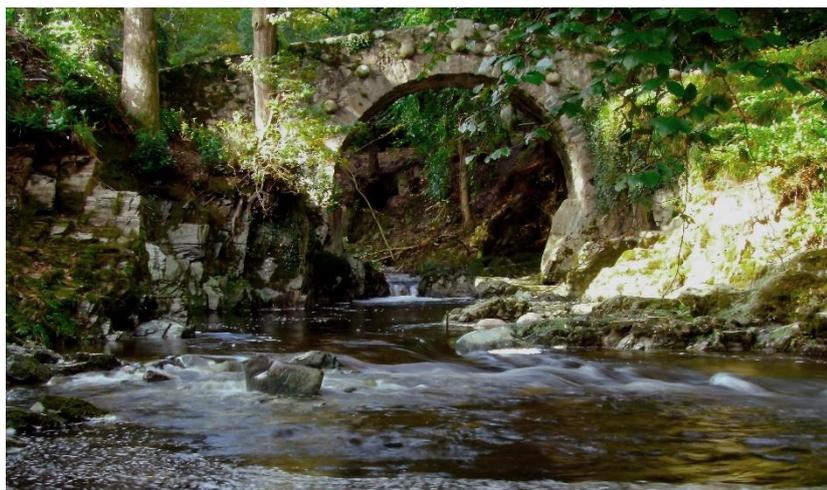
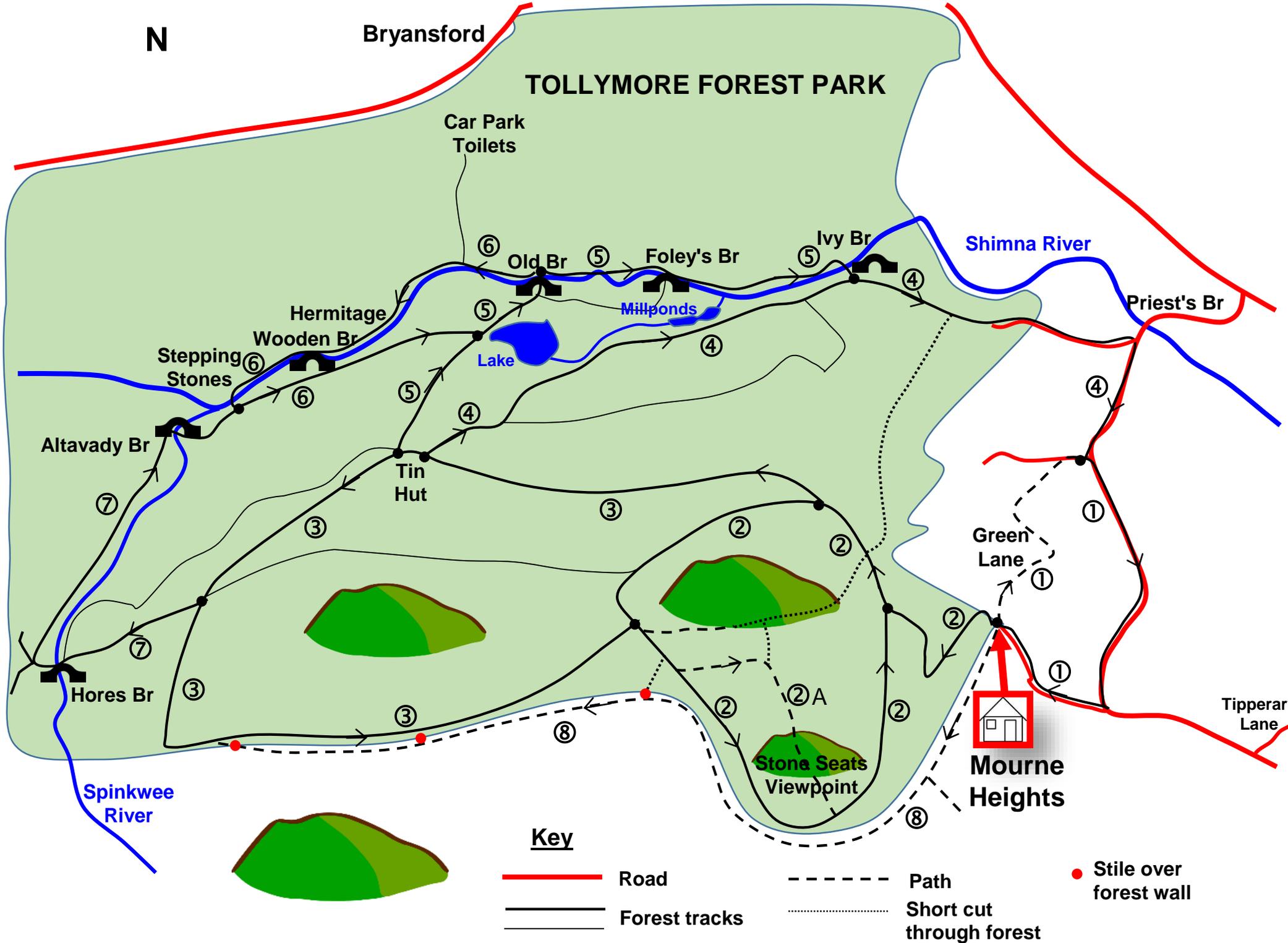




