

Brackwalks



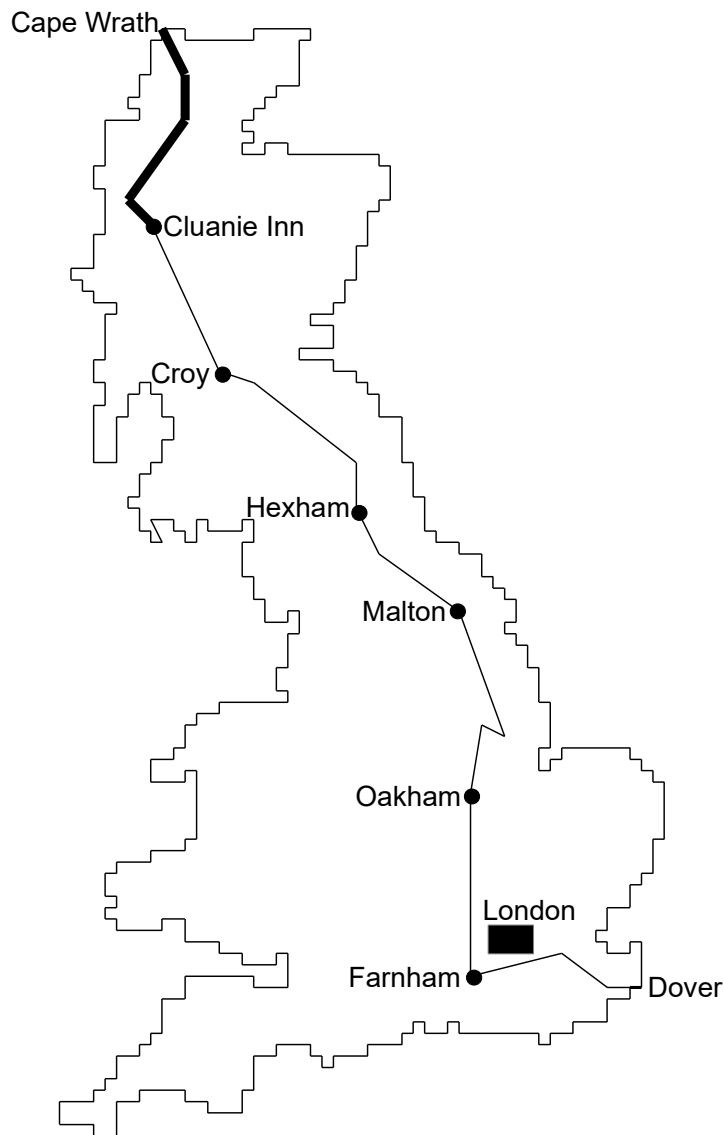
From FORELAND to CAPE

- an end to end walk across Britain from
South Foreland (Dover) to Cape Wrath

Linda Brackenbury

Disclaimer: All details are given in good faith. However no activity can be completely hazard-free so undertaking any part of this route is done entirely at your own risk and I accept no responsibility for errors, loss or injury however caused.

Part 7 Cluanie Inn to Cape Wrath (185.5miles)



The final part of the walk to Cape Wrath has the most spectacular scenery. However, it requires the most thought and organisation because the terrain is more remote than other sections and unless camping, organising catered accommodation involves a number of pick-ups from the route. The compensation for this is using the same B&B base for more than one night. There is real choice in a route to reach Cape Wrath. The usual westerly Cape Wrath Trail routes are to my mind tough, involving quite long passages of slogging through pathless, boggy, featureless terrain and the fording of burns and rivers described as 'difficult in spate'. Having failed to see the appeal of this, I have gone for a gentler western route using paths and tracks. Nevertheless, there are some pathless sections (the minimum I could get away with) and more (quiet) lane walking than other described routes.

The route goes northwards from Glen Shiel into Glen Affric before turning westwards to Ruarch (hamlet) and Inverinate village. Hill tracks beyond lead over to Killilan and a subsequent hill track over to Attadale and on to Strathcarron village. Glen Carron is followed to Achnashellach where the track over the Coulin Pass is joined. Once over the pass, a new construction road offers an easy way of reaching the village of Kinlochewe while offering spectacular views of the Torridon mountains. Kinlochewe is the last habitation of any size unless a rest day is taken in (off-route) Ullapool.

Beyond Kinlochewe, the route heads over to Loch a' Bhraoin via the narrow pass of Bealach na Croise and emerges on the quiet main road to Braemore Junction. However before the Junction, the route strikes northwards on paths and tracks along Strath More. The route continues northwards to the path along Strath Nimhe which meets the well-walked track to Oykel Bridge at East Rhidorroch. It's remarkable that most off-road routes to both John O'Groats and Cape Wrath pass through remote Oykel Bridge with its hotel; however it is a spot where tracks and roads converge on it from most directions. This enables other easier, more-easterly options to Oykel Bridge to be considered.

The River Oykel is followed north-westwards to Loch Ailsh before striking northwards on an old track (with spectacular views of the Assynt mountains) to emerge far up Glen Cassley. A power station access lane ensues which crosses the north end of Loch Shin to reach the Lairg road. There's easy walking along an old miner's track to Gobernuisgach Lodge where a good track with spectacular views branches off through Glen Golly and over to Loch Dionard. Beyond the loch, there's a good track along Strath Dionard to the Durness main road at Gualin House.

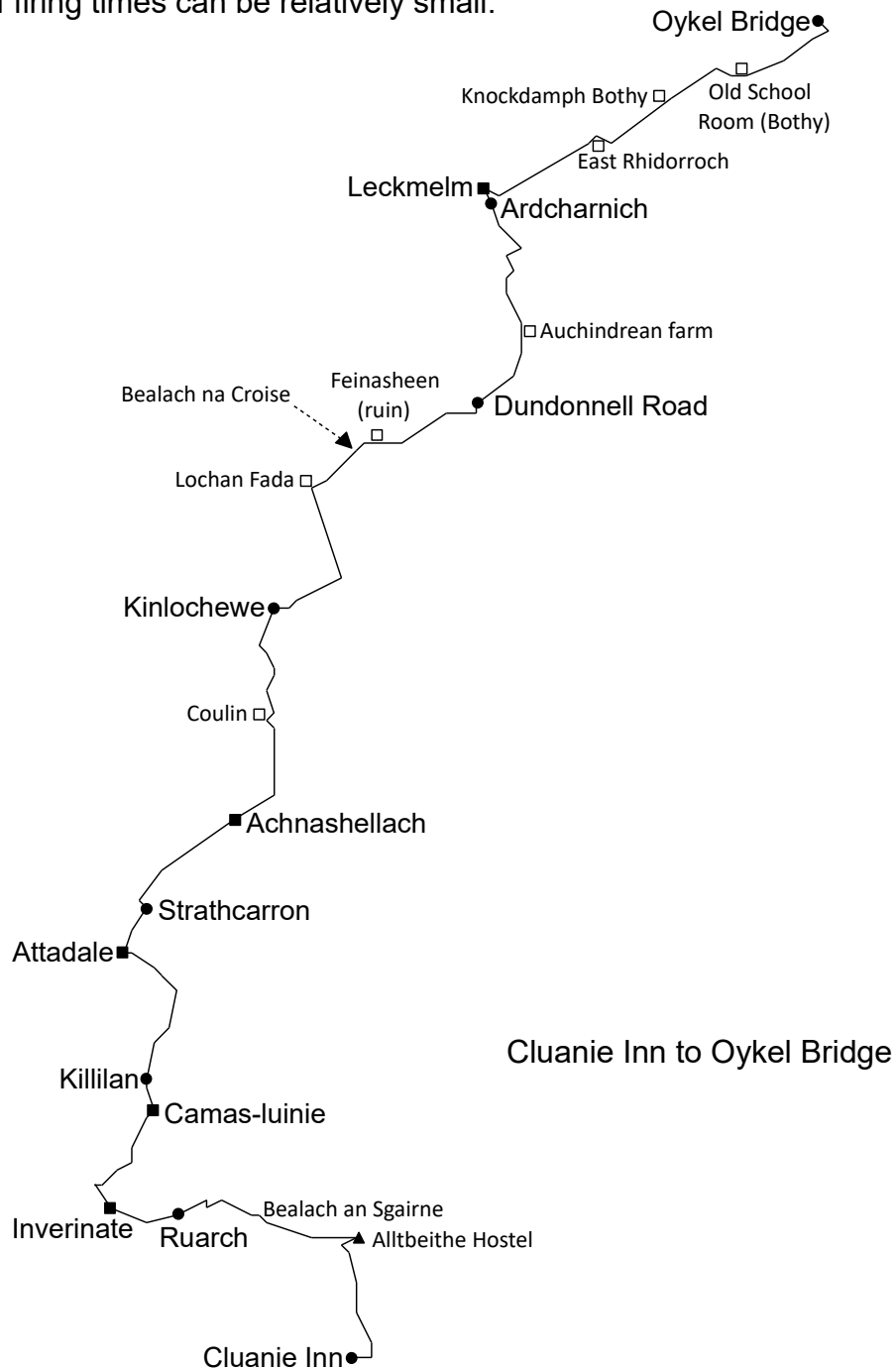
Unusually, the route now makes for the west side of the Kyle of Durness, using footbridges to cross the River Dionard and the Grudie River. The west side of the Kyle is then followed to reach and follow the track through MoD territory to the iconic lighthouse at Cape Wrath marking the end of the walk from Dover. It then only remains to take the minibus back to the Kyle for the ferry crossing back to the Durness side. Returning home is relatively easy as Durness has a weekday bus that runs to Lairg railway station in time for the mid-morning train to Inverness and a Saturday bus which arrives in Inverness late morning.

