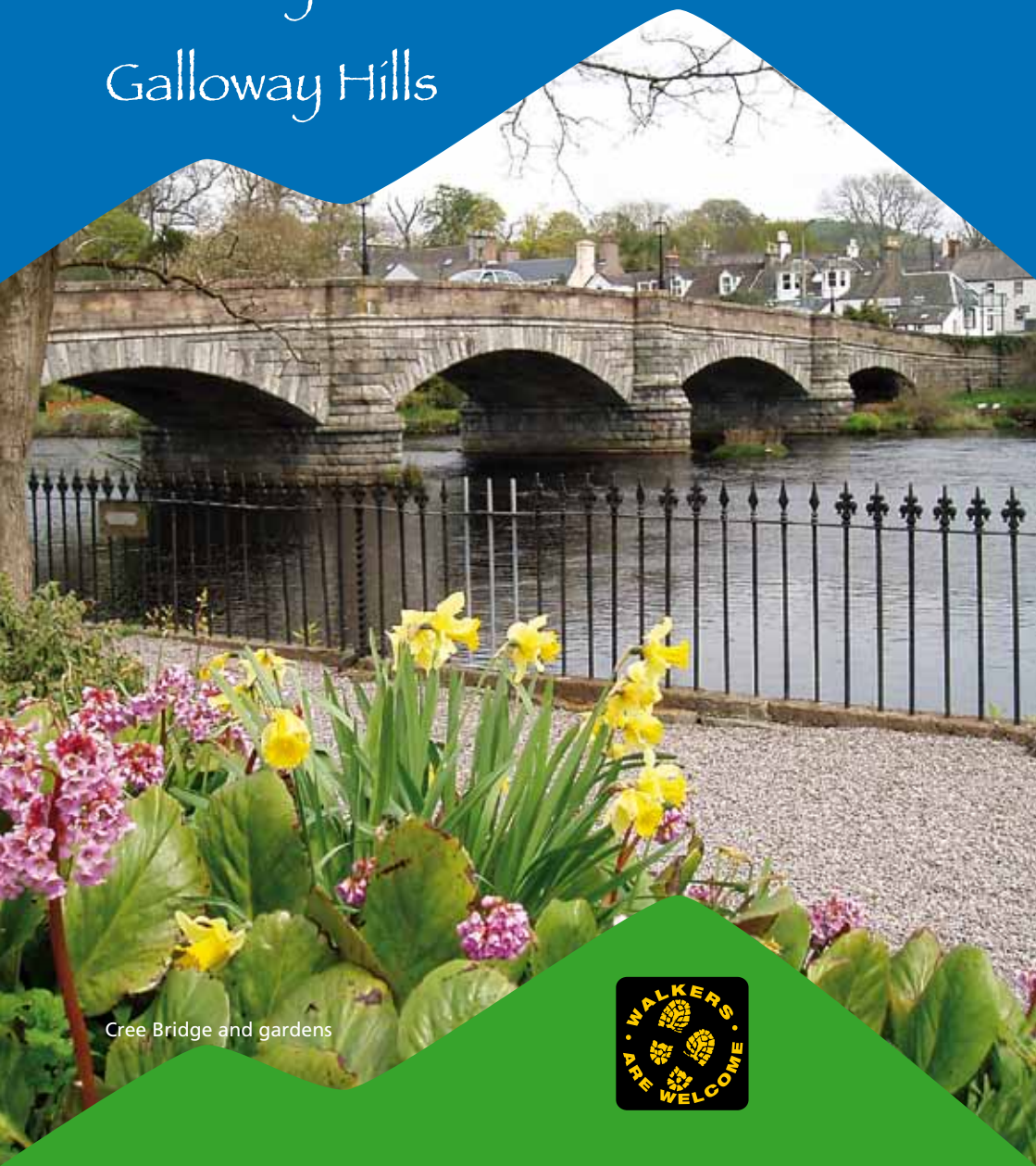


Newton Stewart Walks

Gateway to the
Galloway Hills



Cree Bridge and gardens





Creebridge

Newton Stewart - 'Land of Silvery Winding Cree'

Newton Stewart, Gateway to the Galloway Hills, lies in the heart of Galloway. The town sits at the lowest bridging point of the River Cree which winds its way from its source in Loch Moan high up in Galloway Forest Park to its estuary at Creetown and Wigtown Bay.

Newton Stewart owes its character to the Cree which formed the historic boundary between the two districts of Galloway - the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright to the east and 'the Shire'- Wigtownshire- to the west. On the east bank lie the old

settlements of Creebridge and Minnigaff, dating back to medieval times while Newton Stewart itself originated in the late eighteenth century as a planned town using the water of the Cree to power textile mills. Four bridges, two vehicular and two pedestrian, cross the Cree within the precincts of the town and another two cross its tributary the Penkiln. These feature in our picturesque walks and provide a viewpoint from which to watch the many anglers on the hunt for salmon, sea trout and brown trout.

Today Newton Stewart stretches for a mile and a half along the west bank of the Cree with the low-lying town centre backed by steep streets and lanes leading to newer residential areas from which you can enjoy spectacular views of the Galloway Hills. The town is dominated by the great rounded mass of Cairnsmore of Fleet with the more northerly skyline of the Minnigaff Hills, Larg, Lamachan and Curleywee, visible from several walks.

Within the town centre the walker should look out for interesting buildings such as the old town hall and clock tower, the Art Deco cinema, now a thriving community cinema, and the octagonal livestock mart which reminds us that Newton Stewart is still an important market town for the surrounding farming community.

The countryside and its wildlife is on the doorstep with woodlands, like Doonhill and Bower Wood, right on the edge of the town while Galloway Forest Park and Wigtown Bay Local Nature Reserve lie within easy walking distance. The walker has a good chance of seeing red squirrels, roe and fallow deer in the forests and fields while the bird life ranges from the summer warblers of the woodlands to the winter spectacular of overwintering wildfowl on the mudflats of the estuary.

The Walks

1. Riverside Poetry Walk
2. Cree Flood Plain
3. Old Minnigaff and the Two Rivers
4. The Town Periphery
5. Doonhill Woods
6. "The Country Ones" Walk
7. Penkiln Burn and Cumlodan Deerpark
8. The Port Road
9. Moss of Cree and Wigtown, Scotland's Booktown

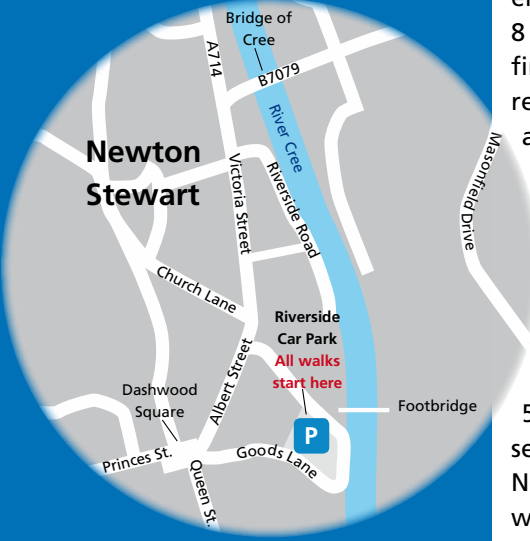


United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere

member of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves



The walks in this booklet are an introduction to the many and varied walking opportunities in Newton Stewart and district. They have been chosen to encourage people of all degrees of fitness to explore the town and its surroundings on foot and to help promote Newton Stewart as a 'Walkers are Welcome' town. They are easy or moderate walks and all start at the Riverside Car Park (NX413 653) in Newton Stewart.

Walks 1 to 7 are circular walks, ending at the car park while walks 8 and 9 are longer linear walks finishing at Creetown and Wigtown respectively. Public transport is available for the return journey or, if you prefer, you can take the bus out to Creetown or Wigtown and walk back into town. Bus service, 415, serves Wigtown to Newton Stewart at approximately hourly intervals on weekdays, less frequently on Sunday. Services 500/X75/431 provide a regular service between Creetown and Newton Stewart. The 500 service is wheelchair accessible. For detailed information, check Dumfries and Galloway Council website www.dumgal.gov.uk and click on 'bus time tables' from the home page or call Traveline Scotland on 0871 200 2233.

