

## Find out more

The Living Lomonds Landscape Partnership is an association of organisations in Fife and Perth & Kinross.

Our aim is to re-connect people with the living legacy of the Lomond and Benarty Hills through a range of community based activities, volunteering opportunities and projects.

Visit the Living Lomonds website [www.livinglomonds.org.uk](http://www.livinglomonds.org.uk) to print more copies of this leaflet and other themed walks in the area and to access the links detailed below.

## Further information

Scottish Place-Name Society [www.spns.org.uk](http://www.spns.org.uk)

Simon Taylor, with Gilbert Márkus Place-Names of Fife Vol. 2 (Central Fife between Leven and Eden) (Shaun Tyas: Donington 2008). For the place-name data in this and the other Fife volumes, visit: <http://fife-placenames.glasgow.ac.uk/>

Simon Taylor 'Knowing Your Place', A Place-Name Walk in Markinch (Markinch Heritage Group 2011)

A fuller version of this leaflet and other place-name walk leaflets can be found at [www.livinglomonds.org.uk](http://www.livinglomonds.org.uk)



## With thanks to

Dr Simon Taylor of the University of Glasgow, for his extensive knowledge on place-names and the local area that is shared through this leaflet.

To our funders without whom this leaflet would not have been possible:



Markinch  
Heritage  
Group



## Markinch A themed place-name walk



Re-connecting people  
with the hills

Living Heritage



## Markinch

This walk around the historic Fife settlement of Markinch explores a varied landscape that connects with place-names created over a long period of time. You will encounter sites, such as the Parish Church of Markinch, the Bow Butts and the ancient legal assembly place of Dalginch, that date back to medieval times. The changing face of urban and rural settlement in the 18th and 19th centuries is reflected in the exchange of old names for new, *Prickhilly* becoming Northhall and Glass Street replacing The Causey. Since the late 1940s, the development of the modern new town of Glenrothes has had its own influence on the landscape, with names of farms such as Sweetbank and Prestonhall being appropriated as street names.

How did all of these names come about? This leaflet will be your guide, helping you to explore the landscape and uncover the meaning of place-names in this fascinating corner of Fife.



### About the route

This themed walk takes you on a circular route around Markinch starting at the car park near the railway station and the Haig Business Park. It heads westwards along the route of a former railway branch line before connecting with a bridleway through suburban Markinch to Balbirnie Estate. Returning to the heart of Markinch, the walk leads onto Markinch Hill and down to Northall Cemetery before doubling back to the Parish Church of Markinch from where there are spectacular views across the 18th-century 'new town'. Heading south along Glass Street and the High Street, the walk takes you back to the car park.

The names encountered on the trail are guides to the languages of the past, which for this part of Fife are chiefly Pictish, Gaelic and Scots, together spanning around 1,500 years, with the latest names in Gaelic coined about 800 years ago.

If you are travelling by car there is a parking place just south of the railway station as shown on the map. Local transport links can be found via [www.travelinescotland.com](http://www.travelinescotland.com)

### Make your walk enjoyable

Please wear sturdy footwear, take suitable clothing and some water and be aware that the weather can quickly change.

### Scottish Outdoor Access Code

While out enjoying the local countryside please follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

[www.outdooraccess-scotland.com](http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com)

### Like this – want more?

This themed walk is one of a series in the area. To find out more go to [www.livinglomonds.org.uk](http://www.livinglomonds.org.uk)



## Description

Explore the Pictish, Scots and Gaelic origins of many of Markinch's fascinating place names on this themed walk.

