



## MEDIEVAL ROADS IN SCOTLAND

**Y**ou can experience a taste of medieval life by walking the ancient routes that still wind their way through the countryside of Scotland. And you are free to enjoy the lovely scenery without worrying about robbers or extortionists, or getting your cart stuck in the mud. Here are five Scottish medieval roads that survive as rural paths.

### The Capel Mounth

Cairngorms National Park, from Spital of Glenmuick to Glen Doll, 9 km.



Used for centuries by Highland travelers, the Capel Mounth is a particularly high track, at 2,000 feet above sea level. It becomes downright treacherous in the winter. A number of people over the years have lost their lives on the Mounth, as testified by the frequent cairns encountered along the route. In the medieval and renaissance eras, a hospice for travelers was maintained at the Spital of Glenmuick, demonstrating the former importance of the road. The Capel Mounth can be seen on the first-ever road map of Britain, the Gough Map, dated to c. 1360.

### The Causey Mounth

Aberdeenshire, from Muchalls to Badentoy Park, 5.5 km.

The Causey Mounth is an ancient route and bears a number of hallmarks of a medieval road. Notably, it passes very close to several prehistoric megalithic monuments such as the Aquhorthies Stone Circle and the Old

Bourtreesbush Stone Circle. It is worth remembering that many medieval routes had already been in use for centuries. The Causey Mounth is one of the very few roads marked by Timothy Pont in his series of maps of Scotland that were created in the 1590s, shortly after the medieval period ended.

### Comyn's Road

Perth and Kinross, from Blair Atholl to Glen Tromie, 35 km.

This massive old road was built in the thirteenth century to link strongholds of the powerful Comyn family at Ruthven and Blair Atholl. Some sources state that it was paved and passable by carts, which would have been quite impressive as the road winds up and over parts of the steep Cairngorm plateau. It is infrequently walked nowadays but legend has it that John Comyn had it built to better transport his favorite ale from Blair Atholl, where it was brewed, to his principal seat at Ruthven.

### Wheel Causeway

Scottish Borders, from Cleuch Head to Deadwater on the English border, 13 km. Sometimes the name of a route offers a hint at its age. This is the second road in the list to have 'Causeway' or the diminutive 'Causey' in its name, which is an antiquated term for a raised or paved road and is a common old road name in Britain. The Wheel Causeway was so called because it passed by the medieval village of Wheel, long since abandoned, rather than because of the type of transport it saw. Edward I, "the Hammer of the Scots," is known to have traveled it in 1296 shortly before the Wars of Independence broke out.

### Old Edinburgh Road

Dumfries and Galloway, Clatteringshaws Loch to Newton Stewart, 6.9 km.

This route was certainly used in the medieval period but is very likely to be a lot older as it seems to be an extension of the



Roman road that runs through Craik Forest. James IV, the Scottish king from 1488 to 1513, traveled the Old Edinburgh road en route to St Ninian's shrine at Whithorn as he tried to atone for his part in the death of his father, King James III.

The Gough Map and the Pont Maps are both visible online today, thanks to recent digitization efforts. You can view the Gough Map online at [goughmap.org/digital-map/](http://goughmap.org/digital-map/) and the Pont Maps at [maps.nls.uk/pont/](http://maps.nls.uk/pont/).

More medieval routes in Scotland can be found on the website [heritagepaths.co.uk](http://heritagepaths.co.uk), which features a variety of historic pathways in Scotland. It is managed by the Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society.

If you know of any other medieval routes in Scotland, you're invited to contact Neil Ramsay at [heritagepaths@scotways.com](mailto:heritagepaths@scotways.com).

—by Nate Pederson and Neil Ramsay  
—Capel Mounth photo by Sheila Tough

## BECOME AN ENGLISH LORD OF THE MANOR

A Lordship of the Manor is a genuine English title. However, it is a property title and not a title of nobility. Owing to a quirk in English law, these titles are deemed property without land and can be bought and sold just as any other piece of property. They can range in price from 3,000 British pounds to 200,000 pounds. Depending fac-