

Spokes Summer Competition 2025

My Favourite Bike Ride

results & prizewinners

Competition description: www.spokes.org.uk/2025/09/spokescomp-2025-my-favourite-bike-ride

We said: "In judging, we want to know not just the route itself but, most of all, *why this ride is so special to you*. Hopefully your entry will entice or inspire other people to get on their bike and try something similar.

So that the competition does not require technical skills, judging will be based on written entries. Your route should be fairly easy to describe, without too many intricate instructions, frequent turnings, etc. Photos and/or a sketch can be included and often help, but are not essential. You can also include electronic mapping if you wish, but this will not be included in the judging."

Judging: This was done anonymously, except that a few entrants included themselves in photos. Judging was by three members of Spokes Resources Group and two external judges, Mike Lewis who runs a [website](#) covering Edinburgh bike rides, and Ewen Maclean of [Blackford Safe Routes](#). Judges scored entries independently, and then discussed the combined scoring to determine a final agreed ordering.

Themes from entries:

- As expected, most entries were **recreational rides**, some circular, some A to B. Entrants described the natural pleasures encountered, cafe stops, historic buildings, stages of urban development, and much more. For example, 5th prizewinner John Forbes, *Cramond, Wardie Botanics circular*.
- Several entries were **utility rides**, mainly **commuting**, and one **school bike-bus** (2nd prizewinner, Elaine Appleby, with *Parson's Green bike bus*). Whilst these journeys often referred to natural or built features en route, they were usually favourites mainly because of the pure pleasure of undertaking them by bike rather than by car, to to help them cope with stressful times at work (e.g. 6th prizewinner Mike Armstrong, *One and a Half Times round the World*).
- Some rides could be used as recreational or utility – for example 1st prizewinner Gregor Steele, *Quietly to the City*, or 4th prizewinner Jane Waters, *Aberlady to Bruntsfield*.
- It was great to have high-scoring entries from **all 3 Lothian Council areas** - 3rd prize Donald Tainsh from Livingston, *Fave Livi Rides: Rail & River*; 4th prize Jane Waters from Aberlady, *Aberlady to Bruntsfield*; 9th prize Pete Roche from Carlops, *Penicuik to Portobello*.
- There were also some stunning **photos**, notably from 1st prizewinner Gregor Steele (above) and 8th prizewinner Jarlath Flynn's *Pentlands Nature and Dark Sky*.

Competition questions:

2. Who is the ride suitable for?
3. Where is the ride located?
4. Start, End, Brief description
5. Interesting/useful/beautiful features
6. Why this is a favourite bike ride of yours

First prize, Gregor Steele - *Quietly to the city*

2. Families with young children / Experienced cyclists / Novice cyclists 3. Ed central, Ed west

4. Start: Balerno End: Fountainbridge

Begin at the start of the Water of Leith Walkway on Bridge Road, Balerno. You are on NCN route 75 which crosses a bridge over the A70 after about 4.5 miles, joining NCN route 754. At this point, you are following the Union canal towpath rather than the Walkway. This takes you all the way to Fountainbridge in the city centre.

5. Colinton Tunnel, Slateford Aqueduct. Cafes, toilets and more Stevenson murals in Colinton village

6. I live in Lanarkshire, not Edinburgh, but I have a huge affection for the city, having studied there for 5 years four decades ago. When possible, if I am visiting friends I like to cycle in and take the train home. The route I have described is a delightful alternative to continuing along the A70. It is a shared route, sometimes busy with dog walkers, dogless walkers and fellow cyclists. You would, however, need to be lacking in soul to treat this as a 'head down, elbows in' sprint even if it was deserted. It is a journey to be enjoyed at a leisurely pace.

Though there is beauty to be found all along the Walkway and Towpath, for me the absolute highlight is the Colinton Tunnel. I love the works of Robert Louis Stevenson. The tunnel is adorned with artwork illustrating his poem "From a Railway Carriage".

*'Faster than fairies, faster than witches,
Bridges and houses, hedges and ditches;'*

I have passed through Colinton Tunnel many times and always find something new. Indeed, I recommend dismounting and taking time to read the whole poem and enjoy the illustrations. It would be wonderful to go there with young children to talk about the verses and pictures.

There's more to it than that, though. It's too easy to fall in to the trap of pessimism, thinking that things are never as good as they used to be. This ride is an antidote to that way of thinking. Though there is more traffic on the roads than when I rode around the city in 1981 on a junk shop bike, traffic free paths are much more common. This ride is functional - gets me where I want to go - and is also a sensory treat. But it's more: it's part of something bigger, something good, something joyful.



Second prize, Elaine Appleby – *Parson's Green Bike Bus*



2. Suitable for all riders, especially novice/inexperienced
3. East Edinburgh
4. Start: Lilyhill Terrace Flats by gate into Holyrood Park End: Parson's Green Primary

This is a bike bus journey but is also a good route to bypass the busy junctions on London Road at Jock's Lodge.

5 & 6. It's a favourite route because it supports a new generation of cyclists to learn skills in a real life context, has beautiful views and avoids busy roads. Cycling into the future!

What could be better than a bike bus ride first thing in the morning with a group of youngsters on their way to school? This is my latest favourite bike ride, seeing the journey through the eyes of the next generation of cyclists whose default mode of transport for short local journeys will become a two-wheeled one.

We start from the top of Lilyhill Terrace beside the tall tower block, which was built on the site of the original Parson's Green School after it burned down in 1958. We're heading for the current Parson's Green Primary School in Meadowfield Drive, less than 1km away. The school badge shows a fired-up beacon basket, possibly a reference to the fate of the old school.

From this elevated point, the views are stunning, looking to Portobello and beyond, as far as Berwick Law and across towards Fife. It only gets better as we begin the journey.

Once the stewards are in position, ready to guard the junctions to left and right, we embark on our ride. As the ride proceeds, there's lively chat between the riders and if one bell is rung then we all join in. Car drivers are usually more gracious and respectful of a phalanx of young riders, and we acknowledge those giving way with a cheery wave. We turn into the top of Willowbrae Avenue and right again into Paisley Crescent, a tricky and busy junction on a hill, requiring us to signal right and brake simultaneously. School crossing patrol, Irene, holds the traffic for us with her lollipop. Then we jink left and right onto the level stretch of Abercorn Drive, picking up a little speed as we head towards the first uphill section, a short pull to join Ulster Drive.

A recent bike bus included an adult running alongside their child who is gaining confidence – that's a fair workout for the morning, up the hill to the school. Another child was being coached in using gears to help with this uphill section and glowed with her success.

From time to time the bike bus is joined by other riders where we pass near their homes. The series of junctions and turns allows plenty of opportunities for practising cycling skills - keeping a safe distance from others, being aware of your own position in relation to hazards such as parked cars and managing to control the bike safely with brakes and pedals.

From Ulster Drive we begin the final run along Paisley Avenue and the stiff pedal up Paisley Drive and into the school grounds. It's helpful that this last section is well marked to show that motor vehicles are prohibited at the start and end of the school day. Even so, it's disappointing to occasionally meet a car in which there's a child being driven to school on this road.

So, the children embark on their school day refreshed and energised by the ride and the camaraderie, while the adults disperse on their onward journeys after the complete pleasure of the 20 minute journey. So yes, short in time and distance though it may be, this favourite bike ride is more than the sum of its parts. Any cyclist thinking of supporting their local bike bus (and there are a fair few around the Lothians) will enjoy the best ride of the week.



Third prize, Donald Tainsh - *Fave Livi Rides: Rail and River Ramble*

2. Families with young children / Experienced cyclists / Novice cyclists / Other. Family friendly on a mix of tarmac and good gravel surfaces suitable for all but narrow-tyred road bikes. Adaptive cycles, longer cargo bikes or bikes with trailers might find some narrow path sections challenging.

3. West Lothian

4. Circular route, about 20 km on traffic-free paths (almost entirely) or traffic-calmed residential streets (two), starting and finishing at Livingston North rail station.



- From the car park on the south side of Livingston North rail station head west for 700m on Railway Path to its junction with Nell Burn Path.
- Turn left on Nell Burn Path following it for 1 km to its junction with NCN75 at Lochshot Burn Path
- Turn left on NCN75 and follow it for 8.3 km through Livingston to Nasmyth Bridge in Almondell and Calderwood Country Park (A&CCP).
- Turn left at Nasmyth Bridge and follow the road or the riverside path to A&CCP Visitor Centre, the mid-point of the route.
- Return to Nasmyth Bridge to rejoin NCN75 and continue on up the hill for approximately 1.5 km to where it exits the park on Main Street, East Calder.
- Turn right and continue along the shared-use footpath on Main Street for 100m then turn sharp right to join the trail running north-west behind Almond Grove. The trail follows the track bed of a former mineral railway between Camps and Uphall.
- Follow the trail for 4.5 km to Uphall rail station and continue past the station to the traffic lights at Pumpherston Road.
- Cross Pumpherston Road at the traffic lights to join Railway Path.
- Follow Railway Path westwards for 3.3 km to return to the start at Livingston North rail station.

5. Places of interest.. Eliburn reservoir, Livingston Old Wood, art installations alongside Lochshot Burn, Livingston Old Kirk, Livingston Inn, River Almond, Livi Skate Park, Howden Rock Ramp fish pass, Almond Park (several paths to choose, just keep heading east!), Craigshill Bypass fish pass, Almondell and Calderwood Country Park, Linhouse Water, Mid Calder weir Larinier fish pass, Union Canal feeder channel, Kirkhill Pillar at A&CCP Visitor Centre, the views from Camps Viaduct and The Shale Trail. The staffed Visitor Centre is at the mid-point of the route and has a picnic area, play park, toilets, ice cream, a drinks vending machine and an exhibition space.

