

# Walkislay 2009

## *A walking week for all on Islay and Jura ("guaranteed midge free, we believe")*



**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> April** To start walkislay this year, we meet up with Donald James MacPhee at 9.30am sharp at Dunlossit Kennels, Ballygrant and aim to be on our way by 10.00 am. (NR407658)

Walking from the Kennels to Lossit Wood along the shores of Lossit Loch heading to Balla-Na- Claidh (The Stoney Township), passing some lead workings. From here we pass the Long and Broad Lochs into Glen Logan, through some old shielings and cambering round on to Beinn Bhreac before descending to An Cladach on the Sound of Islay. An Cladach is a Mountain Association bothy, where illegal whisky was made some time ago

by an old resident called Baldie. After lunch, we wander along the shore to Baleachdrach, hopefully seeing some seals and otters, possibly a Golden eagle or a Sea eagle! We then make our way up through the woods before reaching Lossit and back to the Kennels. This is circular walk of around 10 miles and taking about 6 hours and was the first walk that DJ led for us back in 2004, but then it was done in reverse. Please remember to bring wet weather gear, and suitable footwear. Please also remember to bring your packed lunch with you. This walk is not suitable for dogs. A good 3\* walk to start the week with, see note at end relating our stars! We reckon this is a strenuous walk!

**Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April** Today we meet up at Bunnahabhain at 10.15 for a 10.30 am start, Lindy MacLellan and Bryony MacFarlane are our leaders. On this walk, we would welcome well behaved, sociable dogs (no fighters allowed!). The dogs may have to go a lead in certain areas where we may encounter deer. We leave Bunnahabhain on the Ballulive track, and walk through the forestry track to Staoisha Eararaich. Near the end of the forest track, we follow a forest ride up to the gate in the deer fence. We then follow the bike track onto the hill and skirt the south end of Loch Giur-Bheinn. From here we make the short steep ascent to the summit of Giur-bheinn. From the summit, we should have some magnificent views all around Islay, over onto the West coast of Jura, and up to Colonsay and beyond. We descend at the north end and continue to Margadale and return along the bike track to rejoin the Ballulive track back to Bunnahabhain. An 8 mile circular trip of moderate walking taking about 5 hours, there will be some boggy tussocky ground to cover.



Please remember to bring your sandwiches for your lunch. Another 3\* walk. This is the same walk that Lindy and Bryony did for us back in 2007, but the weather was not kind to us that day to appreciate the views from up the summit of Giur-bheinn!

An alternative, shorter walk is also on offer today, meet at the car park opposite the Ramsay Hall in Port Ellen at 11 am for shared transport for a walk through Glen Astle on the Oa. Your walk leaders are Florrie MacAllister and Maggie Pollard and your walk will take around 4+ hours of moderate walking. A good 3\* walk, about 6 miles or so.

At 9pm in the Port Charlotte Hotel, there will be some light music along with some of the locals, so come along for a pint and enjoy the craic! No stars for this one, sorry.

**Monday 13th April** For those wishing, some of Jura, we will meet up at Port Askaig at 09.10 for shared transport on the 0930 ferry. We will meet in with Gordon Muir and Louise Gregory at Craighouse for their walk out to Keils and onto the Burial Ground. Only a 1 star walk, easy going about 2.5 miles circular walk. You may purchase lunch at the Jura Hotel on our return to Craighouse, for those who wish not to face another day of making sandwiches! In the afternoon, they propose to take a short walk out to Ardfernal via Knockcrome. Starting point will be from the car park at the Three Arch Bridge. There is a good chance of good views from the trig point at Ardfernal over the Sound of Jura. An easy 2 star linear walk, around 3 miles moderate walking.



Another alternative walk on Jura will be led by Susan McGhie and Keith Findlay. Just to confuse you all, we will meet at Port Askaig at 9.45 to catch the 10 am ferry and then connect with the bus to take us to Jura House Gardens. If allowed we may wander through the famous walled gardens, and then walk down towards the pier and look towards Claig Castle. From here we will continue walking along the shore, may be stopping for a bite to eat opposite Glas Eilean where the deer sometimes get stranded in a high tide! On this walk, we may be lucky and see some seals, short eared owls, sea eagles, golden eagles, buzzards, otters.....it's nice to dream. We continue on along the shoreline, rejoining the A846 at MacDougall's Bay and along the road to the Feolin Ferry to get the ferry back to Islay.



Numbers on this walk will be restricted strictly to 14 walkers as this is the bus capacity! Names to Ian on 01496 850 382. Although this is a moderate walk, the last stretch of beach is made of large stones/pebbles and can be a bit of a slog, and hard on the ankles, so appropriate footwear is advisable. A good 3\* walk



There will be a "Visitors Welcome evening", at 8 p.m., to be held in the Gaelic College in Bowmore. Listen to some of our local musicians, sample Rae's cloutie dumpling and wash it down with a local dram. Even better, there is no charge for this! Come and share some Islay hospitality at its best.



**Tuesday 14th April** This morning we meet with Scott Brown and Alan MacDonald at 9.00am sharp at the car park at the Auction Market, Bridgend (NR333625). We shall be sharing transport, leaving at 9.15am. We will be walking from Gortantoid, across the moorland to the caves at Bolsa. From Bolsa, we follow the coastline to the lighthouse at Rhuvaal and then head south along the Sound of Jura to Bunnahabhain. We return to our cars, at the market after being picked up at Bunnahabhain. Do not forget your food as there are no shops en route! The views,

weather permitting are not to be missed, both of the scenery and of herds of Red Deer. A good strenuous 3\* walk, around about 14 miles, for all you hardy walkers. This walk is the same as the successful one that Jack Adamson led in previous years.

