

# Earlston to Leaderfoot

Distance 3.25 miles / 5.2 km

A Country Walk from



Earlston Paths Group

# Diamond Jubilee Path

## 2012

### Diamond Jubilee Path 2012

The Jubilee Path, developed by Earlston Paths Group to provide a long-term local legacy in celebration of Queen Elizabeth 2<sup>nd</sup> Diamond Jubilee, was formally opened in Spring 2013. The 3.25 mile / 5.2 km route between Earlston and Leaderfoot is primarily designed as a "country walk". The Leaderfoot is varied and every effort has been made to ensure minimal disruption to the sensitivities of the natural plants, birds and animals.

The historic Cowdenknowes House and Redpath Village provide added interest along the way.



Crafted by Ozzy Mackinnon

The path is fully signposted, waymarked throughout and the degree of difficulty generally ranges from easy to moderate; although there are some more strenuous sections where the route climbs high above the Leader Water.

### Earlston

The town, straddling the A68 trunk road, is a bustling community serving the surrounding rural area. It is the site of the ancient settlement of Ercildoune and was once home to the 13th century poet and seer, Thomas the Rhymer. The town has a good range of food shops, public houses, coffee shops, two industrial estates and other small businesses as well as having both a primary and high school. It is adequately served by public transport and there is ample on-street parking. Public toilets are located at the bus stance in the Square.



Long before these three structures existed the Romans had a river crossing in the vicinity taking Dere Street, the Roman road from York, north to Cramond on the Firth of Forth

Caught in early morning mist, winter sunshine or the glow of summer's setting sun, the viaduct is a beautiful sight.



### Cowdenknowes House

The Jubilee Path passes this ancient structure, on its route from "Speedy's Path" and Cowdenknowes Woods. The present house stands on the site of a 12th century Douglas stronghold on the Leader Water. The original castle was demolished in 1533.

The house (or castle) was acquired by the Hume family in the 15th century and they were granted a royal charter relating to lands and titles in the area. During the latter part of the 15th century the family's interests clashed with those of the sovereign, James 3rd. The Humes, along with others, were incensed by the loss of privileges and revenue, and they rose in rebellion. Their Border spearmen helped bring about the King's defeat and death at Sauchieburn, Stirling in 1488.

On the subsequent accession of James 4th, the Humes were again rewarded for their support. However in 1497, after the king unsuccessfully invaded England, initially taking Northam Castle, the English retaliated with the Earl of Surrey laying waste to the Hume estates.

As you walk down the narrow path beside the burn, look to the right: the ruinous and reduced tower, including the dungeon with buttressed walls, is still evident. It was last used to house Napoleonic Prisoners of War.

The earliest part of the existing house is the East Tower dating from 1554. It was built to help defend the border as a result of the fragile relationship between Scotland and England and the frequent cross-border raiding by Reivers. It is recorded that Mary Queen of Scots stayed at Cowdenknowes on her way to Jedburgh in October 1566.

The house has changed appearance over the centuries as new owners redeveloped the existing structure or added new wings. It has suffered from the ravages of conflict in the turbulent relationship between Scotland and England. Today, it sits quietly by the Leader Water, a silent witness to centuries of Scottish history. Cowdenknowes House is privately owned and is closed to the public.

### Redpath Village

The village is a few minutes' walk from the Jubilee Path. It is an ancient place, dating from the 12th century, which retains a genuine air of antiquity with its simple cottage-lined main street, topped and tailed by farms at either end. The old school house is now the village hall. Unfortunately there are no facilities in the village and parking is very limited.



### Leaderfoot Bridges



Three bridges span the River Tweed at Leaderfoot, the most spectacular being the disused railway viaduct.

### Drygrange Railway Viaduct.

Opened in 1863 for the Berwickshire Railway, it connected the East Coast Main Line and the Waverley Line. The viaduct has 19 brick arches, each approximately 13 m wide and 37 m above the river.

### Drygrange Bridge.

Built between 1779-1780 by Alexander Stevens, the bridge's 31m central span was exceptional for its time.

### A68 Road Bridge.

The modern box girder construction was built between 1971-1973.

Long before these three structures existed the Romans had a river crossing in the vicinity taking Dere Street, the Roman road from York, north to Cramond on the Firth of Forth

### Location Map for Earlston



### Useful information at a glance

**Earlston:** Ample parking, transport links, toilet facilities, general shops, coffee shops, public houses and accommodation.

**Redpath:** Very limited parking at village Hall. No facilities.

**Leaderfoot Viewpoint:** Ample parking. No facilities.

**Waymarking:** Finger posts with directional information are located at key junctions.

Waymarker posts with distinctive Earlston Paths Group discs confirm the route in other places.

