

Pentlands from Nine Mile Burn

WALK FACTS

Distance: 10 miles/16 km

Maps: OS Landranger 1:50,000 Sheet 65 or Harveys 1:25,000 Superwalker - Pentland Hills

Start/Finish and parking: Nine Mile Burn, a small hamlet situated 8 miles/13 km southwest of the Edinburgh City Bypass, Lothianburn Junction, and 'standing back' off the A702 on the south-eastern side of the Pentland Hills Regional Park at Grid Ref NT177577. There is parking here for a small number of cars alongside those of the hamlet residents.

Grading: A pleasant, scenic walk, on a mix of tracks over sometimes rough and quite steep terrain. It is recommended for reasonably fit and energetic hill walkers of all ages. A good summer route but in winter weather or low cloud, a map and compass, and the ability to navigate with them effectively may be required due to the many paths which intersect the route. Sheep and cattle graze so dogs must be kept on a lead. In some areas the Pentland Hills are not suitable for mountain bikes.

This walk is in part of the Pentland Hills Regional Park that lies 7 miles/11 km to the southwest of the A720 Edinburgh bypass. The Park extends over an area of approximately 11 miles (18 km) by 6 miles (10 km) with its highest point of Scald Law at 1,900 feet/579m and provides upland pasture for sheep, grouse moor and forestry together with recreational areas that include an artificial ski slope, mountain-biking and hill-walking routes. It also has training areas and shooting ranges for the MOD Army. There are a number of reservoirs within the park important to the water supply for Edinburgh; namely Harperrig, Threipmuir, Glencorse, Bonaly and Clubbiedean reservoirs. There are also sites of geological interest amongst rocks of old red sandstone and Silurian age.

Edinburgh, Midlothian and West Lothian Councils, Scottish Water and Scottish Natural Heritage support the Park and there is a ranger service providing guided walks and educational visits in addition to park management.

The walk starts at the northern end of the parking area where a 'finger-post' sign indicates the way, through a kissing gate, to Monks Rig and Braid Law going left and gently, but steadily, uphill on a soft grass track to reach the first of many stiles. Cross this and turn right then left at the next sign for Monks Rig. Slightly higher up this track there is another stile with a 'Pentland Path' marker fixed to it. Cross here and after about 1 mile/1.6km into the walk, on the ridge of Monks Rig beside the footpath up Scroggy Hill, the Font Stone is reached at Grid Ref NT175592. It is considered good luck for passing walkers to toss some loose change in here - it never amounts to much, so someone must collect the money ...?

Despite its appearance this is not, in fact, a font stone but was the base of a medieval cross. It is said that the topmost fragment of the cross was discovered at the bottom of Monks Rig in 1808 however, should it still exist, nothing is known of it. There is no evidence of there having been a church in the immediate vicinity so it was most probably a solitary structure used in preaching to the community in general and associated with a church located elsewhere in the area. Further clues to the origin of the stone may lie in the name of the ridge it lies on - Monks Rig - or the nearby Monks Burn.

Past the stone, to the north of Cap Law, there are two stiles separated only by a short distance. Cross over the left-hand one to the path junction* and begin the ascent to the rough summit of West Kip, taking care to avoid a slip or stumble once there. On a good day, do take time to enjoy the panorama that includes the City of Edinburgh, the distant landscape of Fife across the River Forth with its two imposing bridges right around to the Scottish Border countryside to the south.

The descent from here to the saddle between the tops of West and East Kip - separated by only 550 yds/500m - is short but quite steep and on a loose, eroded gravel and earth path then continue up to the summit of East Kip. Descend carefully once again to meet a crossing path and keep going ahead to a 'Y'

junction. Stay on the lower, more obvious, path to the left that ascends gently to the triangulation pillar on the bare, flat summit of Scald Law at 1,900 feet/579m - the highest point of the route and this fine range of hills.

The path descending from here to the northeast and ending at a gate and stile has undergone some repair and drainage improvement work over the years but is rough and stony in places, so care needs to be exercised to avoid a slip or fall. Turn left from the gate and stile and continue for a short distance to a ladder stile beside a Right of Way direction arrow. The path leads from here to yet another stile beside a (usually open) gate and continues ahead and down the wide, grassy Kirk Road to the head of Glencorse Reservoir.

Follow any one of the paths left alongside the stream from here across The Howe¹ where some of the waterfall area to the left has been fenced off for some 10 years (2004) to exclude livestock and walkers and so allow regeneration of the beauty of the natural habitat. From here, through Green Cleugh² and out to Bavelaw Castle - a 17th century 'L-plan' tower-house built on an earlier site - the path is well-surfaced, easy to follow and ends at a gate through the wall surrounding the castle grounds.

Once through the gate follow the tarmac road - which leads out to Balerno - for 330 yards/300m through a sharp left-hand bend to a sharp right-hand one. From this second bend, follow the rough wide road that leads ahead for 100 yards/90m and turn left up to the gate that leads out onto the open moorland track. Stay on this track as it dips to cross the bridge over the Logan Burn then rises gently again to the two stiles at the junction of paths reached earlier before the ascent of West Kip*. Cross the farthest of the stiles onto the wide grass track that leads away right with the Eastside Burn on the left in the valley below.

Keep watch for the Pentland Path marker post** beside a junction and follow the path away right and to the west of Braid Law.

ALTERNATIVELY: Continue ahead until reaching a stand of trees, turn immediately left inside the edge then right again onto the rough farm road that links Westside with Eight Mile Burn beside the A720. Where this road takes a turn sharp left there is a gat on the right-hand side and a narrow path leading away from it across the field. Follow this path, staying high, as it winds round the southern slopes of Braid Law above the Quarrel Burn Reservoir and watch for a narrow path dropping away from it to the left at Grid Ref NT181590. ***This path is best located by watching for the rough scar of the next part of it that climbs away from the narrow stream below.*** Follow this path as it descends quite steeply, crosses the stream then ascends once again to join the path leading in from the post at ** above. When on the path, turn left and continue to the stile over a wall.

From here, back to Nine Mile Burn, it is a simple matter of following the marked field-edge paths as the route continues ahead, bearing to the left and right through gently undulating pastures, to rejoin the inward route below Scroggy Hill.

¹ **Howe:** *n.* A hollow or low-lying piece of ground, one of the hollows of an indented or undulating surface or outline.

² **Cleugh:** *n.* Sc. forms of Eng. *clough*, A narrow gorge or chasm with high rocky sides.

From: THE DICTIONARY OF THE SCOTS LANGUAGE (DSL) - <http://www.dsl.ac.uk/dsl/>

The early part of the day on which this route was walked was not conducive to obtaining scenic photographs - hence the collection of finger posts and other markers! Nevertheless, it is hoped that these will be appreciated - and beneficial - if using this guide!