

LOVERS' WALK, MARTYRS' STAKE AND WIGTOWN HARBOUR

Circular town, country and shore walk

2.7km/1.5 miles to 5.2km/3 miles

Allow 1-3 hours depending on route

Roads, track and grass track

Moderate

Boots or stout shoes recommended

As an interlude to browsing around the many bookshops, try this walk from the centre of Wigtown.

START at the County Buildings, which stand at the head of the town square, walk downhill from the clock tower along Bank Street until you reach the boundary wall of the churchyard. Turn left along Church Lane, continue along Beddie Crescent and you will see a blue sign for Lovers' Walk. On a clear day this old lane gives superb views of Wigtown Bay and the Galloway Hills beyond as it rises gently away from the town.

Pass the communications mast and turn right at the T junction (signed Wigtown via A714). On reaching the A714 turn right and follow the verge for 100m, before turning right down the minor road signed for Moss of Cree. Turn right at the next road junction and continue until you reach the car park for the Martyrs' Stake. Here you will find picnic tables and a bird hide.

A short walk along the old railway line will take you to a series of information boards and the start of the boardwalk across the saltmarsh to the Martyrs' Stake. This monument records a sad event of 1685 when two local women were drowned at the stake for their sympathies with the Covenanters. The Covenanters were Presbyterian Protestants who opposed the Established Protestant Episcopal Church in the latter part of the 17th century. The Royal Authorities ruthlessly suppressed them during the 'killing times'. There are Covenanters monuments throughout the region.

There are good bird watching opportunities on these walks, so be sure to take your binoculars.

Regular winter visitors are pink-footed geese and whooper swans from Iceland. These return annually to Britain's largest Local Nature Reserve and may be seen along with other water birds during your walk.

You now have two options to continue your walk:

OPTION 1

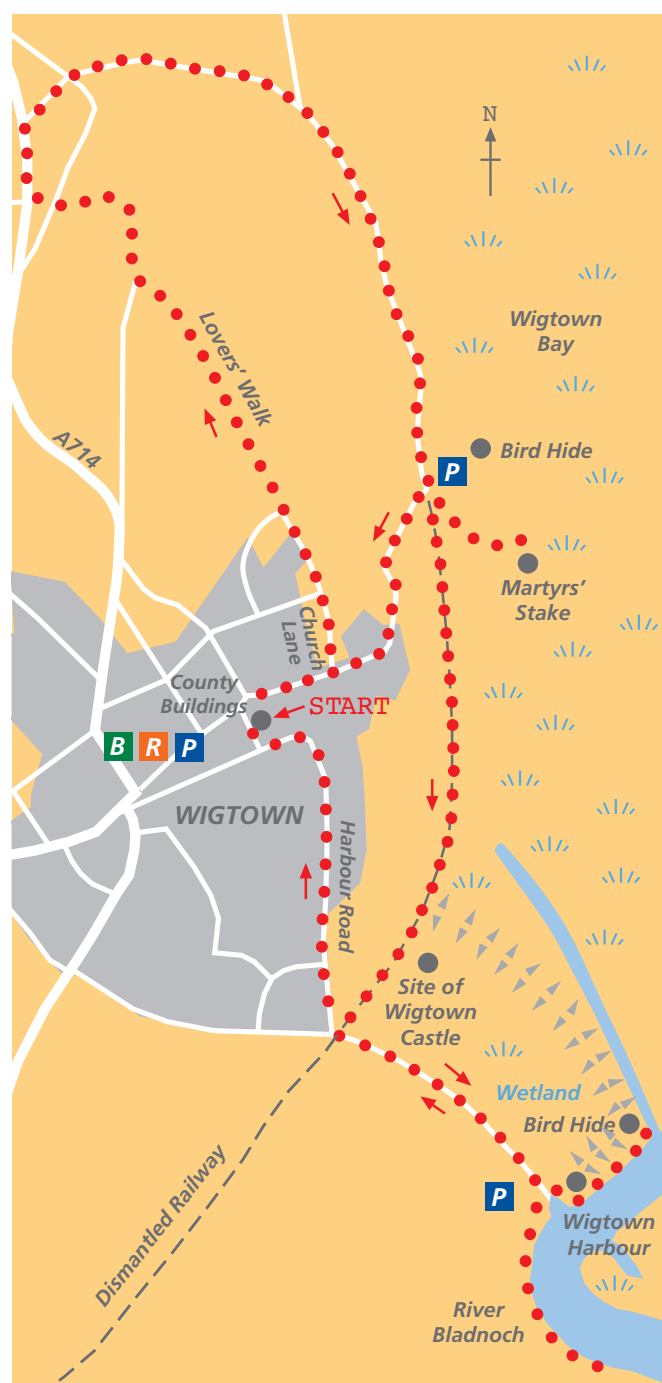
Return to the road, turn left up the hill which will take you back to the County Buildings and the start of your walk.

OPTION 2

Continue along the old railway line until the path descends the side of the embankment. Pass through the pedestrian gate at the side of the cattle crush.

Continue until you meet the Wigtown Harbour Road. Here you may turn left and head downhill to look at Wigtown Harbour, the River Bladnoch and the two recently created wetlands. The new bird hide gives good views over the river, the saltmarsh and the freshwater wetland.

Alternatively turn right and return to the County Buildings by crossing the old railway bridge and walking along Harbour Road.



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Leave gates as you find them - Keep dogs under close control at all times - Keep to paths across farmland - Take care on country roads
Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls - Respect farm livestock, crops and machinery - Take your litter home with you
Protect wildlife, plants and trees - Guard against risk of fire - Make no unnecessary noise.