

A Mortonhall figure-of-eight

Starting from the gazebo at the east end of Blackford Pond proceed eastwards to the Entrance Gates on Charterhall Road. Exit. Turn right up Charterhall Road heading towards the traffic lights at Blackford Avenue. Half way along, after cresting the slight rise, discover 56 steps leading to the right, straight upwards. Turn left along the back of '70s housing to ascend 19 more steps to Blackford Hill Grove. Turn down left to Blackford Hill Rise. Go up right (an excellent, quiet corner for observing badgers and foxes on summer evenings after dusk). Admire the varied, innovative housing styles, some with superb views to Fife. Reach Observatory Road. Turn left (good views to East Lothian) and go straight down to the



Harrison Arch. *[Alternatively the Arch can be reached by staying on Charterhall Road to the lights and then walking up Blackford Avenue, thereby by-passing the steps and 70s housing.]*

Pass through and turn right up West Mains Road. Reach the corner of the University Campus. In 50 yards find steps and hand railings leading down into the campus. Keep straight ahead. The route follows anticlockwise around the perimeter of the campus. The bus terminus is off to the left. Keep ahead. Step across Max Born Crescent and bear slightly right through car parks.

Route of 'A Mortonhall figure of eight' in red. Length 6.8 miles. Distances given (in miles) in small square boxes. Map drawn using <https://gb.mapometer.com/>

Pass the Flow-wave Ocean Energy building [1-mile marker on map.] Keep on along the perimeter road. It soon swings left, parallel to the southern boundary of the campus and alongside tall hedging. At the far end of the James Clerk Maxwell Building our road swings left and then right. [Clerk Maxwell was a Scottish scientist in the field of mathematical physics and an

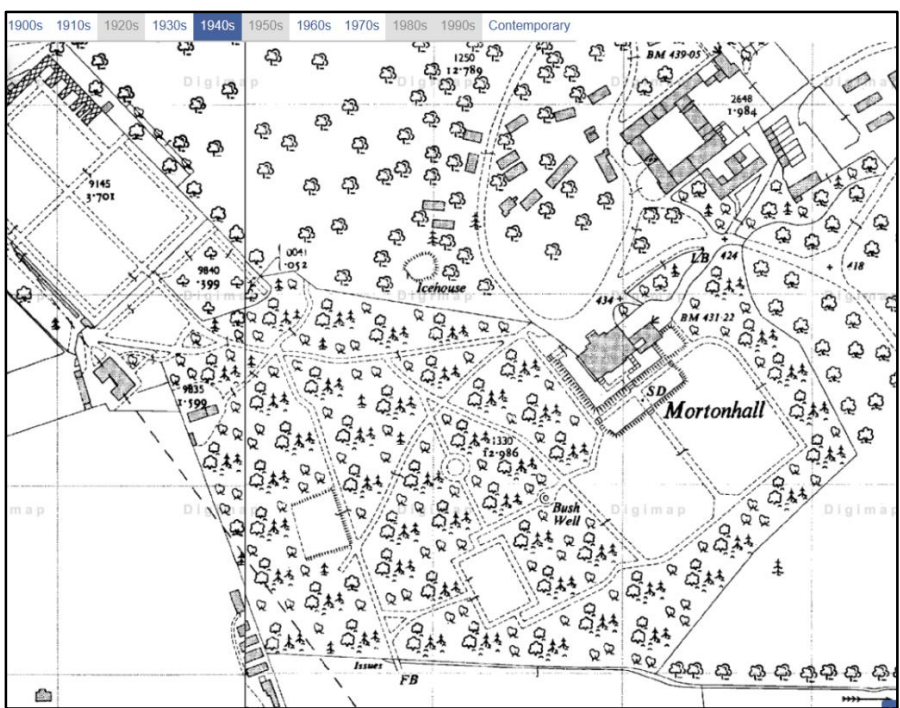
undergraduate at Edinburgh. His most notable achievement was to formulate the classical theory of electromagnetic radiation, bringing together for the first time electricity, magnetism, and light. His contributions to the science are considered by many to be of the

same magnitude as those of Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein.] We are still on Max Born Crescent. [Born was a German physicist and mathematician who was instrumental in the development of quantum mechanics. He was the Tait Professor of Natural Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh (1936-52) becoming a naturalised British subject one day before World War II broke out.] On exiting the campus into Mayfield Road turn right along the pavement. Head down, cross the bridge over the Braid Burn and walk up to the traffic lights. Bear half right up the main A701 (the Penicuik Road). After 150m take a right turn towards the Montessori Arts School.

