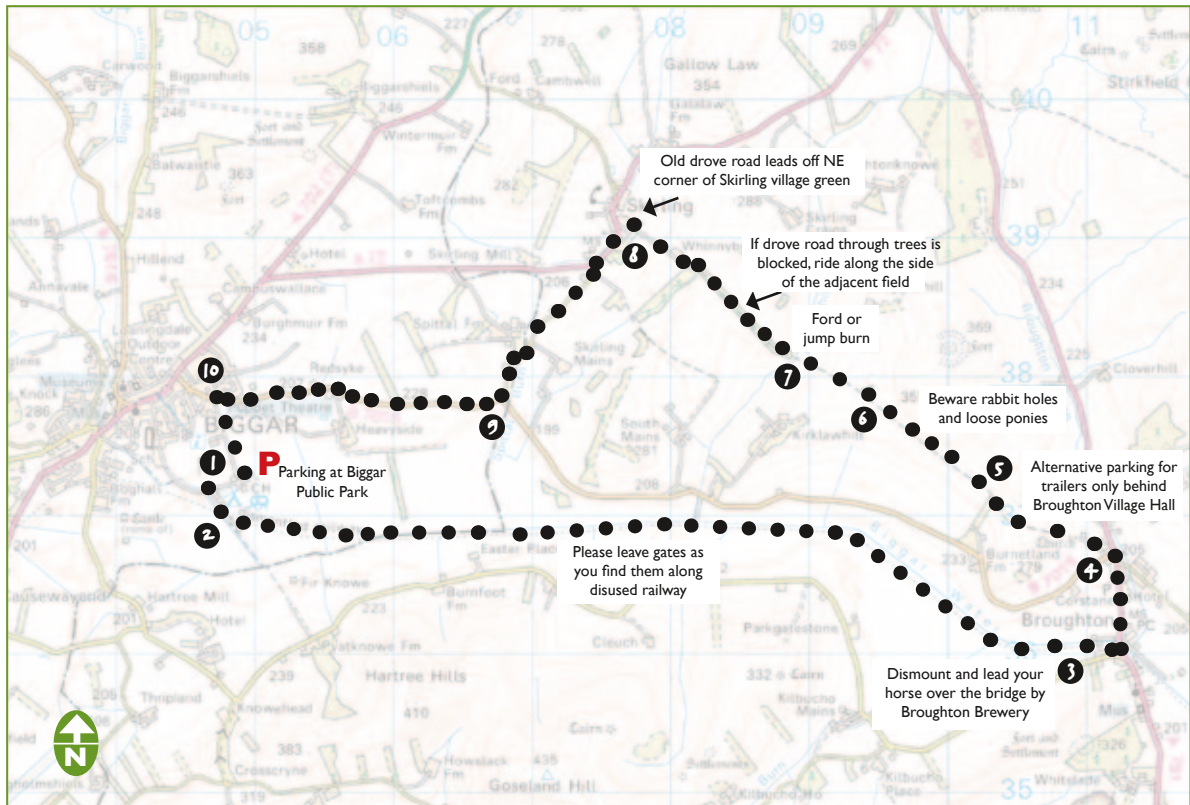


Route 5 - Biggar-Broughton-Skirling Circular Route

Attractive circular route with two-thirds off road



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Description: Attractive circular route with two-thirds off-road, half of which is on disused railway and the remainder along an old drove road. Ideal half-day or summer evening ride, or link this route with the John Buchan Way to make a full-day ride (see www.southofscotlandcountrysidetrails.co.uk).

Distance: Approximately 17km (2-4 hours, depending how fast you go).

Location: Between Biggar in South Lanarkshire and Broughton in the Scottish Borders, south of the Pentland Hills.

Maps: OS Landranger no. 72 Upper Clyde Valley
OS Explorer no. OL 336 Broughton and Biggar

Access and Parking: No formally agreed parking arrangements but there is normally ample space at Biggar Public Park (OSGR NT050373). Follow the signs off B7016 for Biggar Little Theatre and carry on down to the end of the road. You are advised to turn your trailer/box when you arrive in case the car park fills up while you are out riding, and if you are meeting with friends and are looking for parking for several boxes/trailers, please ring in advance. Please respect other users and clear

up dung. Limited parking in Broughton village other than the car park behind the village hall, which is across a narrow bridge unsuitable for lorries. Please make sure that you do not block access for other people, and avoid parking in the small lay-by outside the school opposite the brewery during term-time.