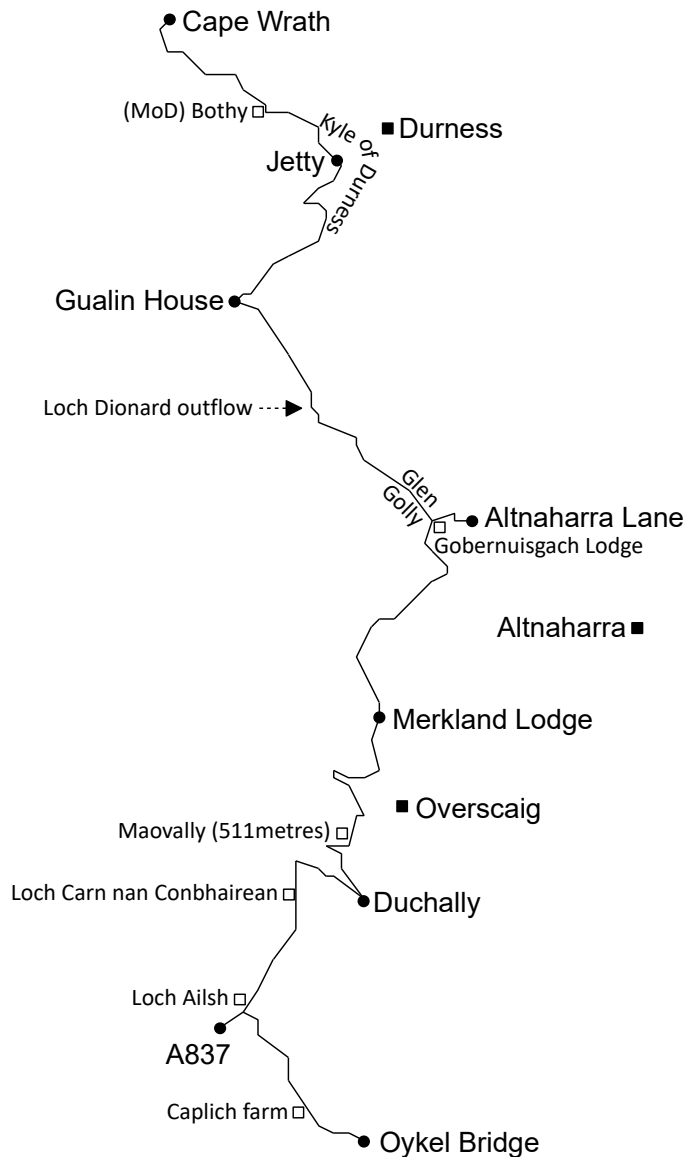
A feature of walking this section is new deer fencing with a single entry and exit point and mostly this does not appear on the Explorer 1:25000 maps. So where necessary to assist with navigation, GPS readings are given. The other feature encountered in this section is the large number of fords that need to be crossed. Most are insignificant and can either be easily stepped over or have stones strategically placed. There are just too many crossing points to mention, so the description only refers to 'significant' fords; these are ones that could be problematic to cross because of width, flow rate or steep banks to negotiate, and particular care should be exercised here especially in spate conditions; good leather boots and gaiters plus walking poles should ensure a successful crossing. This section was

undertaken in fairly wet conditions both from above and below and the route selected only resulted in the boots filling with water when tackling the outflow of Loch Dionard.

The time of the year chosen for this section needs some thought. This is an area of large estates where stalking is a favoured activity. The stalking season is from the start of July to the third week in October although no estate appears to shoot on a Sunday. Many routes are open at all times and some estates only stalk from late August. Detailed lists of the stalking activities for the estates in different areas are at <https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/heading-scottish-hills-stalking-area-tables>.

I am told that the MoD at Cape Wrath generally tries to avoid live firing during July and August, and often it's only a week or fortnight at other times. For data on MoD firing times, contact Range Control tel. 01971 511 242; Out-Of-Hours tel. 0800 833 300 but note that advance notice of firing times can be relatively small.





Oykel Bridge to Cape Wrath

Stage 75: Cluanie Inn to Ruarch (Morvich) 16miles, ascent 748metres (2430ft), descent 945metres (3070ft). Explorer 414 (Glen Shiel); Landranger 33 (Glen Shiel).

Returning to the Cluanie Inn is relatively easy. Inverness is well served by trains and providing you arrive prior to 17:00 then it's possible to catch the last bus of the day to the Isle of Skye from the bus station close by

The walk to Ruarch from the Cluanie Inn is in two distinct halves with the Glen Affric Youth Hostel being roughly the halfway point. It's well reported that once the track to the Youth Hostel ends, the path beyond is fairly wet and this description is not exaggerated! There is relatively new deer fencing with only one exit stile around the latter part of the path; the provided stile has obviously been constructed for people with extremely long legs leaving

the rest of us to struggle. Over the stile, there's an unfordable allt to the left so it's necessary to take to the river bank between the deer fencing and the allt to reach the elegant bridge leading to the hostel. The path from the hostel along Gleann Gniomhaidh and up over Bealach an Sgairne into Gleann Choinneachain is a well constructed and walked hill path which is a pleasure to traverse and this half of the stage is by far the best part of the walk. There's no B&B accommodation at Morvich but there's an excellent B&B at the tiny settlement of Ruarch nearby and there's more B&B accommodation in Inverinate.

Route: From the Cluanie Inn go east along the main road (towards Inverness) for nearly a mile, cross an allt and 180metres later turn left on a track with a Scottish Rights of Way sign to Morvich & Glen Affric. Follow the rough track as it ascends along the valley with the allt below on the left. When the track finishes, continue straight ahead contouring. The path tends to disappear in the bog but normally by looking ahead its restart can be seen. The path gets progressively boggier and eventually reaches a stile in a (new) deer fence (not on the map). Cross and follow the main (lower) track which loosely follows the left fence clockwise around the lower flank of the hill on the right. When a deer stile is spotted in the left fence (NH 07252 19415) take this onto the ground lying between the fence and an allt. Follow an intermittent path on rough ground to the right along the allt bank. Alltbeithe Scottish Youth Hostel is soon visible and after 0.9mile an elegant suspension bridge over the allt is reached (7miles).

Cross and turn left along the river bank to reach a good track from the hostel, fording a burn on the way; to avoid fording the burn, follow the burn towards the hostel to find a bridge and the track. Follow the track but now on the opposite side of the allt and in the opposite direction to the approach to the suspension bridge. About half a mile from the suspension bridge, the Allt Beithe Garbh is crossed on a sturdy low wooden-plank bridge. Immediately after, leave the track to go half-right on a small grass path; a small pile of stones marks the turn-off. The path quickly improves and is mainly a good path with a foundation that can be followed all the way to either Ruarch or Morvich.

