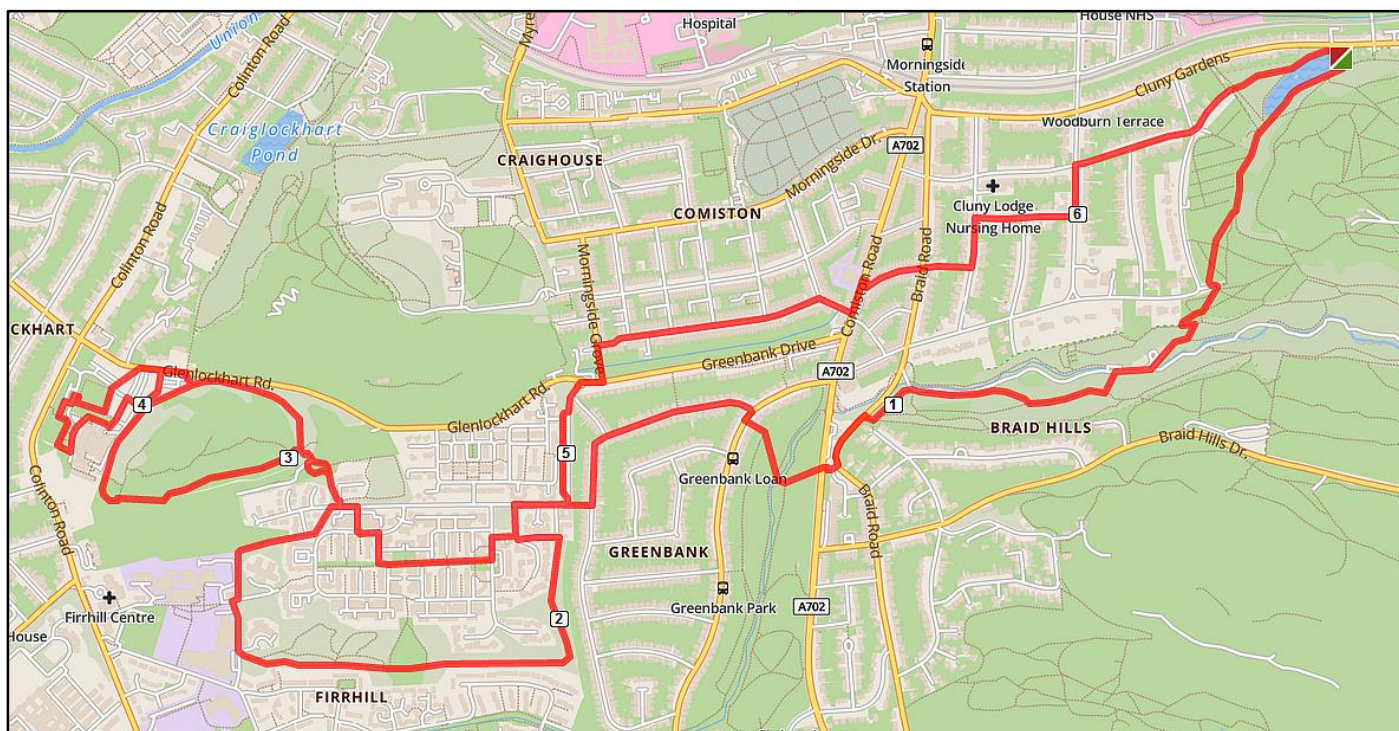


A War Poets 4-loop walk

A 6.5-mile 'circular' walk through Greenbank and Craiglockhart, visiting the grounds of the War (Hydropathic) Hospital, City Hospital for Infectious Diseases and Poor House.



Route drawn using mapometer.com

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 with the pond on your right. Gradually ascend until just past the allotments. Go right through a wall gap. Cross a shallow, damp gully and rise diagonally uphill to exit into the car park on Midmar Drive. Bear left into the car park and through a gate. Aim diagonally right, across open ground, towards the field corner. Here step down into the Woods of the Hermitage of Braid. Go left, a few paces, before descending diagonally to the right. Go past the Visitor Centre and right along the main track of the valley floor. In around 80 paces climb steps leading diagonally up to the left. At the top turn right. The path climbs and descends. On approaching the Gatehouse do not cross the stream, but turn left on a path which leads uphill [1-mile marker on map] to the base of steps. Here, turn right, down a short tarmacked alley and exit onto Braid Road.

Climb left to reach the car park of the Braid Hills Hotel. Steps are found on the right leading down to Comiston Road. Cross at the traffic island and enter Braidburn Valley Park. Descend slightly left, to cross a bridge near the old open-air theatre. Over the Braid Burn, rise to the right. Aim for the top of the belt of trees and discover Fly Walk. At its end, cross to the right and proceed left along Greenbank Road. This winds left, where Ashy Path is found next to number 66. Emerge onto Greenbank Drive (at a junction to which we later return). Keep ahead. Ignore Pitcairn Grove. Turn left along the next road, Littlejohn Wynd. After 100 paces take the driveway on the left. Pass to the right of a gate, to come upon a woodland path. Follow this for a kilometre and a half, in a clockwise loop, which follows the perimeter of the wooded grounds of the old City Hospital for Infectious Diseases, now

redeveloped as housing). Pass through an open area, which provided the Nurses' Home of the old Hospital with lovely views of the Pentland Hills. Exit near Barnardo's. Turn right. Turn right again to quickly go left alongside metal, palisade fencing. Follow the narrow footpath around to emerge at Owen View (a 2nd junction to which we will later return).