6. Why is this a favourite route.. This is a “green space” ride that I enjoy in any season with places along the way to discover and explore or just to pause and think or wonder. It’s a delightful ride that takes in the history of Livingston as a post war New Town and its place in the heritage of West Lothian. Livingston has a wonderful extensive and comprehensive network of traffic free, shared use paths that was one of the attractions of the town when I moved here with my young family in 1982. Now retired I love exploring the network and its connections to other areas of West Lothian, recording many of my rides on YouTube (www.youtube.com/@lostinlivi) in the hope of encouraging others to discover the connections that can be made and the delights to be found.



Link to the route on Garmin Connect: <https://connect.garmin.com/modern/course/393111396>

Link to GPX recording on YouTube video: [My favourite local bike rides: Rail and River Ramble](#)

Fourth prize, Jane Waters - *Aberlady to Bruntsfield*

2. Experienced cyclists

3. East Lothian / Edinburgh East/ Edinburgh Central

4. Start: Sea Green Aberlady End: Bruntsfield by Barantine

Follow the coast road to Musselburgh, Innocent Cycle Path to St Leonard's, Meadows to Bruntsfield

5 & 6. See attached two sheets

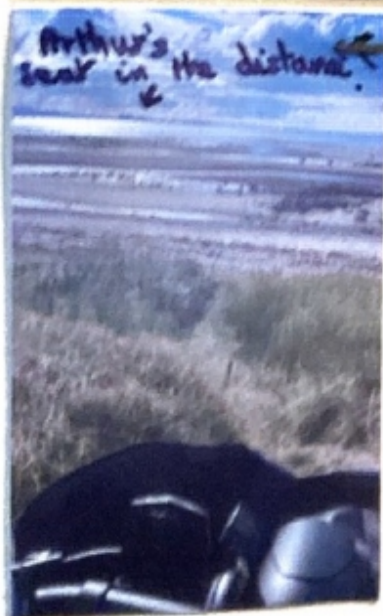
My favourite bike ride is my twice-weekly commute from Aberlady to Edinburgh.

Two and a half years ago I became the proud owner of a beautiful Tern small cargo bike. I travel into Edinburgh from Aberlady 4 x a week with my bassoon and music, to teach the bassoon in various schools. I now do 2 of these journeys every week on my bike, thus halving my car use. I love this 18 mile cycle.



My cup of tea!
My Heckel Bassoon!
My Music and lunch!

As I set off from the Sea Green in Aberlady I wave at familiar faces in the village.



seeing the sea opposite Gosford House is a journey highlight, especially as at high tide you can spot seals basking on the rocks. The length of the wall surrounding the grounds of Gosford never ceases to amaze me!

Dogs, joggers, children going to school all keep me amused as I cycle along the coast through Port Seton, Cockenzie and Prestonpans.



River Esk, Musselburgh.

As I approach the bridge at Musselburgh I scan the River Esk for swans and ducks - there can be so many of them!

When I find myself on The Innocent Cycle Path I know I'm nearly there.



Innocent Cycle Path

The pattern of the sun shining through the leaves, reflected onto the path always makes me smile.

Arthur's Seat is now so close - it looked so far away when I saw it in the distance at Longridge Bents.

As I pedal through the tunnel, I search for any new aerosol paintings sprayed on the wall.

Exiting the tunnel, I'm in town, ready for a welcome croissant from the 'Wee Bakery on South Clerk Street.

After cycling across The Meadows, watching students walk hurriedly to lectures I'm in Bruntsfield, ready to go to work. If I've made good time I might treat myself to a coffee from Barantire, a favourite café.

I feel a sense of achievement at coming from home on 2 wheels and energised for the day ahead.

Fifth prize, John Forbes - Cramond, Wardie, Botanics circular

2. Everyone including families and novice cyclists,
3. Edinburgh north
4. Start: Junction between Roseburn path and Blackhall path near Craigleith Retail Park (circular ride)

The route heads north west on Blackhall path and then via Silverknowes road to the Esplanade. Turn left and head towards Cramond. [Optional bird watching at the end of River Almond]. From Cramond head back east along the Esplanade the junction with West Short Road, hopefully with the wind behind you!

Turn left and continue along West Shore Road / West Harbour Road to Wardie Bay where you can lock your bicycle on the bike racks near the way onto the beach. [Optional open water swimming at Wardie Bay].

Continue east along the cycle path parallel to Lower Granton Road until the Trinity Road junction. Cross at the traffic lights, onto north Edinburgh cycle path, through the tunnel to 5 ways junction and then down Goldenacre Path to the junction with quiet route 20.

Go down to the end of Eildon Street, turn left onto Inverleith Row and then right onto Inverleith Terrace. Follow the road around to the Botanics west gate entrance where you can lock your bicycle. [Optional walk around Royal Botanic Gardens - coffee, soup or more substantial food and wonderful views of the plants and gardens]. Cross Inverleith Path and then continue on cycle route 20 along Carrington Road, then Craigleith Hill Avenue. Turn left onto South Groat Hill Avenue then rejoin the Roseburn path at the start point opposite Craigleith Retail Park.

5. Numerous, including historic Cramond village, river Almond, super esplanade cycling conditions, Granton Harbour, Royal Botanic Gardens (e.g fantastic displays of rhododendron and the iconic Himalayan poppy in Spring). Views to Cramond island (and walk at low tide). Many opportunities for bird watching (e.g. curlews), listening to bird songs and spotting other wildlife.

6. This is a favourite ride of mine as it combines cycling with three of my favourite hobbies – bird watching, wild swimming and visiting the Botanics. In particular..

- I love being outdoors. As this route is mostly offroad I can relax and really enjoy the cycling.
- There are plenty of things to do en-route and plenty of places to just stop and admire the view, watch the wildlife or marvel at the beautiful trees – you can take as long or as little time as you like.
- Cycling along the Silverknowes Esplanade is always a joy as it is a nice wide path and there are stunning views across the Forth. These views vary depending on the time of year, the weather and the state of the tide. As well as the abundant bird life there is also the possibility of spotting seals.
- I am particularly fond of a stand of pine trees half way along the Esplanade. There is something very majestic about a Scots pine. I am always uplifted by these trees and often stop to admire them.
- Wardie Bay is protected by the wall which forms part of Granton harbour. It has a gently sloping beach and so is a great place for wild swimming. The cycle to the bay acts as a gentle warm up, ideal preparation ahead of the swim. Similarly, the ride from Wardie Bay to the Botanics helps me warm up afterwards, with the prospect of coffee and cake providing additional motivation!
- The Royal Botanic Gardens are an Edinburgh treasures and we are very fortunate that it costs nothing to wander round. There are cycle racks at both entrances, good facilities and a shop.

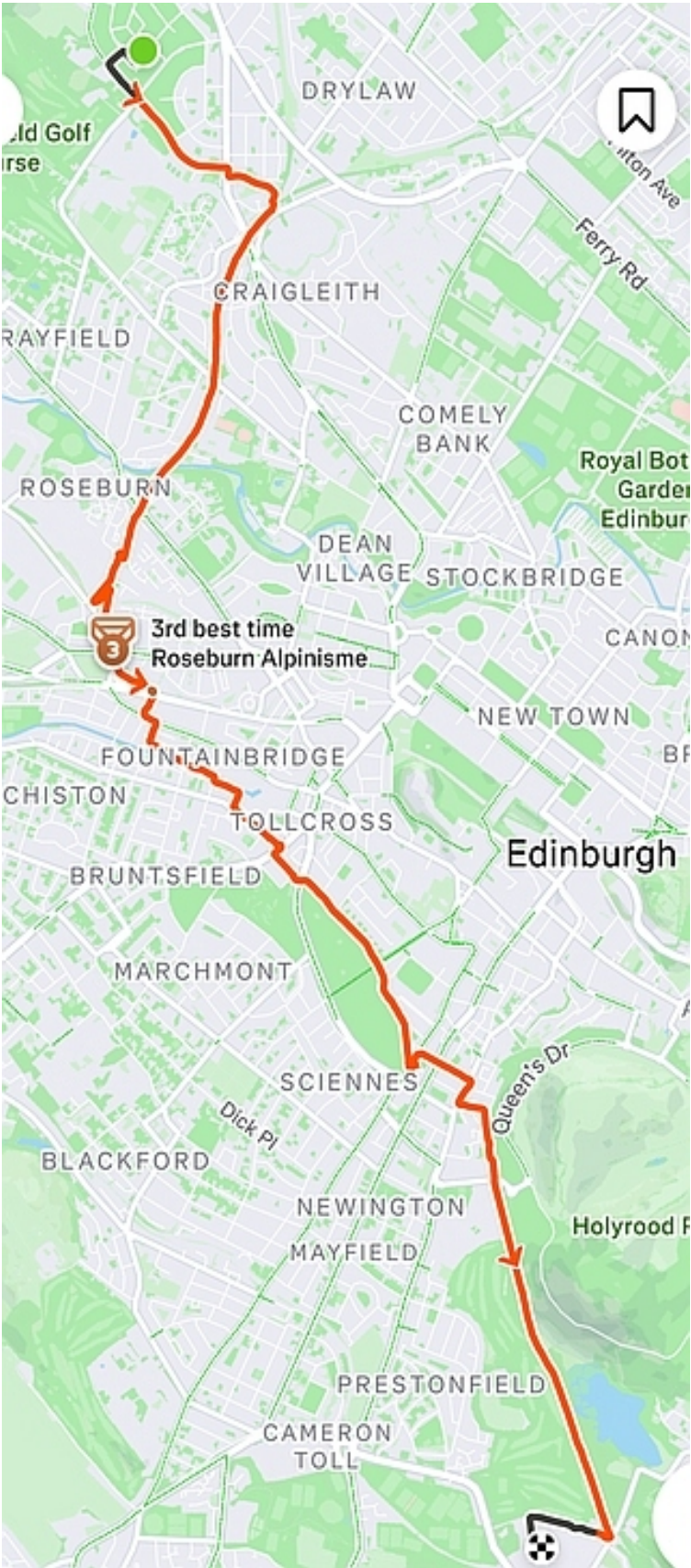
I am always uplifted by the time I return to the Roseburn path, as a result of the exercise and the fantastic views as well as the joy of being outside, so it is with a renewed enthusiasm for life, that I cycle the short distance from the start point back home.



