

Markinch Heritage Group

Braes Làn Circular Historical Trail



- Length: 2.5 miles / 4 km
- Allow 1 to 2 hours
- Incorporates core paths 418, 808, 343
- Tracks, rough grassy paths, field margins, in-town roads
- Mainly flat, some steep inclines, may be muddy and overgrown in parts
- Boots or stout shoes recommended
- Nearest station: Markinch (400m)
- Bus stops are close by

START: Glass Street Car Park, KY7 6DP
OS: NO 297 019

Turn left out of the car park

1. The Church

Worship may have taken place on the mound ahead for 1000s of years before evidence of a church building around 1050 AD.

The 12th century tower is one of the finest examples of Romanesque architecture in Scotland.

The church itself has been extensively modified several times and incorporates the Leslie mausoleum. The earliest burial record is of Alwin Cameron in the late 13th century.

Go right and then past the Victorian manse

2. Mansefield

Just beyond a modern house on the right sits Mansefield, known formerly as the Old Manse or The Prior's House, a 13th century lodging place for churchmen and perhaps pilgrims travelling between Dunfermline and St. Andrews. The pan-tiled outbuildings to the east are some of the oldest in Markinch.

As you turn right into Manse Road the lower part of the wall shows the medieval technique of building, using rough boulders held together with limestone mortar.



3. Bow Butts

In the area to the right at the next junction, a series of practice targets were set up to train archers for the Scottish army. James I ordered everyone over the age of 12 to fire at least 6 shots every Sunday after church from April to October. A twopence fine applied for non-attendance.

Proceed along Northhall Road

4. Markinch Hill

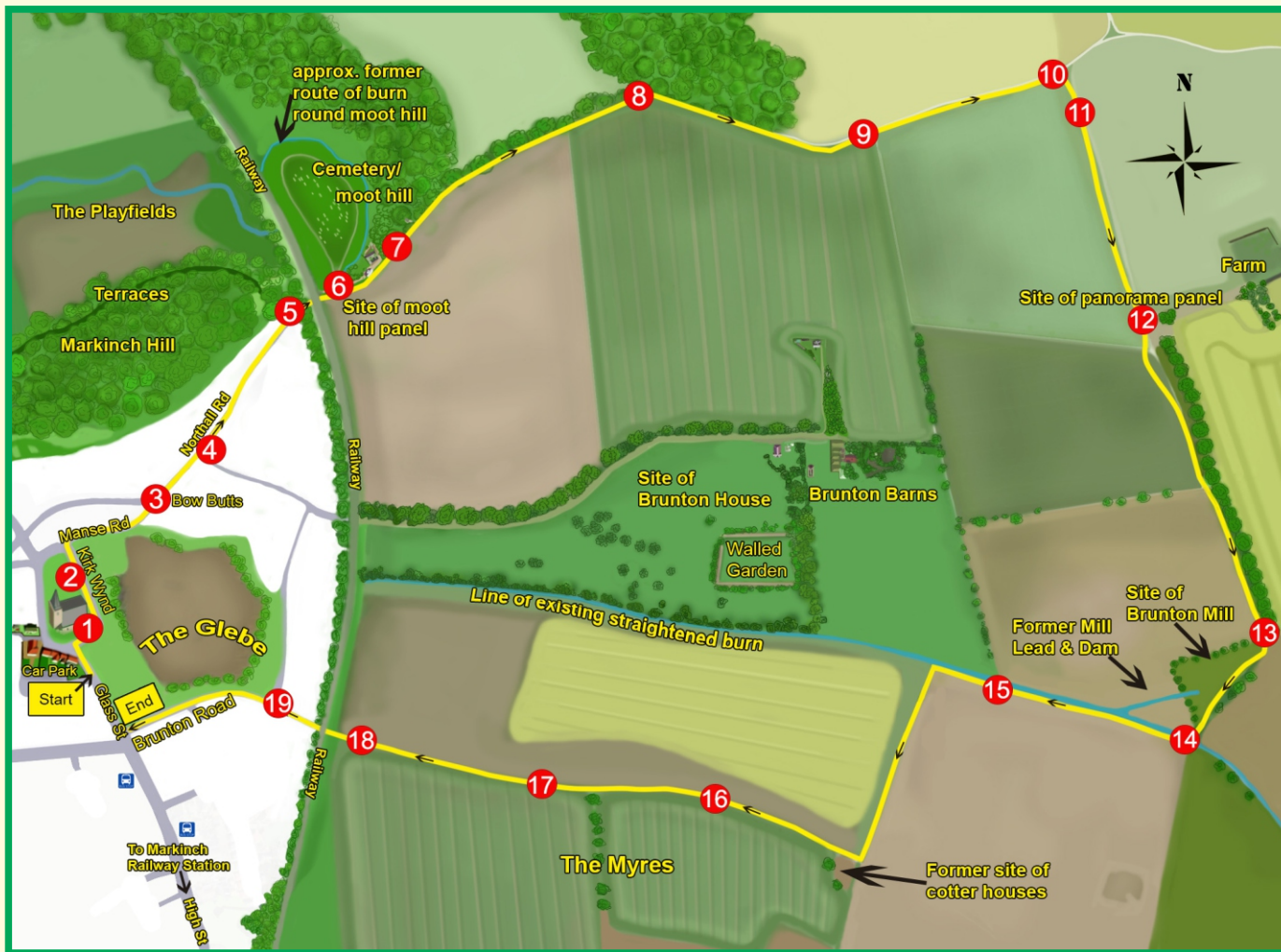
The north side of the tree covered hill on your left has been cut into mysterious terraces about 300 yards long. Cultivation use is unlikely and recent excavations found no trace of defensive works. They may even have been part of the wider Bronze Age landscape.

