

Crawick Multiverse NEAR SANQUHAR

Crawick Multiverse is the latest project from landscape architect Charles Jencks. An old open-cast mine near Sanquhar in Dumfries and Galloway has been transformed into an artistic cosmic-themed landscape. Lines of boulders, sculptural shelters and spiral grassy mounds form an intriguing park where intrepid visitors can travel from the centre of the earth to the outer limits of space without leaving the ground.

When you arrive, you can choose the gentle Low Road or the more challenging Comet Walk which takes you to the Belvedere – a grand viewpoint at the top of a gravel hill.

From there you can see the full scale of the Multiverse and the careful yet playful arrangement of its various components. Grasslands, mountains, water and deserts are all represented, leading to perpetual contrasts between low and high, grass and gravel, organic and geometric, all divided by a perfectly straight north-south line. The sun Amphitheatre and the lines of stones that surround it have the air of somewhere much more ancient. With space for 5000 people there is plenty of room for sun worshippers.

From the Belvedere wander down past the banks of coal to the Multiverse,







a spiral of standing stones representing the whole collection of universes. Just past the grassy hillocks of the Supercluster lie the twin spiral mounds of the Milky Way and Andromeda. Beyond them, outside the bounds of the Multiverse, black coal tips (known in Scotland as ‘bings’) pepper the horizon. Their shape echoes the pointed mounds of the galaxies. The transformation of this former mine is a small step for nature, and a giant leap for the imagination.

This is Jencks’ second garden in the area. His Garden of Cosmic Speculation at Portrack House near Dumfries is a beautiful area full of landforms with a

scientific or mathematical bent. It is only open to the public one day a year, so this permanent attraction is a welcome addition. A trip here is out of this world.

Access and opening times

Crawick Multiverse is situated just off the A76 (Dumfries to Kilmarnock road), 44km north of Dumfries, and is 24km from the M74 (at Abington). There is an entry fee and car parking at the entrance. Walks are suitable for children but not buggies or wheelchairs. Paths are mostly gravel. They can be steep and muddy in places so wear suitable footwear.

www.crawickmultiverse.co.uk

Cultybraggan Camp

COMRIE, PERTSHIRE

Nestled in scenic Glenartney, south of Comrie, Cultybraggan Camp was built in 1941, one of roughly 600 prisoner of war camps in the UK at the time. Unlike the others, it has survived pretty much intact, making a little spot of living history. These buildings weren't built to last, but here they are 75 years later, a vital part of Comrie's past and of its future.

From the gates, the camp stretches out as far as the eye can see. There are more than 100 Nissen huts and accompanying buildings, enough to hold 4500 men. Even though the soldiers are long gone, many of the buildings still have the trimmings of their military lives with

doors marked 'Ablutions' or 'Officers Mess'. It's hard not to go a little bit *Dad's Army* as you wander around, crouching at corners and looking out for imaginary snipers. If playing soldiers is your bag, there's a whole firing range to run about in. Thankfully it's perfectly safe, with not a gun in sight.

Work on Cultybraggan began in May 1941 and finished later that year, weeks before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. Initially, it was meant to be a labour camp for Italian prisoners, but it became a transit camp for German prisoners and ultimately one of the two maximum security camps in Britain. Camp 21, or Nazi 2 as it was known,





held some of the fiercest or 'black' Nazis (the others were interned at Watten near Wick). Despite its fearsome reputation, many of the prisoners enjoyed their time in such a beautiful location and settled locally after the war had ended.

Disbanded as a prisoner of war camp in 1947, the Ministry of Defence kept Cultybraggan in use until 2004. It has been a British Army training camp and a Ministry of Defence training centre (the firing range was only added in the

1970s). In the 1980s, as the Cold War heated up, a Royal Observer Corps Post and nuclear bunker earmarked to become the Regional Government HQ were added. Thankfully they were never put to use.

By 2004, the political climate had changed and Cultybraggan was sold off as the MOD slimmed down their estates. This could easily have been the end of the story, but Comrie Development Trust bought the land for



the community in 2007. Today it is springing back to life with busy allotments, a small number of Nissen huts redeveloped into business units and other tenants moving in around the site. The long-term aim of the trust is to develop the area into a sustainable resource for the community with more business, education and sports facilities. As 26 of the huts have been category A-listed by Historic Scotland, it looks like Cultybraggan is here to stay.

Access and opening times

Cultybraggan Camp is south of Comrie, off the B827 in Glen Artney. The grounds are open to the public daily 9am-6pm and there are information boards at the entrance, as well as a visitor centre – the best way to visit is through one of the heritage tours, which run around once a month in summer.

www.comriedevelopmenttrust.org.uk