Wind left, then right, through the various outbuildings to pass right of new housing. Go left along the field edge. Our route heads for Liberton Tower. Pass the windows and balconies of the new houses. [2-mile marker on map.] The track rises diagonally and passes the Tower and cottages. Exit onto Braid Hills Drive near the Braid Hills Golf Driving Centre. Cross the road. Keep the golf driving range on the left, the public golf course on the right. Follow the road. Just beyond the far edge of the golf driving range a footpath leads diagonally left across a wide expanse of open ground. Head towards the low buildings of the dog kennels. A good panoramic view is obtained as we crest a slight rise in the middle of the open ground. Arrive at the buildings that occupy the former site (now a scheduled monument) of WWII anti-aircraft defences. Part of the Forth AA Defences the battery was equipped with four 3.7” gun emplacements, two magazines with blast walls, a command post, and gun laying radar, used to calculate the gun time-of-flight to the enemy aircraft. The area of the radar mat (a large metal mesh rolled out and forming an electrical grounding for the antenna, so increasing the efficiency of the system) lies on a scarped area to the north. Pass the entrance. [3-mile marker on map.] Follow Stanedykehead to the Seven Acre play park. At its far end turn right. Mortonhall caravan park is to the left. Reach a Y-junction and lonely cottage.

Take note as we will return to this junction later in the walk. Go left. Pass through a scruffy wooded area. Pass the entrance to the Stables Bar. Keep left of the main Mortonhall House

(built 1769). Opposite the entrance to the Mortonhall caravan and camping park is the overflow and late-arrivals car park. Go through it and into the Arboretum of Mortonhall House. Climb up, passing Hemlocks, Yews and Holly. Keep the House to your right. A Yew with columnar trunk lies ahead and down. Head in a general southwest direction, pass the old well, fountain and former bowling green. Find the Stenhouse Burn (Issues and FB on map) in the old ha-ha ditch.



1940s map of Mortonhall stables, main house, arboretum, ha-ha and walled garden. [Source: Digimap]

At the burn swing right. Wander on through the magnificent trees. This substantial area of open woodland includes cypresses, thujas, Norway Spruce, *Cedrus deodara*, *Cedrus libani* (very large), Japanese Red Cedar, Giant Sequoia and cut-leaved and purple beeches. The trees were grown from some of the earliest seed imported from the west of America. In 1845 a sycamore tree was said to have been planted in 1700 and grew to 14 feet in circumference.

Head north west and reach a lane which passes to the left of the Walled Garden. [4-mile marker on map.] Bear left, up a rough path through trees. In about 100m turn right, signpost to Alnwickhill, along a good track which leads back to the Stables Bar. Retrace the outward route to the Y-junction by the lonely cottage.

Turn left through the gate and along a broad track. Crest a small hill to swing down right to the stabling area of Meadow Head. The private Mortonhall golf course is to the left. On reaching the wall corner and the public Braid Hills Golf Course turn left on a good track alongside the old wall. [5-mile marker on map.] After 300 m, at a dog-leg in the track, step right and up onto the golf course. Head across (with care). Make directly for Salisbury Crags. The old right of way passes alongside the ends of shelterbelts, the back of greens and golf-buggy trails. A wall (a remnant of the former Winchester's Refreshment Rooms, note the apple tree and remains of privet hedge) points the way. Aim for Arthur's Seat. Descend to Braid Hills Drive. Cross. Take the Howe Dean Path down to the valley of the Braid Burn.

Cross the bridge and immediately opposite rise up steps into the Millennium Wood. Keep to the main track which rises to the left, then right and finally left again. Once through the old wall [6-mile marker on map] turn right to reach car parks by the Royal Observatory. Pass to its right to find a footpath. It rises slightly and follows the edge of the Observatory Grounds. Keep ahead and drop down to arrive at the sharp bend on Observatory Road. A well-made track leads half-left back to Blackford Pond. The '70s housing, that we passed through earlier, lies to the right. Stay on the track. Shallow flights of steps lead down to the entrance at Charterhall Road, the gazebo at Blackford Pond and the end of this figure-of-eight walk.



36th (Scottish) Anti-Aircraft Brigade was responsible for defending eastern Scotland. 3.7" gun deployed in 1939 and one of the two transmitter arrays of the Gun Laying radar, Mk. II.