A road to the east has been cut through the hill separating it from the ancient Stob Cross and the railway line divides it from the mound at Northhall.

5. Town Gas Works

The site just before the rail bridge saw the first gas works finished in 1842 and using coal from the Balbirnie estate.

At one point the manager's and stoker's house sat within the works. It finally closed in the early 1950s.



From earliest times coal was dug from the area just over the burn from the far side of the cemetery mound. In medieval times the pits would have been shallow.

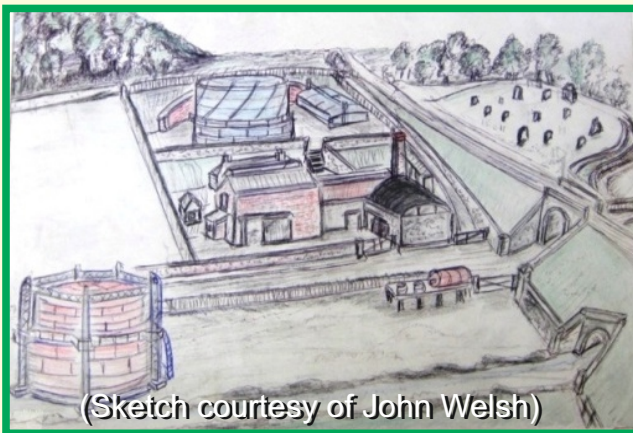
Now head straight up the track

7. Cuinin Hill Ancient Roadway

This ancient track is most likely the old pilgrim way used by Edward I as he entered Markinch with his army in 1296. His French scribe refers to the church as a “moustier” or minster and three “mesons” or stone built houses. More humble dwellings are left out of the account.

8. Another Roadway, Steps and Boundary Stone

Look to your left as the track turns to the right. An ancient sunken way branching off along a wall leads to Newton Iron Age settlement and on to Balfarg Henge. The steps ahead built into the wall lead to the top of Cuinin Hill and on to Star.



Go through the railway arch

6. Fife's Place of Legal Assembly

The mound of Northhall cemetery is believed to be Dalginch, ancient heart of Fife and Forthriff. The Earl (or his representative) would have sat at the top of the “moot hill” to pronounce judgement and resolve disputes. Perhaps the assembled magnates grazed their horses on the nearby “Mark Inch” or “horse island”.



Nearly opposite, in the field margin, sits a boundary stone. During the 19th century the boundary between Markinch and Kennoway parishes was redrawn and marked with stones bearing M & K on opposite sides. Markinch is a large parish and has common boundaries with 8 others. Until the late 19th century an outlying part lay by the sea shore just south of Leven, so technically Markinch had a beach!

Continue on the same track to North Lodge which looks down to the lands of Brunton

9. North Lodge

Immediately before the lodge itself, note another boundary stone located tight to the garden wall.

