

Lothian-90

A new 90-mile walk across the whole of the Lothians, using quiet footpaths, disused railways, river banks, tracks and the occasional minor road.

Leg 1. Harthill, Whitburn, EastWhitburn, Loganlea, Addiewell (10 miles).

Alight from the X900 Edinburgh to Glasgow Express bus at Harthill services (cafe, toilets). Walk south-east, up the service road, towards Harthill village. Bear right to the far corner a football pitch, and onwards through the outskirts of Harthill to reach the prominent Harthill Church (St Andrew's) at the junction of the B718 and B7006. Head left, along the pavement of the B7006 to the true start of the walk - the Border of North Lanarkshire and West Lothian. Still on the pavement proceed eastwards past Greenrigg. On crossing the nascent R Almond, step through the low fence and take a footpath into the trees of the delightful Polkemmet Country Park. Follow woodland paths that wind along the right bank. Cross to the left bank at a rustic bridge, and over lawns to the Centre (toilets, cafe, owl centre). Pass the old walled garden (now a bowling green), to follow a woodland track along the left bank. Carry on to the end of the golf course and visit the Polkemmet Horn (beside the motorway). Retrace your steps 100m to cross the Almond. Head south following a track beside the golf course. Regain the B7006/A705. Go left. Cross before the large roundabout. Turn right beneath the electricity power lines. Keep straight on (south) along Polkemmet Rd. When the housing on the left ends (at Burnhouse), and before an industrial estate is reached, go left along the old railway line (Town Walk). Pass schools to your right to cross the A706. Here veer slightly left to visit South Whitburn Church. Go on through the War Memorial Park, past the Community Centre, to join the White Burn. Follow the burn downstream. Cross near Blaeberry Park. At a minor road, re-cross to the left bank. Carry on downstream Cross back again at a small (wooden?) bridge. At this point head back upstream, a few 100m, to turn up, and left, to join a footpath along a shelterbelt, besides housing. Keep on the path as it meanders along more shelterbelts, at the back of the land belonging to the Bickerton Lowland Crofts. We are heading for East Whitburn bing. Go directly over a minor road. Almost immediately cross the old East Whitburn to Foulshields railway line and go slightly left onto the bing. At the first junction take the path heading due east. This path rises, through conifers, before branching right onto a clear area atop the bing. Admire, or be bemused by, the kitchness of the dog cemetery. Set off south-west across scrubby open ground to find a rough path that leads back down to the old East Whitburn to Foulshields railway line. Turn left along the line. Soon take the footpath, to the right, beside a small stream, to shortly emerge onto the minor road, crossed previously. Follow the road, left, to a T-junction. Turn right then left at the next junction to take Hen's Nest Rd towards Bents. In an entrance way, on the right, just after the old county boundary (stream), find a footpath that parallels the road. Eventually the minor road is rejoined and followed to the B7015. Turn left (old signpost) taking the road into Bents. Near the middle of Bents turn right down Meadow Rd. and take the path straight on. Once across the R. Breach follow the left-hand path to rise through woods over the gently landscaped Loganlea bing. Turn left at the minor road into Loganlea. Proceed along the main Loganlea drag. After Loganlea Rd. crosses an incised stream, turn right up Addiebrownhill. Just before the railway bridge, turn left along the footpath beside the railway. The path leads us directly to Addiewell Railway station.

Leg 2. Addiewell, West Calder, Livingston Village, Mid-Calder (10 miles).

