

Balgarvie Road

When I walked from Lindores to Cupar on 23 May 2015, I failed to spot the Balgarvie Road milestone, partly because of the crush of traffic for the Fife Show, but mainly because I had not consulted the map closely enough and had not fixed its location in my mind. On Sunday 26 July I walked out along the Balgarvie Road, accompanied by our friend Claire, but thinking it would be clearly visible, once again I failed to consult the map in advance, so once again I missed it.

On 28 July I had to take the car to Cupar for a check up, and used the opportunity to go back to look properly. I took note that the map shows the milestone just beyond where the road crosses the burn that runs from Foodieash down past Kinloss House. According to the map this is the first watercourse after the road leaves leaving Cupar.

It was a grey day, quite chilly, with occasional spots of rain. The countryside looked lovely in the subdued light – mown hay-fields, barley almost ripe, the roadside verges lush with grasses, cow-parsley, thistles, nettles and many other flowers I couldn't identify. On the way into Cupar along East Road there is an old disused Edward VII letter box set in the wall, with its replacement on a post beside it. I thought that if my search for the milestone proved unsuccessful, at least I might come away with a photograph of a letter box. Then on Balgarvie Road there is a handsome George V letter box, which again I photographed.

On the ground, as opposed to on the map, the first watercourse that the road crosses is just beside the sports field and Kilmaron School. When the map was drawn it seems that the burn disappeared into a culvert a little way to the west of the road. Having convinced myself that this wasn't where the milestone ought to be I walked further on, and a few hundred yards further on identified the correct burn quite clearly – its course was visible all the way down from Kinloss House.

On the map the *MS* indicating the milestone is placed just beyond the point where the burn flows under the road, so I walked on from the burn searching in the long grass and weeds, peering down into the ditch, and even looking over the wall into the field beyond – all without finding anything. Every so often a broad leaf half seen through the grasses would look momentarily stone-like, and I'd look again, eagerly, only to be disappointed when it turned out to be a leaf after all. Well, I thought in the end, the stone must have fallen victim to road-widening or repair work on the bridge. I took photographs in all directions to prove that I'd been in the right place.

On the point of giving up, I had the thought that perhaps I'd misread the map, and so I tried going back on the verge towards town, and almost at once, just a yard or so from the burn, there was the stone, hidden in the grass. It was virtually invisible from the footpath side of the road, so it's not surprising we didn't see it on Sunday, and even walking on the verge I didn't see it until I was right on top of it. It is, as the gazetteer in the *Milestones of Fife* records, unpainted and without a cap. I photographed it, first of all just as I'd found it, and then again after clearing some of the grasses away.

Then I hurried to get the bus back to St Andrews.