**Terrain:** The route follows pavements and well made footpaths some short steep sections, care should be taken when crossing roads.



easy

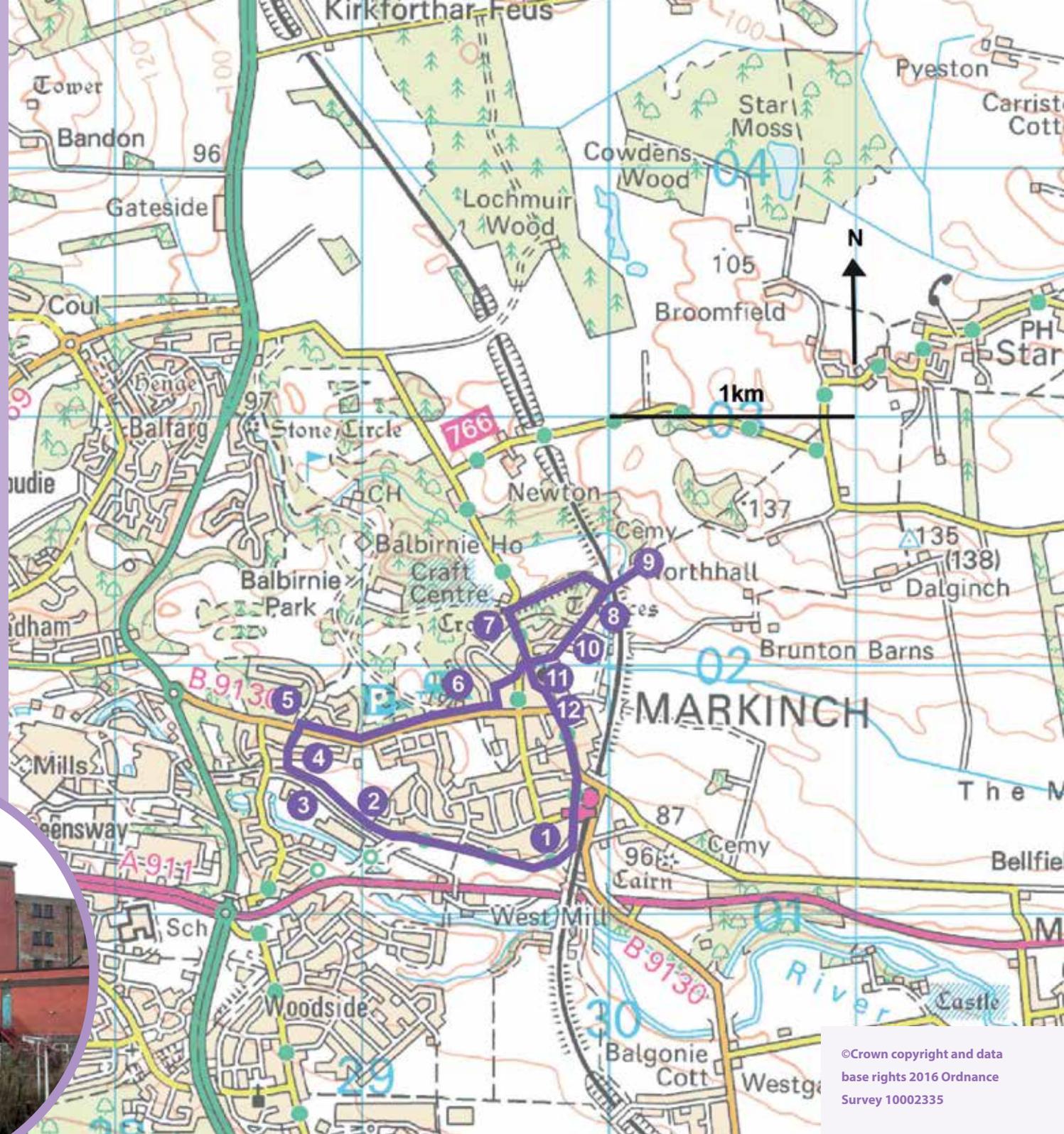
2.5 miles  
4km  
Allow  
1.5 hours

### 1 Haig Business Park

This walk starts outside the Haig Business Centre, a large red brick building that was the blending and bottling plant for Haig's Whisky. In 1822 John Haig leased the former corn mill at Cameron Bridge as a distillery. It was sold in 1877 to the Distillers Company which moved the blending operation to Markinch.

