

TAY DESCENT – A GUIDE TO THE RAPIDS

This document describes the rapids, marshalling, and navigational advice for the most challenging section around Stanley village. The four main rapids - **CAMPSIE LINN**, **STANLEY WEIR**, **FISHERMAN'S BEND**, and **THISTLEBRIG** - will have safety teams on the water and may also have Marshals on the bank offering advice and assistance.

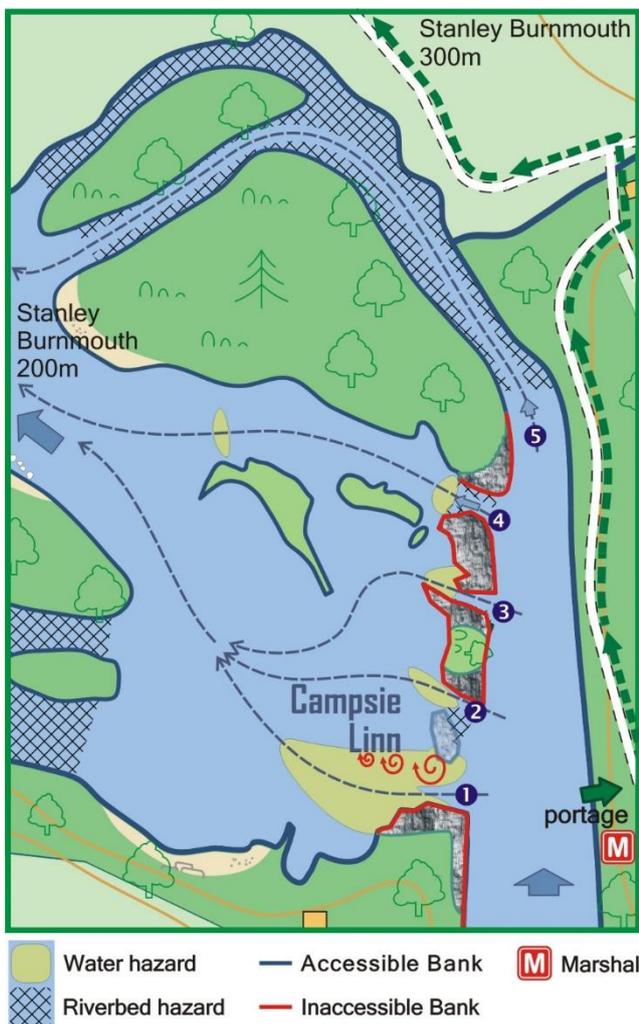
These descriptions have been prepared assuming average autumn water levels (1.0-1.5m on the [SEPA Ballathie Gauge](#)) but actual conditions on the day may be significantly different.

Marshals will inspect the rapids on the morning of the event and may advise particular routes to reflect actual conditions or hazards on the day. Ignore them at your peril!

1. CAMPSIE LINN

Approximately 6km (4 miles) after Kinclaven Bridge, on a gentle right-hand bend, a high rocky outcrop appears to block the river ahead. This is the entrance to **CAMPSIE LINN**.

There are FIVE possible routes through depending on the river level. Marshals will advise you which are available and appropriate for the actual conditions.



Bank Marshals coordinate with the Safety Crew patrolling the rapid below. If you ignore their advice you may pick a route no-one is watching or protecting. It is your decision!

At the expected **Low to Medium** river levels channel **1** (Grade 2) is the best route. Stay close to the left side and be aware the current pushes strongly to the right towards whirlpools.

At **High** river levels, the rocky outcrop to the right of **1** becomes submerged creating a fierce standing wave with powerful whirlpools below (see [Tay Descent 2010 video](#) at 04:30!)

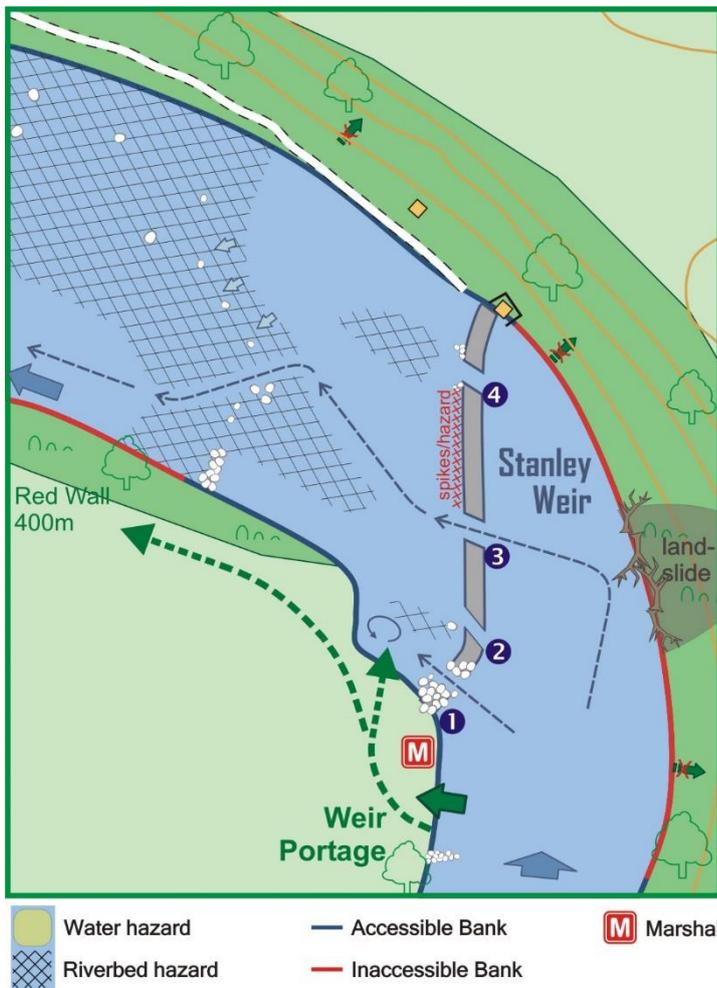
Routes **2** **3** and **4** are passable at higher river levels but all include a sharp 1-1½m drop. Route **5** (straight-ahead) is a gentler and flatter Grade 2 option with standing waves but no significant drops. Take the first branch left and join the main stream again below.

