

Dowally to Dunkeld via Loch Ordie

by Andy Crawford

WALK FACTS

Distance: 7½ miles/ 12 km

Map: OS 1:50,000 Landranger Sheet 53 or OS 1:25,000 Explorer Sheet 379

Start/parking: From the A9, follow the main road through to the north end of Dunkeld and park in the public car park. Be sure to get a 'Pay and Display' ticket for parking. If not able to use two cars to connect the start and finish of this walk use the local northbound bus service from Dunkeld, and alight at Dowally. Where used, cars should be parked on the slip road that leads to the Dowally Craft Centre. **DO NOT** park in, or block access to the Craft Centre car park.

Grading: This is a relatively straightforward route of scenic beauty suitable for walkers of most abilities. It is over good forestry roads and other vehicle tracks throughout. There is a sort bit of road walking near the end. Sheep and cattle grazing therefore dogs must be kept on a lead.

This is a linear walk that starts at Dowally, a roadside hamlet dating from the Culdee times, lying some 5 miles (8 km) to the northwest of Dunkeld. The small church here, built to replace an earlier one, dates from the early 19th Century. A stream flows down from Dowally Loch into the River Tay near here.

The walk ends in the ancient burgh town of Dunkeld, one of Perthshire's gems, where it is thought a pre-700 AD monastery was founded. The relics of St Columba were brought here from the west when the kingdoms of the Picts and Scots were united in 846 AD. The Cathedral Church of Dunkeld was built between the mid-13th and late 15th Centuries. After the destruction of Dunkeld in 1689, the centre of the burgh was moved eastwards to its present position and the cathedral grounds were incorporated into the grounds of a house of the Dukes of Atholl.

Thickly wooded Stanley Hill, an artificial mound raised in 1730 in the form of a fortification by the Duke of Atholl, forms a backdrop to the village. The bridge over the Tay was built in 1809, as a toll bridge by Thomas Telford, surveyor and engineer to the Commission for Highland Roads and Bridges.

If using the local northbound bus service from Dunkeld to Dowally, cross the busy A9 road **CAREFULLY** and bear right, in front of the cottages to the south of the church. Car users should walk south up the footpath from the slip road leading to the Craft Centre. Follow the path – that deteriorates somewhat into rutted vehicle tracks – uphill in an easterly direction through an attractive woodland and, after about ¼ of a mile (0.5 km) negotiate the stile or gate onto a rough, wide road crossing north/south and turn right.

A short distance on there is another stile and gate on the left. Cross over (or through) and continue up the rough road alongside the stream to another gate and stile at Raor Lodge. Raor has more the appearance of a croft or small farm rather than the traditional image of an estate 'lodge'. Again, cross over (or through) then turn left (north then northeast) and continue on the wide track for some 1¾ miles (2.6 km) until reaching a junction at the outrun from Loch Ordie - Grid Ref NO028499. Turn right, cross over the bridge and follow the path between the high rhododendron bushes to Loch Ordie Lodge. The grassy area between the lodge and the loch is an ideal place for a picnic.

To continue, follow the path to the right of the lodge, up a bank and through a gate in the deer fence then ascend gently over the lower, western, slopes of Deuchary Hill before descending again to Mill Dam. Cross over the narrow outrun at the south end of the loch to reach another rough, wide road that joins from the right – from Raor Lodge.

Turn left (southeast) and follow this road all the way through to the A923 Dunkeld to Blairgowrie road. Turn to the right, downhill, for about 220 yards (200 metres) to a T-junction then turn left into Dunkeld. The car park is on the right just after the hotel drive entrance.