

Steeplechase Walk Notes

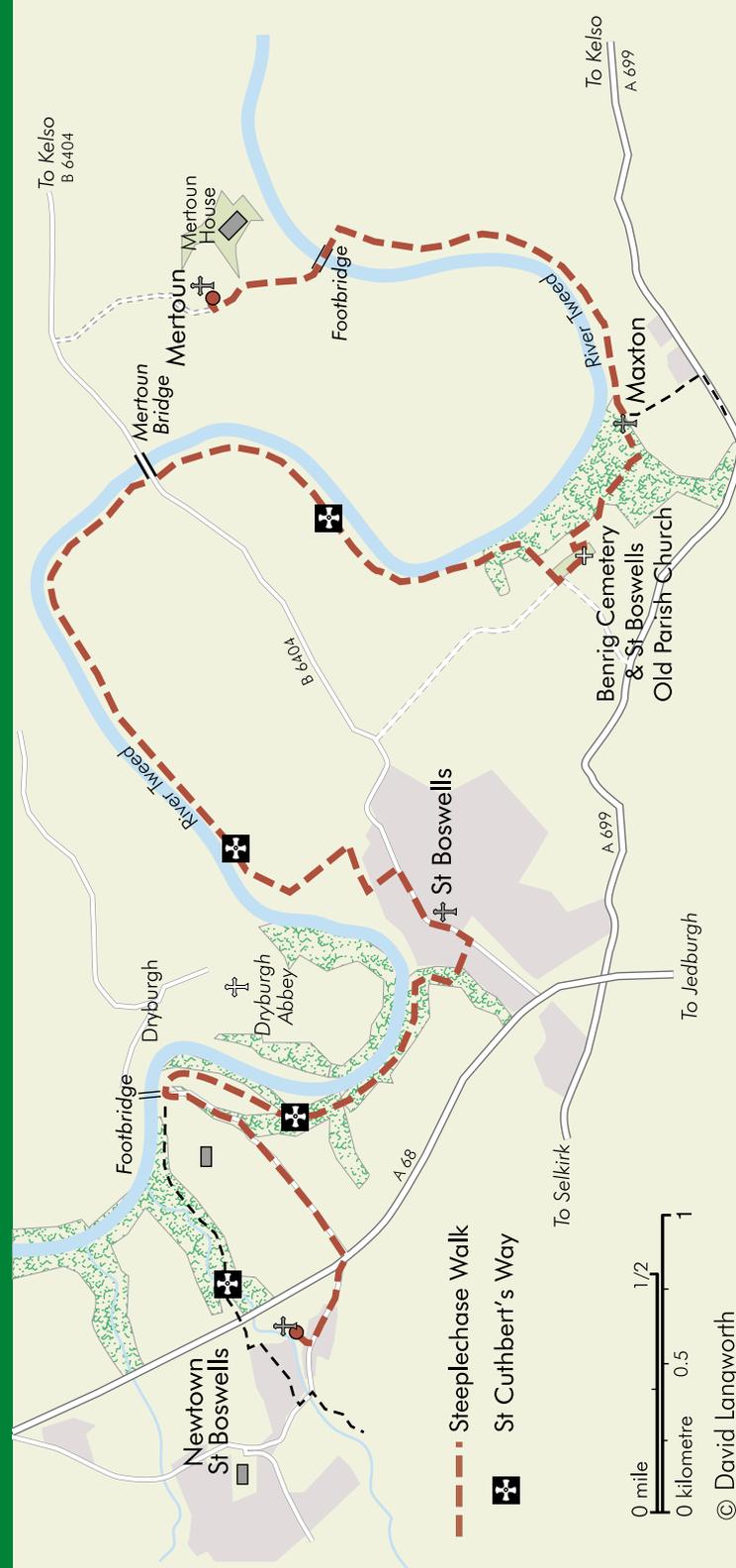
From Newtown to St Boswells, the route follows St Cuthbert's Way alongside the River Tweed, with views to the Eildon Hills.