Initially after the turn-off, the path follows the Allt Beithe Garbh before veering away left and after some time the Allt Gleann Gniomhaidh is seen below on the left. Soon the path comes close to this allt and follows it. When the path appears to end, keep with the allt; bicycle tyre marks are a good indication of the route to take. Eventually a gravel path half-right indicates the reappearance of the path. Take this and follow the (now well defined path) above the valley floor. Keep going until Loch a' Bhealaich is spotted. The path twists as it makes its way to and along the south end of the loch (loch on the right); the map shows a path up the east side of the loch but there seems no sign of it.

Beyond the loch, continue on the clearly defined path as it ascends towards Bealach an Sgairne at around 523metres (1700ft). The path is defined until it passes round a rock. From here, ascend a quarter-left to pick up the path all the way to the bealach which is marked by a large cairn. The path down is well defined. Initially it descends through a rocky and narrow gap before ascending a small knoll and beyond reaches a path fork. Take the right branch and the path continues descending using a set of zig-zags to ease the gradient. The path descends to a significant allt, the Allt a' Choire Chaiol, which needs to be forded; there are usually enough rocks to keep the feet dry. Continue on the well constructed path which now contours along Gleann Choinneachain descending slowly. Pass through a deer gate and continue beyond a second deer gate for about 220metres; at this point you should be opposite the end of an open area on the opposite side of the glen and looking 1½-right you should see a Falls (of Glomach) waymark post about

100metres away. Leave the main path at this point (NG 98116 22187) to take the path past the Falls post. It soon becomes a well defined path descending through trees to a sturdy footbridge (NG 98152 22322). Beyond the crossing of the glen's allt, follow the path through a deer gate and then a brief grass path onto a track. Turn left. The track becomes a lane and ignoring a track off right signed to the Glomach Falls, follow the lane along the glen. It becomes a rough lane which ascends to pass under a height restriction bar and then curves left. Soon cross two bridged burns then a cattle grid and immediately after there's an (excellent) B&B on the left.

Stage 76: Ruarch to Killilan 10.6miles, ascent 775metres (2520ft), descent 794metres (2580ft). Explorer 413 (Knoydart); Landranger 25 (Glen Affric).

This is an extremely good walk. It first makes its way through Inverinate where there's a petrol station with a village shop attached; it's a good place to stock up as there's no other shop until Kinlochewe. The walk continues by following the An Leth-allt flowing through the glacial hollow of Coire Dhuinnid using a good hillside track; there's a bonus in that there's an eyrie in the cliffs across the glen and if you are lucky you will spot (as we did) golden eagles soaring high in the sky. Eventually, the route turns off along an old cart track north which follows the line of the Allt a' Mhaim to a flattish area between mounds (Mam Coire Doimhneid) with increasing views ahead of Glen Elchaig below. A well walked hill path leads down to the area above the hamlet of Camas-luinie which is clearly visible below. The map shows a path going north-of-eastwards to Camas-luinie and another east-of-north heading towards Killilan, with the latter the intended route. As neither path was apparent on the ground, a decision was taken to head eastwards to Camas-luinie and thereafter take to the quiet lane along Glen Elchaig to a pick-up at Killilan. There's a self-catering bunkhouse at Camas-luinie but no accommodation at Killilan.

Route: From Ruarch continue down the rough lane and turn right when a lane is met to reach the main A87 road. Turn right here; there's a verge or pavement that can be used for all the main road sections. Shortly turn off half-right through a walkers' gate, signed 'forest walks'. Follow the good track for $\frac{2}{3}$ mile as it contours the hillside and then rises. Before the top of the rise, look for a walkers' access into forest which leaves the main track half-left. Take this and follow the pleasant grassy track for $\frac{1}{2}$ mile down and up through woodland to meet a good forestry track at a corner. Turn left and shortly re-meet the main road (opposite the Community Centre). Turn right, pass a road off left called The Square and turn left down the next road entry off left. After a few metres, at the left bend, turn off right through a walkers' gate onto what looks like another section of the original Road to the Isles. Follow this short section back onto the main road and turn left to the Inverinate petrol station & stores. Beyond, continue on the main road for another 0.4mile to a lane off right signed to Carr Brae which is taken.

Ascend steeply past houses, cross a burn on a bridge then a cattle grid. Continue to ascend round a right bend then on the left bend that follows, turn right into a small parking area and go through a walkers' gate. Pass to the right of a farm building then turn left on a track. This ascends along the glen side with its allt below on the right. The glen is narrow with steep sides at first but in time widens out. Eventually when the hill track finishes, continue for a short distance on a path through a small iron gate. Just beyond ford a burn and almost immediately reach a ruined shieling; a shieling is a shepherd's summer dwelling. Turn left after the building to ascend on an old farm cart track which loosely follows the line of iron posts, usually on the left, marking the old fence line up the hill (although the track sometimes zig-zags to ease the gradient). The track leads up to the col

of Mam Coire Doimhneid.

Here the track disappears so go forward parallel to the posts on the left until they swing right ascending the hillside. Continue forwards keeping to the left of the lowest ground and soon (new) deer fencing appears ahead. Make for a walkers gate on the left (NG 93199 26427). Beyond the gate follow the stony hill path which soon starts to descend to the left of an allt. Follow the path down tending to veer right when the path disappears. As another deer fence is approached, look for a crossing point which is a low wooden fence (NG 93747 27445). Over, follow the obvious path to a deer gate (NG 93871 27978); Camas-luinie is clearly visible below on the right. Through the deer gate, a path coming in from the left soon joins and about 110metres later, a path is shown going off right to Camas-luinie with a half-left fork towards Killilan.

Turn right here and make your way with care as best you can over the rough ground towards Camas-luinie crossing two burns on the descent. Eventually, get to a padlocked deer gate with a walkers' gate a few metres to the right. Pass through and follow the path to an access lane and turn left to meet the lane at Camas-luinie. Turn left to follow the quiet lane along Glen Elchaig. The lane turns right to cross the River Elchaig. Beyond, the lane follows the river before turning right and then continuing to a left bend signed for Ardelve. There's a parking area here on the right which makes a good pick-up point; turning right on the estate drive through the parking area leads to a handy telephone (which accepts cash) after 0.4 mile; Macrae Kintail Taxi tel. 01599 511 384 operate in the area.

Stage 77: Killilan to Strathcarron Hotel 10.3miles, ascent 554metres (1800ft), descent 542metres (1760ft). Explorer 429 (Strathcarron); Landranger 25 (Glen Affric).

This is another memorable walk first using a path along Glen Ling and then after the footbridge crossing of an allt known locally as 'Shepherds Burn', the route turns north-northeast on a clear hill path; telegraph poles across the moorland to the right of this hill path are this stage's navigational aid and are not shown on the maps. The path enters trees and becomes a track which passes east of Loch an Iasaich to meet a hardcore construction road (for a hydro scheme). After just over a mile the construction road is left to follow the original forest track to a bridge crossing of the River Attadale. Beyond, a farm track which eventually becomes a lane leads round the grounds of Attadale Gardens onto the main A890 road. Tiny Strathcarron village with its hotel lies 2¼miles up the road and on a very wet Sunday in summer seemed quite quiet.

Route: Turn left on the lane towards Ardelve, cross the River Ling and after a further 0.3mile turn off right on a private road signed 'Nonach Lodge'. Continue on this lane to its end passing between a barn and a bungalow; ignore the footpath sign off left before the barn which just leads into untrodden, boggy rough ground. Pass through a walkers' gate ahead and take the trodden path through the field left-of-ahead to a walkers' gate in the field corner. Through, turn right along a trodden path which is initially along the right fence. After a deer fence there's a choice of staying on the upper path straight on or taking a descending grass path off right which presumably leads to the lower path along the river. Staying on the well-defined upper path, a path fork is reached at NG 94213 32058. Take the right branch here and gently descend to meet the lower path along Glen Ling. The path continues along the glen staying quite close to the river. Eventually, a footbridge across a side allt is reached.

