

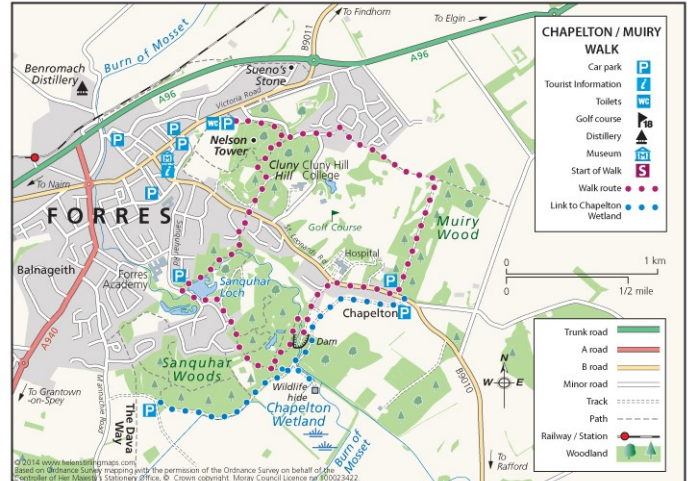


Sanquhar-Chapelton-Muiry Walk 4.5 miles/ 7km

A circular walk around the southern outskirts of Forres taking in Sanquhar Loch and Woodlands, Cluny Hill the opportunity to visit the Chapelton Wetlands Wildlife Hide and an unexpected glimpse of Findhorn Bay



Geocaches on or near to this route include:
Grant Park, Helges Hole and Dam Fine View



Walk Information

Terrain

Stiles-None
Suitable for most abilities

Planning

Start/Parking

Victoria Road Car Park
Grid Ref: NJ043593
Map OS Landranger 27 or
Explorer 423

Refreshments

Town Centre

Public Toilets

Grant Park, also off High Street

Public Transport

Buses from Inverness/
Aberdeen to Forres
Trains from Inverness/
Aberdeen to Forres

Introduction

This walk is for your enjoyment, to help you do just that the walk has been waymarked for your convenience with yellow arrows on lamp-posts and waymarkers along with the occasional arrow on fencing. Our thanks are extended to the following landowners for allowing us access and giving permission for the waymarking of the route as it crosses their land—The Moray Council, Forres Community Woodland Trust, Sir Alistair Gordon-Cumming (Altyre Estate), Mr Hamish White & family (Cassieford Farm) and homeowners where waymarking has been sited on boundary fencing.

The Walk

From the start point in Victoria Road Car Park follow the track that goes from the back of the car park towards Forres squash Club. As you enter the track you will see the Logo and an arrow on the fence to your left. Keep moving forward until the steps and the first waymarker slightly to your right come into view.

Here the path veers right across the grass towards some steps and a ramp up the banking to reach a broad path. Here turn left for a few yards until on your right you will see a set of steps to take you up to the next level. Your way here is forward and upward round the East side of Cluny Hill. At the top there is a path

coming in on your right, ignore it and keep moving forward following the contours of the hill until on your left your way is indicated along the path going downhill. Turn left here down the slope. (The section you have just walked will be your return route to the car park).

At the bottom of the slope turn right along the avenue of beautiful trees and continue along the main track keeping the depression in the ground to your right. This depression is known as Helgy's Hole or Hell's Hole. Keep Helgy's/Hells Hole on your right hand side (ignore the tracks on your left as your way bends to the right) until the cross-roads junction to your front.

Turn left here and continue gently downhill through the avenue of mature trees and onto a macadam road surface passing between two lovely old properties to the junction with St. Leonard's Road. Being mindful of the traffic, cross over the road and move uphill over an old tar Macadam surface which is the access to the properties on either side. At the top go straight forward entering a narrow passage between two properties, at the far end you will see a waymarker on the left-hand side and to your front on the lamppost a metal sign indicating that you should turn left here keeping on the track, [Do not enter the housing area] here you have a low wall and then a garden fence on your right hand. When the fence

stops at the end of the property the track angles to the right slightly and starts descending to the top of a set of steps, go forward down the steps, at the bottom of the steps there is a path across your front, turn right here keeping the 'Mosset Burn' to your left.