Walks In and
Around
Tollymore Forest
starting from
Mourne Heights





N

Bryansford

TOLLYMORE FOREST PARK

Car Park
Toilets

⑥

Old Br

⑤

Foley's Br

⑤

Ivy Br

④

Shimna River

Priest's Br

Hermitage

Wooden Br

⑤

Millponds

④

⑤

④

④

⑤

⑥

Stepping
Stones

⑥

Altavady Br

⑦

⑤

Tin
Hut

③

③

②

②

Green
Lane

①

④

①

Hores Br

⑦

③

③

⑧

②

②A

②

②

Mourne
Heights

②

①

①

Tipperary
Lane

Spinkwee
River

Stone Seats
Viewpoint

⑧

Key



Road



Forest tracks



Path



Short cut
through forest



Stile over
forest wall

Walks in and around Tollymore Forest starting from Mourne Heights

We do hope you enjoy these walks. Walking times depend on the individual, but the shortest walk, route 1, may take about 30 minutes and route 2 about one hour.

Please feel free to take out with you the relevant plastic folders for the routes you intend to use, as well as the map. It would also be advisable to take the Ordnance Survey map, a copy of which is provided in the cottage. Please return the folders and maps for the use of other guests.

You can walk anywhere in the forest and Mourne Mountains area, but please observe Forestry notices. It is advisable to keep to the paths in the forest. Dogs should be on a lead on the moor and mountains as they are used for sheep grazing

If you have any questions, comments or suggestions then please do not hesitate to speak to us.

Happy walking!

Tricia and Julian

Footwear

All routes except 1, 2A and 8 are on forest tracks, which remain free of surface water even after wet weather, so normal outdoor shoes should be suitable.

Routes 1 (Green Lane), 2A and 8 are on grassy tracks with wet, boggy sections and generally require waterproof footwear.



1. Green Lane and Tullybrannigan Road

A short circular walk from the cottage along a grassy track between sheep fields, returning via Tullybrannigan Road and the lane up to the cottage.

Waterproof footwear usually needed.

On leaving the cottage turn left, and after a few metres turn right down the grassy track (Green Lane). After the first bend follow the lane down the hill. Just over halfway down are a pair of old red cast iron gates, on either side of the path. On the far side of each post are the initials BWC (Belfast Water Commissioners). The gates mark the route of the massive pipes taking water to Belfast from the Mourne.

Continue down the hill, round the left bend at the bottom, coming to a T-junction with a concrete track. Turn right here. (A left turn leads to an old reservoir, whilst further up through the fields is the new reservoir which serves Mourne Heights). Walk straight on past the houses, and turn right onto the Tullybrannigan Road.

CAUTION - there is no pavement, keep to the grass verge wherever possible.

After about 500 m, where there is a sharp bend in the road to the left, turn right up the single track road to Mourne Heights

CAUTION - dangerous bend

Going up the hill, there is a new reservoir on the right, and after a further 50 m is the derelict water house, last occupied by a Water Commissioners employee and family about 20 years ago. Looking across the fields towards the mountains, another water building can be seen on the side of the moor opposite. This is the exit point of the tunnel under Slieve Donard which takes water from Silent Valley onto Belfast. Continue up the hill to Mourne Heights.

2. Curragherd and the Stone Seats Viewpoint

A circular walk through the forest around Curragherd, the hill overlooking the Tullybrannigan area, with fine views across to the mountains. There is a deviation up to the Stone Seats viewpoint for magnificent views of Newcastle, Dundrum Bay and the Mournes.

