

# WALKING

*in and around*

## **Gatehouse of Fleet**



The natural place to walk





Particular thanks are extended to Brian Arneill, David Steel, Forest Enterprise, Gatehouse Community Council, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Scottish Natural Heritage.

Photographs by Keith Kirk, Peter Norman, Dumfries and Galloway Council, VisitScotland Dumfries and Galloway and Richard Mearns.



Set in a National Scenic Area, Gatehouse of Fleet is an ideal base for walking. From the ancient oak woodland at Carstramon to the stunning shoreline at Sandgreen and windswept moors at Laghead and Dromore, there is something to impress everyone. There is a wealth of wildlife in the area and golden eagles are amongst the rarer sights.

The town is steeped in history. Cardoness Castle, built in the 15th Century is one of the first things you see as you approach Gatehouse.

Nearby, on Trusty's Hill, there are Pictish carvings and just past Gatehouse the impressive Neolithic chambered cairns at



*Cairnholy*

Cairnholy are well worth a visit. In the past, Gatehouse was a thriving industrial centre and a reminder of this is The Mill on the Fleet, a former bobbin mill which now houses a visitor centre.

One of the best ways to get to know this area is on foot. For the more adventurous, there are hills and moorland to explore. There are also a variety of paths, tracks and quiet roads

which allow you to sample all aspects of this very diverse area. A selection of these has been chosen for this booklet, giving a range of walks for all to enjoy.



*The Mill on the Fleet*

## THE WALKS

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Gatehouse of Fleet



### Route information

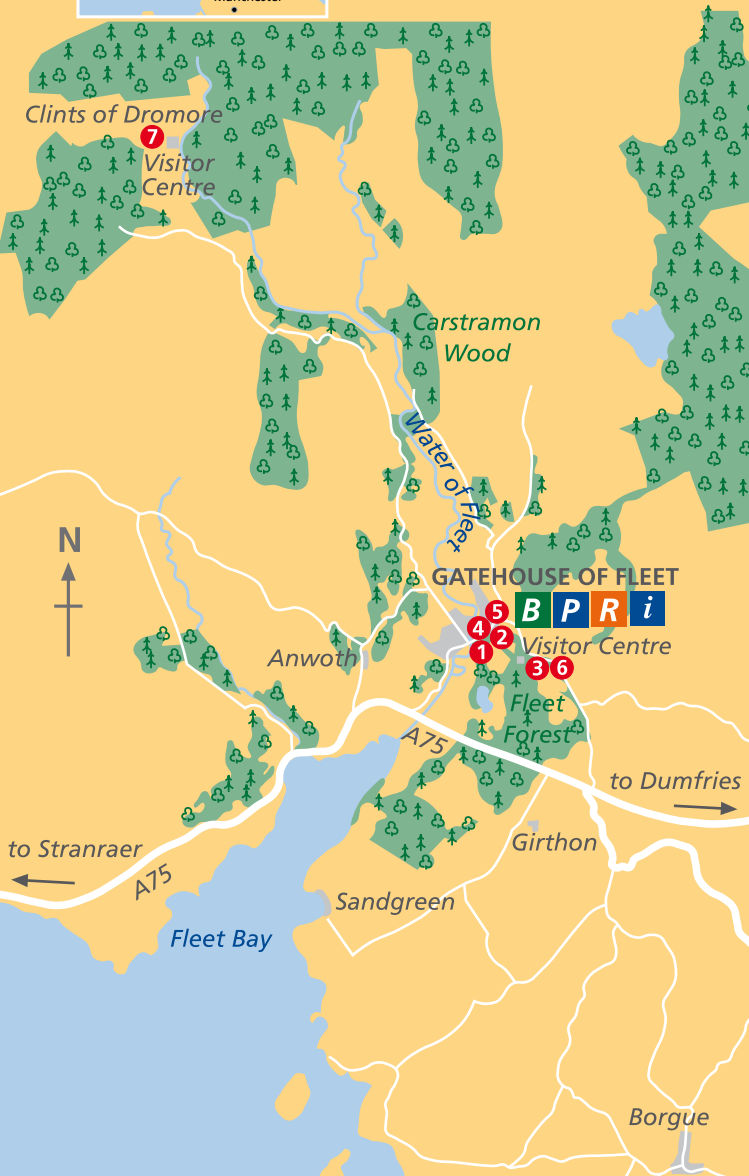
- A brief description, approximate distances and times are given for each route.
- Paths are graded for people of reasonable mobility as easy, moderate, strenuous or very strenuous.
- Accessibility by wheelchair is indicated on appropriate routes.
- Please follow the guidelines given for dogs.
- As with all walks, it is a good idea to take weatherproof clothing and stout footwear.

