

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Abbey St Bathans-Edin's Hall Broch Circuit (Borders)

Route Summary

An enjoyable rural walk amongst rolling Borders hills and a patchwork of fields and woods. The highlight of the route is a visit to the ruin of an unusual and mysterious broch overlooking the Whiteadder Water valley. There is an option to divert to the summit of Cockburn Law.

Duration: 3 hours.



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: No public transport nearby. There is a small rough-surfaced car-park at the walk start/end point. See Waypoint 1 for location details.

Length: 8.690 km / 5.43 mi

Height Gain: 218 meter. **Height Loss:** 218 meter.

Max Height: 222 meter. **Min Height:** 126 meter.

Surface: Moderate. A mix of rough roads and grassy paths, with a 2km section on quiet tarred roads.

Difficulty: Medium.

Child Friendly: Yes, if children are used to walks of this distance and overall ascent.

Dog Friendly: Yes, but stiles must be crossed. Keep dogs on lead on public roads and near farm animals.

Refreshments: See: <https://riversidebakehouse.co.uk/> for the opening times for the Riverside Bakehouse and Cafe in Abbey St. Bathans. Otherwise, options in Duns.



Description

This is a very pleasant countryside walk with an interesting historical dimension. The route starts and finishes at the rural hamlet of Abbey St. Bathans, buried deep in Borders countryside close to Duns, on the banks of the Whiteadder Water. Slightly incongruously, the "abbey" in the name derives from a small Cistercian priory of twelve nuns which was founded here by Countess Ada De Dunbar around the year 1200. Apparently, the location was chosen because of a belief that a tiny missionary chapel had been established here in the 6th C by St Bathan, a follower of St Columba. Unusually for the Borders area, the immediate valley of the Whiteadder river, which rises in the Lammermuir Hills to the north, is steep-sided and narrow but, away from the river, soon opens out to the more typical landscape of rolling hills and mixed farmland. The little settlement is one of the last stops on the Southern Upland Way before it reaches the east coast near Cockburnspath. Our circular route does not follow any part of the cross-country Way, however. The initial section follows the river downstream before ascending onto a commanding position on a shoulder of Cockburn Law to visit the ruin of Edin's Hall Broch within the site of an Iron Age hill-fort. Brochs are more typically associated with the North of Scotland and this unusual southern variant is large compared to a typical Highland broch. The date of the broch is uncertain but it has been speculated that it was built between the two main periods of Roman occupation in Scotland, about 200 AD. Its precise purpose may be something of a mystery but it undoubtedly made a statement about power and status. After the broch, the route descends through pasture to cross the river on a suspension foot-bridge at a pretty little rocky gorge. The final section ascends through farmland, with fine views of Cockburn Law, before dropping back to Abbey St. Bathans.



Waypoints

(1) Start walk at car-park in Abbey St Bathans

(55.84992; -2.38052) <https://w3w.co/guilty.reviews.pounces>

The walk starts from the small car-park shared by walkers and the Riverside Bake House. With your back to the Southern Upland Way information board walk out of the car park heading for a path on the other side of the access road.



(2) Almost immediately - cross road and take path into the trees

(55.84956; -2.38032) <https://w3w.co/clutter.cocoons.devoured>

In 40 m from the information board, cross the access road and take the obvious path into the trees with the Whiteadder Water river close on your left side. In about 120 m, after crossing a rough road, take the steps up onto the tarred public road and go left along the road for a short distance. (41 m)



(3) Leave road at wooden well and take path close to river again

(55.84799; -2.38058) <https://w3w.co/pods.varieties.trucked>

In 190 m from Waypoint 2, passing the sawmill buildings on your right side, leave the road to take the path into the trees on your left side, towards the river again, passing a wooden garden well. In about 170 m, the path meets the tarred public road again. Turn left and follow the road uphill. (228 m)



(4) Leave road onto path on left at Toot sign

(55.84318; -2.37339) <https://w3w.co/sediment.clockwork.empty>

In 780 m from Waypoint 3, just before a sharp bend right on the road, where there is a sign saying 'Toot' and a walkers' waymarking sign, go left off the road and down onto a path. Now follow this path through trees and rough grazing land, gently ascending for about 1 km. (990 m)



(5) At walks signpost - cross stile for path across field

(55.83569; -2.36912) <https://w3w.co/logs.richest.joystick>

After 1 km, on the open hillside at a walks signpost*, don't take the signed direction downhill for Edin's Hall Broch but instead cross the nearby stile into the field. Follow the grassy path up through the field in an easterly direction to a field corner then follow the fence towards another stile. (2 km)

**Note: you have the option to turn right here and ascend Cockburn Law, returning to this point to continue the walk. This optional diversion adds about 1.5 km and over 100 m of ascent.*



(6) Cross another stile for access to field with broch ruins

(55.83503; -2.36573) <https://w3w.co/imparting.copycat.witless>

In 200 m, cross another stile for access to the field with evidence of ancient hill fort ramparts and multiple stone buildings. Walk downhill towards the obvious broch ruins. (2.2 km)



(7) Edin's Hall Broch

(55.83537; -2.36483) <https://w3w.co/swaps.tinted.bulldozer>

In less than 100 m you will arrive at the broch ruin*. You will want to spend some time exploring the site. (2.3 km)

