

THE PENTLAND HILLS

30 WALKS IN EDINBURGH'S LOCAL HILLS

by Susan Falconer

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Dedication

*This book is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Evelyn,
who allowed me the freedom to explore the hills.*

Acknowledgements

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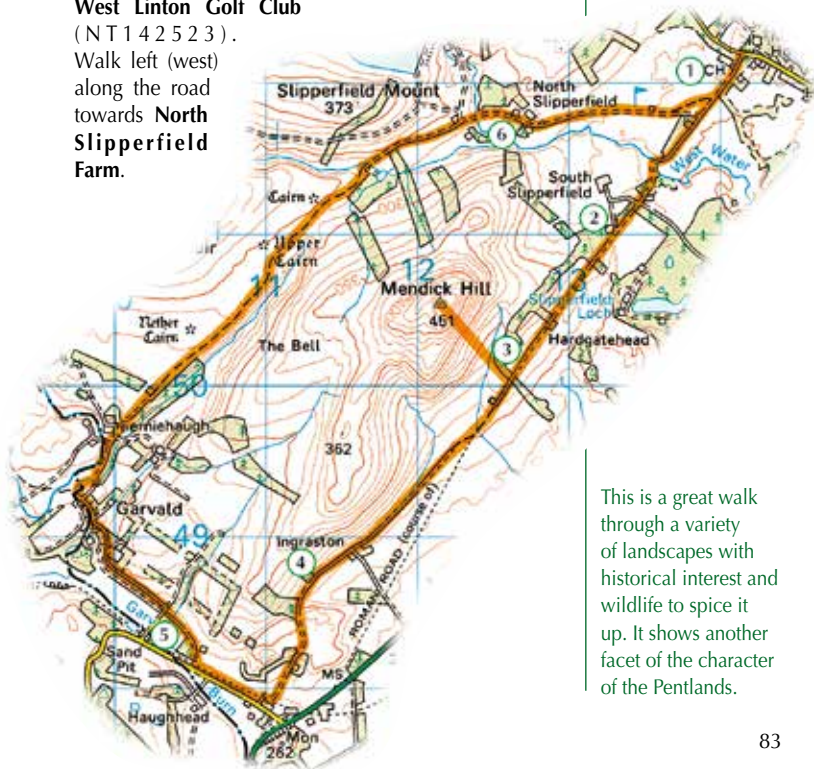
Front cover: Looking over to Turnhouse Hill from Flotterstone Glen

WALK 13

Roman road

Start/Finish	West Linton Golf Club (NT142523)
Distance	14km
Ascent	110m
Time	3hr 40min
Maps	Ordnance Survey Landranger 72 Ordnance Survey Explorer 344

1 Begin the walk at a small lay-by near the entrance to **West Linton Golf Club** (NT142523). Walk left (west) along the road towards **North Slipperfield Farm**.



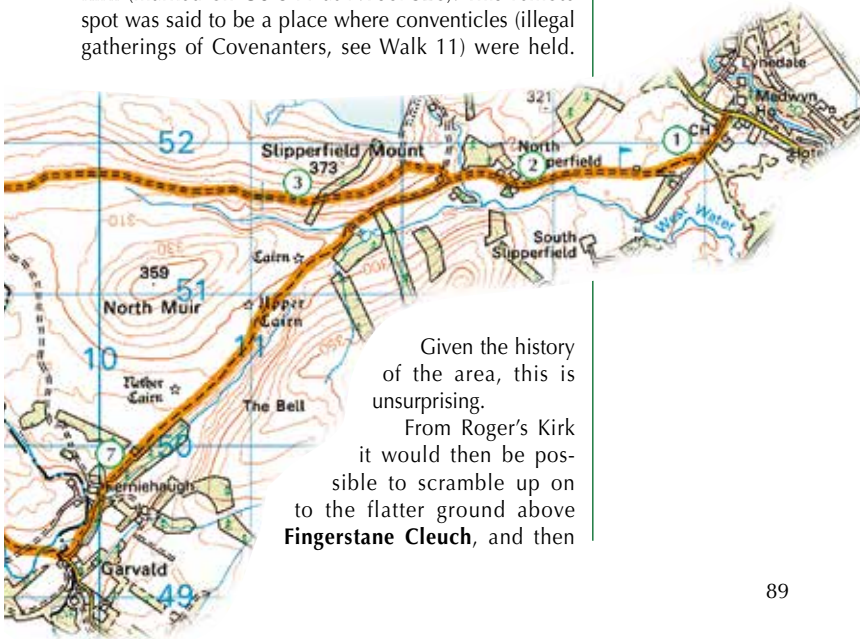
This is a great walk through a variety of landscapes with historical interest and wildlife to spice it up. It shows another facet of the character of the Pentlands.