On leaving the cottage turn left and continue straight up the hill, through the wooden gate and into the forest. After about 400 m turn right at the T-junction. Continue for about 200 m, passing under some tall pine trees.

[There are a couple of shortcut paths starting around here. They are indistinct and steep in places so caution and good footwear are needed. The path to the right goes down steeply, arriving at route 4 next to the Shimna river. That to the left leads up to the summit of Curragherd and the Stone Seats.]

Continue on the main forest track for a few metres, then at the junction take the left fork up the hillside. Walk up for about 200 m, bearing left at the junction near the top, then follow the track around the hill, continuing straight across any junctions without going downhill. The large cleared area to the right was felled in 2015.

To the left is a path, marked by a carved stone sign with a red hand showing the direction and the inscription "To The Mountain Top 1826". This path is now rather obstructed by fallen trees and there is no track to the "mountain" top itself, though access is possible through the gorse.

Continuing along the main track which slopes slightly downhill, after about 100 m there is a wooden post on the left with a white circular sign, marking the deviation to the Stone Seats Viewpoint (route 2A, see below).

The route bends gently to the left as it goes around the hill. After about 150 m there is an open area (an old quarry) with good views across to the mountains. The track continues through the forest for about 300 m, eventually coming to the junction where a right turn leads back to Mourne Heights.

2A. Stone Seats

A short diversion to the summit of Curragherd and the Stone Seats viewpoint.

Waterproof footwear needed.

At the wooden post follow the grassy path up into the forest for about 100 m. A large clearing is reached and another wooden post may be seen. In any case turn right along the path which passes through a gap between the pine trees. After about 70 m the path goes steeply up for a few metres, leading to the cleared area on Curragherd summit and the Stone Seats. On a clear day Scrabo Tower in Newtonards can be seen to the north.

After resting and admiring the view either retrace your steps or continue along the path between the gorse bushes, dropping very steeply down for about 50 m and re-joining route 2.

CAUTION This downward section of the path is very steep and can be slippery.

3. The Drinns

Starting from route 2, this follows the forest tracks around The Drinns, which is the name of the central hill of Tollymore Forest. The path returns along the forest wall, with fine views across the moor to the mountains.

After passing under the tall pine trees on route 2, take the right fork down the hill, with the newly planted areas on the right. Continue down the track for about 500 m until arriving at a large clearing and the Tin Hut. This is the site of the old sawmill. Passing the hut, take the first track on the left at the crossroads, going up a gentle slope, with mature open forest on the right and rather younger trees on the left.

After 300 m the path becomes a little steeper and there is a crossroads. Continue straight over and up the hill beneath the trees.

After about 200 m the path bends to the left and runs alongside the forest wall on the right. (There is a stile across the wall and onto the moor near to a locked iron gate behind the trees). Our route continues straight ahead on the forest track, with a large recently felled area to the left. After about 500 m the track heads uphill and re-joins route 2.

Note that it is possible to get to the top of The Drinns by walking through the cleared forest, but there is no path. There is tree cover on the summit and no views.

4. The millponds, Shimna River and Priest's Bridge.

Starting from route 3, this route descends to the millponds and follows the Shimna river to where it meets Tullybrannigan Road at Priest's Bridge. By walking along the road a return can be made to Mourne Heights via Green Lane (see route 1).

Where route 3 arrives at the Tin Hut, take a sharp right turn (ie before reaching the crossroads). Follow this gently sloping downhill route, continuing straight ahead past a track to the right. Carry on down until arriving at the mill ponds on the left. These were once used to feed water to the wood mill on the Shimna

CAUTION Deep water and steep, soft sides.

Continue along the track, eventually meeting the river on the left. After about 200 m pass by the Ivy Bridge with its pointed turrets. Continue along the track, which diverges from the river somewhat, for about 300 m, around a barrier gate and on to the tarmac road. Go past the former forestry workshop buildings, the old gate lodge and some houses, arriving at Priest's Bridge and the Tullybrannigan Road, turning right up the road.

CAUTION There is no footpath or verge on this section of road. Walk on the right so as to be able to see oncoming traffic.

Walk up the steep hill to where the road widens out and bends to the left. Turn right here onto a side road and straight up the hill on the concrete track, to meet Green Lane and return to Mourne Heights.

