

COLINTON

LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

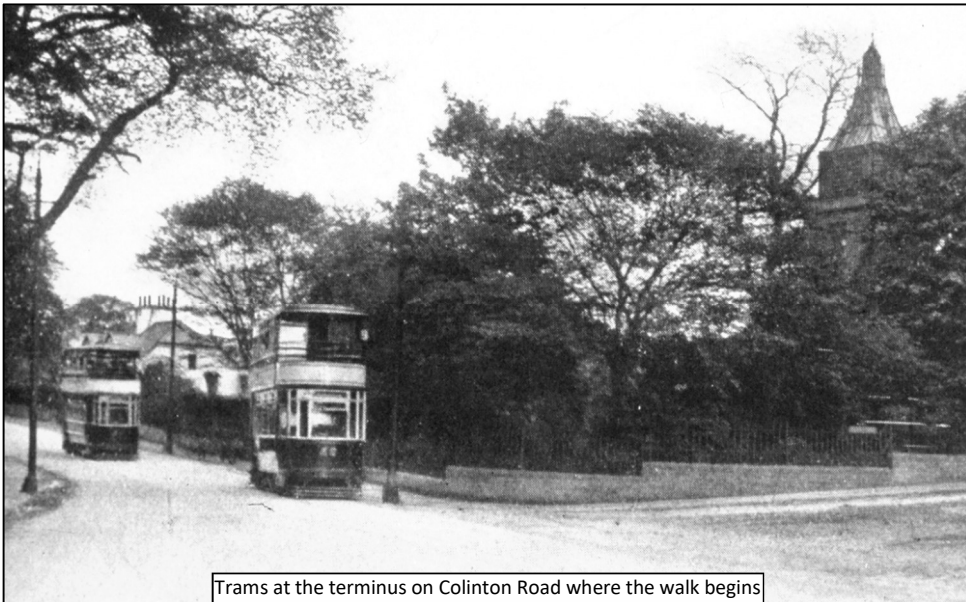


Walks around the parish of Colinton

Walk 3: Cottages, Chimney Sweeps, Castles and Kings

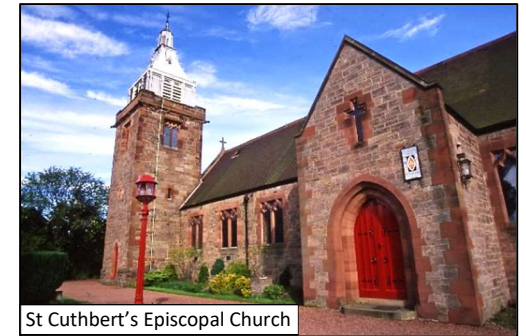
St Cuthbert's Episcopal Church – Rustic Cottages – Drummond Scrolls – Colinton Column – Dreghorn Woods – World War I Trenches – Polo Fields – Laverockdale – Dreghorn Loan – Woodhall Road

The walk is just over 2 miles long, on a mixture of surfaced pavements, good but unsurfaced footpaths (which can be muddy) and quiet roadway. The route includes uphill sections.



START ON COLINTON ROAD AT THE FOOT OF WESTGARTH AVENUE.

On the eastern corner site of the junction stands St Cuthbert's Scottish Episcopal Church. The site was provided by local landowner R A Macfie of Dreghorn for the nominal feu duty of one peppercorn, and the original church was designed (1888-89) and partially funded by Sir Robert Rowand Anderson, the eminent architect who lived in Colinton and was a member of St Cuthbert's congregation. Rowand Anderson also designed the interior of the original building, including the surviving pews and altar screen, and carried out some of the stencilling on the ceiling. The belfry was added by him in 1894.



On the opposite side of Colinton Road is a small modern development of houses, St Cuthbert's Close. The small one-storey building at the westerly end of the terrace facing Colinton Road was originally the tram waiting room and toilets for the tram crews, since the tram terminus was in front of St Cuthbert's Church. The building subsequently became Colinton's public toilets before being incorporated into the housing development. The two-storey section of the terrace is on a site occupied at one time by Swanson's Garage and later by Glenvarigill car showroom.

Walk along Colinton Road in front of the church (away from Colinton Village) and immediately you come to a row of distinctive white-harled houses behind thick hedges. These are Rustic Cottages, designed (1900-1902) by Sir Robert Lorimer, another renowned architect with Colinton connections – some of his best-known houses are in Colinton.

