



Rafford/Califer Hill

16km/10miles 5hrs

A circular walk to the summit of Califer Hill, with its fine views of the Moray Firth and the Sutherland Hills, returning via Lower Rafford and the Dava Way.



Geocaches on or near to this route include:
Least we Forget Rafford and Room For a View.



Walk Information

Terrain

Stiles-None
Suitable for most abilities

Planning

Start/Parking

Leancoil Hospital Parking at
Council Wood Car Park
Grid Ref: NJ0495981
Map OS Landranger 27

Refreshments

Various in Forres and M&C Garden
Centre

Public Toilets

Various in Forres and M&C Garden
Centre



Introduction

A circular walk along minor roads and footpaths which starts from Leancoil Hospital (closed) at the southern edge of Forres, includes stunning views from the Califer Viewpoint, routes through Old Rafford and returns to Forres along the Dava Way disused

railway and passes the Burn of Mosset, Forres Flood Alleviation Scheme. A shorter circular route of four miles starting from Rafford Church that includes the Viewpoint is also described below.

This walk is NOT way marked. Walkers are responsible for their own navigation and use of the tracks and footpaths under the Scottish Outdoor Access Code See www.outdooraccessscotland.com The walk can be undertaken in either direction. These directions take the walker clockwise as the 2.6 mile road section is undertaken at the outset. Take great care on the narrow roads!

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The start point of Leancoil Hospital (NJ 049581) is one mile south of the Town Centre on the B9010. Walking the initial road section can be avoided (and the walk shortened) by utilising the Dial M for Moray bus service to take walkers from the Hospital to the Califer View Point – see the Moray Council website for details:

www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_52932.html



Starting at Leancoil Hospital, head away from Forres along St Leonard's Road keeping to the footpath at the left side of the road. As the footpath comes to an end continue straight ahead for some 200 yards then bear left on the minor road (NJ 055579). Continue straight ahead at the cross roads. Follow this minor road passing Newforres Farm on your left and as you curve left and uphill you will pass Newforres Quarry on your right. Continue along the minor road to the cross roads (NJ 073575) where you go straight ahead (shorter circular route from Rafford Church joins at this point). The minor road can be seen climbing the hill in front of you by zig zag bends. To your right you can see the tower and remains of Blervie Castle which was built in the 1600s. You will be able to see the tower for much of the walk. Follow the minor road up the hill and about a 1/4 of a mile after it straightens, at the crest, you will see a brown, viewpoint sign pointing off the road to the left. Turn left and enjoy a rest on the seat and the panoramic view of Forres and the Moray Firth (NJ 084572). A viewing platform indicates directions and the distance to places that may be seen. The vista provides ample reward for the effort of the climb and the 2.6 miles that you have walked so far. Return to the minor road and retrace your steps by turning right and walking back some 200

yards until you see a track on your left signed Calfermoss and Laverock Height (NJ 082570). Take this track and then take the right fork at the two Y junctions until you pass two houses on your right and cross over a stream at Burnside (NJ 084564). Turn right, signposted Sourbank and Rafford. Follow the footpath downhill passing through a metal gate at the bottom. The path can be muddy and slippery when wet. Continue straight ahead and shortly, when the road turns sharp left, continue straight ahead into a grassy lane (which might appear to be a private drive) passing Parkview bungalow on your left and the small Sourbank pumping station on your right (NJ 075561). Continue on the path as it curves to the right with the stream running alongside on your right. At T junction turn right joining a farm track. Just before you reach the farm buildings at Granary take the right track, keeping the buildings on your left and cross over a wooden bridge. Continue on the farm track with good views of Blervie Castle out to your right on the horizon.



As you approach Rafford Church (NJ 061563), with its distinctive tower. Rafford Church was built in 1826 with later alterations which include a magnificent stained glass window in memory of Captain Galloway who was killed in WW1. Just prior to the Church take the footpath down to the left turning left where it becomes hard surfaced until it meets the road. Take care and cross the road, then take the minor road over the small bridge, signposted Dallas Dhu, and curve Right with the old churchyard and then bungalows on your left. Follow this minor road for almost a mile passing occasional houses on both sides of the road.

Immediately before a stone bridge over the road turn Right through a gate signposted Dava Way – Forres. This path gently ascends to join the disused railway, now designated the Dava Way – see

www.davaway.org.uk for more details.

Continue straight ahead and after a delightful stretch of woodland, you cross over the Mosset Burn as it passes under the embankment and then pass the Dallas Dhu distillery on your left: it is a disused distillery, maintained in working order as a museum by Historic Scotland. You could pay a visit or simply take a rest at the picnic tables provided.

www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/forres/dallasdhu

Continue along the Dava Way until you pass under a bridge (NJ 036574). Here, turn sharp Right and climb the steps up to a track.

Turn Left at the top of the steps and after about 200 yards turn Left onto a track through woodland maintained by the Forres Community Woodlands Trust.



Ignore tracks that go off to the left and continue along this wide forest track with the woodlands on your left and open fields on your right. Pass a Mountain Bike jump area on your left and then at the second turning after the jump area, turn Left into the woodland (if you reach a large map board on your left, you have gone too far) and then almost immediately turn Right. You have joined another of the Trust's walks with yellow way marks. The track climbs gently and, just over the crest, turn Right again to join a narrow track. This will bring you along the top of a ridge with a Dam below. This £20 million project completed in August 2009 is designed to prevent flooding of the lower areas of Forres by retaining flood water in the fields upstream of the dam. The path will lead you down to the Mosset Burn which

you cross by the wooden foot bridge. Follow the track around to the Right and then turn sharp Left on a track that leads you up through Chapelton Farm which is no longer a working farm. Continue through the Farm joining the tarmac road and straight ahead you will see your starting point of Leancoil Hospital

Shorter Circular Walk from Rafford Church – 4 miles.

From Rafford Church (NJ 061543) return to the B 9010 and turn Right (towards Forres) taking care as you walk along the road for 50 yards. Turn Right at the war memorial and continue along the minor road past Blervie Castle until you come to the first cross roads (NJ073575). Here, you turn Right and join the main route instructions above to walk up the hill to the viewpoint. Follow the instructions until you return to Rafford Church.