

A Walk with Robert Louis Stevenson



The RLS Poetry Trail in Colinton

The poet and writer Robert Louis Stevenson was born on November 13th 1850. He is often referred to as RLS.

In his book of poems 'A Child's Garden of Verses' he remembers the summers he spent in the village of Colinton when he stayed with his grandfather, The Rev Lewis Balfour who was the minister of Colinton Parish Church (1824 -1860).

The Poetry Trail starts at the Long Steps on Bridge Road which lead down to Colinton Parish Church, Dell Road and finally the Swing Café within the church.

Working in teams of 3/4/5 (1 reader, 1 writer, and history hunters) take the Poetry Trail down the Long Steps to Colinton Parish Church to discover what life was like in Colinton, when RLS was a boy.

Look for evidence of how people lived in the 19th century, what the village looked like then, what industry there was in those days, how the mills worked (with no electricity), what jobs people had in those days AND what it felt like to visit Colinton as a boy on holiday from the city in the 19th century.

A Note to the Teacher

How you organise your children to 'Walk with Robert Louis Stevenson' will depend on the size of your group and the adult helpers who accompany you.

As the Long Steps - where the poetry trail starts - are relatively narrow and steep, it would be advisable with a large group, to divide the class into teams of three/four/five, who have their own map and specific clues to look for, discuss, and then answer on their work card/sheet.

At the end of the trail all the teams can meet in the Swing Café (open between 10am and 2pm Mondays - Fridays) to report their findings to everyone else and complete the picture of Robert Louis Stevenson's childhood in Colinton.

The Map and CLUES are designed for downloading and copying for each team or a whole class.

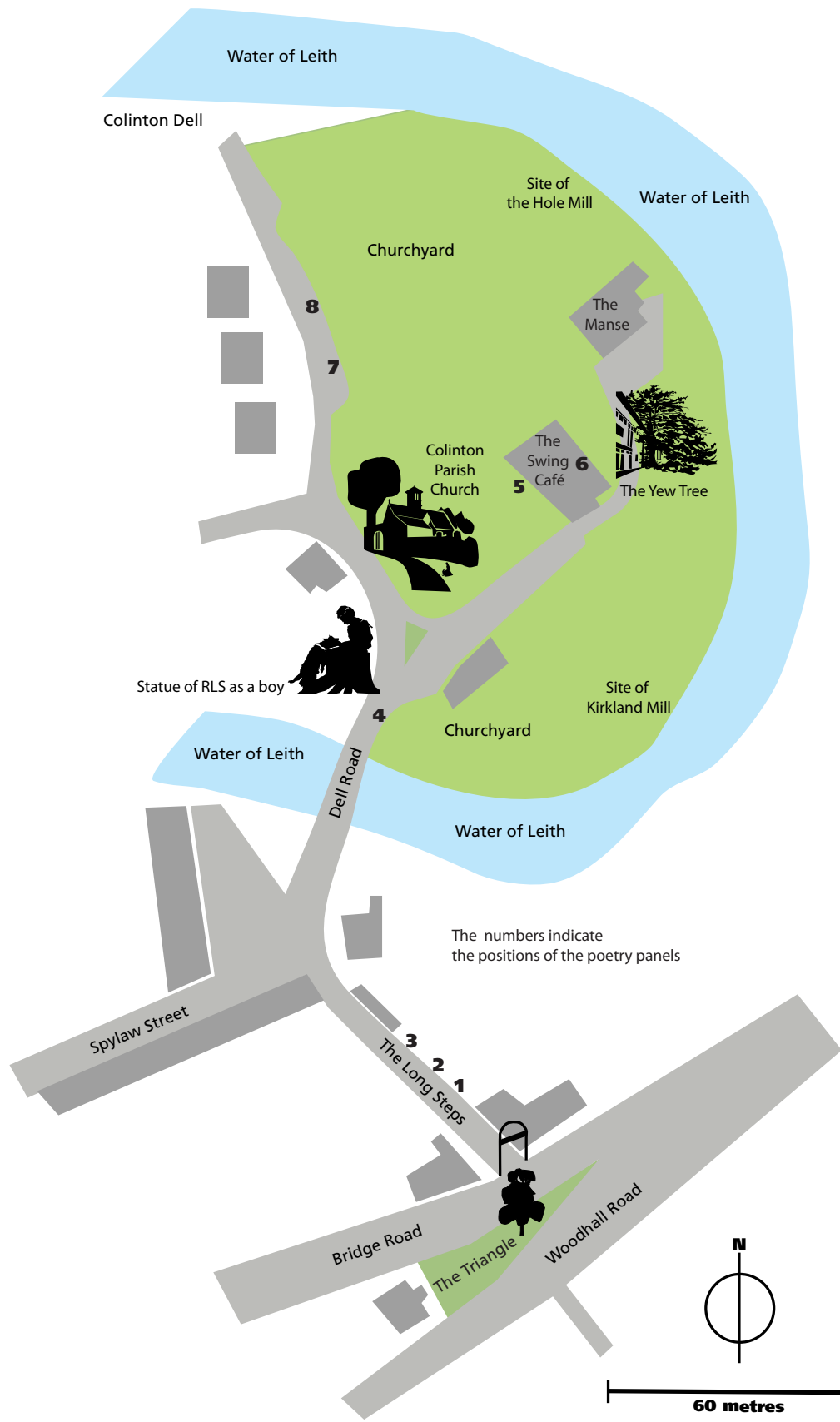
TO ARRANGE YOUR VISIT please contact Gayle Taylor (Associate Minister for Children and Youth) either on gayle.taylor@colinton-parish.com or at the Colinton Parish Church Office: tel. 0131 441 2232 (between 10am and 4pm.)