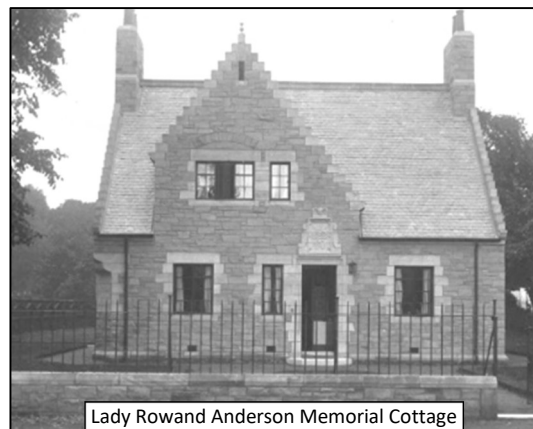


Opposite Rustic Cottages is what is possibly the oldest house in Colinton, Heather Cottage. It was built as a lodge house for the Colinton House Estate and was originally thatched. At the beginning of the 20th century it was occupied by Jock Dickson, the local chimney sweep, and his wife.



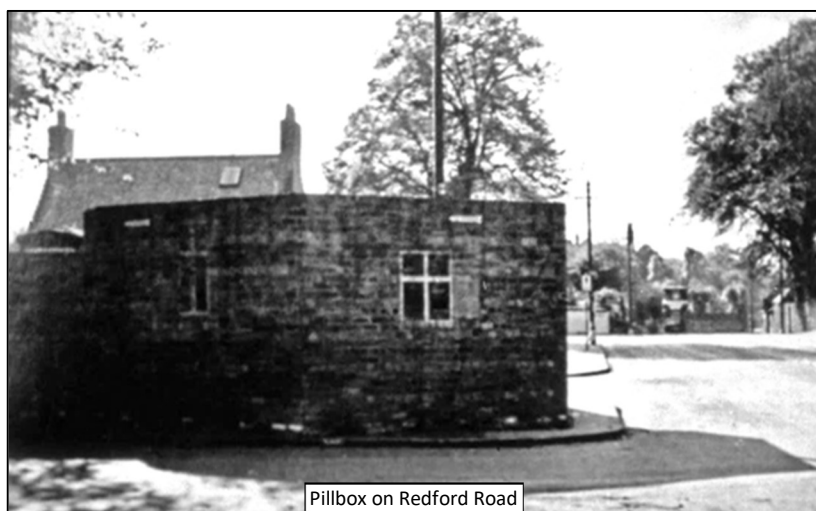
Carry on along Colinton Road, crossing over Thorburn Road. If you look a short distance up Thorburn Road you will see on the west side, behind a wall, a large stone building which is now a nursing home but which was originally the primary school. It was still used as Bonaly School Annexe until Bonaly Primary School in Bonaly Road was rebuilt and expanded in 2008.

The smaller stone building with crow-step gables which you're now standing beside was built in 1921 as the Lady Rowand Anderson Memorial Cottage. The architect, Sir Robert Rowand Anderson, provided a sum of money to build the cottage in memory of his wife and it was occupied by the local district nurse. The building is now part of Colinton Cottage Homes, a complex of retirement homes owned and managed by the charity The Aged Christian Friend Society of Scotland.



Lady Rowand Anderson Memorial Cottage

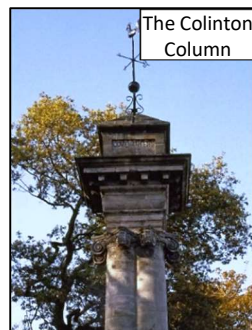
Staying on Colinton Road, you come to the junction with Redford Road where you will notice a traffic island at the junction where a tree is growing. This is known as the "Sixpenny Tree". The young tree which stands today on the traffic island at the junction of Redford Road and Colinton Road is the third of three attempted replacement plantings of the old tree which was found to have died and was removed in 1994. At that time the old tree was about 150 years old, so that it must have been planted around the middle of the 19th century. It seems that the tree planted then took the place of a previous tree on the same site, so the story goes back a very long way. The sixpence referred to in its name was of course the pre-decimal coin which in 1971, when decimal coinage was introduced, was the equivalent of 2.4p. Its actual buying power in the 19th century would naturally have been many times more than that. There are many theories about how the Sixpenny Tree got its name, but the most likely one is that the tree was the meeting place for employees of the local paper mills. The workmen came to the tree to make their payment of sixpence to pay their contribution to the Paper Makers' Union, whose business was conducted there. At the time of World War II, this site was rather incongruously occupied by a pillbox.