Approaching the tunnel on North Edinburgh path



Majestic pines on Silverknowes Esplanade

Place	Entries in positions 6-16 [prizewinners]
6 Mike Armstrong	<i>One and a half times round the world.. from Blackhall to Peffermill Industrial Estate and back</i> 2. Suitable for everyone 3. Ed central / Ed north / Ed east 4. Skirting the site of the old Royal Infirmary, St. Leonards, The Innocent Path and Tunnel. Then all of that in reverse. Mostly traffic free. Start... Blackhall End... Peffermill Industrial Estate (and back to Blackhall after work shift) Brief description... My work commute since December 2008, never missing a day regardless of weather or time of day. 5. The amazing Roseburn Path joining at Craigleith, then (latterly) the equally amazing Roseburn to Canal Link, The Meadows 6. Why is this a favourite route? ... I have been able to get to work and back cheaply, reliably and never affected by traffic problems, for the last 16 years (and counting). The route has gradually improved over the years with e.g. the safe route at Gifford Park and Rankeillor Street, lighting being added to the Innocent Path and, the best improvement - the Roseburn to Canal Link, taking the toxic rat run of Russell Road / Murieston Crescent and also Dalry Road out of the equation. Although I am now 66 and only work one 12 hour shift each week, I doubt I would still be working (or sane) if it wasn't for this amazing (mostly) traffic free commuting route. The return journey is around 13 miles and I have calculated (conservatively) that I have amassed over 36,000 miles by pedal power alone, 1.5 times around the world! I do own / share a car but wouldn't dream of using it for this commute and I'm pretty sure that I am one of the very few employees who has never been late for work, as traffic problems aren't an issue. 

The Edinburgh Elevator (Craigleith to the Meadows)

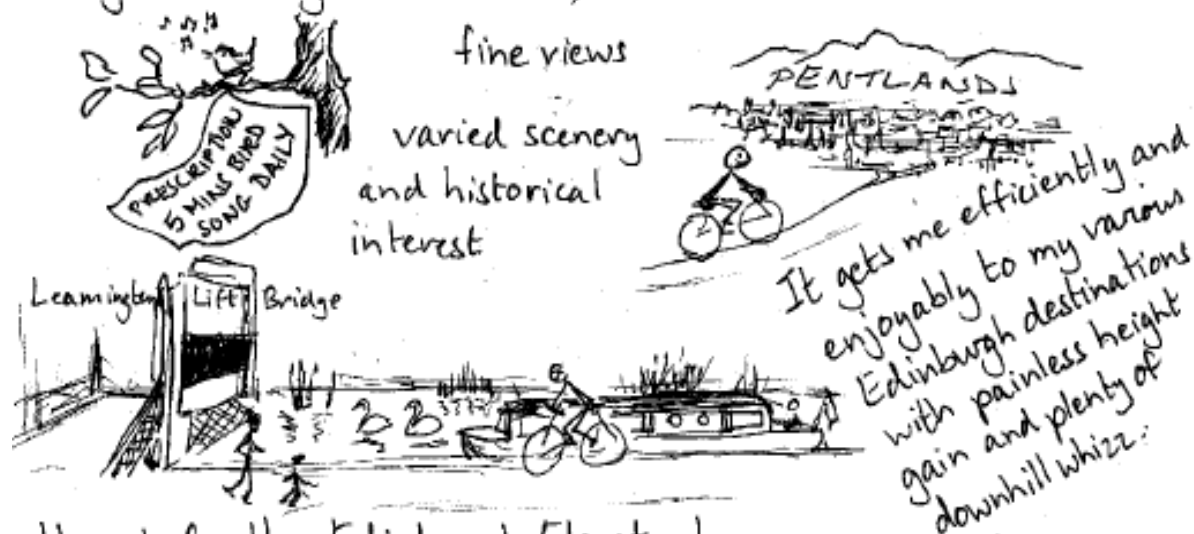
Suitable for: all (novice, experienced, families with children
— some road crossings and a canal section)

The Route

Start: Maidencraig Junction (Craigleith) End: The Meadows
Follow Roseburn Path south to Russell Road. Under railway, then continue up new cycleway (zigzag) over railway (new bridge) and over Dalry Road to Western Approach Rd. Cross and emerge at Fountainbridge (ramped steps). Left then right to Union Canal. Left to Lift Bridge (WCV 75) then Gilmore Place, right at lights then left onto Valleyfield Street and cycle link to Meadows.

Features: Wildlife haven (Roseburn Path), wild flowers esp. poppies on new link from Russell Road. Great views to Pentlands, easy height gain due to kind gradient zigzag. Excellent links to West-East route, seamless cycleway from Roseburn to Fountainbridge. Canal picturesque, Leamington Lift Bridge of historical / engineering interest. Optional continuation to canal basin Meadows — options too numerous to mention!

This is my favourite route because  it makes me happy.
It gives me my dose of nature,



Hurrah for the Edinburgh Elevator!
It elevates me both physically and emotionally, and it is almost completely **TRAFFIC FREE!**



Pentlands Nature & Dark Sky Ride

2. for experienced cyclists

3. South West Edinburgh

4. start - Colinton Tunnel, circular

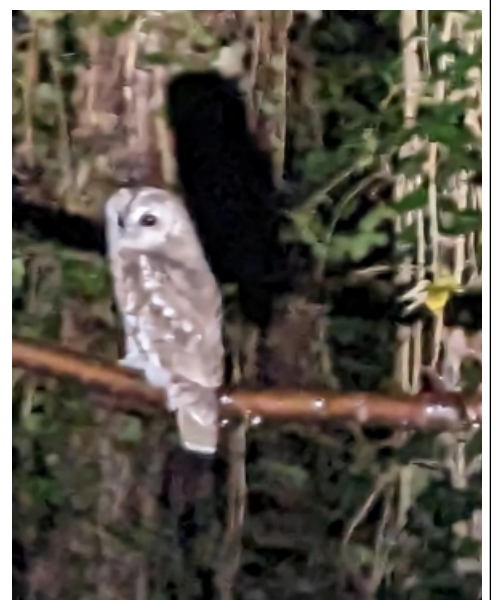
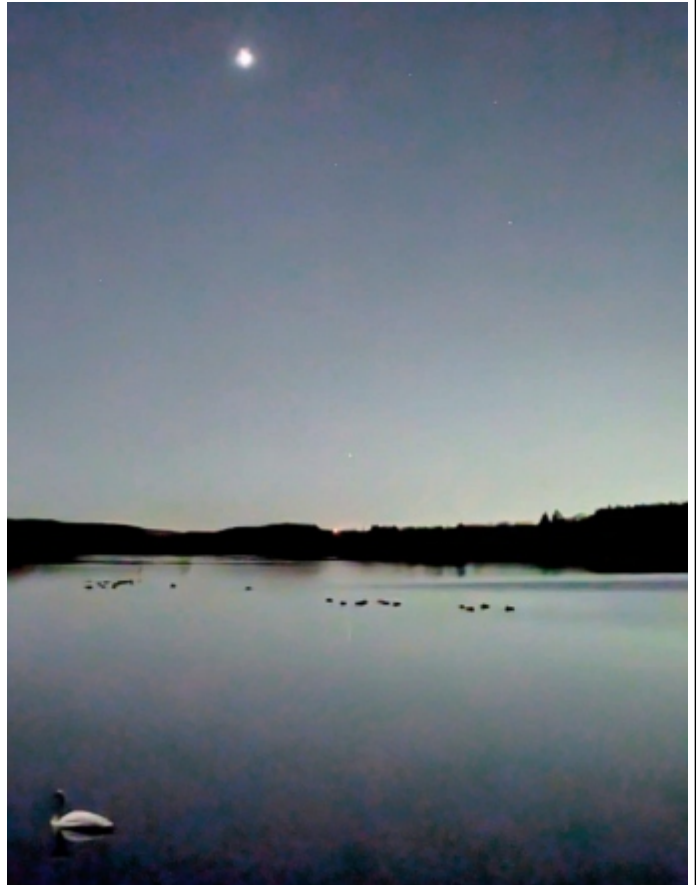
Depart the Colinton Tunnel and head along gravel trails up into the Pentland Hills. A brief stop at Red Moss then onwards to the Red Road that takes you to the East Kip. Turn for home and descend back to Colinton via Harlaw and Torduff

5. The nature of night time Edinburgh, the stars and moon rise

6. This is a journey that will ignite your inner child as bats dance and flutter around as the Milky Way looms over your head. Mind the foxes and the badgers as you leave the boundaries of the urban world and enter the realm of the dark sky where the stars come out to greet you and where ghostly owls flash into view only to disappear as quickly as they came.