We hope we have whetted your appetite to explore further afield. If so the information board outside the Belted Galloway Visitor Centre in the Riverside Car Park shows the walking opportunities throughout the Cree Valley, or why not join us each May for the popular Newton Stewart Walking Festival.



Creemills



Suspension Bridge over River Cree

Route Information

- A brief description of the route, terrain, approximate distances and times and points of interest are given for each route.
- Each walk is colour coded in the booklet with matching route-markers on the ground.
- The description 'barrier-free' indicates suitability for wheelchairs or childrens' buggies.
- The orange covered OS Explorer 1:25,000 maps numbers 319 and 311 cover the area in detail.
- Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work
- Leave gates as you find them
- Keep dogs under close control at all times
- Keep to paths across farmland
- Take care on country roads
- Use gates and styles to cross fences, hedges and walls
- Respect farm livestock, crops and machinery
- Take your litter home with you
- Protect wildlife, plants and trees
- Guard against risk of fire
- Make no unnecessary noise
- Take particular care crossing A75

Walk 1: Riverside Poetry Walk

Route: Start and finish at Riverside Car Park, taking in both banks of the River Cree from the A75 to the Cree Bridge.

Description: Circular riverside walk with added interest of poetry inscriptions, also published in Cree Lines by Liz Niven. The verses celebrate the importance of the Cree in defining the character of Newton Stewart.

Distance: 1.5 miles/2.5km

Time: Allow 1 hour.

Terrain: Includes paved path and side roads and grass path which may be wet. Mainly level but includes steps, stile and kissing gate.

This walk is enlivened by inscriptions of poetry celebrating the River Cree, written by local poet, Liz Niven, as part of a project for Newton Stewart Initiative with words and ideas provided by local people. Before leaving the Riverside Car Park enjoy the verse, 'Cree Seasons', on the plaque on the river bank and the poem 'Brig' engraved on the metal of the pedestrian Sparling Bridge, celebrating the fish of the Cree.

Leave Riverside Car Park following the signed footpath on the west bank of the Cree, looking out for anglers and river birds like mallards, swans and goosander and the views of Cairnsmore of Fleet described



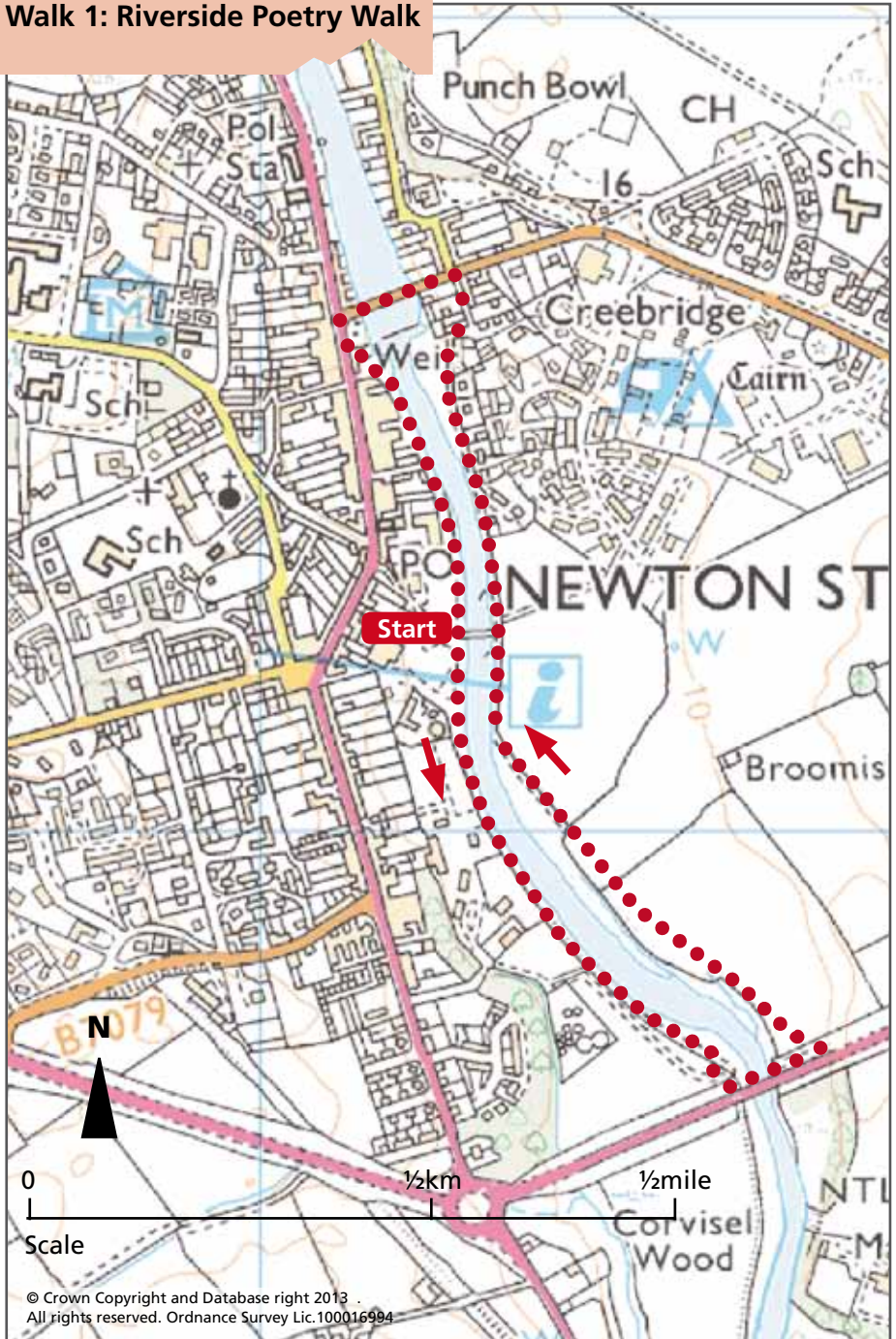
Creebridge

in 'Scan Horizons' inscribed on a granite seat.

At the underpass under the A75, climb the steps to the right and cross the river to the anglers' lay-by where another poem engraved on granite, 'Stravaigers's Rest', reminds us of travellers through Galloway as well as local folk. Descend the path to the stile into the fields and proceed to the west end of the Sparling Bridge with its verse reminding us that the Cree is the historic boundary between the Stewartry (Kirkcudbrightshire) and the Shire (Wigtownshire)

Carry straight on along the riverside to the main road before turning left across the attractive Cree Bridge. This bridge was built in 1813, replacing an earlier wooden bridge and ford on this important river crossing point with its old tollhouse. Turn left passing the gardens and memorial to Randolph, Ninth Earl of Galloway. If you turn left to the riverside at the eighteenth century clock tower, you will spot the last poem, 'Cree Voice', engraved in the sandstone surface of the river wall, before returning to the car park.

Walk 1: Riverside Poetry Walk



Start at Riverside Car Park, Grid Reference NX413 653

Walk 2: Cree Flood Plain

Route: Riverside Car Park to Nether Barr returning by same route

Description: Pleasant stroll along the banks and floodplain of the River Cree with views of the Minnigaff Hills

Distance: 2.6 miles/4.2km

Time: Allow 1.5 hours

Terrain: Barrier-free, all on paved cycle path; mainly on the level but including approximately 60m stretch with 14% gradient.

The first section of this walk follows the same route as the first part of Walk 1 and you should pause in the Riverside Car Park to read the verses on the plaque on the riverbank and on the entrance to the Sparling foot bridge. This bridge, completed in 1998, is named after sparling, a rare fish breeding only in the River Cree and two other sites in Scotland.

This route stays on the west bank of the Cree so leave the Riverside Car Park following the signing for the Riverside Walk. Look out for the birds which frequent the river - mallards, mute swans and swallows skimming over the river surface on summer evenings.

