

# VISITOR GUIDE TO ETTRICK & YARROW VALLEYS



## TWO VALLEYS - LOTS TO SEE & DO

Near the town of Selkirk, the valleys of the Ettrick Water and the Yarrow Water are the very essence of the Scottish Borders.

There is so much to see in Ettrick & Yarrow Valleys. With beautiful hill and river scenery as a backdrop, today's visitors can enjoy a host of things to do. Cycling and walking, birdwatching, angling and horse-riding are just some of them, as well as discovering the valleys' heritage and traditions of balladry.

This guide will help you to explore these peaceful valleys.

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

## WELCOME TO ETRICK & YARROW VALLEYS



Ettrick Valley

The two parallel river valleys of Ettrick and Yarrow lie south-west of the town of Selkirk in the Scottish Borders. Though close together, each valley has its own distinct communities and stories to tell.

Lying in the very heart of the Scottish Borders, their heritage takes in stirring tales from the days of the Borders Reivers (raiders) and even further back to the days of the Scottish patriot William Wallace. The area lays claim to figures both legendary and real-life who feature in the balladry of the area. Border Ballads were both collected and championed by Sir Walter Scott who, along with James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, contributed much to the literary heritage here.



Yarrow Valley

Historically, the seclusion of the hills hereabouts was disturbed in the 17th century by bloody Covenanting episodes with the Battle of Philiphaugh (1645) in particular as an important chapter in Scotland's religious story.

Today, farming and forestry are the main elements in the local economy. In both valleys, there are farms that have been worked for generations by the same family - and also farm names that go back to mediaeval times. This sense of continuity and timelessness is especially associated with this area.



Cycling in the valleys

Cycling and angling are well established outdoor activities in the valleys. Walkers can enjoy the wide open spaces and fresh air of the moorland slopes and rolling hills where old tracks and throughways have been used for centuries. With virtually no light pollution, the dark skies of the upper valleys offer an amazing opportunity to stargaze at our Milky Way galaxy and beyond. But, most noticeably in the upper Ettrick Valley, visitors will have a strong sense of somewhere undiscovered - and hence exceptionally tranquil - the very essence of rural Scotland waiting to be explored.

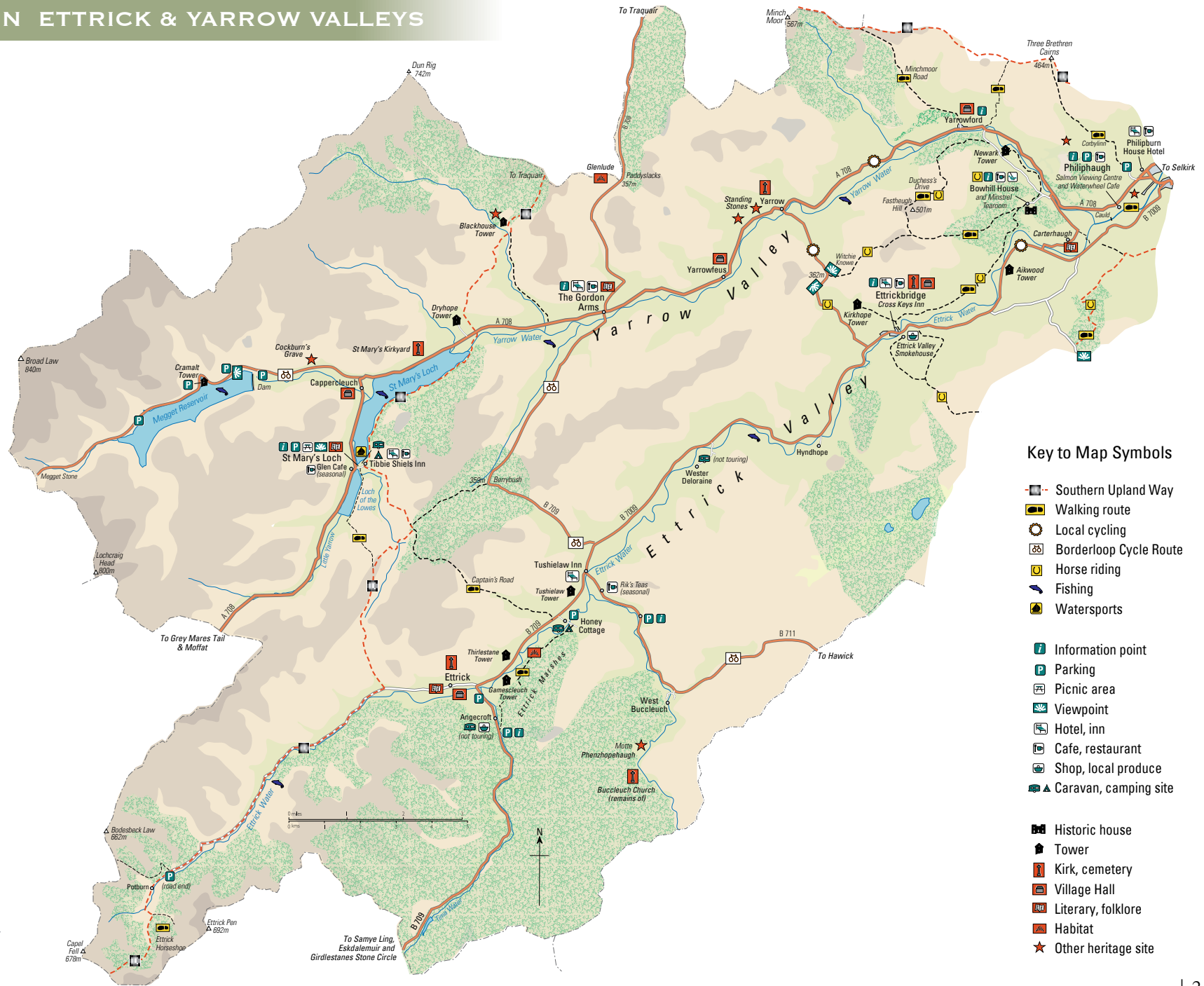
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# PLACES TO VISIT IN ETRICK & YARROW VALLEYS



## Key to Map Symbols

- Southern Upland Way
- Walking route
- Local cycling
- Borderloop Cycle Route
- Horse riding
- Fishing
- Watersports
- Information point
- Parking
- Picnic area
- Viewpoint
- Hotel, inn
- Cafe, restaurant
- Shop, local produce
- Caravan, camping site
- Historic house
- Tower
- Kirk, cemetery
- Village Hall
- Literary, folklore
- Habitat
- Other heritage site





## HISTORY, HERITAGE AND PLACES OF INTEREST: PHILIPHAUGH TO ST MARY'S LOCH

Though the Ettrick Valley is peaceful and 'off the beaten track' today, in 1645 the lower valley by the River Ettrick, just outside of Selkirk, was the scene of dramatic events. The **Battle of Philiphaugh** on 13th September saw the Covenanting forces under General Sir David Leslie defeat the Royalist troops of the Marquis of Montrose. There are interpretation boards that describe the course of the battle here.



