

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 the 1870s. Trains carried passengers from 1874 until 1943 and freight until 1967. In 1973 the route of the railway became part of the Water of Leith 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.

After about 100 yards, a gap in the wall will take you left 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 was situated for many years the home of Scott's Porage Oats. The Company has since moved to Cupar in Fife and the old mill building has been replaced by flats.

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.



Spylaw House

Turn right up Spylaw Street. At the junction with Bridge Road is a cottage at No. 24 Spylaw Street. This was once the local police station.



A section of the railings on Bridge Road

Immediately opposite the junction, on a sloping path up to No 25 Bridge Road, are wrought-iron railings designed in the 1920s by Phoebe Anna Traquair, whose house in Spylaw Bank Road we passed earlier. The railings were commissioned by Walter Biggar Blaikie, the Edinburgh printer, engineer and historian. The railings are Category A listed and were restored in 2007.

Our walk ends here, close to bus stops in both directions.

This walk leaflet has been prepared by Colinton Local History Society.

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: Literature, Art, Architecture – and more

Mackenzie Cottage - The Long Steps – Parish Church – Spylaw Bank Road – The Shoot - Old Colinton Station – Spylaw Park – Spylaw Street – Bridge Road

The walk is approximately 1.2 miles long, on a mixture of surfaced pavements, quiet roadway and good but unsurfaced footpaths. The route includes steps and a steep uphill section.



Statue of Robert Louis Stevenson

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START AT THE TRAFFIC LIGHTS AT THE JUNCTION OF BRIDGE ROAD AND WOODHALL ROAD, ON THE NORTH SIDE OF BRIDGE ROAD

You will see a small cottage set behind iron railings, and at a slightly lower level than the road. This is MacKenzie Cottage, named after the writer and lawyer, Henry MacKenzie, who used it as his summer retreat. His novel, *The Man of Feeling*, was the most popular of the 1770s, and MacKenzie was an influential supporter of Robert Burns and Walter Scott. His social group included many familiar names of the Scottish Enlightenment including Hume, Smith and Cockburn, and he was a founder member of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. The cottage was restored in 1997 and is now used as an office.

Walk down Bridge Road to the gap between the Co-op building and Colinton Inn, where the Long Steps will take you down to Spylaw Street and what was once a ford at the Water of Leith. At the top of the Long Steps stands a wrought-iron archway marking the start of *A Walk with Robert Louis Stevenson*. Information boards have been placed at various points between here and Dell Road.

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

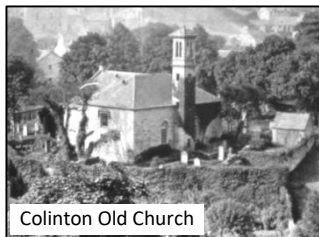


Allendale

To the left up Spylaw Street, notice the distinctive pantiled cottages which were acquired in 1799 by the Merchant Company of Edinburgh under James Gillespie's Will. The interiors have been modernised, but the exteriors retain their rustic features. They were intended as almshouses for needy families. James Gillespie was a wealthy snuff mill owner who lived in Spylaw House nearby. He and his brother, John, both pictured left, 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.



Cross the 19th-century single arched bridge; the Parish Church is facing you. This bridge replaced an older one which in its turn, by the 17th century, had replaced the original ford.



Colinton Old Church

On the right is a statue, erected in 2013, of Robert Louis Stevenson

as a boy. He was the grandson of Dr Lewis Balfour, who was the minister here from 1823 until his death in 1860. Young Robert played on a swing on the yew tree next to the manse and wrote some of his poetry beside the Water of Leith nearby. The café in the modern church rooms has been named 'The Swing' in his memory.

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 without a block and tackle. During that macabre period the Session House doubled up as a watch house.

The present Church dates from 1908 but a Parish Church has been in Colinton since 1636. There is some doubt as to where the original



Colinton Mortsafe

site was, but then it was known as Hailes or Halis. Prince Ethelred, a son of Queen Margaret and King Malcolm, passed this way on his many sojourns to and from Melrose. The storyboard inside the church porch explains in greater detail its history.

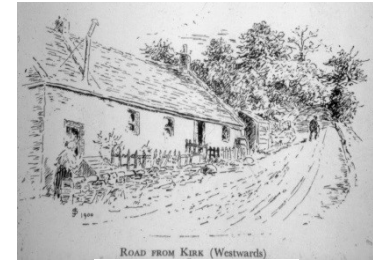
Look up to see the sundial (photo, right) on the church wall. It is inscribed Sir James Foulles 1630. The Foulis family were local land-owners and responsible for the upkeep of the church buildings and parish school. The family had special seats allocated inside the church.



There are notable stones in the graveyard. The oldest, dated 1593, is 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 situated where the newer cemetery now stands, while Hole Mill was 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.



Spylaw Bank Road

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 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.

At 13 Spylaw Bank Road lived one of the leading artists of the Arts and Crafts movement in Scotland, Phoebe Anna Traquair. In 1920, she was made an honorary member of the Royal Scottish Academy, the first woman to be recognised in this way.

Continue up Spylaw Bank Road and in about two hundred yards on the right, you pass the Sir William Fraser Homes. These were designed in 1898-99 by



Sir William Fraser Homes

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. They became tenanted by

retired professional women who lived rent free. They became part of the Merchant Company Trust in the 1960s and were modernised inside.

Two notable houses stand on the opposite side of the road: 'Glenlyon' (No 45) and 'Almora' (No 49), designed by the renowned Scottish architect, Sir Robert Lorimer, in the early 1900s.

Turn left into Pentland Road and admire 'Stonehouse' (No 1) on the corner. It was the last house that Lorimer designed in Colinton. Then take the second 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