Portage to Stanley Burnmouth (approx. 600m in total by road) is available from the right bank.

Exit Campsie Pool through a Grade 2 rapid and towards **Stanley Weir**.

2. STANLEY WEIR

About 1km after Campsie Linn, on a gentle left-hand bend, Stanley Weir angles across the river.



At expected **Low to Medium** water levels (1.0-1.5m on [SEPA Ballathie Gauge](#)) the usual line is the **Grade 2 channel in the middle of the weir (3)**.

However, above 1.5m the weir is completely submerged so this channel can be hard to spot. Head towards the right bank (an old landslide forms a gap in the trees) then aim towards the middle of the river and down the smooth "V" of the safe channel.

NOTE: Erosion of the weir between channels 3 and 4 has dislodged masonry and exposed iron spikes. If the river is high and flooding over the top of the weir, avoid this area.

The flow of channel 3 curves away to the right. As it peters out work back towards river-left and the main channel.

At **High** river levels (above around 1.8m on the [SEPA Ballathie gauge](#)) an easy route (1) appears tight RIVER-LEFT. Marshals will indicate if this is viable.

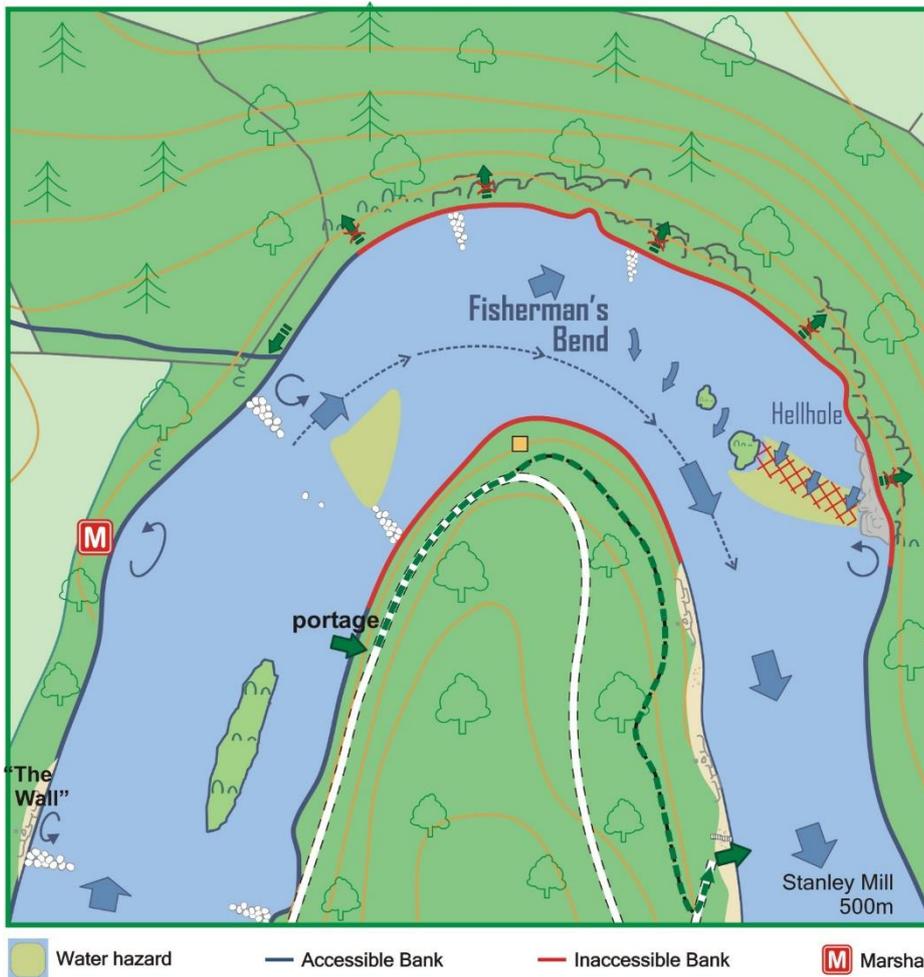
Portage around the weir (approx. 150m) is available river-left. Exit above the bend near the large solitary bush.