Leaving the town behind, you pass under the A75 by-pass bridge and follow the cycle path which skirts the edge of the Cree floodplain.



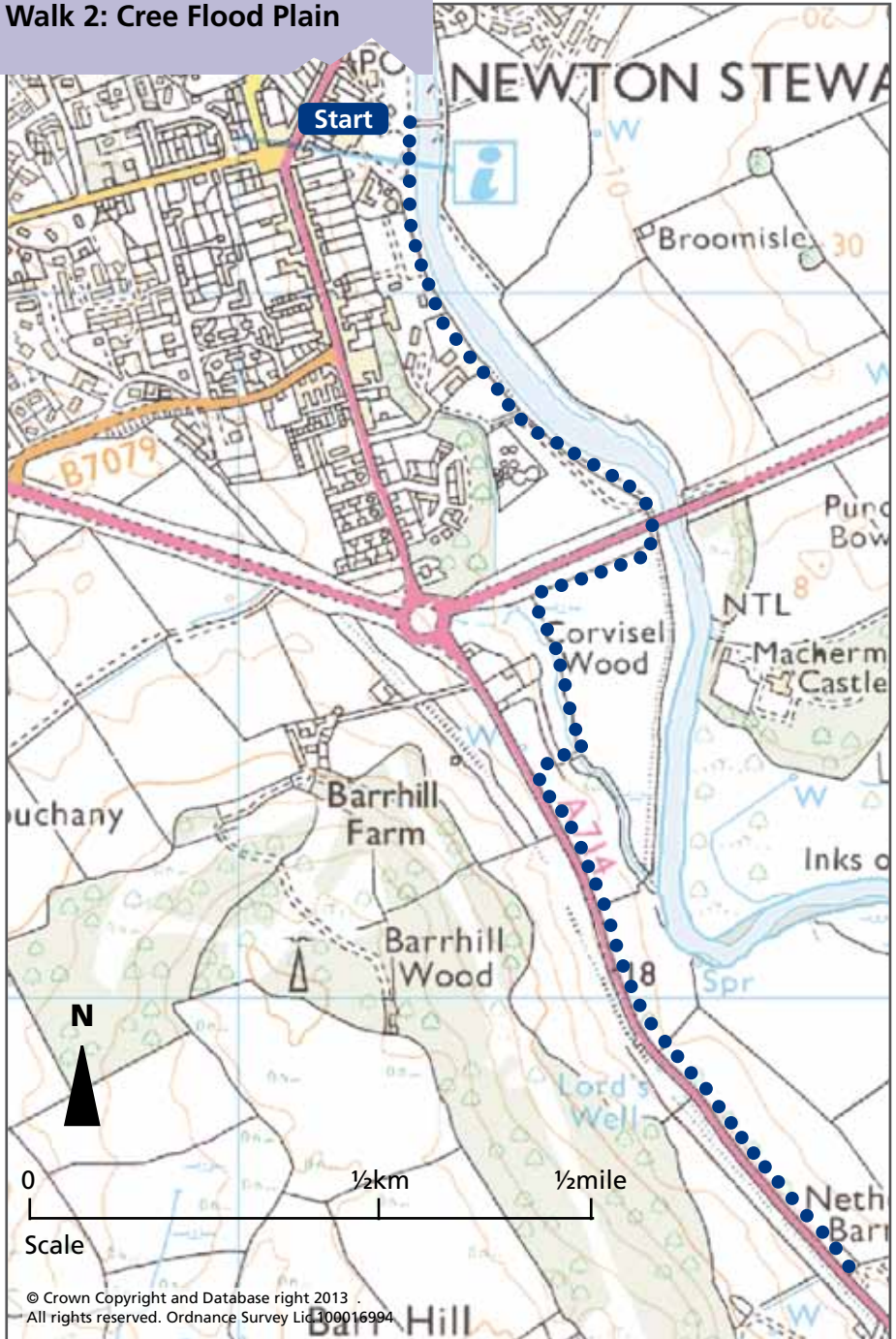
River Cree

The river meanders in wide sweeps across its floodplain and this area frequently floods when heavy rain and high tides coincide. To the left of the footpath lie marshy meadows with reed beds on the right. Look out for the plants such as rushes, sedges, lady's smock and meadow sweet associated with this habitat.

Take a breather at the handy bench and enjoy the view to the left of the hill mass of Cairnsmore of Fleet and the village of Blackcraig. The rocks around Cairnsmore of Fleet contain mineable seams of lead and copper and Blackcraig was a centre of lead mining in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Turning at Nether Barr retrace your route back to town, enjoying the fine views of the town and its backdrop of the Minnigaff Hills - Larg, Lamachan and the distinctive 'peak' of Curleywee. In this direction you get a good impression of the site of Newton Stewart at the lowest bridging point of the River Cree and appreciate why it earns its title as the 'Gateway to the Galloway Hills'.

Walk 2: Cree Flood Plain



Start at Riverside Car Park, Grid Reference NX413 653

Walk 3: Old Minnigaff and the Two Rivers

Route: Minnigaff, Queen Mary's Bridge, Suspension Bridge, back to town centre via Windsor Road

Description: A circular walk through the old settlement of Minnigaff, featuring the bridges of the Cree and Penkiln Burn.

Distance: 2.7 miles/4.3km

Time: Allow 1.5 hours

Terrain: Mixture of pavements and paved side roads plus a footpath. Includes a few short climbs.

Leaving Riverside Car Park, cross the Sparling Bridge and turn left along the river side. Follow the road, enjoying the fine view of the Cree Bridge, to the junction with the main road. Go straight ahead through the old settlement of Creebridge passing the old Toll House on your left. The pleasant walk from Creebridge into the centre of Old Minnigaff provides views of the rivers and passes fine buildings such as the old nineteenth century corn mill, now in residential use.

After the Youth Hostel, veer right at the next junction up Old Edinburgh Road, a surviving section of the historic route which carried trade and pilgrims from Edinburgh to Wigtownshire. At the last house, head left through the kissing gate along the lane into Bower Drive.

