

This route for horse-riders, cyclists and walkers through Ae Forest is part of the 350km South of Scotland Countryside Trails network, linking Dumfries and Galloway with the Borders.

The South of Scotland has a rich heritage of tracks and trails, drove roads and old Roman roads, many dating back thousands of years. Although some of these routes are still visible on maps or from the air, very few are recognisable on the ground. The South of Scotland Countryside Trails (SoSCT) is a project establishing a new 350km network of quiet off-road trails. Through SoSCT the sound of marching feet and horses' hooves will once again be heard on the routes used hundreds of years ago by Roman armies, cattle drovers and the Reivers who robbed and pillaged their way across the border country. These new, much needed riding, cycling and walking routes span Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders.

The map overleaf indicates the SoSCT Ae route, which has been developed for all users - on foot, cycle or horseback. There is ample parking provision at either end of the route. The route is clearly waymarked throughout and is easy to follow - Just look out for the SoSCT discs. The track is stone surfaced and of varying gradient and able to withstand use at any time of year. The route is also wide enough for users to pass each other safely. Although this is a linear route there are many tracks linking up with SoSCT which can form circular routes of different lengths. Please note that any linking tracks are not waymarked. Larger scale maps should be used to follow routes on the ground, such as Ordnance Survey Landranger 1:50,000 maps no. 78 Nithsdale and Annandale area and 1:25,000 Pathfinders:- 495 Moffat; 505 Thornhill; 506 St Ann's and Boreland and 517 Dunscore and Ae. More detailed route description is available on:- www.southofscotlandcountrysidetrails.co.uk

forest. Young plantations and forest edge, when managed sympathetically, provide habitat for the nationally rare black grouse. Smaller birds such as the crossbill, coal tit and siskin are commonly spotted in the mature forests as are red squirrel. The Forestry Commission Scotland in partnership with the Red Squirrels in South Scotland Project is actively managing Ae Forest to maintain Douglas fir, larch and pine trees of cone bearing age. This management hopes to ensure a consistent source of food for the red squirrels for the foreseeable future.

As you pass Hound Rigg on your right look out for Blue Cairn. It is said that William Wallace saw the English approach from his encampment on Queensberry Hill. As he hastened to attack, they met at this spot. A bloody battle ensued in which the English were beaten.

The views along the Ae Forest Route are forever changing. As you start to climb uphill away from Ae look south to the Solway Firth and Criffel. On a clear day you can see as far as the Lake District hills. As you travel further north Queensberry and Wee Queensberry come into view and dominate the skyline. Further north still to Earshaig, the Southern Upland and Moffat Hills form a backdrop to the narrow Crooked Road winding its way down to Beattock.



Black Grouse



The forests at Ae are managed for timber production, recreation and conservation. The most commonly planted species is sitka spruce, a conifer that was introduced to Britain in 1831 from North America. Although conifer plantations are not known for their species diversity, some common and rare species thrive in this environment. Birds of prey such as short-eared owl, buzzard and goshawk regularly nest and hunt in the

Accommodation

The following establishments offer accommodation for horse and rider on or near the trails, with parking, secure tack storage and drying facilities. An evening meal or transport to/from a local pub offering food may also be provided, together with packed lunches on request.

Roger Grant, Burrance of Courance, Lockerbie, DG11 1TT. Tel:01387 860434 burrance@aol.com
D, B&B, stabling/grazing by arrangement

The Barony College, Parkgate, Dumfries, DG1 3NE. Tel:01387 860251
www.barony.ac.uk or e-mail: admin@barony.ac.uk

Martin and Mary Brown, Lochhouse Farm Retreat Centre, Beattock, Moffat, DG10 9SG. Tel: 01683 300451 Mob: 07798 800934 www.lochhousefarm.com or e-mail: browns@lochhousefarm.co.uk
Farmhouse B&B and basic evening meal on the route at Beattock. Sleeps up to 6 with grazing available for horses.

Follow in the footsteps of those who have gone before!

As you pass through Ae Forest remember that this is a working environment. Respect warning signs and keep clear of any operations and machinery. Remember to follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code:

- Respect the privacy, safety and livelihoods of those living or working in the countryside, and the needs of other people enjoying the outdoors.
- Look after the places and routes you visit and enjoy: take only memories, leave only footprints.
- Accept responsibility for your own actions.

For more information visit - www.outdooraccess-scotland.com

For further information about the Ae Forest Route please contact:

Forestry Commission Scotland
Ae Forest District, Ae Village, Dumfries, DG1 1QB.
Tel: 01387 860 247

Work to develop the Ae Forest Route has been undertaken by South of Scotland Countryside Trails. Under the umbrella of Southern Uplands Partnership, this innovative project has developed a network of over 350km of quiet off-road paths enabling walkers, cyclists and horse-riders to enjoy southern Scotland's rich heritage of ancient routes.

www.southofscotlandcountrysidetrails.co.uk



South of Scotland
Countryside Trails

**Ae Forest
Route**