Other less common marvels of the natural world will greet you, but I am not for telling as these are to be discovered by you. This bike ride offers you another gem. Should you time your ride well, the lunar cycle can provide you with the most glorious golden burning orange moonrise creeping over the city form where you came.

[Spokes note: Jarlath also submitted a longer version, too long for the competition, but available [here](#)]



Penicuik to Portobello Circle

2. The route is 31 miles long, so not suitable for small children, but it is mostly off-road and mostly flat, so good for novice cyclists.

3. The route goes through Midlothian, East Lothian and Edinburgh.

4. The route starts and finishes at Valleyfield Road in Penicuik;

Follow route 196 Penicuik to Dalkeith along the railway path to Eskbank. After Eskbank Station follow signs to the grounds of Newbattle Abbey College and onward to Dalkeith Community Campus. Then your back on a railway path which you can follow to Whitecraig (you're now on Route 1); (196 branches off to Pencaitland). At the end of the railway path in Whitecraig turn left; there is a short section of busy road; turn right at the traffic lights and follow the River Esk path until a bridge which takes you over the river. Follow route 1 round Queen Margaret University. Follow signs to Brunstane Station, then go straight down Brunstane Road South and Brunstane Road to Portobello Prom. Turn left along the prom until you get to Bellfield Street. Then you can follow route 61 all the way to Roslin. Once you get to Roslin at the end of Route 61 go straight on down Penicuik Road. Take the second left turn. This quiet road takes you to the B7026. Turn left; past the Glencorse Centre and down the steep hill into Auchendinny. When you get to a cross roads with traffic lights take the left turn into an area of converted mills where the streets are all named Dalmore something. The hill will take you down to the railway tunnel from where you can follow the railway path back to Penicuik.

5. In Penicuik visit the community café/shop – the Storehouse for breakfast; In Eskbank you go through a large shopping centre; I like to visit Greggs, but there is also a Starbucks; As you climb through Moredun on Route 61 you'll pass a Morrison's on Gilmerton Road which has a café where you can stop for lunch.

6. I love to cycle into Edinburgh from where I live outside of Penicuik. I am always amazed at how quickly I can get into town without risking life and limb on any major roads like the A702. This route combines the two railway paths I use frequently and takes you through some of the most stunningly beautiful scenery in the Lothians. The path from Penicuik follows the River North Esk through Auchendinny and Roslin Glen which is spectacular. The path from Dalkeith to Whitecraig takes you through the rolling East Lothian countryside and a particularly gorgeous stand of silver birch trees. You see how the River North Esk turns into the mighty Esk; and to top it off you even pass the seaside. On the return leg you pass by Straiton Pond Nature Reserve and the beautiful countryside around the Roslin Research Centre. You also have the option to visit Roslin Chapel.



Whitecraig



Bilston Glen viaduct



Roslin Glen

Clubbiedean Scone Run

2. Decide suitability on this basis: it's a 40km round trip with 300m of relatively gentle climbing. It is mostly on paths, gravel tracks and quiet streets, with a few short sections on busier roads that can be worked around. There are some gentle woodland paths, and one section near Bonaly is a bit more technical and includes some steps, though this can be bypassed by cycling through Bonaly itself.

3. Ed south / Ed east

4. Start & End:: The Little Green Van on Portobello Prom - a useful rallying point for a pre-ride coffee while waiting for the inevitable latecomers, though weekends only. Purists may wish to begin where the Figgate Burn enters the Firth of Forth, about 500m along The Prom.

The outward part follows the route, more or less, of the Figgate/Braid Burn from Portobello to its source near Bonaly on the north east end of The Pentlands, and then up to Clubbiedean Reservoir, picking its way through using a lot of south Edinburgh's parks and paths.

[Details - From Portobello cycle inland via Hope Lane and The Magdelenes to pick up NCN1 towards town. At Forckenford, head through Kingshaugh and then into Craigmillar Castle park towards Bridgend. Cross over into Inch Park then on towards Blackford Glen Road. This part of the route is not the most pleasant, especially the junction at the bottom of Kirk Brae, but there are a few options to avoid the busy road. Follow the burn up past Hermitage of Braid, over into Braidburn Valley Park, and sticking to the paths, crossing Oxfangs Avenue, Oxfangs Road North and Colinton Mains Drive. From Colinton Primary School some quiet streets and a short section of Redford Road get you to the entrance to Dreghorn Woods through to Bonaly. Head either right to take the roads through the village, or the path left for a slightly more agricultural route, turning right just before the path passes under the bypass and up some steps to the back of Bonaly. From Bonaly, cross the Bypass on Bonaly Road then a couple of sharp Climbs up Torduff Road will get you to Clubbiedean Reservoir.]

The return route is simpler. Continue west along the (now unpaved) road alongside Clubbiedean Reservoir, stopping to pay your respects to The Clubbiedean Big Puddle as you pass. Take Harlaw Road and then Kirkgate down to The Water of Leith and follow that down to the Lanark Road Footbridge to pick up the canal. From there, it's back to The Meadows and down The Innocent, retracing the outward route from Forckenford back to Porty.

5. The route passes through several parks and woodlands, so plenty of options for play stops and picnics. There are intermediary cafes at Bridgend and Braid Road on the way out, and The Meadows on the way back. Check the opening hours of the cafes!

6. The Clubbiedean Coffee Stop, a small cafe on the north east corner of Clubbiedean reservoir, sells (arguably) the best scones in Edinburgh, so what better reward after hauling up from Porty?

I've done this trip quite often with my kids. It has grown with them, from early trips to Craigmillar, extending it a park at a time until we were out in The Pentlands. Now, their stamina far exceeds mine and we push a bit further into the hills on occasions.

The route is mostly on paths, so perfect for a family outing or a relaxed cycle with plenty of chat. And, it's downhill all the way home!



11
Malcolm
Bruce

Cramond Island circular

2. All levels of ability/age etc but not 100% accessible for those with mobility issues
3. Edinburgh Central / North / West
4. Start: Edinburgh City Centre End: Cramond Island
A straightforward (mostly) off road route out of the city and onto Cramond Island via a tidal causeway. I mostly use National Cycle Route No. 1 to Whitehouse Road then descend to the shore via Cramond village, but Edinburgh Council quiet route 12 along the promenade at Silverknowes is also scenic and pleasant. (See [Spokes Edinburgh Map](#)) so a 'lollipop' route is possible.

The causeway has been improved in recent years and you can cycle most of it (WITH CARE!). Most cyclists will leave their bikes at the island end of the causeway. Make sure you read the warning signs at the beginning of the causeway, giving the safe times to cross to the island, and return.

5. Edinburgh's superb shared cycle paths, Lauriston Farm Agro-Ecology Project, Lauriston Castle, Granton Castle Walled Garden, The Pitt, the ice cream van and bistro on the Cramond promenade.

6. I love this route for so many reasons. It reminds me of childhood visits to the beach at Cramond. It's an adventure crossing a causeway to the island knowing you're in danger of getting cut off (and rescued) if the tide comes in. There's lots of seashore interest at the island and on the way: birds, seals, dolphins, beachcombing, rockpools. The island was lived once - visit the old farmhouse. Explore the World War 2 bunkers in what is now a beautiful, peaceful place to visit by bike.

Cramond Island is a great place for a picnic. A great place to take visitors to the city. People camp there too. A great place to watch the full moon rise over the sea. Or the sun after dawn. The perfect antidote to the festival madness. Watch the planes and ships go by. Imagine life here when Cramond was a busy port full of Roman squaddies, or when it later traded iron with Scandinavia.

Last time I went to the island I enjoyed it so much I went right back the next day!



Off to See the Clubbiedeans Big Puddle

I named this route on CityCyclingEdinburgh forum and it has [its own thread](#) as there are other devotees.

The route is circular and starts at Balerno High School [though some of the faithful start it in Portobello making it quite a schlep]. The route is mostly off road or on quiet roads. Some folk even drag their kids [NB. On Saturdays and Sundays there is a cafe stop]

Go up Bridge Road turn left at Bavelaw Road up the hill past TopMid [the wee Scotmid]

Turn left on Harlaw Road and proceed up to Harlaw Reservoir [new composting toilet may be available at the car park if you are in need] If you don't need a pee avoid the car park as it can be hoaching and continue along Harlaw Road past the farm that Roseberry have closed on the bends. Continue to top of Kirkbrae, then with caution on the road marked dead end. Not for bikes. We have a route. At the next farm double back and take the farm track around the farm cottages. Bit bumpy here but not too bad.

Go through two gates and behold the majesty of the Clubbiedeans Big Puddle [t-shirts available]. Sometimes it has dwindled to two ruts on the road of dried mud, sometimes it is impassable without getting wet. Mostly you can use the stepping stones on the left or the sliver of land on the right or just batter right through it.



Shy cafe - Sat & Sun only

After the puddle the farm track bends round Clubbiedeans reservoir and then you get to Clubbiedeans Cafe. A lovely spot for a pitstop with friendly staff and laidback vibes [ie a wee queue]. Beloved of Colinton Dug Walking Brigade.

Proceed with care down the now tarmacadamed road round Torduff Reservoir, great views of Edinburgh. You can then barrel straight down to the bypass at Bonaly or cross the reservoir and round to Llamaland via the scout camp car park and down to the same wee bridge at the primary school. From the top of Bonaly the simplest route is to drop like a stone down to the Water of Leith Path near where Globespan used to operate, now flats. Some jinking required at the main road at Colinton. There are diversions through Zara Phillips estate but if westerly blowing best to get down to the valley floor. From Colinton it is a gradual climb back up the lovely new path to Balerno.

