

# NEWTON STEWART RIVERSIDE

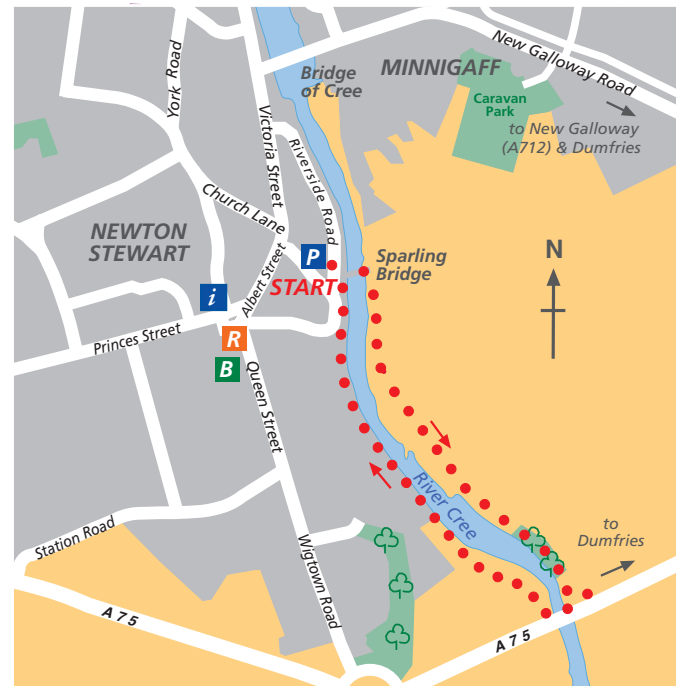
- **Circular riverside walk**
- **1.5km/1 mile**
- **Allow 45 minutes**
- **Hard surface and grass paths and roadside pavement. Stile and kissing gate.**
- **Easy**
- **Stout shoes recommended**

**PARKING** is available at the riverside car park, in the centre of Newton Stewart.

**START** From the car park cross the footbridge over the River Cree, turning right at the end. Known as the Sparling Bridge, this was part of a series of improvements to the riverside walk completed in 1998. It is named after the sparling, a rare fish breeding only in the River Cree and two other sites in Scotland.

Continue along the riverside path to a carved granite waymarker. Granite boulders inscribed with poems and great chunks of beech carved into sturdy benches provide added interest throughout the walk. Cross two fields, passing a small patch of riverside woodland. This provides a haven for wildlife with blue tit and chaffinch being common sights. At the end of the field, cross a stile then follow the track up to the road. Turn right, cross the A75 bridge, then turn right again at the signpost to rejoin the path.

The path returns to the car park along the riverside. Depending on the time of year, you may see mute swans, mallard or goosander. Upstream from the car park is the Bridge of Cree, built in 1813 of local granite from the Minnigaff Hills. The original wooden bridge, built in 1745, was washed away. Before this, the river had to be forded or crossed by ferry further downstream. Having the bridge made Newton Stewart the busy place it is today, bringing traffic, people and trade into the town.



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# KNOCKMAN WOOD

## Circular forest and woodland walk

5km/3miles

Allow 2 hours

Hard surface track and paths, grass paths and beaten earth, all soft in places. Kissing gate and wicket gate.