Yarrow Water

For many visitors this may be the first introduction to the Covenanters, a Presbyterian movement bitterly opposed to episcopacy (government of the church by bishops or a hierarchy) and Catholicism. This resulted in a prolonged and complex series of clashes between monarchy, church and state for much of the 17th century, both in Scotland and beyond - notably between 1644 and 1651 during the Wars of the Three Kingdoms (between Scotland, England and Ireland).

Today's visitors here can also enjoy the **Salmon Viewing Centre** where cameras record the passage of the 'king of fish'. Nearby **Philiphaugh Estate** is a fully restored

walled garden with a great range of produce and flowers for sale. You can also visit Tibbie Tamson's grave which is marked with the inscription 'Tamson 1790' and is near Philiphaugh (NT 436296) - the walk being described in the booklet '*Paths around Selkirk*'.

The story goes that Tibbie, a simple minded woman and resident of Selkirk, was caught stealing yarn. She was so distressed and embarrassed that she hanged herself. Being regarded as a criminal, she could not be buried in consecrated ground, but some townsfolk who had sympathy for her laid her to rest on the side of the hill. Other explanations for her isolated grave site are that she may have been executed for practising witchcraft and buried here as a penalty. It is also possible that she was a victim of a plague and buried separately to reduce the spread of infection or that she was the victim of the crime of homicide.



Salmon Viewing Centre

Signposted from the main road, Bowhill Country Estate opens between April and September with Bowhill House, the Scottish Borders home of the Duke of Buccleuch, open for guided tours in the main season (tel 01750 22204 or see [www.bowhill.org](http://www.bowhill.org) for full details). There is a lot to see all around the estate - walks and trails to suit all ages and abilities, wildlife and woodland, plus an adventure playground, gift shop, tea room and visitor centre.

Also on the Bowhill estate, three miles (five km) to the west of the battle site of Philiphaugh, is the ruined tower of 15th century **Newark Castle**. It got its name to distinguish it from the earlier Auldwork ('old work') that formerly stood nearby. It features in a scene in Sir Walter Scott's poem '*The Lay of the Last Minstrel*' (1808). It also has a notorious connection as the place where about 100 royalist followers of the Marquis of Montrose were shot in the castle's barmkin (Scots for defensive enclosure) after their capture at the Battle of Philiphaugh. William Angus' classic text '*Ettrick and Yarrow, a Guide with Songs and Ballads*' (1894) describes Newark as 'the best preserved tower in the Yarrow Valley'.

On the other side of the Yarrow Water, easily seen from the road on the north side, is the birthplace of the African explorer **Mungo Park**. Born in 1771, and the seventh child of a relatively well-off tenant farmer, he had exceptional ability and eventually obtained a medical degree at Edinburgh. He made his first African expedition to find the source of the Niger River in 1795 and subsequently published a famous account of this, '*Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa*', that brought him widespread acclaim. He made a second African expedition to the River Niger in 1805. Against advice, he travelled in the rainy season. Most of his party died before they even reached the river and the

few who remained were drowned at the Bussa rapids, after an attack by hostile natives. News did not reach Scotland until 1814. A plaque was inserted in the wall of the ruined cottage by a Dr Anderson of Selkirk during the 19th century and this memorial can be seen from the road today. A large chestnut tree, which was reputedly planted by Park himself, stands in Selkirk near to the Mungo Park memorial on the High Street.



Minchmoor Road

Continuing south-west along the Yarrow Valley, tracks leading up from **Yarrowford** give access to the hill routes to the north, as well as some historical features. The ancient Minchmoor Road was used by the Marquis of Montrose escaping after Philiphaugh. Sir Walter Scott locates a scene in his tale '*The Two Drovers*' on the Minchmoor Road. The long distance route of the Southern Upland Way follows part of the Minchmoor Road as well as an old drove road along the hillcrests. Drove roads were ancient thoroughways that carried cattle until the mid 19th century. Aside from the cattle raiding that went on in the days of the Borders Reivers, later cattle-droving through the Scottish Borders was usually south-bound - taking cattle raised in the north to be sold at the great cattle markets or 'trysts' of England.

North-east of Yarrowford, also on the Southern Upland Way, is the skyline landmark known as the **Three Brethren**. A cairn in Scots is usually a heap of stones to mark a summit or route, but these three cairns are solidly built small towers, dating from the 16th century and mark the meeting point of the Selkirk, Philiphaugh and Yair estates. Further west, walkers on the Southern Upland Way will find it crosses **Wallace's Trench** at right angles. This curious feature runs down the hillside for a considerable way, deep enough in places to hide a rider on horseback. Most likely associated with the patriot Sir William Wallace, others speculate it is Pictish and much earlier in origin. Wallace's Trench is intersected by the Minchmoor Road at its lower end. These are some of the points of interest for walkers to explore in the hill country so easily accessible from the main road here.



The Three Brethren

Further upstream, at **Yarrow**, where the 'Swire Road' from the Ettrick Valley drops to the bridge over the Yarrow Water, **Yarrow Kirk** is a short stroll from the main road. When St Mary's of the Lowes (sometimes called St Mary's of the Forest) was abandoned by its minister and congregation around 1640, they moved here, it being a more central location to serve the religious needs of the valley. The kirk has been rebuilt many times over the years - firstly in 1771, then restored 1826, then 1906, though subsequently destroyed by fire in 1922, and thereafter rebuilt.

One of its most famous ministers, Dr James Russell wrote another classic guide: *'Reminiscences of Yarrow'* (1886). In it he describes parishioners attending worship having walked barefoot from the top of St Mary's Loch or over the hills from Ettrick. He also said that so many shepherds attended that the words of the sermon could sometimes scarcely be heard for the barking and fighting of their sheepdogs. The final benediction was always given with the congregation sitting down 'to cheat the dougs' who would otherwise know the service was ending and give vent to a crescendo of howling and barking!

Continuing south-west the main road passes Tinnis Farm. Events further down the valley at Philiphaugh, described above, gave rise to a curious story. On the very day of the battle, the Earl of Traquair, a Royalist, was travelling to meet the Royalist army with money for them. He met some fleeing troops who told him of the defeat. The Earl's horse, carrying the moneybags, was given to a blacksmith riding in the Earl's company. The blacksmith was instructed to hide the cash. It is said that he threw the bags in an old well hereabouts. The money has never been found, though curiously, years later, some silver coins were ploughed up in the vicinity. These came James Hogg's way and he gave them to Sir Walter Scott. Perhaps the blacksmith deliberately put about the story of the well and stole the money?

Note also the 'loupin on stane', Scots for the jumping-on stone - an aid to mounting the saddle. The kirkyard has some interesting 17th and 18th century gravestones with a variety of symbols of mortality. Inside there are oak pews and fine stained glass. The whole setting is peaceful and timeless - the very essence of a rural kirk.

A little way east is the 'Faa-in doon Brig' (the falling-down bridge) usually called the Deuchar Bridge - of which only one arch and cutwater remain. The original bridge dates from around 1748 and replaced an even earlier one. It was built by the Duchess of Buccleuch.