Pillbox on Redford Road

Turn to your right up Redford Road. Behind the wall on the opposite side of the road is Old Farm Court, a sheltered housing development built on the site of the old farm of the Redford estate. Continuing along Redford Road, you pass more of the Colinton Cottage Homes complex on your right. Woodthorpe, the substantial building at 26 Redford Road, nowadays offers sheltered housing. A short way on, Colinton Bowling Club is on the left. It opened in 1939. As you reach the junction with Redford Drive, you have entered an area which began to be developed for housing in the 1920s and 1930s, with many bungalows typical of that period.

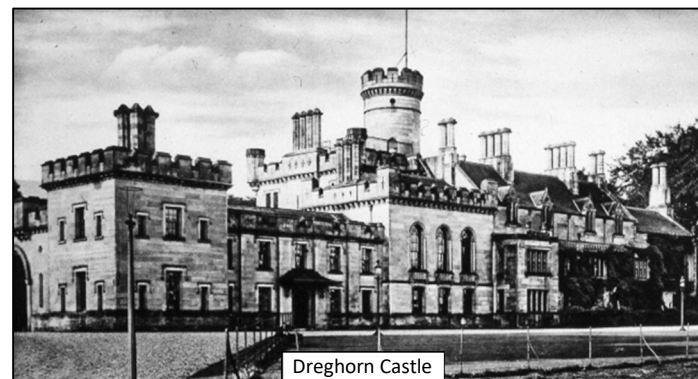
Keeping to Redford Road, you cross over Redford Avenue and soon see, on the opposite side of Redford Road, a roadway flanked by two gateposts. This is the driveway to Redford House, the 17th century home of Lord Redford, the eldest son of Sir James Foulis, Lord Colinton of Colinton Castle. Just beyond the entrance, behind a hedge and fence on the north side of Redford Road, you will catch a glimpse of a low flat-roofed building known as the Drummond Scrolls. This was built as a stable block for Redford House in 1884 by the then owner, Robert Andrew Macfie of Dreghorn. He used as building materials ornamental stonework from the old Edinburgh Royal Infirmary which had just been demolished. The building was named Drummond Scrolls after Lord Provost George Drummond who founded the Infirmary.



The Colinton Column

Mr Macfie used the stonework in other ways as well – if you continue for another 150 metres or so along Redford Road, you will reach a tall column on your right-hand side, slightly obscured from this direction by trees. This is the Colinton Column, sometimes known as the Covenanters' Monument, built by Macfie with ionic columns from the Royal Infirmary and topped by a weathercock. Near the top of the pillar are recorded four military campaigns that passed through the Colinton area: the "Romans, Cromwell 1650, Covenanters 1666 and Charles 1745". Beside the monument stands a stone with a long inscription made up of a poem in English written by Macfie as well as a dedication in Latin, also written by him, to General Gordon of Khartoum.

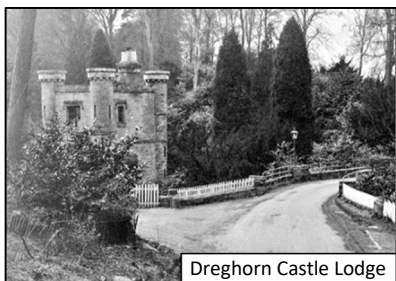
Carry on just beyond the column to the entrance to Dreghorn Barracks, built 1937-39 and upgraded and extended 1989-92. The barracks were built in the grounds of Dreghorn Castle Estate. The castle was built in the 17th century by Sir William Murray, Master of Works to King Charles II. It was later bought



Dreghorn Castle

by Alexander Trotter, a paymaster in the Royal Navy, who carried out alterations in the early 19th century. Later still, it came into the hands of R A Macfie. During the early 20th century Dreghorn Castle was used as a private school and finally it was bought by the War Department. By the 1950s the building had fallen into disrepair and the decision was taken to demolish it. In April 1955 the Royal Engineers used flame throwers to reduce the Castle to a shell. The following month they returned with explosives and finished the job.

