

3.3 Lochmaben to Hoddum Bridge

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Distance 14.0 miles 22.6 km

Terrain mostly field paths and tracks, with some minor road walking

Grade one stiff climb to the summit of Almagill Hill (217 m/712 ft) rewarded (on a good day) by stunning views

Food and drink Lochmaben (choice), Dalton (pub, slightly offroute), Hoddum Castle (pub)

Side-trip Lochmaben Castle

Summary a varied day that combines a panoramic hill walk with woodland and lochside, ending on some charming riverside paths



- Head south on Lochmaben's High Street, and bear right to go downhill between the war memorial and the church.
- After the bowling green enter the wood and follow Castle Loch Walk which runs between the loch and the road on a well-drained broad path. You pass some wood carvings, and at the first footbridge it's worth detouring left to a log canoe with info board.
- At the end of the wood go left along the farm road. At Castlemains Farm, the Way turns right, but first make a 350-m detour to visit the ruins of Lochmaben Castle: go straight ahead for 70 m then turn left as signed.
- Return to the farmyard and pass through its middle (across the weighbridge if necessary).
- Continue south on the track that soon becomes a path with hedges, then goes along the edge of a field with a hedge on the right. The prominent flat-topped hill (287 m) to your left is Burnswark, the site of an Iron Age hill fort.



Lochmaben Castle

Edward I built this in a superb location, almost surrounded by the waters of Castle Loch. Completed in the early 1300s, it was captured by Robert the Bruce in 1306 but soon retaken by the English. After Bannockburn (1314) the Scots regained it, only to lose it to the English (1333-1385). Later it became a Scottish royal possession and Mary Queen of Scots stayed there in 1565. It had strategic importance in border clashes until the 1700s, when it was abandoned to decay. Today's ivy-clad ruins include massive stone walls and a fine moat. For more, see the info boards and www.historicenvironment.scot.

Castle Loch

- At mile 34.3 meet a minor road near Heck, one of the 'Royal Four Towns'. Turn right along it for 250 m to a gate on the left with a footpath sign.
- Enter and go straight down the field, first to the pole, then to the waymarker post on the riverbank.
- Turn left along this embanked path for 0.8 mile to cross Calflake Bridge at mile 35.2.
- Turn right along a minor road leading to Hightae with its play park and shelter. Turn right down the hill to the centre of the village, with the Hightae Inn.
- Cross the village square to leave by School Road which passes the Royal Four Towns Hall: Hightae, like Heck, was one of the Royal Four Towns.
- School Road soon veers right to reach the B7020. Here, turn left and after 130 m turn right, passing the Mossburn Animal Centre on the right.
- About 800 m further, beyond the sawmill, start the ascent to Rammerscales. At its gateposts, bear right on the track with Rammerscales House on the left: for its history, see page 42 and www.rammerscales.com.
- About 300 m beyond the house, the track reaches a junction at mile 37.2 with bench and fingerposts: turn left.
- This track descends steeply to cross a stream by stepping stones, and climbs again. Look for a sign pointing right, where you leave the track on a steep muddy path that climbs to a gate and another sign.
- Traverse the moor south-east, guided by two marker posts: the first is left of a rocky outcrop, and the second aligns with (if it's clear) a distant view of Joe Graham's monument.
- On reaching the fence, bear right and follow it to the derelict farmhouse and steading.
- The Way now crosses this pleasant plateau for about 900 m. At first, keep the stream on your left, then bear right at the wall, keeping it on your left.
- Head towards the gate in the corner, but do not go through it. The route heads down the track to its right, and through a gate on the left at the bottom, before the woodland. Look uphill for a distant view of the monument, encircled in the photo below.
- Climb this field diagonally (south-east), ascending to a gate. Go through, maintaining the same direction, and pick up the path leading to a gate, and to the summit of Almagill Hill at 217 m/712 ft.

