



OCTOBER 2020

# HEATHERY HEIGHTS MONTHLY

*Articles, walks and news*



## BRUCE'S CASTLE AND FYNE VIEWS

*A glimpse into the past...*

This variation of an old time favourite encompasses history, fabulous views up Loch Fyne and a chance to enjoy the natural anchorage and bustling fishing village of Tarbert. The walk starts opposite Tarbert Parish Church, which stands proudly over the village's western aspect. Many a coin has been thrown down its banks to children by newlyweds and the building is a fine example of Georgian architecture. And you wouldn't wish to visit Tarbert without exploring the remains of Tarbert Castle. Here Robert the Bruce undertook major works in 1325 to fortify and enlarge it in order to protect his territory from the Lord of the Isles. However, it was not until the late 15th Century that James IV added the Tower House, the remains of which give the castle its main outline today. Above Tarbert paths and tracks open up grand views and are worth the effort of the steep climbs.



## ***Safety in the Outdoors***

***Please continue to adhere to current guidelines as set out by the government, exercise responsibly and use appropriate clothing and equipment for your chosen outdoor activity. Consider informing a contact about your route/whereabouts and don't forget your phone, snacks, drink, any medication/first aid supplies you may need and to check weather conditions. Please keep your dog under close control, especially around livestock and wildlife, and be aware some open areas of moorland may have snares in use. Please follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.***

[www.heatheryheights.co.uk](http://www.heatheryheights.co.uk)

## ***The walk***

1. Turn left out of the car park in front of the church. Follow the road for 200m and cross carefully over to the seafront. Continue towards the pier, which once was crowded by jostling herring boats and piled high with wooden fish boxes as the catch of the day was sold on. Just past the Loch Fyne Gallery you will see steps up to your right signposted to the castle and Kintyre Way, take these.

2. The castle is soon reached and is worthy of exploration. The Tower House is well preserved and I remember many a ghost story was told here when we were children. To continue leave the castle grounds through the south gate to join the Kintyre Way, which passes the community orchard on your right. Soon after you go over a small rise, ignore a path to your left leading to houses at the top of the Big Brae. Just beyond is a Y junction; take the right hand fork leaving the Kintyre Way.

3. You will now be following a well-kept route, which was once merely a faint heathery sheep track with little sign of bracken, rarely trodden. Keep an eye out for adders, they do live here and enjoy sunbathing on sunnier days but are very shy. After 150m turn right. The path will now climb steeply on the right-hand side of a burn. After 250m there is the first view point to your left. The second is just 100m further on your right and has a wider view over the village. Both are worth taking the time for.

5. Turn left. Continue for 1km, ignoring the first path on your left (the Kintyre Way leading back to Tarbert). The track crosses a large burn, passes a turning area on your left and drops gently down. Just before going round a right-hand bend look out for a small cairn on your left just after a small burn. Turn left onto the path by the cairn. If you start to go back uphill you have gone too far!

6. The path meanders downhill before crossing the small burn followed by the large burn crossed earlier. It is easy enough to manage unless in spate when it can usually be negotiated slightly upstream. If you wish to explore there are some fabulous waterfalls both down and upstream once the bracken has died down in winter. The grassy path is pleasant walking and often dragonflies can be seen here throughout summer. On reaching a well preserved sheep fank – a reminder of pre-forestry days – the path leads uphill. Look out for the giant's seat on your right!

7. Over the brow of the hill you will see where the path joins a stony track ahead that takes you on but look out for well beaten bracken on your right indicating a series of small paths kept open by Tarbert residents and seeded with wildflowers. These lead out to gain an excellent view over Loch Fyne, worth a small detour. Return to the path or track and head downhill. At a T-junction you should turn left and the steep tarmac road leads you down to the sea.



## Take the time to explore....

8. Turn right and head to the end of the road. A small path on your right leads you to the shell beaches, a reminder that thousands and thousands of scallop and queenie shells were once deposited here. Returning to the road it is now a nice easy 2km amble back into Tarbert via the old pier, ferry terminal and yacht club.

*The described route and accompanying information are there to be used as a guide and do not replace the use of map and compass and the skills required to use them. Whilst every effort is made to ensure the route is accurate at the time of going to print please be aware that track and path closures can happen at any time. All walks are undertaken at your own risk.*



## Walk Information

**Route:** Tarbert Castle and Mealdarroch

**Distance:** 8km (+4km extension\*)

**Ascent:** 335m

**Time:** 2.5-3hrs walking

**Terrain:** paths, forestry tracks and road;  
steep & uneven sections

**Map/s:** OS Landranger 62 (1:50 000)  
OS Explorer 357 (1:25 000)

**Start/Finish/Parking:** Village car park

**Grid Reference:** NR 862685

**Public Transport:** Bus and ferry

**Toilets:** Harbour Street

*\*Forestry Operations may be in force*

