

The Ramblers - St Andrews & N.E. Fife Group

Eleven members of St Andrews & North East Fife Ramblers made an early start towards the end of last month for our journey to Mid Calder, for a 7-mile walk at Almondell & Calderwood Country Park. Our collective navigation skills were tested before we even started the walk as two of the three carloads (including, of course, your correspondent's) took scenic routes to the meeting point. Once we had all gathered, we set out from the car park in strong sunshine along the banks of the River Almond, following the Shale Trail (in recognition of West Lothian's role in the oil shale industry in the mid-19th century). We had our coffee stop just before



Camps Viaduct, an impressive B-listed structure notable for its surveyor Thomas Bouch, who designed the ill-fated Tay Bridge. As we continued on the wooded paths we caught our first glimpse of Lin's Mill Aqueduct, which carries the Union Canal over the Almond, 75 feet above the river. On reaching the aqueduct we had a steep and slightly muddy climb to the top, but were rewarded with our leader's well-chosen scenic stop for lunch next to the water's edge. Our route then took us across the aqueduct and along by the canal, and



onto minor roads in open countryside before turning back into the park. By now it was very hot and we felt obliged to stop at the visitor centre for ice creams and a short rest. Mild entertainment was provided by a talking waste bin which politely thanked us for depositing our rubbish. On the homeward stretch we were glad of the shade provided by the trees as we gently wound our way back to the car park. In need of further refreshment we made for a nearby café to sustain us on our journey back to Fife. This was a splendid walk in a very pretty location unfamiliar to everyone except our walk leader. We may well return!



Our next walk is tomorrow, Saturday 8th July, a 6.5-mile walk at Forfar Loch and Balmashanner Hill, following a path beside the loch and on to the hill for a climb to the monument and viewpoint, returning via Reid Park. All of our walks are open to guests who would like to try out The Ramblers, and full details can be found on our website www.standrewsnefiferamblers.com