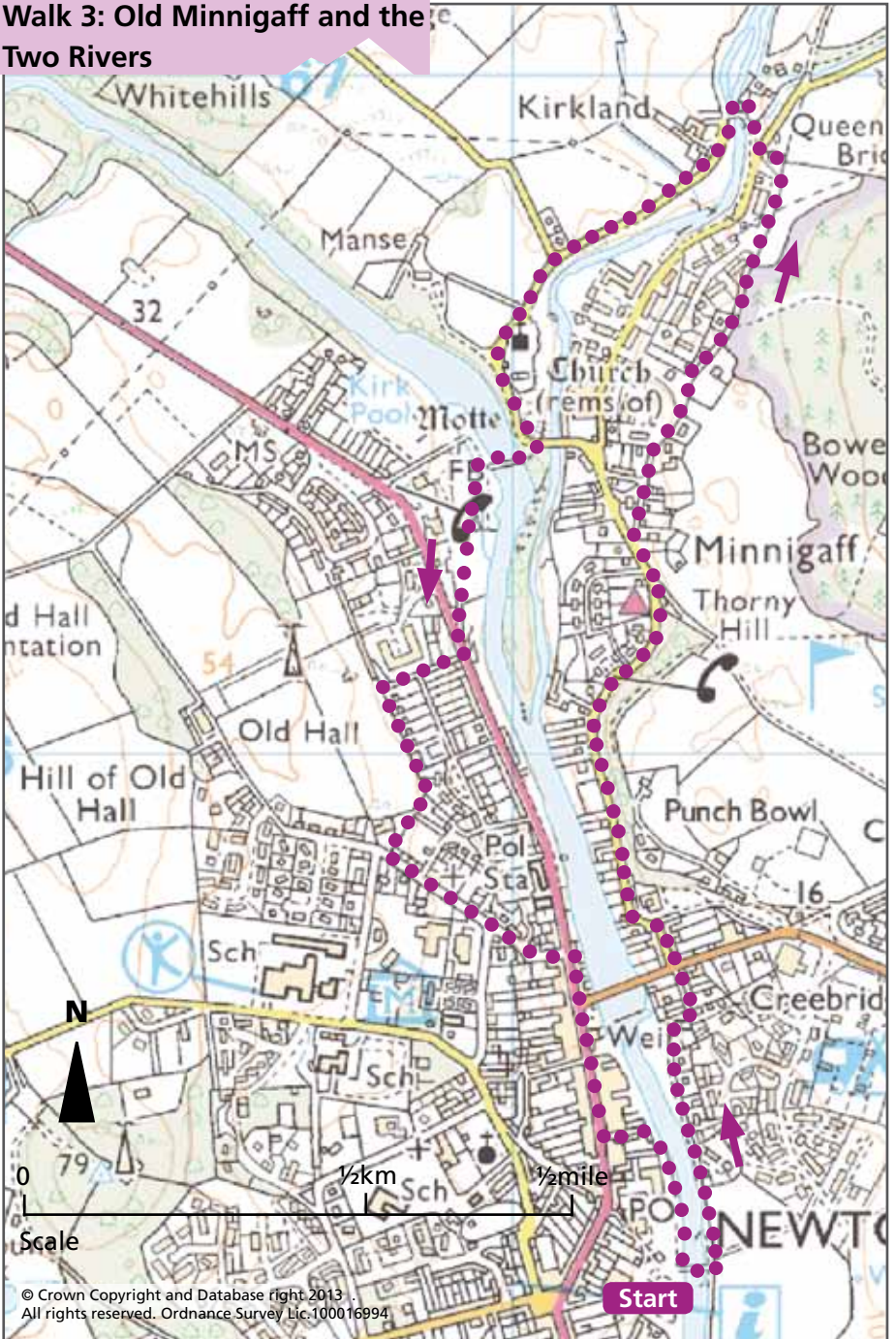


Descend to the main road and cross to the lane on the left leading to the picturesque Queen Mary's Bridge and the Penkiln Burn. The adjacent building, the Waulk Mill, is another reminder of former industries based on water power.

Turning left you climb to Monigaff Church occupying an old defensive site at the junction of the Penkiln and the Cree. Take time to explore the motte and kirkyard with its medieval church ruins before crossing the pedestrian Suspension Bridge into the 'new town' of Newton Stewart.

Turning left through the public gardens you cross a mill lade before entering a new housing development built on the site of the former Cree Mills which continued the tradition of woollen and mohair cloth manufacture until it closed in the 1980s. At the main street cross diagonally and climb the steep lane leading to a footpath which provides fine views of the town and surrounding woods and hills. At Windsor Road turn left straight down the hill to the Salt Box Brae before regaining the car park via the main street.

Walk 3: Old Minnigaff and the Two Rivers



Start at Riverside Car Park, Grid Reference NX413 653

Walk 4: The Town Periphery

Route: Circuit round the periphery of Minnigaff via the Golf Course, Bower Wood and the Suspension Bridge returning via Old Hall Farm.

Description: A walk with a pleasing mixture of woodland and open space offering panoramic views of the town.

Distance: 4 miles/6.5km

Time: Allow 2.5 hours

Terrain: Mainly unpaved paths with likelihood of muddy sections; 80m of ascent with some moderate slopes.

Crossing the Cree from Riverside Car Park via the Sparling Bridge, turn left and follow the side road along the river bank. At the main road at the Cree Bridge turn right, passing the petrol station. Take the pedestrian route straight ahead through the bollards to Kirroughtree Avenue.

Passing the golf pavilion on the left cross the line of the Old Military Road, the old route to Ireland, and take a path to the left leading to the golf course. Skirt the golf course on its right hand perimeter, watching out for players, but enjoying the fine views over the town and the policies of Kirroughtree House, once the seat of the Heron family and now a quality hotel. At the far end of the golf course skirt the Lily Pond and enter the Wild Wood through a gap in the wall.



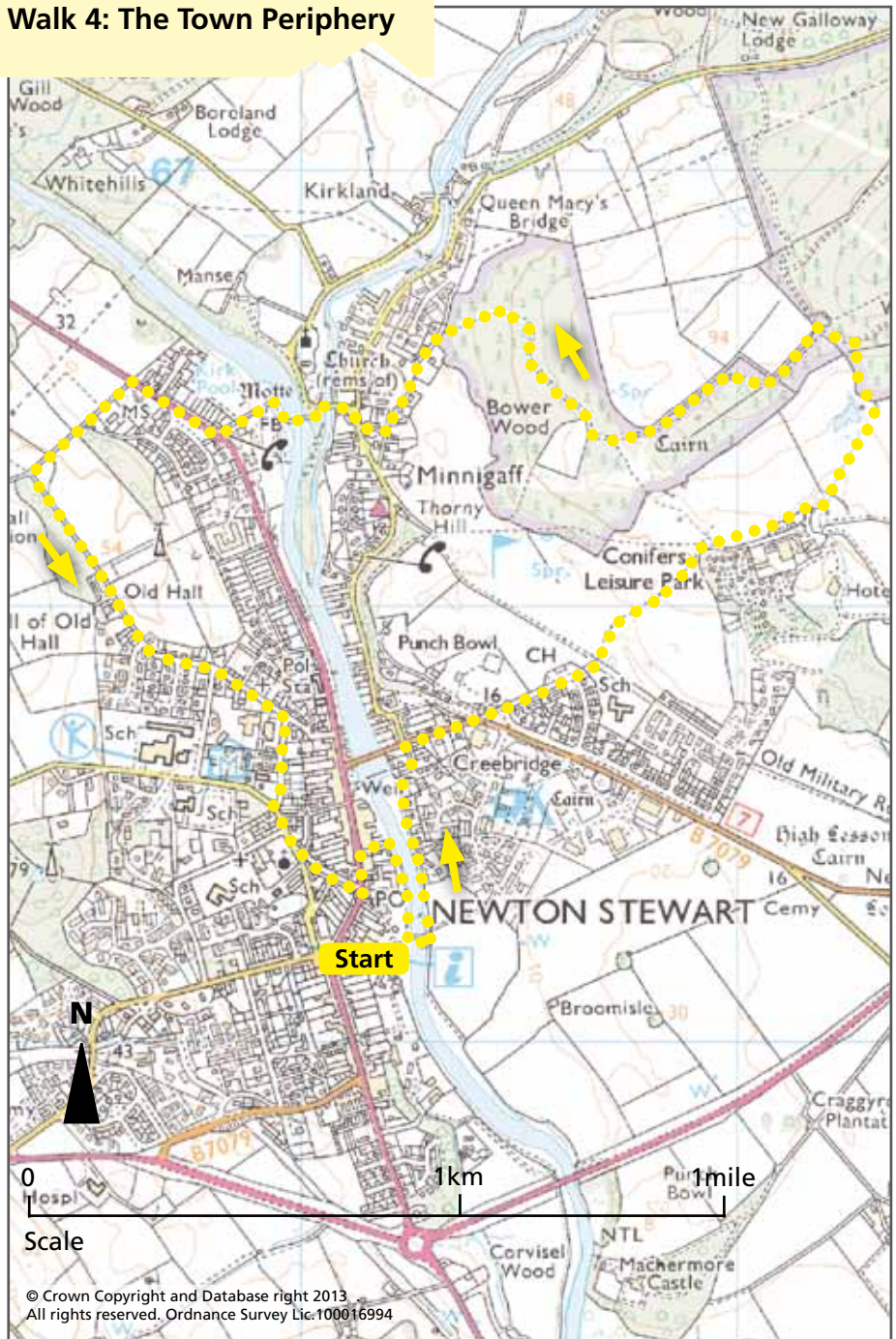
Newton Stewart golf course looking towards Cairnsmore of Fleet

Turn sharp left and follow waymarkers through the mature coniferous plantation of Wild Wood and Bower Wood with the chance to detour to the left to visit the Doocot, a popular local landmark dating back to the early eighteenth century. Leave the wood at the Old Edinburgh Road, and head downhill to the junction with the main road.

