



Forres Engineering - Past and Present

11km/7miles 4hrs

A circular walk around the outskirts of Forres.



Geocaches on or near to this route include:
Sanguhar Pond View and Caley's Highland Caches #1-3.



Walk Information

Terrain

Stiles-None
Suitable for most abilities

Planning

Start/Parking

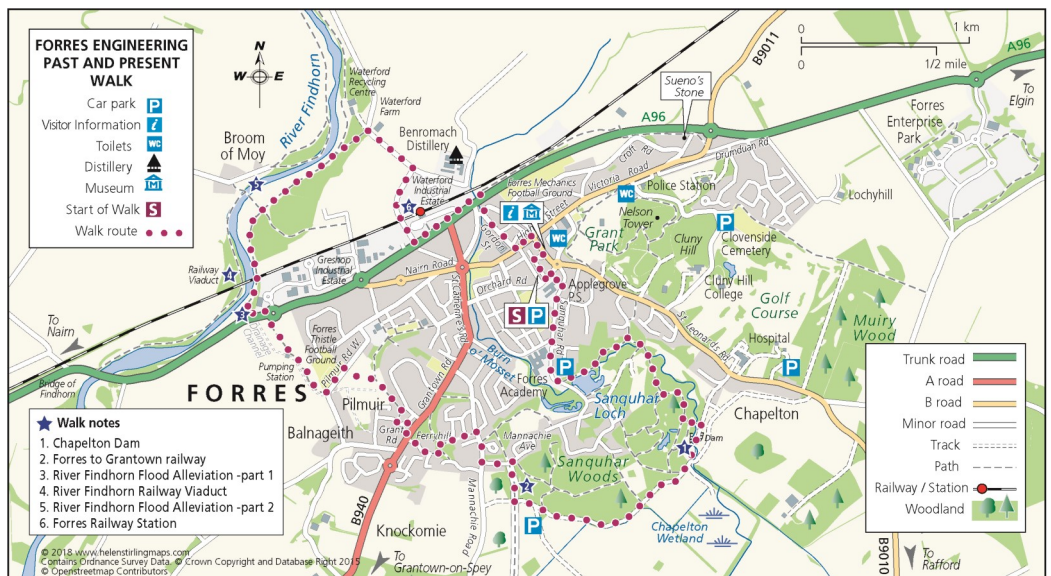
Orchard Road Car Park (Free)
Grid Ref: NJ038588
OS Maps Landranger 27
Explorer 423

Refreshments

Various in Forres and M&C
Garden Centre

Public Toilets

Various in Forres and M&C
Garden Centre



Introduction

This interesting and varied circular walk around the outskirts of Forres visits some of the fascinating engineering projects that have changed the local landscape from the 19th century to the present day. It also takes the walker to some of the most scenic countryside on the edge of this historic town. 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

Leave the car park and cross Orchard Road then keeping the Primary School on your right walk down the lane beside it to reach Sanquhar Road. Turn Right and walk along Sanquhar Road with the green area of Roysvale Park on your right. Continue along Sanquhar Road, crossing over at some point, until the road curves left and you arrive at a small car parking area with a FFT stone pillar and map.

Here turn Left and take the footpath that runs alongside the pond. You will see the water running down the overflow and across the other side of the road is a fish ladder. You may see swans and ducks on the pond. It is often referred to as Sanquhar Loch but by definition it is a pond as it is artificial and was created in 1900 to provide a supply of cooling water to the Benromach Distillery and to a tannery that no longer exists.

Follow the path as it takes you alongside the pond and then beside the Burn. Underneath your feet runs a plastic pipe taking the spring water from the Romach spring at Chapelton to the Ben Romach distillery. This path was laid as an all abilities path on top of the water pipe when new piping was installed and the distillery re-opened under the management of Gordon MacPhail Ltd in 1999. The pond is slowly filling up with sediment and as you walk upstream you will see that the water course has divided with overgrown areas off to your right.

Ignore the path that leads up steps to your left but continue ahead and cross the Burn o' Mosset on the wooden bridge. After crossing the bridge continue to follow the Burn upstream and you will shortly enter the Sanquhar Woodlands owned and managed by the Forres Community Woodlands Trust. You will ascend the hill by a series of steps and continue on this main path as it winds through the woods until you come to a T junction. Turn Left and follow the undulating path which returns to the side of the Burn and a wooden seat on your left gives an opportunity to pause. Continue about 200 metres after the seat and then turn sharp Left downhill and descend to a wooden bridge enabling you to cross the Burn o' Mosset once more. The path curves right and then joins a wider path as you emerge from the woods into the basin of the Chapelton Dam. Here look to your right and you will see a low building with a domed roof. This is the testing and transfer station of the Romach Spring water: the spring is out of sight about half a mile away on the other side of Wrights Hill to the South of you.