From St Boswells, the route follows the River Tweed, along the edge of the Golf Course, towards and over Mertoun Bridge (B6404), then along Benrig Haugh, through the woods and up Jacob's ladder to Benrig Cemetery and the site of the old church.



The route continues on St Cuthbert's Way to Maxton Kirk, then follows a path along the edge of fields and down to the riverside, crosses the suspension bridge into Mertoun Estate and ends at Mertoun Kirk.



Maxton & Mertoun, Newtown & St Boswells Churches

'Steeplechase'

Steeplechase originated in Ireland in the 18th century. Horses and riders raced from one town's steeple to the next. The steeples were used as markers due to their visibility over long distances.

Please enjoy a visit to our churches – by foot, by car or?

St Boswells Church is open daily from 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

Other churches by arrangement



We are grateful to the photographers in our congregations for the use of the images in this leaflet and to David Langworth for the map of the route.

Newtown Church

Newtown Church opened in 1868, designed by John Paterson. Built in pink sandstone with cream stone margins, the simple nave and aisles change to a many sided apse flanked by porches, one with a pyramid roof, the other with a spire.



Newtown has been referred to through the ages as Newtown, Newton, Newtown of Eildon and Newtown of Dryburgh. It is first recorded in 1529.

Newtown was until relatively recently in the Parish of Melrose, and was a milling centre for the grain of the area. Because of the burns which run through the village, the monks of Melrose Abbey brought corn to be ground at Newtown Mill, milling continuing until the early 1900s. The Mill today has been converted into a house, but it still stands at the foot of the hill up to the Kirk.

Being in Melrose Parish resulted in the village being without a church and graveyard for many years, but, with the Disruption in the Church of Scotland, Newtown became the base for a 'branch' of Selkirk First Secession Church in 1772, first down the Glen, and later, in 1868, on the site of the present church.

It is currently part of a Linked Charge with Maxton and Mertoun and St Boswells congregations.

St Boswells Church

St Boswells congregation originally worshipped in a disused barn near the smithy and built the current St Boswells Parish Church themselves for around £80, as a Free Church, after the split in the Church of Scotland in 1843. Originally it was a plain, almost square building with no seating and an earth floor.



In 1900, the St Boswells congregation became a United Free Church of Scotland when the Free Church of Scotland and the United Presbyterian Church united. In 1929 the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church reunited and the St Boswells congregation took the name of St Modans to distinguish themselves from St Boswells Old Parish Church at Benrig.

Both churches continued to serve the community until the congregations united in 1940 and the Old Parish Church was abandoned. It was demolished to its foundations in about 1952. Fragments of the stonework can be seen built into the present building.



St Modans Church became St Boswells Parish Church. It was extensively renovated in the late 1950s.



Maxton Kirk

Maxton Kirk is reputed to have been a place of worship for almost 1,000 years. It is dedicated to St Cuthbert. 'St Cuthbert's Church of Mackiston' was first recorded in the reign of William the Lion (1165-1214) but there was a church there before that date. The church was a plain oblong shape with a thatched roof until 1812 when there was a major refurbishment. The North Aisle was added in 1866 and a vestry in 1962. The Maxton War Memorial and a crypt containing the remains of the Kers of Littledean are located within the church. There is also a fine stained glass window. Maxton Kirk is the parish church for Maxton and is now united with Mertoun Church and linked with Newtown and St Boswells.



Mertoun Kirk

The original church at Mertoun was built on high ground overlooking the River Tweed and includes an old burial site. It was dedicated to St Ninian and consecrated by David de Bernham, Bishop of St Andrews in 1241. Before the Reformation Mertoun Church belonged to Dryburgh Abbey. The present Mertoun Kirk is located three quarters of a mile from the older church. It was built in 1658 and renovated in 1820. It was enlarged in 1898 when the gallery was removed and the old box pews replaced. It seats about 180 people. Mertoun Kirk is the parish church for Bemersyde, Dryburgh and Mertoun and is now united with Maxton Church and linked with Newtown and St Boswells.

