

River Esk Plaque Trail



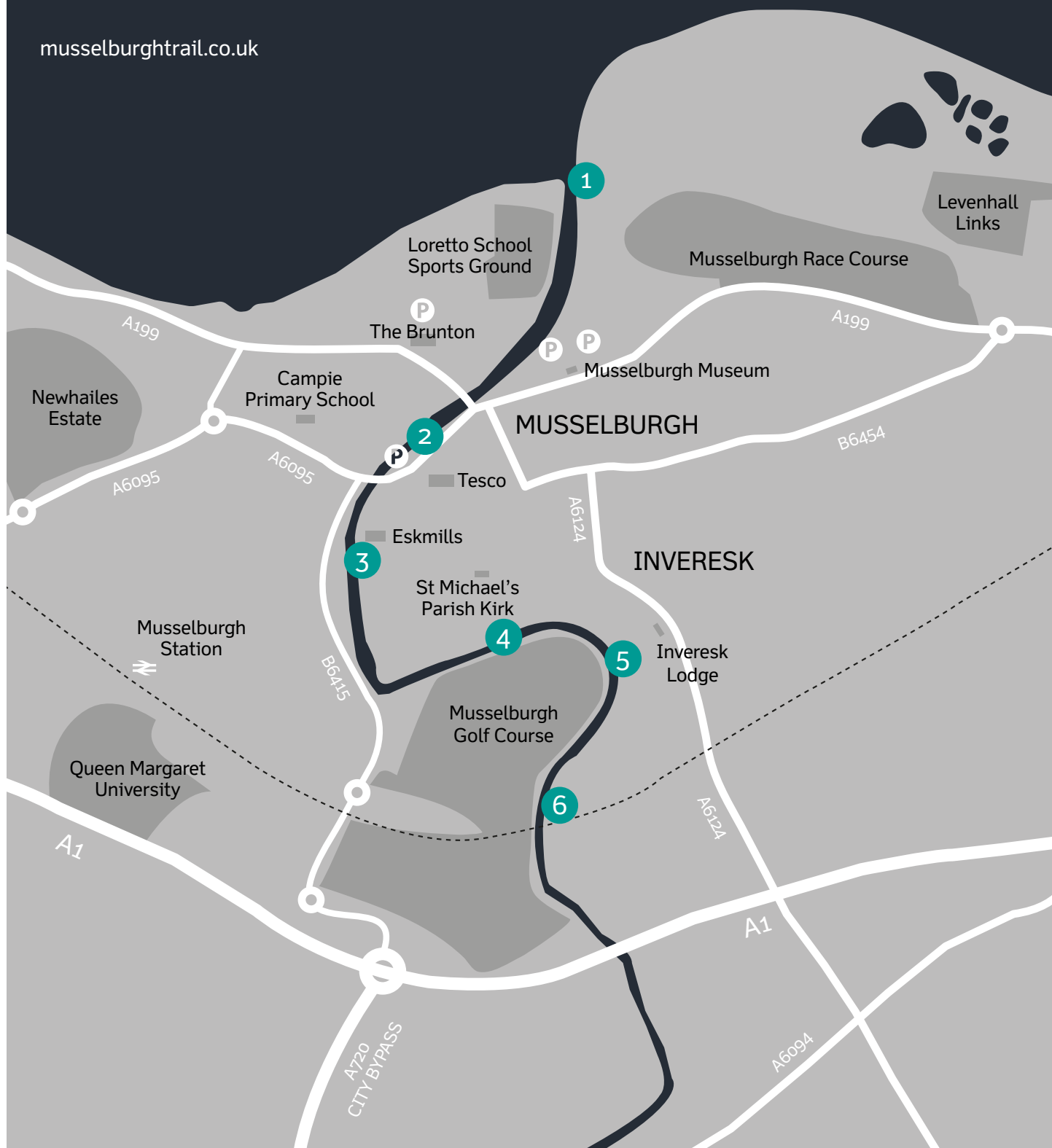
This map will help you to find the six plaques 'hidden' along the trail. Each one depicts a person and place, telling you a little about the history and nature of the area. The guide overleaf will point out some of the interesting landmarks along the way, as well as the animals and plants to look out for.

Each time you find a plaque, make a crayon rubbing of it. Once you have found all six plaques, place them side by side in the right order to reveal a secret 10-word phrase. Input this phrase at musselburghtrail.co.uk to unlock your certificate.