Over, the path continues half-right briefly but then the trodden path curves left (turning

away from the river) and slightly ascending to pass through a gap in fencing. Continue to follow the well defined path to reach a sheepfold. Keep right of the first sheepfold then turn up left on a path which shortly crosses the fence line. The path now turns left beside a burn for a short distance before crossing it. Continue to follow the path which keeps to the left of the line of telegraph poles. When the path starts to ascend, curving round the hills on the left, it becomes an old track. Once the top is reached (at about 283metres), continue on the path towards trees, pass through an iron gate and just follow the obvious track. Ignore a sign off left to Loch an Iasaich and continue straight on descending to meet a hardcore construction road.

Turn left and follow the mainly descending track for just over a mile to where a track crosses the construction road (NG 94431 37639). Here leave the hardcore by turning right onto the old track. Follow this track as it turns left before generally curving right to reach a bridge across the River Attadale.

Over, turn left on the farm track along the valley, ignoring track turn-offs left. After passing through a gate, the track becomes surfaced. Follow the quiet lane which turns left at the entry to Attadale House and Gardens (which are straight ahead). Shortly cross a cattle grid then follow the right wall as it leaves the lane and curves right to exit onto the main A890 road. Turn right and proceed with care. The road passes Attadale railway station then ascends and descends back to the railway line. Continue on, passing the Carron Restaurant offering teas/coffees etc. when open. On approaching Strathcarron village, cross the burn and immediately take the footpath by the railway line which re-meets the road at the level crossing. Over, the Strathcarron Hotel is immediately on the right; it is the only accommodation in the vicinity.

Stage 78: Strathcarron Hotel to Kinlochewe 17.1miles, ascent 692metres (2250ft), descent 674metres (2190ft). Explorer 429 (Strathcarron). 435 (Kinlochewe); Landranger 25 (Glen Affric), 19 (Ullapool).

This is another good straightforward walk with the highlight being the traverse of the Coulin Pass and later the tremendous views of awe-inspiring Torridon mountains in the Beinn Eighe reserve. There are good conditions underfoot all the way so speedy progress can be made. The walk commences with a good footpath and track which emerges on the main road west of the small hamlet of Coulags. The valley road is then followed past Loch Dughail to Achnashellach with its station and small passenger shelter; this is a lovely easy walk along Strath Carron with very little ascent or descent along a (mostly) single track road which is not too busy.

From the station, there's a gently ascending track which offers good views of the strath below. Over the summit there's a steady descent to meet a hardcore construction road. The construction road leads past Torran-Cuilinn (bungalow) and ascends through forest out onto open moorland. The moorland track contours above Glen Torridon with dramatic views of the Beinn Eighe massif across the glen. After entering a cleared area of forest the road starts to descend as it makes its way down to the Torridon-Kinlochewe road. Although this is not shown on the map, it does avoid the usual problems reported by walkers who attempt the path into Kinlochewe. Kinlochewe is the last village of any size before Durness and has B&B's plus a Hotel with bunkhouse accommodation, a post office/shop and the busy Whistle Stop cafe (recommended) in its small centre.

Route: From the Strathcarron Hotel, continue along the main road and immediately after crossing the River Carron turn off right on a riverside path signed to Coulags. This soon

joins a farm track. Continue to a track fork and ignore the track off left to go straight on past a small farm building with a distinctive red roof. Keep going and at the next track fork, branch left as indicated to shortly reach the main A890 road. Turn right for the walk along Strath Carron and shortly pass Coulags. Just beyond Balnacra the road crosses the railway and then passes close to the shoreline of Loch Dughail.

After crossing a significant burn with a big house beyond on the left, pass the house drive and a few metres further on (just beyond the wire fence) turn off left and go half-left up the bank to a tree with a little stone cairn. Pass right of the tree then curve left to a bank overlooking the side of the big house. Turn right up stone steps then descend the bank to reach a track at the back of the house. Ascend the track passing some cottages to reach their access gate and through meet a track. Turn left briefly to reach Achnashellach Station (6.6miles). If you don't fancy the path, continue on the main road until a sign off left for the station and follow the track up; the passenger shelter on the platform is effective and contains a seat. Cross the line to the track opposite and shortly reach a cross-track.

Take the track opposite; it has a Scottish Rights of Way sign to the Coulin Pass. Follow the excellent ascending track through forest. The track crosses a bridge with a waterfall visible on the left. Continue climbing on the track which eventually curves left and reaches the summit just after leaving the forest. The track continues but is now downhill along the open hillside and eventually crosses the River Coulin to meet a stony construction road. Turn right and follow the hard-going surface along the construction road. When the road approaches Coulin House, turn right with the road just before the house (11.8miles). Continue to cross the River Coulin and about 100metres beyond turn off left on the old track. This passes left of the building of Torran-Cuilinn and all too soon re-meets the construction road; Loch Coulin is visible on the left.

Follow the ascending road into the forest. The road soon curves left and after some time reaches a right bend followed by a left bend. It now climbs steeply through the forest and continues ascending after leaving the forest but at a gentler gradient. Ignore a quarry off right to stay on the main track which passes to the right of a lochan. Keep going on the construction track which after a period of contouring the open hillside starts to gently descend. After entering a deforested area the track descends steeply to a track junction (NH 02241 58977). Here, the construction road turns left and there's an unsurfaced track off right. Continue by turning left to stay with the road which shortly descends to a bridge across the river A' Ghairbhe and then meets the 'main' Torridon to Kinlochewe road. Turn right on this quiet single-track road for about 1¾ miles to reach the centre of Kinlochewe.

Stage 79: Kinlochewe to Dundonnell Road (NH 162 761) 16.8miles, ascent 862metres (2800ft), descent 615metres (2000)ft. Explorer 435 (Kinlochewe); Landranger 19 (Ullapool), 20 (Loch Broom).

Most walkers doing the Cape Wrath Trail go to Corrie Hallie on the A832 (about 2 miles south-west of Dundonnell) but this is getting on for 20 miles. Hence the choice of making for the track along Loch a' Bhraion which meets the A832 at NH 162 761. Even so, in my opinion it is the hardest day of this section. It had been the original intention to reach Loch a' Bhraion via Bealach Gorm but having arrived in Kinlochewe I was persuaded that Bealach na Croise would make an easier route with less peat hags and fords to be negotiated. This added about two miles to the route and in retrospect I wish that I had opted for Bealach Gorm. Note that it is the only stage on the entire route where you will experience the joy of peat hags. A pick-up is required to accommodation from the finish point.

The route first makes its way through the hamlet of Incheril onto a good track along the Abhainn Bruachaig to a track junction at the Heights of Kinlochewe (somewhat misnamed as it's at a distinctly low level). Here, the route turns northwards to follow Gleann na Muice, again on a well defined track/path which continues until in sight of Lochan Fada. The hard, pathless work across the peat hags to Bealach na Croise now starts with an ascent to a small loch which provides a useful (and rare) landmark. From here the route heads north-east to the bealach, although having to negotiate the groughs (deep channels in the peat which are often wet in the bottom) makes maintaining this direction difficult. In addition, a (significant) allt lies between the lochan and the bealach and needs to be forded.

Once the bealach is reached, the walking gets easier with a stalkers path used to descend from the pass. When a side glen opens up on the right, the stalkers path is left to go cross-country (over rough ground but no peat hags) to a (walked) contouring path running along this glen and this is followed to Loch a' Bhraoin, from where a good track can be taken to the A832.

Route: From the T-junction in Kinlochewe, turn right on the A832 towards Inverness. Cross the Kinlochewe River and then branch left to follow the pavement and cycle lane which is separate from the main road. This emerges on the lane (a 'No Through Road') to Incheril. Follow the lane up, ignoring a lane off left. The lane curves right passing to the right of a parking area and becomes a track; there's a Scottish Rights of Way sign here to Bealach na Croise and Bealach Gorm. The track leads to a serious gate. Through, just follow the very good track with Abhainn Bruachaig just to the right. Eventually, a glen opens up on the left indicating where the route will leave the abhainn. After crossing a cattle grid, a new build home is passed and shortly after turn off left from the main track opposite a generator building; this point on the map is described as the Heights of Kinlochewe.