Moderate

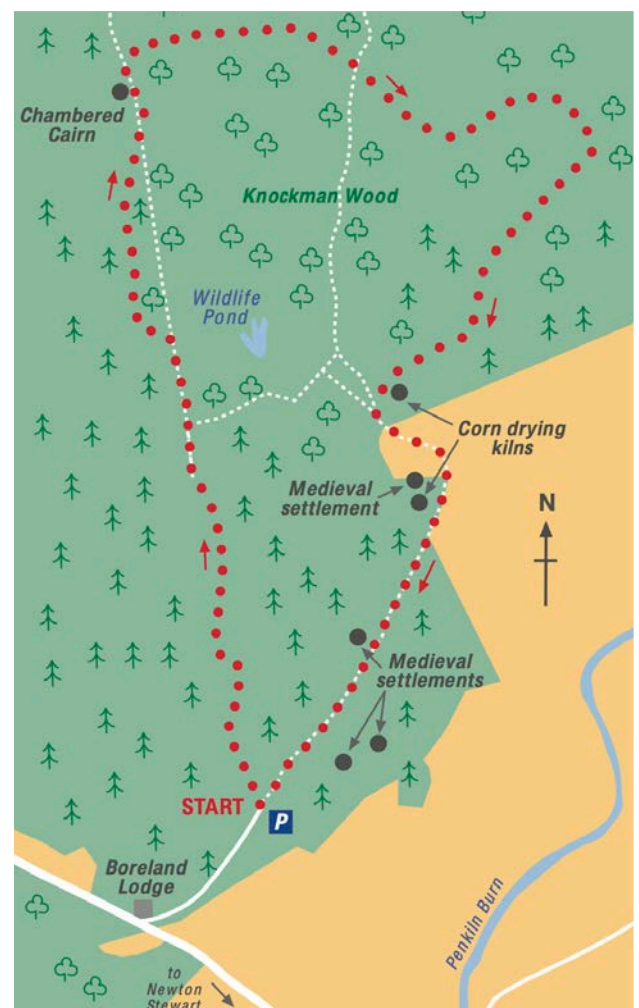
Stout shoes recommended

**PARKING** is available at the start of the trails, in Knockman Wood. The wood is managed by Cree Valley Community Woodlands Trust (CVCWT) in partnership with Forest Enterprise. From Newton Stewart, head towards Minnigaff then follow signs for the Wood of Cree for about a mile and a half. At the sign for Knockman Wood turn right, go through the gate and along the track to the car parking area. There is an interpretation board here with a map.

**START** From the car park, follow the red waymarkers. After a while, you reach a junction where you bear left. Follow the path through the wood, back to the start. Knockman Wood contains both conifer and semi-natural oak woodland. After both World Wars, timber was in great demand and much of the natural woodland was felled. Trees were cut close to the ground by a method known as coppicing, leaving the root system and base intact. This allows re-growth in a characteristic way, with many smaller trunks growing out from the base. There are several areas of the ancient oak wood that have now been deer fenced and left to regenerate naturally. These support a wide variety of plant and animal life such as mosses and lichens which flourish in the clean air and several species of rare birds and butterflies.

The wood is steeped in history and there are various reminders of its agricultural past. Look out for a chambered cairn on your left, an ancient burial site dating from the Neolithic period between 6000 and 4000 years ago. Much later, you pass on your left a well-preserved corn drying kiln, used to dry the grain before milling. Further on, in the forest clearings are the remains of medieval settlements.

In the past the wood has been used for pasture, a rare practice in Scotland, and in the 19th Century it was also a deer park. Nowadays, resident fallow deer and the occasional red or roe deer may be seen in the unfenced areas of this walk. They are shy creatures but can sometimes be spotted if you are quiet. Along the way, enjoy the stunning views to Cairnsmore of Fleet and the surrounding countryside.



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# WOOD OF CREE

- **Circular woodland walk**
- **3.5km/2 miles**
- **Allow 1½ hours**
- **Beaten earth and hard surface path and track. Steps.**
- **Moderate**
- **Stout shoes or boots recommended**

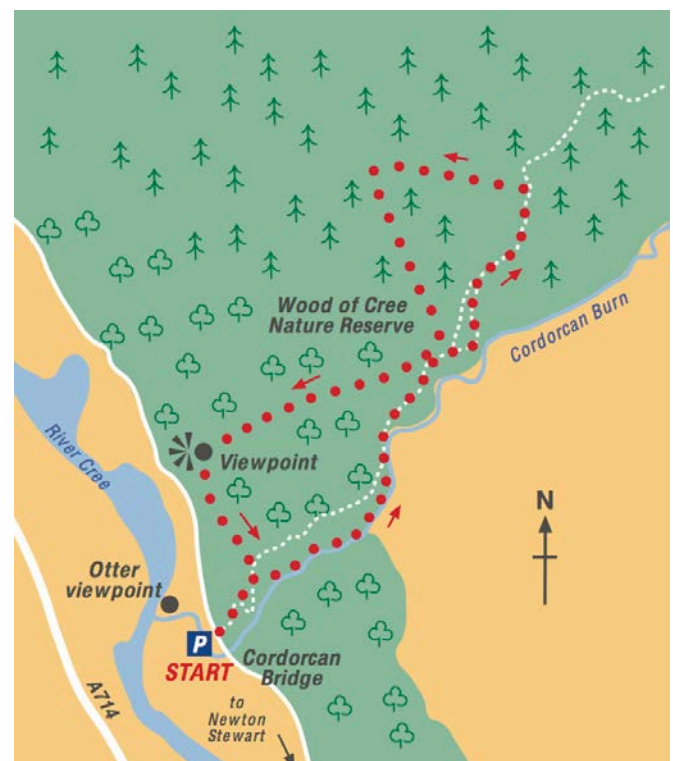
**PARKING** From Newton Stewart, follow signs to Minnigaff then to the Wood of Cree RSPB Nature Reserve. The car park is on your left after 6.5km/4miles. There is an interpretation board with a map here.

**START** From the car park, cross the road to reach the start of the walks. The Scrubland Trail, described here, incorporates most of the shorter Woodland Trail.