Head towards the Dam passing the outflow that is the Burn o' Mosset and go up to the rim. **Note 1.**



Chapelton Dam restraining the water after heavy rain

From the top, enjoy the view to the South past Wrights Hill to Callifer Hill in the distance. Now head upstream passing the bridge on your left and almost immediately curve right to re-enter the Sanquhar Woodlands passing a metal gate. Continue along this wide track with open countryside to your left and the woodlands on your right. You will pass mountain bike jumps and then come to a junction with a farm track coming in from your left. Turn Right following the Purple arrow and walk along this track until it comes to a bridge over a disused railway line. **Note 2**

Turn Right down the steps and at the bottom turn Right ignoring the Purple arrow and head into the cutting. You are now walking on the early part of the Dava Way which is a Long Distance Trail linking Forres to Grantown on Spey following the track of the disused railway. Follow the track as it takes a ramp up to the right to meet the tarmac road of Mannachie Avenue. Turn Left and walk along until you meet the minor road of Mannachie Road where you turn Right crossing the road and going downhill until just after you have passed the entrance to Grovita Gardens. Here you turn Left along a tarmac path that runs between the rear of houses on both sides. At the end of the houses turn Left and after about 30 metres curve Right on a path to pass between houses crossing over the mini roundabout to go down Ferryhill to the main road – the A940 to Grantown on Spey. Cross the road and turn Right. Very shortly, after a hedge, you will come to a small open green area on your left with a path at the far side. Turn Left down this path which takes you the short distance to Grant Road which you follow round to the Left for about 100 metres then turn Right at sign West Grant Road onto the tarmac path and follow it as it winds along with an open area appearing on your left.

As you approach trees ahead turn Left and go through the metal gate. Walk along the hard core path with the drainage channel of the flood alleviation scheme on your left. Come out onto the road and turn Left walking

alongside the Forres Thistle football ground. At the end of the football ground turn Right through a wooden fence and again walk along with the flood alleviation channel on your left which swings around to the right. Continue on the track past the pumping station until you come to a gate by a roundabout on the A96.



Drainage channels at Pilmuir

Cross the main road to the tarmac pavement on the other side heading towards Inverness. You will see a stone pillar and information boards describing the River Findhorn Flood Alleviation scheme which are well worth a read and will explain the engineering that you have just walked past. **Note 3**

With the Garden Centre on your right continue along the path following the River Findhorn downriver to the Railway Viaduct **Note 4**.

Taking great care, follow the narrow path down to the sloping embankment and pass underneath the viaduct. Continue to follow the river downstream and you will come to the long bridge at the Broom of Moy. **Note 5**

Having admired the bridge, continue downstream following the Purple FFT waymarkers which gradually leave the bank of the river to emerge onto a minor road at the Waterford waste collection station. This, as the name suggests was the old crossing point of the Findhorn River before any bridges were built. You turn Right towards the tall red chimney of Benromach Distillery. As you approach an area of industrial units, turn Right up the wide footpath beside the new road that leads you up and over the railway line. Cross this road and as you pass over the railway bridge look to your left to see the new Forres railway station opened in late 2017. There are excellent views of Forres as you cross the bridge. **Note 6**

Walk down to meet the main road, the A96, and turn Left walking along the footpath beside the road and passing the road entrance to Forres station. On reaching the bridge over the Mosset Burn, taking great care,

cross the A96 to a gap in the fence on the opposite side with the Mosset Burn on your right. Proceed up Gordon St with the imposing St. Laurence Church on your right. At the top turn Left along Forres High Street, and as the road narrows at the Tolbooth turn Right down Tolbooth Street passing the Red Lion. At the bottom of the slope turn Right and this will take you to the car park from which you started.

Note 1 Chapelton Dam. Over 430 houses and 27 commercial properties in low lying parts of Forres were flooded in July 1997 when the Burn o Mosset overflowed its banks after a period of very heavy rain. The Dam at Chapelton was built in 2008 - 2009 as part of the £20 Million Forres (Burn o' Mosset) Flood Alleviation Scheme to prevent a reoccurrence. The dam restricts the flow of water down the Burn to 8.5 cubic metres per second and after heavy rain the fields above the dam act as a flood storage reservoir instead of the water flooding the low lying areas of Forres. Since being built, the water flow has exceeded the limit three times and the storage area has been flooded: the first only a week after the dam was officially opened and before the final works were completed.