Ahead, at the bus terminus, a footpath leads up, in trees, towards Wester Craiglockhart Hill. At a low wall go left, then right to rise up and find a good track contouring off to the left above the fairways [3-mile marker on map]. Traverse beneath Wester Hill to see a wall. On the back side of the second segment of the wall find a plaque to the War Poets. Here, follow a good track down and then alongside the boundary wall of the old War (Hydropathic) Hospital (now Edinburgh Napier University). Pass a magnificent geological exposure with pronounced, well-formed, hexagonal columns of basalt lava. On reaching trees take a path to the left and exit onto Glenlockhart Road (a 3rd junction to which we will later return).

Go left at the second entrance into the University. Inspect the remains of a small, 15th century defensive tower (originally four storeys high) of Craiglockhart Castle. Cut across grass and the edge of car parks towards the distinctive modern entrance of the business school. Reach a square, level sports area. (When built, the Hydropathic (1880-1916) boasted outdoor facilities for tennis, croquet, archery and lawn bowling, as well as golf on the adjacent 34-acre golf course. Indoors a commodious billiards room, large and luxurious Turkish baths, a spacious and lofty swimming pool, and rooms with hot and cold plunge, vapour, spray, needle, douche and electrical baths were provided.) Pass a low building dating from the time when the site was used by the Society of the Sacred Heart, as a convent and training college for Catholic teachers. Follow the tree-lined path around the far edge of the old sports area and over the original entrance road. Bear left, amidst car parks and grass to the old main entrance with steps and lamp-posts (see photo of W.H.R. Rivers below).

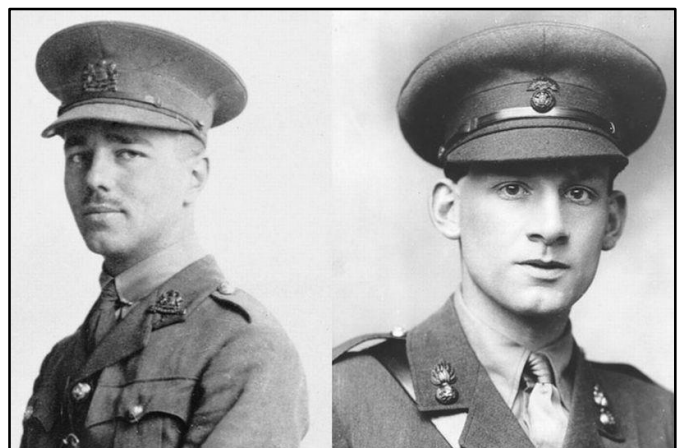
Return by walking around the left-hand corner of the old building, cross the modern entrance, down steps, through car parks and around the roundabout to regain the woodland junction on Glenlockhart Road. Re-enter the woods. This time follow a path which climbs left over the shoulder of Wester Hill. Near its crest drop down a track to a fairway. Turn sharp right to follow along the edge of the woods onto a path which revisits Owen View. On reaching the bus terminus turn left along Greenbank Drive for 50 m, then turn right through car parking and flower beds between buildings Step through onto Littlejohn Road. Go left. The old ward pavilions for diphtheria, typhoid and erysipelas lie to the right (now housing). In 40 m turn right along Morham Gait. Step through to the central pedestrian avenue (old ambulance drive through the Hospital). Turn left. Pass a play area and keep straight on. All the old ward pavilions hereabouts, to both the left and right, were reserved for scarlet fever. All were placed to get as much sun as possible. The light-red, warm and pleasant-looking Permian sandstone (brought by the newly opened Caledonian Railway, from Closeburn quarry in Dumfries and Galloway) was specifically chosen to generate a more welcoming, cottage-like feel. Reach the T-junction of Littlejohn Avenue. Turn left to the T-junction of Greenbank Drive. Here, a very short diversion can be made to the clock tower of the old City Poorhouse. Turn left for 50 m and then right. The Clock Tower is immediately ahead. Return to the Littlejohn-Greenbank junction. Keep on along Greenbank Drive to the junction with Ashy Path.

At this point, go left and follow a narrow path in trees, up above the road. It passes alongside the former site of the hospital and mortuary of the City Poorhouse [5-mile marker on map]. Emerge near a roundabout. Cross over, using the pedestrian island to the roundabout's right. A few paces along Greenbank Drive turn left up Morningside Grove.

Turn right. Walk the full length of Comiston Drive. At Comiston Road go left. Cross at the pedestrian lights. Turn left to find steps leading up to Braid Bank Crescent. Turn left, cross Braid Road. Carry on. Then go left again at Cluny Gardens, right at Corrennie Drive, left at Braid Avenue, right at Cluny Drive, straight over at Midmar to reach the bowling green, entrance to the park and path back to the Blackford Pond gazebo where the walk ends.



Staff and patients at Craiglockhart Military Hospital 1917. [The First World War Poetry Digital Archive]



W.H.R. Rivers standing outside Craiglockhart Hospital in 1916; The First World War poets Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon (right). [Source: The Heritage of the Great War website]