5. The Lake, Shimna River and Tollymore Bridges

Starting from route 3 this route passes the lake and then crosses the Shimna River, following it down past cascading waterfalls, torrents and the interesting bridges of the old Tollymore Estate, eventually joining route 4.

Where route 3 meets the Tin Hut, walk for about 20 m past the hut and take the path on the right at the crossroads. After about 300 m is the lake on the right. This lake, or rather pond, was made as a reservoir for the wood mill on the river. There are seats here, take the opportunity for rest and contemplation.

Continue down the path and cross the Shimna River by the Old Bridge. This was the first bridge on the estate and was built in 1726. It gave access to the land across the river from the main house, which was situated on the Bryansford side where the car park is now.

Walking down the riverside path, with the river to the right, there are gorges where the water can be heard rushing below.

CAUTION Very deep, sheer-sided ravines, and fast flowing water.

Foley's Bridge may be seen next. It was built in 1787 in the style of a packhorse bridge ie with low parapets allowing laden horses to pass unhindered across its narrow walkway. The arch is semi-circular and from certain angles, when viewed from upstream, the rocks beneath give an overall circular appearance to the area under bridge.

Finally, after about another 200 m, Ivy Bridge is reached. This has turrets and niches guarding each corner. Cross the river here and join route 4.

6. The Hermitage and Stepping Stones on the Shimna

Starting from route 5, this route goes up river, following the Shimna past the Hermitage, a place of tranquillity fashioned out of the rock, crossing the river at the Stepping Stones and returning to route 5.

Where walk 5 crosses the Old Bridge, turn left up river and walk along the riverside with the river on the left. There are a number of paths off to the right leading up to the car park and toilets of Tollymore Forest Park. Continue along the river to the Hermitage, which was built in 1770 by one of the owners of the Tollymore estate in memory of a friend. There are two chambers cut into the rock, each with a domed roof and view over a quiet pool in the river.

About 200 m further upstream is a wooden bridge spanning the river. After another 100 m are the Stepping Stones, which may be crossed if the water is not too high. This was a location in an early episode of the *Game of Thrones* TV serial. If this route is impassable, retrace your steps and cross the river by the wooden bridge instead.

In any case once over the river turn left and follow the track back to route 5.

7. Spinkwee River

Starting from route 3, this track follows the impressive Spinkwee river as it cascades down to meet the Shimna near the Stepping Stones on route 6.

After leaving the Tin Hut, route 3 turns left and goes gently upwards for about 300 m until reaching a crossroads. At this point turn right onto the track which slopes downwards and eventually crosses the Spinkwee River at Hores Bridge. Turn right after the bridge, walking down the path with the river on the right. The water may be heard rushing down between the rocks, and there are some fine rest points with seats.

CAUTION Deep, sheer-sided ravines, and fast flowing water.

Continue down the riverside walk until Altavaddy Bridge is reached on the right. Cross this and join route 6 after about 100 m.

8. Moor Path around the Forest edge.

Starting from the cottage, this route follows the edge of the moor at its boundary with the forest wall. Access to routes 2 and 3 via stiles is possible.

Note: this a grassy and muddy path, not a forest track. It can be very wet in places. Waterproof footwear is needed.

On leaving the cottage turn left up the hill, then after a few metres turn left through the metal farm gate. Walk along the grassy path, with a green field to the left and forest to the right. Passing the field boundary, keep following the path through the ferns to an old iron gate.

Once through the gate turn right up the grassy bank with the stone wall on the right (The path which follows the stone wall on the left leads across the moor to Donard Forest, with access to the mountains). Follow the path around the forest, always keeping the stone wall to the right.

After the highest point on the path, just below Curragherd, the route continues fairly level for about 100 m before reaching a right-angle bend in the wall. At this point there is an easily crossed stile through the wall to route 2.

The path continues down to a wet area over a stream where frog spawn and tadpoles are usually visible in the spring. The route then passes numerous piles of stones, which were once perhaps hides for hunters. Where the trees finish on the right access over the wall is possible using stones jutting out of it.

Looking out towards the mountains at this point there is an easy hill to climb, with some large erratic rocks on the side left by the last Ice Age.

The path now slopes gently down until it reaches an iron gate in the wall. The gate is locked but the wall can be crossed via a series of jutting out rocks to join route 3.