

Rural Walk

Circular route from Markinch
to Kirkforthar via Cuinin Hill
and Star Moss

Markinch after the Reformation. The loch landscape is as close as we can now get to the appearance of the area in the immediate vicinity of Markinch when it was surrounded by marshland in prehistoric times. Remain on path through Star Moss. Keep dogs on lead here and on farmland.

Exit Star Moss at north SSSI sign. Continue along path and turn left at junction to follow track with views of East Lomond (Falkland Hill) ahead. Continue on public road past the entrance to Kirkforthar Farm and enter the first field gate on the right. Follow the right handside field margin to field edge then turn left and proceed along the track.

Note the round stand of trees containing the remains of **Kirkforthar Chapel 7**

Kirkforthar Chapel was long associated with the Lindsay Family who owned the adjacent house, now a ruin. It was the centre of a separate parish in the Middle Ages and is referred to several times in the Vatican archives. Little has survived except the names of one of its vicars – Zong (probably a name pronounced like modern Young using the old Scottish letter “yogh”).

And beyond on right, note the remains of old **Kirkforthar House and doocot 8**

Kirkforthar House is the ruin of the ancestral home of the Lords Lindsay of the Byres, one of Scotland’s most prominent families from the 15th century.

*Turn left and follow the path through the strip of trees to rejoin the public road. Turn right and continue on road. Bear first left at track which enters Lochmuir Woods. Continue along track and where it splits three ways take middle track. Bear right at next junction towards railway. At rail bridge note **gun emplacement 9***

The strategy in the early years of the Second World War was to check a German invasion along a line that stretched from Dysart to Newburgh. This “stop line” stretched along the railway line and hence through Markinch. The pillbox is a testament to the Polish troops that were stationed in the area and responsible for much of the construction. It would also have been their task to defend the rest of Scotland along this fortified line.

On reaching the road, turn left to return to Markinch following the perimeter wall of Balbirnie Park (caution busy traffic) and crossing bridge over the Back Burn.

*Take first entrance on left in stone wall to view the **Terraces 10** which contour Markinch Hill.*

The Terraces are massive steps about three hundred yards long cut into the face of Markinch Hill. They could be defensive, ceremonial or related to the growing of crops although the latter is unlikely given the north facing aspect. They have variously been ascribed to the Bronze Age, the Iron Age, the Romans, the Picts and the Thanes of Fife. They were used in later Middle Ages by the inhabitants of Markinch to view games or miracle plays on the “playfields” lying along the Back Burn Haugh.

Further round to your right from the entrance, look across to the embankment on far side of the road to view **Stob Cross 11**

The enigmatic carved stone slab has a cross on both sides, most clearly incised on the face directed away from the road. Its date is uncertain but it has the form and line of more elaborate Pictish crosses such as that at Aberlerno. Its original Pictish carvings may have been chiselled off during the Reformation by zealots keen to rid the monument of anything reminiscent of “idolatry”. Because of its association with the Pictish and Culdee past, it may have been removed to its present location when the church was rededicated to St John the Baptist.

After exploring the hill rejoin Stobcross Road and return to Glass Street via Kirk Street and Kirk Brae.

www.livinglomonds.co.uk



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Please note: All information is provided in good faith.

This leaflet was produced by Markinch Heritage Group - 2015
for further information please visit
www.markinchheritage.org.uk



Walk Description

Distance:
5 miles, 8 kilometres

Terrain:
Tracks and paths, rough in places, some of the route is along the road.

Height climbed:
235 feet, 72 metres

OS map:
Explorer 370;
Landranger 59



From Glass Street, KY7 6DP, bear right up Kirk Wynd, below **Markinch Parish Church 1**

