

NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND MEDIA RELEASE

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Ben Lawers' hidden path features in new series of Scottish history trails

The Kiltyrie route is among the walks which uncover Scotland's secret history

A lochside path, which allows people to follow in Rob Roy McGregor's footsteps along the banks of Loch Lomond, has been included in a list of six Hidden History Trails which uncover Scotland's secret past.

The Kiltyrie Hidden History Trail at Ben Lawers tells the stories of the forgotten community who once called the area around the loch home and features in the National Trust for Scotland's new series of Hidden History Trails.

The trails are located at six NTS properties around the country, Ben Lawers, Newhailes, Ben Lomond, St Abb's Head, Fair Isle and Threave Estate, where the charity's archaeology team have carried out digs and investigations.

The circular walks, which are mapped or sign-posted, tell stories of survival, of Scotland's people, from the Neolithic period to the modern era and how landscapes have changed and been cultivated across the centuries.

Visitors can walk ancient paths, see World War II crash sites and get a tantalising glimpse of Scotland's 'forgotten history'. They offer dream days out for every aspiring Indiana Jones – no matter how young or old.

The routes have been drawn up by the National Trust for Scotland's Archaeology team as part of Archaeology Month (September 2020) and coincide with the conservation charity's Stride Out for Scotland campaign, which is encouraging people to get out and enjoy the places and spaces it cares for.

"The walks really cover everything," explained Derek Alexander, the National Trust for Scotland's Head of Archaeology. "You'll see nature, wildlife and archaeology, there really is something for everyone along the routes.

"Normally we would cover these routes on guided walks, but we obviously can't do that for groups at the moment and are instead encouraging people to discover these places for themselves.

“We know that people want to get out again and enjoy properties but do so in a safe environment. They want to be outdoors and somewhere that has good parking and safe footpaths, that’s the beauty of NTS locations, they offer all of that.

“The trails tell of Scotland’s hidden heritage and some of the things we highlight are very subtle, you would not know what was there until someone actually points out the features in the landscape and tells you the story.

“And more often than not, it’s the archaeology of the everyday. We are telling the stories of Scotland’s people – not of the elites.”

Kiltyrie’s Hidden History Trail at Ben Lawers tells the secrets of the people who lived along the banks of Loch Tay, while the **Ardess Hidden History Trail** at Ben Lomond takes you through Rob Roy McGregor territory on the banks of Loch Lomond.

The **Threave Estate route** follows an existing footpath that leads down to Threave Castle and tells stories of sieges and the hidden iron Age cropmark enclosures that lie hidden beneath the turf. At **Newhailes** visitors are encouraged to follow the existing estate walk and absorb the information provided on the interpretation panels. These tell the story of the 18th century designed landscape and how its remains have been slowly rediscovered as part of a two-decade long study involving NTS staff and volunteers. This uncovered many of the original features in the grounds of a house which was once at the centre of the Scottish Enlightenment.

On Fair Isle a fold-out leaflet covers 5000 years of human history from Bronze Age burnt mounds to the evidence of Scotland’s role in the Second World War, including remains of a crashed Heinkel bomber. At **St Abb’s Head** visitors are encouraged to walk around the existing footpath from the village along to Pettico Wick Bay. This passes a large number of sites which are marked clearly on Ordnance Survey maps and interpretation panels, including the remains of an Iron Age fort, a medieval chapel, a fishing station, lighthouse, signal station and even traces of a former golf course!

“It’s great for us to give people the chance to get out and read the layers in the landscape,” explained Daniel Rhodes, NTS Archaeologist. “People appreciate the importance of natural locations but what we are trying to do is give that historical depth.

“The recent pandemic has refocused everyone, it has made them realise how important the countryside is and has made us consider how we tell stories and present our work in a different way.

“The walks are situated in stunning locations. St Abb’s Head is well known as this beautiful location, but it also has this incredible 2000-year-old story, directly under your feet. I think when people know that, they will be amazed as I constantly am, every day that I work here.”

Some of the Hidden History Trails have optional, longer routes for walkers who fancy a challenge. Some take in steep and heavy ground and people are advised to prepare for the weather and where good walking shoes.

Booklets are available at some of the trail locations, while others will be signposted with interpretation panels which map out the land and show the changes.

