

Charlie Gracie

Bankend

Writers' Walks



Charlie Gracie

Charlie Gracie is a poet, novelist and short story writer, originally from Baillieston, Glasgow and now living on the edge of the Trossachs.



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Writers' Walks



From the quay end at Glencaple, to Bankend, past the canine rescue centre and back down again via Kennethbank.

It's a walk my sister, Alice, introduced me to. You'll often meet other people there, walking dogs or pushing prams or just taking it all in.

Distance: 6.0 miles. Time to walk: 1 hour 30 minutes at a decent pace.

Start from the quay end at Glencaple (with its view of the River Nith and Criffel beyond), then trace the path up the Quay Hill, past the old school, the new Caerlaverock primary and the Barbour Hall. After the hall, you'll pass the allotments where there are stalls selling the produce throughout August and September.

From there, carry on up the hill. You can expect the wind to get up more times than not. Turn right at the top at the war memorial. As you walk towards Bankend, you'll see Caerlaverock Church over the field down on the left-hand side: there are many old graves there, so it's worth stopping for a bit.

Opposite the church entrance, there's a right turn where you feel like you must be half-way: but you're not! Take that turn and then you pull uphill towards the canine rescue centre along a single-lane road. There are a few houses straggling along the way before you reach the kennels, which you'll hear before you see them. The building sits down off to the right, so you won't see much, but there are often workers or volunteers out walking the dogs. And what a view of Criffel there is from here!

Follow the road now to take you down onto the return leg. Before you turn back onto the main Glencaple road, you pass a lodge house (with a hot tub) that people rent out. Turn right after that and you're back on the way to Glencaple.

Look out for a row of lovely nineteenth-century terraced houses at Kennethbank. The big house before them once belonged to the Fisher of Fisher Price.

Between Kennethbank and Glencaple, the view across the Nith to Criffel and the Solway is mainly blocked by trees. But you'll often hear many of the thousands of waders and other birds that live in or migrate to this area.

New houses have been built at this end of Glencaple, and shortly after them you're back in the village and heading to the quay end, with Criffel now visible again behind you. Time for a coffee, or a pint in the Nith Hotel.

The Half Parish

I walk the Half Parish with my sister
above the glinting Nith
in the thinness of the day.

We talk of
mother, father
other sister.

In the Half Parish the fields are eternal
patient with grass and seed and harvest
with slow kye, yows awaiting lambs.

We talk of
grandweans
the stretch of our lives.

We walk the Half Parish in the lash of rain.

Yes, it lashes
and yes, we are drookit.

We talk of
a bird in the blackthorn – the way it eyes us
something in how the sky shifts.

The Half Parish is a place of distant dogs.

The air is peppered with dog song
and jackdaws and laverocks in the thrill of cloud.

We talk of
the breath of the sea
the brush of brambles on our legs.



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