Facilities: Local shop, garage and tea-room/bistro/bar in Broughton. Petrol station, numerous cafes, food shops and supermarket in Biggar.

Season: Accessible all year, particularly disused railway - if it is really wet and you want a blast, ride to Broughton and retrace your steps. The highest point of the drove road is fairly exposed in wet weather and may be wet underfoot, but no serious bogs.

Going: Firm grass turf and level gradient of disused railway allows you to go as fast as you want (remember to stop at the gates!) Old drove road through undulating wood and fields, with scope for a good gallop up the steepest climb

Attractions: Great canters/gallops, fantastic views from old drove road, disused railway ideal all year.

Route Description

- 1. From the car park next to the golf club house, take the red stoned track between the golf course and the boating lake. Where the track meets the burn, turn left.
- 2. Before the sewage works, turn left through a self-closing gate onto the disused railway which continues for 7km right the way through to Broughton. All of the gates along the route have been replaced so that you should be able to open them without dismounting. Wooden railings have been erected across the culverts and burn crossings but please take extra care when negotiating gates next to the railings. Parts of the disused railway are sometimes grazed by cattle and sheep.
- 3. At the Broughton end of the disused railway, immediately past the service centre on your right, you will reach a gate which restricts access to the coal yard. Follow the rather unpromising but clearly waymarked path around to the left (i.e. north) of the coal yard fence, across the wooden bridge over the Biggar Water to Broughton Brewery. This bridge has recently been rebuilt specifically to accommodate walkers, cyclists and horse-riders and most horses will cross it without any difficulty but if in doubt, please dismount and lead your horse over the bridge. (The brewery is on the site of the former slaughterhouse, sheep were downloaded from trains across the former bridge.) On the brewery side of the bridge, turn right along the tarmac brewery access road to the A701. Turn left (north) onto the A701 through Broughton.
- 4. Just after the village shop, turn left at Laurel Bank Tea Rooms on the B7016 towards Biggar. Almost immediately turn first right, just before a new house with a turret, following the track uphill past an old house and the remains of a church on the right, to the grass drove road which is enclosed by parallel dykes/hedges on either side as it climbs up the hill in front of you. Take care to close the gate or fence which is usually fastened across the lower end of the track.
- 5. Beware of rabbit holes and occasionally loose horses grazing through the next section. Once through the gorse, carry on around the contour of Corstane Hill to a gate across the track which you pass straight through - watch out for live electric wire adjacent to this gate.
- 6. Go straight ahead through the gate in the fence at the southernmost corner of a small shelterbelt, to carry on in the same direction you were going (north-west). Keep parallel to the fence on your right as you head downhill, through another gate, to Kirklawhill Burn.
- 7. Ford or jump the burn, and go straight through the gate at the top of the opposite bank, to climb up the hill through the shelterbelt following the old drove road through to Skirling. (If the drove road through the trees is blocked by vegetation, branches or cattle, you can divert into the fields adjacent and continue parallel to the old drove road until the next gate allows access back onto it.) You will come out in the north-east corner of the village green in Skirling.
- 8. Turn left, around the village green, and then left again along the A72 for a short distance before branching off to the left on a minor road past Skirling Mains and Spittal Farm.
- 9. At the T-junction with B7016, turn right (west) and follow this road back into Biggar.
- 10. Turn left signed to the puppet theatre, which takes you back down to the golf course.

Accessing the disused railway from Broughton:

To get onto the disused railway from Broughton, turn off the A701 along the tarmac access road to Broughton Brewery which is parallel to and immediately north of the road bridge over the Biggar Water, just south of the school. Follow the path around the left side of the brewery buildings across the wooden bridge over Biggar Water, continuing right over the bridge around the coal yard fence onto the disused railway which leads you to Biggar.

Carry on along the track north-west towards Skirling, with the dyke on your left, through another gate onto rough grazing. Keep heading in the same direction with Burnetland Hill on your right. Depending on the weather and time of year, there may be some damp patches on this section or shallow ditches to ford (or jump) but it is usually quite easy to pick your way through without any problems.