Turn right then first left, signed Wood of Cree Reserve, crossing first the Penkiln Burn and then the Cree via the Suspension Bridge. Turn right following the paved road up to Douglas Terrace turning right at the telephone kiosk. At the 30 mile limit take the track to the left signed Duncree House. Climbing the hill you look across the hillocks of glacial moraine on your right with unfolding views of the Minnigaff Hills. Duncree Wood on your left, under the management of Cree Valley Community Woodlands, merits a detour before reaching the corner of a plantation where you turn left down a dyke-edged farm track.

Proceed down past Old Hall Farm to Windsor Drive. Turn right at York Road past the town tennis courts and Newton Stewart Museum on your way back to the car park.

Walk 4: The Town Periphery



Start at Riverside Car Park, Grid Reference NX413 653

Walk 5: Doonhill Woods

Route: Riverside Car Park to Doonhill Wood via Albert Street and Princes Road; returning via Corsbie Road.

Description: A pleasant walk on the outskirts of Newton Stewart including woodland and pond area managed by Cree Valley Community Woodlands and panoramas of the town and surrounding hills.

Distance: 2.5 miles/4km

Time: Allow 2.5 hours

Terrain: Mixture of paved sidewalks and woodland path.

Leave Riverside Car Park via the main access road signed to the town centre. At the main street turn left past the Bank of Scotland. At Dashwood Square turn right admiring, on the left, the mass of McMillan Hall, a monument to Victorian confidence and enterprise.

Climb up Princes Street until you reach a kissing gate on the right, which gives access to Doonhill Woods. This area of mixed woods, consisting of mainly ash, oak and sycamore, is managed by Cree Valley Community Woodland Trust, whose vision is to recreate a continuous corridor of native woodlands along the full length of the Cree Valley. This woodland brings spring bluebells, nesting tits and evening bats right into the town.



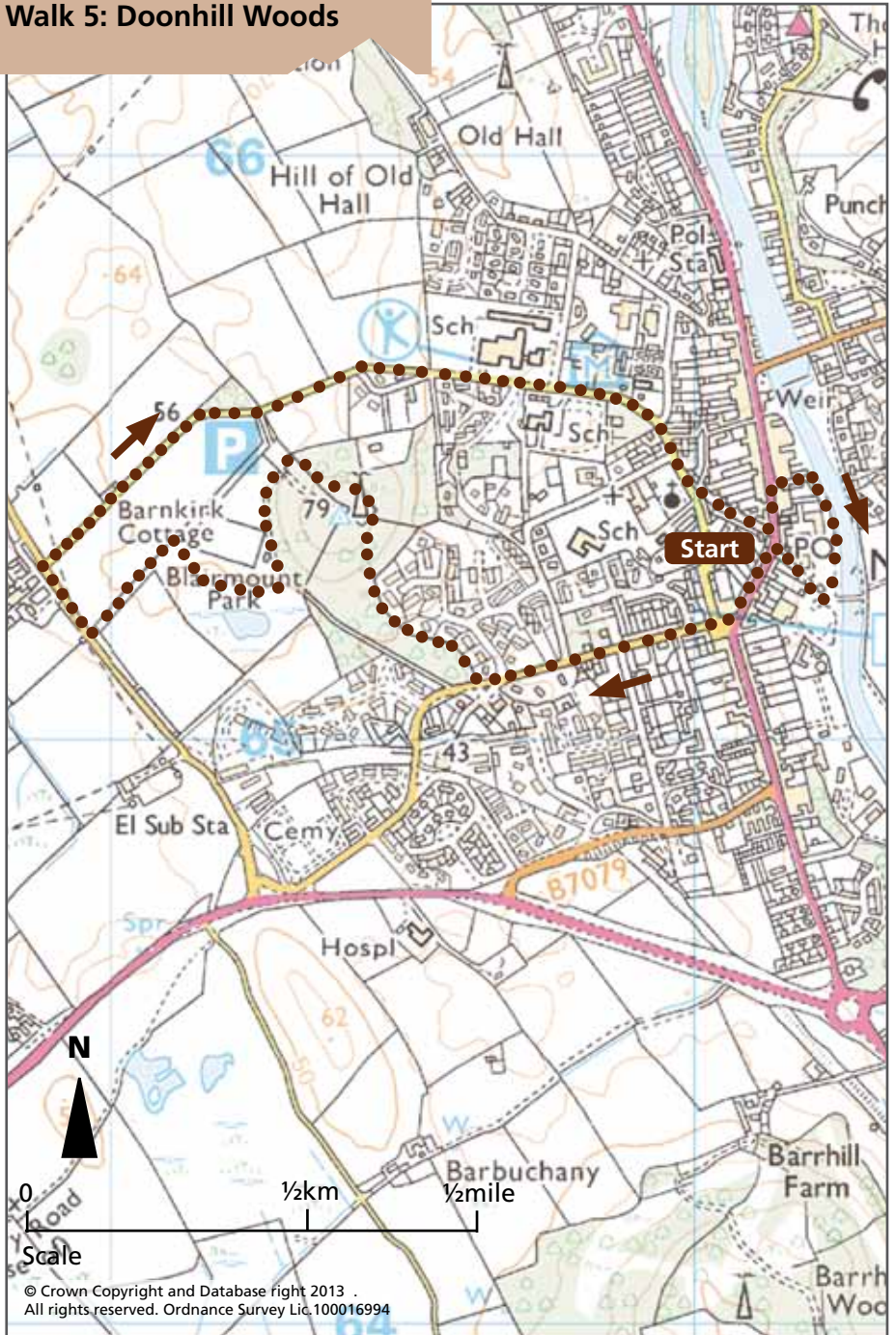
Blairmount Pond

Follow the Newton Stewart Walks waymarkers which bear uphill and take you into Blairmount Park through a stand of beech. Skirting the edge of the park, past the pavilion, you reach a pond and boardwalk. This former curling pond has been modified by the woodland trust to provide a variety of habitat for plants like bogbean and march cinquefoil and look out for waterfowl, frogs and toads, or dragonfly and damselfly hovering over the summer waters.

Leaving the pond, continue through the larch plantation before taking a left turn leading to Barnkirk Road. Turn right for a few yards, then right again and follow the side road which will take you back into town. On the way you will enjoy spectacular views over Newton Stewart with Cairnsmore of Fleet straight ahead and the Minnigaff Hills ranged on the left.

The road leads past the Merrick Leisure Centre and Douglas Ewart High School, the secondary school serving the Machars; at the foot turn right and then left opposite the bowling green to return to the main street and car park.

Walk 5: Doonhill Woods



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Start at Riverside Car Park, Grid Reference NX413 653

Walk 6: "The Country Ones" Walk

Route: Circular route from Riverside Car Park, via Carsenaw, Parkmaclurg and Blackcraig.

Description: Easy walk in floodplain of River Cree, the landscape of which is evocatively described in local author Mary Curran's book "The Country Ones" which describes the childhood of young Aggie Kenny on a Galloway farm in the post-World War 1 period.

Distance: 5 miles/8.2km.

Time: Allow 2.5 hours

Terrain: Barrier-free, level, on paved side-roads and cycle paths with two crossings of the A75 trunk road.

Leave Riverside Car Park via the Sparling Bridge and follow the cycle path straight ahead, bearing left through the housing estate until you reach the main road (same as Walk 9) where you turn right, following Aggie's route to school.

Follow the cycle path until the junction at Machermore cemetery where you take the slip road on the right before carefully crossing the A75 to Aggie's hedge-bordered lane: "a country world that made up the Little Valley hemmed in between Barr in the west and Larg in the east with Cairnsmore looming behind for the sun to climb over in the morning."



