

Take your time to admire the work done by Chris Rutterford and his team of artists from local schools and other community organisations. The mural has become a popular attraction in Colinton.



A small section of the Colinton Tunnel Mural

In the past, this walk could have been extended slightly to take you beyond the tunnel, down to Colinton Dell and the Water of Leith, and back to Colinton Village via Dell Road and Spylaw Street. Unfortunately, the steps on the footpath between Dell Road and the Dell have been closed, making this route inaccessible for the time being. Instead, retrace your steps back through the tunnel towards the car park under the bridge. At this point, turn right and go up a few steps before turning left to reach the Gillespie Road end of the bridge.

Walk across the bridge towards Colinton Village. The bridge was built in the 1870s with the intention of providing improved access to the new station and as an alternative to the previous river crossing and main route through Colinton via Spylaw Bank Road and Spylaw Street. Immediately at the end of the bridge, turn left down Spylaw Street. The pub down the street on the left was previously called the *Railway Inn* because of its proximity to the station, but nowadays is known as the *Spylaw*.

A short way down Spylaw Street, off on the right is Cuddies Lane, the site of a former smiddy as the name suggests. You reach Bridge Road, the main road nowadays through Colinton Village, by heading up Cuddies Lane and climbing the steps. Should you need public transport from here, you will find a bus stop immediately on the right for buses heading into town, or slightly further to your right on the opposite side of the road for buses to Juniper Green and Riccarton, or to the airport.

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

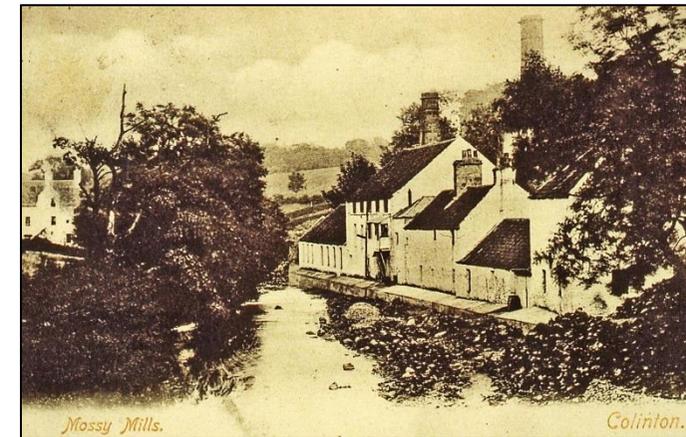


Walks around the parish of Colinton

Walk 2: Water Power and Steam Power

Upper Spylaw Mill – Mossy Mill – West Mill - Spylaw Mill – Old Colinton Station – Colinton Railway Tunnel and Mural – Colinton Bridge – Spylaw Street – Cuddies Lane – Bridge Road

The walk is approximately 1.5 miles long, mainly on good but unsurfaced footpaths. The route includes some steps.



Mossy Mill

START ON GILLESPIE ROAD AT THE CORNER OF SPYLAW AVENUE

There is a bus stop almost opposite, on Gillespie Road. Cross over Gillespie Road just up from the bus stop and walk south-west down the dirt track towards the old railway line, now the Water of Leith Walkway. Turn right at the path junction to join the Walkway and after a few yards you will see, on the left, **Upper Spylaw Mill**, now a private dwelling. In 1682 it became one of the earliest paper mills in Scotland. It had a 16 feet water wheel operating the machinery.



It is referred to in a court action when James Lithgow and his partner, Nicholas Delchamps (or Nicolas de Champs) were jointly charged with violating Peter Bruis's licence for manufacturing playing cards and enticing workmen away. They were also charged with 'abstracting hair cloths from another man'. Hair cloth was a felt used for absorbing water from newly formed sheets of paper.

In 1765 the mill was producing snuff under the ownership of a William Reid. Tipped off by James Gillespie, a rival snuff-miller who lived nearby, excise men, accompanied by some of Gillespie's employees who were really there to inspect the machinery of a rival, searched the building supposedly for smuggled goods. Nothing was found but a decade later, the excise men returned and found, hidden in the roof space, 16 chests and 20 bags containing over a ton of tea and three barrels of brandy, clearly contraband.