The whole route is only about an hour, very little interaction with car drivers, and curiously almost all down hill. What's not to like!

13

Karen
Esslemont

A city transect | Morningside to Holyrood

2. Suitable for everyone although more confident cyclists will find it easier.
3. From Edinburgh South to Edinburgh Central/ edge of north Edinburgh

4. Start Morningside, End Holyrood

A multi-option route but generally taking in the quiet route between Morningside and Bruntsfield links, through The Meadows, down Lady Lawson Street and through the Grassmarket, along the Cowgate and down toward parliament. Alternative sections include down the Royal Mile, or through the Meadows toward St Leonards, and past Edinburgh Distillery.

5. • This becomes a cherry tree route in spring: beautiful trees down Braid Road, outside Canaan Lane Primary, in the grounds of Astley Ainslie and lining the Meadows boulevards.

- In the spring you can hear woodpeckers along Canaan Lane- there is a tree they love beside the road just within the grounds.

- It can be fun or irritating cycling through the Grassmarket- it starts the festival being fun then ends up irritating, so alternative routes come into play.

- Lovely watching shifting light across the Meadows and changing use through the year: students with wine, cricket teams, picnicking families, and circus skill practice.

- The gorse around Arthurs Seat in full flower in early summer is almost overpowering but fabulous.

- The sense of history detracts from the slight edgy feel through the Cowgate.

This transect takes in so many views it gives a real sense of the identity of the city.

A great stopping point is Soderberg on Middle Meadow Walk, right next to the route.



6. This is my commuting route; I love the fact I see such a cross section of the city in a journey I need to do, and feel very lucky that the route has so many options to it. I can change which way I go depending on how fit I feel, how quickly I want to get there, and which bike I am on (electric or non-electric!) or if there is something happening within the city I want to see/ avoid. It's a great way of feeling connected to the city I live and work in, and is a quicker and fitter way of travelling!

Forth Road Bridge to home in South Edinburgh

2. Everyone! Families with young children (walk a short section through South Queensferry and the tiny bit between the Roseburn-Canal link that is on the road), experienced cyclists (take the fast route to the Dalmeny Estate by using Ferry Muir Road, Scotstoun Ave and Dalmeny Main Street), novice cyclists (choice of off road options, as family option), others (e.g. to cycle from Edinburgh to the bridge and back for a nice half day ride)

3. Ed central / Ed north / Ed south

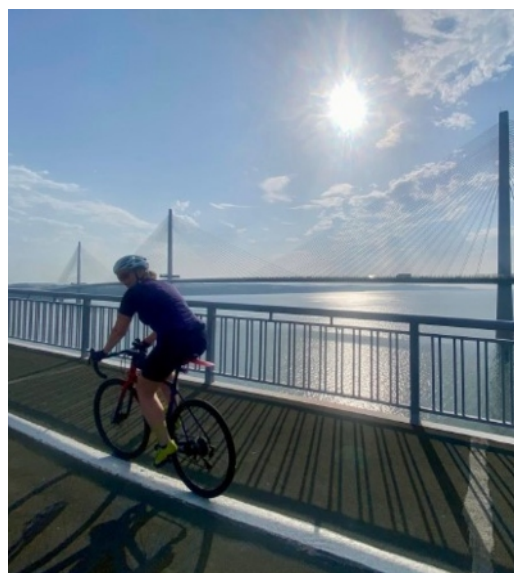
4. Start: Forth Road Bridge cycle path End: Morningside, or anywhere safely linked to Roseburn path. A Beautiful traffic free route with spectacular views: perfect end to a busy day.

5. If doing it as a there-and-back route from Edinburgh the Honeypot cafe in South Queensferry is lovely. Look at all of the single track roads and paths in Dalmeny Estate and take a different route home. Highland cows and their calves are a particular treat in late summer.

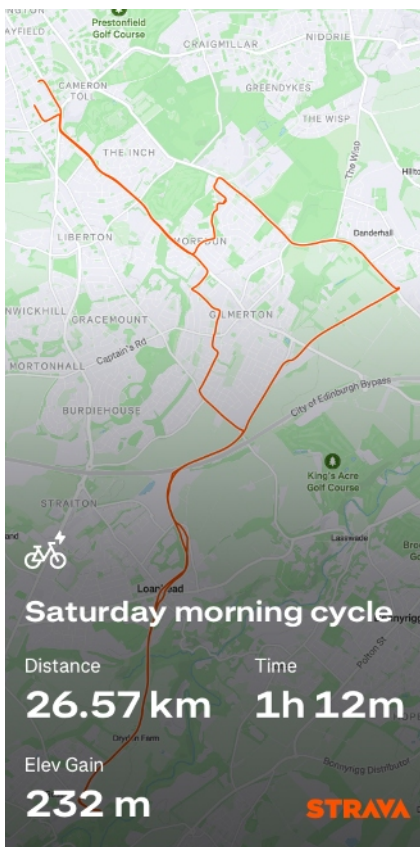
6. On days when the weather plays fair, my commute home is the best part of my job. Crossing the Forth Road Bridge, the view always stops me. No matter how many times I've seen it, the wide sweep of water and sky makes me feel lucky to live here. Often my colleague and friend Tom rides with me. We always stop on the bridge, take in the view, and let the working day fall away. From there the route drops into Dalmeny Estate. The lanes are car-free and quiet, lined with trees and fields where highland cows and sheep graze. Pheasants dart out and, for a while, the pressure of the day is replaced by simple rhythm — turning the pedals, moving forward.

At Cramond Brig we pause again, a small ritual that gives us time to catch up outside the hospital walls. Those moments of conversation and quiet are as important as the ride itself. The Roseburn Path then carries us back to the city, busy with other cyclists heading home. There's a kind of shared purpose, even without words. The new link to the canal makes the route flow easily, and by the time we reach Bruntsfield Links the ride feels more like a privilege than a commute. The last stretch, past James Gillespie's school and down into Morningside, is quiet and familiar — a gentle end to the journey.

I work as a paediatric radiologist, and the job brings its own intensity. Families depend on the decisions I make, and the responsibility can be heavy. But this ride — when the weather gives me the chance to take it — restores perspective. It makes me grateful: for the beauty just outside my door, for work that matters, and for the chance to share the journey home with a friend.



15 Jason Rose	Hungry for Haddington! 2. Families with young children / Experienced cyclists / Novice cyclists 3. East Lothian 4. Start: Longniddry railway station, circular via Haddington Farmers Market Follow the old railway line, now an excellent walking/cycling path from Longniddry station five miles to Haddington then back the same way 5. It's a good surface, away from traffic, through beautiful countryside, always lots of birds in the hedgerows, you often see deer in the fields, sometimes hares and there is a picnic bench half way along if small people need a break 6. <i>I'm a hardy cyclist but have a family who prefer fair weather and no hills, so this old railway line is perfect as it's pretty flat and sheltered but affords wonderful views and if you time it right - last Saturday of the month - you can stock up on tasty treats at the farmers market in Haddington. The ride justifies a bit of cake!</i>
16 Christine Dora	Haddington to Dalkeith Country Park 2. Experienced cyclists / Novice cyclists who have a bit of stamina / families with older children (it's quite a long return journey) / leisure cyclists with plenty of time on their hands 3. East Lothian / Midlothian 4. Start.. Haddington End.. Dalkeith Country Park Head out of Haddington on the quiet back roads via Begbie and West Saltoun, pick up the Pencaitland Railway Walk route, then use national cycle network route 196 and Dalkeith's many excellent shared paths to access the country park. 5. All in all a lovely route past old farm buildings, a whisky distillery, interpretation boards on the railway walk, plus a very short and handy detour (if you want one) to Rosearista cafe in Pencaitland. Mostly flat - there are a couple of sharpish hills but if I can get up them so can you! 6. The journey and the destination are equally enjoyable! I get a lovely relaxed and bucolic ride, much of which is on off-road paths, and other friends can converge on the park from elsewhere (a friend of mine cycled up from Portobello and loved the experience, although the park is also a nice place to visit solo), I can have lunch or just coffee and cake, maybe toddle around the Restoration Yard shop or go for a longer walk around the park. There's also an adventure playground for kids.  Spokes maps came in very handy the first time I did this ride, although the route is easy enough to remember for subsequent outings.

RUNNERS-UP (all get choice of a Spokes Map or Buff) ... <i>these entries are in random order</i>	
Fiona Collins	Roslyn Chapel ride  2. all 3. Ed south/ Midlothian 4. From Holyrood park, take the Innocent Railway tunnel and then along the Cycle Route 61 to Roslyn Chapel. Start: Royal Commonwealth Pool End: Roslyn Chapel or return to RCP  Saturday morning cycle Distance 26.57 km Time 1h 12m Elev Gain 232 m STRAVA A beautiful ride on cycle routes towards Portobello then pick up the 61 cycle route along the old railway. 5. Roslyn Chapel is a fabulous mid-point with great views and a lovely cafe, a beautiful route with great views over the Pentlands. 6. I love to cycle this route early in the morning. It is usually quiet then with just a few other cyclists, dog walkers or joggers. Once you get on the old train line, cycle route 61, you get a beautiful view of the Pentland hills and there is greenery all around. It feels great to be alive and helps me prepare for the day ahead. It's a straight route most of the way so I can just focus on enjoying the fresh air and looking at the flowers and trees all around. Roslyn Chapel is a great place to stop and have a coffee and a snack before heading back into the city.
Jackie Young	Canonmills Walkway to Wardie Bay 2. Route suitable for all - Families, experienced, novice 3. Ed Central to North 4. Start point cycle route 75 at Canonmills, End point Wardie Bay • Walkway Trinity path • Cycle north towards Trinity Crescent, cross straight over 5 junctions • North through the tunnel • Exit path at Trinity Crescent • Cross at pedestrian crossing and continue East on the promenade path, McKelvie Parade • Wardie Bay / Granton Beach is approximately half mile on right. • Entrance is where the walls from the railway line bridge remains. 5. The route is tree lined with, depending on season blackberries, elderberries, wild garlic. Wild life possible sightings are Foxes, Badgers, Squirrels, Rats, Robins, Woodpeckers, seals and occasionally dolphins! 6. The route is one of my favourites as it is completely off road and takes me to a small sheltered bay where I litter pick and beach comb. A safe beach for kids to paddle in their wellies and water wings! 

