

Begins:

## **RIVER EDEN WARTIME GIRDER BARRIER AND NATURE RESERVE**

The River Eden Estuary information in the third edition of the pilot handbook is almost entirely based on a survey made for the first edition 1974. Recent shore walking has shown that there have been very significant changes in the intervening years.

In addition to the disappearance of the ruined target platform reported earlier, the wartime girder barrier bearing a beacon on its end has gone. As with the target platform, remains may be covered by sand. In the area of the former barrier there is now a row of pairs of telegraph poles linked by cables and bearing runway lights, extending 100 metres onto the sand. They stop well short of the channel so cannot serve as a channel marker.

At the landward end of these poles is a triple row of “dragon’s teeth”, wartime concrete anti-landing obstacles. Behind them on the upper shore is newer foreshore stabilisation of broken concrete.

Contrary to the pilot handbook text, landing on the North side is not forbidden but one should not cross the RAF perimeter fence which delimits a prohibited area, dogs patrol inside the fence. The most convenient landing with closest facilities (St Andrews) is on Out Head by the groynes but the volume of visitors means the safety of an untended dinghy is questionable.

For those wishing to carry out a shore side reconnaissance the following is offered:

### **North shore landward access**

The North shore of the estuary is most conveniently approached from the car park in Tentsmuir Forest, OS sheet 59, map reference NO508242. This car park is open from 09:00 to one hour before dusk, charge £1 per car, contact Forest Enterprise 01350 727284 or warden’s mobile 07850 640031. Walking from this car park one can take in the coastal defence bunkers and long lines of dragon’s teeth, defences built by Polish troops stationed at Tentsmuir. These include an unusual domed steel one man observation post. Alternatively, find the route from Leuchars village through Reres Wood to the North of the RAF station.

The North shore can also be reached from Guardbridge by following the South perimeter fence of the airfield, however in places it is very overgrown with gorse (whins), necessitating taking to the mud and slippery stones of the foreshore. Being a nature reserve this route has potential for wildlife disturbance so is best avoided.

### **South shore landward access**

The South shore is more accessible than the North. From St Andrews one may walk along the West Sands (the beach to the East of the golf course), North of the town. There is parking on the golf course, see the OS map.

Alternatively, a track leads part of the way from the A91 to Coble Shore. The OS map also shows the track bed of a dismantled railway leading from a car park on the East side of Guardbridge. It is overgrown in places but partially adapted for access to the estuary, see the excellent description in "Scottish Railway Walks", MH Ellision, Cicerone Press, 1989, reprinted 1996, ISBN 1 85284 007 2. The piers of the former railway bridge over the Eden remain; reminiscent of the Alloa Swing Bridge and are worth a look.

### **The Eden nature reserve**

The Eden nature reserve has become one of the gems of the East Coast. The difficulty of access along the north shore from Guardbridge is partly responsible for this. The wildlife has learned to tolerate the noise of low flying fighter aircraft and rattle of small arms fire from ranges in the RAF station. With care and consideration occasional use of the Out Head anchorage should not interfere with the aims of the reserve. For further information visit the Eden Estuary Centre at Guardbridge open 9:00-17:00 hours seven days a week or contact Fife Ranger Service 01334 473047.

19 February 2006

Ends.