

# Pitlochry to Dunkeld

by Andy Crawford

**Distance:** 17 miles/27.4 km

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

**Start/parking:** Easthaugh - Grid Ref. 960562 is the start for this walk. Using public transport is the easier option for getting to the start although two cars could equally suffice. Whichever is used, leave the A9 and 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 the telephone kiosk at Easthaugh. Where used, cars should be parked on the roadside wherever practicable, taking care not to block access to any of the accommodation.

**Grading:** This route is mostly on good forestry roads and other vehicle tracks throughout.

However, there is one almost trackless part around the south shore of Loch Broom.

Recommended Ideal for competent, fit adults and older children. Full protective weather clothing and navigational equipment must be carried. Sheep and cattle grazing in parts therefore dogs should be kept on a lead.

This is a fairly long, linear walk that starts at Easthaugh, a roadside hamlet on the southwest outskirts of Pitlochry and 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.

## REMEMBER TO LEAVE DETAILS OF YOUR ROUTE WITH SOMEONE!

A regular bus service to Aberfeldy leaves from Dunkeld on weekdays and Saturdays and reaches the Easthaugh between 15 and 20 minutes later. Check with "Stagecoach" in Perth, prior to departure, for any alterations to this timing.

The bus turns off the A9 after Ballinluig and travels via the "General Wade's Road" into Pitlochry. Take a single fare to Easthaugh - Grid Ref. 960562 - and alight beside the telephone kiosk.

Follow the narrow tarmac road to the left of the telephone kiosk, steeply uphill in a northeasterly direction. After about 1 mile the road levels out and turns sharp right beside a stand of conifers. Take a minute or two to appreciate the view westward over the Tay Valley - and to draw breath! Pass through a field gate and 220 yards (200 metres) further on cross the deer fence by the stile. Unfortunately this stile was not designed for short-legged walkers! Continue on the rough road through the extensive, young conifer plantation and, on reaching the top of this ascent (1181ft / 360 metres) the radio mast on Faire Mhor should be clearly visible.

DO NOT deviate from this road until reaching a forestry area marker "PITCASTLE /TOM BHEITHE" where the route divides. Take either fork. The higher track (to the right) offers the better views over Ben y Vrackie and the Ben A'Ghlo massif.

Following the higher track, pass a marker "PYLON BRAE / PITCASTLE" and, at the Y-junction, keep right. Pass below an overhead power line and after a further 55 yards (50 metres) bear left along the grass/heather track. Descend from here until reaching a wide junction where the lower track meets the higher. There are 3 markers here - "BROBY BURN", "PYLON BRAE" and "FAIRE MHOR".

DO NOT go down the road to the right through the swing gates, but continue straight ahead, on a gentle incline, east by northeast, past another marker "CARN ELRIG", towards two small wooden huts at Grid Ref. 007596. From this stretch of track, Loch Broom is visible below to the southeast

A few metres before the huts, 2 tracks – a few yards/metres apart - lead off and down to the right. Take the second track to avoid a DEEP DITCH.

Continue descending on this track south, past a marker “ALLT BURBRUACH”, to the stile over the deer fence beside the boathouse at the northeast corner of Loch Broom.

From the boathouse continue left, close to the deer fence to avoid the boggy grassland, cross the Allt Burbruach and then follow the easterly shoreline - a mixture of sandy beaches and small rocky sections - until reaching the second boathouse which lies south southwest of the first. It may be necessary, depending on the height of water in the loch, to walk through the heather in places on the intermittent fisherman's path.

The OS Maps show two tracks that ascend south, away from the loch. DO NOT be tempted to follow the first as the underfoot conditions are very rough. Continue on to the boathouse and take the second track instead.

Stay on this track until reaching a large, fenced, sheep-dipping compound and sheds at Grid Ref. 012555 where a footbridge leads directly east, up a long “cobbled” straight section, to a large walled enclosure - formerly a sheep-dipping compound. The path continues eastward, on the incline, reaching a gate in a wall, on the right, below Meall Lochan Oisinneach. Go through the gate onto the track on the opposite side of the wall and continue ascending (1444ft / 440 metres) round the hillside to reach Lochan Oisinneach Mor. This is just under half way.

Follow the west shore of the lochan – right-hand path - to the sluice and keep right again. This track heads due south to Loch Ordie. En-route, pass the ruined cottage at Grid Ref 028527 - an idyllic place to stop for a break on a sunny summer day - and some 275 yards (250 metres) later keep left where the path divides. Continue, through a gate then descend, amidst the remnants of what must have once been a splendid forest of conifers, to a T-junction and turn right - southwest. On reaching Loch Ordie turn right again and follow the path round the west side of the loch to where a diversion left leads to Loch Ordie Lodge.

Behind the lodge, and to the right, a grassy track leads up to a gate in a deer fence and out over the lower western slopes of Deuchary Hill and then descends gently through to Mill Dam. Cross the barrier at the south end, over the narrow outrun and onto a wide rough road that joins from the right, from Raor Lodge.

Alternatively, backtrack from Loch Ordie lodge, on the diversion, to the junction and turn left - southwest. DO NOT deviate from this path until reaching Raor Lodge where it divides through gates with stiles. Raor Lodge has more the appearance of a small farm, rather than the traditional image of an estate "lodge". Go through the gate to the left and continue on past Dowally Loch and Rotmell Loch to Mill Dam.

Follow this rough road all the way through to Dunkeld. At Birkenburn, amongst the trees, there is a long S-bend that finishes near Hatton. Approximately 650 yards (600 metres) beyond here a track joins in from the right.

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.