Chris
Misslin

West Lothian Meandering

2. Experienced & Novice; anyone with a bike that can handle the Union Canal and doesn't mind altering plans

3. Ed west & West Lothian

4. Loop linking the Union Canal to Forth with plenty of stops for tea, coffees and cakes as well as escape routes if the weather becomes unpleasantly dreary

Circular route - Start anywhere, but Ratho Station is a good start and end. Ingliston Park & Ride or Dalmeny are options too, especially if one only wants the Dundas Castle, Dalmeny estate section

Not the flattest of routes - Quite good for some cardio!

5. Too many to list, but: Lost Shore is a very nice place on a bonnie summer day, and their coffee is ace. Thus my favourite start. Broxburn and Winchburgh also offer some respite, but New Hopetoun Gardens café would be my second favourite stop.

6. This route is my favourite as I keep discovering it. It's really a meandering route that can take between a couple of hours to a full day. It offers different angles and scenic views of the city. It links two very popular routes; the Union Canal (NCN 754 – Forth & Clyde Canal) and the Inner Forth (NCN 76). It's a definitely less trodden/ridden route, but that's its very charm. It tells more about the Lothians and Edinburgh past and present than the more popular routes. It's also a good alternative to the NCN 754 and NCN 76 as it's the loop circumnavigating the West of Edinburgh. Additionally, it can be stopped or altered at any time, doesn't require any training or specific equipment but the basic tools one would carry on a daily commute.

The route also shows how much Edinburgh is changing. The classic, Union Canal, Abercorn, Hopetoun House, Dundas Loch, as well as a few other castles and large mansions (Carlowrie, Midhope, Niddry, Newliston) can easily be included. But it's the new developments that are really of interest: cycling under the new Forth Crossing offers a striking view on its design (the ride takes me right by its anchorage point (the roads are not named yet) and so is sipping a coffee at the Lost Shore.

The route offers a few "if only moments": the A904 leading to New Hopetoun Gardens and Baird Road in Ratho could do with a cycle lane on the verge, the Path through Dundas Estate could be better marked, but also offers some nice cyclist friendly crossing and marking.

On a few iterations I ended up lifting the bike over a fence or broken wall (Little Bugs Outdoor Nursery Abercorn). But they can all be avoided.



Josh
Turner

The Otter Circuit

2. Families with young children, all cyclists, otters [steps + step-free detour]

3. Edinburgh West, Edinburgh Central

4. Start at Harrison Park West, use the Union Canal towards town, before linking across the Western Approach to Quiet Route 8, around the Water of Leith and rejoining the canal at the aqueduct to return. An ~8 mile circuit with wonderful wildlife, excellent cafes, and some steps (or a not-ideal step-free detour).

5. On route: 3+ excellent cafes, 3 wonderful public parks, 3 children's playparks, 1 bottle refill point, and the chance for a lot of wildlife.

6. The Otter Circuit promises some remarkable bits of beauty interspersed through West Edinburgh. It answers my need for a break from the city with minimum exposure to cars and maximum cycling time. I'll describe a typical ride, and you can see why I love it!

Starting at Harrison Park West, the circuit follows the Union Canal towards Lochrin Basin. Turn left down Gibson Terrace just before Boroughmuir Highschool and carefully cross Dundee Street, down towards the Dalry underpass. Don't be lured into the darkness however! Take the ramp up to the (very welcome) new crossing over the Western Approach to Dalry Park.

Follow the lovely new route through Dalry Park and over the railway line with views across Murrayfield and Corstorphine Hill in the distance. Wind your way down the ramp, before heading (safely) along Quiet Route 8 around towards Murrayfield.

Enjoy the green space of Roseburn Park—particularly beautiful with the blossoms out—as you wind onwards.

Stop at the wonderful Rosebean Café, which offers great cakes, sandwiches and coffees.

Back on the bike, and follow the path around Murrayfield next to the lovely Water of Leith, before crossing to the opposite bank at the second bridge. Take a slight detour up to Balgreen Foot Tunnel for a lovely new community mural which is brightening up the pass—kingfisher guaranteed.

Continue along the Water of Leith and cross to Saughton Park. Take a moment to enjoy the beautiful gardens, and the lovely café inside run by charity Four Square. There's also a bottle refill point just outside the walls.

Carry on beyond the park and exit via the road, but take a stop at Ford's Road bridge, I've seen kingfishers here multiple times, and seen otters on this stretch too! Track the river onwards, following the rough path by the right bank moving away from the park. Cross the A71/Gorgie Road at the crossing before rejoining the path by the river. Stop at the next bridge and take five minutes to enjoy the breeze through the trees. This is my favourite place to spot kingfishers.

Nature-bath complete, follow the path onwards until you reach the Union Canal Aqueduct. The route here pushes the bike up the ramp by the steps, but if you need a step-free route you can continue and turn right up Lanark Road, over the junction, and catch the bridge over the canal to the right. Steps or no steps, the Water of Leith Visitor Center is another great wee café just beyond the aqueduct, and an interesting place to find out about the river and its wildlife.

Rejoining the canal, meander your way back into town along its banks to return to Harrison Park. I've seen kingfishers, otters, and other wildlife along this stretch many times also!

That's a normal day on the Otter Circuit, and it's why I love it so much. It's a short route which offers an escape from the city with the chance of some truly beautiful wildlife.



Rosanna Rabaeijs	From West Edinburgh into the centre, avoiding traffic 2. Suitable for anyone; ideal for inexperienced or nervous cyclists. 3. North-west Edinburgh to the centre 4. Start: Craighleith Junction End: Top of Middle Meadow Walk Brief description: In West Edinburgh using traffic-free paths to get to the centre of town 5. The views over the city are great from the new Roseburn to Canal section. The Roseburn Path is a wonderful natural corridor. 6. This route offers a very stress-free way into the centre, because it's off the roads. The new section makes it so much better, although I would often choose this route before that was built. My work involves having Homestay students staying, teaching them English and showing them Edinburgh. I always try to get my visitors on bicycles, as it's the most flexible way to discover a large part of the city, and often places that other tourists do not see. Besides our car is a van used by my husband for his work, and we live ten minutes' walk from a bus stop. And of course, I believe in the bicycle!
Charlie Wood	Edinburgh Circle (DeTour de Leith) 2. 25km, suitable for all, quiet roads and cycle paths. 3. Ed south / Ed east / Ed North 4. Start: Portobello, circular From Portobello cycle inland via Hope Lane and The Magdalenes to pick up NCN1 to The Meadows. Cross to the Canal (careful!) then pick up the Canal to Roseburn route at Gibson Terrace. From Roseburn follow NEPN to Leith at Sandport Place, then Leith Links then back to Porty along the coast. 5. Nothing outstanding, it just makes for an interesting tour of different parts of the city. 6. This is a straightforward, stress free cycle (mostly) away from the Edinburgh traffic. I live in Porty and work in Leith, it takes me about an hour to get to Leith using this route as an alternative to my regular direct commute along the coast, short enough to fit in before work, long enough to relax and enjoy the journey. I try to fit in at least once a week - weather, light and time depending - and it really lifts my mood and sets me up for the day. If you're already lucky enough to be able to commute by bike, and have the time and energy for a longer ride now and again, then I thoroughly recommend looking for ways to squeeze in an occasional longer commute, just for the joy of it.
Graeme Smith	Edinburgh To Linlithgow 2. Suitable For All Ages 3. West Side Of Edinburgh 4. Start: Lochrin Basin End: Linlithgow Canal Centre 5&6. One of the best routes I found was the Union Canal towpath for a traffic free journey to the historical Linlithgow canal and museum wheel. The journey is around 3.7 mins one way and takes around 20mins if you start from Lochrin basin, Fountain bridge. Pass the historic leamington Lift bridge built in 1906 as you travel along this stunning location taking in the sites of amazing wildlife and peace and calm in an extremely busy city. The waterway was originally created in 1822 to transport coal and minerals. The canal towpaths provide scenic routes for walking and cycling, with the route from Edinburgh to Falkirk being particularly extremely popular, If you don't want to go to that far along the canal walkway there are locations like Harrison Park, a good place to sit and have a pack lunch, also Sighthill and Winchburgh. And of course the last place on the journey is Linlithgow canal Centre operated by Linlithgow Union Canal Society (LUCS) - a historical site and a visitor attraction located in Linlithgow canal basin, with a museum built in 1977. The canal centre is a great day out for all the family, with boat trips and other events on regularly. Give these Foundations and Trusts a wee follow... Fountainbridge Canalside Community Trust / Linlithgow Canal Centre

**Björn
Ross**

Hillside to Portobello and back

2. Adults, including novice cyclists, teenagers and older children, and parents with cargo bikes. I probably wouldn't take a small child on their own bike, because there are short sections on the road.
3. Ed central and Ed east.

