

Lothian Walks – Corstorphine Hill with John Davidson

I do not think I was on Corstorphine Hill for forty years – until the other day. However, it is a name of significance for all walkers and hillwalkers, being an early case taken up by the “Association for the Protection of Public Rights of Roadway in and around Edinburgh”. This Society was founded in 1845 by some prominent citizens to oppose attempts to close off many paths and public rights of way in the area. These had reached alarming proportions by 1845 and the society has gone on to champion the cause of public rights of access ever since.

It is now the Scottish Rights of Way & Access Society, with offices at 24, Annandale Street in Edinburgh, and still defending public rights of way throughout Scotland. Thanks to the Society and its Victorian, philanthropic aims we can still walk on Corstorphine Hill.

The hill hides its bulk well – 2.5km north-south, 1.5 max east-west, about 6km all round the base and the whole contrives to fit in as an elegant backdrop for housing lapping round its feet. Rising from flattish west Edinburgh, it enjoys extensive views on all sides.

A visit to the top of the hill might make a pleasant Sunday afternoon stroll. Take the 26 or 86 bus to the terminus on Clermiston Road. There are access points all along this side and the prospect is more open. The bus takes care of nearly all the climbing! Unfortunately, Clermiston Tower is permanently and securely closed. It must have been a marvellous

viewpoint. (Erected 1871 by Wm McFie of Clermiston; presented to the city in 1932.)

The walk round the base of the hill is more demanding – about 6km, with some climbing. There are two prominent access points from the south, one from the angle of Kaimes Road and Corstorphine Road, the other by a gate directly opposite Balgreen Road. That is what I did on my recent visit.

Starting at Kaimes Road, 100m west of Edinburgh Zoo, I went up (steeply) to join the zoo’s perimeter fence at the end of Old Kirk Road. (This might be a sort of safety net later; if you are unsure of your direction at any time, find the fence and follow it anti-clockwise to the entrance buildings or clockwise towards Murrayfield Golf Course and the way out to Balgreen Road.) Continuing uphill, Kaimes Road turns 90° left to become Cairnmuir Road. At this point you are no more than 200m from Clermiston Tower. But having climbed 80m, you may feel like a rest and the prospect to the Pentlands is magnificent.

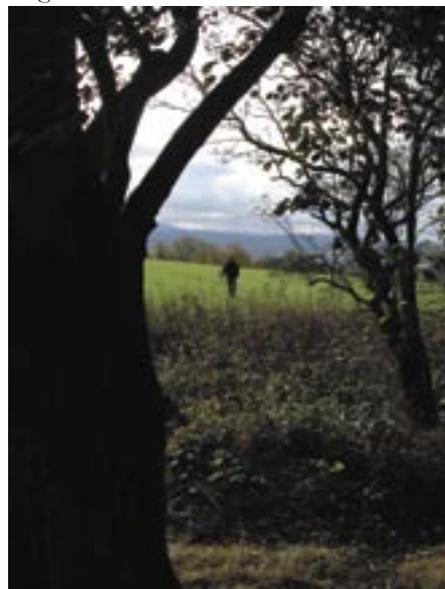
To continue the circular walk, you should stay on Cairnmuir Road, then follow Clermiston Road right to the traffic lights at Queensferry Road. Here, right (towards the city) past the disused Barnton Quarry for about 300m. A green Rights of Way Society sign points into the woods to a path heading back eventually towards the start. The direction is roughly south; the path stays just inside the woods. The going is easy and

level until the steep ground rising from Murrayfield Golf Course. At this point you can actually leave the hill by way of a straight lane crossing the golf course to Ravelston Dykes but, if you keep to the zoo’s perimeter path, you will come to the grassy slope down to Corstorphine Road.

The fact that this lovely walk goes mainly over public rights of way is largely due to the efforts of the Scottish Rights of Way & Access Society. It is worthy of the support of all who love walking in the countryside.

If you would like to add some interest to your walk, there is a permanent orienteering course on Corstorphine Hill. For maps and sample courses, contact Janet Clark on 0131 225 7771.

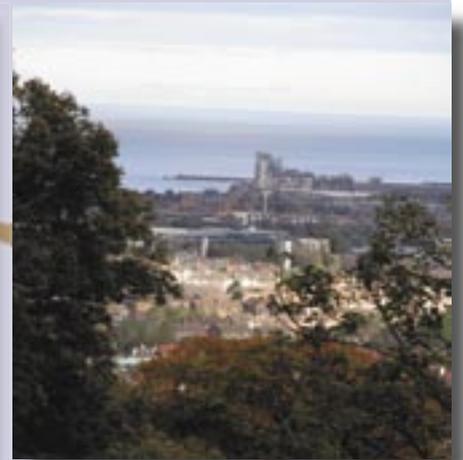
Dogwalkers’ Dream



Western panorama



Silver Birch around Barnton Quarry



Glimpses to the North



*Beechwood Flooring
Clermiston Tower*

