

Dalswinton Circular Walk



Go between the handsome twin gatehouses on the left hand side of the road to enter the main driveway towards Dalswinton House. After a short distance you will

see the last ruined remains of the original Dalswinton House on your left. A circular stair turret and cellar are all that remain of the early 17th century house. It is worth a short detour to take a better look at the tower.



As you approach the gateposts to Dalswinton House turn right and follow the road, with the loch on your right, towards the stable block. Dalswinton House sits high on your left at this point, on the same site as the original 13th century castle of the Comyns. Patrick Miller, the wealthy Glasgow born merchant banker and friend of the poet Robert Burns purchased the estate in 1785, and cleared the site of the old castle to make way for his new mansion.

If you wish, you can walk round the loch. In October 1788 the first steam powered paddleboat was launched on this loch, and Robert Burns is said to have been present on this memorable occasion. Patrick Miller was an inventor and promoter of steam navigation in the 18th Century, and a life size replica of the boat sits between the walled garden and the loch. In addition to steam navigation, he was a pioneer in new methods of farming, and introduced iron ploughs, threshing machines, turnips, and the use of bone manure.



Follow the road on past the stable block (Dalswinton Mains), and at the bottom of the hill turn right towards the white painted farmhouse of Bankfoot. Over to the left is a large

red steel railway bridge that crosses the river Nith. At one time, the river Nith ran close by Bankfoot, and a pool near the old house of Dalswinton called Comyn's pool belonged to the old watercourse. A large Roman fort was discovered in 1972, on the level floodplain of the Nith immediately after Bankfoot, and close to the site of the already known fort.

The Route

The Barony of Dalswinton has remained unaltered since medieval times, with a castle at Dalswinton since 1244. The Cumins of Badenoch, rivals of the Bruce family for the Scottish crown, held the estate in the 13th century. It was from Dalswinton that the Red Comyn travelled to his death in Greyfriars church in 1306 at the hands of Robert the Bruce.

The walk starts about one mile south east of Dalswinton village on the C11, which goes from Heathhall to Auldgrith. Grid ref NX950844, postcode DG1 1TD. Cars can be parked in the wide road entrance on the right hand side of the road, between the Bridge at Boghead Cottages and the main gates to Dalswinton estate. The main route for this walk is shown in red, but optional routes are shown in a broken red line.



KEY:
Main Walk - Solid Red
Optional Walks - Broken Red



Follow the road on past Bankfoot and after a long straight stretch the road eventually leads uphill, where you can enjoy a panoramic view of the surrounding countryside. Keep left after Bankhead farm, and as the farm track turns right, look ahead over the fields. This area was the site of two large Roman Cavaary forts, now only visible in aerial photographs as cropmarks. There are no surface indications of these sites, but finds from the excavations are on display in Dumfries Museum.



As you move towards the village the old school building is directly in front of you. Patrick Miller developed the village as part of Dalswinton estate after its acquisition in 1785.

The village was originally intended to house 15 families, and the school, built at the same time, was supported financially by Patrick Miller. Although all the buildings are now residential, the village earlier also had a tailor, a village shop, and a smiddy. The old Dumfries and District Post Office Directory of 1911/12 is an interesting source of information about former Kirkmahoe residents. A variety of longer hill and moor walks lead up behind the school towards Mullach with its Iron Age fort, and Clontock Tower. On a hillside near Mullach is an area still called the Hospital Wood, to which wounded covenanters were said to have been carried for safety and care. Nearby are large stones supposed to mark the graves of those who did not survive.



Immediately after the mill turn right, and then shortly after, take the right fork towards Braehead cottages. Criffel can be seen clearly from this stretch of road. Pass between the two cottages to head downhill, passing Braehead farmhouse on the way. John Paton, a 19th century missionary to the New Hebrides islands in the South Pacific was born and lived here for some years. He spent many years working among cannibal groups, and translating hymn books and the New Testament into native languages. He retired to Queensland Australia, where he died in 1907 at the age of 82.

Shortly after Braehead farmhouse turn left across a cattle grid, and go through the gate to follow the road back down to the parking area.



When you reach the buildings at Douganstyle the main walk leads you left and out across the road to head uphill past Maryfield House. As you can see on the map however, you have an option here to follow the footpath through the woods to the walled garden and loch.

On the main walk, follow the narrow



road past Maryfield House until you reach Dalswinton Mill. The mill is now a dwelling house, but the water wheel has been re-established.