The grassy dam face of **West Water Reservoir** is dominant on your right. West Water was completed in 1967 as a drinking-water supply – it can provide 3.4 million gallons per day. Besides this, it is an internationally important winter roost for pink-footed geese, a regionally important site for common gulls and a site for breeding waders such as dunlin and ringed plover.

Keep left as the track divides (the right fork goes to West Water Reservoir) and continue walking along this track, still marked by large posts. ▶ After about 2km cross a cattle-grid and ford a burn, close together. To the left is a small conifer plantation enclosing the house at **Medwynhead**, and the track folds around on itself and crosses a bridge over **Medwin Water**.

Just after crossing Medwin Water there is the option to divert north and follow another track along the west side of the river to reach the rocky cleuch at **Roger's Kirk** (marked on OS 344 at NT087528). This remote spot was said to be a place where conventicles (illegal gatherings of Covenanters, see Walk 11) were held.

The area is open and exposed, and you may hear and see curlews, skylarks and buzzards, each with its evocative call or song adding to the atmosphere of this walk.



Given the history of the area, this is unsurprising.

From Roger's Kirk it would then be possible to scramble up on to the flatter ground above **Fingerstane Cleuch**, and then

walk southwest to reach the **Covenanter's Grave** on the main route. Otherwise, retrace your steps from Roger's Kirk to the main route.

4 Continuing on the main route, you come to the site of a former cottage at **Blackhill** (NT088516).

In 1666 the cottage at Blackhill was the home of a shepherd, **Adam Sanderson**. These were times of insurgents and rebels, the Covenanters, fleeing from the aftermath of the uprising at Rullion Green. One such man was John Carphin, from Ayrshire, wounded in the battle. Carphin was fearful of reprisals to those who harboured fugitives, and also of dying away from the sight of the Ayrshire hills. He refused help and struggled on until he died, at a place Sanderson called Oaken Bush. The shepherd carried him to a spot on Black Hill, where there is a gap to the Ayrshire hills in the southwest, and laid him to rest. This is the place called the Covenanter's Grave.

5 The **Covenanter's Grave** can be tricky to locate. From the main track a wooden crossroads sign at NT082515 indicates Crosswood via the Covenanter's Grave. Ascend up through the heather and grass towards a line of tall wooden sight posts on the brow of the hill.

The stone at the **Covenanter's Grave** was erected in 1841 at the instigation of Dr Manuel, minister of Dunsyre. The inscription reads, 'Sacred to the memory of a Covenanter who fought and was wounded at Rullion Green Nov 28th 1666 and who died at Oaken Bush the day after the Battle and was buried here by Adam Sanderson of Blackhill.'

Descend by the same route and rejoin the track from Medwin Water.

6 From the crossroads sign adjacent to the track, follow the indicator directing you south east to Dolphinton via



Garvald. There is a line of guideposts across the heather and in places boggy ground. The path becomes faint and can be difficult to locate but chose a line between the posts. The path follows the burn to your right and you'll eventually reach another signpost. Go through the gate next to the signpost following the sign to Dolphinton and West Linton. After a few metres go right at the next way-marker and cross a wooden footbridge.