Pass through a gate with a Letterewe Estate notice and follow the good, steadily ascending track up Gleann na Muice to a footbridge across its abhainn. Over, the track continues up the gleann with its abhainn below on the left. On reaching a track fork, left keeps with the abhainn to the south-east end of Lochan Fada while right is the route to Bealach Gorm. Staying left the Letterewe Estate is exited and the path continues on to Lochan Fada. As this large loch is neared, look for a small cairn on the right (7.6miles) and turn off right here (NH 05242 69903).

Follow the faint path up the hillside as far as possible; the small burn to the right is the outflow from Loch Meallan an Fhudair but there are so many streams hereabouts that it is increasingly difficult to ascertain that you are still following its outflow. The path is in a generally east-northeast(ish) direction and is too far eastwards for Bealach na Croise but is preferable to a more north-easterly route across the peat hags. When the path disappears, continue east-northeastish (from about NH 058 702) to the left of two small outcrops and from here go left-of-north to pass above left of Loch Meallan an Fhudair. Continue north-eastwards over peat hags to significant Allt Coire Mhic Fhearchair which has to be forded. The favoured crossing point is just below where a side burn joins the allt at NH 067 709 although a higher crossing point was chosen on the day. Over, head north if crossing at the confluence and north-eastish if crossing higher up to reach a small cairn at NH 06809 71509 at the top of the narrow opening of Bealach na Croise.

The cairn marks the start of a fairly well defined stalkers path right down to Lochan an Nid. The path keeps to the left of and normally some distance from the Allt Cul Doireachan. When a glen opens up looking to the right with the hill Ruighabhraghad visible half-right above its left entry, leave the stalkers path at around NH 07731 72534 and aim half-right

towards the visible path running eastwards along the lower flank of Ruighabhraghad (above the glen floor). After fording the (significant) allt continue towards the path across rough wet ground but thankfully with no peat hags; in spate conditions the allt may need to be forded at a higher point. Another burn is met requiring another significant ford which again is not usually difficult. After crossing the glen floor, meet the path at around NH 08694 73006 (10.8miles) and turn right along it.

After passing a ruined building (Feinasheen), immediately pass through a walkers' gate (NH 09251 73012) and follow the (intermittent wet path) to a ford where the glen's river, the Abhainn Loch a' Bhraoin is crossed. Follow the fairly well defined path on its north bank and it finally becomes a track leading to Lochivraon (house). Pass through the gates surrounding the house and continue on the rough track along the northern side of Loch a'Bhraoin where quite a lot of fording required. Eventually, at the end of the loch (before the boathouse) turn left on a new track which ascends and swings right to a track junction. Turn left here onto the old right of way and this leads out onto the A832 Dundonnell Road.

Stage 80: Dundonnell Road to Ardcharnich (near Ullapool) 10.6miles, ascent 308metres (1000ft), descent 557metres (1810ft). Explorer 436 (Ullapool); Landranger 19 (Ullapool), 20 (Loch Broom).

After the long walks of the previous two stages, this is an easy day involving a short, fairly low level walk into and along Strath More. The walk involves some walking on the quiet A832 and later on the busier A835, both of which have a walkable verge. The A832 is left for a newly restored (listed) bridge across the Abhainn Cuileig; the map shows another footbridge near the Cuileig Power Station but this has been unusable for many years. The excellent new path beyond the restored bridge (not shown on maps) rises to display the dramatic river gorge before contouring the hillside now following the River Broom, Strath More's river. After dropping to the strath floor, a good farm track along the strath is followed. This becomes a lane which meets the A835 after crossing Inverbroom Bridge. The route takes to the forest at Inverlael and after a short spell re-meets the A835. Ardcharnich, which has a B&B, lies a short distance up the road.

Route: Turn right on the quiet A832 main road using the walkable grass verge. Cross an allt and then the Abhainn Cuileig. Continue and pass a parking area on the left. About 150metres beyond (and about 50metres before a descending fence on the left), hop over the barrier on the left and descend the short steep bank. Go straight on descending less steeply on a walked path which leads to the descending fence previously observed. Turn left along the fence on an improving path down to an elegant looking bridge spanning a gorge carrying the Abhainn Cuileig; note: do not follow the descending fence from the main road unless you are a fan of uneven ground, undergrowth, clambering around fallen trees and bog.

Across the abhainn follow the wide path provided and shortly on meeting a path, turn right signed 'Cuileig Path'. The path, with spectacular views of the gorge, winds up to a bridge crossing of a side allt. After, ignore a path coming in on the right and follow the good path as it contours round the open hillside. The path descends gently and eventually after passing another Cuileig sign meets a wide gravel path. Turn left and follow the good track along the hillside down to the floor of the strath, passing through gates as met. Pass to the left of Auchindrean Farm and beyond there are verges to follow; a distinctive feature from this point is the drystone walls.

Keep progressing on the track along Strath More ignoring path signs off the track and

further on pass a couple of houses on the left. There are more dwellings after two cattle grids and shortly after the track becomes a lane. Ignore a turn-off right to Home Farm and continue to Croftown where the lane swings sharp right; the corner here can be cut by following the right wall. Go straight on at a cross-road, cross the River Broom on Inverbroom Bridge and meet the busy A835 road to Ullapool.

Turn left and using the verge on the right, walk a good half mile to a house on the right. Turn right immediately after the house onto a gravel track hosting a telephone box on the left. Cross a stile and follow the track (towards a large barn). Shortly after entering Inverlael Forest, the track forks. Go left here, descending to cross the River Lael and beyond meet a track. Turn left and immediately there's a track fork. Branch right on the upper track (the left branch descends towards the river). Ignore a track off right by a green marker post to continue a steady gentle ascent. After crossing a more open area, ignore a track off half-right and start to descend towards the main road. On reaching the A835, turn right. There's a verge on the right plus laybys on the right and left (the latter being formed from the old A-road) which can be used to avoid the traffic. Shortly after the second layby on the left, Ardcharnich with its welcoming B&B is reached.

Stage 81: Ardcharnich to Oykel Bridge 18.5miles, ascent 895metres (2910ft), descent 886metres (2880ft). Explorer 436 (Ullapool), 439 (Assynt) negligible, Explorer 440 (Glen Oykel); Landranger 20 (Loch Broom), 16 (Lairg).

This is a day on good tracks throughout so navigationally is very straightforward and a good pace can be maintained. However it's also high mileage combined with quite a lot of ascent, so expect to feel tired on arriving at Oykel Bridge. The route turns off the A835 for Srath Nimhe at Leckmelm and it's as well to check before starting off that this particular track is not affected by stalking (if it is, it's necessary to take the track along Glen Achall which starts from Ullapool). From Leckmelm, a long steep climb through forest ensues to reach Srath Nimhe and this high level river valley is then followed as it gently rises over the next three miles. There's a fairly long and steep descent to join the track along Glen Achall with the track leading to Loch an Daimh. The MBA's Knockdamph bothy is at the end of the loch and on the approach to it, it looks as if two walkers can be seen when in fact it's the chimney pots of the bothy; the bothy makes an excellent (midge-free) spot for a late lunch.

Beyond the track continues pleasantly descending to the significant crossing of the Abhainn Poiblidh; the ford here is used by vehicles as well as walkers and cyclists so is crossable in most circumstances although wading may be required. In spate conditions, it is said that a crossing may not be possible in which case it would be necessary to wait for the water level to subside or attempt an alternative route via Strath Mulzie but this would add so much extra mileage that it's an alternative of last resort. Beyond, the track loosely follows the line of the River Einig and meets a wide gravel forest track just before Duag Bridge across the Abhainn Dubhag. Just beyond the bridge, there's the well-kept MBA Duag bothy; this used to be an old school and in keeping with its original purpose, inside there's old fashioned desks complete with text books. From the bothy, the forest track is followed along Glen Einig into Oykel Bridge with its hotel. However, if the Oykel Bridge Hotel is too expensive, consider using the Achness Hotel in Rosehall as a base; Northern Sights Taxis (tel. 01549 402 399) and Munro's Private Hire (tel. 01549 402 262) both operate from Lairg, or the hotel may be able to organise something.