Ascent to Joe Graham's Monument (encircled)







East over Annandale from Joe Graham's monument

- Joe Graham's monument sits on the summit, and on a clear day the panorama is superb. Almost all of Annandale can be seen to the north, east and south-east, with flat-topped Burnswark visible at upper left of the photo above. South across the Solway Firth lies the Lake District, including the mountain of Skiddaw, at 932 m/ 3055 ft. To the west lies Galloway, with Criffel prominent at 569m/1868ft.



Joe Graham

The monument on top of Almagill Hill is inscribed 'In memory of Joe Graham, for many years huntsman of the Dumfriesshire fox hounds, who died in 1892 at the age of 80'. The bronze relief, showing a huntsman with horn, horse and dogs, is signed J W Dods, 1896. Graham was a former weaver from Cumbria, who moved to Dumfriesshire. He was a very fine horseman, and rode with its hunt for 44 years, from its formation in 1848.

- With your back to the monument and trig point, descend south-south-east across the middle of the sloping field ahead to the waymarker post in the far left corner. (If it's been ploughed, or if visibility is poor, bear left and follow markers around the field's left-hand edge.)
- At the waymarker post, pass left through the gorse. The path goes left at the dyke, then down and up to reach the track.
- Turn right (mile 39) and follow the track downhill, finally turning right down the access road that serves Almagill Farm.
- At the end of the farm road, go straight across on to a minor road which undulates for 1 mile, crossing a stream just before meeting the B7020 at a T-junction (mile 40.5): turn left. (Dalton, whose pub the Murray Arms offers food, is a 500-m detour to the right).
- The Way heads north on the B7020, then after 500 m turns right on a minor road signposted 'Lockerbie 5'. After 1 mile, cross Williamwath Bridge over the Annan (mile 41.9). At its far end, climb wooden steps on the right, up a steep slope and through a gate.



Lockerbie

Memorial Garden

Eskrigg Nature Reserve

Pilmuir

Firpark

A74(M)

FB

Hungryhill Covert

Shawhead Cottages

Kettleholm

Nutholm Hill 120

Milkbank Kennels

Daltonhook

Williamwath Bridge

St Mungo's Church

Pathead

Middleshaw

Dalton

Sorrysike Moor

Broom

River Annan

Brockterigg Bridge

Hoddom Castle

Hoddom Bridge

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- Keep right in the field, beside a fence leading to another gate. Enter the wood through a further gate, descending towards the river. Choose the path slightly set back from the river: the riverbank path can be dangerously slippery, especially if the water is high.
- Within 500 m look out for a straight path bearing left uphill, where you exit the wood to bear right on a minor road.



St Mungo's Church

- At mile 42.8 the road bends around the remains of St Mungo's Church and graveyard (worth a visit), then climbs to turn sharp right past Kirkbank (with lovely views over St Mungo's).
- Then it makes a left/right dogleg and levels out. Within 400 m of the dogleg, turn right onto another minor road at a wood with a fingerpost (mile 43.3).
- After 550 m, this road bends right into Whitecairn (private), but the Way continues ahead on a straight track that soon leads into Sorrysike Moor.
- Just before you exit the moor, a fingerpost marks where the Lockerbie branch of the Way rejoins this route (mile 44.1).
- Continue on the farm track, which bends past a derelict cottage before reaching Brocklerigg Farm. Bear left to pass through the farm buildings, and within 300 m cross the Water of Milk by Brocklerigg Bridge.
- Immediately turn right to the riverbank, with an info board and bench – a picturesque spot. Follow the path through the wood, above the river on a narrow path that soon reaches the Annan and continues on its north bank to an iron footbridge (mile 45.6).
- Cross to the riverside path on the south bank, now with only a mile to cover before Hoddom Bridge. Stay as close as possible to the river, especially around the edge of the golf course.
- You emerge through the gates of Hoddom Castle Caravan Park onto Hoddom Bridge. Turn left along the road to cross the River Annan again at mile 46.5.

Hoddom Castle