The orange-covered OS Explorer 1:25 000 map (No 312) and yellow Outdoor Leisure 32 cover this area in detail.

# Location Map



- Walk Start Points
- Walking route
- Alternative walking route
- - - Footpath or track
- Road
- ✳ View Point
- B** Public transport link point
- P** Car parking
- R** Refreshments (pub, hotel, café)
- i** Tourist Information



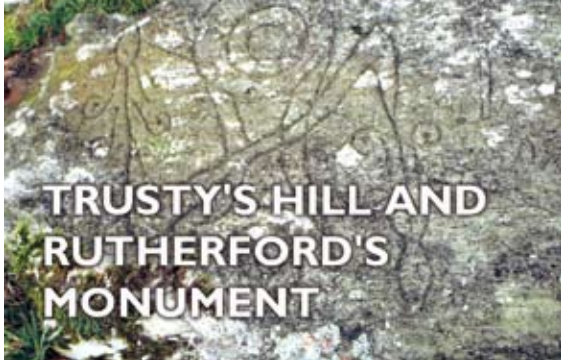


## Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work.

- Leave gates as you find them.
- Keep dogs under close control at all times.
- Keep to paths across farmland.
- Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls.
- Respect farm livestock, crops and machinery.
- Take your litter home with you.
- Take care on country roads.
- Protect wildlife, plants and trees.
- Guard against risk of fire.
- Make no unnecessary noise.

**Take particular care on the shore – the Solway Firth can be deceptive, with fast tides, strong currents and deep hidden channels.**





Circular woodland and farmland walk.

5.5km/3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> miles

Allow 2 hours

Roadside pavement, minor roads, beaten earth and grass paths. Stiles.

Moderate

Stout shoes or boots recommended.

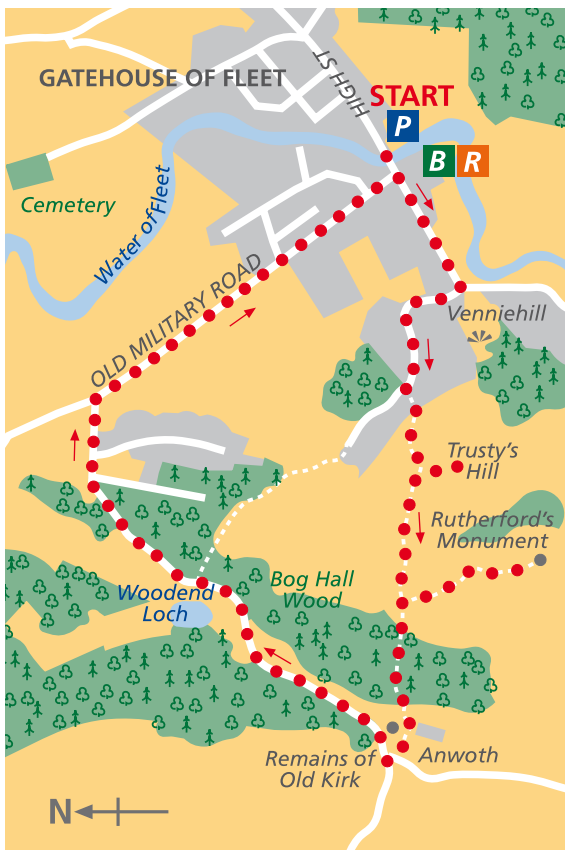
**PARKING** is available at the car park in the centre of Gatehouse of Fleet.

