

# Queensferry Benchmark and Sundial Walk

You are about to start our quirky South Queensferry walking tour following a trail of benchmarks and sundials. Our 4 km (2.5 miles) trail will take you around and through the historic town using as guides benchmarks created by the Ordnance Survey as reference points for their maps. There are two types on this walk: Cut Marks carved into the lower levels of buildings and walls that look like an arrow pointing up to a short, horizontal line; and metal Flush Brackets fitted into a recess.



Our walk starts nominally at Dalmeny Station and takes you on a counter-clockwise loop first east, then north, west along the river front, south and east again back to the station. To bag all the benchmarks and sundials might take an hour or so with a substantial hill on the way. Check the [map](#) on the back and choose where you will begin your walk.

**Caution:** *Queensferry is a popular destination with busy roads, please take great care when crossing roads. Also, several of our benchmarks, mentioned in this guide, are on private houses so rather than alarm the residents by close encounters with walkers, we request you pass them by and move on.*

## 1) Dalmeny Station

### Flush Bracket



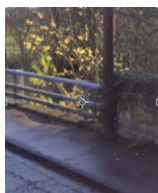
This building, once a ticket office, bears a flush bracket benchmark on the northwest corner with Station Road. Note in the photo the former ramp up the side of the building to the tracks.

The station was originally called Forth Bridge and the first official train to cross the bridge, in January 1890, had a woman at the controls. Candida Louise, Marchioness of Tweeddale, wife of the head of North British Railway, was complimented on her driving skills by Matthew Holmes, the Chief Engineer.

Now turn right along Station Road, under the station bridge and walk 135 m to our next stop.

## 2) Bridge over cycle walkway

Benchmark missing



As you approach the bridge, a benchmark once was on the parapet. The cycle-walkway below used to carry the railway line down to Port Edgar where the ferry crossed to North Queensferry.

We are also near the former Rosshill shale mines. Many shale mines operated quite close to the surface and there are stories of people hearing the voices of the miners below and occasionally, of land caving in and swallowing farm animals.

Crossing to the other side of the road, continue 230 m along Station Road.

## 3) Bankhead Cottages

Benchmark not available



These two cottages at the end of the road once formed a chapel for men working on the Forth Bridge. At that time, this corner would have looked and sounded very different with a 60 acre bridge manufacturing site in the field at the corner. Giant steel plates were shaped, holes drilled with steam-driven machines and checked before transfer to the bridge. At its peak 4,600 men worked on the bridge.

Turn left, crossing the road, onto Bankhead Road past New Gardens House and the small industrial estate to the next T junction. Turn left onto the Hawes Brae and head downhill for 250 m to the next benchmark.

## 4) Hawes Brae




Cut Mark  
halfway down  
on pavement  
side of road



This benchmark is low on the wall on the pavement side of the road, about ten paces down from the Z-bend road sign, and is easily missed. The road was part of the first west Lothian turnpike in 1751 which brought traffic, on much improved road surfaces, from Cramond to Queensferry and the ferry across to Fife.

Tolls were complicated with stagecoaches charged between £4 and £40 in today's money. The toll collector had nearly 30 categories of charges. Coaches with wider wheels received cheaper tolls as they made less damage to the roadway.

Head further down the hill and cross the road to the entrance to a driveway to the Hawes Inn car park.

