

# Berwickshire COASTAL PATH

## Cockburnspath to Berwick

30m/48km

### Boats lost

Radiant, Janet, Lass O'Gowrie, Sunshine, Fiery Cross, Enterprise, Margaret & Mary, Velox, Good Intent, Excellent Margaret & Catherine, Robinas, Pearl, Stormy Petrel, Lily of the Valley, Beautiful, Press Home, Renown, Wave Industry, Alice, Florida, Six Brothers, Harmony, Myrtle, Invincible, James & Alice, Concord, Economy, Christina, Two Sisters, Fisher Lassies, Snowden, Transcendent, Perseverance, Guiding Star, Forget-Me-Not & Blossom.

### The 125 Memorial Association

Raise funds for the advancement of the arts, heritage, culture or science. If you are moved by the event, donations can be made to the '125 Memorial Association' at the banks or the Post Office in Eyemouth. Registered Charity SC045042.

### Bronze Trail Markers

Twelve Bronze Trail Markers, by artist John Behm, link the four memorial sculptures along the route.

1. Find these markers using your navigation skills or a GPS (co-ordinates on map);
2. Take rubbings on good stout loose paper with crayons or coloured pencils. The main [Eyemouth] rubbing needs a piece of paper of roughly A3 size, the others are smaller.
3. Together they form a patchwork picture or collage, within the framework found on Eyemouth Harbour entrance wall. The collage illustrates aspects of fishing life in 1881: "hard-working fisher lads and fisher lassies; the baiting of lines; fifies under sail; the gear and the craft of it all."

You don't have to walk the Coastal Path to collect these gifts. Undertake this challenge by car, by foot or by bike. To promote a sense of unexpected gift we have left the location deliberately weak. Good luck and remember to take care near the cliffs!



Sea Arch, Marshall Meadows



Coldingham Bay

## OVERVIEW

Stretching for some 48km from Cockburnspath in the north down to Berwick-upon-Tweed, the Berwickshire Coastal Path takes in some dramatic clifftop scenery complete with arches, stacks and crumbling castles. It rounds St Abb's Head, a National Nature Reserve renowned for its birdlife, to reach the attractive fishing village of St Abbs. Several sandy beaches are reached en route to the town of Eyemouth, before the long final stage leads on along the cliffs to cross the Border to Berwick.

St Abbs and Eyemouth Voluntary Marine Reserve.

[www.marine-reserve.co.uk](http://www.marine-reserve.co.uk)



National Trust for Scotland  
St Abbs Head National Nature Reserve

[www.nts.org.uk](http://www.nts.org.uk)



[www.scotborders.gov.uk/berwickshirecoastalpath](http://www.scotborders.gov.uk/berwickshirecoastalpath)



## WAYMARKED ROUTE

It may seem unnecessary to provide directions other than saying – walk north or south keeping the sea on your right or left! You will find interesting facts about the history of the landscape inside this leaflet and further information at: [www.scotborders.gov.uk](http://www.scotborders.gov.uk)

Why not view the sculptures and collect Bronze Trail Markers along the way?

You can get this document on tape, in large print, and various other formats by contacting us at the address below. In addition, contact the address below for information on language translations, additional copies, or to arrange for an officer to meet with you to explain any areas of the publication that you would like clarified.



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Designed by Scottish Borders Council Graphic Design Section, March 2018



St Abbs Lighthouse - Jason Baxter



## THE TRIP

Can I undertake the route in one trip? Do I walk north or south? Dependant on your home location either may be preferable. You may wish to plan your trip around your accommodation location and undertake the walk on individual days. A frequent bus service allows flexibility for planning a day out. Dowlaw has no bus service but a taxi may be an option.

### Two days

Strong walkers might manage the route in two days, but there is so much to see we recommend three relaxing days.

### Three days

Take time to enjoy all that the towns and villages along the way have to offer. This option entails tackling the longest day, between Cockburnspath and St Abbs in one go, to avoid leaving transport at Dowlaw.

### Four days

Four day trips will require leaving transport at Dowlaw - this is not permitted overnight. This option allows plenty of time to explore Cove; Cockburnspath; Fast Castle at Dowlaw (entry not recommended: unguarded cliffs); St Abbs; Coldingham and Eyemouth.

### Accommodation

[www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com)

### Travel - Leave the Car behind!

A bus is available between Berwick, Burnmouth, Eyemouth, Coldingham, St Abbs and Cockburnspath.