Note 2 Forres to Grantown Railway.

The Forres to Grantown railway forms part of the Forres to Dunkeld railway built between 1861 and 1863 to link Inverness with the Central Belt of Scotland. The route was chosen and the line built under the supervision of Joseph Mitchell, who was born in Forres in 1803 the son of John Mitchell, a civil engineer. In 1820 he went to work on the construction of the Caledonian Canal under an apprenticeship to Thomas Telford. From 1824 until his retirement in 1867 Mitchell held the post of Inspector of Highland Roads and Bridges and became one of the leading civil engineers in Scotland. He carried out surveys for the railways and was involved in the construction of much of the rail network in the Highlands.

The construction of the 103 miles between Dunkeld and Forres started on 17th October 1861. The 36 miles from Forres to Aviemore were opened on 1st June 1863, whilst the whole route was opened for traffic on the 9th September 1863 having taken less than 1 year and 11 months to construct. There were 9 contractors involved and cost was £8,860 per mile. The most notable engineering feature of the line is the Divie Viaduct, having a total length of 477 feet (145 metres). It crosses the River Divie on seven arches of 45 foot (14 metres) width span each and

cost £10,231 to build. The highest embankment at 77 feet (23 metres) is by Rafford which required 208,000 cubic yards (164,000 cubic metres) of rock and earth to build. Despite rising to 1050 feet (320 metres) above sea level on Dava Moor no gradient on the original route exceeds 1 in 70 along the whole length. The steepest gradients are on the rise from Forres to Dava

Note 3 River Findhorn Flood Alleviation – Part 1

This £45 million flood alleviation scheme is designed to standard of 1 in 200 year plus climate change. It was completed in 2015. New channels were built to drain the Pilmuir area. These operate under gravity for most of the time, draining into the River Findhorn, close to the A96 and the Greshop Industrial Estate. The level of the A96 was raised so that traffic passes over the top of the drainage channels. When river levels are high, flap valves close to stop river water flowing back up the new drainage channels and flooding the Pilmuir area. The pumping station will pump water from the Pilmuir channels into the River Findhorn when the flap valves are closed. The fully automated pumping system comprises three variable speed vertical I mpeller axial flow pumps each rated at 1.1 cubic metres per second. The pumps send the water up the small hill and it then drains under gravity under the A96 and into the River.

Note 4 Findhorn Railway Viaduct

The viaduct was completed in 1858 with three spans, each of 150 feet (46 metres) total length 608.5 feet. It was built for the Inverness and Aberdeen Junction Railway by Thomas Brassey and James Falshaw from 1856–58. The engineer was Joseph Mitchell. The massive masonry abutments and piers demonstrate Mitchell's architectural and engineering abilities. It is an early, important example of an open-top box girder constructed of butt-jointed wrought-iron plates. The ironwork was supplied by Messrs. Fairbairn and Sons, Manchester. The river piers are 42ft high above the bed of the river and founded on rock 18 ft beneath it, which contributes significantly to the fact that the viaduct is still in service.

Note 5 River Findhorn Flood Alleviation – Part 2

Between February 2013 and April 2014, 185,000 cubic metres of material was removed from the river corridor to create extra space for water. The material was crushed and used to build the flood embankments between the River Findhorn and Forres

The Bailey Bridge, opened in 1948, replaced a rowed ferry across the river. The bridge was extended by 90 metres in the summer of 2013 to make the crossing usable during periods when the river water levels are high. Each 30m long and 4m wide section was brought to site by road and lifted into place in a single day.



Note 6 Forres Railway Station

The railway station at Forres is now at its third site. The original station was built when the Inverness and Aberdeen Junction railway, between Nairn and Keith, was opened in 1858. The Inverness and Perth Junction Railway opened in 1863 to give Inverness a route to the South. It joined the Inverness and Aberdeen Junction railway at Forres, necessitating the construction of a triangular junction station. When the Grantown line closed in 1966, the remaining platform was sharply curved, with a 20-mph speed restriction some distance from the signal box and passing place. The new line is 1.25 kilometres long of which 600 metres is new track on the closed goods line. This required the widening of one underbridge and parapet works at another. The new station has two 160-metre-long platforms, to accommodate a five-coach HST, linked by a footbridge with lifts. Both lines have bi-directional signalling, which will enable most trains to stop at the southern platform, where the station entrance, ticket office and waiting room are located.