Go along Croft Road and turn right along Wellpark Terrace to Commercial Street (formerly the High Road to Balgonie). Left, past the former site of the small close or wynd called **The Throatie** [local lore, now a landscaped area] then right to the parish kirk of **Markinch** [Pictish or Gaelic 'horse- or steed-island', the island (Gaelic *innis* or its Pictish equivalent) the raised ground on which the kirk and old village stand. The kirk is dedicated to St Drostan, a Pictish saint centred on Old Deer, Buchan, Aberdeenshire, and to John the Baptist ['the church of St John the Baptist and of St Mo-Drust the confessor, of Markinch' (ecclesia sancti Johannis Baptiste et sancti Modrusti confessoris de *Marchynche* (*St A. Lib.*)), was dedicated on 19 July 1243 by David de Bernham bishop of St Andrews]. The kirk, with its fine tower dating from around 1100, with early links to St Serf's, Loch Leven, sits on a raised piece of ground with a good view to the south over the 'new town' of Markinch, begun to be built in 1796. Glass Street (formerly *The Causey* 1765, a causeway built up over boggy ground is immediately south of the kirkyard and beyond it High Street, formerly *Howie Gate* 1765, 'hollow road', i.e. a road with steep sides.

Turn around and head north along Kirk Street past the end of **Manse Road**, (in which is Mansefield, built as the parish manse in 1655), to Stob Cross Road, then turning right up steps into the park. Keep parallel to road, to view the (see cover**) Stob Cross**, on a banking on the left opposite, [probably marking a girth or sanctuary around the church, containing Sc *stob* 'stump' 'apparently denoting originally the stump of a tree, or of a standing-stone or stone cross' (*DOST*)], then continue north and around **Markinch Hill**, along one of the 6 **Terraces** past the **Playfield** [the *Play-fields* 1790s, Scots 'an open space for public festivities, performances etc']. Follow path right round then bear left down **The Hill Rigg** to Northall Rd. Turn left, past the **Holyland** on left, to Northall Cemetery, opened in 1853 and probably the original site of **Dalginch** [*Dalginge* c.1165; *Dalgynche* c.1200: Gaelic 'thorn island' (*Dealg-Innis*); described in the 12th century as the chief place of justice in Fife].

Retrace Northall Road and first left to Brunton Drive. Turn right before railway and along edge of **Brunton** estate [the *Burntoun* 1435, Scots 'farm on a burn'], said to occupy the site of a castle of Macduff, Thane of Fife.

Turn right onto Brunton Road and past 'The Glebe', on right, the 'meadow' given by William de Valence to St Andrews Priory in 1284, on to Glass St, then left to High St. and Station.

Markinch Place-Name Walk

Distance approx. 4 miles. Time required, between 2 1/2 and 3 hours

Introduction
What is a place-name walk? It is a walk through past and present, through landscape and language. It is an attempt to see the modern environment through the eyes of the people who gave it the names which we still use today, taking the names themselves as our guides. These names are guides also to the languages of the past: for Fife these are chiefly **Pictish**, **Gaelic** and **Scots**, together spanning around 1,500 years, with some names going back even further, perhaps into the first millennium BC, names such as **Fife** itself, or the river-names **Leven** and **Ore**.

However, earlier than that we cannot go: we have no idea, for example, what language or languages were spoken by the people who built the henge at Balfarg, the stone circle at Balbirnie or the burial cairn at Law Head, all of which were constructed between about 4,000 and 5,000 years ago. There may be echoes of their languages still in some of our place-

names, but if so, they are too faint and distorted for us to hear. This rich linguistic past brings with it so-called dating horizons: this means that a name coined in Scots, such as **Brunton**, can scarcely be older than the thirteenth century; one coined in Gaelic, such as **Auchmuty**, cannot have been coined much before c.1000 AD, nor much after the 1190s, although it is first recorded in 1240; while names like **Markinch**, which could be either Pictish or Gaelic, may go back the eighth century or even earlier.

On this walk we will encounter everything from the recent appropriation of earlier farms and estates to the needs of the new town of **Glenrothes**, a name created in the late 1940s, through the estate planning and naming of the early modern period, right back to the medieval church and settlement of **Markinch** and the ancient legal assembly place of **Dalginch**.

The Route
Start at Markinch Station [new ticket office, 2009, beside the old one, 1847], built on a piece of land formerly called **Pennys [**1766]. (Running west from here is Landel Street named from the holder of a rig).