**START** From the car park. Turn left over the River Fleet Bridge and carry on until you arrive at the spot where the main road takes a sharp left turn. You will notice straight ahead a sign for Venniehill where you can enjoy magnificent views of Gatehouse of Fleet and the surrounding countryside.

From the main road turn right on to the minor road and continue for approximately 300 metres where you make a left turn and start to climb the hill to a cattle grid. Take the path on the left here. Follow this through a private







garden, remembering to close all gates behind you, until you reach a stile over a dyke. From here, follow the waymarkers through the rough, undulating landscape. When you come to the signpost for Trusty's Hill, follow this to the vitrified fort and Pictish carved stones known locally as the 'De'il's Specs'. The Pictish stones can be found on the south side of Trusty's Hill, very near the summit. This is one of only two known sites in Galloway where the Picts have left clearly recognisable marks and it can only be a matter of speculation as to why these carvings have been found so far from 'Pictland' (normally regarded as the north east of Scotland). From here you will also enjoy splendid views of Fleet Bay.

- 10 Once you have visited the fort, retrace your steps and continue to follow the waymarkers until you come to a signpost for Rutherford's Monument. Follow the path to the monument where you obtain fine views of the Fleet Estuary and the surrounding countryside. The 55 foot high granite obelisk was erected in 1842 to the memory of the Reverend Samuel Rutherford who ministered in the Parish of Anwoth between 1627 and 1639. The millennium Cairn opposite shows the names of all ministers of Anwoth and Girthon until the year 2000 when it was erected.

To continue the walk, retrace your steps then follow the waymarkers through the wood to



*Rutherford's Monument*



the ruined Old Kirk at Anwoth. There has been a church here from at least the 1100s. The ruin you see today was built between 1626-27 and was in use until 1825. The Parish Church to the south was completed after this, between 1826 -28, but is no longer in use.

To complete your walk, follow the minor road past Woodend Cottage until you reach a T junction. Turn right and follow the road back into Gatehouse.



*View from road near Woodend Loch*



Circular woodland walk

2.5km/1 1/2 miles

Allow 1 hour

Beaten earth and hard surface paths and tracks

Easy

Stout shoes or boots recommended

**PARKING** is available at the car park in the centre of Gatehouse of Fleet.

**START** From the car park, take the path next to the Kiosk and cross the grass. The sculpture here was carved from a 200 year old oak

to commemorate the Queen's Golden Jubilee. Go through the gate and follow the waymarkers through attractive mixed woodland and back to the car park via Garries Wood.



*Sculpture*

The path initially follows the Water of Fleet. On the opposite bank at Boat Green there is a small port, the site of a shipbuilder's in the late 18th Century. Then

Gatehouse was a thriving industrial town with three cotton mills and a growing population. In the early 19th Century, after the advent of



steam power, industry gradually declined. By the 1840s all the mills were closed, although bobbin making and the sawmills continued into the 20th Century.

Later you join Cally Avenue. This was once the approach to Cally House, focal point for the impressive Cally Estate. Now a hotel, it was completed in 1765 for James Murray of Broughton. James Murray was an entrepreneur and responsible for much of the early development of Gatehouse. His descendant, the late Mrs Elizabeth Murray-Usher sold a large part of the Estate, including the Cally Oak Woods surrounding you.



Circular woodland walk

5km/3miles

Allow 2 hours

Beaten earth and hard surface paths and tracks.

Moderate

Stout shoes or boots recommended.

**PARKING** is available at the Murray Centre in Cally Woods. There is an information point here, open during the day from April to October. Head out of Gatehouse on the B727 towards Kirkcudbright for a short distance then follow the Forestry Commission signs to Cally Woods and the Murray Centre.

**START** All three trails start from the Murray Centre and are waymarked. The one described here is the Coronation Trail, waymarked as yellow.

