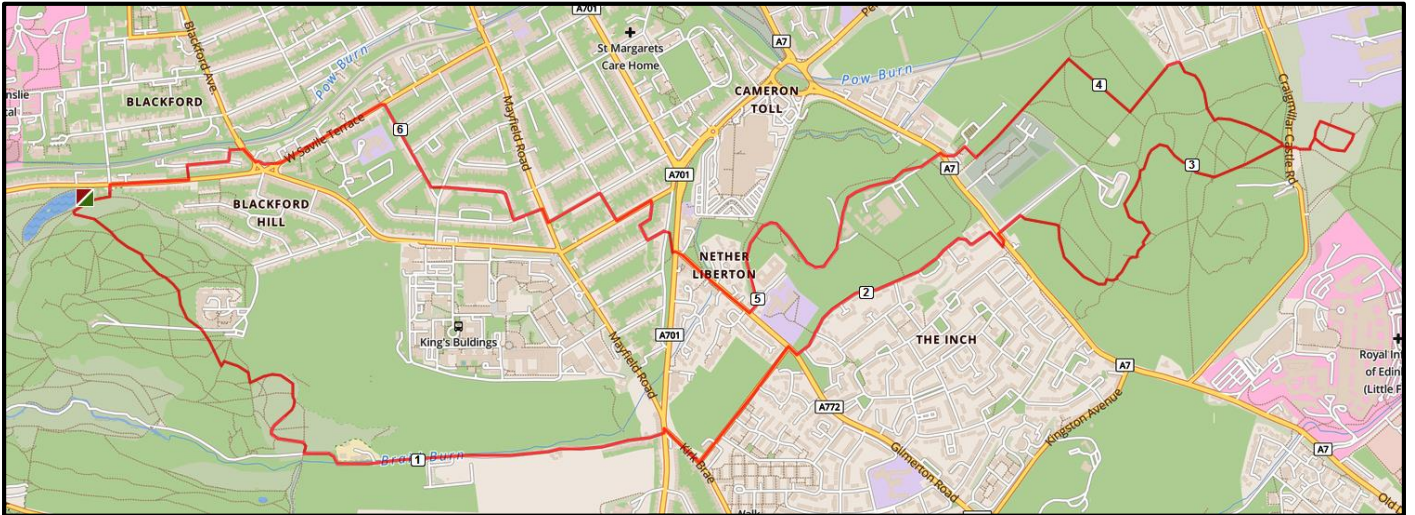


# Route description – ‘A Craigmillar Castle Circular’



*Total distance 6.7 miles. Source: mapOmeter*

Starting from the gazebo at the east end of Blackford Pond, exit by the metal gate, by heading towards Blackford Hill. Turn right along the broad path. After a few tens of paces find a sturdy set of steps leading diagonally upwards. When the steps level out, locate a narrow path angling back, left, and up, to quickly reach a steep grassy slope. Climb it. Keep on up the broad, open slope. Aim for the right-hand corner of the Royal Observatory [**Locality 1: see notes**].

Follow a path to the right of the Observatory buildings. Beyond, head half-left, passing beside a car parking area and generally in the direction of the distinctive yellow of Liberton Tower. Look for a gap in the wall with the Craigmillar Park golf course on the left and the Millennium Wood [**2**] ahead and to the right. Follow the path downhill through the Millennium Wood. It winds down, first turning right and then left in a broad, sweeping zig-zag. At the far, bottom corner, of the wood steps lead down to Blackford Glen Road. A short detour can be made to the right to visit Agassiz's Rock [**3**], before turning left along the road to Liberton Dams [**4**].

At the traffic lights go across and take Kirk Brae up, half-right. Very soon, on the left, turn into Double Hedges Road. At the far end, on the right, is the area of Clapperfield [**5**]. Cross the busy Gilmerton Road using a pedestrian island and continue ahead along Glenallan Drive. Inch Park is to your left. At the far end (see map) take a footpath to the right. In a few paces, beyond a stone wall, step left onto the pavement of the Old Dalkeith Road. Cross at the nearby pedestrian island to take the minor road towards the ‘City Dump’ and Craigmillar Castle Jubilee Park [**6**].

In about 80 paces a footpath leads right through trees [**7**]. Keep right. Follow the path as it curves round. In about 300 paces arrive at a complex junction. Go right then straightaway left. Aim for the castle. Take Yew Tree Walk to the left. A sandstone quarry, above on the right, can be visited. When through the trees, angle right to arrive at the picturesque, right-hand corner of the castle. Observe the deep earthworks of the former, P-shaped fish pond. Retrace your steps and skirt around the left hand side of the castle. Over the brow of the ridge aim half-right towards the pedestrian lights.