4. Start: Montgomery Street Park End: Portobello Beach

Cycle to Seafield promenade via the Restalrig Railway Path, then follow the promenade to Portobello. Return via Fishwives Causeway, Restalrig/Marionville Avenue and Quiet route 20. GPX file available.

5. Easter Road Stadium, the Restalrig Railway Path, Seafield Promenade, Portobello Beach, Portobello Tap, Lochend Park.

6. On a sunny summer afternoon, between May and September, after work, my girlfriend and I will ride down to Portobello for a swim.

The route takes us from our home in Hillside (near the top of Leith Walk) through quiet residential streets, across busy Easter Road, over the Crawford Bridge, past Easter Road stadium, down the zig zags onto the Restalrig Railway path, which we follow east until Seafield. There is a shared-use pavement along Seafield Road that we follow until the start of the promenade.

My favourite moment is when you turn onto the promenade. At this point you are still quite high up and you can see the beach and the East Lothian coast stretch out before you, and on a clear day North Berwick Law in the distance. There is a nice spot with benches where you can rest but by this time we're too excited to get into the water to stop, so we continue along the promenade until we get to Portobello. We usually lock up our bikes at Straiton Place Park or the swim centre.

Then we'll go for a swim. (Unless it's really hot, make sure to bring warm clothes to change into). If we're feeling hungry we'll go for a burger and a cheeky non-alcoholic beer at Portobello Tap. Or maybe an ice cream or a coke.



Then we cycle back, but a different way: from Portobello High Street we turn left onto Fishwives Causeway, just before the KwikFit Garage. When the street turns right, you take the crossing to your left, across Sir Harry Lauder Road, to stay on Fishwives Causeway, and here it becomes just a cycle path. This takes you to Portobello Road (at which point my girlfriend might start singing: *Portobello Road, Portobello Road, street where the riches of ages are stowed!*). You could just follow the road until it eventually becomes London Road and takes you back to the city centre (it has a cycle lane part of the way) but instead we usually take the second right, then left. Now you're on Restalrig Avenue which is much quieter and almost as quick. It becomes Marionville Avenue and takes you to Lochend Park. Once we're through the park, we're back at Easter Road Stadium from where we make our way back home feeling accomplished, adventurous and full.

The ride takes about 20 mins each way. I'm sure you could do it quicker, but what's the point?

The way there is almost entirely on cycle paths away from cars, the return makes use of more roads but they have always been quiet. The only dangerous part is the jellyfish really.

The entire route is tarmacked and suitable for any type of bike. Just beware the potholes!



William
Maloney

Victoria Park - Cramond Loop

2. Experienced Cyclists

3. Ed north

4. Start .. Victoria Park,
circular ride

Victoria Park to Ferry
Road Bridge to Granton
Beach to Cramond

Beach, then River Almond Walkway to Braepark Road, then back to Ferry Road Bridge and Victoria Park

5. Features included in 6 below

6. My favourite route (map) makes ample use of Edinburgh's cycle paths and natural features, mostly avoids busy city streets, and can be a one-hour ride or an all-day excursion.

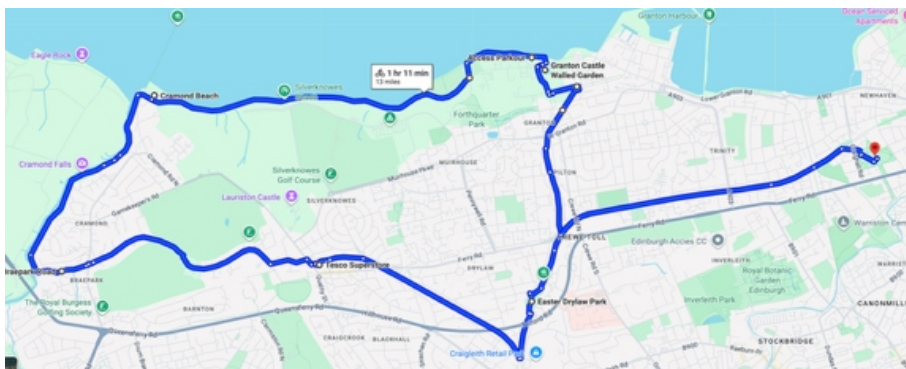
Victoria Park has great examples of sensitive park management, including the new community orchard, and the Wildflower Meadows in progress.

The route passes Granton Castle Walled Garden, open Saturday and Sunday afternoons, and enters the foreshore path at The Pitt, a new community centre open Thursday-Sunday with an outdoor market, live music, a bar, a sauna and parkour.

Cycling down the foreshore offers a beautiful view from Leith's Western Harbour to Queensferry and the Forth bridge. The paths are wide and there is lots of green space for people walking, cycling or picnicking, so it doesn't feel crowded and there is generally a positive and friendly vibe.

At Gypsy Brae a brief detour inland leads to Cyclone Mountain Bike Track, where those so inclined can ride around the dirt track or catch some serious air.

The Boardwalk Beach Club at Silverknowes beach has a wonderfully snarky message that non-customers will be charged £10 to use the toilet, and helpfully pointing to the public toilet a mile away. Cramond has bike racks so you can lock up and walk to the island.



The route up the River Almond walkway passes an information board where the Roman Cramond Lioness was found, and continues along a riverside path that feels miles from the city. As well as the natural scenery the path includes the physical challenge of carrying a bicycle up the Salveson Steps, cycling 100 meters or so on a path far above the river, then carrying the cycle down five flights of stairs again.

The walkway leaves the River Almond and joins Cycle Route 1 at Braepark Road, where you can visit the three friendliest Sheltand ponies in Edinburgh. Returning on Route 1 is a mostly quiet route of streets and bike paths, although the cyclist has to be vigilant crossing Whitehouse and Cramond Roads.

At Cramond Road the signs indicate that Route 1 continues on the other side, but down the street to the right, Tesco's back car park leads to an unnamed and unnumbered gravel and tarmac trail that connects back with Route 1 after a few hundred meters. It's not a shortcut but a fun back way.

Just past Easter Drylaw Park, on November 5, you can watch local residents build the largest bonfire known to man. Back at Ferry Road bridge, you can briefly leave the cycle path to see what birthday, anniversary or graduation message someone has left on a bedsheet on the bridge, before going back to Victoria Park.

Whether I go for an uninterrupted one-hour ride or stop to do something else, I return feeling like I've made an excursion far outside the city.

Rosanna Rabaeijs	From West Edinburgh, along Sustrans NCR Route 1 to S.Queensferry, and back 2. Fairly fit cyclists, due to distance 3. North-west Edinburgh to Midlothian 4. Start: Craigleith Junction End: Port Edgar Marina (can be circular, but then it's longer) From Edinburgh, out to the historic and attractive neighbouring town of South Queensferry. 5. South Queensferry Museum is well worth a visit if you go on a weekday. The views of the bridges and the Forth are great from many places. South Queensferry has a wonderful array of cafes, chippies, restaurants, and especially good ice cream shops to tempt one to stop and enjoy some refreshment. 6. This route offers so many possibilities and options. It's quite varied, but with no really steep hills. You can detour off the NCR1 to take in Dalmeny Estate, which is beautiful, and there are several paths you can take through it, including close to the coastline, with nice places to stop for a picnic. From South Queensferry you could cycle over the River Forth on the old road bridge. If you do this ride on a Sunday during the summer, assuming the wonderful Inner Forth bike bus service continues next year, as it has run for 2 years but seemed underused on the day we did this, it can be extended by doing a trip around the Forth, in either direction.
Steven Leitch	The Water of Leith Wander 2. Families with young children / Novice cyclists / Experienced cyclists (for a relaxed, scenic pace) 3. Edinburgh Central / Edinburgh West / Edinburgh South / Midlothian 4. Start: Balerno, in southwest Edinburgh, where the Water of Leith path meets the rural area. End: Leith, the port district of Edinburgh, along the banks of the Water of Leith. The Water of Leith Wander follows the tranquil Water of Leith, Edinburgh's main watercourse, and offers a beautiful, peaceful escape from the city's bustle. The route stretches about 13 miles and winds its way through a mixture of urban and rural scenery, including woodlands, parks, and urban street corners, ultimately reaching the scenic Leith Docks. The trail is mostly flat and off-road, making it suitable for most cyclists, including families and beginners. The path gradually takes you from the more residential areas near Balerno to the heart of Edinburgh, passing Morningside, Stockbridge, and Dean Village, before ending at the docks in Leith. 5. • Dean Village: This picturesque village, located right next to the Water of Leith, is often called a "hidden gem." Its cobbled streets and historic buildings make it feel like a step back in time. • Stockbridge: A charming part of Edinburgh, with lovely cafes and local shops. A good spot for a rest and refuel. • Leith: The vibrant waterfront area with restaurants, cafes, and the famous Royal Yacht Britannia. • Water of Leith Visitor Centre: Located near the start of the route, the centre provides info about the trail and local wildlife. • Wildlife: Expect to see a variety of birds and small wildlife, particularly near the more rural sections of the route. • Parks: The route passes several beautiful parks and green spaces, such as Inverleith Park and The Botanic(Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh), which are great spots to stop and enjoy the scenery. 6. This is one of my favourite routes because it offers a perfect balance of natural beauty and city life. Starting from the quiet, rural outskirts of Balerno, where the trail feels like it's far from the city, you soon transition into the heart of Edinburgh, passing through hidden gems like Dean Village and Stockbridge, with plenty of green space along the way. It's also a fantastic route for all skill levels. The relatively flat terrain and smooth path make it accessible for families with young children, while still offering enough variety to keep experienced cyclists engaged at a leisurely pace. The wildlife along the way, from birds by the river to urban foxes, adds a lovely natural touch to the journey. And as a bonus, the end point at Leith offers a nice chance to grab a bite to eat or explore the waterfront area. Plus, it's one of those routes where you can go as fast or slow as you like, making it perfect for a relaxing day out or a scenic workout. It's the kind of ride that makes you appreciate the calmness of nature, even when you're in the middle of the city.