From the entrance to Dreghorn Barracks, we turn back and take the old road beside the Colinton Column which leads down to the old bridge over the Braid Burn at the edge of Dreghorn Woods. The bridge was built for Alexander Trotter, the owner of both Dreghorn Castle and Redford House in the early 19th century, and it was part of the original Redford Road until the mid-20th century when the present road layout came into being. One of the lodge houses for Dreghorn Castle used to sit on the east bank of Braid Burn. Set into a low wall on your left you will see an old carved lintel which was rescued from Dreghorn Mains Farm (on the south side of the present-day Edinburgh City Bypass) when the farmhouse was demolished in 2008. Don't cross the bridge, but take the path up to your left into Dreghorn Woods.



Dreghorn Castle Lodge



Lintel from Dreghorn Mains

The path follows roughly the line of the boundary fence of Dreghorn Barracks. As you arrive almost at the last of the barrack buildings immediately on your left, you will see on the right traces of the World War I trenches which were excavated here and used for training. An information board has been provided to explain their history.

Continue on the main path, still following the boundary fence where it turns left. About here was the site of Dreghorn Castle. Murray, who built Dreghorn Castle in 1658, had the grounds landscaped with avenues of beech trees. Many fine trees are still to be seen, including Wellingtonia and yew. After a succession of owners, R A Macfie acquired the castle in the 19th century and on one occasion played host there to the King of Hawaii. Another rather exotic connection is the Prince of Siam's Tree, a Wellingtonia planted by the Prince after he had completed his training at the barracks in the early 20th century.



Prince of Siam's Tree

The path turns sharp right and descends to cross the Howden Burn, turning right again alongside the burn. About 40 metres after crossing the burn, the path turns sharp left towards some houses and brings you out of the wood where you walk across Scald Law Drive and along the winding Shearie Knowe Gardens. Cross over Scald Law Drive once more to take a footpath across a grassy area. Then turn right downhill with a line of trees on your left. This area, stretching between your present position and Dreghorn Woods and down to Laverockdale, is known as the Polo Fields and has been the subject of several attempts over the last few decades to maintain the land for recreational purposes, and even to purchase it as a community asset to be retained as open space. However, the Polo Fields were finally acquired by developers and the present houses were built in 2016.

At the foot of the path, turn left on to a surfaced road, crossing the Bonaly Burn. The house you will see on your right was probably once one of the lodge houses for Dreghorn Castle and dates from the 19th century, when only a small timber footbridge crossed Bonaly Burn.

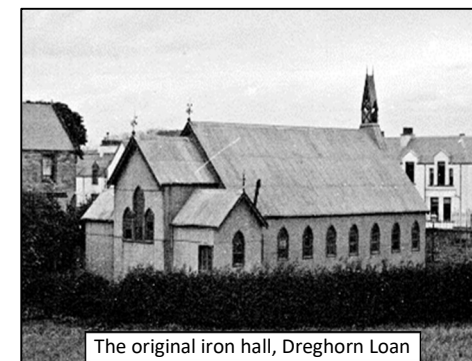


Laverockdale House

Continuing along the surfaced road, you pass the wrought-iron gates of Laverockdale House on your left. The house was built around 1909 and was designed in the Scottish Baronial style by Robert Lorimer for a James Ivory. James Ivory's wife was the first person in Scotland to own a motor car, bought in 1902. It had the registration number S3.

The road you are on is the southern part of Dreghorn Loan, known simply as "The Loan" until 1916. As early as 1709 it was recorded as part of the common loan (lane) providing access to the common grazing ground in the Pentland Hills. The right of way was the subject of some disputes regarding access in the late 1800s, in the 1930s when the Dreghorn Estate was owned by the War Department and again in the late 1970s/early 1980s when the owner of Laverockdale House attempted to block the route.

Descend a little further, out through the gates at the end of this private roadway section of the route on to the public road of Dreghorn Loan, which continues all the way down to Woodhall Road and Colinton Village. This road was one of the first to be developed when Colinton expanded considerably in the late 19th century following the building of the railway along the Water of Leith. Just over halfway down Dreghorn Loan, on the left, is Dreghorn Loan Hall, the hall of Colinton Parish Church which provides a venue for many of the village's organisations. The present building dates from 1925 when it was built to replace the original iron hall.



The original iron hall, Dreghorn Loan

At the foot of Dreghorn Loan, you emerge on to Woodhall Road. The large house on an elevated site at 1 Woodhall Road, now owned by Viewpoint Housing Association, was originally called Colinton Bank House when it was built in the early 19th century, possibly for the owner of one of the mills operating along the Water of Leith.