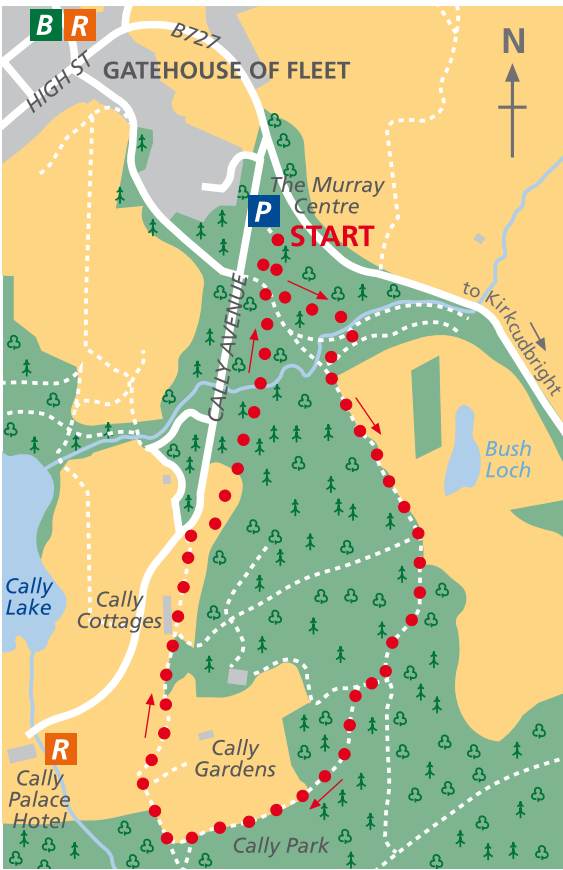
From the car park, follow the yellow waymarkers. Soon you come to a bridge over Bush Burn. Around 1860, a dam here collected water to drive Scotts Mill on the outskirts of town. Sawmills such as these were common at the



time and the great demand for timber contributed to the disappearance of trees from Cally Wood itself and other woods in the region.

Few old trees remain in Cally Woods and most were planted in the 1930s after the Forestry Commission acquired the land.

Red Squirrel



Cally Estate was renowned for its fine broadleaved trees. Species planted include oak, birch, sycamore and beech, thereby continuing the tradition. Although the trees are relatively young, there is an abundance of animal and plant life which has found its home here. In spring and summer there is a wealth of wildflowers such as primroses and bluebells. Roe deer and red squirrels can be spotted as well as a variety of birds, including buzzards and treecreepers.

The walk continues through the forest, passing Cally Gardens. This walled garden, built in the 1770s once provided Cally House with an abundance of fruit and vegetables. Nowadays, it is a nursery, growing many new and interesting plants from seed obtained worldwide. It is open to visitors from April to September.



Circular countryside and woodland walk

11 km/7 miles

Allow 4 hours

Roadside pavement, minor roads, beaten earth, grass and hard surface paths. Kissing gates.

Moderate to strenuous

Stout shoes or boots recommended.

**PARKING** is available at the car park in the centre of Gatehouse of Fleet. There is also parking for four or five cars available at the entrance to Carstramon Wood if you wish to do the woodland walk only.