Jack Adamson will also take another walk today starting again from the market, but meet with Jack at 9.45 for a 10.00 am start. This walk is the same as the walk that Jack for us led in 2007, but in the reverse way! From the Market, we walk out to Knockdon, and go on passing Loch Sibhinn, head up Glen Drolsay to Loch Drolsay. From there we almost go due North, up past Loch Leathan and then following Abhain nan Sidhean down to the track leading to Gortantoid. When we meet the track we will have transport ready waiting to bring you back to your cars at the Market. Another good linear 3\* walk about 10 miles in length of challenging walking.





An alternative, shorter walk will be led by Andy Schofield, starting from the car park (NR281419) at the RSPB Oa reserve, Upper Killyen at 10am sharp. This is a circular walk taking in the American Monument returning along the coastline to Upper Killyen. On a clear day, Rathlin Island and the Irish coast can be seen. This is about 4 miles of moderate walking and 3 hours of your time and is a 2 \* walk. Light snacks advisable for those who wish one.

**Wednesday 15th April** Today, we meet up at Port Askaig at 9.40 sharp with James How to catch the ferry over to Colonsay. Our walk will be from Kiloran Bay to Balnahard, and then leading on to the old Chapel and Cross below Cnoc Corr. This walk will be around 6 miles off road, of moderate walking. We will be providing transport on Colonsay to help you having to do so much leg work on the roads. We should return to Islay around 7pm. Remember your lunch again or you will be able to purchase food on the Cal Mac ferry, especially if you have worked up an appetite after this walk. James's walk is another good 2 \* for your card.



Meanwhile back on Islay in the afternoon, Neil Park will meet up with you at 2pm in the car park along side the playing fields in Bowmore. Neil's walk will take in The Battery and along the shore out to Gartbreck and return back along the "Moss road" to Bowmore. Another 2\* walk, taking about 2 – 2.5 hours of your time and just over 4 miles in distance of easy walking, although there is some walking on shingle along the shore.



**Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> April** Today, Iain MacPherson and Walter Ramsay are our leaders. We meet with them at 9.15 for 9.30 starting from Kilchiaran (NR 206602) and over the hill to Kilchoman Distillery, where you may purchase your lunch, rather having to make sandwiches! From Rockside, we head out over towards Granny's Rock and the Radio Masts at Kilchiaran, taking in the history of the masts, possibly visiting where the Swordmakers once lived. There should be, weather permitting, a great chance to see over to Donegal and possibly Tiree in other direction. Nearer to hand you will be able to see some of our rare Choughs. Another 3\* walk this time, about 8 miles of challenging walking, taking about 6 hours!

For those wishing an easier option, meet with Rory Crawford at RSPB Loch Gruinart, Visitor Centre. Rory has just returned from Aride in The Seychelles after working there for 6 months. Rory will lead the short walk down to the hide, returning through the woodland trail. Rory's walk will leave at 10am prompt, along tracks and paths, about 2 miles and 2 hours to allow for twitching en route (1\* walk, sorry Rory!).

At 8 p.m. on Thursday evening there will be an illustrated talk, on Islay wildlife by Malcolm Ogilvie at the Wildlife Centre, Port Charlotte. There will be a small entrance fee (donated to the Wildlife Trust), but there will be some refreshments available afterwards.



**Friday 17th April**, our last day and Tom Dunn will meet with us at 10 am for shared transport at the car park opposite the Ramsay Hall, Port Ellen. Tom's walk will start from Ardtalla and will take us out to Proaig and then out to Mac Arthur's Head and the lighthouse The walk is around 5 miles of moderate to challenging walking and should take us not more than 3 - 4 hours. Please remember that although we meet at Port Ellen, our walk will actually commence from out towards Ardtalla, see Islay, Jura and all

around from a different viewpoint. The last walk for those dreaded sarnies, thankfully...., Tom's walk is worth every step to gain you another 3\* and take in some of our spectacular scenery.



For our final walk, we meet with Catherine Fotheringham at the Visitor centre, RSPB Loch Gruinart reserve at 6pm for a 6.15pm start. Catherine will take out across the moor before dropping down to Moulin, we then return past Gruinart Farm, and along the sea wall and returning along one of the Corncrake corridors. This is around 4 miles, moderate going and 2 hours of your time. Only 2\*, but you will get a well deserved plate of soup and sandwiches to refresh you when we get back to visitor centre.

A nominal fee will be charged for each walk, and **suitable footwear and clothing is strongly recommended**. We regret that dogs will be allowed only on the Sunday walk, with smoking only at the discretion of the walk leader. We have tried to grade the walks as easy, moderate, challenging and strenuous.

*For those of you who had been wondering what the star rating are for, well here goes. As usual as an incentive for you to come and join us on the walks we will be giving you **walkislay prize**. All you have to do is to do the walks to attain a total of 8 stars to aim for your **walkislay prize**.*

We wish to thank the various land managers who kindly allowed us to hold **walkislay** over their properties, and all the walkleaders gave their valuable time and help to make the walks possible.

If you require further information on **walkislay**, phone Ian Brooke on 01496 850 382, or e mail us on [footsteps@walkislay.co.uk](mailto:footsteps@walkislay.co.uk)

Pictures courtesy of Armin Grewe, for further pictures and reports from previous Islay walking weeks visit <http://www.armin-grewe.com/islay/islay-walking-week.htm>