Route: Commence by continuing up the main road towards Ullapool using the verge on the right and a layby on the left. Turn right off the main road up an ascending lane signed

'Leckmelm Holiday Cottages'. Follow the lane as it curves right. Pass to the left of Campbelltown Cottages and keeping left ascend to the entry to Leckmelm House. Take the track immediately to the right of its entry gate. There's now a long steep haul up through forest. The track exits the forest near the top of the climb and the track continues through open ground passing to the right of a barn before passing through another short patch of forest. Beyond, the (clear wet) track rises imperceptibly along the open hillside of Srath Nimhe with its river below on the right. After passing to the right then left of wooded areas, the track reaches a ford.

The track ends here but continue over the ford onto a good well-defined hill path. The path starts to descend; it's a long descent on a stony path eroded in places. The path leads to a gate and then down through the vegetated hillside to the wall surrounding the buildings of East Rhidorroch Lodge. Cross the wall by the (metal) ladder stile immediately ahead. Over, turn left to a field gate. Through, turn right and go through a field gate on the right (next to an iron gate). Go forward on a rough grass track for a few metres and on meeting a track, turn left briefly to a footbridge over the Rhidorroch River.

Cross and meet the track from Ullapool to Oykel Bridge (6.3miles). Turn right and ascend towards Loch an Daimh. As the loch is approached, ignore a track off left and shortly after at a track fork, take the left branch (right leads down to the loch). The track passes to the left of the loch and eventually runs along its shore. At the end of the loch, pass the well kept Knockdamph bothy (10miles). The track ascends from the bothy then winds round the hillside loosely following the line of the Abhainn Poiblidh before descending to cross it at a significant ford. Beyond, circle clockwise to miss the bog and regain the track. Keep to the main track as it ascends and twists in and out of the hillside before it drops down to meet a wide gravel vehicle track.

Turn left and shortly reach Duag Bridge over the Abhainn Dubhag (14.2miles). Shortly after the track passes to the right of the MBA Duag bothy. Beyond, follow the main track along Glen Einig. The track gets tedious being hard on the feet and there are few views other than trees. Eventually (after over an hour) a cattle grid is crossed and shortly afterwards ignore a track off right to Amat Farm. The track swings left to cross the River Einig. Over, follow the track as it curves right to cottages where the track becomes a lane which is followed to the main A837 road; the (welcoming) Oykel Bridge Hotel is the white building visible half-left.

Stage 82: Oykel Bridge to Loch Ailsh (A837 (NC 297 083)) 10miles, ascent 315metres (1025ft), descent 192metres (625ft). Explorer 440 (Glen Oykel), 439 (Assynt) negligible; Landranger 16 (Lairg), 15 (Loch Assynt).

Following the long walk of the previous stage, this is a lovely easy short walk with good views of the upper reaches of attractive Glen Oykel. When it emerges on the access track to Benmore Lodge just south of Loch Ailsh, the route turns to meet the A837 road as this is the only feasible pick-up point. The 1½miles to the main road is included in the stage mileage.

Route: Cross the 'main' road at Oykel Bridge to the track opposite left which crosses the old Oykel Bridge and very shortly meets a track with a foundation. Turn left and follow the wide track (shortly ignoring a good path off left). The track climbs to a modest height above the River Oykel and then contours along the glen; this is an enjoyable section with panoramic views. The track crosses into the Caplich Estate and later passes to the right of Caplich farm. Beyond, there's a track choice – either go left and follow the riverside track

or keep straight on above the glen; the latter is preferable as it is shorter and there's a considerable river section later. When the top track eventually descends to meet the riverside track, turn right over a sturdy bridge and continue on the track by the river; it still appears reasonably open because a gap has been left to the right before the trees start.

Continue on the riverside track until it ends and then continue on a good path which also shortly finishes; there appears to be no sign of the building marked as Salachy on the 1:25000 map. The path now continues briefly very close to the river but is now a rough grass path. As soon as is feasible, ascend the small bank to find a wide (wet) grass track and follow this; it keeps mainly to the line of the river. After passing a fisherman's hut, a fording bridge beyond appears unsafe, so follow the Cape Wrath Trail sign and briefly diverge right along a small burn to an approved footbridge. Over, follow the track beside the burn for a few metres but then turn 1½ left on a grass track back to the river. Follow the grass track along the river to where it emerges onto the access drive to Benmore Lodge at the point where the drive crosses the River Oykel. The route continues right but turn left and follow the drive 1½ miles down to the A837 road for a pick-up from there.

Stage 83: A837 to Duchally Lodge (NC 389 167) 12.5 miles, ascent 489 metres (1590ft), descent 535 metres (1740ft). Explorer 439 (Assynt) negligible, 440 (Glen Oykel); Landranger 15 (Loch Assynt), 16 (Lairg).

This is an excellent hill walk amidst the stunning scenery of the Assynt mountains. It's mainly on well-defined but wet paths and tracks. From the A837, Benmore Lodge's access drive is taken past the east side of Loch Ailsh to the lodge. Beyond, the River Oykel is left to follow a side allt (the Allt Sail an Ruathair) on an old track which leads round the flanks of Meall an Aonaich. The track then continues northwards with the mountains of the Assynt range rearing up on the left and an endless vista of peat hags visible on the right; this is not a good place to be on your own in bad weather. The track peters out just as a rough vehicle track is met and the route uses this to descend towards Glen Cassley. On reaching the glen, it's then a matter of following its river to reach a pick-up point at the start of a public road along the glen.

Route: From the main road return up Benmore Lodge's access track to where it crosses the River Oykel and continue up the the drive to Benmore Lodge. The track passes Loch Ailsh and becomes a lane. Pass to the right of a holiday cottage and continue on the lane passing left of the large house (Benmore Lodge). Beyond, follow the track which is the lane continuation. The track comes close to and follows the River Oykel. Follow the track to an awkward gate with a ladder stile provision.

Over, continue on the track to shortly reach a ford over the Allt Sail an Ruathair with a footbridge a few metres to the right. Over, meet a track and turn right to shortly meet a (significant) ford of the allt. Cross and follow the obvious track which keeps company with the line of the allt (now on the left). The track reaches a ford but there's a footbridge crossing of the allt a few metres upstream. Continue on the well-defined track to reach a significant ford of a side burn and over continue on the track. After a small ford crossing, there appears to be a fork of grass tracks. Take the left fork (northwards) straight up the hill; half-right is a north-eastwards track which does not appear on maps. Ascend (looking back for a view of Loch Sail an Ruathair) and follow the (wet) path to a cairn (NC 34697 15337) near the path summit.

Continue on the distinct path which continues gently rising then contours round Meall an Aonich before descending to pass east of Loch Carn nan Conbhairean; the path becomes

very wet necessitating some diversions to avoid the worst of the bog, however the route of the path is clear. Just after passing the loch, meet a significant ford, the loch's outflow. Over, follow the bank briefly before curving left on the path which starts to gently rise. After ascending, the path contours the hill on a ledge, again boggy in places. The path crosses a significant ford and shortly after meets another significant ford which is crossed. The path now disappears so head a quarter-left up a bank to meet a good gravel/stone track at a small cairn (NC 34639 19627); if the path is lost before the second ford, head for the left of the pyramid-looking rock to find the track.

Turn right on the track and follow it down to meet a pipeline service track. Turn left for about 150metres and then turn right into a turning area. Pass straight through onto a track at the back. Follow the descending (wet) track (eroded in places) which turns right to a major ford. Beyond, the track follows close to the River Cassley on the left, with forest on the right. This is a very wet, squelchy track and there a number of fords to cross (one of which is significant). When the forest ends, continue on the track along the river for as long as possible then continue on rough ground to the now visible suspension bridge. Over, turn left along the bank but shortly curve right to a parking area and pick-up point at the end of the public road along Glen Cassley.

Alternative Route combining Stages 82 and 83: Oykel Bridge to Duchally Lodge 18.8miles

The less interesting, mainly tarmac alternative to reach Duchally Lodge from Oykel Bridge is to first walk to Rosehall by taking the riverside path along the River Oykel to Langwell Farm, then the track to Brae where the track continues as a lane which turns left to cross the Oykel at Inveroykel to the main A837 road. Rosehall is to the right and Duchally Lodge can then be reached by following the lane up Glen Cassley from Rosehall.

