Kinross Sheet 58 or
One-Inch Map, Perth & Alloa Sheet 55.

Historic Outline

The town of Abernethy was once an ancient Pictish capital. It was known as 'Obair Nechtan' to the Highlanders, which means Nechtan's work or stronghold. Nechtan was the name of more than one of the Pictish Kings who were said to be the founders of the town and who selected it as their capital and place of residence. They claimed to be Christians even before the coming of St. Columba and a church was built at Abernethy which became a Monastery and a place of learning through the Dark Ages. The town has a long history of religious involvement, being once the seat of the Bishops of the whole Pictish Kingdom, a centre of the Culdees until 1273 and one of the early seats of the Secession Church in the mid-18th century.

Close by the site of the old monastery is the Round Tower, an early 9th century building. It was used as a belfry and probably as a keep to secure the Monks and their valuables from marauders of the times, the door being situated high off the ground and well suited for defence. Several skeletons, one in a stone coffin, were found buried under the Tower during excavations in the first half of the nineteenth century. It is thought that they were the remains of distinguished early ecclesiastics. The collar and chain fixed to the outer wall of the tower is known as a Joug and was used to chain miscreants to the building on the schoolmaster's midden as punishment for lesser crimes.

Not far from the Tower, the Kirk Wynd leads up to Loanhead Quarry, once worked for road building material, and then on to the Witches Road that was



used, as legend has it, by witches and other supernatural forces on their way up to Castle Law. These witches were brought to their end by the Laird of Invernethy who, by subterfuge, tricked them into revealing their names and thus ended their practices. They were burned on the town hill (Abernethy Hill) and their ashes deposited on a level space to the east where the two and twenty hillocks are known as the Witches Graves to this day. This same Laird is the one who, for a bet, carried a silver goat on the toe of his boot all the way down the difficult track from the Law.

This track can still be seen today marked by an embankment lined with boulders. It is quite possibly as old as the fort on the Law itself. On Castle Law is an ancient Iron Age fort formed by an oval enclosure of about 136 feet by 51 feet enclosed by a stone wall 18 feet to 25 feet thick. The wall consisted of inner and outer facings of dressed stone infilled with rubble reinforced by horizontal and vertical timbers. Another wall branches out from the main building down to a small loch and marsh which, together with a rock cut cistern within the fort, may have supplied water to the



fort's defenders. Below the northern line of defence there is a natural terrace on which can be found the remains of circular Iron Age hut foundations. This hill site is important as it has produced several dateable pre-Roman finds;— a bronze brooch, a polished felsestone axe, stone lamps and other fragments pointing to a date of about the 2nd or 3rd century B.C. A legend of this area relates that when the Scots were fighting the Picts a nurse, in a vain attempt to escape with the Royal heir in a solid gold cradle, threw herself and the child into the Loch and drowned. When the Scots were attempting to recover the gold a fierce tempest blew up and a gaunt figure of a woman appeared to them out of the Loch, saying:—

"Forbear, forbear or thus feel my power!
The golden cradle can never be got;
till mortal man, undaunted, at midnight mirk hour,
Nine times alone shall encircle me round;
then, then shall the golden cradle be found."

However, apparently, only ill has come to those who have tried to recover the gold.

Below the fort is the Rough Glen which was once part of the route from Strathmiglo to Abernethy used for the transport of coal and lime. The original stone paving is still in existence beneath the present earth covering. The road then continued to Perth via Hatton, Carey, Culfargy and over the Earn at the old Bridge of Earn.

This was before it was replaced by the road through Glenfarg that used much of the stone from the fort in its construction. One of the tracks on the hill possibly formed part of the Coronation Road leading from Falkland Palace via Abernethy, Elcho and by Ferry to Kinfauns and then overhill to Scone.

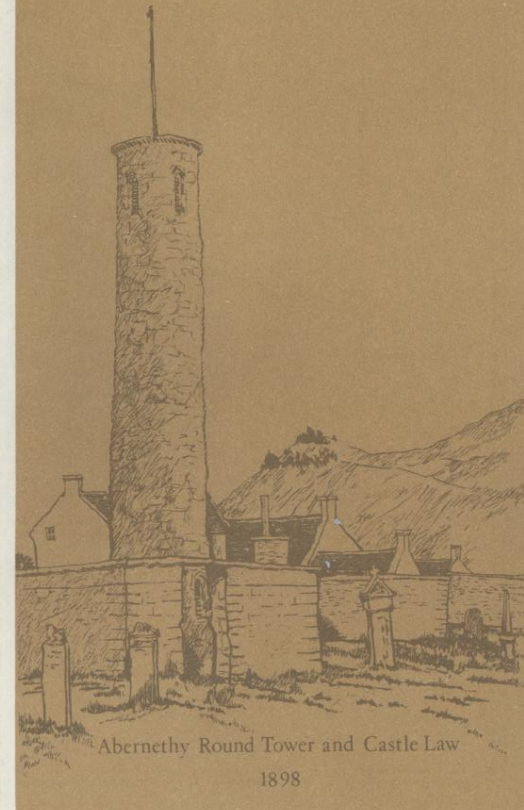
Views

The skyline, as seen from the Fort or Law, contains many hills with prehistoric forts. Looking almost due south, the top of Beins Law Fort can be clearly seen, crowned with ancient Scots Pine. This fort is situated mid-way through the Ochil Hills and can be clearly seen from Maiden Castle, perched above the Arraty Craigs on the northern slopes of the Lomond Hills. Maiden Castle Fort is itself overlooked by the high fort on the very crown of East Lomond. From Beins Law, looking almost due north, Castle Law Fort appears in a dip in the hills with Arnbathie Fort hill clearly visible in the distance across the Tay beyond Kinfauns. By shifting the gaze slightly to the east, Evelick and Dunsinane Fort hills can be seen in line ahead through the Abernethy Glen opening, rising up from the Braes of the Carse and the Sidlaw Hills beyond. These same hill forts can also be clearly seen from Castle Law. The other important top visible from Beins Law is Culteuchar Hill with its remarkable stronghold, Glenearn Fortress situated on its eastern shoulder. Back at Castle Law Fort the viewer can locate Mordun Top Carnac Fort, across Strathearn, atop Moncreiffe Hill. Many of the forts mentioned, together with others in line along the length of the Ochils, also provide varying degrees of mutual visibility.



Produced by
Perth and Kinross
District Council

Abernethy Glen Circular Walk



Abernethy Round Tower and Castle Law

1898