Alight from the Edinburgh to Glasgow (via Shotts) train at Addiewell. Cross the footbridge to follow the slip road towards Addiewell. Pass the wire-fencing of the car-auction show grounds. Turn right along a new road which gently curves round to the right. Pass the front of HM Prison Addiewell to discover a footpath which leads up onto Addiewell bing. Pass a recycling area below, on your left, while making for the broad summit of the bing. When approaching the summit bear right, where the footpath divides, to head towards an angle in the trees. Continue on the path down through the trees to a corner on the B792. Take care when stepping onto the road. Carry on (ENE) along the narrow verge of this minor road(*), pass a cottage and take the footpath, on the right, towards West Calder. Over the railway turn sharp left, then right to arrive at the centre of West Calder. (Dickson St. provides public toilets). Head east to the traffic lights. Go left down Cleuchbrae and under the railway. Turn right (NNE) towards the Five Sister's Zoo. Carry straight on, passing houses on the left to reach woods. Here a footpath descends steep steps to cross the R. Breach. Follow the path downstream. Rise, left, to a minor road(*) to soon join the B7015. Go right a few yards, cross to the footpath leading off ENE. The path winds alongside the R Breach. Cross a bridge as the Breach approaches the Almond, and follow the Almond downstream. Beyond Kirkton Campus, use the elevated road bridge to cross the Almond. Turn down right back towards the river. In broad terms, the R. Almond is now followed all the way to mid-Calder. Break away from the riverside paths to visit Livingston Village. Take the road eastwards out of the village. A footpath is soon found (after Maukeshill Court) which slopes slowly down, right, to lead back to the river. Carry on along a series of footpaths all leading downstream. Halfway to mid-Calder the path momentarily veers slightly left, and up, to a road junction (B7015 / Almond link road / Calder Park Road). Cross with care to once again resume following the riverside downstream. At the mid-Calder weir cross, and gently rise alongside wooden fencing. Half-way up the valley-side turn sharp right up a path which leads to the A705. Turn left into mid-Calder.

- (*) An alternative route leaves the B792 before the cottage. A footpath over the R Breach gives access to the Five-sister's Bing. A path along field edges then leads past a cement works to re-join the main route. (*)

Leg 3. Mid-Calder, Union Canal, Ratho, Long Hermiston (10 miles).

First buses 27/28 stop Mid-Calder. With your back to the Torphichen Arms turn right, and then immediately right again down Gasworks Brae into a park. Cross the leftmost bridge to find a path which takes you beneath the imposing arch of the old coaching-road bridge. Beyond, climb the steep flight of steps, turning left as the top is gained. Rise up to a cross path. Turn right to meander alongside the R. Almond. Pass the modern sewage works. Cross below the weir. The route now follows the canal feeder all the way (2.5 miles) to the Union canal. Follow the left bank to the Ranger Centre (coffee, ice-creams). Beyond the old stable block (now toilets) bear right and cross the suspension bridge. Carry on over many stiles, and through many gates. Before reaching the canal aqueduct climb right up steps. Turn left and go down and under the canal. Climb steep stone steps to reach the canal basin. Turn left towards Edinburgh. Follow the towpath, for a mile, until a footpath to Platt Hill branches off. Continue on the footpath, alongside the busy motorway slip road, over Platt Hill (be sure to look down into the indoor climbing area) and onwards, along a quiet old lane, to emerge in Ratho. Turn right, past Ratho Church, to re-join the canal. Turn left towards Edinburgh. Walk for two miles along the towpath to bridge number 12 at Hermiston. Rise up to the road. Turn right, cross the canal and walk a short distance, past cottages of Wester Row on your right, to reach the main A71 at Long Hermiston.

Leg 4. Long Hermiston, Currie, Maiden's Cleuch, Mauricewood (10 miles).