**Strong boots** are recommended at all times as the paths can be muddy and are often on steep hillsides.

**Wear suitable clothing** as weather conditions can change quickly.

**Obey any warning notices** relating to land management e.g forestry activities, shooting.

**Dogs** should be kept on a lead in wildlife sensitive areas and under strict control at all times.

**Dog fouling** is offensive and unhygienic. Please "bag it and bin it", even if you have to carry it for some distance.

**Litter** is unsightly and dangerous to wildlife. Please take it home with you.



Produced by the Earlston Paths Group

### Earlston Paths Group

The Group, a not for profit voluntary organisation, was formed in 2005. We have successfully waymarked existing Rights of Way, restored and improved old footpaths and opened several new walking routes.

Our guidebook is available from local outlets in Earlston, Lauder, Melrose and St Boswells, price £3, or through the Earlston Paths Group web site.

### Enjoy Scotland's outdoors responsibly

- take responsibility for your own actions
- respect the interests of other people
- care for the environment.



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**DISCLAIMER** Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this leaflet is accurate at the date of publication. Inevitably changes may occur to the route and conditions underfoot and it is for you, the walker, to assess whether undertaking the walk presents any personal risk based on your health, fitness, capability and experience. No liability is accepted by Earlston Paths Group for any loss, damage or injury arising to persons undertaking or attempting the described route.

### Acknowledgements

The Jubilee Path has been developed with the generous co-operation of local landowners and their tenants which is gratefully acknowledged.

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# Diamond Jubilee Path 2012

The Diamond Jubilee Path runs from Cowdenknowes to Leaderfoot, however, to get to the start you have to use one of our other walks. The path is a linear walk, unless you tackle the "Leader Water Round", and whichever way you decide to explore, you should ensure that your transport arrangements are suitable.

The information which follows describes the route from Earlston to Leaderfoot.

## The Route

### 1 Earlston to Cowdenknowes

1.1 miles / 1.7 km

Easy

30min

From the War Memorial in the Square head along Station Road (B6356) towards Redpath. The road bends to the right, at North Lodge, and once you are past the house you go down a flight of steps; a finger post indicates that you have reached the start of several footpaths.



Photograph: CM Welsh

You are now on Speedy's Path, a pleasant woodland walk amongst broadleaf trees.

After a short distance the path divides; ignore the left hand fork and continue along the main path until you reach another finger post pointing you left for The Black Hill and Jubilee Path.

Follow the waymarkers uphill through the woods to a rough road, turn right and continue down the road to the next finger post. Turn right and walk a few yards down the driveway to the start of the Jubilee Path.



### 2 Cowdenknowes to Redpath

1.3 miles/ 2.2 km

Moderate to Strenuous

45min

The start of the Jubilee Path is marked by a distinctive commemorative sign. Follow the path, between double fences, to steps leading down to a pretty Victorian stone bridge over the burn. The path follows the stream, in a deep gorge, as it tumbles down towards the Leader Water. High above the river the path swings to the left before dropping down to follow the riverside to a fine stand of poplar trees.

Continue along the riverbank and turn left and then right into a plantation of young deciduous broadleaf trees. The path winds its way uphill and into a double fenced channel running along the field edge before entering another young plantation to drop gently downhill this time, towards a footbridge across the burn.



Once over the burn, the path goes uphill before swinging right into a plantation of large Scots Pine. The going is much harder now as the path climbs through the trees high above the Leader Water towards Redpath.

Steps take you down once again and the path follows the fence line as it clings to the hillside high above the river. Redpath village can just be seen in the distance across the fields.



