

Milestones in Newport

1 May 2017

When I walked from Dairsie to Forgan in 2012, I stopped at the roundabout without going on into Newport. The Gazetteer in *The Milestones of Fife* lists two milestones on the A92 in Newport, one at the top of School Brae and the other zero miles from Newport, and I have been meaning to go in search of them for five years now. Neither stone is marked on the Landranger Map. They are obviously not on the current A92, but the older (inch to the mile) OS map shows the A92 going down into Newport along what I think is called Cupar Road, and then turning west to Wormit.¹ Although I could find the Primary School on Google Maps there was nothing called School Brae, but it was clear enough from the Gazetteer's grid references where the milestones ought to be. As I had to go to Tayport on Labour Party business, I decided to check up on them, as well as visiting our old friends Mary and Jim in Westwood Terrace – another street I could not find on Google Maps.

The bus dropped me at Forgan roundabout at half-past ten. The weather was grey and chilly and dim. It wasn't damp enough to be misty or hot enough to be hazy, but the effect on the visibility was something like mist and haze, cutting off the distant view of hills beyond Dundee. My photographs are all quite dark.

Although it was a public holiday the traffic was heavy enough to make crossing the roads at the roundabout a slow business. The area round the roundabout is partly scrubland affected by the proximity of the main road (litter, bits fallen off cars, dead trees, weeds and long grass, a filling station in the background) and partly rustic (stone walls and pastures for sheep and lambs), and partly built-up, having a footpath beside the road, houses, an arts centre, signposts and the school.

I walked down Cupar Road, past the school with its array of warnings and prohibitions – Maximum speed 5mph, Beware pedestrians, No parking outwith marked bays, Danger ice, Look both ways before crossing, Beware ramps, No unauthorised football – until I saw the milestone ahead. It's tall, but doesn't stand out proud from the wall, so wasn't immediately visible. It shows 32 miles to Pettycur, nineteen to New Inn, ten to Cupar and one to Newport. The road slopes down quite sharply after the school, and the milestone is just over the brow, so I suppose the Gazetteer is right and the hill is known as School Brae.

After photographing the milestone and the views up and down the road, I strolled along the nature trail (the old railway line) for a short way before going back to Kirk Road to visit Mary and Jim – their Westwood Terrace is a section of Kirk Road. Going back towards the school I noticed a tree with magnificent blossom – some sort of cherry, I suppose.

Having spent an hour or so with Mary and Jim (they were very disappointed that I had come alone, without Anna), I went back to Cupar Road and walked down towards the river, with vague and fuzzy views of the road bridge and Dundee ahead of me. The road between Wormit and Tayport (High Street to the left and Tay Street to the right) runs along beside the river, and the junction with Cupar Road was busy, with a clutter of signs, cars, wheelie-bins and substantial stone buildings reminding us that Newport was, perhaps still is, a prosperous suburb of Dundee.² One sign was to the Library and Heritage Point. I've not come across the term Heritage Point before, but I think it is the same as a Heritage Centre – Fife Council's website describes it as a local history display. Shortly before the junction the road turns sharply to the left so you are looking towards the Rail Bridge. The effect of the light was to make it seem quite close.

At the junction I turned right towards the road bridge, and walked several hundred yards past the war memorial and what I suppose is a gazebo before realising that it was the wrong direction. Turning back I saw the jetty, and realised that that must have been where the ferry came in, which was naturally where the milestone would be, since the milestones were marking the distances between the ferries at Pettycur and Newport. I walked back past the junction onto Newport High Street and down Boat Brae towards the old ferry terminal. The terminal building and adjacent row of shops (Italianate in design) are now all boarded up, and the shops are listed as 'at risk'.³ There I

¹ Sheet 64, published 1925. It shows the one mile milestone.

² The grandest house I saw was a large villa called Grenada on Tay Street.

³ See <https://canmore.org.uk/site/33141/newport-on-tay-boat-road-ferry-pier-and-terminal-including-stone-sets> and <http://www.buildingsatrisk.org.uk/details/906991>

photographed the 'zero' milestone, which is set into the wall. The footpath has been built up at the base of the plate, so it appears that much shorter than it should.

With walks from New Inn to Cupar (April 2016), Dairsie to Cupar (part of the walk from St Andrews to Cupar in October 2011) and Dairsie to Forgan (April 2012) I have now covered all the surviving 1824 milestones on the Great Road across Fife from Pettycur to Newport. The only surviving stone south of New Inn is at Dysart Muir; its plate is the same type as the 1824 plates but is dated 1844, and shows the distance to Burntisland rather than Pettycur.⁴ The only missing stone north of New Inn is the one from the centre of Cupar, which was removed and sold for scrap, and is now in a garden in Pollockshields. Alasdair MacFarlane has promised to provide a photograph.

⁴ See *The Milestones of Fife*, page 11.