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

August 2015

An appropriate number of thirteen ramblers foregathered at the gates of Dundee's Balgay Park for a meander around some of the darker sites of the city's history.  After a welcoming drink of blood-red cranberry juice for some, the group ventured into the Western Necropolis to view a sample of the Victorian memorials - including that of James O'Neill who fell to his death from the Tay Railway Bridge in 1886, and is one of twenty men who died in the construction of the ill-fated enterprise. The group crossed the infamous Balgay Bridge over the Windy Glack, sadly without encountering its 'White Lady' ghost, and after a quick visit to the Mills Observatory, braced themselves for the ascent of the Law Steps.  Without the help of Sherpa porters, and with some cheery encouragement from allotment gardeners, Dundee Law was conquered and provided a wonderful vista and welcome coffee stop.  With a promise of now being all downhill the walk continued to Kinloch Street for a chat on the history of Dundee's spy - Mrs Jessie Jordan - who was arrested at her hairdressing salon there in 1937 on Official Secrets charges. At this point a local passer-by joined the group and pointed out a former bank where apparently the manager had gone dullaly and "Done his wife in!"  Following a circuitous route our intrepid group then descended to the city centre with several excursions to points of interest in the less frequented avenues of history - mention being made of William Wallace who spent part of his education there until becoming involved in a fatal affray, the former Theatre Royal and its murderous associations,General Monck and the 1651 siege and slaughter of the inhabitants, and thence to the historic Howff graveyard for lunch.  Gathering at a group of graves marked with 'piratical' skulls and crossbones, and by chance beside a memorial to a Mr Kidd, the group were treated to a recitation of just a few verses of the ballad of Captain Kidd, the privateer, born in Dundee and executed in London in 1701.  At long last the leader got round to giving a potted history of the case of William Bury, who was hanged in Dundee in 1889 for the murder of his wife Ellen, and who is now regarded as a prime suspect for the true identity of 'Jack the Ripper'.  The group's final stop was at the now derelict house at Roseangle, the scene of a double murder in 1980 - and so back to the start after 6.5 miles of walk and talk in the City of Discovery.

On Saturday 15th, a dozen members and visitors set off for Birnam. Unfortunately, due to a mishap with one of the cars, only 8 made it in time to climb up 1,000 ft to the Top of Birnam Hill. There had been a little rain, but it soon cleared, allowing fabulous views in all directions. We sat in brilliant sunshine for lunch overlooking Dunkeld and The Loch of the Lowes. Once back down at the side of the Inchewan Burn, we completed a circuit of Ladywell and Tomgarrow Woods, meeting up with the remainder of our party en-route. The sun shone brightly while we walked round by Balhomish Farm and down by the Inchewan Burn again and back to Birnam for refreshments.

The good weather on Wednesday 19th, brought out a large crowd of Ramblers for a local walk up to the Hopetoun Monument. 23 met at the Deer Centre and once across the busy A91 we were able to relax and enjoy the agricultural beauty of the Over Rankeilour Estate. At Westhall farm we joined a quiet road and started the ascent towards The Mount Farm where, after a short coffee stop, we joined tracks leading round the Mount itself and enjoyed expansive views in all directions. The Monument was erected in memory of John, 4th Earl of Hopetoun and is a prominent landmark in North East Fife, today providing the backdrop for our lunch in the sun. We gradually made our way down again to Westhall, but took a different route through Over Rankeillor back to the Deer Centre.

It was an early start from Cupar for the 15 members and visitors, who ventured to Acharn on the South side of Loch Tay for a ten mile walk to Aberfeldy. Stiff climb to start, up the track to view the Falls of Acharn, but then suitably impressed, we carried on along the route known as the Queen’s Drive. We stayed at this height for much of the walk enjoying fantastic views over Loch Tay, Kenmore, Taymouth Castle and the Farragon Hills. We watched several rain showers sweep along the other side of Strath Tay, but were able to enjoy lunch in hazy sunshine, overlooking Drummond Hill, and the River Lyon as the cloud lifted from Schiehallion. We were following part of a Long Distance Footpath known as the Rob Roy Way, with impressive views the entire length. Our path crossed several times with a young French couple, who had already completed the Great Glen Way, the West Highland Way and were finishing their 3 week holiday in Pitlochry. Despite the wet weather, they thought Scotland was marvellous. We finished our day a little damp following a 10 minute shower,by walking through the Birks of Aberfeldy.

You would be welcome to join us for a walk in September.

Sunday 13th. Pool of Muckhart-Rumbling Bridge Circular. 8miles. For Details:Tel. 01337 831113.

Saturday 26th. Craigtoun & St Andrews Circular. 9miles. For Details: Tel. 01337 857791.