10. Star Village

Before the path takes a right turn up a hill, look northwest to the view of the East Lomond Hill and north towards Star, once home to the novelist Annie S. Swan. The word "Star" is linked to the word "stair" and refers to the raised cart track across the moss between the peat workings, now known as Star Moss, an SSI.



11. Braes Loan

You are now on an old cattle track. Herdsmen would once have driven cattle from the common grazings near Star over to meadowland around Brunton Mill and the Mires at the bottom of the hill ahead. Produce from these same fields all around which once fed the local population are now sold across Scotland.

12. Braes Loan Viewpoint

Descend to a junction and enjoy the panoramic views across the Forth. To the left of the junction vestiges may remain of the old farm of Braes, possibly the "Breis" referred to in 1152 paying an annual tithe of 4 cheeses to the Priory of Loch Leven.

The updrafts here would have made it fine hawking territory for the local nobility. In 1172, King William's brother David, Earl of Huntingdon granted a parcel of land to a supporter in exchange for the annual payment of a young goshawk.

Continue down the hill

13. Brunton Mill

A small conifer plantation now covers a site that was once a busy mill. Look out for the stone from the reconstructed 19th century mill

Markinch Heritage Group, 2013

Mobile app and further details from:

www.markinchheritage.org.uk



in the area of a gate across the path and beyond. The miller also had his own bleach field, meadow and a small farm. Drinking water was supplied from the nearby Samson's Well, now an enclosed hydraulic ram visible to the east of the track.

Cross the stone bridge and turn right



14. The Mires

This flat former marshland (once an ancient loch stretching between Markinch church and Kennoway) was an important economic resource providing reeds for thatching, peat for fuel and grazing for cattle. Deepening and channelling of the burn increased the amount of agricultural land. Markinch Church steeple acted as a labourer's reference point.

15. Brunton Barns

Before turning left just beyond a wooden bridge, look up the hill to the northwest to see the ruins of Brunton Barns, former home farm for Brunton House, which included a gardener's cottage, mill and doocot. Turn right at the next junction where the

cotter houses of Barnslee farm once stood and head towards Markinch.

16. Brunton House & Walled Garden

Some 200m on, look north through a gap in the trees towards a walled garden. This supplied fruit and vegetables to the house of Brunton, demolished c.1973, designated as Markinch's principal manor house in the town charter of 1673.



Brunton was the home of Lady of Dalginch whose first husband was Andrew Wardlaw of Wilton. Their son Henry founded St. Andrews University. It is believed that a Macduff once had a castle on this spot with an underground escape tunnel.

17. The Old Station

In another 200m look south to see Markinch's 1847 Italianate old station and house. The opening of the station was a big event with the church bell ringing as the first train came in. It was full of dignitaries who had just had a slap up meal with champagne in Cupar. When the train stopped, dozens of people



jumped on board without tickets and had to walk home from the terminus at Burntisland where it met the ferry to Granton.

18. The Railway

The Edinburgh and Northern Railway, also completed in 1847, was a company backed and part financed by the Balfours of Balbirnie to ensure it came through Markinch. The expensive Markinch section from Coaltown to New Inn, including the 10 arch viaduct, was completed on a tender of £54,000. A substantial part of the Balbirnie estate was mortgaged to provide security. During WW2 the railway plus various reinforcements such as concrete tank walls (as can be seen at the station), trenches and pill-boxes acted as a 'Stop Line', a 2nd line of defence should the coastal defences be breached by the anticipated invasion.

19. The Glebe

A rough field on the right soon after exiting the railway tunnel known as the minister's meadows or the 'stank' is one of Markinch's most historic pieces of land. In 1284 William



de Valoniis, his mother Margaret and sister Mary granted this meadow land to the church in exchange for prayers being offered up for the soul of his father and the Earl of Fife. A charter defines the land in great detail and mentions the gardener who looked after the prior's house and Ranulph, the vicar of Markinch. Along with the land came the right to graze two cows and their calves on the common pasture of the Valoniis family.

Proceed ahead along Brunton Road

Before turning right back into Glass Street, the end point, you may want to explore the streets of Markinch or take advantage of the various facilities such as cafes, shops and hotels all close by.

Braes Lane
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