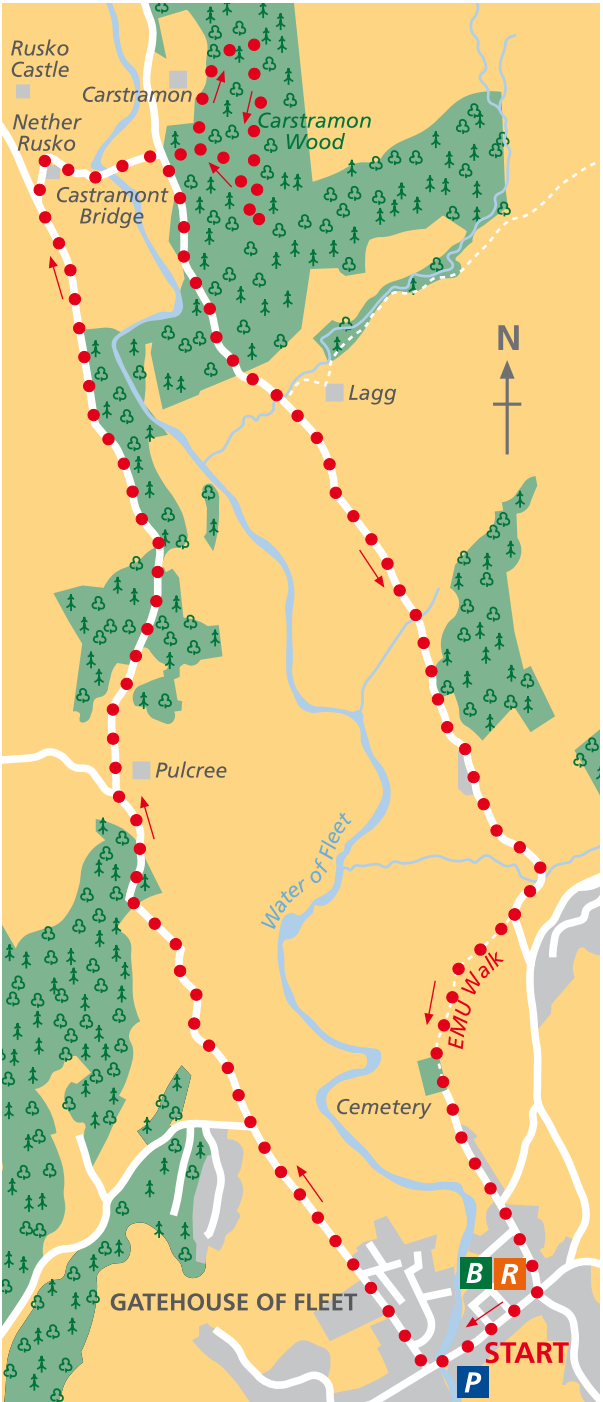
**START** From the main car park, turn left over the River Fleet bridge, then first right. Follow this pleasant country road for approximately 4km/ 2½ miles, enjoying views to the surrounding hills and woodland.

Turn right when you reach signs for 'weak bridge' and follow the road downhill towards



View from Castramont Bridge







Castramont Bridge. To the left there are magnificent views of Rusko Castle, a fine early 16th Century restored tower house. It may be rewarding to spend a moment or two at the bridge which crosses the River Fleet as views of grey wagtail and dippers may be had. A hundred metres downstream you can still make out the stepping-stones that the postman used before the present bridge was built.

Continue along the road to the T-junction where the sign for Carstramon Wood



*Dipper*

is straight ahead. Turn right and the entrance to the wood is on your left. An interpretation board at the entrance shows the network of paths within. To do a short loop, bear left at the first waymarker then right at the next three. Continue downhill past the next waymarker and back to the start. In the past, charcoal-burning platforms in Carstramon Wood converted oak to charcoal for the smelting of iron, brass and copper. Timber was also used to supply a bobbin mill in Gatehouse until 1931. In 1990, Carstramon Wood was gifted to the Scottish Wildlife Trust by the late Mrs

Murray Usher and is now being managed as a nature reserve. Roe deer are plentiful and keep your eyes open for pied flycatchers and wood warblers. The woods are particularly beautiful in spring with masses of bluebells covering the ground.

As you exit the wood, turn left onto the road and follow it for about 2.5km/1 1/2 miles until you reach a sign on your right for the EMU Walk named after Elizabeth Murray Usher. Follow the path through several kissing gates, past the cemetery and back on to the High Street.



*Walkers in Carstramon Wood*



Circular farmland and moorland walk

11 km/7 miles

Allow 4 hours

Roadside pavement, minor road, hard surface and grass track. Stile and kissing gates.

Moderate

Stout shoes or boots recommended.

