

## **A SHORT CIRCULAR WALK IN NORTH DOWN (With a Historical Context)**

Not every Walk needs to be a strenuous day in the mountains. Some local walks accomplished in 2 hours, perhaps in a summer evening, offer an opportunity to learn a little of the history of the area and perhaps provide a welcome opportunity to wet the appetite of younger walkers. Let me share one with you.

### **START.**

Car park in Helen's Bay (toilets available), parking free. G.S. 459829.

### **TIME**

1.5 hours but allow extra ½ hour for visit to Crawfordsburn Inn or Park Centre (see below). Total 2 hrs. Possible extension to view Fort at Grey Point overlooking Belfast Lough.

### **GOING**

Level on footpaths or tracks but can be muddy in places.

### **FACILITIES**

Toilets available at start in car park, in Crawfordsburn Inn and in Country Park. Refreshments in Crawfordsburn Inn or Park café (limited opening hours)

### **USEFUL INFORMATION**

View Northern Ireland Environment Agency web site <http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk/> for details of opening times.

### **WALK**

Depart from far end of car park from entrance along "Clandeboy Avenue" a carriageway built in 1850 by James Frazer for Lord Dufferin to connect Clandeboy House with Helen's Bay Railway Station and beach. Overgrown in places but it is possible to distinguish lines of trees and to see supporting stone walls etc.

Pass below Helen's Bay Railway Station noting first the extra width of carriageway to allow horse-drawn carriages to turn and to the left the bricked up private entrance and steps to private waiting room and station platform. Residents were first attracted to Helen's Bay by the offer of a free rail pass.

Continue along Avenue breaking out into the country. Pleasant level going, part track, part surfaced. Note clumps of trees on either side of carriage-way, on the left Tennyson's & Browning's clumps named by 1<sup>st</sup> Marquess after his favourite poets and on the right Spitzbergen Bank– commemorating a visit by him to the Arctic Island in 1856 on his schooner *Foam*. (See details below).

Pass under Red Bridge. Note the splendid architecture, coat of arms and date. (They don't build them like that now!). Continue ahead.

Leave old carriageway by stile and emerge onto main Belfast – Bangor road first ensuring small children and dogs are supervised. Note continuation of carriageway to the Clandeboy Estate on opposite side of main road past lodge built in 1856. Clumps of trees straddling that

part of the carriage-way include Montreal, Toronto, Niagara and Ottawa commemorating oratingrating the time Lord Dufferin spent as Governor General of Canada.

Do **not** cross the main road, turn left along the footpath towards Bangor and turn left again into Meadow Way. This is an unsurfaced lane or “Loaning” with typical high banks on each side which eventually becomes a residential road. A short distance from the road on the right spot the clump of trees called Jan Mayen another reminder of Lord Dufferin's arctic trip in 1856. At the end turn right. BE CAREFUL OF TRAFFIC and follow to a T junction opposite the Crawfordsburn Inn

Enjoy a refreshment halt. Crawfordsburn takes its name from a family of Scottish settlers who arrived here in 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Old Inn dates back to 1614 and the road through the village is one of the oldest in Ireland linking Bangor Abbey with Holywood Priory – used since 570AD. More recently the Inn was a stopping place for mail coaches travelling to the mail boats from Donaghadee to Portpatrick and some say it was the haunt of smugglers.

Cross the road carefully to the Inn and turn left. Enter passageway between Inn and garage descending steps. This leads into a deep wooded glen and Crawfordsburn Park After a short distance follow the path to the right down a steep bank to the river and across. . At bottom to visit waterfall keep right upstream otherwise bear left downstream. The river has been used at various times to power a flax mill, a cornmill, a sawmill and to generate electricity.

Continue walk at will along river under railway viaduct to the beach noting the variety of trees. You will emerge into a car park and have the option of heading up the hill opposite to the Countryside Centre with its exhibitions and Woodland's Café. Alternatively continue along the river to be greeted with a beach and wonderful views over Belfast Lough. Here you join the North Down Coastal Path. Turn left towards Belfast.

Rounding Quarry Point we come into Helen’s Bay named after Helen Sheridan mother of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marquis of Dufferin & Ava who also built Helen’s Tower in her memory in 1861 and about which Tennyson wrote a poem of the same name. There were plans to build a model village here.

The golf course on the left has clumps of trees throughout all with names from novels by Sir Walter Scott the Marquess's favourite author.

Our Walk ends by a left turn at the end of the golf course, through the barrier and at the road turn left up the hill to the car park and starting point.

If time permits the walk can be continued up the hill past the car park to Grey Point Fort, a coastal battery and gun emplacement dating from early this century but updated during WW2 (The two 6" guns are a great attraction).

### **HISTORICAL FOOTNOTE.**

Lord Dufferin's family name was Blackwood and they settled in Co. Down from Scotland in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. (In fact it was an Uncle by the name of Blackwood who captained the frigate that brought the first news to England of Nelson's death and the outcome of Trafalgar). Clandeboye became the family home in 1674 but the current estate was laid out from 1826

onwards. The house currently home to the Marchioness of Dufferin & Ava was built in 1801 although extended several times.

Through a series of marriages the family became extensive landowners and Lord Dufferin was born into "society". He was born in Italy in 1826, attended Eton and Oxford. In 1856 he had a schooner built named *Foam* and sailed it first to Iceland then north to Jan Mayen Land, to Norway and on to Spitzbergen. A remarkable journey for those days which he recorded in his book *Letters From High Latitudes*.

He then followed a diplomatic career serving in Syria, as Governor General of Canada (You will find a tube station in Toronto named Dufferin), then as Ambassador to Russia, and later Turkey. Finally he became Viceroy of India. His statue may be found in the City Hall grounds in Belfast.

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