<p><b>5) Hawes Brae foot</b></p> <p>Cut Mark</p> 	<p>This benchmark is on the wall beside the rear entrance to the Hawes Inn carpark.</p> <p>Stagecoaches, like the Defiance to Aberdeen and the Duke of Wellington to Inverness, would change horses at the Hawes Inn before catching the Newhalls ferry across to Fife. Built in 1757, the Inn is mentioned in the writing of Sir Walter Scott. Robert Lewis Stevenson set Kidnapped here where David Balfour was knocked unconscious and spirited away aboard the ship Covenant.</p> <p>Benjamin Baker, the Forth Bridge designer, lamented the popularity of the pub and its whisky with his workforce. An accident station was built in the Hawes Inn garden.</p> <p>Continue under the Forth Bridge to the far end of the Hawes Inn.</p>
<p><b>6) Hawes Inn Sundial</b></p> 	<p>What is left of a sundial is up on the southwest corner of Hawes Inn. To give a reading, vertical dials had to face south and this one likely served as a guide to ferry sailings. A date 17?0 can just be read but little is left of the lead gnomon that casts the shadow. Although clocks replaced sundials, sundials could still be used to reset clocks.</p> <p>Cross the road to the Hawes Pier and its abandoned small lighthouse almost hidden next to the Coastguard station.</p>
<p><b>7) Hawes Pier Lighthouse</b></p> <p>Benchmark missing</p> 	<p>The lighthouse was used, with a smaller beacon further down the jetty, to form navigating leading lights to guide ferries at night. A bell and horn warned of fog. The pier was one of three ferry landing piers in Queensferry to suit the tides and weather. Ferries stopped using the pier when the Forth Road Bridge was completed in 1964. Today the Hawes Pier houses the RNLI lifeboat and is a supply base for the Hound Point terminal about half a mile to the east where North Sea crude oil is loaded on tankers destined for refineries.</p> <p>Continue west along the Esplanade, a hugely popular site to park and watch the river to the last house on the left.</p>

## 8) Harry Ramsden's

### Flush Bracket



Our next benchmark location was until recently Harry Ramsden's restaurant. It has also been a temperance hotel and once the home of Hugh Justin Tweedie, Commodore of the Grand Fleet's destroyers based at Port Edgar. Commodore Tweedie and his destroyers had a major role in the surrender of the German High Seas Fleet which arrived at the Forth on 21 November 1918.

The metal flush bracket benchmark can be found to the right of the window on the right hand side of the building. This benchmark was used in the (wait for it) the second geodetic leveling of Scotland in 1936. This was a huge project to map Scotland noting the height above sea level.

Continue and then take the path on the left which leads up to Stoneycroft Road.

## 9) Sundial 2



As you approach the top of the hill you will see to your right the remains of our second sundial. It was part of a former, larger chimney at "Bridgewart" house and, while facing south, has two dials which would have read 15 hours, from 6 am to 8 pm. The Gnomons are missing but you can admire the decorative stone bobble on top. It is not known who fitted the dial or who benefitted from its timekeeping.

Continue on Stoneycroft Road and take the right fork down the Vennel and round to the Vennel Church.

## 10) Vennel Church




### Benchmark missing






The church dates from 1635 and the benchmark may be lost below road level. Among its ministers, Mr Ephraim Melville was recorded in the church records in 1641 as being "assiduous in the pursuit of witches". In 1751 they reported that "profanity and immorality" were rife in the burgh. The church was used for offices and a YMCA facility in the 1960s and is now a private dwelling.

Continue down steps to the High Street and proceed left for about 115 m to the Rosebery Hall and the Tollbooth clock tower.



<p><b>11) Clock Tower</b></p> <p>1 GL Bolt Benchmark</p> 	<p>On the west side of this imposing building is a 1 GL benchmark (or first Geodetic Leveling, i.e. measuring heights) “highly prized among benchmarkers”. This is similar to a Cut Mark with the addition of a bolt to aid measurement.</p> <p>This building, or tollbooth, was used as a prison for witches and as a tax collecting office. Today the hall is used for community events.</p> <p>Cross the road and continue west for 95 m past the junction with the Loan, and along Hopetoun Road to the Priory Church</p>
<p><b>12) Priory Church Sundial</b></p> 	<p>On the south side of this 15th century former Carmelite Friary, facing the police station is a <i>scratch dial</i> near the bottom right of the first window. There are only about 10 of this type of sundial in Scotland (more than 2,000 in England). These dials weren’t scientifically calibrated but likely scratched into the wall by priests to mark the canonical hours of prayer in medieval times.</p> <p>By the middle of the 16th century scratch dials had surrendered to the sundial proper and then to the mechanical clock.</p> <p>Now walk along to the far end of the church.</p>
<p><b>13) Priory Church</b></p> <p>Cut Mark</p> 	<p>The church is an “A” listed historic structure and the oldest building in the town with eight centuries of links to the Dundas family who had their family seat southwest of Queensferry.</p> <p>After the Reformation the church reverted to the Dundas family and fell into decay. The Dundas family allowed the remains of the church to be used by the Queensferry congregation until completion of the Vennel Church in 1635. Restored in 1890 it is now the Episcopal Priory Church of St Mary of Mount Carmel. Apart from services, the church is used for community events.</p> <p>Cross the road and follow the road up the hill 145 m to Springwell Terrace</p>

