

Crichton Castle to Borthwick Castle

PLEASE READ THESE NOTES BEFORE ATTEMPTING TO WALK THIS ROUTE.

These notes do not constitute a recommendation to walk this route. They are intended to help you to find the correct route, and to make you aware of the obstacles on the route. This is a fine walk for the adventurous, but people walking the route should note that there are problems with it, as set out below.

The main problems are listed below.

- The path is quite rough in places.
- There are some fences to cross with care; insulating foam has been placed round the barbs to enable crossing.
- Adjacent fences off this route are electric and live; do not wander off route.
- Some parts are very boggy, so boots are essential.
- **An unsafe bridge over the derelict railway should NOT be crossed;** an alternative is described. The bridge will be replaced as part of the Waverley line, ?early 2012.
- There is no reception for mobile phones in the bottom of the valley.

You are advised NOT to take a dog with you, as the route is across a field with cattle at one or two points.

Route description:

From the north corner of the stable block, a narrow mown path leads to a stob with a Way Marker (WM). At the top of the opposite steep slope in the distance is a square white board; that is what you are heading towards.

Follow the steep path down into the valley, cross a minor stream and then a bigger burn by a bridge erected by volunteers in May 2011, led by the Midlothian ranger service; it was funded by a bequest from Scotways. The burn is the infant river Tyne, which flows past Haddington to the sea just north of Dunbar – i.e. it doesn't flow to Newcastle-on-Tyne; another river, another country...

After crossing the burn, head upstream for approx 100yds, where a stob and WM point out a path across the meadow, and thus avoid the worst of the boggy bits. You can see the path continuing steeply uphill ahead of you...

Climb the steep slope, following the path which was cleared by the volunteers in July 09. Cross a renewed stile, and continue through bracken till you reach a fence with a field beyond at the end of the wood. At this point go right, over the fence into the wood, and over another fence (WM). Continue through the wood—you may notice some old railway sleepers and cinders: these were dumped here from the railway many years ago. Much of the hillside here is ashes from steam locos and general railway debris.

Continue through the wood for approx 200 yards, exiting under a fence. There may be cattle or horses hereabouts. Continuing in the same direction, then veer to the left of a muddy area; cross over 2 broken down fences then the line of the old railway track (very boggy!). Some wooden stepping "stones" have been placed there as a veritable stream has developed (May10). Climb over another fence, where the barbed wire has been covered by insulating tape, to the right of a couple of birch trees. The dangerous bridge is on your left. **DO NOT CROSS THE BRIDGE!!**

Climb up the embankment to a stile over the fence on your right (WM). Ahead is a steep slope to a knoll, which you head for, with the hedge on your left. There are 2 very boggy areas to cross; it seemed easier to cross them about 30 yards below the hedge-it is very boggy indeed. Continue along the brow of the hill; from this ridge there is a superb view of Borthwick Castle with the Pentland Hills in the distance.

Up till now, you have been on a right of way – albeit somewhat derelict. The right of way now turns right, down the field towards the castle. However that is NOT a good idea; this ancient right of way, which has been in existence for centuries, is presently blocked. Hopefully matters will improve in the future, and the route will be reopened.

Instead, continue along the edge of the field, with the hedge to your left. Here, you are taking access under the Land Reform Act, and have a duty to do so responsibly. As you descend, the hedge is succeeded by some beech trees, behind which lies Currie Woods. At the very corner of the field, beside the straining post, it is easy to get over the fence into the woods (WM).

Descend along a narrow path for some 20 yards, where you will pick up a good path taking you down to your right, through the woods to a farm road. There are a couple of kissing gates on the way.

Turn right, and go down the road, keeping to your left at 2 junctions, till you reach a bridge which you cross. Go over the stile ahead, round the right end of a cottage, and strike up the slope diagonally to a stile. There is a stile if you go straight up the hill beside the castle, but it is broken and unsafe. There are often horses in this field.

Borthwick Castle itself is presently being run as a hotel, and is closed to the public, other than guests. Sometimes they let you peep in, if you ask politely, and they are not too busy.

For any comments or queries, contact ScotWays: info@scotways.com; 0131 558 1222.