Continue westwards along the old railway line until you see a green metal footbridge crossing the river. To access it, turn right (away from the river) and go down some steps which lead you through a low tunnel (mind your head!) and across the bridge. The modern flats you see from the bridge occupy the site of the former Mossy Mill, whose name came from its one-time owners, the Mosey Brothers.

Mossy Mill started life in the 17th century as a **wauk** mill (coarse woollen and linen cloths) changing in the 19th century to making

paper. It had three wheels, 18, 14 and 12 feet in diameter. It had no tail lade and the water left the building at 90 degrees, returning to the river. This was an unusual feature. Mossy Mill closed in 1972.

Walk eastwards past the modern flats on the site of the mill and follow the tarmac road for about 500 metres, passing several modern houses on your right, then some old mill cottages on your left. Where West Mill Road bends uphill to the right, a modern development of flats, West Mill Bank, faces you. Turn left just before it then rejoin the Water of Leith Walkway (signposted to Union Canal, Longstone, Slateford).



Just after crossing the river, on the right hand side you will see a modern block of flats. The ground it occupies was part of the West Mills site, part of which was known as King's Mill, after the name of the family who owned it for about a hundred years. There were three mills here in 1688, one for waulking, one for making flax and one for grain processing. In 1791, 300 people worked here. In 1850 West Mill had a 12 feet wheel, and King's had two 17 feet wheels. In 1909, papermaking ceased here and the mill was taken over by A and R Scott, who made the original Scott's Porage Oats. (Note the distinctive spelling.) The mill closed in 1971 and the firm moved to Cupar in Fife.

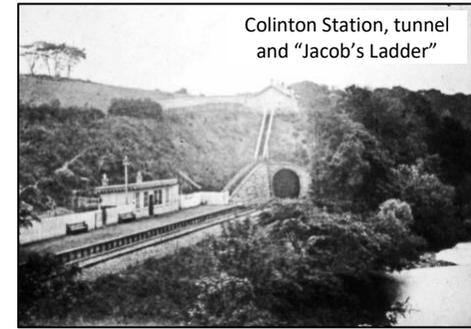
Leaving the surfaced road, you pass Spylaw Park on the south side of the track. Enter the park through the gap in the wall and ahead of you stands the fine stone building of Spylaw House. The part of the building facing the river is considerably older than the façade that you see and would have formed part of the Snuff Mill. James Gillespie lived in the impressive house which was added in 1779 to the original mill of 1650. Gillespie went on to bequeath money to build the almshouses in Spylaw Street and a hospital in Bruntfield Crescent.

Look across at the high stone bridge over Gillespie Road, built in 1873. It has been strengthened and widened since then to take modern day traffic.

Pass in front of Spylaw House and at a fork in the path turn left behind a stone building to climb a flight of steps which bring you under the road bridge to a car park. Just beyond this spot stood **Colinton Station**. Rejoin the Walkway here. High above was the Station Master's house in Station or Kirk Brae. There were steps cut into the hillside and it was here that the master would walk up and down 'Jacob's Ladder' as it was known to meet the stopping trains.

Colinton was one of the stations on the Balerno Branch Line, built by the Caledonian Railway Company and opened in 1874. The railway

served the many mills located alongside the Water of Leith – for example, sidings were built at West Mill – as well as providing transport in and out of Edinburgh for the villages of Colinton, Juniper



Green, Currie and Balerno. Specially designed locomotives, known as "Balerno Pugs" were brought into use around the end of the 19th century to cope with the steep gradients and sharp bends along the route. The ease of commuting by rail to the centre of Edinburgh was an important factor in the expansion of Colinton in the latter part of the 19th century and first part of the 20th century. However, passenger services were withdrawn in 1943 and the last goods train ran in 1967, following the closure of Kinleith Mill. The track was lifted the following year, and the line of the railway was incorporated into the Water of Leith Walkway.

About 150 metres on from the old station, you enter the railway tunnel cut through a rocky hillside. This is now a railway tunnel like no other, as it is home to the largest historical mural in Scotland: 140 metres depicting local history and based on Robert Louis Stevenson's poem, *From a Railway Carriage*.



Chris Rutterford, mural artist leading the Colinton Tunnel project, with his dog in front of a small section of the mural