



FEBRUARY 2021

HEATHERY HEIGHTS MONTHLY

Articles, walks and news



NEXT ISSUE

*Castle Dounie, Creag Mhor
& Cnoc Reamhar*

STEP BACK IN TIME ON DUN SKEIG.

A land defended with forts looking far out to sea...

The paths chosen for this walk have been well trodden over the years, the ancient fort and duns harking back to another age, the vitrified rocks tiny pieces in a jigsaw that tells the story of this land. The village of Clachan – place of stones - has a rich history. Sir William Mackinnon of Campbeltown, who became a famed shipping magnate in the mid-18th Century, owned nearby Balinakill House and was buried here. The church, rebuilt in around 1760, has several carved medieval stones of important note and the area is rich with standing stones and ancient remains. A second church built with the aid of Sir William, now converted, is situated nearby and an old lime kiln can be found in the village north of the burn. Whereas one may be tempted to swim and picnic at the beach in summer, the paths can get quite wet and muddy after rain. Nevertheless, the windswept peace of Dun Skeig makes for a fascinating walk especially when the sun is low on the horizon creating magic on the waves.



The walk

1. From the village centre head north over the bridge, following the minor road for 500m. The route leads uphill passing a minor track on your right and the lane to Dunskeig farm on your left. The road bears right and you will come to a walled track on the left, opposite a couple of houses.

2. Turn left into this. After 300m you will reach a gate. Continue and as you gradually climb Dun Skeig will come into view to your left. A further 250m will take you to the crest of a rocky rise and views up West Loch Tarbert. It seems an old squeeze stile may once have been in the wall here, but it is now blocked by a large stone. After dropping down slightly you will reach a rusty gate on your left. Climb/step over this with care; it is secured with barbed wire.

3. A faint path wends its way up to the fort. After you pass through what would have been the outer walls of the older oval fort the steep slopes lead you directly to the entrance of the northern Dun. This is very well preserved; it is likely its stone was taken from the vitrified Dun just to the south beyond the Trig point. Catching the wind from the southwest the exposure can be keenly felt in winter but the summit of Dun Skeig certainly commands amazing views to the south, west and north and would have made a fine lookout.

4. Return down the faint path and back over the rusty gate. Turn left and

continue down the walled route through woodland. A haven for wildlife, the way is sheltered from the winds above. The track is diverted from that on the map when you reach a gate but is clearly signposted to take you down past pretty birch copses by the side of a fence. The track re-joins those on the map after a second gate; turn left then immediately right down to the cottage at Portachoillean.

5. Ahead lies the jetty but the main route now turns left through a gate and continues for over a kilometre. Initially the ground is dry enough but after passing through a further gate it can be very wet; wellies are useful. To your right the rocky shore often beckons for photographs looking over to Knapdale and Jura. Keep your eyes keened for otter, cormorant and gulls toying with the wind. Old structures also remain, nodding back to Kintyre's more industrial past.

6. Veering south the track brings you to a gate with a sheep pen and small holiday cabin ahead. Turn right before the gate and a small track will lead you to the wild sandy shores of Dunskeig Bay. Although this can be a popular spot to sunbathe and paddle in summer it is quite different when the sun lies low in southern skies and gales send breakers towards its shores. Beyond light may play amongst the clouds over Gigha and Jura, creating jewels on the restless seas.

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.

Windswept shores beckon below the Fort's airy command.....



7. Continue along the beach until you reach the Clachan Burn. A path will now lead you left away from the sea and back towards Clachan following the burn. It briefly joins the track after passing through a gate before veering off right and following the burn through fields all the way back to the village centre.

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: Dun Skeig and Dunskeig Bay from Clachan

Distance: 6.7km (4 miles)

Ascent: 200m

Time: 2 - 2.5 hrs walking (add time to explore!)

Terrain: tracks, road and rough pathless terrain; uneven, steep and muddy

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

Start/Finish/Parking: village centre (space may be available by the village hall)

Grid reference: NR765561

Public Transport: Bus route 449, 926

Toilets: No



OS Map Links:

<https://osmaps.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/route/6852709/Heathery-Heights-Dun-Skeig-and-Dun-Skeig-Bay-from-Clachan>