This is a lovely area, feel the atmosphere changing as you follow this path forward, eventually Sanquhar Loch/Pond is beside you on your left, continue up and over the dam head down into the small car park with its information point set in Moray sandstone. Turn left here, look for the "Dippers" which nest under the cascading water, they are also to be seen across the road at the Fish Ladder. Cross back over the road and sit awhile on the seating on top of the dam and enjoy this oasis of peace and tranquility. The loch or pond call it what you will was created in the year 1900, and as you can see it is silting up badly.

When you are ready to move on keep the dam head to your left and move forward until you come to a short section of wall, in which there is an opening. Turn left here onto a fairly narrow track [3-4ft wide] with the loch on your left and the rear of properties on the right. The gradient rises steadily for a short distance then the track splits in two, bear right here, in a matter of a few metres/ yards another wider track joins from the left, keep moving

forward still with the rear of properties on your righthand side until you have a public road crossing your path.

[The older property on the right is what used to be the gardeners cottage when this area was part of the 2000 acre (810 hectare) Sanquhar Estate. Look for the sign on the left which tells you that this is Woodend.]

Cross the public road and move along the track in front of you into what are known as Sanquhar Woodlands (These woodlands are managed and held in trust by the FORRES COMMUNITY WOODLANDS TRUST), after walking a short distance a track goes off at right angles on your left, ignore it, keep moving forward and in a matter of a few minutes walking time an informal gravel pathway giving access to the properties on your right is in sight. Ignore this too! Your way is straight forward.

After leaving the properties behind as the track rises up out of the dip in the ground look across to your right and in the middle of the field there is [at the time of writing] a stand of Scots Pine. These mark the site where the Sanquhar Estate Offices were once situated. Depending on the time of day it is in this field that you may be lucky enough to see deer feeding, indeed you may see them in the woodland alongside the track. Continue forward on the main track ignoring any inviting paths on your left until the track begins to descend.

Those wishing to visit the Chapelton Wetland and Wildlife Hide should continue straight ahead (ignore the Yellow turn left way mark) and at the T junction with a main track, turn Left and pass on the left side of wide metal gates. Then, turn immediately Right and walk along a wide track with the Burn of Mosset on your left. You will soon come to a metal gate and beyond it a wildlife hide which looks out over the Wetland area created when the Chapelton Dam was built: the Burn of Mosset was diverted through this field and it has become a haven for wildlife which Altyre Estate is now managing for conservation and recreation. To rejoin the walk, return towards the Dam, do not cross the bridge over the stream but walk up to the Dam ridge, turn Left and climbing slightly make your way into the woods bearing Right where you will come to a narrow, hard core path where you turn Right and are back on the walk.

Walkers not going to the Wetlands should turn Left at the way mark onto another main track and follow it uphill for about 100 metres. As it descends into a dip, take the narrower waymarked path to the right which has a hardcore surface.

This path will lead you to the edge of the trees where you will have a marvellous view of the Califer and Romach Hills to the South of Forres whilst in the foreground is dam of the Forres Flood Alleviation Scheme of the Burn of Mosset. The dam is designed to restrict the flow of water down the Mosset Burn and thus prevent it flooding the lower parts of the town, The water will, instead, flood the low lying fields upstream of the dam, This impressive scheme which cost £18 million was opened in August 2009 and immediately proved its worth less than two weeks later.

If you wish to inspect the scheme more closely, you can cut across to the dam and follow a grasscrete track that runs around the dam before turning left through a gate just after the end of the dam and rejoin the walk as it comes up from the Burn. Otherwise, continue along the hardcore path with the views off to the right and the path curves down to an impressive new footbridge over the Burn of Mosset. The path winds up the opposite slope and as you leave the dam behind, you join a wider track with broom growing high on either side.

From here the gradient rises, taking the track up to Chapelton Farm. Just before entering the farm, there is a field on the left which may be cropped or pasture, about 50 or 70 yds in, the ground rises into a small mound which is usually covered in rough grass and uncultivated.

