

# Murray's Monument and the Black Loch

Walk 23

**Distance:** 2 miles/3 km **Map:** OS Explorer 319 Galloway Forest Park – Dumfries & Galloway Core Path 400



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A short but steep and interesting excursion into Galloway Forest Park. This walk can be combined with visits to other attractions such as the Wild Goat Park and the Red Deer Park.

**Start:** At a small car park at Grey Mare's Tail bridge on the A712 (the Queen's Way) about 7 miles from Newton Stewart.

**Refreshments:** Café at Clatteringshaws Visitor Centre about 5 miles further up the road.

**Note:** It would be a great help to future walkers if you could record any inaccuracies you come across during this walk and report them to reception so that appropriate amendments can be made. Thank you for your help. *Happy walking.*

- Leave gates as you find them
- Walk to the edges of crop fields, not across the middle
- Keep dogs on leads, especially if there is livestock in the field
- Cows with calves can be aggressive
- There is a large tidal range in the Solway Firth. Be careful if venturing into the tidal zone.

## WALK

**1.** You can see the first objective, Murray's Monument, from the car park. Follow the waymarked path steeply up the hillside to reach the monument.

**2.** The monument was erected in 1835 to commemorate Alexander Murray, a local shepherd boy who became professor of oriental languages at Edinburgh University. Murray was born at Dunkitterick Cottage, the ruins of which can be seen across the valley.

Descend from the monument by the same path and take the left-hand branch that leads across towards a track along the edge of woodland. Follow this track rightwards as it climbs to reach a forest road. This section of path is shared by mountain bike trails so be aware of the possibility of cyclists appearing unexpectedly.

Follow the forest road to the right for around half a mile to where the forest road crosses a bridge over a small river. This road follows the route of the old Edinburgh Road, used by pilgrims on their way to the priory at Whithorn.

**3.** On the right side of the road at the bridge are some dry-stone walls that used to be sheep folds. Search around these walls and you will find some carved granite heads. These are called "Quorum" and were created by local artist Matt Baker as part of a residency in Galloway Forest Park in 1997. There are other examples of his works at the Clints of Dromore about five miles to the south.

**4.** The Grey Mare's Tail waterfalls can be seen up in the woods a few hundred yards upstream of the bridge. There are faint tracks by the east side of the stream if you want to get a closer look.

You can extend the walk with a detour to or around the Black Loch. Walk about quarter of a mile further along the forest road and take a left turn on another track that goes around the left side of the Black Loch.

**5.** As you reach the loch, you will see a slender conical sculpture on the shore. This is known as "The Eye" and was made from terracotta tiles by Colin Rose in 1997. The Black Loch is an atmospheric place that reflects the changing light on the surrounding hillsides. It is also a good place to see mating toads in spring.

From the Eye, you can make a circuit of the loch by following the forest track up until it bends round to the left then there is a faint path that runs back down the hillside past the far end of the loch to meet the main forest road again.

Return to the sheep fold with the "Quorum" sculptures and follow the path alongside the stream. After a couple of hundred yards, the stream bends round to the right and drops into a narrow gorge. The footpath climbs to the left over a small ridge then drops steeply down the far side to return you to your starting point. You can detour from the path to get a closer look at the upper waterfalls of Buck Loup on the way down this path.

While you are in the area, you may also like to visit the Wild Goat Park and the Red Deer Range which are a little further along the A712.

There is a short loop footpath to the ruins of Dunkitterick Cottage from another car park on the other side of the road just after the Goat Park.