From Yarrow, there is a narrow unclassified road referred to locally as 'The Swire' which links the two valleys. At the top of this road are two amazing viewpoints. From the stone-sheltered seat, you can look down into the Yarrow Valley. Or you can walk a short way towards Witchieknowe for views of the Ettrick Valley and beyond. Breathe in the fresh air, feel the peacefulness and listen to the silence!

Continuing on the A708, about half a mile south-west of Yarrow (signed Whitefield) is a stone in a wooden enclosure (also marked on OS Landranger map 73 - useful for all of this area!). This is the **Yarrow Stone**. It is highly unusual and has a Latin inscription commemorating two princes of the British kingdom of Strathclyde. It was first discovered in 1803, lying flat, when the area was first taken into cultivation. Human bones were found below. At the time, there were several other cairns in the vicinity. The stone was later re-erected close to where it was found. The inscription is much defaced and weathered and the reading of its crudely carved capitalised Latin has been attempted by many historians from the days of Sir Walter Scott onwards. It

seems to say that Nudoss and Dumnogenus are buried there and that they are the sons of Liberalis (hence the alternative name of the 'Liberalis Stone'). The stone is dated to around 500AD and when it was re-erected - in the early 1800s - it was set up, some say, on its side - the vertical text certainly suggesting this.



The Yarrow Stone

With other standing stones nearby (the Glebe Stone and Warrior's Rest), substantial traces of a linear earthworks and other local names open to a variety of interpretations, this area has long attracted interest from historians. Many believe this was the setting of a Dark Ages battle between the Britons in the west and Anglians in the east. Some even associate the site with King Arthur himself!

**The Dowie Dens of Yarrow** is one of the best known of the Border Ballads, the body of folksong that so inspired Sir Walter Scott. Dowie is Scots for sad, while den (also seen as 'dean') is another Scots word meaning a little valley in the hillside. Sir Walter, as a collector, had a hand in the setting-down of the ballad, though some say he may have recorded parts of two ballads. If this is the case, then that is part of what has always happened with folksong - the performer adding, amending and 'improving'. The ballad is printed in Scott's famous collection the *'Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border'* and Scott says it refers to a duel fought at Deuchar Swire between John Scott of Tushielaw and his brother-in-law, Walter Scott of Thirlestane. (A blood feud existed between the two Scotts over disputed land.) In essence the ballad contains typical themes of romance, violence, heroism in an unequal contest, bloodshed and death!

*'Four he has hurt, and five he has slain,  
On the bloody braes of Yarrow,  
Till that stubborn knight came him behind,  
And ran his bodie thorough.'*

A few minutes further on is the **Gordon Arms Hotel**, a historic inn thought to be named after its builder Gordon, who was also involved in making the road running south from the inn, towards the Ettrick Valley. The latter road is referred to in William Angus's guide as the Hartleap road but it is usually referred to today as the Berrybush. A plaque at the hotel recalls the last meeting of James Hogg and Sir Walter Scott in 1830, when they walked a little way together from the inn, the failing Scott leaning heavily on the arm of the Ettrick

Shepherd. James Hogg farmed for some time at Mountbenger, just above the Gordon Arms on the road towards Innerleithen. This road runs north to the Tweed Valley via Traquair House and has its local name - the 'Paddy Slacks'.



Dryhope Tower

Travelling west from the Gordon Arms, lay-by parking on the A708, just before St Mary's Loch is a convenient place to start the short walk northwards, using a section of the Southern Upland Way, to see **Dryhope Tower**. This uncompromising foursquare ruined tower is a typical Border pele tower of a kind built on both sides of the Scotland-England Border. Many of these Scottish fortifications were built by order of the Scots Parliament in the 16th century, when there was still conflict between the two kingdoms.

Dryhope belonged to the Scotts of Dryhope. One of the family, Mary Scott was known as 'the Flower of Yarrow' and was an ancestor of Sir Walter Scott. The castle was slighted by King James VI because of a connection between the Scotts and one of the king's political enemies. Though rebuilt, it fell into disuse towards the end of the 17th century. Stabilisation work has been carried out on the ruin and today it is in the hands of the Philiphaugh Estate Trust. The Southern Upland Way continues north-eastwards at this point, reaching **Blackhouse**

**Tower**, approximately 2 miles / 3 km further on. This is a very ruinous structure of the late 16th century, once belonging to the Stewarts of Traquair.

Back on the main A708, on the other side of the road from St Mary's Loch, look out for a signpost to **St Mary's Kirkyard**. This is one of the most atmospheric settings in the valley - the site of an ancient place of worship with a fine view over St Mary's Loch. It is only a few minutes walk to reach a solitary tree by this ancient enclosure. Today only the gravestones remain of St Mary's of the Lowes - 'the Kirk in the Forest'. The kirk itself has vanished entirely - some of its stones no doubt built into the wall that marks the kirkyard. Some claim that this is the Kirk in the Forest where William Wallace was proclaimed Guardian of Scotland.



Graveyard at St Mary's of the Lowes

Records show that there was a place of worship here as early as 1275. Family names include Scott, Kerr, Bryden, Linton, Pringle and others. To commemorate the determination of the persecuted Covenanters of the 17th century to maintain their beliefs, an annual 'blanket preaching' still takes place at the end of July within the kirkyard. This recalls the days when the outlawed Covenanters were forced to hold their acts of worship out of doors in secluded places.



Talla Reservoir

At Cappercleuch, a minor road leads west to the **Megget Reservoir**. Covering 259 hectares (640 acres), this substantial man-made water-body supplies water to Edinburgh and is held in the valley by Scotland's largest earth dam. The construction phase lasted from 1976 to 1983. There are several parking places and viewpoints around the reservoir as well as interpretation boards telling the story of the dam and history of the area. **Cramalt Tower** was submerged when the reservoir was created and has been partially reconstructed beside the water. The original tower was three or four storeys high and had its own pit prison for captured reivers and outlaws. From here, there are beautiful views of the reservoir and towards St Mary's Loch below.

From the car park at the reservoir dam, there is a short circular walk along the dam wall and into the valley below. Further up from the reservoir, at the top of the valley by the cattle grid and just before a steep descent towards the Tulla Reservoir, you will pass a standing stone at the roadside, known as the **Megget Stone**. This is also the starting point for a walk up **Broad Law**, the second highest hill in the south of Scotland which also offers amazing views of the Borders and beyond. For the less energetic, there is a fantastic view down towards **Talla Reservoir** from the road just a short way past



the Megget Stone. The steep climb up from Tala Reservoir is a route that is also used by cyclists looking for a serious challenge and is one of the most beautiful gateways into the valleys.



St. Mary's Loch

About halfway between Cappercleuch and the reservoir is the settlement of Henderland. This was the stronghold of William Cockburn a notorious Border Reiver in early part of the 16th century. His well-known thievery and his purported close connections with his English counterparts just south of the border made him a target for the young King James V who wished to clearly establish his authority over the more lawless parts of his kingdom. According to tradition, Cockburn of Henderland was hanged at his own doorway and his lady fled to waterfall in the nearby Dow Linn so she could not hear the sounds of her husband's execution over the rush of the water. The tale is told in *'The Border Widow's Lament'*. It is well worth the short walk to see the waterfall at Dow Linn.