At a leisurely pace, the 4km trail will take one to two hours to complete. Don't forget to bring a sturdy pair of shoes, a waterproof jacket, this guide, a crayon and some paper to make your plaque rubbings. Good luck!



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1 The Fishwife

Your journey starts at the mouth of the River Esk, where you will enjoy tremendous views towards Edinburgh and across the Firth of Forth to Fife. The plaque shows a Fisherrow Fishwife, the hardworking wives and daughters of local fishermen who cleaned the lines, attached bait, gutted and cleaned the catch, and carried baskets filled with fish to Edinburgh for sale.

From here, walk south along the eastern riverbank; past the 'Electric Bridge'; the Store Bridge where you will hopefully see some swans and geese; under the New Bridge designed by John Rennie, originally built in 1806; and onwards to The Roman Bridge.

Look out for oystercatchers, sea trout, salmon, seals, eider ducks (with their duckling 'crèche' in May/June), swans and cygnets on 'Swan Island', and Canada geese. If you're feeding the swans, ducks and geese, only brown bread or bird feed please!

2 The Centurion

Musselburgh was first settled by the Romans in the years following their invasion of Scotland in AD 80. They fortified Inveresk Hill and possibly used Musselburgh as an administrative centre. Although rebuilt twice, with an extra arch added on the east side, today's bridge owes its existence to the Roman settlers who originally established this crossing as the main eastern approach to Edinburgh.

From here, follow the path beside the river southwards until you reach the next road bridge. Cross the busy road carefully and follow Station Road to Eskmills.

Look out for swans and cygnets, greylag geese, Canada geese, and the distinctive non-native pink Himalayan balsam plants by the river's edge.

3 The Mill Worker

Eskmills was the site of one of the world's leading manufacturers of fishing nets, exporting to North America, Europe and Australia. At its height, Stuart's Mills employed over 800 people in cotton processing and rope manufacture, playing a vital role in the local economy.

From here, cross the road and follow the riverside path through the trees until you come to the sluice gate at the weir. The sluice gate controlled the flow of water into the mill lade which flowed through the paper and net mills and then through the town. Follow the path as it turns to the east until you come to the Council noticeboard.

Look out for the blue streak of a kingfisher (especially at the curve in the river just upstream from the weir), dippers, grey wagtails, otters, elderflowers and purple toothwort.

4 The Happy Couple

Up the steep path, you will find St Michael's Kirk. The site has been used for Christian worship since the 6th century, and the church walls feature Roman 'broached' stones with deep lines cut into them. The hill was also used as a strategic fort by the Romans, the Duke of Somerset in 1547, and Oliver Cromwell in 1650 for his cannons. One can see the Pentland Hills and even Ben Ledi in the Trossachs on a clear day from the Kirk cemetery.

From here, follow the path until you come to a bench beside a signpost that points the way to Inveresk.

As you walk though The Grove, keep an eye out for rabbits, songbirds, buddleia, willow and oak trees (and acorns of course), and lots of colourful butterflies in the summer months. It's rumoured that the last witch to be executed in Musselburgh is buried on the steep slopes leading up to the Kirk.

5 The Lady of the Lodge

On the hill to the east, you will see Inveresk Lodge in Inveresk Village. It was built between 1683 and 1700, and was latterly home to John Brunton whose wireworks supplied cable for the Forth Road Bridge. It has colourful herbaceous beds, shrubs, roses, a croquet lawn, a sundial, an aviary, and an Edwardian conservatory, where peaches are grown. At nearby Inveresk House, the remains of a Roman bath house were uncovered in 1783.

From here, follow the path through the trees and past the field until you come to the railway bridge. Keep an eye out for horses in the field on the left, and high speed trains.

On the path, look out for finches, moorhens, squirrels, red campion flowers, holly, ivy and Herb Robert ('Stinky Bob', once used as a remedy for toothache).

6 The Golfer

Musselburgh has a proud golfing heritage, with documentation that the sport was played on Musselburgh Links from 1672, earning it the Guinness World Record for being the oldest course in the world. Nearby Musselburgh Golf Club dates back to 1938.

Look out for buzzards, otters, foxes, goosander ducks (with their serrated bills for catching fish), pipistrelle and Daubenton's bats (known as 'water bats'), ash and sycamore trees (with their distinctive 'helicopter' seed pods in autumn).

Congratulations, you've reached the end of the trail! Now place your crayon rubbings side by side, in the right order, to reveal a hidden message. Once you have the message, you can download your certificate from musselburghtrail.co.uk

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