

Lucklaw Hill

By Andy Crawford

Lucklaw Hill, a prominent feature in the north-east Fife landscape, towers over the expanding village of Balmullo. Renowned for its huge, pink quarry, it is the source of volcanic dacite rock for a myriad of projects in the County and beyond, including field walls, house building, path and road surfacing. Almost half of the hill has been quarried over the years, but it is unlikely to continue much further. On weekdays the air reverberates to the sound of aircraft engine noise from nearby RAF Leuchars airfield.

The walk begins through 'Willie's Wood' - a Forestry Authority Community Woodland - and follows a wide grassy rise, rounding to the left up to the highest point. Picnic tables and an interesting spherical sundial grace the top. The path descends from here, through a gate then rising towards a steading development that was Lucklaw Farm. Negotiate the wooden kissing-gate and turn left on the rough road for a short distance to a junction. Turn right and continue to a crossroads. A short way to the left is the hamlet of Logie; ahead a link road to the A914; to the right the road to the quarry and Balmullo.

Turn right and, after 60 yards, cross over the road, pass through a gateway and follow the Land Rover tracks up the rise. The stone wall on the left continues to the top where a gate leads through onto another track. The wall is now to the right. Keep on this track - which at times can be badly churned up by the cattle that graze here - passing through two gateways. Turn immediately left after the second one and follow the fenceline uphill to a thicket bounded by a high wall. A gate at the top of this rise leads through onto a track which branches right, towards the summit of Lucklaw Hill (690ft/190m) that is festooned with radio telecommunications masts and a trig point.

Spend a little time on the top of this little hill and take in the magnificent 360 degree panorama east and north from St Andrews across the River Eden estuary and RAF Leuchars airfield towards the Angus coast, round past Dundee and the Sidlaws - and the Grampians beyond on a clear day. Continue west past Norman's Law and round further still to West and East Lomond and Largo Law. Keep a watch for buzzards, kestrels and foxes.

To continue, keep to the right of the steel fence surrounding the masts and small building and head WNW towards a gate in the fence bordering the tree line. Inside the fence four tracks lead ahead. Take either of the center two through a mix of heather, broom, blaeberry, birch, bracken, beech, conifer, holly and many other species of flora, taking care when walking over the exposed roots of some of the trees. The path bears to the left and descends towards a wide forest track beside a barrier and one or two cottages. Turn right and head down the tarmac road to the junction at Brackmont and left again. In the dip - at Loanfoot steading - turn left and follow a rough track towards the trees on Straiton Hill. The route can be plagued by brambles at times as it leads uphill through the trees emerging at the wide track some 100 yards from the barrier and cottages where the route turned right (above). Turn right here and continue to the western edge of the forest at a gate and heavy rail fence constructed for horses to negotiate. The route continues ahead, over the field, to the end of the trees which range in from the left. However, should the field be planted, respect the growing crop and follow the fence left round to the large metal gates leading out through the thicket to a rough road.

Turn left and walk the long, inclined straight, southwestwards past Brighthouse, to reach a tarmac road. Turn left, again, passing Ardlogie house, to the crossroads mentioned above. Continue ahead at the junction and retrace the outward route through the woodland back to the start.

WALK FACTS

Map: OS Landranger Sheet 59 (St Andrews & Kirkcaldy)

Distance: 5 miles. Mostly on good paths and tracks with a little road walking.

Starting Point: NO 416 205 Cuplahills Community Woodland car park, ¾ mile along a rough road, signposted from the southern outskirts of Balmullo on the A92 Tay Bridge / Cupar road. Parts of the route pass through agricultural land therefore dogs MUST be kept on a lead and under strict control.