There is signpost at Henderland to Cockburn's grave. There is a tombstone on a mound, which is all that remains of an earlier Chapel, which bears the inscription "Here lyes Perys of Cokburne and his Wyfe Marjory". It is recorded that William Cockburn was arrested and beheaded in Edinburgh, so this tombstone probably relates to another generation of the Cockburns of Henderland.

**St Mary's Loch**, the largest natural body of water in this part of the Scottish Borders, has been a favourite excursion for generations of visitors. It has a fine setting amid the rounded hills. Sir Walter Scott helped spread word of its beauty and solitude, for example, in *Marmion* (1808) where he writes:

*'Ofi in my mind such thoughts awake  
By lone Saint Mary's silent lake'.*

Perhaps most famous of the romantic poets, William Wordsworth, wrote about the area in his publication *'Yarrow Unvisited'* on his 1803 Scottish visit, with its famous lines:

*'The swan on still St Mary's Lake  
Float double, swan and shadow'.*

The English romantic poet came north more than once however - and in his 1814 excursion he finally managed a visit to St Mary's Loch!

Helped by the fame of the 'Scott Country', visitors soon flocked to St Mary's Loch. For example, one favoured tour - before the days of the motor car - was by coach and horses from Selkirk railway station, into the Ettrick Valley, up and over by what is now called the Berrybush road (the B709 or 'Top Swire'), heading down the side of Berry Knowe to Crosscleuch and Tibbie Shiels. The tour returned to Selkirk via the Yarrow Valley. St Mary's Loch has retained its popularity over the years and still offers visitors sailing, angling and a choice of walks in the surrounding hills and valleys.



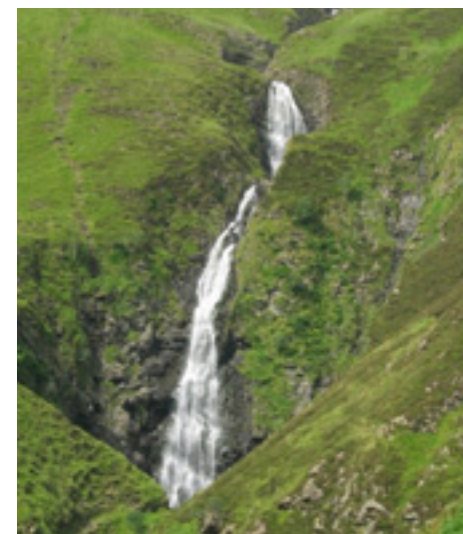
St Mary's Loch

Overlooking the loch, the **James Hogg Statue** recalls the 'Ettrick Shepherd' (1770-1835) who became a celebrated literary figure but remained, at core, a Borders shepherd. Born in poor circumstances to a sheep farming family in Ettrick, Hogg had little education. He was shepherding at Blackhouse when he met Sir Walter Scott and a lifelong friendship followed. Scott recognised and encouraged his literary talent, eventually influencing the Duke of Buccleuch to allow Hogg the tenancy of the farm of Altrive, east of St Mary's Loch, rent free.

Hogg's memorial here was unveiled before a large crowd in 1860. The Tibbie Shiels Inn was a meeting place for notable literary figures including the essayist and historian Thomas Carlyle, as well as Hogg and Scott. The famous local landlady, Tibbie herself is quoted as saying about Hogg that he was a *'sensible man, for all the nonsense he wrote'*!



James Hogg Statue



Grey Mare's Tail

From St Mary's Loch it is easy to visit **Grey Mare's Tail** waterfall and **Loch Skeen** which are just a few miles further along the road towards Moffat. Grey Mare's Tail, with its 60 metre cascade is one of Scotland's finest waterfalls and is a very impressive sight, particularly when in flood. The waterfall flows from a hanging valley which was created by ice flows. There is a challenging path that climbs up to the right hand side of the waterfall to the beautiful Loch Skeen with its pure, unpolluted waters, ringed by craggy hillsides. Loch Skeen supports the very rare freshwater fish called the vendace and is the only place in Scotland where it is found. It is typically salmonid in form but has large scales which give it a silver appearance. Look out also for wild goats especially by the Tail Burn.

## ETTRICK VALLEY - INTRODUCTION



Ettrick Valley

Today, commercial forestry plantings cover some of the slopes of the peaceful green and rounded hills that dominate the skyline. Elsewhere in the Valley, in parts of the Ettrick Marshes for instance, native broad-leaves have been restored and the marshes reinstated. Long ago, all of these hills and the little valleys between formed part of the great Ettrick Forest – famed in balladry as ‘*The fairest forest that ever man saw with his e’e*’ (The Outlaw Murray). The ‘Forest’ referred to the hunting grounds of kings, and the wild, untamed Ettrick Forest with its high

hills, secluded valleys, rough terrain and patches of woodland gave excellent cover. No wonder it was the hiding place of outlaws and the refuge for those out of favour with either the Scottish or English monarchy – like the Scottish Patriot William Wallace.

Much of the original wildwood vanished long ago as the ‘Forest’ was tamed and order imposed by Edinburgh. A more settled pattern of sheep-farming and cultivation developed along the river valleys. Descendants of ancient hawthorn, rowan and juniper trees still cling on in the rocky valleys or ‘cleuchs’. Just as importantly, the ‘folk-memory’ of those wild times lives on through the Border ballads, the place names and a kind of mystical atmosphere you may feel if you spend time in the upper Ettrick.

There’s a sense of ‘out of this world-ness’ that can be just the antidote for the stresses of 21st-century life. It’s peaceful yet something more – as if the protection of the old forest lived on! However it is defined, it’s well worth spending time in the Ettrick Valley.

## HISTORY, HERITAGE AND PLACES OF INTEREST: ETTRICKBRIDGE TO POTBURN

The B7009 into the Ettrick Valley, beyond Carterhaugh of ballad fame, passes by **Oakwood (or Aikwood) Tower**, the site connected to the Scotts of Harden from as far back as 1517. It is one of several pele towers, some occupied, some ruinous, for

which the area is noted and has a legendary connection with the 13th-century Borders wizard Michael Scott. The tower has been restored and today offers luxury accommodation for house parties and weddings, for

Tam Lin (or Tamlane and other spellings) is a famous Scottish ballad, and takes the theme, common in European folklore, of a man captured by the fairies, rescued by love. Recorded as a tale in existence at least by the 16th century, it exists in many variations. Usually it starts with a warning to the local young ladies: ‘*I forbid you maidens all, who wear gold in your hair to come and go by Carterhaugh, for the young Tam Lin is there..*’ But one young maiden (usually Janet) does so, becomes pregnant in mysterious circumstances, then has to confront the ‘Queen of Faerie’ under instructions from Tam Lin, as he was captured by fairies and is facing imminent sacrifice – it being Halloween – unless Janet rescues him. She does so – and gets her man in the end.

It is remarkable for its specific association with Carterhaugh, the farm and woodland close to where the Yarrow Water meets the Ettrick Water. Today, a well, marked by a carved stone plaque ‘Tamlane’s Well’ can be found in the woodlands next to the road.