First buses 27/28 stop outside Heriot-Watt. Enter the grounds of Heriot-Watt University at the “A listed” North Lodge. Set off through the old gardens of Riccarton House along the combined foot and cycle path. We cross a road and then, after passing the recycling centre (on your right), turn right through an underpass to go along ‘The Walk’. Ascend the first set of steps to the left, and cross along the boardwalk beside the ornamental loch. Next, turn sharp right to find the half-concealed entrance to a lochside path. At its end, turn left up the cross-path, then right and go through the ‘rustic’ door in front. Our exit is almost directly in-front through a similar ‘rustic’ door, on the far side of the corridor. If time permits the ‘bridge link’ corridor, to the right, leads to a cafe and toilets. Having crossed through the building we carry on ahead. Next, bear right, near an old ice-house, then fork left to skirt the sunken garden with its curling lawn and ornamental trees. Turn right at the far corner of the Library to follow Cameron Smail Rd. to the playing fields. Here bear right, cross at the zebra, and proceed along the left-hand side of the line of trees ahead, with the playing fields on your left. On reaching the far end go right into trees. A broad path is found. Follow it right. Just before the minor is reached, bear left along a narrow, informal path. This roughly follows the road until it emerges onto it. Turn left along the pavement. At a pronounced bend cross carefully into the car park of Currie Hill Station. Take the pedestrian bridge. Exit the station and immediately make a 360° left turn, to follow a ‘commuter path’ over open ground. The path rises diagonally to the left. On reaching a road turn right. Bear slightly right to follow a footpath then back streets (Palmer Rd, Pentland Pl) and up steps into a small shopping area, to take us up to the main Lanark Rd West. Turn left along the pavement, once over the pedestrian crossing. Beyond the old library bear left down an old snicket. Head across the bridge over the water of Leith towards Currie Kirk, but take the steps up left onto the old railway line. Turn left following the broad riverside path downstream. In a few 100 yards turn right up a footpath to Poet’s Glen. Steps lead up to the minor Blinkbonny Rd. Turn right along the pavement. Just after the entrance of Braeburn Dr. Turn left to enter Poet’s Glen. Climb the wooded path upwards all the way to Middle Kinleith. Turn right along Harlow Rd. Cross a small bridge, then carry onwards to a crossroads with Kirkgate. Take the lane on the left. Follow this straight, broad lane all the way to the Pentlands. After a mile, pass through the gate into the Pentlands proper. Soon bear left, at a path junction and gate, to rise in a mile to the low coll of Maiden’s Cleuch. Our path keeps straight on, and down, for a mile to the Glencourse reservoir. Turn left along the road. After the end of the reservoir take the path on the right to the ‘Old filter Beds’. At the end, when the minor road is regained, we simply cross onto a made path, through thin wood, to the Rangers Station (toilets, leaflets). Follow the road down past the Flotterstone Inn. Before reaching the main A702 turn right over the old bridge. Bear right along the pavement until cottages are reached on the left. Cross with care to take the track. This leads through to Belwood Rd. A new housing estate is planned here. If still unbuilt, cross the rough ground and follow a small stream towards Beeslack. Else keep along Belwood Rd. past the housing estate until Stevenson Rd. is reached. Turn right and continue through to the pedestrian bridge, over the stream, between Breck Terrace and Inkerman Court. Bear left once across the bridge. Keep to the footpath through to Beeslack High School.

Leg 5. Mauricewood, Rosewell, Carrington, Gorebridge (10 miles).

At the Beeslack pedestrian underpass take the road down towards Aaron House. Beyond the playing/tennis pitches proceed right into trees. The path leads down to the Penicuik to Dalkeith Walkway, along the former Edinburgh to Peebles railway line. Take it to the left for three miles. At Rosewell cross the A6094, go left on a short path alongside the main road. At the junction turn right into Gorton Rd. Take a snicket, on the left by houses, through into Gorton Place. Find a path, which leads across washing greens into Victoria St. to meet the main road at Lousia Square. Turn right then, opposite Gorton Rd., turn left into the park. Head across, diagonally-right, and exit through a hedge into Whitehill Rd. The road crosses the Dalhousie Burn and winds around the magnificent Whitehill House. Carry on, turning right at The Old Dairy, and then left to Thornton Farm. A rough track leads straight on. After a few tens of paces, take the footpath (right) into woods. Shortly step through a high boundary wall, go sharp left, along the far side of the wall, and then right along a straight path through agricultural land and over a stile. At the minor road ignore the footpath sign opposite. Go right along the road, past cottages and Parduvine farm. At the road-junction we carry straight on. A footpath soon leads off left. Cross the stream just below the small confluence and set off following the right bank downstream. We are heading towards the houses at Carrington. Go through a gate, and onwards keeping to the left-hand edge of fields, to pass through a kissing gate. Follow the left-hand field boundary as it winds gradually leftwards to eventually join the minor road into Carrington. At the Kirk, turn right along the road to Temple. When the road starts to descend, look for a stile over a low fence, on the left. Once over, bear left again and gradually descend through overgrown trees to reach the R. Esk at an attractive bridge. Ignore the bridge, taking paths downstream. After a mile, cross the Esk, keep right and, after a weir, cross the R. Gore. Turn immediately right upstream. The new Shank Bridge carrying the A7 high overhead is reached. Go under the viaduct, then up left. Go left again, left onto the pavement to cross the river. Once over, bear left to enter trees above, and then alongside, the R. Gore. Proceed upstream. Exit right above the brick walls of the old gunpowder works to trace a field edge. Step left into a playing area. Cross slightly diagonally to a left-hand corner, by buildings. Exit left, and sharp left again, into John Bernard Way and then Glenview Place to find a path/steps which lead down to Powdernill Brae. Turn left, cross the R. Gore, cross to the far pavement and go up Station Rd. into Main St.

Roy Thompson (Feb 2013)