

The north Fife sundial trail

The North Fife Sundial Trail to St. Andrews by Dennis Cowan



This sundial trail starts from the Forth Road Bridge (the main A90 road from Edinburgh) which spans the River Forth between South Queensferry and North Queensferry and is only a few miles from Scotland's capital city. It ends in St. Andrews, the home of golf where another sundial trail is available (the St. Andrews Sundial Trail).

St. Andrews now of course is almost as famous in some quarters for being the place where Prince William and Kate Middleton first met at the University in the town.

Another sundial trail is available for the return journey which takes a different route back to your starting point at the Forth Road Bridge (the East Neuk Sundial Trail).

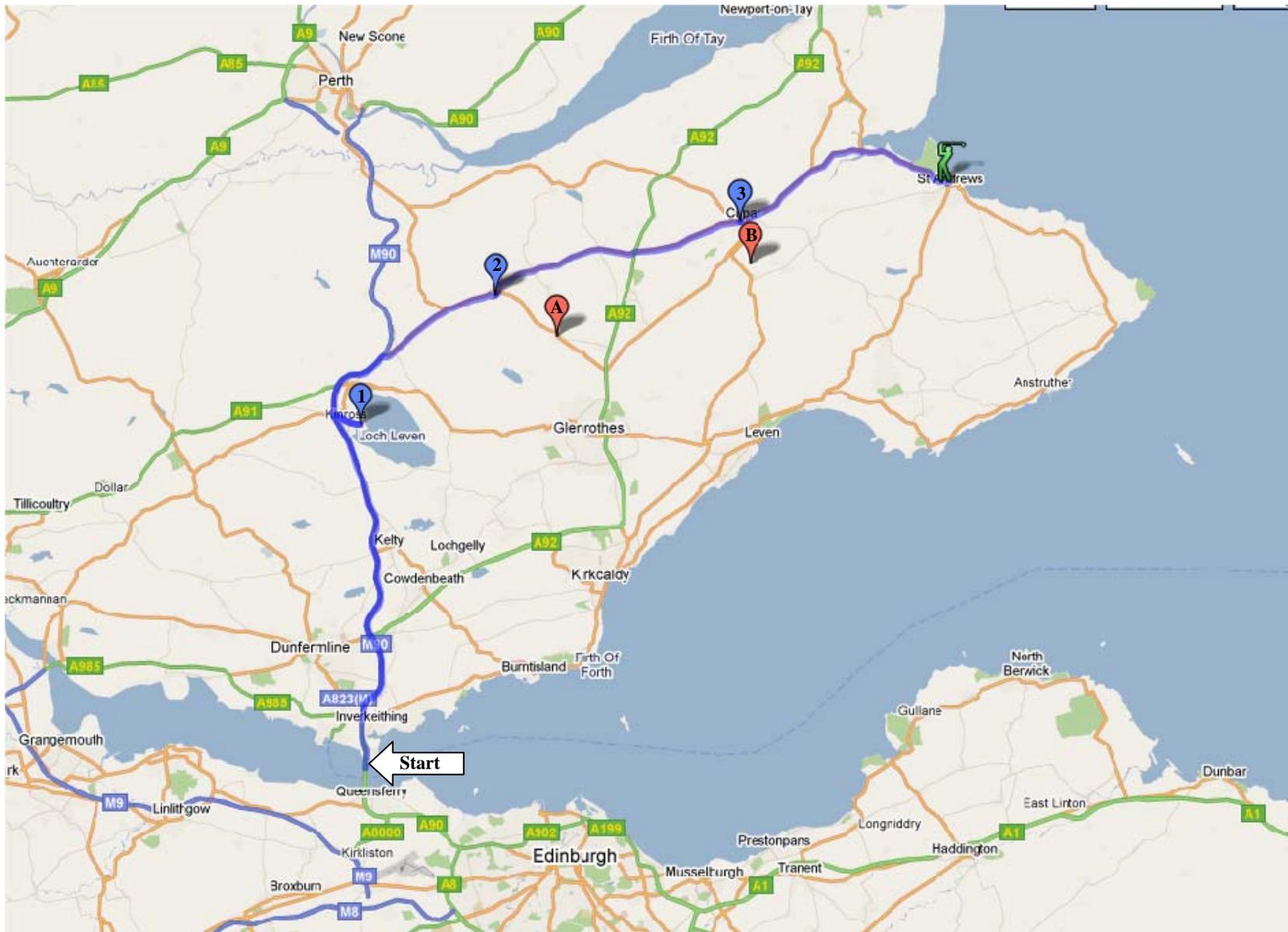
The North Fife Sundial Trail takes the most direct route to St. Andrews going up the M90 motorway to Kinross, then via Strathmiglo and Cupar and then on to St. Andrews. A car will be needed and a full day is required. The journey to St. Andrews is approximately 45 miles and around 1½ hours driving time from the Forth Road Bridge plus stopping and viewing times.