Cross Craigmillar Castle Road. Ahead, the cycle path branches, keep left. Where the trees end (fine view of Edmonstone ridge) go left through a gate on a well-made path. Rise up into Hawkhill Woods (and old quarries) to follow a good path to complete an anticlockwise circuit.

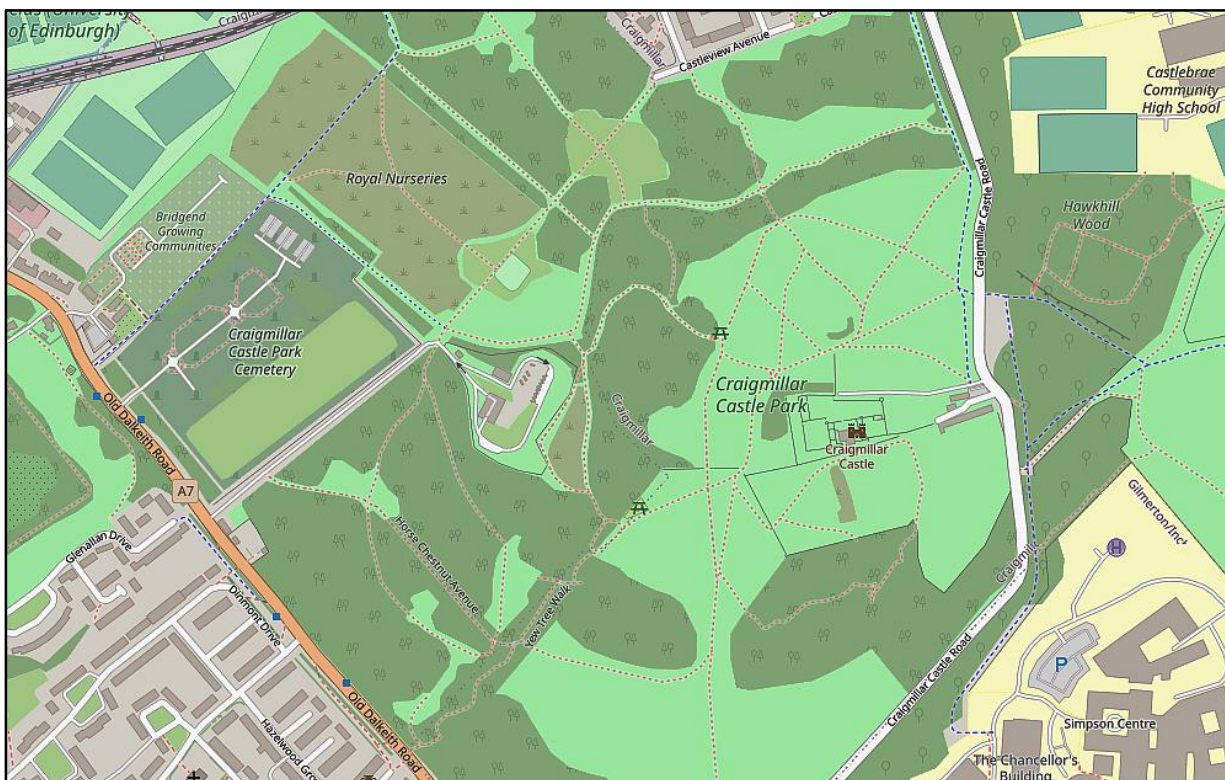
Return to the lights at the entrance to the Hawkhill Woods. Cross. Either follow signs and surfaced footpath to the Adventure Playground, or, more directly, go along a thin footpath in the general direction of Arthur's Seat and the twin towers (of Craigmillar). Join other paths to pass through a

wooded strip. Continue ahead, towards the twin towers. Arrive at Castleview Avenue. Immediately go left. Step through a low wall and return into the woods. A footpath leads straight ahead towards the Adventure Playground. Before the play area, take a tree-lined cross-track to the right. In 400m turn left along a footpath and cycle track. Allotments lie on the right, a Cemetery **[10]** on the left. At the end of the allotments turn right down the short lane to Bridge End Farm **[11]**. Pass amongst buildings to reach the busy Old Dalkeith Road.

Cross over. Turn right to find the entranceway into the Inch Park on the left. The metalled road passes to the right of Inch Park Nursery, and Inch House **[12]**. It then winds around the sports club and care home, across a roundabout and out onto Gilmerton Road. Turn right to enter the area of the old village of Nether Liberton **[13]**. Across the road, in the grounds of the University of Edinburgh's Landscape Section is the old dovecote **[14]**. Further on, to the right, is Old Mill Lane. A short diversion can be made here to follow the lane (the course of the old mill lade) as it 'contours' left to arrive at Number 6, the old mill building. Continue along Gilmerton Road. Pass over the Braid Burn and turn down right along a short, but pleasant (almost rural) riverside walk. Good views across to the old saw-mill. Turn left up to the busy traffic junction at Goods Corner.