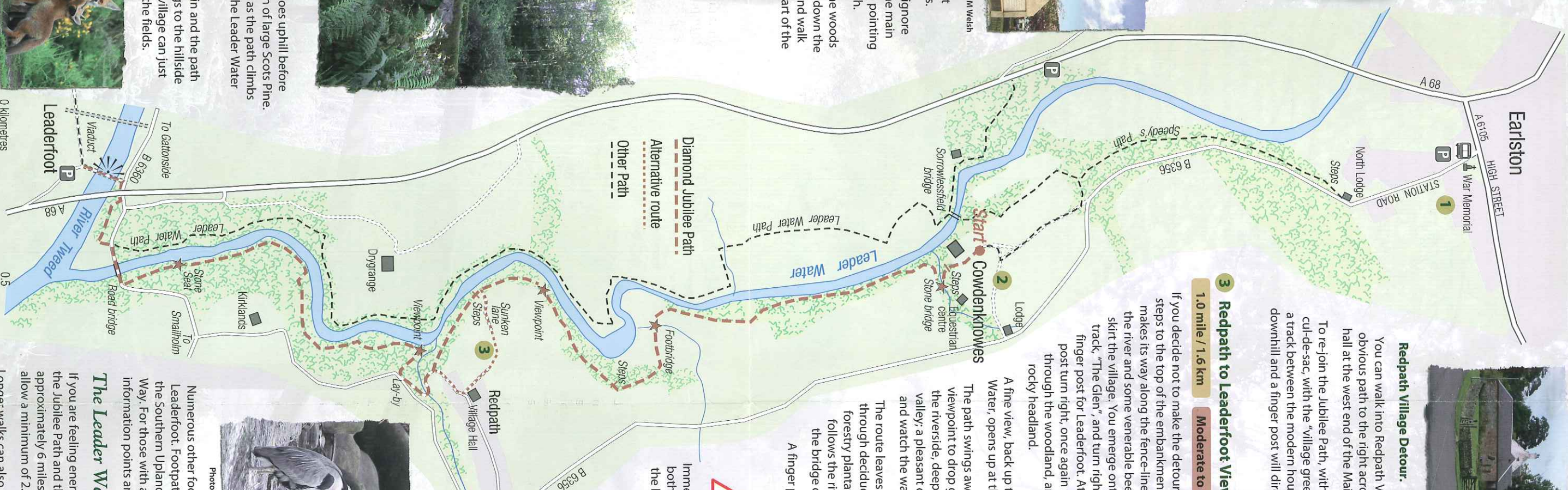
Photograph: HG Armstrong

The route, dropping steeply at times, continues to follow the fence line as it skirts farmland; twisting and turning before emerging opposite another set of steep steps.

Redpath village is signposted to the left, up a Sunken lane, while the Jubilee Path continues up the steps.



Photograph: HG Armstrong



Redpath Village Detour.

You can walk into Redpath Village by turning left up the lane and following the obvious path to the right across the field. You emerge at the side of the village hall at the west end of the Main Street.

To re-join the Jubilee Path, without re-tracing your steps, turn right into the cul-de-sac, with the "village green" on your right, and walk straight ahead on to a track between the modern houses and West End farmhouse. Follow the track downhill and a finger post will direct you onwards to Leaderfoot.

### 3 Redpath to Leaderfoot Viewpoint

1.0 mile / 1.6 km

Moderate to Strenuous

30min

If you decide not to make the detour, climb the steps to the top of the embankment. The path makes its way along the fence-line high above the river and some venerable beech trees, to skirt the village. You emerge onto a broad track, "The Glen", and turn right to follow the finger post for Leaderfoot. At another finger post turn right, once again for Leaderfoot, through the woodland, and out onto a rocky headland.

A fine view, back up the Leader Water, opens up at this point.

The path swings away from the viewpoint to drop gently down to the riverside, deep in the wooded valley; a pleasant quiet spot to sit and watch the water slip by.

The route leaves the river once again and climbs steadily upwards through deciduous woodland along the edge of commercial forestry plantations. Heading downhill through the forest it then follows the riverside all the way to the road (B3630), emerging at the bridge over the Leader Water.

A finger post directs you to the right and across the bridge.



Take care along this short section of road walking.

Immediately over the bridge, another finger post marks both the start of the Leader Water Path and the way to the Leaderfoot bridges.



Just beyond the finger post, cross over the road and down the steps. The path goes uphill for a short distance through some giant beech trees to emerge at a small lay-by beneath the A68 Tweed Bridge. Turn left along the lay-by onto the old Drygrange road bridge. Cross the bridge, pausing to admire the magnificent Leaderfoot railway viaduct and the River Tweed below, and you have reached the end of your walk: the Leaderfoot Viewpoint and parking area.



Photograph: J Osborne

Numerous other footpaths and walking opportunities spread out from Leaderfoot. Footpaths lead onwards to St Boswells, the Eildon Hills, Melrose, the Southern Upland Way, the Borders Abbeys Way and the St Cuthbert's Way. For those with an interest in Roman history, the Trimontium fort site information points are only a few moments walk away.

### The Leader Water Round

If you are feeling energetic you can do a complete circuit by combining the Jubilee Path and the Leader Water Path. The total distance is approximately 6 miles and you should allow a minimum of 2.5 hours.

Longer walks can also be created by linking many of the other paths described in our booklet "Country Walks around Earlston and Redpath".



Photograph: J Osborne

Map based on 1954 1:25000 O.S. map and updated from field survey and information supplied.