Turn right through the village, and at the end go through the gate on the right hand side to follow the footpath through the Church Wood. The footpath will lead you past the small red painted Barony church. This pretty little church was built in 1881, and was referred to as a chapel of ease, as it was not the official parish church. It is a good example of a prefabricated ecclesiastical building made from corrugated galvanized iron. These were often referred to as tin tabernacles. The church has an interior fully lined in pine, with some stained glass windows, and is still in use today. A short footpath leads to the church if you want to look more closely at this little building.

CAERLAVEROCK

- Linear woodland and estate walk with an all ability trail for first 100m
- 3.5km/2miles
- 1 hr
- Hard surface paths, beaten earth, boardwalks and gate.
- Moderate
- Boots for full route. Binoculars recommended

PARKING Head out of Dumfries on the B725, pass through Glencaple and continue along the shore road into Caerlaverock National Nature Reserve. The car park is a layby approximately 2½ miles from Glencaple on the right hand side. If you wish to cycle to Caerlaverock follow National Cycle Route 7 from Dock Park heading for Gretna.

START You can learn about the local wildlife from the information boards before entering the nature reserve. The first 100m of this route is an all ability trail which terminates in a viewing area overlooking the merse. At the viewing area bear left along the woodchip path and enter the woodland. The path runs along old earthbanks associated with the early castle and then skirts along a strip of spruce trees. Mid way along the path there is an option to turn off to a picnic area and bird-viewing seat. This is waymarked from the main path.

The huge mudflats of Blackshaw Bank are home to millions of shellfish and worms which provide sustenance for thousands of waders and wildfowl, such as curlew, oystercatcher and shelduck. The entire population of barnacle geese from Svalbard (an island off northern Norway) spend winter on the Solway and a large proportion choose the merse and farmland around Caerlaverock. The rare and protected natterjack toad can also be found here; in fact Caerlaverock is home for the northernmost population. It can be identified by a distinctive yellow line along its back and can be heard croaking on warm summer evenings. At the southeast corner of Castle Wood the path turns left and on past Back o' Woods Cottages. Turn right along the woodchip path for a short circuit through a recently re-planted broadleaved woodland with views out to neighbouring farmland.

This path rejoins the main track just below the site of the first castle at Caerlaverock that was abandoned around 1277 when the buildings started to subside and collapse. Continue to the impressive sandstone ruins of the second castle, a unique triangular medieval fortress.

The castle and grounds are managed by Historic Scotland. The entry charge is displayed on signs and tickets must be purchased from the visitor centre. The Castle, playground, visitor centre and toilets are open all year and the tearoom opens from April to October.

Return along the same route.



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Leave gates as you find them - Keep dogs under close control at all times - Keep to paths across farmland - Take care on country roads - Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls - Respect farm livestock, crops and machinery - Take your litter home with you

WATERLOO MONUMENT

- Linear road and farmland/woodland walk
- 3.5 km/2½ miles
- 1½ hrs
- Hard surfaced paths with steps, gates and minor road
- Strenuous
- Boots recommended

PARKING From Dumfries follow the A710 Solway Coast road through Islesteps to New Abbey. The setting of the car park alongside Sweetheart Abbey in the picturesque village of New Abbey is an impressive start point for this walk. There are toilets, tearooms, two pubs and a village shop close to hand.

Sweetheart Abbey is one of three Cistercian Abbeys in Dumfries and Galloway and was founded in 1273 by Lady Devorgilla de Balliol in memory of her husband John Balliol, the puppet king of Scotland and founder of Balliol College Oxford. Lady Devorgilla always carried a casket containing the embalmed heart of her late husband and when she died she was buried with the casket in the Abbey. The Abbey is now in the care of Historic Scotland.

START Leave the car park and turn right down Main Street until you reach The Square. Pass in front of the Abbey Arms and bear left. Turn left at the millpond and continue for about 1/2 mile to the end of the minor road. Impressive boulder dykes skilfully constructed from granite 'footballs' bound this road. At the end of the road do not cross the burn; keep right and enter the field using the gate. Follow the path to the foot of the steps up to Waterloo Monument.

Your reward for a strenuous climb to the top is an excellent view over the Nith Estuary and across the Solway to the Lake District. In the foreground you can pick out the landmarks of New Abbey and the Crannog and island in Loch Kindar.

The memorial, built in 1810, commemorates the British, Belgian and Prussian soldiers who, under Wellington and Blücher gained the victory of Waterloo.

Return via the same route.

If time allows, Shambellie House Museum of Costume and New Abbey Corn Mill are both well worth visiting during your time in New Abbey.



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