### 2 Sweetbank

Set out along the pathway that skirts the business park, following the former railway branch line built in 1861 to connect with textile mills in Leslie. On the right, beyond a fork in the trail, is a pond at the foot of the lands of Sweetbank, a name that suggests 'a bank or slope of good land.'



### 3 Balbirnie Mills

Carry on past the former Balbirnie Mills on the left, described in 1662 as Balbirnie wake mill. Originally a textile waulking or fulling mill, it was developed as a paper mill from 1816 on a lease from the Balbirnie estate. The name Balbirnie, mentioned as *Balebrenin* as far back as c.1168, is derived from the Gaelic for a 'wet or well watered farm.'

### 4 Prestonhall

Turning right onto Prestonhall Drive at the level crossing, take the signposted right hand lane by laurel bushes to Prestonhall Road. Styled *Priesty Hall* in 1775, this may refer in Scots to a 'hall or big house (sometimes used ironically) associated with a priest'.

### 5 Mount Frost

Carry on past a property named Beechdale and cross with care the busy main road between Leslie and Markinch before entering Balbirnie Estate and the lands around Balbirnie House. Mount Frost Drive, which leads into a modern housing development, contrasts with the 'good land' of Sweetbank in having a name that suggests an exposed hill.

### 6 Croft Road

Turn right along a bridleway through trees running parallel to the main road. Emerging onto the main road by the South Lodge, turn left up Croft Road, croft being Scots for 'an enclosed piece of ground'.



### 7 Stob Cross

Follow Croft Road to its junction with Commercial Street, turn left and walk up to Stob Cross Road, entering the Markinch Hill park just beyond a bus stop. A pathway leads north round the edge of the park from where there is a good view over to the Stob Cross. Derived from the Scots word for a 'stump', this ancient cross probably marks the boundary of a sanctuary around the parish church.

### 8 Northall Road

The pathway, which follows one of six ancient terraces through the trees of Markinch Hill, doubles back for a short distance before dropping down onto a surfaced path that leads to Northall Road. Turn left and walk under the railway bridge as far as the Markinch Burn beyond which stood Northall, a name coined in the eighteenth century for lands formerly known as *Prickhilly*. This was presumably a 'north hall' in relation to the centre of Markinch.

### 9 Dalginch

Northall Cemetery, just beyond the railway bridge is thought to be the original site of Dalginch which was described in the 12th century as the chief

place of justice in Fife. Rendered *Dalginge* c.1165 and *Dalgynche* c.1200, this name is derived from the Gaelic *Dealg-Innis* meaning 'thorn island'. Opened in 1853, the cemetery is the burying place of the Balfours of Balbirnie, the Haigs of Cameron Bridge and the papermaking Tullis family.

### 10 Bow Butts

Returning back along Northall Road you come to the name Bow Butts, a place where archery was practised in medieval times.

### 11 Parish Kirk of Markinch

Walk on to Mansefield Road then turn left up Kirk Street to reach the Parish Church of Markinch with its tower dating from c.1100.

Dedicated by David de Bernham, bishop of St Andrews, on 19 July 1243, the Kirk is dedicated to St Drostan, a Pictish saint centred on Old Deer in Buchan, Aberdeenshire, and to John the Baptist. The name Markinch is derived from the Pictish or Gaelic for 'horse- or steed-island'.



### 12 Glass Street and High Street

Walking down the Kirkbrae you enter the 'new town' of Markinch developed in the eighteenth century. Glass Street, immediately south of the kirkyard, was formerly known as *The Causey*, a causeway built up over boggy ground. Further on, the High Street was once named the *Howie Gate* which is Scots for a 'hollow road' or a road with steep sides. Return to the car park via Balgonie Road which passes the railway station.