

## **Walks Grantown-on-Spey, Inverallan, Anagach to Craigroy**

### **1: The Square to Inverallan**

Start in The Square, the historic centre of Grantown, which was founded in 1765 by Sir James Grant. The first house of the new town was built on the north side of The Square for James Grant a weaver from Rothiemurchus. Sadly the house has not survived, as it was demolished in the 1850's, to be replaced by the National Bank of Scotland, now called Morlich House. The south side is dominated by the Grant Arms Hotel, though not the building that Queen Victoria visited incognito in 1860. Beside it Speyside House, a former orphanage and the only A listed building in Strathspey and Badenoch. This fine Georgian building was home to orphaned children, mostly from the surrounding parishes until it closed in 1975. The art deco building a few doors further down was the cinema which closed in the 1970's and now houses the British Legion.

In the centre of The Square the war memorial is a simple column of grey granite on a pedestal with bronze wreath and panel of a highland infantryman. Two hundred and fifty two men and women are listed, who were born or resided in the district, who had enlisted in Strathspey, or had former family connections with the locality. It was unveiled by the Countess of Seafield in 1921. Leaving the Square walk down the High St with its varied independent shops, former post office, banks, Baptist Chapel and Victorian Institute (1897). Sadly there are also several empty properties on both sides of the street.

At the turn of the 19th century when the town had grown way beyond Sir James Grant's expectations, it could boast a population of 1500 plus branches of the Caledonian, National and Royal Banks, the Strathspey National Security Savings Bank, several hotels, a court house, public hall, public water supply, a gas works, an orphanage (1824), cottage hospital (1884), curling and cyclist clubs, Freemasons, public library (1859), agricultural society (1812) a golf course (1890) and two railway stations. By the 1950's Grantown had 15 hotels and over 40 good quality shops

At the west end of the High Street by the Silver Bridge a foot path to the left leads through Grant Park and along the banks of the Kylentra Burn, passed a pond once popular with skaters and curlers to end at the by-pass road. Cross the road and follow the single track road upstream beside the River Spey. The road ends at a small car park used by fishermen at Old Inverallan Cemetery. Here's the site of the earliest ecclesiastical origins of the parish. A single standing stone with incised Christian crosses perhaps marks the resting place of the elusive early St Figgat, who preached in the area and to whom a well is also dedicated near-by. A Pictish Class 1 stone is embedded in the cemetery wall close to the site of the original church of which nothing remains. An early baptismal font also rests by the tree at the entrance gate. Just beyond the

cemetery, the path crosses a bridge over the Glen Beg burn where it flows into the Spey. This confluence is Inverallan or the mouth of the Allan Burn, to use its older name and the origin for the parish name.

Return to the road and follow it back to the main road and the pavement that heads towards the new Spey Bridge. Opened in 1931, its single span was built with concrete and replaced the older bridge which could no longer support vehicular traffic. From the roundabout at the bridge return to Grantown by Spey Avenue or a little beyond it, the Old Military Road through the woods.

## **2: The Square, Anagach Wood, Poorhouse Wood**

Starting again in The Square walk down Forest Road past the fire station and old telephone exchange and cross the road to continue towards Anagach Woods. On the left a sign marks the Speyside Way and numerous other walks of various distances within the woodland. The direct route following the Speyside Way will eventually lead to Cromdale Church, passing the curling ponds, Anagach Moss, golf course (1890) and Lag nan Caorach (hollow of the sheep). Way markers to Poorhouse Wood take the path close to the former site of a single story extended house which was still in use in the 1960s for homeless, poor people. Now demolished it's still possible to see remains of the foundations. A path from here leads back to the golf course and a short walk across the course to Golf Course Road and Market Road.

The Market Stance and Black Park on the right were donated to the town by the Seafeld family for public use. Here markets were held, sporting events, agricultural shows and Highland Games. Crossing the junction of Heathfield Road and South Street (Back Street) leads to Market Road, once a sea of animals coming and going to market and the noise of the smiddy which was also located here. Markets were removed from The Square in 1852. Where Market Road joins Castle Road, turn left. Castle Road has many listed buildings and the distinctive Garth Hotel (1769) which was home to a previous clerk to Sir James Grant and also housed Grantown's first industrial textile factory. The road branching to the left called Burnfield, is named after a burn diverted to flow down here, not only for the public water supply, but was also used in linen manufacturing. The green on either side, which is now a large car park was once used for drying flax. Grantown Museum located in Burnfield, a former girl's school, is worth a visit. It tells the history of the town, has a small archive and hosts various exhibitions. The imposing building on the corner of The Square is the Court House. Opened in 1868, it housed the police station, jail and meeting rooms for the provost and burgh council. Grantown was elevated to Police Burgh status in 1898 and gloried in the new title of Grantown-on-Spey. To the right of the war memorial the former Seafeld Estate Office block (1884) now accommodates The Cairngorms National Park H.Q. Beyond the war memorial the

avenue of trees to the right lead to Inverallan Church or the Seafield Memorial Church of Inverallan. The current building was opened in 1886 by Caroline Dowager Countess of Seafield in memory of her late husband, the 7th Earl of Seafield and only young son, Ian Charles 8th Earl of Seafield. She also erected the Ian Charles Hospital in 1885 in memory of her son, which has admirably served the community, though its closure is now imminent.

### **3: The Square, Old Spey Bridge to Craigroy**

The final walk from the Square goes down Forest Road and continues along the Old Military Road to join the road beside the Spey. The Old Military Road is often mistaken for a Wade road, but it was built by Major Caulfeild, his successor in Scotland. Stretching from Blairgowrie to Braemar and over the Lecht to the Old Spey Bridge, it continues onto Fort George on the Moray Firth. The road and bridge were instrumental in Sir James Grant's decision to establish Grantown where he did. Turn left on reaching the road and walk past the row of houses and villas known as Speybridge. Beyond where the road curves, leads across the old bridge. On the far side, which is in the parish of Abernethy, a marker stone rests beside the bridge, erected by the soldiers to commemorate the completion of the road to the Spey. Walk back to the sign to Anagach on the right and follow the track past the farms of Wester, Mid and Easter Anagach. Before the bridge was built there had once been a ford here and also a Loch Anagach which was later drained and planted. The track eventually reaches Craigroy where the choice is to turn left following a trail into the wood that joins the Speyside Way or right and return to the old bridge by the banks of the river.