If the river is **Very Low** (below about 0.6m on the [SEPA Ballathie gauge](#)) there is a real risk of grounding in the shallows below the weir. To avoid damaging delicate hulls you can further portage (approx. 400m) to deeper water at the bottom of the rapid. Advice will be available at the Start at Dunkeld and bank-based Assistants will be onsite to help carry boats around.

Follow the flow to RIVER-LEFT and down the 500m Grade 2(3) rollercoaster to **Fisherman's Bend**.

3. FISHERMAN'S BEND

Fisherman's Bend is an almost-180° right-hander. As you approach it Marshals on the left bank will advise on the best route.



The normal route is to start off RIVER-LEFT and cross over to RIVER-RIGHT to pass close to the headland on the inside of the bend.

Around the corner a short sharp Grade 2, normally with peaky standing waves, flows into a flatter section and towards Stanley Mill.

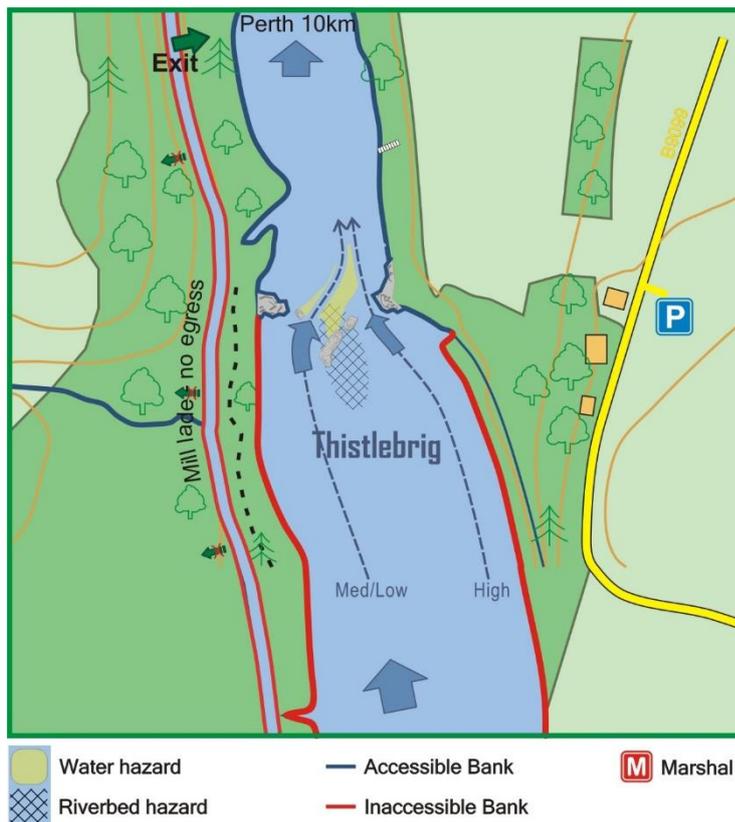
At **High** water levels the river flows to the outside of the bend into an area known (for good reason) as "Hellhole Corner". This is not for the faint hearted or Open Canoes so ferry across to the right in plenty of time!

Portage (approx. 400m slog) is available RIVER-RIGHT. Follow the track up the hill and past the fisherman's bothy but please keep to the path - there are vertical cliffs here! You will eventually find a road that doubles-back to your left to re-join the river.

Past Stanley Mill look for the houses perched on the edge of the high red sandstone cliffs on the right. These mark the approach to **Thistlebrig**.

4. THISTLEBRIG

Around the gentle left-hander the river gradually builds towards **Thistlebrig** - the narrow gap between high rocky banks in the distance.



At **Low to Medium** levels there is a rocky outcrop visible in the middle and the route is RIVER-LEFT (Grade 3).

Approaching the gap, the river drops to the right, and then to the left, forming a wide S-bend. Follow the flow through the main stopper avoiding the large standing wave on the right.

At **High** levels, a gentler Grade 2 route becomes available RIVER RIGHT. Follow the right bank and pass through the gap close to the right outcrop.

At **Very High** river levels, the mid-stream rocks disappear altogether and Thistlebrig washes out to become fast but straighter and flatter. Under these conditions just about any line will do.

Both banks are steep and heavily overgrown and there is no safe portage available here.

NOTE: Some guidebooks recommend using the Stormontfield Mill Lade on the left as a Thistlebrig bypass - its entrance is back just below Fisherman's Bend - but frequent landslides, downed trees and difficult egress all make this a potentially hazardous route. **It is also completely hidden from the Safety Crews, does not form part of the Safety Plan, and will not be surveyed in advance or monitored on the day.** Use it at your own risk but re-join the river as soon as possible.

Below Thistlebrig there is a short Grade 2 (Grade 3 with more exposed rockery at lower levels!) before the river gradually slows to become wider and gentler for the last 10km (6 miles) into Perth.
