

Lothian Walks

The Hermitage and Blackford Hill, Edinburgh with John Davidson

From Blackford Hill you can walk half a mile with small children and feed the ducks in Blackford Pond or you can go for a strenuous 3-mile run. Here is an interesting and varied walk. As it is a figure-of-8, you can join in anywhere, do half only, as you like. For this article I have chosen to go from Blackford Pond. From the main gate in Charterhall Road turn right past the pond. (Either side, it does not matter.) The path rises steeply by the west side of Blackford Hill, passing allotments and then a couple of meadows where cattle graze.

Continuing from this first high point, the path drops equally steeply down the locally named “Cardiac Brae” to the Braid Burn. I would not take the burnside yet, however, but cross the wide footbridge to rise yet again by the steep steps on the Lang Linn Path to Braid Hills Road. This is a good point to pause for a moment and enjoy the view.

Blackford Hill and Arthur’s Seat block out much of Fife but there are wide prospects over both East and West Lothian and the city. After you have enjoyed the view, turn west/right along Braid Hills Road for

a bit. The main gate back into the Hermitage is in Braid Road; you might use the quieter Braid Farm Road and/or Braid Hills Avenue to get there, avoiding busy traffic.

From the gate follow the burn – your companion for the next mile. But keep looking about, for this is one of the city’s most interesting nature reserves. Half-way along is the Hermitage of Braid House, housing the ranger service.

The Hermitage of Briad has been designated as ancient woodland. This means that woodland has covered the site for at least 300 years. However, most of what you will see today probably dates from the 19th century.



Allotments

Midmar Road

Hermitage Drive



Hermitage of Braid House

Braid Hills Road

Braid Farm Road

Braid Road



Pass under the long footbridge you crossed some time ago, then, shortly after you leave the trees of the Hermitage behind, you will come to the Agassiz Rock. Note the small plaque that explains how much of the theory of Scotland’s Ice Age history was based on discoveries made locally. Now look for an informal path uphill (north) towards the top of



Charterhall Road

Blackford Pond

Blackford Hill

Royal Observatory

Mast

Fort

Corbies Crag



Blackford Quarry (Disused)

Agassiz Stone



Braid Hills Drive

Lang Linn Path

Blackford Hill and the Observatory. If you prefer, retrace your route to "Cardiac Brae" and climb the 100 steps up to the trig point on Blackford Hill.

The Observatory is another significant landmark as you head north-west back to the pond. However, there are many paths, so take your time to stroll about the top of Blackford Hill and enjoy the huge panoramas.

As you walk about, you may notice some wooden posts with red triangular markers on them. These are the markers for the Permanent Orienteering Course set out by Edinburgh Southern Orienteering Club in conjunction with the Edinburgh Council Rangers.



A map pack containing a detailed full-colour 1:5,000 scale map of The Hermitage and Blackford Hill, overprinted with all the control points, and a description sheet suggesting ways of combining these points into courses of varying difficulty can be obtained, price £1.50, from the Hermitage Visitor Centre, when open, or direct from: Janet Clark, 13 N W Circus Place, Edinburgh EH3 6SX, enclosing a cheque for £1.50 payable to "ESOC".

This pack can be used over and over again and, like the walk, is suitable for walkers of all containing a detailed full-colour 1:5,000 scale map of The Hermitage and Blackford Hill, overprinted with all the control points, and a description sheet suggesting ways of combining these points into courses of varying difficulty can be obtained, price £1.50, from the Hermitage Visitor Centre, when open, or direct from: Janet Clark, 13 N W Circus Place, Edinburgh EH3 6SX, enclosing a cheque for £1.50 payable to "ESOC". This pack can be used over and over again and, like the walk, is suitable for walkers of all abilities, children or runners.