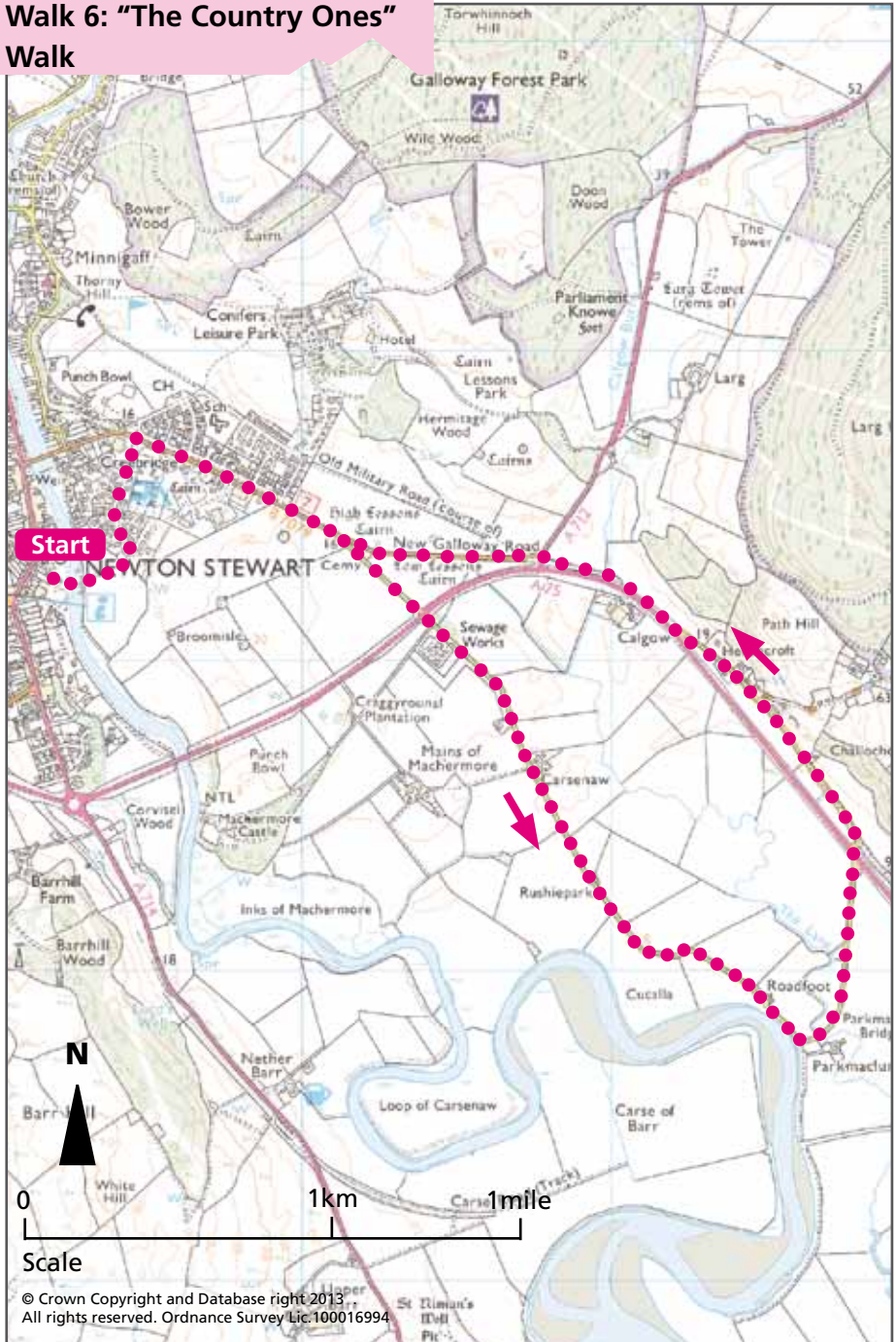
Reed beds on the River Cree

After Carsenaw Farm you pass the cottage, Rushiepark, which was Aggie's home. The name, like the 'carse' suffix in farm names, reminds us that this land is composed of marine clays deposited by post-glacial seas and needs careful drainage to maintain the fertile dairy-farming industry we see today.

Continue on the gentle lane past the meandering Cree whose "soughing reeds" and the "flat full look of clay-coloured water when the tide came creeping up from the bay" frightened Aggie. Then bear left to cross the A75 into the approach road to Blackcraig village - Aggie's "Hill Village", where lead was mined in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Aggie and her father liked to visit the McClurg family: "Mrs McClurg's house was one of a straggling row of white-washed cottages with a thatched roof. Behind the house was a long garden with a row of bee-boxes down one side and a pig-house at the far end."

Leaving Blackcraig, follow the Sustrans Route 7 cyclepath. Cross the A712, past the site of a skirmish in 1300 between English forces under Edward 1 and the Comyns in the Wars of Independence. Follow the old boundary wall of Kirroughtree estate policies back into town.

Walk 6: "The Country Ones" Walk



Start at Riverside Car Park, Grid Reference NX413 653

Walk 7: Penkiln Burn and Cumloden Deer Park

Route: Riverside Car Park, through old Minnigaff, Queen Mary's Bridge to Cumloden Deer Park, returning via Knockman Wood and the Suspension Bridge to town centre.

Description: A walk with attractive riverside and woodlands sections on Cumloden Estate and featuring the attractive Penkiln Burn and Knockman Wood.

Distance: 4.6 miles/7.4 km.

Time: Allow 2.5 hours

Terrain: Combination of paved sidewalks and grassy paths which may include boggy or muddy sections. Level or gentle slopes.

Cross the Sparling Bridge and turn left along the river bank, following the side street to the main road at Creebridge. Cross the road and head through Creebridge and Old Minnigaff, carrying straight ahead at Cumloden Road.*

After the junction with Bower Drive turn left down a lane to Queen Mary's Bridge across the Penkiln Burn and turn sharp right along the streamside path. The Penkiln Burn tumbles through mixed woodlands with banks of woodrush, while the fields to the left are bordered by fine examples of Galloway drystone dykes.

Passing through a kissing gate at Garden Cottage you enter Cumloden



Queen Mary's Bridge

Deer Park - an extensive unfenced area of land abandoned from agriculture

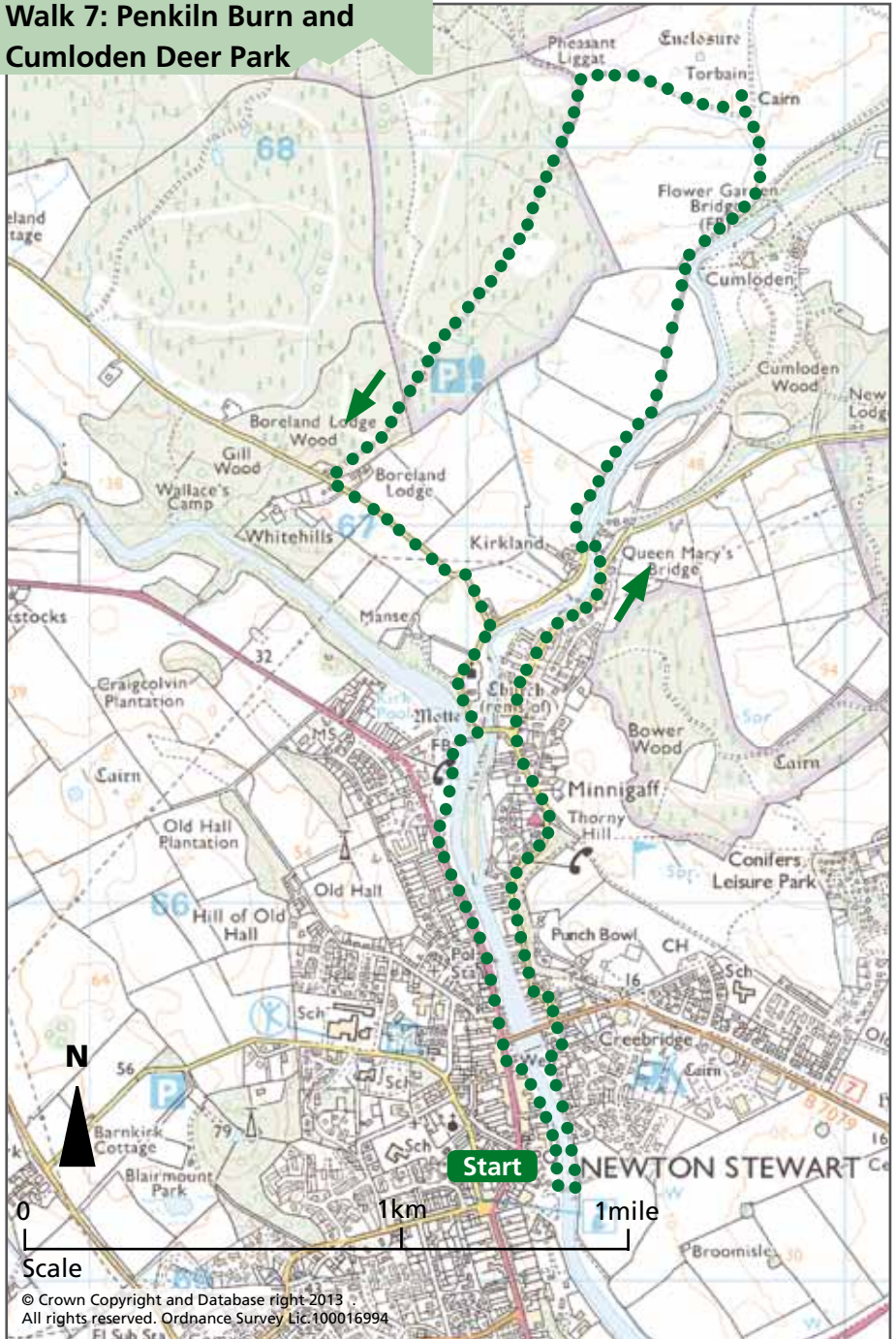
and converted into deer park for sport by General Sir William Stewart of Cumloden in the early nineteenth century. The moor is peppered with prehistoric hut circles and cairns as well as wildlife interest.

