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and **blue**
waymark posts

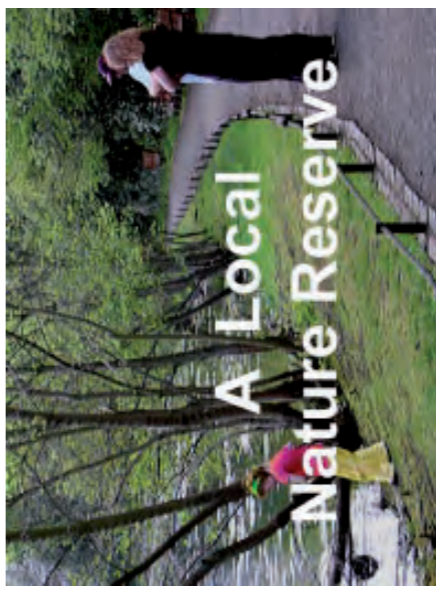


Scout Bridge

Friends at the
Wetland Patch



Guided Walk History, and Nature Geology and Nature Trail



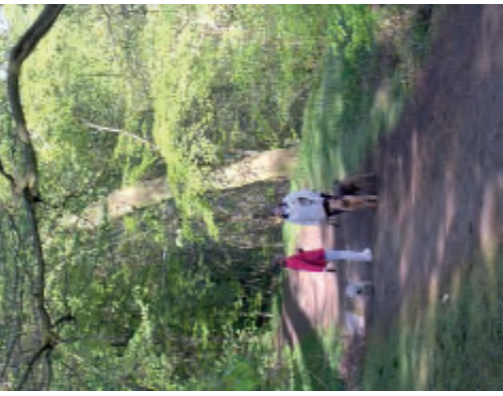
This leaflet is produced by the Friends of the Hermitage of Braid with financial support from SNH.
Want to be involved? Information about activities, membership and lots more can be found on our website www.fotbh.org



Blackford There are several other Blackfords around the country and locally the name is used in street names and for that part of the city to the north of the hill. Blackford House stood somewhere on the south bank of the Jordan Burn and Blackford Farm still exists opposite as flats below the old Blackford Hill railway station (now a veterinary practice in Morningside)

Hermitage The name is said to have come from a hermit's cell based somewhere near the site and first appears on record in 1631.

Over time the tower house developed into a fortified castle but now all that is left are the remnants of the walled garden and the Doocot.



In the interest of wildlife and other people who visit the Nature Reserve please follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. In particular please keep dogs under proper control and remove their faeces from the reserve. By all means enjoy feeding the ducks but please take away your litter afterwards.

What's in a name?

Braid Valley and Braid Hills

In the 12th century Henri de Brad lived in a tower house on crags above the present Hermitage House. He owned lands which stretched from there to the Pentlands where the Braid Burn has its source, so it would seem that the name of the burn and the hills have a long history. During the Ice Age, when glaciers covered Scotland to many thousands of feet, the rock was scoured away by ice to give Blackford Hill a distinctive crag and tail shape. As the ice melted, a huge river created the gorge of the Hermitage. The hills were formed many millions of years ago from lava flows from the ancient volcanoes of the Pentlands. During the Ice Age, when glaciers covered Scotland to many thousands of feet, the rock was scoured away by ice to give Blackford Hill a distinctive crag and tail shape. As the ice melted, a huge river created the gorge of the Hermitage.

Hermitage of Braid and Blackford Hill



1 Hermitage House The house was designed in 1785 by the famous Scots architect, Robert Burn. The style reflects the old Braid Castle thought to have been in the field at the end of Hermitage Drive.

The house is now a Visitor Centre and base for the Ranger Service (0131 447 7145). Here you can buy maps for the orienteering course set up in the reserve – you will see the permanent markers as you walk round the trail.

2 The Weir The circular brick structure just before the old stable block is a water pump used to supply a regular flow of water to Hermitage House. The weir was built either as landscaping of the Hermitage by the first owners or possibly for the now disappeared corn mill.



3 Toll House You once had to pay tolls to travel on the roads into Edinburgh. The toll house used to be at the Edinburgh boundary on the site of the Braid Church in Morningside. When tolls were abolished in 1888, the house was rebuilt here. Look for the number 259 on the lintel at the back of the house.



5 The Doocot This is the second largest example in Edinburgh and once had a total of nearly 2000 nest boxes made from sandstone. Its purpose would have been to keep the local laird in meat all year round but there was a considerable cost to local farmers on whose fields of grain the pigeons grew plump. It was re-roofed in 2006.



View along the burn
near Hermitage House



No doubt in winter it would have deserved its name "Auld Reekie".

6 Blackford Hill The Summit A trig point marks the top of Blackford Hill at 164m (539'). Imagine what Edinburgh must have looked like when Sir Walter Scott or Robert Burns gazed over the city?



Bluebells along the
top path

7 More to see on the hill The large metal ring embedded in the rock was once used to tether a balloon belonging to the Edinburgh University Balloon Club. Where the ground levels out just below and to the east of the top there are some shallow depressions in the ground, circular and no more than 6 metres across. These are the remains of Bronze Age hut circles. The top of the hill was once a hill fort and some of the protecting walls are still visible below the summit. The viewfinder at the summit disappeared in 2006 but hopefully will be replaced soon.

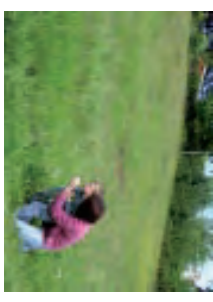


The
Observatory
from the top
of the
Blackford Hill

8 The Observatory As Edinburgh grew in size in the 19th Century the telescopes of the old observatory on Calton Hill became increasingly hard to use because of light pollution. A new Royal Observatory was built on Blackford Hill in 1896. The site is home to the UK Astronomy Technology Centre and the Institute of Astronomy of Edinburgh University.



9 Agassiz Rock You pass this historic rock on the way back to Scout Bridge. In 1840, Louis Agassiz here found the first evidence for the ice in Scotland.



4 Wildflower Meadow This peaceful area is a beautiful place to linger on a summer day