Wat of Harden (see page 8) who lived at Oakwood, married the ‘Flower of Yarrow’ (see Dryhope Tower) who was famous for her beauty. Finding the larder needed replenishing, she once served a pair of spurs on a covered plate at dinner. This hint was immediately understood by Wat and his men, who set off on a cattle-stealing raid right away!

Other farms nearby include Fauldshope, to the north, owned by a family of the Turnbells in the 15th century. They, like the Scotts, also had a fearsome reputation for freebooting – cattle raiding!

Two minor roads lead from the B7009, join behind and above Aikwood Tower and head towards Ashkirk. The second of these routes, from Inner Huntly, passes the remains of **Oakwood Roman Fort** to the right hand side of the road and a Roman Camp on the left. These were discovered in 1949 and are difficult to see from ground level, but the garrison would have held around 500 men whose role was to watch over the Ettrick Valley. Direct communication between this fort at Oakwood and the one at Newstead, near Melrose, would have been possible by means of the signal-post recently identified on the summit of Eildon Hill North.



Ettrickbridge Village

Further up the hill, turning towards Ashkirk, are fine views of the valleys, with Bowhill House at the centre, and near the summit, you will find a small parking area and the start of some gentle forest walks.

Back on the B7009, a little further west, **Ettrickbridge** is the last settlement of any size heading up the Ettrick Valley. The ‘Cross Keys Inn’ is a popular place to eat, drink or stay and



the village has an active village hall, school and church. The Ettrick Valley Smokehouse, just as you enter the village, sells its own smoked, and often locally caught, salmon and trout.

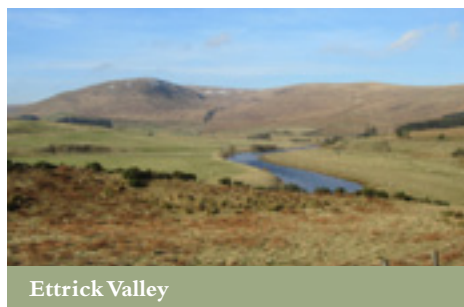
Attractive and peaceful, with a variety of local walks, Ettrickbridge grew up around the crossing point built on the rocky narrows of the Ettrick Water. The bridge here was originally three arches and built by Auld Wat Scott of Harden in 1628. By 1715 the bridge was in ruins. A replacement was opened in 1780 which survives today, though later widened. A plaque with further information on the bridge's history can be seen on the parapet. Note the picturesque lych gate of Kirkhope Parish Church, beside the bridge. The Roll of Honour, showing the names of all the families who lost loved ones in the two World Wars, is within the gate's shelter.



Kirkhope Tower

The imposing Kirkhope Tower stands on the hill slopes to the north west of the village. This fascinating building was constructed in the early 16th century but was later damaged by the well-known Borders family, the Armstrongs, in the conflict between the Scottish and English monarchies known as 'The Rough Wooing'. It was subsequently owned by the Buccleuch family and fell into disrepair and was finally restored in 1996 as a private residence.

Beyond the village, the picturesque Ettrick Water in its rocky bed is confined by linns (Scots for rocky narrows) and has the old name of Newhouse Linns. This spot is where Sir Walter Scott made his last visit to Ettrick in the autumn of 1831 when he was ailing and about to set off for the Continent in the hope of finding a cure.



Ettrick Valley

Further on, the farm at Single is associated with the young James Hogg, who worked there for a time. The vista opens up as the road swings round the slopes of Single Hill to the north (note the cairn on the skyline). It is worth stopping here at a convenient point to take in the broad sweep of green hills that lie ahead and the open, breezy ambience of the slopes and river grazings. Look out, too, for typical wildlife seen from the roadside: a patrolling raven or two (the wedge-shape tail helps to tell it apart from the carrion crow); perhaps a buzzard also high on the hill; listen for curlew and, in summer, whinchats perched conspicuously on the bracken. If you are lucky in the Spring or Autumn you may see black grouse, with their distinctive white tails displaying, in the riverside fields or eating rowan berries in the roadside trees. They are all part of the valley experience!

All along the Valley, each farm name has a connection or story to tell: Gilmanscleuch was once the home of 'Daft Jock Grey' who was the

model for Davie Gellatly in Walter Scott's novel 'Waverley'.

The name Deloraine came about - some say - because King James II gave the Forest of Ettrick to the queen as part of her dowry - hence 'de la reine'. Others argue it could still have a royal connection through Mary of Lorraine, the mother of Mary Queen of Scots. Some prefer the explanation that it is Celtic 'dal' - a field or portion, with Orran the name of a Celtic saint. Sir Walter Scott may have confused the matter of pronunciation by rhyming the name with 'again' in a couplet in his 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel'!

Further up the valley, Crosslee was notable as the first farm in Ettrick to introduce the Cheviot breed of sheep, supplanting the original Blackface. It is said that Crosslee is so named because this was part of a special place where two ley lines crossed. Just beyond Crosslee, the 'Berrybush' road (B709) heads over to the Gordon Arms in the Yarrow Valley.



Tushielaw Inn

The Tushielaw Inn was once a toll house for cattle drovers crossing the valley and heading south-west. Scan the open slopes of Tushielaw Hill (right) beyond the road junction with the B711 and, half hidden by a few trees, the ruin

of **Tushielaw Tower** is just visible. Once it was the stronghold of Adam Scott, the self-styled 'Kind of Thieves' who caused mayhem in the surrounding districts. He raided far and wide and was feared for the way in which he summarily despatched his adversaries, stringing them up from the trees which surrounded the tower. His 'rule' was brought to an end by King James V who, having lost patience with this challenge to his authority, came hunting here in 1529.



View from Tushielaw Tower

The King's forces ran Adam to the ground and laid siege to his tower. It is said that he was overcome, subjected to 'Jedhart Justice' and hung there and then on an ash tree beside his gateway. It is recorded that generations of coach drivers, in the days of early tourism in the valley, would point out a tree growing nearby as 'the very ash tree that Scott was hung on'! Records, however, show that Adam Scott was beheaded in Edinburgh.

This foray by James V was part of a punitive expedition to quieten the 'outlaws' in the Ettrick Forest. This was the same foray that saw the prodigious leaping deer give its name to 'Hartleap' in the Yarrow Valley (see page 12).

Diverting a little way down the B711 by the Rankle Burn and past Cacrabank (first mentioned in 1484 when William Scott was granted the place rent free as he was Ranger of the Ward of Ettrick) is the hamlet of Buccleuch, the name being the ducal name of the Scott clan. Nearby is the steep sided ravine or 'cleuch' where the hunting party of King Kenneth III finally cornered a massive buck. A young man named John Scott so impressed the King by his feats of strength and daring (and by carrying the buck single-handedly out of the cleuch) that he is said to have granted him the land that they were on and the title 'John Scott in Bucksleuch'. However, just as in the tale of Adam Scott of Tushielaw, there may be a more prosaic explanation: Buccleuch may be 'bal-cleuch' - or township/enclosure in the steep-sided valley, as 'Bal-' is a common prefix in many Scottish place names.