Opposite a small white gate in the wall of the estate policies turn left, crossing an area with a mosaic of bogs and grassy knolls and studded with lovely park oak trees with spreading canopies. Fork left past a cairn-topped knoll and climb through rough bracken-covered ground to a gate leading into Knockman Wood. This area of mixed woodland, now managed by Cree Valley Community Woodlands, contains much of archaeological interest, with deserted fermtouns and corn kilns recalling its farming past.

Turn sharp left keeping the spruce plantation on your right and head down to the public road, where you turn left and follow the road past Monigaff Church, before crossing the Cree on the Suspension Bridge. Across the bridge bear left through the new housing estate on the site of the former Cree Mills, climbing to join the main road at King St. Follow this street back to the town centre enjoying the river views and the pleasant riverside gardens.

* For further description see Walk 3.

Walk 7: Penkiln Burn and Cumloiden Deer Park



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Start at Riverside Car Park, Grid Reference NX413 653

Walk 8: The Port Road

Route: Newton Stewart to Creetown via Stronord, Strathmaddie, old railway line cycle path with return by bus.

Description: A pleasant linear walk to the village of Creetown, with woodland stretches, and panoramic views of the Cree Estuary.

Distance: 7.5 miles/12 km.

Time: Allow 4 hours.

Terrain: Tarred side roads and cycle path with one short but very steep section.

Starting at Riverside Car Park, cross the Sparling Bridge and go straight ahead along a hedge-fringed cycleway. At the housing estate bear left until you reach the main road. Turn right and thereafter follow the signed Sustrans cyclepath 7 all the way to Creetown.

The first section follows the old boundary wall of the policies of Kirroughtree Estate before crossing the A712 to Blackcraig village. As you climb the steep Mines Hill, pause to enjoy views of the Cree floodplain. At the top of the hill you will pass ruins of the cottages of Blackcraig mining village where lead and copper were mined in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. You are now entering Galloway Forest Park. The coniferous forest, with its fringe of beech trees, which clothes the hill



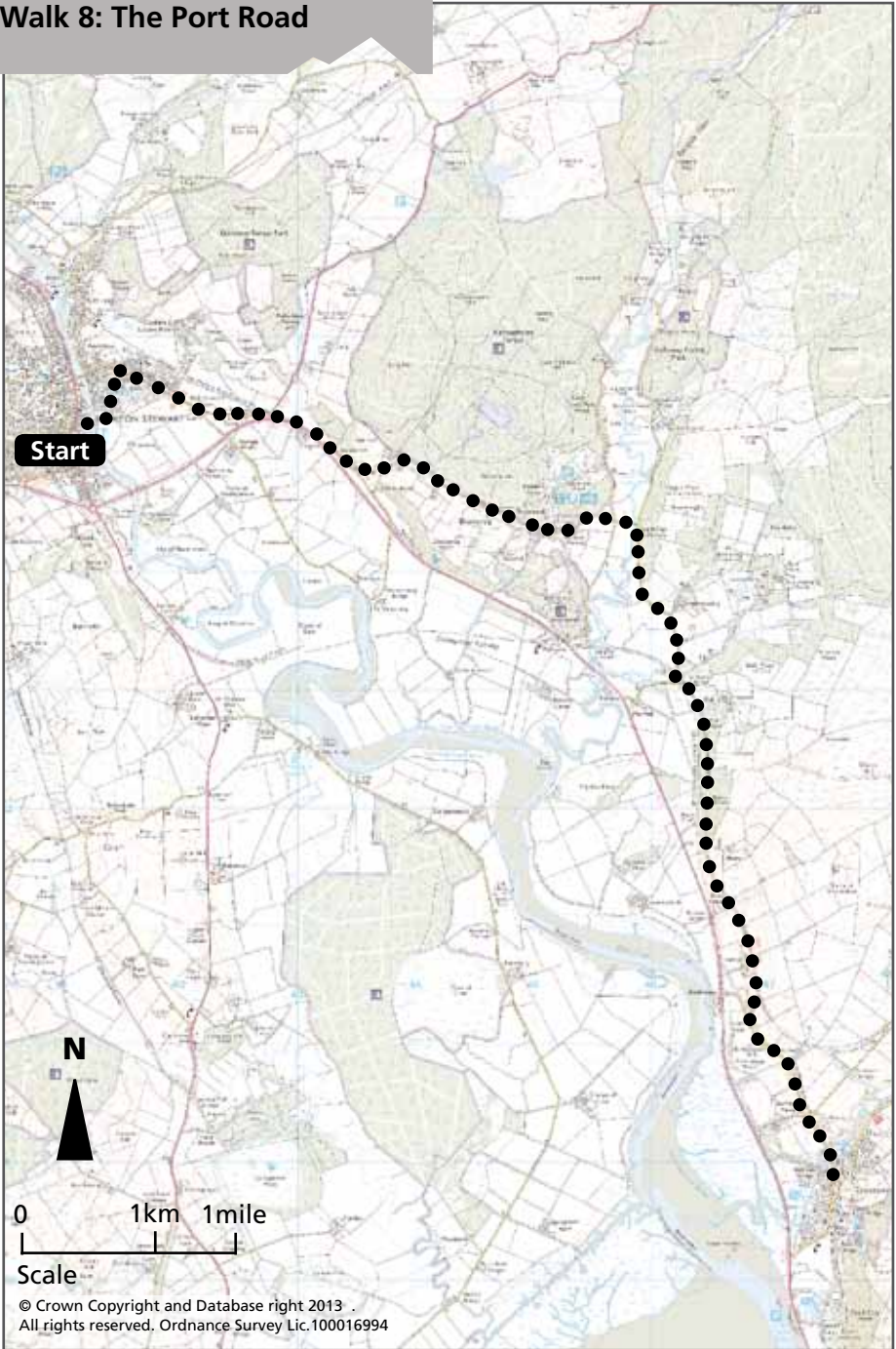
from here to Stronord masks the old mining landscape of mine shafts, adits and spoil heaps *

At Stronord enjoy the view of the great hill mass of Cairnsmore of Fleet. Keeping straight ahead at the crossroads you cross the old stone bridge across the Palnure Burn which drains Bargaly Glen, one of the loveliest glens in the area.

