

EXPLORING EDINBURGH

the braid burn (south)

In previous issues of Outlook we suggested visits to the North Edinburgh Path Network, The Water of Leith and the Innocent route from the centre of Edinburgh to East Lothian. This time it's south to the Pentlands from Morningside.

The route follows the southern section of the Braid Burn. The best known part of the burn is probably The Hermitage - the delightful wooded gorge between Blackford Hill and The Braids (main access from Braid Road). If you've never been, make sure you find the time, one day, but first trace the burn towards its source.



Braidburn Valley Park entrance - colourful and easy to spot!

The trip starts at the gates of Braidburn Valley Park, (junction of Greenbank Crescent and Comiston Road), and goes downhill for a few yards. More surprising, perhaps, is the fact that the route 'up' towards the Pentland Hills is virtually flat for almost 2 miles. There are no signs to guide the way but it's hard to get lost as the burn is always in sight.

Braidburn Valley Park has existed for almost seventy years, previously it was farmland. Paths through the park have recently been upgraded to tarmac by the Department of Culture and Leisure, providing a smooth all-weather surface for walking, cycling or buggy pushing.

The cherry trees were planted in 1935 by a mass of Guides and Brownies. A few of them returned in October to help the Friends of Braidburn Valley Park plant a variety of bulbs that will add colour in the coming spring. The Friends formed earlier this year to help the Council with its plans to improve the park. Membership is £3 per individual or £5 for a household (For more information contact Jim Lavin, 447 5109).

The Park finishes at the other end of Greenbank Crescent. Here, there is a choice of routes, steeply up Cockmylane to Swanston (see panel) or gently on following the Braid Burn. Cross Greenbank Crescent (take care as traffic can come round the blind bend and down the steep hill fast) and follow the path on the south side of the burn.

At Firrhill Drive there is a rough path straight ahead or tarmac path/pavement on the other side of the water. If you've never been to this part of Edinburgh before you'll probably be surprised by the vast flat expanse of Colinton Mains Park by the high flats. The view of the Pentlands from the ground is quite impressive. It must be more so from the top of the towers.



Colinton Mains Park



Heading for Colinton Mains

Cross Firrhill Crescent by St. Mark's School and on to Oxcgangs Road North. Cross again and pass the end of the playing fields for Oxcgangs Primary. The next road is the busy Colinton Mains Drive. If you've walked this far and are flagging you might be pleased to see the bus stops (routes 4, 27 and 32) - but the best is yet to come...

Cross diagonally, pass the "Horses Prohibited" sign and proceed. This section leads to several choices. Best is probably to take the second (newish) bridge on the right which leads to Colinton Primary. Take the turn to the left before the school and meander through the community woodland to the end of Redford Place, bear left and head for the steep steps.

If you want to avoid the steps forget the bridge, carry straight on and up the slope to Redford Road. BUT beware the slope is long and steep. If you do go up the steps you'll find yourself among the modern houses of the unusually named Gallollee. Turn right and when you reach Redford Road cross over to the enormous Covenanters' Monument by the entrance to Dreghorn Barracks. Proceed down the hill on the old road for further choices.

On the left is Dreghorn Woods. If you cross the stone bridge and turn left through the wooden access gate you will discover the most fabulous bit of 'undiscovered' woodland in Edinburgh. Giant redwoods, possibly the oldest 'Christmas Tree' in Scotland and (in season) golden raspberries. You will also discover mud. Several sections of the low-level path by the burn are seriously boggy. It's a wellies or mountain bike route.

However, there is a fairly recent alternative high level path before the bridge. This follows Dreghorn Camp's security fence very closely, avoids the mud and also the more sublime parts of the woodland. Cyclists may like to go up this path and back down through the trees.

The Covenanters' Monument



Dreghorn Woods start here...