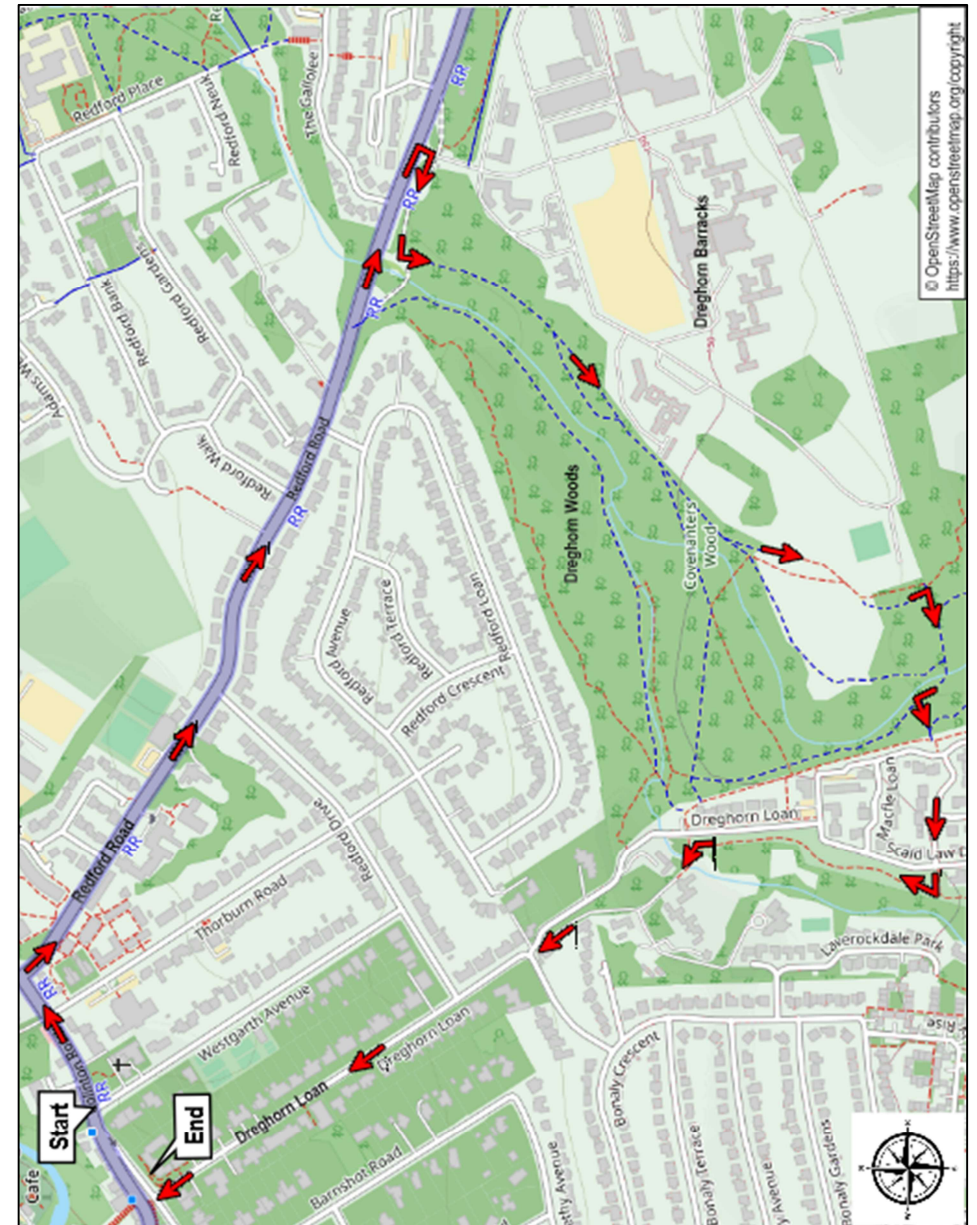
On the opposite side of Woodhall Road, and along about 30 metres to your left, is the building at 2 Woodhall Road, now a private house but built in 1815 as the village school. It was later used as Colinton Public Library and then as Colinton Surgery until the new surgery was built on Colinton Road in 1986.



The Old Village School

This is the end of our walk. If you need to catch a bus into the centre of Edinburgh, you should walk along towards the traffic lights and past the end of Westgarth Avenue where we started, crossing Colinton Road to the bus stop opposite Rustic Cottages. For routes west and north you can get a bus at the stop beside the gate into St Cuthbert's Episcopal Church.

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This walk leaflet has been prepared by Colinton Local History Society.

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