Walk through the years

Welcome to Cardenden Woodlands

“For a child in Cardenden, the woods and fields were an extension of the school playground – a place where the imagination could roam widely and freely.”

Ian Rankin, creator of Inspector Rebus, grew up in Cardenden and these childhood woods he remembers are still as accessible to local people and visitors of all ages. They stretch far and wide from the town and provide lots of opportunities for walking, jogging, cycling and horse-riding.

Cardenden folk are proud guardians of the woodlands on their doorsteps and extend the same welcome to their community as Forestry Commission Scotland does to its woods.

In partnership with Cardenden and District Local History Group and funded by the Coalfields Regeneration Trust.

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Explore
Enjoy and Discover

How to get to Cardenden Woodlands

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Wood mouse
Roe deer
Blue tit
Cardenden – a community of communities

The early people in these parts were Picts and their place names were adapted by speakers of Gaelic and then of Scots. Four communities make up today’s Cardenden. Auchterderran – the parish name – comes from uachdar-doirean, the high oakwood; Bowhill from buachaille, the shepherd and Dundonald from dùn Domhnull, Donald’s fort. The old name Carden began as cardain or cardden, a thicket. It became Cardenden when the Edinburgh and Northern railway opened and named a station here in 1848.

Cardenden’s famous sons include Jo Corrie, a miner turned playwright and artist / illustrator William McLaren.

People have been here for ages. Prehistoric folk felled trees for farmland and kept others for timber. The Picts set up their carved cross, the Dogton Stone, near Cardenden. The Pilgrims’ Road to Scotlandwell passed by Celtic chapels and crossed the Royal Road to Falkland. Kings hunted the Forest of Carden where Carden Tower’s remains are visible. Nearby, a stone marks the site of the last recorded pistol duel in Scotland.

Monks began mining coal in the 1100s and the industry grew under local lairds, private companies and the state. The first deep mine was sunk in 1895 at Bowhill and the community earned its keep from coal for 80 years until it all ended quite suddenly, leaving only open cast mines. Many pits were called after their owners’ favoured ladies, such as the Alice, Josephine and Lady Helen.

Farming, though, continues to thrive, with barley grown for whisky and tatties harvested for serving with mince. Gone, sadly, are the grain miller at Shawsmill and the nearby blacksmith. So too are most other trades like flax-dressing for the linen industry.

Now you see it, now you don’t

However, you can see evidence in and around the woodlands of quarrying for sand, sandstone and whinstone – and coal mining. Limestone was also won and clay was dug for use in the many brickworks that grew up with the coal industry.

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Trail grading

Forestry Commission Scotland trails are graded according to the degree of difficulty, gradients and type of conditions visitors can expect.

- Easy: Treadable footpath
- Moderate: Hardfooted
- Strenuous: Mountain path
- Struggle: Rough track
- Muscles: Staircase/rambler

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