

# **PLACES OF INTEREST IN FIFE**

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## **Tour 1. Falkland Palace, the Lomond Hills and Glenrothes**

Take the Cupar road, a left turn at the exit from the North Haugh site, continuing on the Milnathort road through pleasant Fife countryside until a roundabout is reached about four and a half miles beyond Cupar. Turn left onto the Kirkcaldy road, first passing through Edensmuir Forest then bypassing Ladybank lying to the left. The plain across which the road runs was once a vast marsh (the monks of Lindores gathered peats and heather here) giving rise to the older name for Ladybank, which was "Ladybog". Two miles further on turn off to the right, passing through the centre of the village of Freuchie, reaching Falkland after another two miles.

Falkland palace, interwoven with the history of Scotland and in particular with the Stuart kings, is one of the most interesting places to visit in Fife. The gardens of the palace are extremely attractive. Those interested in history are advised to take a guided tour of the palace. It was at Falkland palace in 1595 that Andrew Melville (famous as a Scottish reformer who masterminded the reformation of the University of St Andrews in 1579, becoming Principal of St Mary's College in 1580) gave King James VI a good talking-to, grasping him by the sleeve and calling him "God's silly vassal". Andrew Melville's name is remembered in the University, giving his name to Andrew Melville Hall with its award-winning design.

From Falkland take the road signposted Leslie which climbs steeply between the Lomond hills (West Lomond 1713 ft, the highest point in Fife). On the descent there is an extensive view over the Firth of Forth. At Leslie is seen Leslie Green, a fine expanse of turf with its church standing on one fringe of it. Jutting from the turf not far from the gates of the churchyard is a boulder, known as the Bull Stone, the grooves in the stone being caused by ropes tethering the bulls in the days of bull-baiting. The church has two interesting windows, a memorial to the Countess of Rothes (died 1886) depicting the Countess in two Biblical scenes.

From Leslie the road leads to Glenrothes, one of Scotland's new towns and a centre of the electronics industry - the modern layout of the town is quite interesting. The best route back is to follow the signs for Cupar, returning from there to St. Andrews.

## **Tour 2. Leuchars Church and Tentsmuir**

On leaving the North Haugh turn left to Guard Bridge with fine views on the right over the golf courses, the Eden estuary and, across the water of the estuary, Tentsmuir Forest. Turn right along the Tay Bridge road at Guard Bridge, a former paper manufacturing town, and after passing R.A.F. Leuchars the village of Leuchars is reached. Rounding the left hand bend into the village the church of St Athernase is seen directly in front.

The church is Norman 13th century but builders in the late 17th century added the heavy tower and belfry. The apse is semi-circular with two arcades topped with a band of corbels, the arches of the church having two arcades. Inside the church is a wealth of ornamental arches and a roof - in the sanctuary arch are the crosses of the Crusaders. By the south door of the church are the Earlshall stones, one a memorial to Sir William Bruce (died 1584 aged 98 who fought at Flodden) the other to Dame Agnes Lindsay, wife of the great grandson of Sir William.

Fork right at Leuchars Church taking the second right beyond following this road for about a mile and a half. Turn right onto an unsurfaced road to Tentsmuir, a forestry area planted almost to the water's edge with conifers, driving for two miles through the woods until a car park is reached. From here many enjoyable walks are possible, either on the very fine beach (where seals are often seen) or along any of the paths through the forest. Morton Lochs, a bird sanctuary and nature reserve, lies at the north-west corner of Tentsmuir forest. Return to St Andrews by the same route.

## **Tour. 3. Magus Muir and Ceres**

From the North Haugh site turn right into the town, take the second turning right up City Road, then right at the roundabout. The main road forks right at the University playing fields (a gift from Andrew Carnegie). Then take the right fork just beyond the new David Russell Hall. Follow

the road to Strathkinness with fine views over the Eden estuary and Stratheden. Turning left at Strathkinness crossroads, the road descends through the village, then begins to climb crossing a main road just before Magus Muir woods are reached. The woods were much damaged in the great storm of 1968.

Shortly after entering the woods, at the top of the hill, there is a footpath on the right hand side of the road, easily located by a small sign indicating "Monument". The narrow footpath follows a ditch for a quarter of a mile along the line of the ancient road into St Andrews, the road being abandoned at the end of the 18th century - remains of its old wall can still be seen a few yards away across the ditch on the last few yards of this stretch of the path. The path turns north leading to a cairn, standing within Bishops Wood, on the spot where Archbishop Sharp was stabbed to death in 1679. In an open field nearby is another monument - a large tomb surrounded by railings - where lie five men who "suffered martyrdom on Magus Muir for their adherence to the Word of God and Scotland's Covenant of Reformation" after being captured at the battle of Bothwell Bridge seven weeks after Sharp's murder. Archbishop Sharp, as Chancellor of the University of St Andrews, induced Charles to found the Regius Chair of Mathematics.