<p><b>14)</b> <b>Hopetoun</b> <b>Road 1</b></p> <p>Cut Mark</p> 	<p>This benchmark is low down on the corner with Springwell Terrace which formerly provided access to housing, a goods station and the rear of the VAT69 whisky plant. Queensferry was blessed with numerous railway stations.</p> <p>In 1811 the Cramond to Queensferry Turnpike was extended from Queensferry to Linlithgow. Starting at Hopetoun Road, it passed through or near Echline, Duddingston, Newton, Philipston, Merrylees and Paddockhall.</p> <p>Continue up the hill to just before the bridge,</p>
<p><b>15)</b> <b>Hopetoun</b> <b>Road 2</b></p> <p>Cut Mark</p> 	<p>This benchmark is on the pavement side as you approach the bridge that crosses the former railway line. This was the line to Port Edgar where passengers disembarked and took the ferry to the Railway Pier at North Queensferry.</p> <p>During WW1, the line was used by ambulance trains to carry sick and wounded sailors from the Royal Naval Hospital at Butlaw to recuperation hospitals.</p> <p>Continue on this road and take the first left up Morison Gardens for 360 m to our viewpoint.</p>
<p><b>16)</b> <b>Viewpoint</b></p> 	<p>From here there is a good view of the three bridges. The area below Morison Gardens stretching to the Loan once contained the VAT 69 blending and bottling plant. This famous whisky was first produced in 1882 by William Sanderson, a Leith liquor manufacturer. He prepared 100 blends of whisky and an expert panel selected number 69 as the best. VAT 69 moved to Queensferry in 1969 but closed down in 1985.</p> <p>Queensferry has a long association with whisky. Robert Wyld, son of the Edinburgh merchant James Wyld, completed his distillery beside the harbour in 1843.</p> <p>Now continue and cross over the Loan. Then walk 180 m up the Loan and onto Kirkliston Road to the corner with Burgess Road.</p>

**17)  
Queensferry  
Primary**

**Cut Mark**



Now an Early Years Centre, the benchmark is on the corner of the Loan and Burgess Road. This is the former Queensferry School whose head teacher, Dr John Mason, wrote the best history of the town. He was an outdoors education enthusiast for his pupils. He established training gardens with names like the Garden of Discipline, where tree pruning was taught. Behind the school were also the Gardens of Thrift, Perseverance and Generosity.

This is the last visible benchmark on our walk. There are a number of other benchmarks on private houses and an inaccessible location. You can complete the circle by walking back to Dalmeny Station if you came by train.

Benchmarks are fixed points which are used to provide heights above mean sea level. The height was calculated relative to the heights of nearby benchmarks. Benchmarks also have a location to provide reference points on Ordnance Survey maps.

Today the word “benchmark” is better known as a superior standard for which managements or businesses strive. For us, these marks are where surveyors would set up their instruments to give them the horizontal and vertical angles to a further point. Take two readings from two benchmarks and you have a triangulation giving you a precise location. Today surveyors use the Global Positioning System.