From here follow the waymarkers to Garvald Home Farm. At the signpost follow the indicator to West Linton 4 miles.

Take the track going between two stone pillars. When the track divides, go straight along between another pair of stone pillars with the name Ferniehaugh.

Walk up the track to a small lake and keep heading uphill to the north of a conifer plantation.

7 Stay on this track, passing **Nether Cairn** and **Upper Cairn** (see Walk 13 for details of the cairns), and rejoining the track through **North Slipperfield Farm** and West Linton golf course to return to the start point.

The Covenanter's Grave

WALK 17

North Esk Valley

Start/Finish	Carlops (NT161558)
Distance	7km
Ascent	210m
Time	2hr 10min
Maps	Ordnance Survey Landranger 65 Ordnance Survey Explorer 344

1 Begin the walk in **Carlops**, either at the small car park opposite the village hall or from the bus stop in the centre of the village. Walk in a northerly direction through the village, along its main street, the A702, heading towards Edinburgh. Just beyond a bus stop and a water trough, cross the road and head along a narrow lane, signposted Buteland by the Bore Stane 5½M.

Carlops as a settlement owes its existence to Robert Brown, an Edinburgh advocate who became laird of nearby **Newhall** by purchasing the estate in 1783. DM Young's excellent book *Newhall* (see bibliography) gives a full and fascinating history of this country estate. Carlops was transformed into a community of cotton weavers, and the original white-washed cottages are still the main fabric of the village, although the looms ceased to function in 1894.

This is a lovely walk, full of variety and contrast. It begins in a beautiful secluded glen, and then opens out to cross a grassy hillside with magnificent views along the Pentland ridge.



2 The lane goes down to Patie's Mill and **Carlops Bridge**, a lovely secluded spot, and instantly away from the busy traffic. Go through a wooden kissing gate by a beech hedge to the right of Patie's Mill house, and take the path that runs alongside the beech hedge to another gate.

At **Carlops Bridge** look out for dippers or grey wagtails by the water's edge. The grey wagtail is strongly associated with fast-flowing burns. The male in spring colours is a bright palette of yellow breast, black bib and slate-grey back. The grey wagtail has the longest tail of the three British species, which it bobs up and down constantly.

3 Go through the gate and the path leads out to a more open grassy area beside the infant **River North Esk**, at the start of the **North Esk Valley**.

This walk is excellent for **wildflowers** in season, and species such as few-flowered spike rush, fragrant orchid, globeflower and mountain everlasting

Carlops Bridge



are found here. In 1988 the valley was designated a site of special scientific interest (SSSI) for its rich flora and geological interest.

The route follows a path along the burn and is narrow, steep and slippery in places, and care must be taken here. There are also a number of places where the path forks, but keep heading upstream.

There are a few helpful Pentland Paths waymarkers to keep you on track. The track eventually descends to the burn and a wooden footbridge and SROWS green metal signpost.

Cross the footbridge to follow the sign indicating Buteland. From here take the rough grassy path as it ascends the hillside below a stone wall. Keep on this path as it skirts round the south of **Fairliehope** and then go through a kissing gate. From here follow a narrow path as it goes through young woodland to another gate. Go through this gate and join the stony track as it ascends, following the signpost indicating Buteland by North Esk. Keep on this track for another kilometre until you reach **North Esk Reservoir**.

4 Take some time to enjoy the view over the reservoir. At the end of the dam ascend steeply up the hillside on a rough track in a westerly direction. Join another track at the brow of the hill and continue to the right.

5 Continue on the path as it then descends down to **Spittal Farm**. Go round to the left of the farm and take the track that leads down to an unclassified road, where there is a signpost indicating Carlops.

GM Reith (see bibliography) says, ‘The name **Spittal** is fairly common in Scotland, and usually marks the site either of a wayside refuge for pilgrims and other travellers, or of a lazar [leper] house, erected and maintained by some monkish fraternity.’ The monks may have been the Cistercian brothers of Newhall and they established a hospital in the locality. To the