

## **Walks Ballintomb, Glen Beg, Dreggie to Ballieward**

1: Lynmacgregor, Ballieward, Camerory

From The Square walk along Seafield Avenue to the Dulaig Bridge passed the caravan site. Follow the signs for the Dava Way onto the old railway line and continue through the cutting as the path drops to the road to View Point . Rejoin the line just beyond the bridge and on the left, strung out parallel to the line are the Crofts of Lynmacgregor. Some of the original single storey houses are still inhabited with their original crofting fields extending down to the railway embankment. There were originally around a dozen lots allocated and a few were eventually demolished for larger Victorian houses and summer guests' accommodation. To the left the farm of Achnafearn appears just below the tree line and on the right across the road, through the belt of trees lies the marshy area of Polchar and the site of Old Grantown. Replaced by the new town in 1765, there were still a few stragglers living there until the 1820's. Eventually the line crosses the main road over the impressive bridge next to the East Lodge to Castle Grant. Built by the Inverness and Perth Railway Company as a private railway halt for the Earl of Seafield, in gratitude for allowing them to build the railway through his expansive estate. The Dava Way continues gradually climbing the Ballieward Brae until it meets a track from the main road to the castle. Going to the left reaches the main road and walking back towards Grantown a short way, will reach the junction to Ballieward on the right handside. There was once an inn at Balliward which would have been a welcome sight to those climbing the brae. The single track road, sign posted Ballieward and Camerory follows the old military road from the Old Spey Bridge to Fort George. This was once the main road in and out of Strathspey from the lowlands of Nairnshire and Moray, until the current route via Huntly's Cave was created. Mail was once delivered from Aberdeen and Forres by this route.

Ballieward was a small contained crofting community, dating from the drive for agricultural improvements in the late 1770s. There were once far more croft houses than remain today. To the left are the thickly wooded Creag Bheithe Mhor and Creag Bheithe Bheag and on the right Carn Luig. This location was one of the first plantations to be established by Sir James Grant with saplings raised on his nurseries and one of the first foresters, Alexander McGregor lived at Camerory. At Upper Camerory the surfaced road stops at a gate and the continuing track is all that remains of the original military road. From here there are great views to Ben Rinnes stretching west along the Cromdale Hills. The track skirts the plantation fence to the watershed overlooking the Dava Moor and beyond. From here it's possible to continue crossing the Dava via Anaboard or following the fence round Carn Luig to join the main road or a little further on, re-join the Dava Way back to Grantown.

## **2: Viewpoint, Achosnich, Gorton and Dreggie**

Starting from The Square follow the signs to Viewpoint along Seafield Avenue. From the Dulaig water fall the route is well signed from the railway line and uphill through the hazelnut wood. The initial climb is short and steep but there is a bench to sit on and take in the view over Grantown, nestling in the sylvan hollow and the Cromdale Hills. The walk continues through birch woods until the farm road to Achosnich is reached. The Viewpoint chart is on the right among a few pine trees. It's possible to return to Grantown the same way or down by the farm road to re-join the Dava Way along the disused railway line or by the main road.

For those who wish to continue further, follow the farm road to Achosnich and through the farm steading and passed the cottage to the rear. The track leads to a hill gate with a deer fence and stile. It's easier walking to stay out with the fence as the ground inside is heavily rutted with recent tree planting. Follow the fence up towards Gorton Hill. Another gate and stile gives access now to another track passed some ruins and a solitary tree to the cairn. Here on a fine day are commanding views from Ben Rinnes, Cromdale Hills, Cairngorms and round to Meall Cuach in Drumochter. Continue down to the Keeper's Cottage in Glen Beg, where a gate and track lead back to the bridge at Dulaig.

## **3: Glenbeg**

Start at either the car park by Old Inverallan cemetery and walk the single track road to join the main road at Kirkton, or on the old road by Kirkton Cottage, where there is limited parking.

Follow the sign for Glen Beg and begin walking with the Glen Beg Burn on the left and up and under the old railway bridge. This follows the old church road that went from upper Glen Beg to the original Inverallan church. The road originally was more direct from where it crosses the mainroad. It then carried on to the right of Tolum a Chrocher (hill of the hangman) and rejoined the current road near the modern houses. The field on the left beyond the bridge was known as Croft Miller and would have belonged to the miller at Craggan. Beside the fields of Croft Farquhar the road forks, either continue on towards Glenbeg farm or take the track on the right towards Gorton. The former crosses the Glenbeg burn and rises to the farm, leaving the wooded glen behind and opening out onto the moor of Laggan and Bheinn Mhor. Behind the farm, tracks can be followed to explore the burial cairn or climb to the trig point on Bheinn Mhor.

Otherwise continue up the glen and the track swings round by a ford, over the Glen Beg burn and passing Wester Gorton. Beyond here a track veers left uphill towards the Keeper's Cottage and Gorton Hill. Going through a gate in the deer fence the track levels off all the way to the head of the glen. It's possible to follow the estate roads all the way to the Rynechra (shieling of the cattle pen)

which can be seen in the distance. Though remote, it was a well chosen spot as the sun always seems to shine on its fields. A solitary larch tree, tilting from the wind and a gable end is all that's left of Sleanafearn and a red corrugated iron roof marks the Foal's well. This was one of many springs that were used early in the 20th century to pipe water to Grantown. Its demands grew, especially during the summer when the population rose dramatically with visitors. For the return journey follow the track past Gorton to Wester Dreggie and down to Grantown. On a good day rewarded with fine views over the town, Cairngorms and Cromdale Hills or alternatively take the track back to the fork above Croft Farquhar.

#### **4: Laggan and Ballintomb**

Starting at Rôches Moutonnées lay by, walk to the road leading up to Easter Laggan. On the fringes of the wood and in the field to the right are outlines of former cottages, once occupied by the labourers at the limestone quarries on Laggan Hill. Just before the entrance to Easter Laggan, go through a gate on the right and follow the track marked for Laggan Hill and the transmitter pylon. A short climb to the top is rewarded with views over Strathspey. It's possible to continue along the watershed to Beinn Mhor or visit the limestone quarries and cup marked stones to the south west on Laggan Hill. Other archaeological remains are to the south east: two cairns in Gaich Wood and one on the moor. Return by the road to Laggan.

Cross the main road to Ballintomb farm and ask permission to access the standing stones at Tom nan Carragh. Often there are sheep with lambs or crops around the site. It's easiest to walk along the old railway line or alternatively walk along the banks of the Spey from Inverallan passed Tarrig Mhore and the Meikle Meadows. This site is of great antiquity and the location must have held some significance. It's been a ceremonial meeting place since the standing stones were erected to monitor the sun and moon and much later clan Grant, the Regality Court and Figgat Fair all gathered here at one time. A ferry also crossed the Spey near here until the 1920's from Boat of Balliefurth. Ballintomb, Glen Beg, Dreggie to Ballieward