Rankle Burn

This land and the tower built there became the seat of the Dukes of Buccleuch, one of the best-known land owning families in Scotland. The tower is now part of the farmhouse at East Buccleuch and the remains of the **Buccleuch Kirk** and graveyard lie about 2 miles behind here, along the farm track and over the Rankle Burn, just past Phenzhopehaugh. To the north west of the cottage at Phenzhopehaugh are the

remains of the Norman **Phenzhopehaugh Motte** - a mound that was once the base of a long vanished castle, probably built in the 12th century when King David I encouraged Norman nobility to settle in Scotland.



Lochans at Ettrick Marshes

Returning to the 'main' valley road and continuing, the **Ettrick Marshes** are prominently signed, with three separate parking areas and the chance to explore (see walking section). This is an important wetland habitat, where the level ground has allowed the Ettrick Water to flow sluggishly. The adjoining river-flats with their reeds and rushes form an important wildlife haven. In fact, the 'haughs' (riverside flat areas) of this part of the Ettrick Water are considered one of Scotland's most outstanding areas of otherwise scarce flood-plain habitat.

The broadleaved trees of the lower levels by the river are replaced by conifers on the slopes above. As well as the 'usual' badgers, roe deer and fox, you may spot otters - though consider yourself lucky if you see this shy creature. The area also has red squirrels - look for the pine cones chewed to resemble an apple-core profile as evidence. Among the birds here, ospreys visit in summer, while there are many smaller birds to look out for. You should hear redstarts singing in early summer, along with a good

selection of warblers, including the sometimes scarce grasshopper warbler. At least 78 bird species have been recorded here. The area is also good for butterflies, notably the Scotch Argus. Amongst plant specialities, you should find northern lady's mantle and tea leaved willow.

To the northern side of the Ettrick Marshes lie the ruins of **Thirlestane Tower** which was built in the 16th century by Sir John Scott, who James V pronounced in 1542 as '*Ready, aye ready*' for battle. The second baronet of Thirlestane, Sir William Scott married Elizabeth, the 5th Lady Napier in 1699 and Thirlestane Tower became the seat of the Napier family.



Grasshopper Warbler

This branch of the family were descendents of John Napier of Merchistoun (1550-1617) who invented logarithms and promoted the use of the decimal point. Both the first and second Lord Napiers fought with Montrose at Philiphaugh - so the family had links to the area from much earlier times. In 1883, the 10th Lord Napier chaired the 'Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Condition of Crofters in the Highlands and Islands', more commonly known as the 'Napier Commission' which was set up to quell agitation linked to the clearances of the Scottish Highlands. In the early 19th century, the family built Thirlestane House, or Castle as it was also known, just in front of the tower.

However, the house was demolished using dynamite in 1965 as it was riddled with dry rot and the costs of restoration were deemed to be prohibitive.



Ruins of Gamescleuch Tower

Gamescleuch Tower, another former valley sentinel on the south side of the Ettrick Marshes was built in the 1570's for Symon, the son of Sir John Scott of Thirlestane. Tradition says that Gamescleuch was never occupied because 'Simon of the Spear', as he was known, was poisoned by his step mother the night before he was to marry and take up residence there. The tower is now ruinous and hidden in the woodlands, although it can be seen from one of the way-marked routes in the Ettrick Marshes.

Continuing up the valley, the road reaches another meeting of routes at the settlement of Ettrick. Ramseycleuch, at the junction of the roads, is remembered and documented (by William Laidlaw, amanuensis to Sir Walter Scott) as the place where Sir Walter Scott and James Hogg, having newly met that day, found so much to say that they did not part till 3am! Just west, in front of what is now Ettrick Hall, is the memorial to the same Ettrick Shepherd - the most famous literary figure in the story of Ettrick.

**James Hogg** was born in 1770, in a farm cottage at the farm of Ettrickhill. Although nothing remains of the cottage, the monument beside the road commemorates his birth. His mother, Margaret Laidlaw, was a strong woman renowned for her story telling and his father, like most men in the area worked with sheep. Hogg received only 6 months of formal schooling, but by his teenage years was entertaining with his fiddle and wild stories at gatherings in farms up and down the valley. He worked at Single Farm in the Ettrick Valley and later at Blackhouses in the Yarrow Valley where he was coached in reading and writing by a kindly neighbour. A meeting with Walter Scott encouraged his literary ambitions and led to Scott collecting ballads from Hogg's mother (who later bitterly complained that they hadn't been set down right and that the oral tradition would now be lost).

Mythical, other-worldly stories and sightings retained their allure in the upper reaches of the Ettrick Valley long after they had been forgotten in other parts of Scotland. Hogg's maternal grandfather, Will Laidlaw, or 'Will o' Phawhope' had a reputation for dabbling in other matters: he was said to be the last person in the area who had talked to the fairies. Yes, really!

This was despite the inhabitants of Ettrick attending church religiously and engaging in long discussions on the theological arguments of the day. It was said that the famous Presbyterian preacher, **Thomas Boston**, could draw crowds of several hundred to his Sunday sermons.

Aside from the conspicuous **James Hogg Monument** by the roadside, Hogg is now remembered in the former primary school which hosts the **James Hogg Exhibition**. The exhibition is open in the summer months, containing some fabulous miniature models and

telling the story of this remarkable man and his influence on Scottish literature.

Hogg's most famous work is the novel '*Confessions of a Justified Sinner*'. Hard to categorize, the work is part gothic, part mystery, but also with satirical elements. It is recognised as the first psychological novel and the split personality of the protagonist and his terrible deeds have influenced writers from Andre Gide to the best selling crime writer Ian Rankin.



Portrait of James Hogg

Today's dog lovers will still enjoy what could be the finest ever poem written about a dog: '*A Shepherd's Address to his Auld Dog, Hector*' - a reminder that Hogg's works may not always be well known, but many have stood the test of time.

Alice Munro, the Canadian novelist and winner of the 2013 Nobel Prize for Literature, is descended from the Laidlaws of Ettrick and thereby related to James Hogg. She wrote '*View from the Castle Rock*' about the her ancestors from the Ettrick Valley.

Opposite is the **Boston Memorial Hall**, focal point for the community in the upper valley. It recalls Thomas Boston (1676-1732), a fiery preacher from a Covenanting background who took charge in Ettrick in 1707. He is buried by **Ettrick Kirk** nearby. James Hogg and his uncanny grandfather Will o' Phaup are also buried in the kirkyard, as is Tibbie Shiel and members of the Napier family. The church here is in records that date from the mid 15th century, though the building itself dates from 1822.

Not all of the ministers of Ettrick Kirk found the far-flung parish and the isolation of the olden days to their liking. A certain Rev Potts was encouraged into retirement after repeated performances involving liberal amounts of strong drink, whereupon he would be witnessed sitting astride a wall, whacking it with his wig in an effort to make his imaginary horse go faster!

Further up the road from Ettrick, the character of the valley changes again and takes on a wilder and more remote aspect. Hogg nominates a ravine on Lochy Law, above Shorthope, as a place that has been haunted '*since time immemorial*' both by fairies but also the ghost of a murdered minstrel. In the valley here, legends and reality are mixed!