[This is the site of a 14th century Celtic Chapel dedicated to Saint Leonard. It is from this place that the church of the same name in Forres High Street took its name when the congregations of the High and Castlehill Churches in Forres were joined.]

Before moving on it is worth turning around to take in the view.

Move forward now through the farm yard passing the farmhouse on your right. Shortly you come onto an access road to a small housing development on the left, keep straight on and very soon you are at a 'T' junction, with Leancoil Hospital straight in front of you. Cross the road [St. Leonard's Road] to the footpath opposite just in front of the commemorative stone telling a little about the hospital.

Turn right after reading the stone and move forward crossing the access road which goes up the side of the hospital, on reaching the other side look closely for the old Town Boundary Stones in the grass to your left. Continue alongside the road until you come to the last of the properties on your left and turn left into a small informal car park between the last house and the woodland.

These woodlands are managed

jointly by the Moray Council and the Forres Community Woodland Trust for the enjoyment of all. The Forres Community Woodland Trust also own an area of ground which they are developing, (The Muiry Woods) again for the benefit of all.

Move forward to the far end of the car park and enter the track which goes straight ahead into the Woodlands passing between a small commemorative cairn to your right and the pole barrier.

There are many footpaths in this section of the walk through these woodlands so please be careful and follow only those waymarkers you have been following with the 'Forres Footpaths Trust' logo and the yellow arrows on them.

Leaving the cairn and pole barrier behind move forward along the path (noticing on your left-hand side a stone wall) until the stone wall turns through 90 degrees and the path continues forward. The path opens out and there in front of you is a sign post indicating that your way is forward. (With an indication that to the right is a path taking you to the Muiry Walks).

Your path is as mentioned previously, forward along a well defined path with waymarkers situated to the right of the path.

The Golf Course you will see on your left as you pass through the woods is the Forres Golf Clubs ' Muiry-shade Course' Your walk keeps you at a safe distance from the edge of the course whilst giving you some tantalising glimpses of this lovely course through the trees.

Eventually, to the left of the path is a signpost indicating that your way at the junction just ahead of you is to the left. As directed turn left and follow this path through to its junction with a broader path to your front.

At this junction we are now going to turn left onto what is believed to be an old Right-of-Way linking Forres and Easter New Forres.

Having turned left your way now is taking you back towards Forres along the old Right-of-Way with the golf course to your left behind the trees and hedgerow and to your right is farmland. Look out to the right as you walk for what is really a view which may surprise you, you may have to go up the embankment a little to the field fence. The bay you can see is Findhorn Bay with the old village of Findhorn itself on the right at the far end. The Moray Firth itself can be seen beyond the bay with the mountains on the far shore visible when the weather is fair.

The gradient now starts to fall and on the right houses come into view, ignore the track which goes at right

angles to the right behind the houses. Your way is straight on with the rear of houses to the right of you and grassland to your left.

(Look for the the logo and directional arrow on the garden fence.)

Soon you will see Clovenside Cemetery appear, also on the left.

The track finishes giving way to a Macadam surface, here you have the entrance to the cemetery to the left of you and the car park in front of you.

Your way is to the right along the cemetery access road the gradient rising to a junction, ignore the road to the left and keep going forward.

Here you have trees to your left and the rear gardens of houses to the right of you at a lower level than the road.

Follow the road round as it curves to the right and just before the entrance to the woodlands there is a traffic sign warning of children, once past this sign there is an opening which leads onto a fairly wide track into the woods, turn left here into the woodland. In a short distance your way is indicated as 'Return Route' (in white) and bears right on a rising gradient until it meets with a path which is where you turn to the right and onto more or less level ground.

Follow this track round to the left as it follows the contours of the hill, shortly the path divides, keep to the right here with a steadily falling gradient. At the bottom go down the steps onto the lower path and turn left moving forward for a short distance where a path on the right takes you down the embankment via a ramp and some steps out onto the parkland below, turn right here and move forward towards Forres Squash Club and onto the dirt track, turn left following this track back to the car park.