

SPEYSIDE WAY, 11th - 18th APRIL 2010

A group of eight members of Surrey County Walkers walked the Speyside Way from Aviemore in the central Scottish Highlands to Buckie, on the coast, east of Inverness. The walk is 65 miles long and splits into 5 sections: Aviemore to Granttown - on - Spey, Granttown - on - Spey to Ballindalloch, Ballindalloch to Craigellachie, Craigellachie to Fochabers and Fochabers to Buckie. The walk is along old railway lines, beside the River Spey and through woods and over hills.

The group travelled to and from Aviemore on the Caledonian sleeper and stayed 6 nights at the Garth Hotel in Granttown - on - Spey,



which provided comfortable accommodation and good food at a modest price. The group travelled to and from walk starting and finishing points using a local taxi service, which conveniently had an 8 - seater minibus.

Granttown is an attractive small town.



The town is largely built of stone and is dominated by one large hotel in the Scottish baronial style.



The first day's walk, from Aviemore to Granttown started from the station, passing through birch woods



and pine woods.

SPEYSIDE WAY, 11th - 18th APRIL 2010



Distant views across the golf course showed the Cairngorm mountains covered in snow.



For the duration of the walk (Monday 12th to Friday 16th April), it was dry, but, on the following evening (Saturday 17th), snow fell and nearer hills received a white covering.

The 17 miles from Aviemore to Grantown splits into 3 roughly equal stretches, with the first ending at Boat of Garten. This was formerly a railway junction and is still a station on the preserved Strathspey steam railway.



Boat of Garten is famous for its osprey centre and one local business proudly displayed a wood carving of an osprey.



Some members of the group visited the centre on the Saturday after completing the walk and saw the ospreys and also red squirrels, which are common in this area, even living in the grounds of the Garth Hotel, right in Grantown.

The Speyside Way crosses the River Spey at Boat of Garten and is already quite a large river.

SPEYSIDE WAY, 11th - 18th APRIL 2010



Boat of Garten provided a convenient coffee stop, with lunch taken at Nethy Bridge. With an early start (0745) from Aviemore, Grantown was reached late afternoon.

The next day's walk took us out of Grantown through woods, across one of many impressive former railway viaducts



to Cromdale, where the old station has now been converted into a private house.



The walk continued along a former railway line, with which this area is well endowed.



Railway lines, by their nature, are almost flat and, at most, gently curving. Other parts of the route, up through woods proved to be much more strenuous and this section of the walk was terminated prematurely at Tormore distillery, whose product was tasted later in the hotel.

The stretch from Tormore was covered in the following day and the next section started from Ballindalloch, which once again was an old railway, so easy walking.

SPEYSIDE WAY, 11th - 18th APRIL 2010



Near to the station was an old building in typical stone construction.



The railway walk continued over a viaduct,



passing further old railway stations



This stretch of the walk passed the distilleries of Knockando, Tamdu and Carron. Beautiful views of the Spey were obtained.

SPEYSIDE WAY, 11th - 18th APRIL 2010



The colour of the river varied from deep purple to almost black. The flow was so fast that no walker could keep up with it. A few weeks earlier, during the peak of the snow melt, it must have been a raging torrent.

From Aberlour to Craigellachie, the route follows the River Spey



This section of the walk ended at Aberlour, a small town with a distillery and a shortbread factory, whose products were available at a shortbread shop in Grantown. The old station is now the visitor centre.



and old railway lines, which passed through a deep cutting,



The Spey was a fast flowing river.



SPEYSIDE WAY, 11th - 18th APRIL 2010

through a tunnel



and beside the River Spey.



This day's walk ended at Craigellachie, whose most famous monument is Telford's bridge.



The section from Craigellachie to Fochabers was mainly through woods, where snow was still lying and along country lanes, both of which were quite hilly.

Beyond Fochabers, the Spey valley opened out



with the path following the river, in parts,



until it formed a broad delta, as the Spey flowed into the sea at Spey Bay.



The path then turned right (eastwards), towards Buckie, the end of the Speyside Way. Some of the route followed another

SPEYSIDE WAY, 11th - 18th APRIL 2010

former railway line



from which Buckie is visible in the distance. Buckie is an old fishing port



and stones mark the end of the Speyside Way.

After the walk, the group returned to Aviemore using the Strathspey steam railway



from Broomhill, the present end of the line, which featured in a television series as 'Glenbogle'.



A final view of Aviemore shows snow on the mountains.