The farm of Overkirkhope suggests a chapel once stood somewhere in the 'hope' or valley

- and there are faint traces of habitation and structures which are - in local traditions, at least - attributed to 13th-century settlements by monks who took possession of the land in 1235.



View from the Ettrick Horseshoe

This last section of metalled road is also used by the Southern Upland Way, which comes over from Beattock and joins the road east of Potburn. It crosses into the Yarrow Valley via an old bridle path at Scableuch. Near Potburn, at the very end of the road for vehicles, there is some parking with a turning area, plus a choice of walking routes. The circle of hills that hem in the end of the valley are sometimes referred to as the '**Ettrick Horseshoe**'. These include Capel Fell 678m (2224 ft) and Ettrick Pen 692m (2270 ft), both classified as 'Grahams', which are hills between 2,000 and 2,499 feet (609.6 and 761.7m), with a drop of at least 150m (490 ft). Other hills here are classified as 'Donalds', being over 2000ft with different criteria. Whatever their classification, they make for great walking!

**William Johnstone** (1897-1981), one of Scotland's most celebrated and important abstract artists, lived at Potburn for a time and also at nearby Cossarshill. Although his art had abstract tendencies, it still retained a physical sense of the visual world. Johnstone's work took on a very personal relationship with the landscape of his native Scottish Borders where saw the tension between humanity and nature.



## WALKS AROUND ETRICK & YARROW VALLEYS

A booklet *'Walks in the Ettrick & Yarrow Valleys'* is available from a variety of local outlets and contains detailed route descriptions and maps of several circular walks in the two valleys. Here is a summary and some pointers for walking in the area.



Walking the Duchess Drive

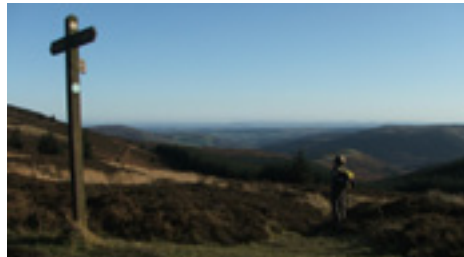
### BOWHILL ESTATE

There are a good number of walking options within the estate grounds around Bowhill House - by the Yarrow Water, by the estate lochs, through the woodlands or up onto the high moorlands. As a working, sporting estate, please ensure you comply with any requests for safety reasons if, for example, pheasant shooting is taking place. The original carriageway known as the Duchess Drive is especially exhilarating, taking walkers on to the moorland and up to 500 metres at the highest point.

### FROM YARROWFORD

With easy parking and good access to the moor and hill to the north, a variety of walks can be enjoyed using the Minchmoor Road and the Southern Upland Way. The rough

pasture of the lower slopes, for example near the Broadmeadows Hostel, are especially good for butterflies in high summer.



Southern Upland Way

### WALKS AROUND ETRICKBRIDGE

Ettrickbridge is a good base for local walks, both around the village and further afield, past historic strongholds such as Kirkhope Tower and into the hills to the south.



Entrance to Ettrick Marshes

### DISCOVER THE ETRICK MARSHES

This varied habitat of woodland, grassland, wetland and open water has great conservation

value and can be explored on a number of different routes, taking in 'water-level' views (with helpful duckboards in the wettest areas!) as well as a walk through the higher coniferous woods. Parking is available at either end of the marshes - Honey Cottage (by the riverside), Ettrick Willows and Tima.



St Mary's Loch

### LINKING ETRICK AND ST MARY'S LOCH

Using the ancient throughway known as the Captain's Road and also the Southern Upland Way allows various permutations of circular walking routes, taking in both valleys and giving a real taste of the off-the-beaten-track ambience of the hill passes between the two valleys. There are also other ancient droving routes arriving in the Yarrow Valley from Peebles and heading over the hills to Tushielaw in Ettrick and onwards to the south. All of these Ettrick/Yarrow links across the hills make for leisurely but satisfying full-day excursions.



Yarrow Valley



Dryhope Tower

### FROM DRYHOPE

As mentioned in the historical section for the Yarrow Valley, two historic towers - Dryhope and Blackhouse - can be reached via the Southern Upland Way as it turns north at the end of St Mary's Loch.



Upper Ettrick

### THE HEAD OF ETRICK

The motorable road ends near Potburn and opens up a variety of higher level walks. With some summits exceeding 600m (2000ft), they should be considered as fairly serious excursions and only be undertaken by experienced and properly equipped walkers in poor weather conditions or in winter. Collectively, the hills here are sometimes referred to as the 'Ettrick Horseshoe'.

## WILDLIFE IN ETRICK AND YARROW



Grey Wagtail

With varied habitats that include river valley woodlands, open moor and grasslands, wetland and conifer plantations, Ettrick and Yarrow has plenty to offer the birdwatcher and photographer. Here are just some of the species found in our area.

Along the riverside and on lochs, dipper, kingfisher and grey wagtail are present, along with the 'usual' species such as heron, coot, goosander plus a variety of duck. Ospreys in summer are now becoming more frequently reported, as this species has made a welcome return to Scotland in recent decades. Look out for them especially on St Mary's Loch.

Conifer forests support good numbers of siskin, goldcrest, crossbills and other small birds, notably coal tit. Broad-leaved woods have both the greater-spotted and green woodpeckers, as well as nuthatch - plus a good selection of the commoner warblers in summer.

In more open country, including riverside fields and higher moorland, look for characteristic

species such as curlew and lapwing, skylark and meadow pipit. Ravens are also a characteristic bird of this area and, amongst the less-common raptors, look for the small and fast-flying merlin, as well as the peregrine falcon. Buzzards are common, with hen harriers intermittent. Any day-flying owl you see will be a short-eared owl, though other species, such as tawny and barn owl, are present in the area.

The characteristic wildlife sounds of the upper moors in summer will be the bubbling call of the curlew, but listen out, in the quieter 'cleuchs' and valleys for the fluting song of the ring ouzel - sometimes called the mountain blackbird.



Red Squirrel

Red squirrels are beginning to establish themselves in the area and among the larger mammals, foxes, badgers and otters are present, as are the widely distributed roe deer in the woodlands. The mountain or blue hare is also on the higher moors. Watch out for adders, particularly on sunny days in late summer.

## LINKS BETWEEN ETRICK AND YARROW - BY CAR, CYCLE AND ON FOOT

### 'THE BERRYBUSH' ROAD

The road joining Ettrick and Yarrow between the Gordon Arms in Yarrow and Tushielaw is referred to in Angus's guide as 'Hartleap Road'. The 'hart' part is an uncommon or old name for a male deer (Old English 'heorot'). The name is still attached to a cottage today (actually on the Yarrow side of the watershed). Hartleap is explained by Angus as follows: *'The leap, 28 feet across, is said to have been made by...the last hart in Ettrick, when stricken by an arrow from the bow of Andrew Telfer, huntsman of King James VI. Two grey whinstones, said to have been erected by the royal followers, now mark the extent of the leap.'* Other early writers date the story to 1529 and James V's reign. Locals know the road as 'The Berrybush' and it is part of today's B709. It is possible that the name is derived from the ancient Briton, 'bar-y-bwlch' meaning the summit of a pass. And this in turn is a reminder of the Yarrow Stone in the valley nearby, and its possible link to a long-lost battle between the Britons and their enemies.