Callum Ross	City Centre to Portobello utilising the Innocent railway 2. Suitable for everyone. A gentle incline on the way back, but not bad and an overall pleasant cycle. 3. Edinburgh / Portobello 4. Start: Southside End: Portobello A dedicated cycling and walking path along a historic disused railway line that involves going through an old railway tunnel, then turning into cycle routes through public parks. 5. Railway tunnels, old railway stations, wildlife, views of Arthur seat. 6. This was a regular trip on bikes when I was a child. The memories of the thrill of cycling fast through the old railway tunnel has never left me and I'm reminded of it every time I cycle this route.
Rosemary Gray	The Drift! The Promise! 2. Everyone 3. East Lothian 4. Start: my house, off Pinkie Road in Musselburgh. End: Wallyford Railway Station. Side streets to the start of The Drift on Pinkie Terrace - now a tarmacked well lit cycle path to Wallyford Railway Station. Or do it in reverse. 5. The Pinkie Mains 1547 sign you pass on the left is a reminder of the Battle of Pinkie which took place nearby. The farmer's field on the right is a sign of the rich farmland of East Lothian. The path itself, known locally as The Drift, a well used core path which runs from Pinkie Terrace in Musselburgh to Wallyford going under the railway bridge on the East Coast Main Line. Then you pass the Pundy Cheese on the right, beside the playing fields. A big lump of stone - with various theories as to what it used to be. One version is that it used to be a loading platform for the trains that came down from the Wallyford Brickwork and Colliery on their way to the main line. The other version is that it was a stone buffer to stop the Wallyford Pug running away with coal from the Wallyford Bing. So lots of things of interest! 6. It's not a long cycle - about 10 minutes in total, but the cycle from my house, up and along The Drift in Musselburgh to Wallyford Railway Station is one of my favourites. It's uphill to start with but then flattens out; but with my electric bike, that's not a deterrent anymore. It's such a pleasant route - with lots of things of interest on the way. It's the Promise then of what comes next... me and my bike in the centre of Edinburgh in about 11 minutes on the train. First, the anticipation, will my train to Waverley be on time? It usually is. Then will there be anyone I know waiting for the train? There very often is. Then once I arrive at Waverley - the journey time too short really to do anything much more than look out the window at the passing scenery, the promise then of the next stage of my outing, what will I be doing next. A few minutes later I can be up on Princes Street, one of the most famous streets in the world! You can't get better than that..... Sometimes I'll hop on another train with my bike to Fife for a geocaching outing (think treasure hunting with a GPS) or cycle down to Stockbridge or Leith Walk to meet friends for lunch. It's just a short cycle, but for me it's the promise of where it takes me: an adventure every time!



Tim Smith - Leith Local

Unfortunately Tim's entry broke so many of the competition rules that it couldn't be included in the judging! However his bike ride gives a fascinating and useful insight into the development of Leith, and Tim has kindly agreed that we can include it here. We have also [posted it on Bluesky](#). We hope it will inspire you to try this tour of Leith! See next page for the pictures which are referenced in the text.

Leith Local – What's happening today?

(T.S. September 2025)

We have been living in Pilrig, on the boundary between Edinburgh and Leith, for 35 years, during which time there has been great change in the local urban fabric. This has mainly been the replacement of industrial or derelict land-use by housing development, a process which I've always found interesting... despite occasional disappointment at its architectural merit. Now, in 2025, my main area of interest has shifted to more northern parts of Leith, where many former industrial areas are currently going through this development process.

This favourite ride combines my monitoring of several new development areas with a small element of utility, my interest in wildlife, and pleasant, largely stress-free exercise where there's almost always something new to see.

From my house it's a short ride north to Newhaven, where I sometimes use the glass recycling beside the old Fishmarket building or pay a quick visit to Asda (Leith) followed by a brief detour round their car park to a great viewpoint over Western Harbour... is there a new ship visitor today?

The area west of Asda is now almost all filled in with new housing. I loop through here round the side of the new Newhaven Primary School to Western Harbour Drive, a quiet tree-lined road bordering tower blocks of apartments. At the far end of this development is an as-yet-undeveloped site called Western Harbour Ponds where there's always some birdlife to be spotted – swans, herons, ducks and moorhens – (although the ponds have recently almost dried out due to dry weather). From the point there's a great view over the entrance locks, the Forth estuary and Inchkeith. (1)

Returning SW along the seafront walkway there's a view of the distant Forth bridges and, in the summer season, cruise liner tenders shuttling tourists. The path ends at Newhaven Harbour beside the historic cast-iron lighthouse. (2) I turn east here, pass the old Fishmarket (3) and retrace along Sandpiper Rd to Melrose Dr, passing Asda, the ADM flour mills and, to the right, the high concrete retaining wall beside the Tram terminus which often features some high-quality street art – much too good to dismiss as mere graffiti.

My route then rejoins Melrose Dr and follows the Tram line past the Cruise Liner Terminal, with a view to the left of Britannia and any other ship visitors before rounding Ocean Terminal onto Ocean Drive. The whole N.E. end of the O.T. building has recently been demolished, opening up a closer view of Britannia. I usually continue to the walkway edge of the dock to see what shipping might be in harbour that day, then retrace to Ocean Drive, where I cross to the south side dual-use footway to avoid the on-road tram-line hazards.

The area between Ocean Terminal and Victoria Quay has only very recently been filled in with a mixture of new housing types, and Geissler Dr now connects through them, so that's an occasional detour from my direct route. On the north side of Ocean Drive, directly opposite, there's another very recent development of four 10- and 12-storey apartment blocks directly fronting the water, with only some minor landscaping works still to be completed (Sept '25). (4)

This is a good spot to see eider ducks, who seem to like sitting on the wooden floating boom that prevents river debris escaping into the dock. At the east end of Victoria Dock I turn right, wind through on Rennie's Isle and then cross the newly-refurbished wooden deck of the Victoria Swing Bridge (5) emerging opposite Fingal, the floating

hotel ship. Here I cross the tram-lines to the north side before detouring through the internal spine of Stevedore Place, (6) a very pleasant, well thought-out 3-storey housing development fronting onto both Albert Dock and the Port of Leith tram stop... fine if you like constant bell ringing!

The next building to the east is a now-defunct casino that adjoins three barely-preserved historic dockside cranes. (7) I usually do several laps of the empty car-park here just for fun. Here also the access roads for future development have already been laid in and the building work is rapidly catching up. Looking across to the east, the final blocks on the site of the former Leith Glassworks are now rising. (8)

My route continues south on Constitution St, passing on the left yet another new development, this time on the site of a former Dalton's scrapyard. I turn left on Baltic St and continue with the traffic along Salamander St past the fronts of the recently completed housing blocks (9) to Bath Rd where I make a left and then go left again into Margaret Thomson Cres (not a curve in sight!) to make a complete circuit – again, just for fun.

I then retrace along Salamander St, turn right at the lights into Salamander Pl and I'm then in an area of new housing where the road names reflect the shipping connections of the industries that once flourished there – Sailmaker, Rope-maker and Chandler. Pillans Walk then leads into the whole Ropeworks housing development, a pleasant mixture of housing types, mostly low-rise, wrapped around a bowling club and having a wide green space in the centre and several pedestrian/cycle access points to Leith Links. (10)

I usually exit at the easternmost point and join the path that leads east to the ramp up to the walkway bridge crossing Seafield Place. I'm now on the route of the former railway spur that branched off the Caledonian Railway Seafield line specifically to service the former ropeworks and other industries in this area and terminated at South Leith Goods station, long since disappeared.

The walkway climbs gently through trees, far above the unpleasantly busy Seafield Rd, passing Seafield Crematorium and Cemetery on the right, before descending again to an access point near the site of the former Eastern General Hospital (now housing) which offers the option of continuing off-road to Seafield and Portobello. The main path curves round to the south and then swings west, going past Restalrig allotments and under Restalrig Rd – a likely stretch to spot wildlife, maybe even a fox if it's early enough in the morning. After Lochend Rd there's a snaky access ramp on the steep grassy bank to Hawkhill Ave. (11) This gives the option of crossing to Lochend Park with its doocot, loch, waterfowl and slightly creepy semi-submerged trees.

The path continues north past the grounds of Leith Academy before emerging near the foot of Easter Rd. I turn right here and then go left on Duke St, continuing on Gt Junction St (currently keeping an eye on the works for the new cycle link to Ocean Terminal) to Bonnington Rd. Heading west here takes me past yet another newly-completed housing development (12) between Bonnington Rd and the Water of Leith formerly occupied by a John Lewis Depot, a process which I was interested to watch as it grew. This brings me back to Bonnington Toll, Pilrig St and home.

This ride has plenty of items of interest, old and new, and rarely disappoints... but then I would say that, wouldn't it?

Leith Local – What's happening today?

(T.S. September 2025)