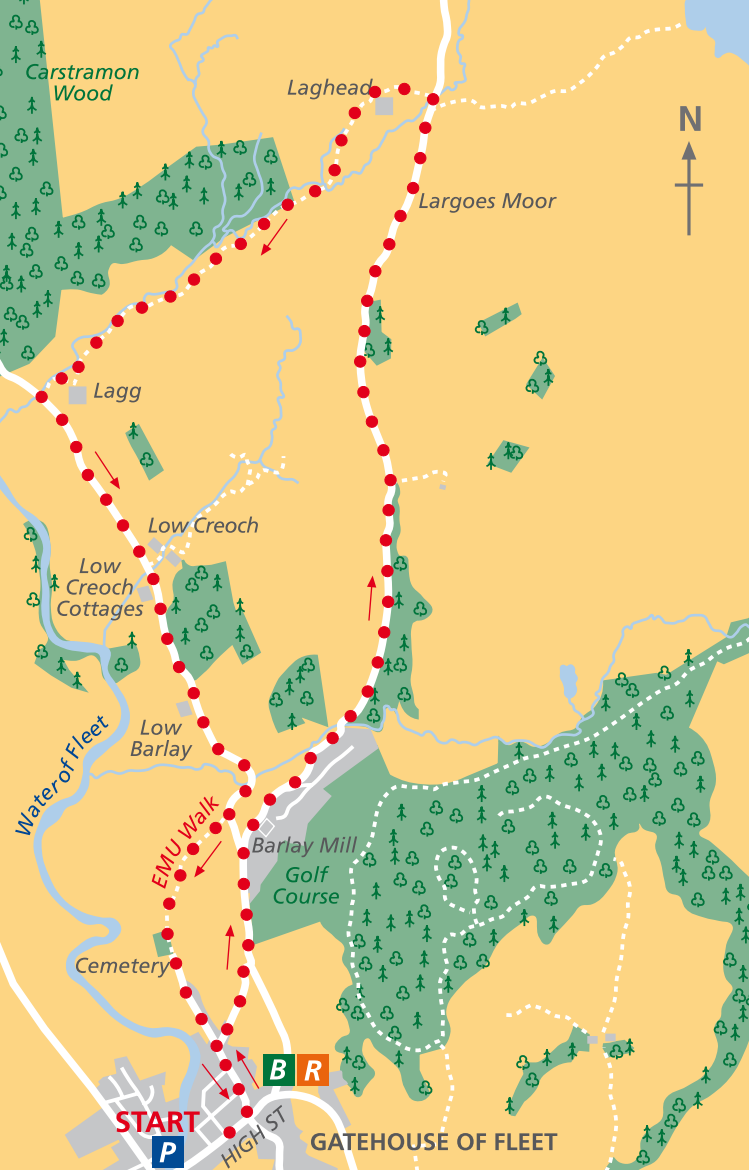
**PARKING** is available at the car park in the centre of Gatehouse of Fleet.

**START** From the car park, turn right along the High Street towards the Clock Tower. Turn left at the Clock Tower into Castramont Road then right opposite a paddock into a quiet lane. Turn left at the end, passing the golf course and Barlay Mill once the home of the Faed family. The Faeds were well known 19th Century artists and John Faed was the best known of them locally. His fine 'View over Gatehouse' may be seen at the Mill on the Fleet. He also provided inspiration for many local artists, including the young Kirkcudbright artist EA Hornel.

At the Y-junction take the right fork on to the Laurieston road. Follow the road uphill past broadleaved woodlands and onto open moorland from where fine views of the Fleet Valley and Estuary can be enjoyed. On a good day the Isle of Man is clearly visible beyond the inshore Isles of Fleet.



*Clock Tower, Gatehouse*



On reaching Laghead Farm, turn left and follow the road between farm buildings. Head down through pleasant farmland to Lagg Farm. Beyond this the track meets the road for Gatehouse, where you turn left. Follow this for about 1.5km/1 mile until you meet a sign on your right for the EMU Walk. Follow the path through the kissing gates, past the cemetery and back onto the High Street.