From the interpretation board, follow the path uphill to reach a waymarker for the Woodland Trail. Follow the Cordorcan Burn past a series of waterfalls rushing down through steep gorges they have created over thousands of years. The Wood of Cree, thought to date back over 5000 years to the last ice age, is the largest remaining ancient woodland in southern Scotland. It is home to a wide variety of wildlife and particular specialities are pied flycatcher, redstart and wood warbler.

Continue to follow signs for the Woodland Trail until you come to a junction where the two trails split. From here, follow signs for the Scrubland Trail through more varied woodland with open scrub and stands of mature trees. Since the establishment of the reserve in 1984, some conifers have been removed and natural regeneration of the woodland has been encouraged. The resulting diversity encourages a host of plants and animals including Scotch argus butterflies in summer. In springtime the woodland floor shimmers with a thick carpet of bluebells. These are characteristic of old woodlands and flourish particularly well in the damp woodlands of western Galloway.

Following the path, you soon come to a viewpoint, giving you good views of the waterfall and over the River Cree and its marshes. The river and marshes are part of the nature reserve and attract waterfowl such as teal and mallard. Otters may be seen on the river and, if you are very patient they can be viewed at dusk from the otter platform near to the car park. From the viewpoint follow the path back to the start.



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# KIRROUGHTREE FOREST TRAILS

- Circular forest walk**
- 4km/2½ miles**
- Allow 1½ hours**
- Hard surface paths and tracks**
- Moderate**
- Stout shoes or boots recommended**

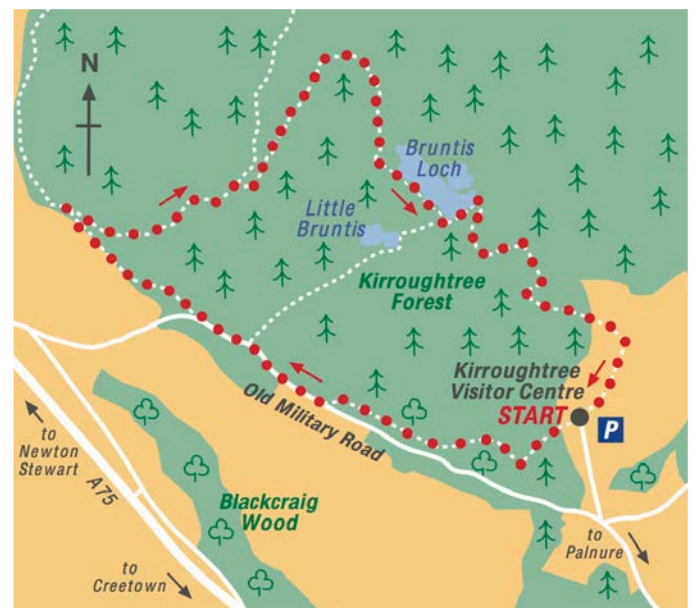
**PARKING** is available at the Forest Enterprise Kirroughtree Visitor Centre. Follow the signs from Palnure on the A75, 3 miles east of Newton Stewart.

**START** There are four waymarked trails starting from the car park. The walk described here, called the Viewpoint Trail is waymarked throughout as red.

Follow the path through open, mixed woodland before reaching a track, part of an Old Military Road. This takes you alongside farmland with the forest on your right. Here, on the forest edge, you will find a mix of wildlife, from roe deer to flocks of finches. The path soon takes you deeper into the forest where the trees are mainly Sitka and Norway spruce and birds such as coal tits are more common.

As you climb higher, you are rewarded with views over the Cree estuary and, on a good day, to the Isle of Man. After a while, you arrive at the picturesque Bruntis Loch, created in the nineteenth century to provide power for the lead mines nearby. Mining began here in 1764 and reached a peak in the 1770s and '80s, providing a great number of jobs for local people. Nowadays, the loch is very peaceful and is a good place to stop for a rest or a picnic.

Soon you come to a spectacular waterfall tumbling through the gorge it has created. This waterfall passes through a patch of woodland containing remnant plant communities from old woodlands. From here, follow the path back to the car park. On the way you pass the visitor centre and other facilities which are well worth a visit. Also, look out for red squirrels which can often be seen around the visitor centre.



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# BALLOCH WOOD

- Circular forest walk**
- 3km/2 miles**
- Allow 1½ hours**
- Roadside pavement, minor road and beaten earth**
- Moderate**
- Stout shoes or boots recommended**

**PARKING** is available in the centre of Creetown, by the Clock Tower.

**START** From the car park, turn right onto the main street then left at the signpost for Kirkmabreck Church. Follow the road uphill, past the church to the start of the path through Balloch Wood. Follow the waymarkers along the Burnside Trail.

