

POST 11.



Walking along the Hopes walk offers good views into the small shaded glen of the Cornie Burn. A mix of Rhododendron, Laurel and Crab Apple grow here, with an extensive ground cover of flowering plants. The Hopes or Ladies Walk was a popular after dinner walk for the ladies of the house, whilst the gentlemen would take a carriage ride or go shooting.

POST 12.

Carry on past the gate, and the bed of Dog Tooth Violets that are splendid in spring with colour. To your left you'll pass two Sarawa Cypress trees – touch the soft needles and smell the fragrance they release. The limestone wall provides a habitat for a range of small herbs, and naturally growing Hops can be found along here!

POST 13.

Back on to the main vista of the house, you find yourself on top of one of the Ha Ha's. These surround the house, maintaining uninterrupted views of the countryside from the House, yet keeping livestock in their fields.



SEA WALK TRAIL PLEASE STICK TO THE PATH



POST 1.

Before you passed through the iron gates, did you notice the “Tiring platform” outside the old blacksmith’s shop? This was used when making cartwheels. The central stone could be lifted out to allow the hub of a cartwheel to fit in and so, permit the rim to sit flat. This was to fit the iron rim to the wood.

From post one you can see the two cannons. These look out over the steeply wooded bank called the Bog Wood. The cannons are believed to be relics from the Napoleonic wars. The wall behind you has intricate carvings between each of the arches, which contain Yew trees. Perched on the wall is an Eagle, brought with the Hopes from their ancient home in Ceres, Fife. The Eagle looks northwards, towards its old home.

POST 2.

Looking to the north, you will see a group of trees planted in neat rows. These Larch trees would have been planted here to be moved to another area of the gardens when they were ready, but the gardeners never got round to re-planting them! As you walk the trail, you will see several ‘stands’ of trees like this.

The tree in front of you, with the deeply furrowed bark twisting in an anti clockwise direction is a Spanish Chestnut.

Beyond this tree, you’ll see a series of small headstones marking the resting place of many of the family’s pets.

POST 3.

The main feature here is a fallen log of a Spanish Chestnut. It was too large to move when it fell, and so has been left to break down. It now provides a habitat for a range of species, and even has other trees growing from it!

POST 4.

You should now find yourself looking over the North Deer Park, and beyond that the river Forth. The Forth is classed as a Special Protection Area for the large numbers of birds and animals that use it. You will see many species of wader using the muddy shoreline and if you are very lucky, the occasional seal!



Grey Seal

POST 5.

Turn right after Post 5 into a wooded area. This area has many planted and native trees growing in it. You will pass a Pendunculate or Common Oak (*Quercus robur*) a fine example of a native tree and then you will see three Western Hemlocks from North America. Note how the branches turn towards the ground – this is to allow the snow to fall easily to the ground without snapping the branches.

On the other side of the path, a large coniferous (evergreen) tree stands. This is a Yew tree, and is the oldest tree at Hopetoun. It is believed to be at least 550 years old. The Yew is one of the strongest and most durable of timbers. The foliage is poisonous to most animals.

POST 6.

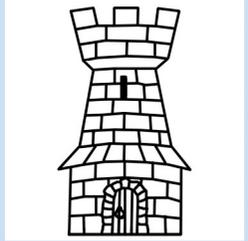


Blue tit

Walking to and from this post, you will hear a wide variety of bird song. Species such as Goldcrest, Blue Tit, Coal Tit and Great Tit and the Chiffchaff (so called after its distinctive call) all abound here. To your left is a path leading to the old summer-house. To your right is an overgrown path towards the sea wall.

POST 7.

You are now standing next to the site of Abercorn Castle. Bearing in mind the elevated position of this site, which overlooks the Forth—it is easy to see why the Douglas Clan choose this as the location for their stronghold!



The castle was destroyed in 1455; the site was landscaped by the Hopes in the early to mid 18th century. The trees here are now home to a variety of wildlife including greater-spotted woodpeckers, whose nesting holes can be seen on some of the old trunks. The damp area surrounding post 7 is thought to have been the site of the castle well at one time.

To the north of the post you will see the trunk of a tree, this was one of our specimen trees called the American yellow Buckeye. This tree had to be felled due to damage caused by the hard winter of 2010.

POST 8.

This is the site of the East Bastion, where the remnants of one of the outer wall towers of Abercorn Castle can be seen. This area commands spectacular views over the Forth and down into the North Deer Park.

The Deer Park extends for some 10 hectares and is home to the Hopetoun Red Deer. The herd has 1 dominant stag which can be seen from this vantage point.



POST 9.

This is the West Bastion – the second of the towers of Abercorn. Looking along the Forth, you can see Blackness Castle. You can also see the spectrum of habitats at Hopetoun – mixed woodland, scrub, parkland and shore.

POST 10.

Take a break here before you follow the path to your left along Hopes Walk.