

Circuit from Scotlandwell 28th August 2023

Six members left Broxden and travelled to Scotlandwell to climb Bishop Hill.

The walk started in sunshine with a steep climb on the Michael Bruce Way into Kilmagad Wood with beautiful views across Loch Leven and out towards the Forth as we continued upwards towards Munduff Hill. We then continued along the escarpment edge to ascend Bishop Hill where the prominent peaks of West and East Lomond came into view.

On returning to the escarpment we descended briefly to view 2 features marked on the OS map. Firstly a stone pinnacle called Carlin Maggie, a 30-foot pillar of volcanic rock standing proud of its parent outcrop of quartz dolerite. The outer edge of a lava sill, this outcrop forms a hard ridge-top layer protecting the softer limestone and sandstones below.

Secondly Stothart Row, a meltwater channel forming a deep ravine stretching from near the base of the stone pillar down to the foot of the hill and possibly named by the OS surveyors after a local quarryman named Stothart. Sandstone quarried for house building from a seam beneath the quartz dolerite sill would have been rolled down this "row" to be collected by cart below.

Both of these found their way onto the six-inch-to-the-mile Ordnance Survey Map published in September 1856.

After coffee we continued to follow the edge before dropping steeply into Glen Vale and finding a point to cross Glen Burn to the Cave and Waterfall at John Knox's Pulpit. One of several strangely eroded features on the slopes of the Lomond Hills, John Knox's Pulpit is an outcrop of grey sandstone laid down as desert sand dunes in the late-Devonian period, 410-353 million years ago, when this part of the Earth lay close to the Equator. The rock face shows thin layers called pin stripes which are characteristic of sand deposited by wind in an arid environment.

Passing under the rocky outcrop we took the higher path down Glen Vale to reach a gate across field tracks below the escarpment where we ate lunch while watching gliders and hang gliders soaring above us. Track and paths were followed to join the A911 before crossing to Portmoak Moss, a conifer plantation on a raised peat bog originally thought to have been part of Loch Leven and formed by the build up of surrounding land. It was once used by villagers to cut for fuel and today is being managed in order to restore the rare bog habitat.

On re-entering Scotlandwell we stopped to visit the Well built in 1858 to cover a natural spring said to have curative powers and which still bubbles up through the sand today.

An enjoyable walk in dry weather was rounded off with coffee and cake at Lochend Farm Shop.

9.75miles, approx 1600ft ascent



View ascending from Kilmagad Wood

Onward towards Bishop Hill





Carlin Maggie



Approaching Cave and Waterfall



Viewing the bubbling sand at Scotlandwell Well