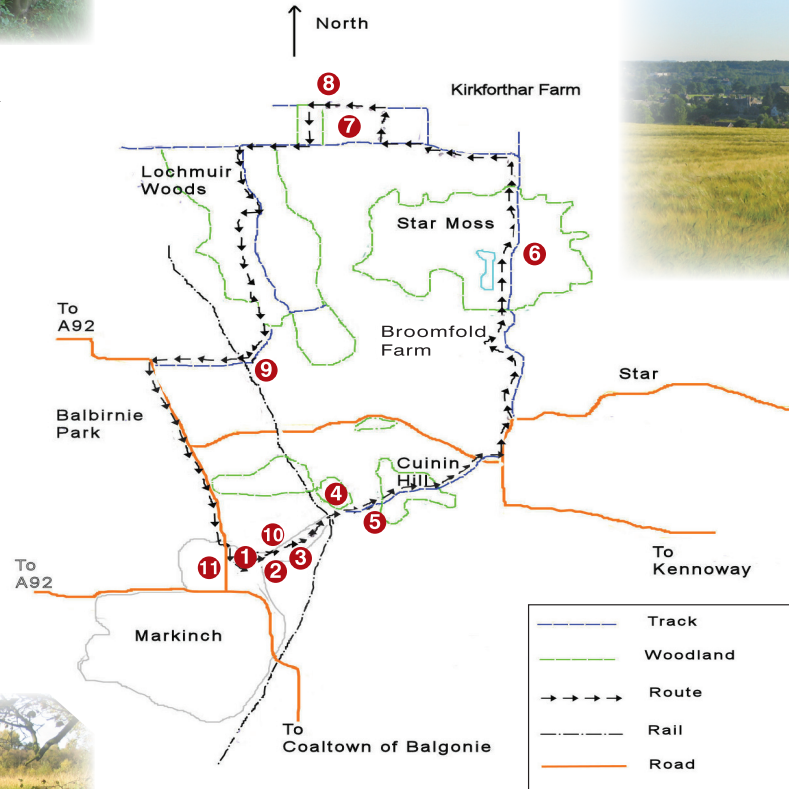
The Church of St Drostan and St John the Baptist boasts one of the finest Norman towers in Scotland. Constructed on or close to the site of a Culdee church dating back to Pictish times, the present tower was built in the early 12th century, probably by one of the MacDuff Earls of Fife. The great west tower arch and a doorway above still exist but have been hidden from the congregation by post-Reformation rebuilding work. A few pieces of carved stonework from a long lost chancel arch have been re-used in the south wall. Markinch was the parish church of murdered Cardinal David Beaton and some say that his body was secretly buried in the family crypt. Prior John Hepburn's coat of arms can be seen high on the east wall. His 16th century refurbishments were completely erased at the Reformation and the present day elegant Georgian-style interior dates from the 19th century.

Continue past Victorian Manse to **Mansefield 2**

The north western corner of The Glebe where Mansfield now stands was donated to "God and the Church of Mo-Dhrust" (or dear Drostan) by Malcolm, son of Duncan the 5th Earl of Fife around 1200. By the end of that century the surrounding land



had come into the hands of William de Valoniis. Along with his mother and sister he granted the land to the Church in memory of his recently deceased father, the illegitimate son of the Scottish Chamberlain. The deed clearly demarcates the plot from the church graveyard along Glass Street (then known as the Causeway), up Brunton Road, along a ditch and up the Back Burn, turning back to the Church via what was then the Prior's House (now Mansefield). The land was later known as the Minister's Meadows.



Turn right to Manse Road and on to **Bow Butts 3**

Targets would once have been along the line of the road that now bears this name. These were aimed at from the Church hill where the arrow marks can still be seen gouged on the side of the wall beside the east and north doors. These marks are likely to date from the 15th or 16th century as James IV decreed that archery should take the place of football and golf on a Sunday after church service. The King himself

visited the town whilst out hunting from Falkland and a local story is told of an argument in the pub between the king, schoolmaster and the vicar over who would pay for the round.

Continue along Northhall Road. Pass under the railway viaduct to view old **Markinch Parish Cemetery 4**

When the graveyard around the Church became full in the middle of the 19th century, land was acquired next to the track of the newly arrived railway. Members of the Balfour family (from Balbirnie) are buried at the top of the hill and to the west are the plots of other heritors, landowners, farmers and merchants. There is a strip of common land alongside the Back Burn designated for the ordinary folk of the parish.



Keeping houses on your left proceed to **Cuinin Hill 5**

This path has been worn down by the feet of pack horses and invading armies down through the centuries. In more recent times peat and later coal and quarry carts have left their mark. You can still see the cart ruts on the slabs and the stones set in the centre to give the horses grip up the hill. The people from Star used to get together to make an annual trip on foot along this path to do their Christmas shopping at the Co-op. Look out for the worn stone step style and opposite, just inside the field, the parish marker stone separating Markinch (M) from Kennoway (K).

Climb well-worn stone steps over wall. Continue uphill on broad path through woodland, emerging at corner of field. Note excellent view of the Firth of Forth and Largo Law. Continue downhill on the field margin in direction of Star village. Leave field at gate, cross road and enter field opposite (Scotways signs). Cross corner of field and turn left at gateway to join road to Star. Keep left and follow road to Broomfold farm. Turn right at farm buildings to reach **Star Moss 6**

This peat bog, a Site of Special Scientific Interest, was once the bed of a large loch stretching from Balfarg to Carriston, and was exploited for hundreds of years. The name Star may relate to a wooden raised walkway or "stair" that once crossed the bog giving access to Kirkforthar, a separate parish linked to