Cross Liberton Road to immediately take steps up into the gardens of Gordon Terrace. Follow the path to the right, through trees. Exit onto Gordon Terrace. Immediately opposite go along Hillhead Road, with the entrance gate to Kitchener House **[15]** on the right. Take a cobbled, back lane behind Kitchener House to cut through to Esslemont Road. Turn left towards Kings Buildings. But, soon cross and turn down Granby Road. At Lygon Road turn left. At Mayfield Road turn right to cross at the pedestrian island and then go left into Rankin Drive. Turn right down Rankin Avenue. At the far end crossover and take a short footpath to the right of trees. Continue downwards along Langton Road. At the bottom, turn left to reach the Reid Memorial Church **[16]**.

Make for the old Blackford Hill Railway Station, by crossing to the right, and down Blackford Avenue. At the railway bridge, drop down left, into Charterhall. Straight ahead leads to the old railway station **[17]**. Our route, instead, veers left along Charterhall Grove. Swing right to eventually find 21 steps leading upwards, between houses, to Charterhall Road. Turn right to arrive at the Blackford Park entrance gates. The gazebo, and walk end, is found to the right.



*Detail of the maze of paths used on the route between Glenallan Drive and Bridge End.*

*Source: Open Street Map.*

## Notes and localities

**1. Royal Observatory:** moved from Calton Hill to Blackford in 1896. Houses two cylindrical copper domes which still shelter a 36-inch reflector telescope first installed in 1930. Edinburgh remains at the forefront of world astronomy although data, today, typically comes from telescopes in the Atacama Desert or Hawaii.

**2. Millennium Wood:** planted as part of the Urban Forestry Strategy run by the City of Edinburgh District Council. I think it's rather good. The groves of trees of different species have all established well. However, others say "*a good example of overplanting with little idea about good design – it badly needs thinning – when will that be done?? You decide...*"

**3. Agassiz Rock.** In 1840, Swiss geologist Louis Agassiz visited Edinburgh and proved that Scotland had been covered by ice. The polished and striated rock that bears his name provided some of his evidence.

**4. Liberton Dams:** Two hamlets, named Liberton Dams and Nether Liberton, lay along the burn here. They were mere groups of cottages. An earth embankment diverted water into a mill lade that ran the quarter-mile to Nether Liberton. A small settlement grew up below the embankment. Later, a steam-pump raised water from the Braid Burn to augment the city's water supply.

**5. Clapper Field and Lane:** possibly led to an ancient form of bridge consisting of large flat slabs of stone, or may refer to the 'clapper of a mill'.

**6. Craigmillar Castle Jubilee Park:** A hidden gem of SE Edinburgh. Designated in 2002. Represents an important tract of green-belt within the boundaries of the city and comprises a maze of paths running through 148 acres of woodland and meadow. Once part of the landed estate of the Gilmours of the Inch.

**7. Craigmillar Woods:** The Craigmillar Urban Forest project involved planting 39,650 new trees over a 3-day period in 1997 with the help of 2,332 volunteers, in an attempt to set a World Record for tree planting by volunteers. It resulted in the creation of 28 hectares of new woodland during the 'Edinburgh Plantathon'. The woods have gone on to become a Green Flag Award park.

**8. Craigmillar Castle:** probably the best example of a medieval castle surviving in Scotland. Dates from the late 1300s and was among the first of this type of castle to be built in Scotland. It stands, directly on a sandstone outcrop, on top of a minor rise between Arthur's Seat and the ridge of Edmonstone Edge. Commands long-distance views. The massive L-shaped tower-house, which forms the core of the castle, was in place by 1425. By the 17th century, Craigmillar Castle had more or less achieved its final form. A notable feature was a P-shaped pond (when viewed from the castle), stocked to provide fresh fish for those within. Shaped as a "P" for the Preston family name. Its outline still remains visible south of the castle (see map).

James V was brought here as a boy, while the plague was raging in Edinburgh. Queen Mary stayed here twice, in 1563 and 1566 (after the murder of Rizzio in Holyroodhouse). On her 2<sup>nd</sup> stay, several of her noblemen (Moray, Lethington, Bothwell, Huntly & Argyle) suggested her unpopular husband, Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, could be removed, either by divorce or by other means. An agreement, the "Craigmillar Bond", was reached between the nobles and a bond set out the conspirators' intent to remove Darnley.

**9. Craigmillar and Hawkhill Wood Quarries.** The Park has long been a source of good building stone. Eight quarries were exploited at various times between the early 15th and 19th centuries. The derelict land, of the main quarry floor, housed a fireworks factory before refurbishment as the 'City Dump'.