On returning to the car continue to the next crossroads: turn right. The road passes through the village of Pitscottie to Ceres, about five miles from Magus Muir. Built into a wall in the centre of the village of Ceres is a quaint little monument, the figure of a man round and merry as a Toby jug. The statue was the work of John Howie, a Ceres man, and the figure is his conception of a church provost - in fact the Reverend Thomas Buchanan (1578), the last holder of the office of Provost of Ceres. The centuries old bridge in Ceres has associations with many historically important events. Archbishop Sharp together with one of his daughters drove across it on the Archbishop's way to his death at Magus Muir, while in 1314 the men of Ceres marched across the bridge to join Robert the Bruce on the eve of the battle of Bannockburn. The men returning victorious from this battle rested in Ceres and held games on Ceres green. Every year since then games (called the Bannockburn games) have been held on Ceres greens and exciting horse races are held on this tiny plot.

Before leaving Ceres a visit to Ceres Folk Museum is well worthwhile.

Either return to St Andrews via Pitscottie or take the road from Ceres signposted Crail to Peat Inn. Turn left at Peat Inn, then left again one and a half miles further on when the St Andrews road is reached.

#### **Tour 4. Balmerino, Lindores Abbey and Lindores Loch**

On leaving the North Haugh site turn left and proceed along the Cupar road to Guard Bridge. Turn right and follow the main road through Leuchars village to St Michaels, bearing left, about half a mile beyond the St Michaels crossroads, on the road for Wormit. Carry straight on at the roundabout passing through the pleasant Links Wood, turning right on reaching a T-junction. About one hundred yards on, just before entering Wormit, turn left onto an undulating road with occasional views of the Tay. Take the right fork about a mile further on, continue through the wooded countryside for a mile, turning right for Balmerino on the shores of the Tay.

Just outside the village lie the ruins of Balmerino Abbey - still standing are some of the pillars, the groined roof of the cloisters and the walls of the chapter house. In the grounds there is a Spanish chestnut tree, planted by the monks over seven hundred years ago, and the Prior's well. After the Abbey the road climbs sharply, with pleasant views along the wooded banks of the Tay, until a T-junction is reached. Turn right through wooded and hilly countryside turning right again at the next crossroads along a road which returns to the Tay valley with fine views over the river backed by the outline of the Sidlaw hills across the water. After seven miles Newburgh is reached.

At the outskirts, on the right hand side of the road, lie the ivy-covered sandstone ruins of the 12th century Lindores Abbey, at one time a Benedictine settlement, standing in grounds which were laid with "sacred" earth from Ireland to keep away adders. Turn left at the junction with the main road and follow this road towards Cupar until the village of Lindores is reached. Turn right at Lindores and pass the pleasant little loch of Lindores. The road passes through Collessie Den, then, two and a half miles from Lindores Loch, the main Cupar road is joined. Turn left for Cupar and St Andrews.

## **Tour 5. The Isle of May**

Before making this trip it is advisable to check with the Travel Information service for times of sailings and sea conditions.

Turn right from the North Haugh following North Street to the cathedral, then round into South Street before turning left down Abbey Street. The road climbs on leaving the town with views back over St Andrews, St Andrews Bay and the Angus coast. After passing the entrance to the caravan site the road forks at Brownhills garage crossing typical Fife farmland to Anstruther nine miles away. On entering Anstruther carry straight ahead for the harbour from where the boat leaves for the Isle of May.

The Isle of May, a mile long, with precipitous cliffs rising one hundred and fifty feet sheer from the water, is a bird sanctuary and a lighthouse station. A thousand years ago St Adrian fled to the May when the Vikings attacked St Andrews, but the raiders landed on the island and put St Adrian and his companions to death. Two hundred years later David I founded a monastery on the island, remains of a 13th century chapel still existing on the low ground at the south-east of the island. For many years after this the English and Scots fought for possession of this key to the Forth - then, after the monks left for a Priory at Pittenweem, it continued as a place of pilgrimage. For three hundred years there has been a lighthouse on the island, the present one being a century old, but its predecessor still stands with the date 1636 over the door. In January 1791 the head-keeper, his wife and five children were burnt to death in their cottage which caught fire from ashes from the lighthouse. In 1814 the Commissioners of Northern Lighthouses bought the island from the Duke of Portland for £60,000.

**Tour 6. Logie, Wormit, Newport and Tayport**

This trip exhibits some of the typical rolling agricultural North Fife countryside, with low hills and woods, and views over the Tay Estuary. Turn left at the exit from the North Haugh site following the main road to Guard Bridge. Carry straight through Guard Bridge taking a right turn into a minor road after one and a half miles, the turn-off point being opposite a blue notice for the Clayton Farm Milk Bar. The road almost immediately crosses the main railway line and then crosses a main road about a mile further on. The road then climbs for a further one and a half miles, with fine views looking backwards towards the northeast Fife coastline, then a

T-junction is reached. Turn right for Logie which is a small village aptly described by its name which means "hollow among hills". The focal point is the church with its manse, standing to the left of the road, where once lived John West, the son of a Logie minister, who was the author of "Elements of Mathematics", and was assistant teacher of mathematics at St Andrews (1775-84).