Turn right and follow the road until you reach the Greddock Burn where you join a section of the old railway line, the Port Road, which served Stranraer and Northern Ireland, before the Beeching axe fell in the 1960s. For the next half hour you pass through mixed woods and shaded railway cuttings where the water-soaked rocks provide an ideal habitat for many varieties of mosses and ferns, including hart's tongue, polypody, and maiden hair spleenwort. Enjoy spectacular views of the carse lands of the meandering Cree, under sea level in post-glacial times, and later reclaimed from peat bog to yield fertile dairying farmland. Areas of unreclaimed moss are still visible. At the end of the cycle path, follow the road into Creetown where the fine public space of Adamson Square reminds you of its granite heritage.

** For more information visit Kirroughtree Visitors' Centre and follow the Lade Trail.*

Walk 8: The Port Road



Start at Riverside Car Park, Grid Reference NX413 653

Walk 9: The Moss Of Cree and Wigtown, Scotland's Booktown

Route: Newton Stewart to Wigtown via cycle path and Moss of Cree Road.

Description: A linear walk through the flood plain of the River Cree skirting Wigtown Bay Nature Reserve to historic Wigtown.

Distance: 8 miles/13km.

Time: Allow 4 hours

Terrain: Barrier-free route on paved, mainly level, surfaces but with two short steep sections. Return possible by bus but vehicle may not be wheelchair-accessible

Leave Riverside Car Park along the west bank of the Cree, following the same route along the cycle path as Walk 2, as far as Nether Barr.

At Nether Barr continue along the cycle path until it ends, then take the side road on the left signed Carty Port and Moss of Cree. This leads past the reed beds fringing the meandering Cree and the former Carty Port, the site of a former tile and brick works as well as a reminder of the importance of river and sea-based commercial trade in the nineteenth century.

The road leads past the birch-fringed Moss of Cree, an area of raised bog, much-modified by coniferous plantations. To the left the flat, green fields of the Cree floodplain support a thriving dairy farming industry, characterised by large modern



County Buildings, Wigtown

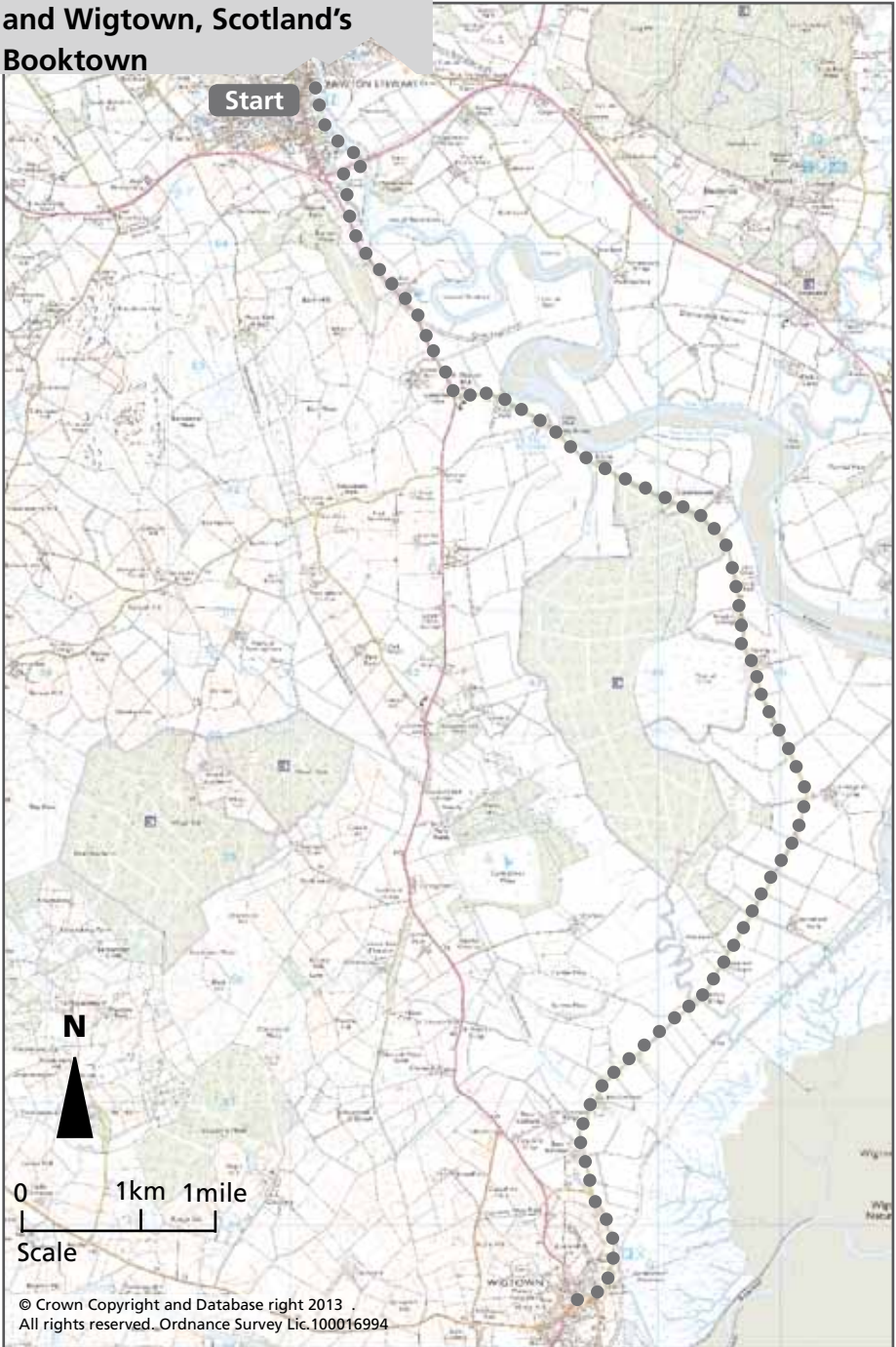
steadings and intensive production. Farm names like Carsenestock and Borrowmoss remind us that this land has been reclaimed from peat bog.

Passing the farm road of Grange of Cree vistas of Wigtown Bay and the estuary of the Cree open out. Looking across to the east side of the river, Creetown, the Ferrytoon of Cree, sheltered under the Larg Hill and, further south, the scars of its former granite quarries are visible on the hillside.

Crossing Bishop Burn, the old county town of Wigtown, sitting on its drumlin mound and overlooking the salt marshes of Wigtown Bay Nature Reserve, becomes increasingly visible. These saltings with their tragic history of the Wigtown martyrs, executed by drowning in 1685 for their adherence to the Covenanters' cause, have contributed greatly to the character of the burgh. Today the saltings are better known for their spectacular bird life, especially over-wintering wildfowl and both the Martyr's Stake and the bird hide at Wigtown Harbour are well worth a visit.

The walk ends with a steep climb up to the town centre with its fine nineteenth century county buildings, pleasant streetscape and bookshops.

Walk 9: The Moss Of Cree and Wigtown, Scotland's Booktown



Start at Riverside Car Park, Grid Reference NX413 653

Newton Stewart Walks



Newton Stewart and the Galloway Hills

For further information on the area:-

Dumfries and Galloway Tourism websites

www.visitdumfriesandgalloway.co.uk www.wildseasons.co.uk

Newton Stewart town website

www.newtonstewart.org

Newton Stewart Walking Festival website

www.newtonstewartwalkfest.com

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Mary Curran, *"The Country Ones"*, ReadingLasses Press, Wigtown, 1998

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Photographs by Robert McQuistan, Jim Deans, Bill Mitchell

This brochure has been produced by Newton Stewart Walking Festival / Walkers are Welcome Committee in co-operation with Dumfries and Galloway Council and celebrates 2013, the 'Year of Natural Scotland'. Grant funding has been provided by Scottish Natural Heritage and Dumfries and Galloway Council. Text by Joan Mitchell.