



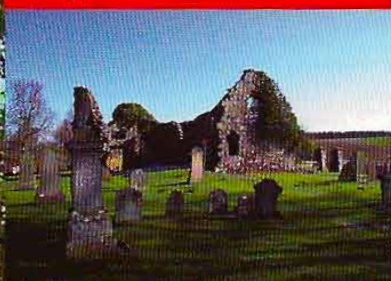
A walk through time

Discover the beauty and history of Scotland with these ten heritage walks, detailed by keen rambler and amateur historian Nate Pedersen

Leisure walkers actively use Scotland's many countryside pathways today, but it wasn't so long ago that these routes had more pragmatic purposes. In living memory, folks used kirk roads to walk from remote areas to Sunday church services, or fishing paths to walk to harbours or curing stations.

The modern day road system has largely replaced these old paths as a matter of practicality, however the recent Heritage Paths Project, initiated by the Scottish Rights of Way Society, seeks to catalogue and promote these old routes through Scotland before their history is lost.

1. Tayport Coffin Road



Geographical area: Fife
Start location: B945 near the former Burnbank Nursery (Ordnance Survey map reference: NO 455 278)
End location: Junction of Pond Lane & Elizabeth Street, Tayport (NO 458 283)
Path Type: Coffin Road
Path distance: 0.6 km

People living in very remote areas used coffin roads to bring their dead to consecrated ground for burial. As only certain churches had burial rights, (usually the mother church of the parish), this meant that the recently deceased had to be transported long distances to be properly interred. Coffin roads often had large flat stones placed at key intervals along the way so the travellers could rest their heavy loads. The Tayport Coffin Road is a small section of what was once a much longer route connecting distant communities with the Forgan church and the cemetery about 1 km west of it. The path was also used as a kirk road for distant parishioners to attend church on Sundays and, as such, likely received a great deal of foot traffic in its day.

2. The Wallace Road



Geographical area: Perth, Kinross and Stirling
Start location: Lochelbank Farm, Glenfarg (NO 136 124)
End location: West Dron, Bridge of Earn (NO 126 158)
Path distance: 4 km
Path type: Medieval Road

Named after William Wallace who is thought to have led his armies along this route in the late-thirteenth century, the history of the Wallace Road also includes such distinguished names as Mary, Queen of Scots, Robert Burns, and Sir Walter Scott. The Wallace Road was for many centuries the main route from Dunfermline to Perth, possibly as far back as the Roman era, until finally superseded by the development of the turnpike in 1753. Today you can tread in the footsteps of Roman soldiers, Jacobite rebels, famous authors, and Scottish royalty. As a sign of its former prestige, the route was lined with ash and elm trees until the end of the twentieth century when Dutch Elm Disease sadly took down the majority of these trees.

3. Creel Path



Geographical area: Lothian and Borders
Start location: St Abbs (NT 918 671)
End location: B6438 north of Coldingham (NT 910 666)
Path Type: Trade Route
Path distance: 1.1 km

The Creel Path was one of many fishermen's routes dotted throughout Scotland. Before the village of St Abbs existed, fishermen who lived in nearby Coldingham would walk the Creel Path to the natural harbour at St Abbs where they moored their boats. At the end of the day, they would return to Coldingham, carrying their catch (mostly herring) in the small, wicker baskets known as creels. Monks inhabiting the nearby Coldingham Priory in the medieval era also used the route. Today the path is well marked and well travelled, providing a lovely glimpse of countryside and coast.

4. Elsick Mounth



Geographical area: Grampian
Start location: Hilton Farm track (NO 808 946)
End location: unclassified road near Cowton just off A957 (Slug Road) (NO 838 892)
Path Type: Drove Road
Path distance: 6.6 km

The Elsick Mounth is an ancient route and one of the best contenders in Scotland for a pre-Roman road. Linking Stonehaven and the north side of the Dee, the Elsick Mounth has the remains of Roman forts at both ends. It is quite likely that the Romans built this route on top of a pre-existing Pictish route. Evidence in support of this claim lies mostly in the fascinating Lang Stane, a Pictish standing stone with ogham inscriptions, found at the southern end of the route. The Lang Stane could have been a boundary marker, or perhaps an epitaph to a Pictish soothsayer named Avuo Annunio, as the inscription has been translated as 'Avuo Annunio Soothsayer of Dovenio.' The Lang Stane provides a fascinating bit of history to contemplate while walking this ancient route.

5. The Darn Walk



Geographical area: Stirling, Clackmannan and Falkirk
Start location: Westerton, Bridge of Allan (NS 787 980)
End location: Dunblane (NN 783 010)
Path Type: Leisure Path, Rural Path
Path distance: 3.2 km