*The Craigmillar rock* is a compact, pebbly quartzose sandstone, typically red to pale brown. As early as the 14th century, quarries at Craigmillar were providing stone for the building of Craigmillar Castle. Also used in the building of the Palace of Holyrood, and brought into town for the Parliament House and for work on Edinburgh Castle. Other uses were for the courtyard interior of George Heriot's School, for George Square where it can still be seen in the backs of most of the surviving houses. The Craigmillar stone was considered relatively impermeable which led to its use in the construction of the Edinburgh Reservoirs and in Leith Docks (1894-96).

*Hawkhill Wood Quarry* provided stone for villas on the south side of Edinburgh in the 1920s, for example at Mayfield Road and Esslemont Road. The rock, a very light mauve/pink to yellow stone, was worked mainly for rubble work. The sandstone contains occasional bands of marl, thin calcareous cornstones (former soil horizons) and conglomerates. A fine example of rubble from Hawkhill Wood can be seen at the Reid Memorial Church (1929-33), where it is used with ashlar from Doddington. Hawkhill stone also used at Fairmilehead Parish Church (1937-38), again in conjunction with Doddington ashlar.

**10. Craigmillar Castle Park Cemetery:** opened in 2010 on part of the former Bridgend Farm.

**11. Bridgend Farm:** The buildings of the farm, originally worked as a mixed dairy and arable farm, appear to be late 18th-C/early 19th-C in date. Although, around 1518, James V built a chapel here adjoining his hunting house. The Farmhouse Community Project is a community-run charitable organisation. It provides a meeting place, café, garden and workshops. It runs classes, workshops and training courses in a variety of crafts and skills. Scotland's first organic allotments opened here in 2006 at a cost of £250,000 and includes sixty individual plots, together with raised beds for disabled gardeners and an organic composting toilet.

**12. Inch House:** Scottish vernacular tower house dating from 1617. Now a category A-listed building. The oldest part, an L-plan tower, dates from the early 17th C. Recently the house has been used as a primary school and a community centre. The word "*Inch*" derives from the Scots Gaelic "*innis*" which can mean an island, or a dry area within marshland or a river meadow – here the flood plain of the Braid Burn.

**13. Nether Liberton:** A little settlement on the course of the Braid Burn. (By the 14<sup>th</sup> Century Liberton was divided into Over and Nether Liberton.) There was a corn mill in the 12th C (mentioned in 1143, in a charter given to the monks of Holyrood Abbey granting them the rights over the mills at Libbertun). It operated until the 1840s. A saw-mill building still stands. The line of its mill lade, can be seen starting in Double Hedges Park at the bottom of Kirk Brae. The village had a population of 267 in the late 18th C. with a school, school house, smithy, saw- and corn-mill, dairy and also a brewery and weekly market, as well as several public houses. The scene would have been worthy of a Constable painting. A number of 18th C. buildings remain behind Cameron Toll Shopping Centre. The young Arthur Conan Doyle, later author of the celebrated Sherlock Holmes stories, lodged at Liberton Bank House in the 1860s.

**14. Dovecot:** the largest in the Lothians. Rectangular, with 2072 nest holes and a lean-to roof. Sixteen crowsteps on each gable. The roof is pantiled. Doves entered via a long horizontal row of 36 flight-holes half-way down the roof, and shorter rows beneath. Thought to have been the dovecot of Inch House.

**15. Kitchener House:** Some walling possibly used stone from Hawkhill Wood. Note how red sandstone blocks used for the posts neatly make use of the bedding planes set at a rakish 45° angle.

**16. Reid Memorial Church:** built 1929-1933. The name comes from William Reid, a successful Edinburgh businessman. His son died without heirs and left money for a church to be built in memory of his father. The building looks older than it really is owing to its cathedral-like Arts and Crafts style - replicating a mediaeval church with cathedral-like proportions and layout. A category A-listed building. A fine example of rubble walling using stone from Hawkhill Wood, along with ashlar from Doddington.

*Rubble masonry*, also known as rubblework, is the use of undressed, rough stone, generally for the construction of walls. The most basic form is dry-stone walling. Popular with landscapers looking for a traditional aesthetic. The stones can be bound with cement or lime mortar.

*Ashlar* is a type of masonry which is finely cut, and is characterised by smooth, even faces and square edges. Since ashlar blocks are precisely cut on all faces, attractive, very thin joints can be achieved.

*Doddington Quarry* lies between Wooler and Berwick-upon-Tweed. It has been worked for more than 200 years. The lower Carboniferous Doddington sandstone is a fluvio-deltaic, fine- to medium-grained stone, speckled, light to deep purplish pink in colour with occasional rust coloured markings.

**17. Blackford Hill Railway Station.** Opened 1884, closed 1962. Originally a busy, two-platform, suburban station with pens for sheep having been fattened on Blackford Hill. Blackford House stood above.