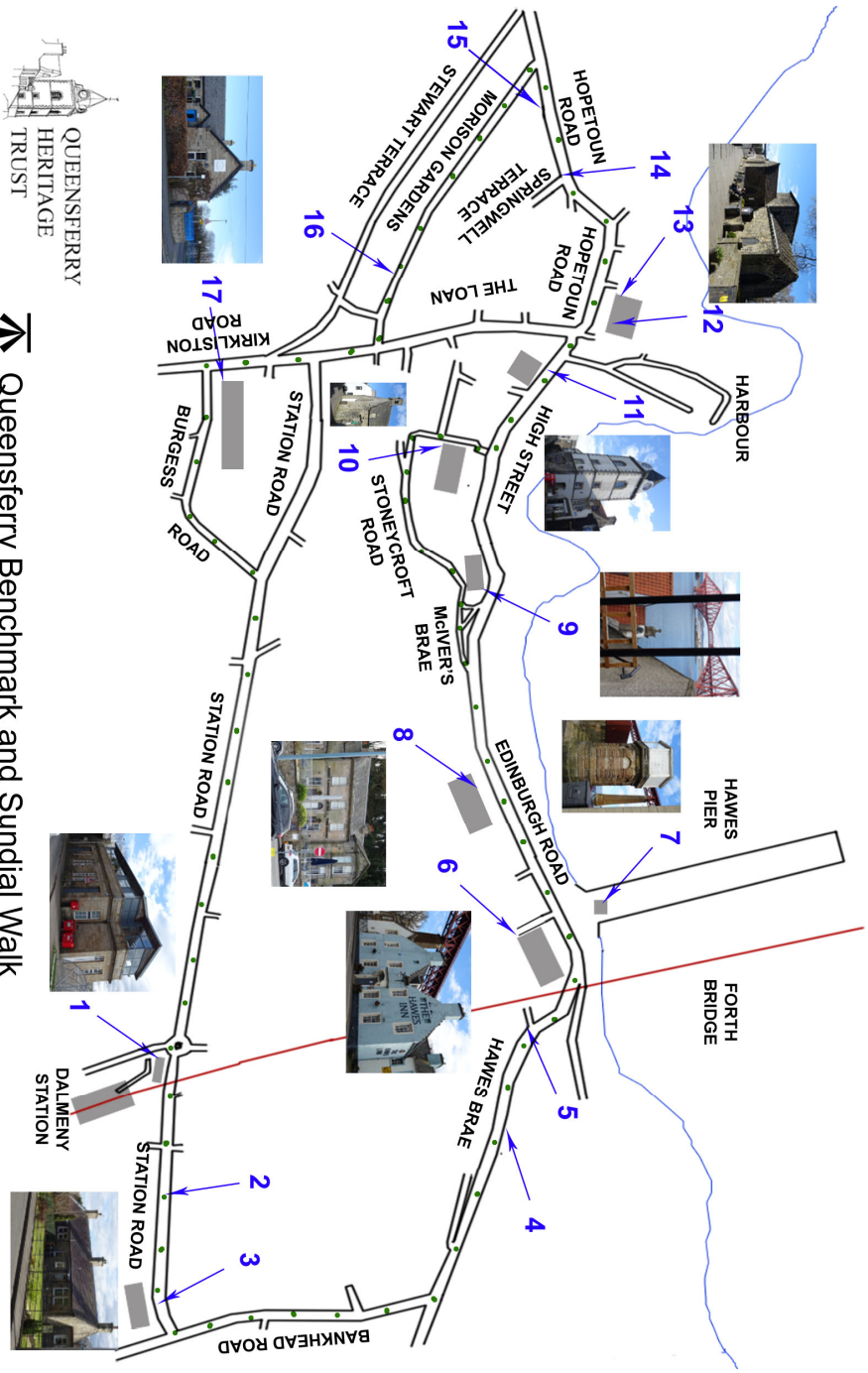
**END OF WALK**

We hope you enjoyed our walk. To find out more about Queensferry Heritage Trust or contact us, go to <http://www.queensferryheritage.org.uk/>

This guide can be printed as an A5 booklet or A4 sheets for larger print or viewed directly on a smart phone – download at [tinyurl.com/k79t59s](http://tinyurl.com/k79t59s)

A tick list and quiz sheet for this walk is available – download at [tinyurl.com/2b74meyv](http://tinyurl.com/2b74meyv)

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