Borders Buses – Routes 235 and 253

[www.bordersbuses.co.uk](http://www.bordersbuses.co.uk)

01289 308719 or 01896 754350

Travelsure – Route 236

[www.travelsure.co.uk](http://www.travelsure.co.uk)

01665 720955

Public Travel Information

[www.travellinescotland.com](http://www.travellinescotland.com)

08712 002233

### Facilities and refreshments

- Burnmouth – The Gulls Nest. The First & Last pub.
- Eyemouth – Choice of many shops, restaurants, cafes and bars.
- Ayton – Shop, bank, Post Office and pub.
- Coldingham – Shops, toilets, Post Office, garage, pubs
- St Abbs Harbour – Shop, cafes, visitor's centre, toilets.
- Coldingham Sands – Hotel, toilets, (Beach Cafe and Lifeguards - summer only)
- Renton Barns on A1 at Grantshouse – Toilets and café.
- Cockburnspath – Toilets, shop/ Post Office and garage.

### Birdlife and Butterflies

From spring to summer thousands of birds will be nesting and rearing young. Look out for; kittiwake; guillemot; razorbill; fulmar; shag, puffin and peregrine, waders include heron, turnstone, oystercatcher, sandpiper and curlew.

The area is good for butterflies, especially at St Abbs Head. The rare Northern Brown Argus can often be seen near rock rose. Other butterflies you may see include common blue, wall brown, grayling and the painted lady. The six-spot burnet moth is present in July.

### Plants

Thrift is particularly noticeable in May and June, growing in dense mats and giving a wonderful blaze of pink. Gorse adds its bright yellow in the early spring period. The rich variety of flora includes:  
Spring – primrose, cowslip, meadow saxifrage, scurvy grass, early purple orchid;  
early Summer – thrift, purple milk vetch, birdsfoot trefoil, and northern marsh orchids in wetter areas;  
Summer – ragged robin, meadowsweet, willow herb.

### Coastal Geology

The oldest rocks here are Silurian greywacke which formed on the sea bed some 440 million years ago. Through plate movement these have become intensely folded and faulted, visible no more so than on **Gunsgreen in Eyemouth**. The Devonian Old Red Sandstone (345 million years old) can be seen around **Linkim Shore, Eyemouth Fort and Siccar Point**. The whole of the Berwickshire coast is noted for its geological interest, especially **Siccar point** where these two rock forms visibly meet.

## EAST COAST FISHING DISASTER

Black Friday, October 14th 1881 commemorates the worst fishing disaster in Scotland's history. A ferocious hurricane devastated the fishing fleet off the east coast taking 189 lives.

### "Widows and Bairns of the Disaster"

By Jill Watson.

These poignant sculptures have been placed in Eyemouth, Burnmouth, St Abbs and Cove to depict the exact numbers of women widowed and their children looking out to sea for their loved ones that never returned. The deadly storm left 93 women as widows and 267 children without their fathers. Of 45 boats that had gone to sea, only 26 returned. The loss of so many husbands, fathers and sons led to many survivors leaving Eyemouth. The population level did not recover until 1971.



Widows and Children of the Disaster Jill Watson



Siccar Point



St Abbs



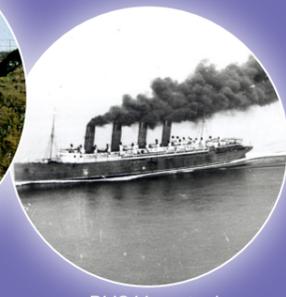
Common rockrose



Kittiwake



St Abbs Head



RMS Mauretania

# Berwickshire Coastal Path

Cockburnspath to Berwick upon Tweed  
30 miles ( 48 kilometres)



## Cockburnspath to Dowlaw 7½mils (12km)

Cockburnspath is the terminus of the Southern Upland Way which leads walkers to, or from, Portpatrick, 212 miles (340km) away in Dumfries and Galloway. The village also connects to the John Muir Way, at Dunbar, some 11 miles (17km) away, via Dunglass.

### Pease Bay

This Site of Special Scientific Interest is managed by the Scottish Wildlife Trust as a Nature Reserve. Look out for woodpeckers, treecreepers, dippers and various tits and finches. Roe deer and red squirrels have also been known to make this reserve their home.

