

The Ramblers - St Andrews & N.E. Fife Group

There was a good turnout last month for St Andrews & NE Fife Ramblers' leisurely midweek walk from Bridge of Earn to Pitkeathly Wells. Bridge of Earn was once a thriving spa town with hotels and boarding houses accommodating visitors taking the healing waters from the Pitkeathly Wells. The popularity boom occurred in the later part of the 19th century and early 20th century. The spa waters from the wells (5 in all) were said to cure ailments such as cancer, cholera and hiccups. The water was available from chemists all over Britain and sold for 6d a gallon. It became so popular that Schweppes opened a bottling plant in 1910 before this was burnt down in 1949, a disaster from which the industry never recovered.

We had some very pleasant weather for our circular walk of 4 miles or so – nice and dry (after the previous week's deluge) and not too warm. The walk took us past the Dunbarney Estate where we could look over the wall and admire the gardens, while the deer in the adjacent field kept their beady eyes on us as we walked past. The path to the B935 wasn't too muddy and we stopped for refreshments after turning right off the main road towards the Wells. After this short break it was through the woods from where we could see the remains of the spa industry – a circular well cottage, topped with a conical stone tower inscribed with a cross. Unfortunately you can see very little of what remains of the wells themselves. From there we turned back towards Bridge of Earn, with views south to Dron Hill, passing Kilgraston School and ending at Victoria Park. The outing finished with yet another visit to the Berryfield Café in Abernethy, where over refreshments everyone reflected on a very pleasant day and, with no hills or steep ascents involved, not too taxing either!



The following Saturday's walk at Backwater Reservoir got off to an entertaining start as we attempted to leave our meeting point in Cupar. Having put a member's walking gear into his car, the driver proceeded to drive off without the owner of said gear. There followed frantic horn blowing and waving, with the abandoned walker in hot pursuit after the car, before the absent-minded driver finally realised his mistake and stopped to collect his disconcerted passenger.

Avoiding any further misadventures en route to Backwater, 12 members enjoyed lovely scenery on the 7-mile walk round the reservoir, and while we had to dodge a few showers the weather was mainly dry, and pleasantly warm when sun came out. We were all surprised to learn it was only 50 years since the dam was opened by the Queen, and it was good to see that it was full at this time of year. Halfway round the walk we had to cross a small shaky bridge which we decided to avoid crossing en masse. Crossing the dam at the end of the walk and learning that it is made mostly of clay, we couldn't help but have a look to ensure there were no cracks appearing. We completed this very nice day out in quiet, scenic countryside with friendly chat and banter in nearby Peel farm with tea, coffee and cakes arranged by our joint leaders.





Backwater Dam

Unfortunately our planned walk at Balmashanner Hill, Forfar last weekend had to be cancelled owing to the heavy rain and strong winds. Our next walk is on Saturday 14th September when we will walk a further section of the recently-opened Fife Pilgrim Way, from Kennoway to Ceres, Grade B, 9 miles. This is mostly on well-defined paths and tracks in open country and woodland, with some road walking. All of our walks are open to guests who would like to try out The Ramblers, and full details can be found on our website www.standrewsnefiferamblers.com