The path initially follows the edge of the wood. The trees here are a mixture of conifers and broadleaves, including a stand of elegant Italian alders. On your left enjoy the excellent views over Creetown and the Cree estuary, with Kirkmabreck church in the foreground. This church, built between 1831 and 1834 replaces two earlier churches in the area.

As you round the corner, Balloch Burn rushes through the gorge below. The path continues through mixed woodland, high above the burn until it descends into a spectacular, steep-sided gorge.

Here, a mass of woodrush clings to the sedimentary Greywacke stone walls. Long trails of hanging ivy, ferns and mosses give it a primeval look. Grey wagtails can sometimes be seen darting from boulder to boulder over the fast-flowing burn. Also, look out for the 'Chalybeate', or 'Red Well' appearing as a hole in the rock. The word Chalybeate refers to any water that contains iron salts and was often thought to have curative properties. The water seeping from this well, however, is highly poisonous and not for drinking!

Soon the path leaves the burn and returns through mainly coniferous woodland. Here, away from the noise of the burn, the contrasting quiet is occasionally interrupted by the calls of birds such as great tits and coal tits. Continue to follow the waymarkers back to the start, then retrace your steps to the car park.



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# CARSLUITH TO KIRKMABRECK

## Circular farmland and countryside walk

7km/4 miles

Allow 2½ hours

Roadside pavement, minor roads, grass path and track. Stone stile and field gates.

Moderate

Stout shoes or boots recommended

**PARKING** is available next to the Village Hall in Carsluith. This is situated approximately 2.5km/1 1/2 miles southeast of Creetown, just off the A75.

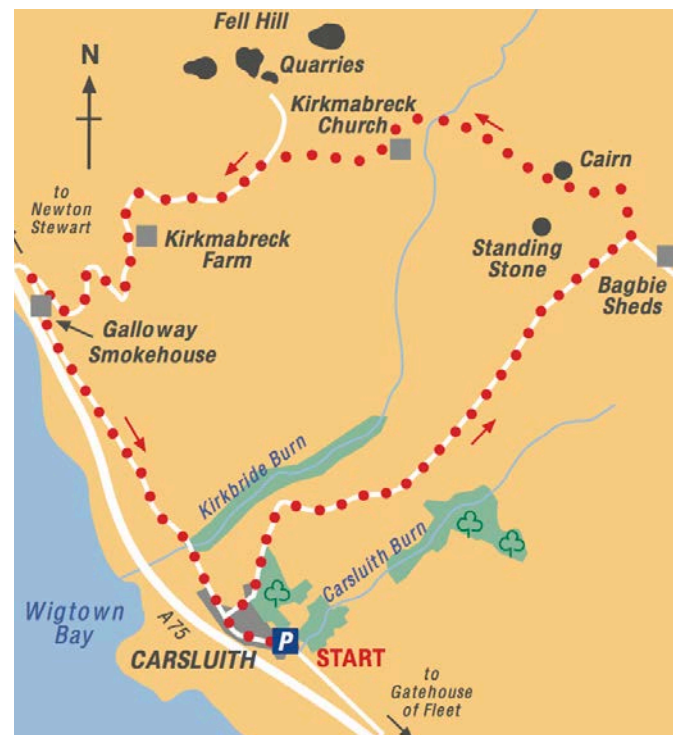
**START** From the parking bay, walk past the village hall then take the first road on the right, signed to Bagbie. This road heads steeply up hill to reach a bench. From here there are fabulous views over the Cree estuary to Wigtown and the Machars.

Continue along until you come to a sharp right hand bend just before Bagbie Sheds. Turn left here and cross the field towards a stile in the dyke. Turn left after this and, keeping close to the dyke, you will soon come to a grassed-over round cairn with unusually shaped stones at the entrance. Over the wall on the left you can see a standing stone on the skyline.

At the end of the field, join a track taking you to the old Kirkmabreck Churchyard. The churchyard includes memorial stones to some of the many seafarers who lived in the parish. It also includes two stones with the original name of Creetown inscribed on them – Ferrytown of Cree. The church is pre-Reformation and was the centre of the community which stood mostly in the field above the church. When the church was moved to Ferrytown of Cree in 1645 the inhabitants gradually vacated their cottages.

Continue past the churchyard, through the field gate then bear right and cross two fields to meet the road. Notice the quarries on Fell Hill that once supplied granite for famous buildings all over the world.

Turn left downhill to Kirkmabreck Farm. Pass through the farm steading and keep to the road until you eventually reach the old A75. As you journey downhill you can see the remains of stake nets used for catching the salmon for which this area is famous. Beside the stake nets is a large post which held targets for the Rifle Volunteers before World War I and at low tide you may see the remains of the firing points. Turn left to Carsluith, past the smokehouse, and in a short while you are back where you started.



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