There are seven sundials at three locations on this route plus two options to see another three sundials. These options are identified in the text.

If you are doing all three trails mentioned above and using this trail as the return leg from St. Andrews, you will obviously have to reverse the directions.

There are numerous options for meals or snacks in St. Andrews.

The map on the following page is from Google Maps.



<http://maps.google.co.uk/maps/ms?hl=en&ie=UTF8&msa=0&msid=110052020879419928295.0004928092b9843161fef&ll=56.202121,-2.90451&spn=0.556132,1.781158&z=10>

With reference to the map on the previous page, head north up the A90 from the Forth Road Bridge continuing on to the M90 motorway to Junction 6 to **Kinross**. Follow the road signs into Kinross and turn right at the "T" junction. After 100 yards, turn left to Kinross House. The following two sundials can be seen from the car parking area.

No 1 - A fine pair of cube sundials can be seen mounted high on the wall, one at each side of the house. These dials each have four octagonal faces and were made by John Hamilton in about 1686. All of the four gnomons on each cube are still in place and according to the handyman, are quite "soft".



Go into the gardens of the house. There is an honesty box into which you should place the £3 entrance fee (in 2010) to the gardens. Immediately on entering the garden, turn to your left. At the corner of the garden turn left again and this will take you into a small enclosed hedged garden where you will see the next sundial.

This sundial is a heliochronometer made by Pilkington Gibbs in the early 20th century. These dials are extremely accurate and take the equation of time into account. This one has Roman numerals and so is an early model. These sundials were designed by Gibbs and backed financially by Pilkington. They were made until about 1914.



Before leaving, walk to the bottom of the garden and look over Loch Leven to the castle on the island where Mary, Queen of Scots was imprisoned between 1567 and 1568 until she escaped, before being recaptured and eventually beheaded in 1587 on the orders of her cousin, Queen Elizabeth I of England. Head back to the M90 motorway and continue your journey north. Take the next exit (junction 8 – there is no exit at junction 7) on to the A91 signposted to St. Andrews. After 5 miles turn right on to an unclassified road signposted to **Strathmiglo**. This leads straight on to the High Street where the next sundial is located on the Town House, which with its tall steeple is easily seen on your left.

No 2 - The town house was built in 1734, but it is thought that this well weathered sundial with three faces may have originally been on the market cross and may pre-date the town house itself. The dial does look out of place in its present position and on closer inspection, a fourth face may be found facing the building. As this face never could get the sun, it would confirm that this was not its original intended position.



Continue on the High Street to the “T” junction.



OPTION A – Turn right at the “T” junction on to the A912 and go on to Falkland (signposted) for the armillary globe in the Palace gardens (a National Trust for Scotland property). There is an entrance fee to pay, but the globe can be seen through a gate in the wall of the gardens in East Port.

Otherwise turn left at the “T” junction on to the A912 and after 100 metres, turn right at the “T” junction back on to the A91 towards St. Andrews again.

Carry straight on, crossing straight over all roundabouts until the outskirts of **Cupar** are reached (about 10 miles). Look out for Preston Lodge at 95 Bonnygate, a few hundred yards after the Police Station on your left. This large house is located right on the roadside. If you reach Cupar town centre, you have missed it and you need to turn round.

No 3 - Preston Lodge is the second oldest building in Cupar and at one time was completely covered in ivy, but thankfully this has now been removed exposing the sundials. There are three wall sundials located on this house which was built in 1623 and it is thought that the sundials are contemporary with the house. There are two sundials on the south face, at either side of the house, and one on the east face of the building, but unfortunately they are all quite high up between the first and second floors. The one on the east face has been disfigured by pipes protruding from the wall just above the dial. Gnomons are missing on two of the dials but the other one remains in place.



OPTION B - From Cupar you can take an optional visit to the National Trust for Scotland's property at the Hill of Tarvit. There are two sundials on view here, one is a large wall dial on the south side of house itself, and the other is a cube dial in the gardens behind the house. The Hill of Tarvit is about three miles away and is signposted from Cupar. (There is a fee to pay only if you tour the house.)



From Cupar, continue on the A91 towards St. Andrews. St. Andrews is a very busy town due to both its status as the home of golf and its world famous university, which is the oldest in Scotland and the third oldest in the English speaking world. Seven sundials can be seen in the St. Andrews trail.

If this trail has wetted your appetite and you would like to look at details and photographs of other sundials, then visit my website at www.sundialsofscotland.co.uk.