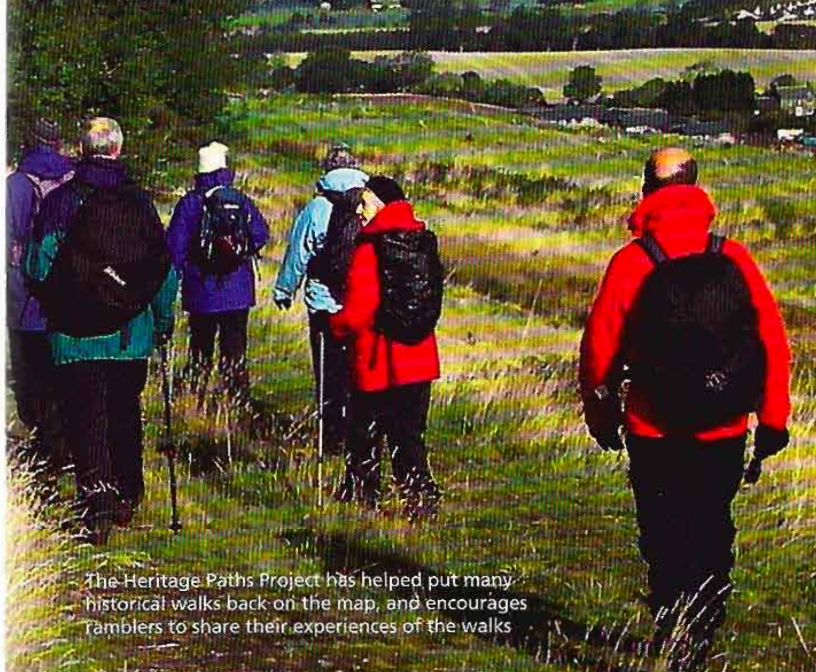
The Darn Walk closely mirrors the earlier Darn Road, an ancient route between the Bridge of Allan and Dunblane, possibly in use as early as the Roman period. Following the east side of the Water of Allan, the Darn Road was only a footpath in 1858 when local workers destroyed a wall blocking the path built by John Stirling of Kippendavie. The Darn Walk was established later in the same century as a leisure path for walkers to enjoy the beauty of the area. Robert Louis Stevenson frequently walked the route and Ben Gunn's cave in Treasure Island is thought to have been inspired by the cave that can still be seen half-way along the path.

6. Corgarff Military Road



Geographical Area: Grampian
Start location: A939, northwest of Ordgarff (NJ 296 063)
End location: A939, 1.5 km past the summit of the Glas Choille road (NJ 262 086)
Path Type: Military Road
Path Distance: 4.5 km

The Corgarff is a small section of the military road that ran from Coupar Angus to Fort George. While the route contains two of the famous 'Wade bridges', it was constructed under Major William Caulfield well after General Wade left the Highlands in 1740. The general purpose, however, of keeping the Highlands under close military watch, remained the same. The original 100-mile route took nine years to build, between 1748 and 1757. While the modern day highway generally follows the military road, this section is a notable exception, offering the opportunity to walk one of the famous military roads in peace and quiet.



The Heritage Paths Project has helped put many historical walks back on the map, and encourages ramblers to share their experiences of the walks



7. Old Shetland Road



Geographical area: Shetland Islands
Start location: Houll (HU 372 910)
End location: Fethaland (HU 375 943)
Path Type: Rural Path
Path distance: 3.6 km

A well-known Shetland path running to the tip of the Mainland, the Old Shetland Road leads to the ruins of a large haaf station. 'Haaf' means open-sea fishing and refers to the practice of local Shetlanders travelling up to fifty miles out to sea in open boats where they cast long-lines to fish for cod. Haaf fishing stations were established to allow for the quickest possible curing of the fish for storage on their return. Haaf fishermen generally lived full-time at these stations from June to August, and this station, Fethaland, had about sixty boats operating from it during its prime. After the Gloup Disaster of 1881, in which 58 haaf fishermen drowned, the industry began using larger fishing boats in more densely populated areas and the Fethaland station was abandoned. Today you can see the remains of twenty buildings and enjoy a lovely walk through wild Shetland countryside.

8. Whaligoe Steps



Geographical area: Caithness
Start location: A99, south of Ullbster (ND 320 405)
End location: old quay, Whaligoe (ND 322 403)
Path Type: Trade Route
Path distance: 0.3 km

A short jaunt up 365 steps rising 250 feet from the sea, the Whaligoe Steps are a famous landmark in Caithness. The steps date from the late eighteenth century and connect the harbour at the base of the cliffs with the remains of a fish curing station at the top. At each corner of the steps there is a large flat stone on which people carrying baskets of fish on their backs could rest their loads for a spell. The term 'Whaligoe' is thought to mean Inlet of the Whales, perhaps referring to strong eddies from the north that sometimes push dead whales into the harbour. These steep steps require caution from the walker and should not be approached by anyone unsteady on their feet.

9. The Greenock Cut



Geographical area: Strathclyde and Lanarkshire
Start location: Waterman's Cottage, Overton Road, Greenock (NS 266 748)
End location: Cornalees Bridge Centre car park (NS 247 720)
Path Type: Leisure Path
Path distance: 8 km

The Greenock Cut was an aqueduct built by Robert Thom between 1825 and 1827 to direct water from Loch Thom to the town of Greenock. The aqueduct supplied drinking water for residents and hydropower for local industry until superseded by a tunnel in 1971. Many of the bridges and sluices along its length have since fallen into disrepair, however local authorities have recently begun to revitalise the path. The embankment of the aqueduct now serves as a walkway with fine gravel laid along most of its length. The path is best walked upstream to enjoy the fine scenery of Firth of Clyde and the Argyll hills.

10. Old Church Path



Geographical area: Skye and Lochalsh
Start location: Aird of Sleat (NG 591 006)
End location: harbour, Acairseid an Rubha, Point of Sleat (NG 563 002)
Path Type: Rural Path
Path distance: 2.7 km

Villagers from the abandoned township Point of Sleat walked this path to attend church in nearby Aird of Sleat. Local school children also utilised the path en route to the Gaelic school in Aird, open on and off from 1814 until 1957. Point of Sleat was eventually abandoned as the twentieth century progressed, however the church in Aird remained in use until the 1980s when it was converted into a family home. After reaching Point of Sleat, walkers can continue along a Right of Way to see an interesting lighthouse.