### Siccar Point and St Helen's Church

A revolutionary moment in the history of geology came in 1788, when James Hutton, James Hall and John Playfair took a boat to Siccar Point where they found horizontal layers of red sandstone overlying older, steeply pitched sedimentary rocks known as greywacke. The site confirmed Hutton's theory that the Earth was much older than six thousand years, the age (4004 BC) computed from the Bible by Bishop Usher in 1654. We now know that the Devonian red sandstones were laid down some 345 million years ago in desert conditions and overlay the eroded surface of highly folded Silurian sediments which had formed 80 million years earlier on the bottom of a long-vanished ocean.

Dedicated to the mother of Emperor Constantine, **St Helen's Church** served the former parish of Aldcambus which was united with Cockburnspath after the Reformation of 1560.

## Dowlaw to St Abbs 6½mils (10km)

### Fast Castle

Fast Castle occupies a dramatic, sheer-sided rock jutting out into the sea. Stumps of masonry represent the final stage of a castle which was visited by Mary Queen of Scots in 1566 and captured by an English force in 1570. Entry is not recommended due to the unguarded cliffs and the site is best viewed from the higher ground on the landward side. Sir Walter Scott later set part of his novel, *Bride of Lammermuir* here, calling it 'Wolf's Crag'.

### Admiralty Distance Poles

Two sets of poles over a measured mile enabled shipping companies to test the speed of ocean going vessels. The Cunard liner RMS Mauretania was launched in 1906 and reached 25.73 knots, making her the largest and fastest ship in the world and securing the mail contract with America for over twenty years.

### Tun Law

At 500ft (150m) this is the highest cliff on the Berwickshire coast, also the site of two Iron Age forts, which are represented by defensive banks and ditches on the landward side.

### Pettico Wick and St Abbs Head

A favourite venue for divers, the cove of Pettico Wick has magnificent views of the coastline. The jetty was built to land supplies for the lighthouse prior to the road and this was also the location of an early salmon fishing station. Beyond St Abbs Lighthouse is Kirk Hill, site of the 7th century monastery of St Æbba and a later chapel. St Abbs Head National Nature Reserve is famous for its many thousands of seabirds and wild coastal plants.

## St Abbs to Eyemouth 3½mils (6km) (a short but popular section)

### Coldingham

In the early 700s the first English historian, Bede, wrote about a place named *urbs Coludi* or Colud's fort and the village of Coldingham represents the settlement of the descendants of Colud. The fort is now identified as Kirk Hill on St Abbs Head, which is named after a royal princess, Æbba of the royal house of Northumbria, who set up a monastery of monks and nuns there. The present priory of Coldingham dates back at least nine centuries to 1098 when it was established by King Edgar for Benedictine monks from Durham. Men from Fisher's Brae in Coldingham worked their boats from **St Abbs** shore before the harbour was constructed. They carried their creels (lobster pots) down the Creel Path.

**Coldingham Bay** is an award-winning beach lying about a mile from the village and its sheltered sands are popular with holidaymakers in the summer months when the Beach Café is open and Beach Guards patrol.

**Eyemouth** has been Scotland's largest south-eastern port since 1482 when Berwick upon Tweed was lost to England. In the wars of the mid-16th century Fort Point was fortified twice; by the English in the 1540s and by the French several years later. Created a Burgh of Barony in 1597, Eyemouth is the largest town in Berwickshire and the River Eye's deep water is still ideal for landing boats. The town was once more popular than Gretna Green because of the marriage house on the Great North Road at Lamberton, where eloping English couples could cross into Scotland to wed. **Gunsgreen House** was built by local smuggler and merchant John Nisbet in the 1750s from the profits of his trade and has recently undergone a major refurbishment.

## Eyemouth to Berwick upon Tweed 12½mils (20km)

The small harbour at **Burnmouth** (3½mils (6km)) was improved in 1879 and 1959 to serve the shoreline fishing communities of Partanhall, Cowdrait and Ross who shipped out their catches through Upper Burnmouth, which is on the Great North Road and main line railway. Partan is the local name for a crab.

### Berwick upon Tweed

Berwick has changed hands no fewer than fourteen times and although English since 1482, its football team still plays in the Scottish League! The ramparts provide a popular promenade around the town and were built in their present form in the 16th century in response to the construction of a French fort at Eyemouth. The Barracks were designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor (more famous for his London churches) and built in 1711-21, making them the oldest in Britain. The Tweed is crossed by Old Berwick Bridge (1611) with its fifteen sandstone arches, the Royal Tweed Bridge (1925) and Robert Stephenson's Royal Border Bridge (1847-50), which carries the main East Coast railway line.