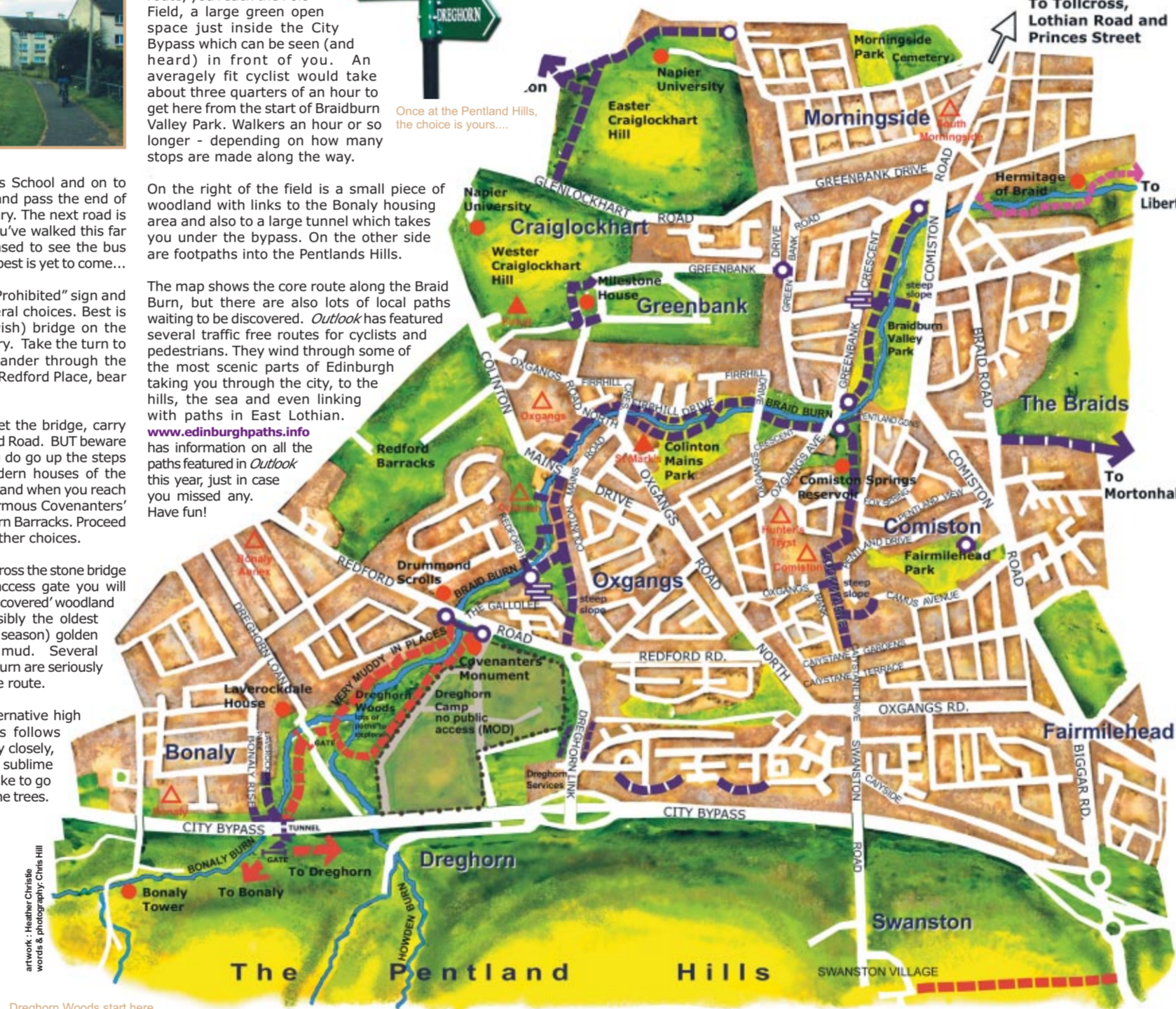
Once out of the woods, by whichever route, you reach the Polo Field, a large green open space just inside the City Bypass which can be seen (and heard) in front of you. An averagely fit cyclist would take about three quarters of an hour to get here from the start of Braidburn Valley Park. Walkers an hour or so longer - depending on how many stops are made along the way.

On the right of the field is a small piece of woodland with links to the Bonaly housing area and also to a large tunnel which takes you under the bypass. On the other side are footpaths into the Pentlands Hills.

The map shows the core route along the Braid Burn, but there are also lots of local paths waiting to be discovered. Outlook has featured several traffic free routes for cyclists and pedestrians. They wind through some of the most scenic parts of Edinburgh taking you through the city, to the hills, the sea and even linking with paths in East Lothian. www.edinburghpaths.info has information on all the paths featured in Outlook this year, just in case you missed any. Have fun!



Once at the Pentland Hills, the choice is yours...



artwork: Heather Christie words & photography: Chris Hill

- key
- shared path and access points
- pedestrian only path, no cycling
- extremely muddy or overgrown path, suitable clothing & footwear needed!
- stepped access
- Oxcgangs Firrhill primary and secondary schools



We want you to enjoy Edinburgh's path networks safely and comfortably. So, when you see a problem, don't ignore it - report it to CLARENCE. Freephone CLARENCE on 0800 23 23 23 or e-mail clarence@edinburgh.gov.uk



Path to Swanston Village

Turn sharp left after Braidburn Valley Park, take the path to the left of the building straight ahead and head up the hill.

Edinburgh Castle from Cockmylane



The oldest Christmas tree in Scotland?



This route is STEEP and old. Substantial amounts of hedging that once marked field boundaries remain. Robert Louis Stevenson would be very familiar with the ground. He went this way to get to his family's summer cottage in Swanston. He would have seen the stone building at the top of the first rise which was an important part of the water supply to Edinburgh's Old Town.

Cross Oxcgangs Hill and follow the path. When it curves right make sure you turn round and see the impressive sight of Edinburgh Castle. Turn another corner and pass Comiston School and you'll probably see why the area is known as Comiston Springs. Water is always near the surface - sometimes on it.

The path continues to Caiystane Gardens. After this it's on the road, (left, right, up Caiystane Drive over Oxcgangs Road) to Swanston. Just before the Village there is a rough farm track down to the main road from Fairmilehead. After the Village there's a footpath into the hills.



SPOKES, the Lothian Cycle Campaign, produces a map for the whole of Edinburgh (6th edition published last September). Available in all good book and bike shops and online at www.spokes.org.uk for £4.95 (post free).

Dreghorn woods is pretty muddy in places...



The Pentlands as you exit the tunnel under the Bypass



The Braid Burn at the foot of the Pentlands



DON'T WANT TO CARRY THE WHOLE MAP? TRY THE WALLET-SIZED GUIDE.....

Braidburn Valley Park, Greenbank Crescent. Cross road, follow the path on the south side of the burn, cross Firrhill Drive. Cross Firrhill Crescent by St. Mark's School and on to Oxcgangs Road North. Cross again, Colinton Mains Drive, pass the "Horses Prohibited" sign and take the second (newish) bridge on the right, meander through the community woodland to the end of Redford Place, bear left and head for the steps. Through Gallollee. Cross Redford Road to the Covenanters' Monument. Down hill, left into Dreghorn Woods - less muddy path begins before stone bridge. |