Stage 84: Duchally Lodge to Merkland Lodge 13miles, ascent 558metres (1815ft), descent 560metres (1820ft). Explorer 440 (Glen Oykel); Landranger 16 (Lairg).

This stage is on a good track and then a private lane servicing power stations so the navigation is simple. From the end of the public road at the top of Glen Cassley, the excellent (vehicle) track is followed along the River Cassley to a power station; the wet path on the other side of the river of the previous stage is visible with the pipeline appearing as the power station is approached. From the power station, the track becomes surfaced with the lane leading up (and up!) around Maovally (hill) from where there are good views looking down onto Loch Shin below. After winding down to, along and beyond the loch, the lane crosses the loch's inflow and then makes its way back to the loch in order to cross the causeway between Loch Shin and Loch a' Ghriama. The lane continues on to meet the single track A838 road.

Overscaig which has both a (good) B&B and hotel accommodation lies a couple of miles to the right. Either organise a pick-up into Overscaig (or walk) but it's better to split the road walking to come by turning left for about 2.5miles to the entry to Merkland Lodge (at the south end of Loch Merkland) and arranging a pick-up into Overscaig from there. The walk to Merkland Lodge is included in the mileage.

Route: From the end of the public road take the track continuation towards Duchally Lodge but immediately after a barn on the left turn left to the River Cassley and follow the excellent gravel track along the river. The track leaves the river to go over the lower slopes of a hill before returning to the river. Near the power station the track meets a tarred lane.

Turn right uphill. The lane twists and turns as it makes its way up and round Maovally; it's a long haul up. At the top of the climb, there's a view behind of Glen Cassley and yesterday's route. Looking left, there's the top of Maovally, while right reveals an interminable vision of peat hags and bog. The view ahead overlooks the glen containing Loch Shin. The lane contours and soon Loch Shin is visible below.

After twisting its way down with increasingly good views of Loch Shin, the access lane to Cassley Power Station is met. Turn left along the west side of Loch Shin and then its headwaters. After passing the Corriekinloch Clay Club, the lane swings right to cross the headwaters and then curves right again to follow the other side of the headwaters back to the main body of Loch Shin. The north side of the loch is now followed to a causeway between Loch Shin and Loch a' Ghriama. The lane then leaves the lochs to continue eastwards past a substation and reach a padlocked gate with a walkers' access just to its right. Go straight on to meet the single-track A838 road and assuming a pick-up at Merkland Lodge turn left for 2½miles. The road follows the line of the east side of Loch a' Ghriama and then the Merkland River. After crossing a cattle grid, the entry to Merkland Lodge is met and the turning area here makes a good pick-up point.

Stage 85: Merkland Lodge to Altnaharra Lane (NC 462 422 - a few miles north-west of Altnaharra) 12.5miles, ascent 388metres (1260ft), descent 378metres (1230ft). Explorer 440 (Oykel Bridge), 447 (Kyle of Tongue); Landranger 16 (Lairg), 9 (Cape Wrath).

This is another day which is navigationally simple as, after leaving the main road, there's a good (lovely) gentle hill track all the way to the stage end; while it is remote, the surroundings do not seem hostile, possibly because the maximum altitude is around 268metres (870ft). From Merkland Lodge, the A838 road is followed past the east side of Loch Merkland to West Merkland. The hill track taken from here was used as an access track to several quarries now disused. It ascends gently to the relatively low-level Bealach nam Meirleach and then threads its way between some serious hills on the left and the Allt a' Chraois on the right. The track leaves the allt to continue hugging the base of the mountains to the left; Ben Hope, looking like a slice of cake, can be clearly viewed half-right. The track drops to Governuisach Lodge and then the lodge's exit track has to be taken to reach a pick up point on a lane. This is a remote area and the nearest point of civilisation is Altnaharra 9½miles away. Fortunately, despite being a tiny settlement, it has an excellent B&B and a hotel.

Route: Continue north-northwestwards on the main road along Loch Merkland for 2½miles. After a warning notice about stags, shortly see a house on the right (West Merkland) and just before the bridge, turn right on a gravel/stony track and pass round a padlocked gate. Ignoring all turn offs, the excellent track gradually ascends curving right to Bealach nam Meirleach. Beyond the track gently descends to lochs, passing to the left of them. After the lochs, the track continues to gently descend curving left round the base of Suil a' Bhadain Duinn and Sail an Ias. The track then curves right towards Governuisgach Lodge and descends more steeply. With the building in sight, note a gravel track off left to a sturdy wooden footbridge a few metres away which crosses the Allt a' Choire Ghraind; this is the route continuation but for a pick-up at the Lodge entry continue descending to the buildings (10.4miles). Here, curve right and keeping left of the buildings, take their access track which ascends pleasantly through woodland (with an allt below on the left). The track reaches a bridge crossing a side allt and over turns right ascending more steeply to reach a pick-up point on the lane to Altnaharra.

Stage 86: Altnaharra Lane (NC 462 422) to Gualin House on the A838 (NC 307 566)
16.5miles, ascent 782metres (2540ft), descent 723metres (2350ft). Explorer 447 (Kyle of Tongue), 445 (Kylescu), 446 (Cape Wrath); Landranger 9 (Cape Wrath).

This is a wonderful walk with exhilarating views of the surrounding mountains. Apart from the section along Loch Dionard and the crossing of its outflow, there's a good track all the way. After returning to the buildings surrounding Governuisgach Lodge, the route follows along the edge of Glen Golly allowing a good view of the Easan Choineas waterfall. The track continues and steeply ascends Creag Dubh before contouring to reach Creag Staonsaid. There's a descent from here to a lower plateau before the final descent to the south end of Loch Dionard, with the mountains to the left particularly impressive.

There's signs of an intermittent path along the east shoreline of the loch but at its northern end it's necessary to cross its outflow (which is the start of the River Dionard) and this represents the only obstacle of the day. Its depth varies depending on the amount of rain, from ankle deep to waist high (according to the locals). Some stones are visible while there are others lurking under the surface mainly in line with the visible stones. Two walking poles are highly recommended for this exercise and removing socks and other clothing so that only boots and gaiters are candidates for a wetting is probably a good move. Beyond the outflow, there's a rough vehicle track that can be followed along Srath Dionard to the A-road near Gualin House. The track is over 6 miles long but the majestic views of the surrounding mountains on both sides of the srath compensate for this, with impressive Foinaven visible on the left on a good day.

Having reached the A-road, there's a B&B a mile to the south or arrange for a pick-up into Durness and use Durness as a base for the remainder of the walk (the Durness Bus Company operates both bus services (hail & ride) and also private hire (book in advance) tel. 01971 511 223, mob. 07782 110 007). There are many B&Bs in Durness plus a reasonable Spar shop and a couple of eating places.

Route: Return from Altnaharra Lane to Governuisgach Lodge. Pass through the buildings and ascend briefly turning right onto the gravel track noted in the previous stage. Cross the allt on the footbridge and beyond gently ascend on the track to cross another wooden bridge. The track curves left climbing to go along the top edge of Glen Golly. The track descends to and along the glen's river through the area called Bucktooth's Meadow before ascending above the glen again. Two more wooden bridges are crossed before the main climb of the day up Creag Dubh. After following the track up, the track then contours along a plateau passing right of Lochan Sgeireach. The track continues to contour and after passing another lochan (unnamed) reaches Creag Staonsaid from where it starts to descend to a lower ridge; Loch Dionard can be seen half-left. The track now traverses the lower ridge with the crags of Plat Reidh in view across a valley to the left and equally serious views of a steep slope across a glen to the right. Finally, the tracks twists and winds as it descends to a small fishermen's chalet close to Loch Dionard (9.2miles).

Continue past the hut to the loch and turn right to follow its shoreline up its east side; there is an intermittent path some of the time and although wet underfoot it is not particularly boggy or difficult. Turn right for a short distance when a spur of the loch at its northern end is met, cross (the spur) and then turn left to return to the loch at its outflow. Cross the outflow with great care and having crossed, the hut at the start of the rough vehicle track is easily reached. It's then just a question of following the track out along Srath Dionard. After loosely following the line of the River Dionard north-northwest, the track finally turns leftwards and climbs steeply above the srath floor towards Gualin House. The track eventually turns right to a gate with a walkers' entry at its side. Through, after a few

metres, a wayout sign points right and leads to another walkers' gate onto the A-road to Durness.

