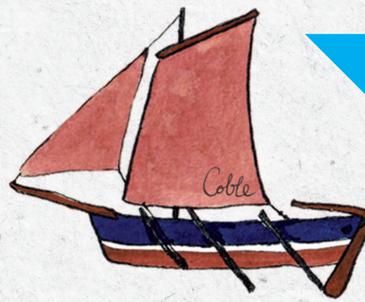


Newtonhill/ Skateraw Walk



4

Since the 17th Century the fishing villages around North Kincardine were a hive of activity. The many bays along the Kincardine coast from Cowie to Torry were filled with boats and inshore fisher folk. The fishing peaked in the mid, to late 19th century.

While the men were risking their lives line fishing several miles out at sea, it was not so easy at home for wives and families. At daybreak the women started collecting bait from the shoreline, baiting over 500 hooks per boat before breakfast and household chores. The women carried their men on their backs to and from the boats, through the surf, to prevent the men from getting wet and catching life-threatening illnesses. When the men were away, the women organised peat and sawdust for fuel and for smoking haddock. Once the catch was onshore, it was gutted and prepared, the women carried the fish, in creels, to the market in Aberdeen, some 12 miles away.

Skateraw used to be a village in its own right until it became subsumed into the village of Newtonhill, named after the land the railway cut through in 1849. The railway supplied the villagers with work, supported trade and travel up until the 1956 when the railway station was closed. Skateraw remains, but the fishing fleet has long since gone.



Fishing cottages in Skateraw

This route takes you on a short walk of about one mile around the architectural and historical features of this fishing village. The walk starts and finishes at Newtonhill Pharmacy, close to the number 7 bus stop and the local shop. It is quite steep in places and sometimes slippery and muddy after a lot of rain.

Explore around Whitelands, Hillhead, Bettridge and Skateraw Roads which have a variety of fisher cottages, most of them have been extended and harled, but some still have attractive fish-scale tiles. You may be able to see some of the slanted roof lines of the original architecture. Number 15 Skateraw Road was the location of first school in Newtonhill from 1846 to 1855; the teacher was Eppie Wishart. Next to number 16 stands the old smokehouse, a low whitewashed building with a square black chimney, this is one of the many smokehouses that would have been in the village where haddock would have been smoked. House number 31, is the nearest to the original design of a fisherman's cottage.

At the bottom of Skateraw Road is Bræhead, which is a fine place to sit and look out at Newtonhill Bay and the North Sea. Many species of sea-birds can be seen as well as grey seals and dolphins. Down to the left, you should take the cliff path to the beach. Signs of the windlass (for lifting boxes of fish to the cliff top and hauling boats ashore) and the remains of the old pier can be seen at low tide. Cross the Elsick Burn by the bridge. Here you will find an old salmon bothy recently restored as a house, called "The Haven" and behind it, is Shore Cottage, originally a boat builder's house and yard.

On the right you will see a flight of steps, recently restored by Aberdeenshire Council, leading up the cliff towards Cran Hill. This route can be for another day. The walk continues up the track which follows the Elsick Burn to the railway viaduct. The route now crosses the stream beside the 18th century Mill of Elsick, which used to grind barley and oats. It has now been restored as a dwelling-house.

Go through the gate and up the path between the fences to the gate at the top of the hill. Follow the road along beside the railway track, passing the Newton Arms opposite the signal box, back to the pharmacy.

Level of Walk

Moderate walk with a steep path down to the beach.

Terrain

The loop is suitable for off road buggies, but will require assistance going up and down steps. Walking is on tracks, sand, over rocks, a wooden walkway and bridge and on pavements and streets. There are streams, ponds, dangerous cliffs and uneven surfaces; children must be supervised at all times.



Siskin Carduelis spinus
found in Conifers, alders and
birch trees eating seeds and
small insects.

Distance

From the pharmacy around the loop is around 1 mile (1.5km).

Map References

For more detailed routes and information refer to the following Ordnance Survey maps:

38 Landranger: Aberdeen; Inverurie & Pitmedden
406 Explorer: Aberdeen & Banchory

Getting There

Various buses run to Newtonhill (7, 7A, 7B, 7C) – check www.stagecoachbus.com and www.travelinescotland.com.

Parking and Starting Point

Parking and starting point for Skateraw is at Skateraw Road.

Postcode (nearest) – AB39 3PU

Latitude 57.032294 Longitude -2.1491039

Planning Your Walk

Go prepared with suitable clothing, shoes, water and provisions. Due to the proximity to the sea, haar and mist can come in quickly, causing reduced visibility and sudden drops in temperatures. Equally, within any one day, it is possible to have sun, rain, sleet and snow.

Mobile phones do not always pick up a service in the area.

Further Information

Skateraw Local History Group

www.skateraw.com

Scottish Natural Heritage

www.snh.gov.uk

Archaeology Service Sites and Monuments Record (SMR)

www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/leisure-sport-and-culture/archaeology/

Aberdeenshire Council - Paths & Outdoor Access

www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/paths-and-outdoor-access



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