Yarrow Feus and Yarrow Valley

### 'THE SWIRE' ROAD

This is the name given to the unclassified road linking Yarrow to just west of Ettrickbridge. The watershed is crossed at Witchieknowe and the road offers an especially good southward panorama, over and beyond the Ettrick Valley. Among road cyclists, this route has a reputation for being fairly challenging - the long steady pull up from Yarrow in particular noted as one of the great hill-climbs in the Scottish Borders.

## OTHER THROUGH ROUTES LINKING THE VALLEYS



Captain's Road

### THE SOUTHERN UPLAND WAY

The official long-distance footpath, the Southern Upland Way, enters the valleys at Ettrick Head. After following the quiet upper valley road, it uses the old bridle path from Scabcleuch near Ettrick, passing west of Peniestone Kowe and Pikestone Rig descending to Riskinhope at the south of the Loch of the Lowes. From there this long established bridle path continues to Tibbie Shiels Inn, beside St Mary's Loch.

### THE CAPTAIN'S ROAD

This joins the Southern Upland Way (if the walker is Yarrow-bound!) by Earl's Hill, and is way-marked in both directions. The Ettrick Valley starting point is at Hopehouse.

### UPPER ETRICK VALLEY

A number of other routes are used mostly by hill walkers connecting the head of the

Ettrick Valley with Moffatdale, notably the path from the public road-end at Potburn over to Bodesbeck. The starting point is indicated by the signpost 'Ettrick Horseshoe and Bodesbeck Law'.

### ACCESS RIGHTS IN SCOTLAND

This guide describes many places of interest and walking routes in the Ettrick and Yarrow valleys. The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 applies and in essence allows responsible access for outdoor recreation to practically all of the rural setting of our valleys. The exceptions are private houses and gardens, farm buildings and fields with crops.

With access, of course, comes responsibility. Outdoor recreation as defined by the Act does not mean you can shoot or fish without appropriate permissions, or drive motorised vehicles away from public roads. Controlling your dog is also important. Stay clear of sheep, especially at lambing time. Likewise, cows with calves can be a danger to both you and your dog. Do not allow your dog to disturb ground nesting birds. Finally, of course, your access or passage should not interfere with farming or forestry activities.

## ANGLING IN ETRICK & YARROW VALLEYS

Shooting Times & Country Magazine has described the River Ettrick as, '*one of the best-kept secrets in the fishing world*' confirming that, while generations of 'in the know' anglers had enjoyed many great days fishing, the outside world was only gradually realising the potential of these waters for salmon and sea trout!

Both the Ettrick and Yarrow waters are tributaries of the famous River Tweed and run through the Duke of Buccleuch's Bowhill Estate. The Yarrow flows from St Mary's Loch and meets the Ettrick at the (appropriately named) 'Meetings Pool'. Day and week tickets are available from the Estate Office throughout the season (1 Feb - 30 Nov) - Bowhill Estate - Tel 01750 20753 or [www.fishtweed.co.uk](http://www.fishtweed.co.uk)

Loch fishing is also available on Bowhill Lower Loch within the Country Estate. The loch is stocked with locally reared rainbow trout



Fishing on the Bowhill Estate

and brown trout and is best fished from a boat (provided).

Other angling opportunities and further information is available by contacting the Selkirk & District Angling Association: [www.fishpal.com/Scotland/Tweed/SelkirkAndDistrictAA/?dom=Tweed](http://www.fishpal.com/Scotland/Tweed/SelkirkAndDistrictAA/?dom=Tweed)



## CYCLING IN THE VALLEYS



Cycling in the valleys

The Scottish Borders in general make for great cycling country, with many lightly-trafficked roads plus off-road forest tracks and a variety of other dedicated mountain bike facilities. Ettrick & Yarrow play their part and the area is already well-known to local cycling clubs and individuals.

The very lightly trafficked Ettrick Valley is a particular favourite. The two main crossings between Ettrick and Yarrow offer testing but

not over-demanding climbs and they provide several options for working out circular routes depending on the starting point.

The Berrybush Road also in particular also gives the option for north-bound cyclists (i.e. from Ettrick) to reach the Gordon Arms Hotel crossroads (the A708) or divert at the summit of the Berrybush (the B709) into the forestry plantings to join the Captain's Road and drop down to St Mary's Loch at its south end. 'Paddy Slacks', the B709 road from Innerleithen, is another favourite way for cyclists to reach the Yarrow Valley from the Tweed Valley to the north. Other possibilities are opened up using the very scenic, but challenging route passing both Tula and Megget Reservoirs, arriving in the Yarrow Valley at Cappercleuch.

To the south, the B711 road from Tushiewlaw provides options for circular cycling tours passing through Robertson and Ashkirk and returning into the Ettrick Valley.

## DARK SKIES



Evening sky over Ettrick Valley

With virtually no artificial light pollution, the upper Ettrick & Yarrow Valleys offer a stargazing and astronomy heaven! The dark skies are awe-inspiring and on a clear night provide amazing views of the Milky Way galaxy and beyond. The best time for stargazing is during the autumn and winter months, when the nights draw in.

There have also been sightings of the Aurora Borealis, or 'northern lights', over the valleys. These are infrequent and you will be lucky to see them, but it is worth looking out in the night skies if you are visiting during the winter months.

## HORSE RIDING

The valleys offer a great landscape for riding with many off-road tracks, forest tracks and moorland suitable for enjoying on horseback. The 'Buccleuch County Ride', the first of its kind in Scotland, offers the rider a 3 to 4-day ride of up to 57 miles on a mixture of private tracks, quiet country roads, bridleways and the open road. You can bring your own mount, or Bowhill Stables can provide well-schooled and fit horses and a variety of treks from a few hours to a full day. For more information look at [www.bowhill-stables.co.uk](http://www.bowhill-stables.co.uk)



View from Buccleuch County Ride

### Photography Credits

Thank you to the following photographers for kindly giving us permission to use their images: Graham Riddell Photography (Dryhope Tower - page 5, St Mary's Loch - page 11), Prof. Andrew Spicer (Graveyard at St Mary's of the Lowes - page 5), Oliver Dixon (Tushielaw Inn - page 8) and Graham Catley (Grasshopper Warbler - page 9).

Thank you, also, to the following organisations for allowing us to use their images: Buccleuch Estates (Yarrow Water - page 3, Fishing on the Bowhill Estate - page 13, Buccleuch County Ride - page 14) and Our Scottish Borders (St Mary's Loch - page 6).

We would also like to thank the following people for contributing photographs for this visitor guide: David Baird, Douglas Hardie, Barbara Harrison, Gordon Harrison, Daphne Jackson, Lindsay Lewis, Helen Marrocco, Jeremy Snodgrass and Viv Young.