Circular woodland, countryside and coastal walk

12.5km/8miles

Allow 4 hours

Beaten earth, hard surface track, sandy beach and minor road.

Moderate

Stout shoes or boots recommended

**PARKING** is available at the Murray Centre.

There is an information point here which is open during the day from April to October. Head out of Gatehouse on the B727 towards Kirkcudbright for a short distance then follow the Forestry Commission signs to Cally Woods and the Murray Centre.

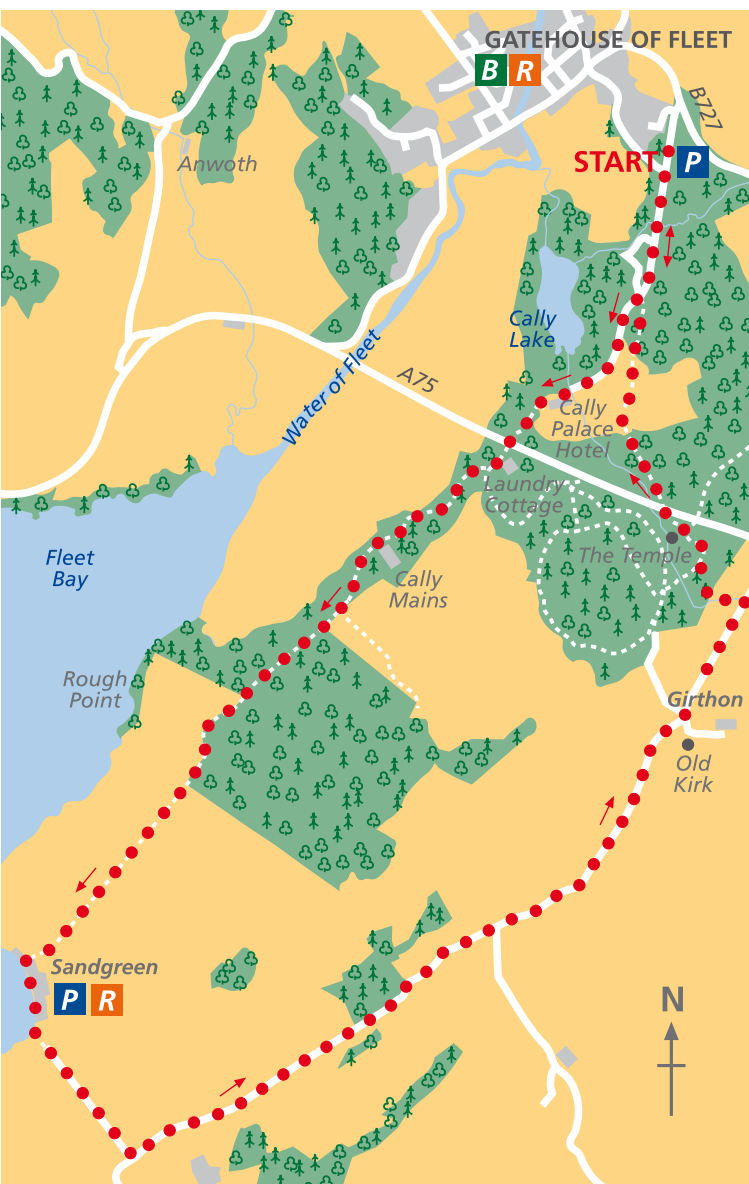
**START** Turn left down the main avenue and continue past the Cally Palace Hotel. This magnificent building once served as the seat of the Murray family and during the war the house was used as a school for evacuees from Glasgow.



View to the Fleet Estuary and hills

Beyond Cally Palace go under the main road and on the left note 'Laundry Cottage' which once served the main house as a laundry. Continue past Cally Mains Farm, ignoring the track to the left signed to the farm. Cally Mains was originally the Home Farm.

