

Dava Way central section – traveling from Dunphail to Dava (5 miles)

Join the railway line at Dunphail. Probably the best place at present to leave your car is in the parking by Edinkillie Hall and telephone box (NJ014482) just south of the turn off to Half Davoch.

From Edinkillie Hall go north along the main road for just over 100 yards and turn right along the minor road for about a further 100 yards. Before the road crosses the railway line turn right. This area used to be the sidings for Dunphail station and we hope to use it for parking in the future. Follow the path through the old sidings area to meet the railway line about 100 yards ahead. The old station and platform are now a private house and garden and so you are directed on a short detour through the woods opposite. (Travelling from Forres you would approach along the line passing under the road bridge from your left.)

Cross the line and follow the path through the woods to rejoin the railway line as it passes through a profusion of Silver Birch trees, then on behind some private houses and into the Braemoray cutting. Like many cuttings along the route this is a damp place. Water permanently seeps from the fields above and for many years this cutting was flooded ankle deep or more. Although the surface underfoot is now mostly dry and firm, it remains lush wet habitat. We hope to preserve the profusion of orchards and other flora and fauna found here.

Emerging from the cutting you approach the Divie viaduct. The ground soon drops away and you find yourself 170 feet (52 metres) above the River Divie. This seven arch viaduct is 477 feet (145 metres) long. Pause here a while and enjoy the wonderful views to either side. Be sure to stop and read the commemorative stone in the centre. In the 1860s the viaduct cost £10,231 to build.

Leaving the Divie viaduct behind, you soon enter Bantrach Wood. The forest track on the left leads in about 150 yards to the Bantrach road where there is also space to park a car. Passing through the Bantrach wood you emerge into open countryside.

Over the next few miles notice how the countryside changes from green pasture land into heath-land. As you climb slowly up towards Dava the railway joins and follows the Burn of Aulthaunachan. This burn hugs the side of the Knock of Braemoray on your right and benefits from shelter from the prevailing winds. It is surprisingly green and lush compared to the moor on your left. The deserted farm at Bogeney marks the halfway point from the viaduct to Dava. Remember to glance behind you as you travel this section. On a clear day there are clear views to Caithness on the far side of the Moray Firth. The conical hill is Morven, near Helmsdale 50 miles (80 km) away.

The Knock of Braemoray, 456 metres (1496 feet) has no worn path to its summit. If you wish to climb the Knock to enjoy the view you are welcome to do so. Leave the line about a mile (1.5 km) past Bogeney.

As you curve to the right enjoy the wild landscape around you. In poor weather it is easy to imagine why the railway workmen built themselves a shelter from sleepers.

As you approach the settlement of Dava you have Craig Tribeg ahead on your right. The station buildings at Dava are once again in private ownership. Cyclists are directed to use the main road for about 600 yards. Walkers are asked to keep dogs on a lead as free-

range hens and geese roam here. A way marked path directs you off the line by the old station and takes you quickly through the woods to join an access track. This is the end of this section. There is space for 1 or 2 cars on the grass verge opposite the entrance to this private drive.

For those continuing to the next section of the walk the railway line can be rejoined about 400 yards away as described in the next section (Dava to Grantown).

Enjoy your day

Know the Code before you go ... Enjoy Scotland's outdoors - responsibly!

Everyone has the right to be on most land and inland water providing they act responsibly. Your access rights and responsibilities are explained fully in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

Whether you're in the outdoors or managing the outdoors, the key things are to:

- take responsibility for your own actions;
- respect the interests of other people;
- care for the environment.

Find out more by visiting <http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com> or phoning your local Scottish Natural Heritage office.

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