Note: From Wikipedia, with thanks – "... Edin's Hall Broch is one of the most southerly broch survivals, which are more typically associated with Northern Scotland ... It stands on the north-east slope of Cockburn Law just above a fairly steep slope down to the Whiteadder Water. The broch stands in the north-west corner an Iron Age hillfort which presumably pre-dates the broch. The hillfort consists of a double rampart and ditches, enclosing an oval area some 135 metres by 75 metres ... It is assumed that the hillfort dates to the pre-Roman Iron Age. The date of the broch is uncertain but it has been speculated that it was built between the two main periods of Roman occupation in Scotland: some time in the 2nd century AD ... Within the hillfort is an array of stone footings marking the positions of houses and other structures. Some of the houses overlie the defences – indicating that they are later than hillfort and may be later than the broch as well ... The broch has an external diameter of 28 metres, and an internal diameter of 17 metres. This is unusually large compared with a typical Highland broch and suggests that it may not have been as tall as the northern brochs. The walls of the broch survive to a height of between 1.0 and 1.8 metres. The entrance passage is on the east side and has two guard chambers flanking the doorway ..."



(8) Leave broch - heading east - taking left fork

(55.83545; -2.36417) <https://w3w.co/corner.enveloped.transit>

After investigating the broch ruin, with your back to the broch entrance, go east for 30 m, then, at a y-junction, take the grassy path veering left and downhill. This section of the route eventually passes over two stone stiles, crossing field walls. After the second stile, look for a rough path on your left that takes you down to a lower level of the field. From there, head north across the field for a short distance and then resume walking east along the field edge with the Whiteadder Water now fairly close, below you, on your left side. (2.5 km)



(9) Cross access road at house and then cross bridge

(55.83595; -2.34373) <https://w3w.co/priced.though.skill>

After 1.6 km, the path goes through a gate and bends left through trees. Cross the rough access road to Elba Cottage on your right and follow the signed path for a short distance to reach a suspension footbridge. Cross the bridge at this very pretty spot and follow the rough road as it veers left away from the parking area close to the bridge. (4.1 km)



(10) Right up access road at walks signpost

(55.83699; -2.34405) <https://w3w.co/sandwich.towel.motoring>

In about 70 m after crossing the Elba footbridge, at a t-junction where there is a walk signpost, go right to follow the access road in a NE direction, away from the river and Elba Cottage. (4.2 km)



(11) Left up tarred road

(55.84145; -2.33831) <https://w3w.co/subsystem.smile.paints>
In 700 m, the rough access road meets a minor tarred road. Go left here and walk uphill on this very quiet road for about 1.5 km, as a good view of Cockburn Law opens up on your left side. (4.9 km)



(12) Left down tarred access road

(55.85235; -2.35206) <https://w3w.co/efficient.weeps.fatter>
In 1.5 km, go left down a tarred access road signed for 'Blakerston' and 'The Retreat'. (6.4 km)



(13) At sharp left bend in access road - go straight ahead onto rough road

(55.84974; -2.35721) <https://w3w.co/shoelaces.creamed.nourished>
In 400 m, the tarred access road bends sharp left. Leave the tarred road here, and go straight ahead, onto a rough farm road. Follow this rough road between fields as it eventually enters woodland and starts to drop down towards the Whiteadder Water on your left side. (6.8 km)



(14) At walks signpost - leave rough road - right onto path up hillside

(55.84800; -2.37716) <https://w3w.co/arranger.gradually.describes>
In 1.5 km, at a walk signpost, leave the rough road and go right onto a path that ascends the steep hillside above the Whiteadder Water. Soon, the path descends to the level of the river and meets a rough road. Go left here to cross the concrete bridge over the river and follow the rough road to the nearby car-park where you started the walk. (8.3 km)



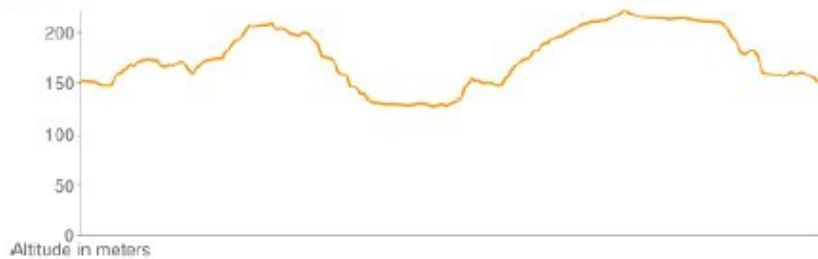
(15) Cross concrete bridge to finish walk back at car-park

(55.84993; -2.38043) <https://w3w.co/guilty.reviews.pounces>

In 400 m from Waypoint 14 you will have arrived back at your start-point in the Abbey St Bathans car-park. (8.7 km)



Route Map



Links:

[Photos from Walk](#)

[Download Route Guide](#) (PDF with illustrated Waypoints)

[Download GPX file](#) (GPS Exchange Format)

[Access Walk on Viewranger](#)

[Access the Walk on OutdoorActive](#)

[Access Walk on OSMaps](#)

[Access Walk on Wikiloc](#)