With station behind, keep left (south) past the business park, formerly Haig's Whisky bottling plant, join footpath on right at entrance of car park. Looking to the north-east, a good view of **Law Head** [1856] (with the new cemetery where a prehistoric cairn sat). Slightly further on, looking to the south, beyond **Parley Brae** (an old road) [1856] below the main-line railway viaduct, over the valley of the **Leven** [*Leuine* c.1050: early Celtic, probably 'smooth-flowing river'] (**Strathleven** [*Stradleuene* c.1165: Pictish or Gaelic 'valley of the Leven'), with **Sythrum** [*Scheithum* 1471: perhaps a Gaelic name containing *sìth*, 'fairy, person from the Other World', referring to a mound or small hill] on the hill opposite, and the former site of **Sythrum Mill** [1511] below (originally grain, later flax). Visible upstream is **Middle Mill**, [1799] with existing old mill-cottages and (gutted) mill-building dating from c.1800; and a short distance further west, remnants of **West Mill**. On the other side of the Leven is **Bighty** [*Bychty* 1511: perhaps from Scots *bicht* 'bend, loop', referring primarily to the Bighty Burn], formerly a farm, now a suburb of **Glenrothes**, [a new name invented for the new town in the late 1940s, using the title of the main land-holder in the area, the earl of Rothes]. The Bighty Burn flows into the Leven near Sythrum.

Continue along the footpath which follows the disused railway line to Leslie but keep right at fork. Just beyond to the right behind pond are the lands of **Sweet Bank** [1828: Scottish English 'a bank or slope of good land'?],

originally part of the lands of **Balbirnie** [*Balebrenin* c.1168: Gaelic 'wet or wellwatered farm'].

Go past **Balbirnie Mills** [*Babirnie wake mill* 1662, i.e. a waulkmill, for waulking or fulling cloth] (on left, now housing) until the former level crossing at the old main road from Kirkcaldy to the north (via the New Inn).

Short optional detour. Turn left (south), over the mill-lade to **Balbirnie Brig** [*Balbirnie Bridg* 1684] over the Leven to the lands of **Auchmuty** [*Admulty* c.1290: Gaelic '(place at the) ford (*àth*) of the wedders (G *mult* 'wedder, castrated ram', the ford probably crossing the Leven where the Balbirnie Brig now stands], up the hill to **The Plaisterers Inn** [*Plasterers* 1775 Ainslie/Fife], (was on left and/or right immediately at top of hill) built by Thomas Alburn, an Englishman, 'the best plaisterer that ever was yet in Scotland', c.1725, after whom this suburb of Glenrothes is named, **Alburne Park**. The inn stood on or beside the small hill (Scots *knowe*) formerly called *Wanders Know* or *Wandersknows* (1781) later known as *Alburn Knowe*. Retrace steps northwards to level crossing.

Take rightmost footpath upwards (the former old main road) to the modern road (B9130), with **Prestonhall** [*Priesty Hall* 1775: Scots 'hall or big hoose (sometimes ironic) associated with a priest'?] on left, Sweet Bank on right. With care cross over at barrier this busy modern road from Markinch to Leslie (via **Cadham** [*Caldhame* 1487; Scots *cauld hame*]), which c.1750 replaced an earlier road cutting through the Balbirnie Estate. In this way both the north-south and the east-west road network was displaced in order to create a more private space around Balbirnie House.

Mount Frost Drive is part of Balbirnie Estate policies around Balbirnie House. **Mount Frost** [*Minfrost* 1821; *Mount Frost* 1914: Scottish English, an exposed hill, on the left, contrasting with Sweet Bank?]

Turn right (east), along bridleway/rough track past **Wester Markinch** [*Wester Merkinch* 1492] to, where bridleway meets road, **Inchinnie** [*Inchawne* 1491; *Inchehony* 1512: Gaelic *innis* 'island; piece of raised ground surrounded by bog', the 2nd element may be Gaelic *aonach* 'assembly-place'], today where caravans assemble at Balbirnie Park Caravan Site. Continue east past site entrance through large gates and then left past the old Balbirnie Estate office, now called KROWDRAH [try reading it from right to left!], at the corner of **Croft** Road *Croft* 1766, Scots *croft* 'an enclosed piece of ground', in this case formerly of about 6 acres].