Beyond Cally Mains you pass through some very fine oak and beech woodland and may be



lucky enough to see treecreepers and spotted flycatchers. In the spring this woodland is alive with newly arrived warblers and their



Treecreeper

varied song is a delight to hear. Follow the track down to Sandgreen and enjoy fine views across the Fleet Estuary, with the hills Ben John and Cairnharrow dominating the scene. Sandgreen is a good place to stop for a picnic before setting off on the return journey.

From Sandgreen follow the tarmac road past the shop and telephone box for about half a mile then turn left at the T-junction. Continue along the road to the Clauchan of Girthon. Note the ruins of the Old Parish Church on your right. This partly pre-Reformation Church, reconstructed in the 17th Century, was in use up to 1818.

From Girthon, continue along the road to the National Cycle Route 7 sign. Turn left onto the cycle path and re-enter the woods. At the junction, turn right then watch out for a path and clearing to the left where you will find The



View from Cally Mains



Temple – an amusing Gothic folly built as a ruin in 1778. On leaving The Temple, return to the main path and go under the A75 again. Follow the path back to Cally Avenue via Belvedere Lodge and Cally Gardens then retrace your steps to the Murray Centre.



*The Temple*



Circular moorland walk

2.5km/1 1/2 miles

Allow 1 hour

Hard surface track and paths, boardwalk and rough grass paths. Steps.

Moderate

Stout shoes recommended.

**PARKING** is available at the Cairnsmore of Fleet National Nature Reserve visitor centre, run by Scottish Natural Heritage. From Gatehouse, take the B796 signposted to Cairnsmore of Fleet Nature Reserve and follow the signs to the reserve.

**START** From the car park, walk past the visitor centre then follow the waymarkers back to the start.

The path initially passes 'inbye' land, those fields closest to the farm buildings, used to bring sheep in from the hills for lambing or shearing. Follow the track and enjoy fine views down the valley. The rounded hillocks on the valley floor are known as drumlins and were formed from debris dumped by glaciers during the last ice age. On leaving the track continue over boardwalk, crossing boggy grassland. In amongst the rushes here you may see the insect eating plant, sundew which is specially adapted to the wet conditions.

Wheatear



Throughout your walk you can hardly fail to notice the Clints of Dromore, a spectacular, rugged, granite outcrop, surrounded by moorland. Moorland birds such as meadow pipits and wheatears seek



cover in the blaeberry, cotton grass and heather covering the moor, while peregrines and merlins hunt

overhead. The moor is carefully managed through the grazing of sheep and swiping or burning away of old heather. This produces a variety of heights and ages of heather to provide the best conditions for breeding black and red grouse.

Your route back takes in some of the former railway track. Part of the Castle Douglas to Portpatrick line, this was completed in 1862 then dismantled in 1965. Nowadays it is used by walkers and cyclists, here to enjoy the wonderful scenery. In spring and summer it is lined with wildflowers and parties of long-tailed tits flit from tree to tree in winter. The impressive viaduct over the Water of Fleet, once used to bring game shooting parties into the area, is no longer in use.

The path returns to the car park alongside the Big Water of Fleet, where dippers and dragonflies can be spotted. Back at the car park the visitor centre, set in the old byre has a wealth of information about the reserve and details of recent wildlife sightings.



# WALKING

*in and around*

## **Gatehouse of Fleet**



### **FIND OUT MORE...**

This booklet is part of a series for walkers and cyclists, covering Dumfries & Galloway.

For further information about public transport, eating out, events and attractions or to book your accommodation contact:

#### **VisitScotland Dumfries & Galloway**

**t 01387 253862**

**[www.visitdumfriesandgalloway.co.uk](http://www.visitdumfriesandgalloway.co.uk)**

**[dumfriestic@visitscotland.com](mailto:dumfriestic@visitscotland.com)**

#### **The Travel Line**

**t 0871 200 2233**

**[www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk)**

For further information about the history and natural heritage of the area contact:

#### **Dumfries & Galloway Council Ranger Service**

**t 01556 505479**

#### **Forestry Commission Scotland Ranger Service**

**t 01671 402420**