

Turn left into Pentland Road and admire 'Stonehouse' on the corner. It was the last house that Lorimer designed in Colinton. Then turn right into Pentland Avenue, where several Lorimer-designed houses were built. 'Colinton Cottage' (No 23) was the first Lorimer house to be built in Colinton and was the Miss Guthrie Wright Memorial Home for Queen's Nurses. Miss Wright was Lorimer's aunt. Other examples of his work are 'The Rowans' (No 21), 'Westfield' (No 40) and 'Binley' (No 42).

Turn around and walk back along Pentland Avenue as far as No 11. Just past this house, turn right down the path known as 'The Shoot' with its high stone walls bordering the gardens on each side. It brings you out at the bridge over the Water of Leith. Below the Bridge was the site of Colinton Station and the old railway line built in 1874. Trains carried passengers until 1943 and freight until 1967. In 1973 it became a walkway.

Do not cross the bridge, but take the road on the left at the foot of The Shoot, then turn immediately right down a short flight of steps to a car park. Around this area, various millwheels have been scattered to remind people of bygone days. Turn right and walk under the road bridge on to the Water of Leith Walkway, on the route of the old railway.

After about 100 yards, a gap in the wall will take you into **Spylaw Park**. The Park was bought by the City of Edinburgh Council over one hundred years ago, in 1911. Take a look at the recently erected park notice board explaining the history here.

Beside the play park is a tall building which for many years was the home of **Scott's Porage Oats**. The Company has since moved to Glenrothes in Fife. Today the building is unoccupied.

In front of you, slightly to your left, is **Spylaw House**, formerly the home of James Gillespie, Snuff Miller. Walk past Spylaw House and over the bridge with black iron railings, then under one of the arches of the road bridge and up to Spylaw Street.



Up on the right side near to the junction with Bridge Road is a cottage at **No. 24 Spylaw Street**. This was once the local police station. Further down the Street on the left is the **Spylaw Tavern**, previously called the Royal Scot and before that the Railway Inn. It served travellers arriving by train to lunches and teas and continues to function as a hostelry today.

Opposite the spot where you exited from the park is 'Cuddies Lane' the site of a former smiddy as the name suggests. To return to Bridge Road, go up this lane and climb the steps on to Bridge Road.



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This is one of a series of walks leaflets prepared by members of Colinton Local History Society.



If you would like to find out more about the Society or about how to become a member, please contact us either via the contacts page of our website, www.colintonhistory.org.uk, or by email to enquiries@colintonhistory.org.uk or ask for up-to-date contact details at Colinton Public Library.

COLINTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



Walks around the parish of Colinton

Walk 1:

The Long Steps – Parish Church – Spylaw Bank Road – The Shoot - Old Colinton Station – Spylaw Park – Cuddies Lane – Bridge Road



START AT THE TOP OF THE LONG STEPS (BETWEEN THE COLINTON INN AND FANELLI'S DELICATESSEN)

This is the point through the village where drovers, horsemen, soldiers and covenanters passed to cross the ford at the Water of Leith having trekked over the Pentland Hills near to Flotterstone.

The tiny cottage on the long steps was said to have been a butcher's shop in the 19th Century.



Looking to the left up Spylaw Street, note the distinctive **pantiled** cottages which were acquired in 1799 by the Merchant Company of Edinburgh under **James Gillespie's** Will. Although the interiors have been modernised, the exterior retain their rustic features.

They were intended as Alms Houses for needy families. James Gillespie was a wealthy snuff mill owner who lived in Spylaw House nearby. He and his brother, John, ran a tobacco shop in the City High Street around 1759. James is buried in an impressive crypt at Colinton Parish Church across the bridge a short distance from here to your right.

At the foot of the steps, look across the road to see a stone building which was known as **'Allendale'**. In days gone by there was a sweet shop and tearoom there.

Looking to the left up Spylaw Street, note



Cross the 19th Century single arched bridge; the Parish Church is facing you. The bridge replaced a ford serving travellers for many centuries.



The past is immediately visible as you approach the old Session House at the Church gate. At this point the elder stood to take the collection which formed the nucleus of the fund for the poor of the parish.



During the body snatching days of the 1820s bodies were dug up a short time after burial and sold to the University of Edinburgh Medical School. To combat this, an iron coffin known as a **'mortsafe'** could be hired out. The body was secured in the coffin under the mortsafe until it decayed

beyond any practical use by the anatomist. There were originally six of these structures, but only this one remains. Each weighed nearly one ton, making it almost impossible to shift. During that macabre period the Session House doubled up as a Watch Tower.

The present Church dates to 1908 but a Parish Church has been in Colinton since 1636. There is some doubt as to where the original site was, but then it was known as Hailes or Halis. Prince Ethelred, a son of Queen Margaret and King Malcolm of Dunfermline passed this way on his many sojourns to and from Melrose. The storyboard inside the church porch explains in greater detail its history.

Look up to see the **sundial** on the church wall. It is inscribed **Sir James Foulles 1630**. The Foulis family were local landowners and responsible for the upkeep of the church buildings and parish school. The family had special seats allocated inside the church.



Dr Lewis Balfour was the minister here in 1838. His grandson was **Robert Louis Stevenson**, the famous novelist. Young Robert played on a swing on the **yew tree** next to the manse and wrote some of his poems and poetry beside the waterside nearby. The new church rooms have been named 'The Swing' in his memory.

There are notable stones in the graveyard. The oldest is dated 1593 that of Agnes Heriot, spouse of J Foulis of Colinton. Another curious one shows 'Peter Dickson killed by a fall from his horse'. Dickson was a groom at Colinton House.

Here also lies John Tod, a shepherd at Swanston and a friend of Robert Louis Stevenson.

Covenanters encamped in the graveyard in 1666, the night before the battle of Rullion Green.

It must have been a noisy time for the ministers living in the Manse. Kirkland Mill, erected in 1585 to produce lint, a by-product of flax, was where the newer cemetery stands, while Hole Mill stood close

by. The cemetery walls were built of old stone from the former mill lade.

Leave the churchyard and climb up Spylaw Bank Road. The cottages on the left retain their rural charm. No 1, opposite the Church entrance, is a listed building, while the cottage next door was thatched for many years. This hill was known as Kirk Brae and Hailes Brae.



On the bend is **Mid-hill, the former station master's house**. Elaborate gates with 'V' guard the entrance. This denotes No.5.

There was a series of steps from the garden down the north face to the station platform. It became known as Jacob's Ladder. On the roadway you may see stones set at the edge. This was to allow the dray horses to rest the carts as they carried their loads uphill.

Continue up **Spylaw Bank Road** and you realize the height you have climbed as you look over the gardens to the village itself.

In about one hundred yards on the right, you pass the **Sir William Fraser Homes**. These were designed by A. Balfour Paul in a Scottish



17th Century style, with a raised terrace and balustrade round the courtyard and a central fountain. The homes were founded by a former assistant Keeper of Scottish Records who made a lot of money publishing histories of notable Scottish families. They became tenanted by retired professional women who lived rent free. They became part of the Merchant Company Trust in the 1960's and were modernised inside.

Two notable houses stand opposite, **'Glenlyon and Almora'**, designed by Sir Robert Lorimer in the early 1900s.