Beyond Logie the road descends to the Kirkcaldy/ Tay Bridge road. Turn right at this junction then, one and a half miles further on, turn left for Wormit which lies at the southern end of the Tay railway bridge. Alongside the bridge the supports of the piers of the old bridge, which collapsed in a gale on Sunday 28th December 1879, can be seen protruding above the waters of the Tay. Continue along the shores of the Tay to Newport, once the ferry-port for Dundee, then just east of Newport the road passes under the Tay Road Bridge (completed 1966). Just beyond this, on the right hand side, there is a car park for viewing the bridge - there is an observation platform about a quarter of the way across the bridge. Now continue to Tayport, once called Ferry-Port-on-Craig, the port from which railway passengers crossed the Tay before the Tay bridges were built. From Tayport the road leaves the coast, with Tentsmuir forest on the left, and when St Michael's Inn is reached turn left for Leuchars, Guard Bridge and St Andrews.

## **Tour 7. Culross and Dunfermline**

From the North Haugh site turn right. Then right again up City Road (A915). The road climbs on leaving the town with views over St Andrews and St Andrews Bay, giving way to views over the Firth of Forth, the Bass Rock, and Berwick Law after passing the village of Largoward. On reaching Upper Largo, about ten miles from St Andrews, turn right. After about one mile a detour to Lower Largo, the birthplace of Alexander Selkirk, the original Robinson Crusoe, may be made. Follow the main road to Kirkcaldy passing through Windygates. The road through Kirkcaldy goes along the Esplanade. Shortly after leaving the sea-front turn left for Kinghorn. Pass through Kinghorn. Burntisland, Aberdour and Rosyth. Follow the A985 for about 8 miles and then take one of the roads to the left signposted Culross.

In the centre of Culross many of the houses with their pantiled roofs and

dormer windows have been restored. It is interesting to visit Culross Abbey which stands above the town and has good views of the Forth. Also visit Culross palace with its pleasing gardens. The interior of the palace is a wealth of painted barrel ceilings and 17th century mural decorations.

From Culross return by the same route until the A994 to Dunfermline is reached. Dunfermline is a historic royal burgh and was the birthplace and burial place of many of the Scottish Kings. Visit Dunfermline Abbey, and the adjoining ruins of Dunfermline Palace. These overlook Pittencrieff Glen, a park with a museum of costume presented by Andrew Carnegie. Andrew Carnegie was born in Dunfermline in 1835. The cottage where he was born is open to the public and contains souvenirs of Carnegie's ruthlessly successful life. Take the A907 from Dunfermline until the M90 motorway is reached. Follow the motorway north passing Loch Leven on the right-hand side after seven miles. Loch Leven Castle is situated on an island in Loch Leven. Mary Queen of Scots was imprisoned here in 1567 by the Protestant Nobles and from here she escaped about a year later.

At exit 8 of the motorway follow the signs marked St Andrews. For many miles the Lomond Hills, first seen rising beyond Loch Leven, are prominent to the right.

## **Tour 8. Crail**

This tour visits Crail in the East Neuk of Fife - that peninsula with fields sloping gently down to a coast ringed with an almost continuous line of small burghs, each with its harbour. James VI called the East Neuk the "golden fringe on a grey cloth mantle" on account of the prosperity brought in by the trade across the North Sea with the Low Countries and the Baltic ports. Small merchant ships took Scottish hides, wool and salt herring to the continent and brought back in exchange cloth, wine and other products of the Low Countries. Trade changed from the east to the west of Scotland as the Americas revealed their wealth and the East Neuk became a neglected area. No longer were its five burghs busy seaports but gradually declined to the status of fishing villages.

Leave St Andrews on the Crail road (A918). The hill out of St Andrews is St Nicholas Brae, at the top of which take the left fork past Brownhills and onto Boarhills so named because here was slaughtered an immense boar

which ravaged farmers herds (note the boar on the crest on the Town of St Andrews). The next village is Kingsbarns so named because here were situated the King's stables used when the Scottish Kings from Falkland hunted nearby. The village church has a striking spire and the manse was built in the 18th century at a total cost of £163.1.3 1/2.

The route goes on to Crail. Places of interest include the harbour, the Town Hall in Marketgate with its tower of Dutch design (notice the weathercock which is appropriately a fish). On the north wall of the Town Hall is Crail's coat of arms bearing the date 1602, depicting an open one-sailed boat with four sailors. At the east end of Marketgate is the ancient Church of St Mary's, still used as the Parish Kirk. James Sharp (later Archbishop Sharp murdered at Magus Muir 1679) was once a minister of this church.

*When juggling Sharp his calling first began, To cheat the church with hocus tricks, he ran To Crail by sea, a flock as he could wish. Them he did feed with wind - they him with fish.*

Close to the west door of the church is a stone indented by the bowmen of Crail who sought divine help when they sharpened their arrows. The large blue stone near the gates of the church was thrown at the church from the Isle of May by the Devil. Anyone doubting this, note the impress of the Devil's thumb on the surface of the stone!