Stage 87: Gualin House to Jetty on track to Cape Wrath (NC 371 660) 10miles, ascent 220metres (715ft), descent 388metres (1260ft). Explorer 446 (Cape Wrath); Landranger 9 (Cape Wrath).

This is a really good walk especially after the Kyle of Durness is reached. Bridge crossings of the River Dionard and the Grudie River are used to reach the west side of the Kyle of Durness. Thereafter, the west side of the Kyle is followed, with good views of the Kyle, to reach the jetty which is the end point of this stage; there's an intermittent path to follow and a fence for guidance most of the way. If based in Durness it's necessary to get a ferry across the Kyle back to Keoldale Pier on the east side. Details of the ferry and minibus operation between Keoldale Pier and Cape Wrath for the current year can be found at <https://www.visitcapewrath.com/when-to-go/>

The ferryman should be contacted (currently Malcolm on mob. 07719 544 207) to check that he will be operating across the Kyle in the afternoon. The ferry normally operates every day from around mid-April to mid-October, crossing from Keoldale Pier at around 09:00 and 13:00 with a return journey from the Cape Wrath side at around 12:00 and 16:00 (to tie in with the minibus transport to the Cape Wrath lighthouse). Whether the ferry runs is entirely down to the ferryman and if the ferries are not running then neither does the minibus. The ferry does not run in a number of circumstances: MoD firing, strong winds making the crossing dangerous, low tidal conditions, or a local event running which has pre-booked the ferry. For all these reasons, it is advisable to schedule in an extra day in order to complete the walk; this has certainly been needed on my last two visits. Note also that although there may be a morning ferry crossing, the afternoon crossing may not happen if the weather deteriorates.

Route: Turn right along the main A838 road which gently descends to the valley floor where it follows the River Dionard; there is plenty of usable grass verge on this section and the single track road is not usually very busy. After the road crosses the river, it rises very gently and there are increasingly tantalising views of the water of the Kyle of Durness. Soon a farm on the left is seen. Turn left on the track to the farm (NC 365 617) (5.1miles), and shortly cross the River Dionard a by footbridge. Over, turn right, pass to the right of the barn and onto a farm track. Follow the track to and along the Kyle of Durness foreshore and when a walkers' gate is reached pass through. Take the path ahead which follows close to the right fence to a gate. Over or through, follow the right fence to pass through a wall gap. From here go half-left to a field gate and through ascend the hill (away from the Kyle), following the left fence until a wall is met with a walkers' gate just to the right (which will probably need to be climbed). Over or through go half-right to a small concrete platform and keeping right of it, curve left on a descending grass track.

At the bottom turn left to pass a small fisherman's hut and continue parallel to the right fence to double gates. Through, follow the stone track for a short distance but then go half-right to meet a track along the Grudie River and follow this leftwards. When a bridge across the river is spotted half-right, look for a path going off three-quarters right to and along the river to the new bridge (NC 34977 62829). Cross here then turn right, contouring above the river over quite rough ground to reach a field gate with a wooden fence arrangement to its left. Cross the one on the left and then follow the right fence line; in fact the right fence follows the line of the west side of the Kyle (until it drops into the sea near the jetty) and is a faithful guide to reaching the Ferry House close to the jetty. There is no

path along the right fence but usually there's a bit of a deer/sheep path within a few metres of the fence. When a fence at right angles is met, the crossing point is in the corner by the right fence. Through/over, cross the broken down wall to the right and follow the right fence to shortly reach a significant ford. The best (only) fording point is by the right fence; there is no bridge upstream.

Having forded, the paths are not as good now although there are intermittent animal tracks to follow a short distance from the fence. When an area of small white stones is reached (NC 36781 64545), the route temporarily leaves the right fence to cut the corner of the fence line which can be seen turning left. Go half-left on a gently ascending path (on a bearing of about 48 degrees east of north. The ascending path passes along the base of the hill on the left. (If you lose the path look for a wider path a couple of metres away half-left). The path leads to a crossing point of a small dip. Beyond, follow the obvious path which reaches a small descending rock slab. Either descend this (easy) or there's an even easier descent just to the left. Turn right with the path to reach the fence and turn left following the fence line as it descends and ascends; again there is a path of sorts above the fence. When the fence turns sharp right descending steeply leave it to take the stone path ahead which contours round the hill, curving left to a small burn crossing. Over, follow the path along the hillside. With the jetty visible below, the path forks. Take the right branch and descend to the Cape Wrath track just below Ferry House; this is outside the MoD firing area. The jetty lies just to the right and you should be in good time for the ferry back to Keoldale.

To reach accommodation in Durness, there's a quick walking route from Keoldale. From the pier turn left on a track and shortly go right at a sign to the Old Manse. Follow the right wall until overlooking Loch Borrallie then leave the wall to descend and follow the loch shoreline to the left. When the shoreline path finishes at a fence, pass through a gap and ascend the small hill a quarter-left to pass left of a sheep fold and continue until overlooking another small loch with a ruined building (the old school at Croispool) on the other side of the loch. The ruin is reached via a walkers' gate in the wall on the right. Pass through and follow the waymarks which lead to a walkers' gate next to the ruined building. From here. Follow the walled track to a distinguished building (the Old Manse) where a walled grass track is met. Turn left to shortly meet a meet a lane at Balnakeil. Turn right for $\frac{2}{3}$ mile to reach the A838 road with the centre of Durness a short distance straight on along the main road.

Stage 88: Jetty to Cape Wrath Lighthouse 11.1miles, ascent 443metres (1440ft), descent 335metres (1090ft). Explorer 446 (Cape Wrath); Landranger 9 (Cape Wrath).

Again it is essential to check that the ferry across the Kyle is likely to be running in both the morning and afternoon. In this case, the minibus will also be running. The minibus is run by Mr Mather (mob. 07742 670 196) and it is advisable to ring him to request a one-way ride on the 15:00 minibus from Cape Wrath. Normally, this is fine and he will ask you to tell (remind) the minibus drivers (and the ferryman) that you are walking to the Cape and want a ride back from the lighthouse on the afternoon minibus and ferry.

The route is straightforward navigationally as it's along a rough track all the way. Safety notices from the military should be treated seriously and it's safest to keep strictly to the track. If the weather is good, the views are fantastic. If as usual, the weather is not so good then the land appears barren, inhospitable and unforgiving. In this case, ten minutes around the lighthouse will be more than sufficient to take in the views before retreating to the Ozone Cafe for a hot drink.

Route: Take the 09:00 ferry from Keoldale Pier across the Kyle. The track follows the west side of the Kyle northwards for the first couple of miles. After a shepherd's house on the right, the track turns left to leave the Kyle. As the track descends to cross the Dail River, a military lookout on the site of an old school is passed. Over the bridge, the track ascends steeply with a cattle grid marking the entry into the MoD Danger Zone. At the top the scenery is of unremitting rough moorland in all directions and the track now contours. It's worth looking out for mile posts giving the distance from the Cape; the 8-mile post of a puffin is particularly nice having been designed by schoolchildren after the original was destroyed by the MoD. After passing a (padlocked) bothy restored by the MoD, the track ascends then contours before descending to a stone bridge across the Kearvaig River; on the descent the cliffs of Clo Mor are to the right (the highest on the British mainland at 283metres). Beyond, the track twists as it rises to ease the gradient. At the second bend (a left bend), look behind to see the beach of Clo Kearvaig.

Continue on the track as it again contours the hillside and passes the 2-mile post. Finally, the track swings right and a U-bend in the track can be seen. It's a surprise on descending to the U-bend to reach a T-junction. Right leads along Clais Charnach to its jetty. However, the track to the Cape turns left here, ascending steadily on the final section of headland. The track circles the lighthouse clockwise, approaching it from the back so there is no sighting of it until within about a quarter of a mile from it; ironically the 0-mile post is on the approach to the lighthouse. There's not a lot there on reaching Cape Wrath but the sea to the north and the west can be viewed from just beyond the lighthouse. However, the feeling of relief, satisfaction, gratitude and happiness on finally finishing the journey from near Dover lasts much longer!