

Dava Way northern section – from Dunphail to Forres

Distance: 8 miles (13 km)

This section takes you from Dunphail on the edge of the moorland scenery that characterises Dava Moor to the coastal farmland of the Moray Firth.

Behind Edinkillie Hall on the A940 lies the Dunphail Breathing Place on the site of the sidings for the former railway station. This site was developed in 2009 with the help of a Breathing Places Big Lottery grant. There are parking and picnic facilities here. Cars can gain access through the Edinkillie Community Hall car park.

Heading towards Forres you pass under the bridge that carries the Half Davoch road. The initial section here was drained and given a new but fairly rough surface in late 2007. Here is the first of many gates. The path continues between fields and enters a series of cuttings. In the fields alongside this section specialist cattle such as Longhorn, Shorthorn or Highland cows can often be seen grazing. This initial section can often be uneven and muddy. After about 1 mile (1½ km) there is another cutting. The drains within these cuttings are damaged and springs on the sides cause permanent running water along the path surface. As you approach the Peathillock bridge that crosses over the track towards the end of this cutting the observant will spot the remains of second world war buildings high on the right that housed Italian prisoners.



Looking towards Logie and the wooded Findhorn gorge



Approaching Cowgreens Wood

Beyond the bridge the view opens up and on your left (looking West) a wooded dip can be seen which is the line of the River Findhorn. The Sluie Walks and Randolph's Leap both provide easy and spectacular access points to the river. The River Findhorn is prone to flash flooding and significant changes in water level. The river is popular with water sport enthusiasts and is regarded by many as Scotland's most spectacular. Logie Steading also lies on your left. This is a small collection of art, book and craft businesses but perhaps of greater interest will be the superb cafe Treats at Logie. To visit Logie Steading is a detour of 1 mile (1½ km) each way. Follow the track on the left immediately past Peathillock Bridge. Go through the farmyard (take care) to the main A940 Grantown road. Cross over to the B9007 Carrbridge road, but take the track ahead right to go through the East Lodge gate. Follow the track down to the Steadings, visible below left. Reverse this route to rejoin the path.

To continue to Forres go straight ahead. The section ahead is mostly on a raised embankment providing fine views. At the end of this farmland section you pass through the final gate to enter Cowgreens Wood. In the woods an insignificant burn passes through a short embankment. It is startling to realise that this burn, in 1997, washed away this whole section of embankment which had to be rebuilt.

The path crosses the Half Davoch road and continues through Clasdhu Wood. Continue straight on when the forest track curves off to the right. Ahead you cross the Altyre Burn. The original bridge across the burn was made of iron girders rather than stone and was removed when the railway line was closed in 1965. The flow of water in the burn varies considerably and for several years crossing it seemed an almost insurmountable barrier to the opening of the path. Local engineering firm AJ Engineering, in Forres, generously designed, built and installed the present structure as a gift to the local people. Bridging the



The new bridge over the Altyre Burn



A family day out

burn was a symbolic moment transforming of the idea of re-opening the old railway line from a hope into reality.

The path follows alongside the burn for a short distance until reaching the Scurrypool Bridge. Railway engineers built many beautiful stone bridges and this bridge, hidden behind trees in the middle of nowhere, is included in that number. If the midgets permit this can be a pleasant spot for a picnic. Immediately beyond is the Squirrel Neuk bridge where steps to the left take you away from the railway line. The deep cutting ahead is badly flooded and we take an easier and more pleasant option through the woods.

Turn right at the top of the steps to cross over the bridge and at the crossroads on the other side follow the track on the left up the hillside. To mark the official opening of the Dava Way on September 18th 2005 a race was held from Grantown to Forres, a marathon distance. As you go up this incline imagine the hurt in the legs of the runners who by now had already covered 20 miles. At the top turn left where you join the forestry track and follow the way markers. Keep bearing left, following the track as it soon slopes gently downhill. Watch out for a path into the woods on your left just past the forestry barrier and immediately in front of a forestry cottage.



Runners on opening event

This is the highest and longest embankment section of the Grantown to Forres railway line. To the right are views of Rafford village and its church tower and also Blervie Castle on the hillside above it. The path crosses over the minor road to Rafford and continues through to the edge of the wood. Here the path crosses over the Mosset Burn and joins the open farmland around Forres. Ahead the line passes beside Dallas Dhu Distillery. Dallas Dhu closed in 1983 and re-opened in 1988 as a 'living museum' visitor attraction run by Historic Scotland. It is open all year round and sells a genuinely rare and excellent malt, popular with collectors. Why not go in and enjoy a tour and a sample?



Rafford village

The trail path enters the outskirts of Forres about 1/2 mile ahead where a ramp leads up to Manachie Avenue. Turn right and the route to the town centre about 1 1/2 mile away is way marked.

Enjoy your day

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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/default.asp> or phoning your local Scottish Natural Heritage office.

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