You can find out more information about the trails at nts.org.uk

SCOTLAND'S HIDDEN HISTORY TRAILS

Kiltyrie Hidden History Trail at Ben Lawers

Takes you along the original track that once led from a pre-18th-century settlement through woodlands, along sunken trackways, past abandoned quarries and ruined buildings. One is a farmstead built in 1798 and excavated by the National Trust for Scotland in 2003. Research carried out by the Trust here has helped to unearth the hidden history, not only of Kiltyrie but of Perthshire and the Highlands as a whole. It tells a story of dramatic change and Clearances but goes even further back with tantalising traces of medieval settlements, now visible as turf humps.

You can [download the Kiltyrie trail here at nts.org.uk](https://nts.org.uk)

The Ardess Hidden History Trail at Ben Lomond

At first glance Ben Lomond looks like one of Scotland's wild places. But walking this trail you find the ruins of houses, farm buildings and field-walls, reminders of a community who lived by the banks of Loch Lomond several hundred years ago. By the early 1800s all but one of the houses on this trail were abandoned. The people who once lived here spoke Gaelic, hence the name 'Ardess' which is Gaelic for the high (ard) waterfall (eas) on the slopes above. At Ardess you are also walking in the footsteps of Rob Roy MacGregor, who owned land here until he was branded an outlaw.

You can [download the trail here at nts.org.uk](https://nts.org.uk)

Fair Isle Archaeology leaflet

This little North Atlantic island boasts an extraordinary history of conflicts and conquest, spanning some 5000 years. That's how long humans have called the Fair Isle home and recognised it as a place of strategic importance. The Vikings lit beacons on Ward Hill and, also on this route, is Malcolm's Head – used as a lookout during the Napoleonic Wars. Ward Hill was also used as a radar base during World War II and the area is littered with evidence of that time, including a German Heinkel 111, shot down by the RAF. This trail truly is a gem and at Feely Dyke you will find evidence of the first prehistoric dwellers, who travelled north through Scotland and Orkney.

Visit Fair Isle [here at nts.org.uk](https://nts.org.uk)

St Abb's Head Trail

Best known for its feathered residents and the thousands of seabirds who call the clifftops home, St Abb's Head has a hidden history and a place in Britain's very earliest Christian stories. Named after the Northumbrian Princess Abbe, it became a place of pilgrimage for medieval women and an important link between Lindisfarne and nearby Coldingham prior.

Cuthbert, the patron saint of Northumbria, was a visitor and spent contemplative nights 'immersed in the sea'. Visitors can walk in the footsteps of the saints and pilgrims and enjoy views south to Lindisfarne from the remains of the chapel at St Abbe's Head.

You can [download the St Abb's Head trail here](#)

Newhailes Estate Trail

This grand Palladian house was one of the centres of the Scottish Enlightenment with many of the great scholars of the time visiting the library that was housed here. During that time many changes were made to the property, with new walks and outbuildings constructed and it has taken a 20-year-long study by National Trust for Scotland staff, volunteers and local people to uncover many of them. The investigations now give a hint of Newhailes' former glories – a story of philosophy, nature and art interlinked through buildings and landscape designs waiting to be discovered.

Visit Newhailes [here at nts.org.uk](http://nts.org.uk)

Threave Estate Trail

Like St Abb's Head, Threave is well known as a place of natural beauty and is home to Scotland's only bat reserve – with eight different species of bat calling the gardens home. Over the past century, the gardens have come to be regarded among Britain's finest and Threave is the only Scottish garden dedicated to the training of horticulturists and home of the School of Heritage Gardening since 1960. Go back several hundred years and you will find it was a place of strategic importance and NTS studies have uncovered evidence of wars and sieges.

Follow the Threave Garden and Estate trail [here at nts.org.uk](http://nts.org.uk)

Please note: The ground can be rough and boggy at some locations so wear sturdy footwear. Sheep and cattle may be grazing so respect the land and livestock; leave gates as you find them; keep dogs under control.

For more information, visit nts.org.uk

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Editor's Notes:

The National Trust for Scotland is the charity that celebrates and protects Scotland's heritage. It relies on the support of its members and donors to carry out its important work of caring for the natural and built heritage of Scotland for everyone to enjoy.

From coastlines to castles, art to architecture, wildlife to wildernesses, the National Trust for Scotland exists to protect the national and natural treasures we all love. To plan your visit today, enter your postcode at www.nts.org.uk.

We would be grateful if, when referring to the National Trust for Scotland that our name is not shortened to 'the National Trust'. We are an independent organisation, separate from the National Trust. The National Trust for Scotland is commonly shortened to NTS or 'the Trust'.