Planning the visit with Gayle will enable you to discuss the practicalities of space for snacks and your final reporting session, toilets and wet weather options. Gayle is happy to include a look inside the church to give a context to RLS's experience of coming to church when visiting his Grandfather who was once Colinton's minister.

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CLUE 1

The Long Steps (from Bridge Road)

Look at the Introductory panel on the left hand side.

1. How long has this been the route from the village to Colinton Parish Church ?

2. Who arranged for these steps to be built? Was he wealthy or poor? How do you know?

3. Can you imagine what these steps looked like and were made of when RLS was a boy?

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CLUE 2

Find the poetry plaque about the Sun and the Moon (no 1 on map)

4. Read the poem: Summer Sun

Name the places around the house where the poet RLS remembers the sun shining.

5. Read the poem: The Moon

What animals does the moon shine upon, in this poem ?

6. Where do you think RLS would have been watching the moon when he was a boy?

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CLUE 3

Find the poetry plaque which mentions 'Gardener's Garters' and a 'Shepherd's Purse'. (no 2 on map)

7. What are these names for? The answer is in the title of the poem.

8. Can you name three other flowers RLS recalls in this poem?

9. Pick your favourite illustration on the panel and draw it below. What is it called? Write the name alongside your drawing.

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CLUE 4

Find the poetry plaque about the gardener. (no 3 on map)

10. What does RLS think the gardener should do instead of working hard each day in the garden?

11. In a large 19th century family household all kinds of workers were employed as servants.

Can you name some of the jobs they were hired to do? (look in the poem). Who would look after the children in the Manse?

12. RLS dedicated his book of poems "The Child's Garden of Verses" to Alison Cunningham, whom he called "Cummie" when he was a boy. Who do you think she was and what job do you think she did in his household?

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CLUE 5

Find the river and the poetry plaque above it. (no 4 on map)

13. What name does RLS give this river?

14. Do you know the real name of the river below? Perhaps another panel will tell you.

15. This plaque has four illustrations of creatures. Can you name them? Two of them are mentioned in the poem. Can you recognise the others?

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CLUE 6

Find the statue of Robert Louis Stevenson as a boy.

16. Why did RLS keep two books in his pocket? (look at the inscription)

17. On the information panel behind the statue you can read about The Manse where RLS stayed for his summer holidays. What is a Manse?

18. Do you know the name of RLS's grandfather who was the minister in Colinton for four decades? You can find his name in the graveyard. Follow the trail in CLUE 8.

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CLUE 7

Find Dell Road beyond the church and the last 2 poetry plaques on the wall. These tell you of the pleasure RLS must have had as a boy in Colinton Dell playing in the woods and along the river banks. (nos 7 and 8 on the map)

19. Nest Eggs. In this poem RLS remembers 'bird nesting' when he was a boy. How many eggs are in the nest and what colour are they ?

20. The main source of energy then was water. The river flowing from Balerno to Leith had eighty large mills on its banks with huge mill wheels turned by the water, to move the machinery. What's the name of the poem in which RLS remembers the excitement and the noise of these mills in motion?

21. Why do you think he gives it this title?

22. What were the actual names of the local mills in those times? (Look on the last panel of this wall)

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CLUE 8

Go through the church gate in Dell Road to find the Glebe graveyard. (*'Glebe' is the old Scottish word for the field next to the Manse or church where the minister kept his cow for milk, hens for eggs, and maybe a sheep.*)

Find the Balfour Family memorial grave.

Directions: Walk down the path past the flat tombstone on your left. Go past the small stone house dedicated to James Gillespie of Spylaw. Look up to see why he had such a large memorial.

Next to his memorial look to your left at the wall tucked away behind. Read the inscription in memory of the Reverend Lewis Balfour for your answers.

This is where RLS' grandfather the Reverend Lewis Balfour was buried and other members of the Balfour family.



23 i) When was his grandfather born?

23 ii) When did he die? What age was he?

23 iii) What age was RLS when his grandfather died?

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CLUE 9

Look at other gravestones in Colinton Parish Church grounds.
Walk around the church to read the inscriptions on other graves.
Remember RLS came as a boy to Colinton between 1850 and 1870.

24 i) Can you find someone else RLS would have known in his childhood?

Find the grave of John Tod of Swanston.
Follow the path to the glass door of the church hall. Look up to
your right to the gravestones of Swanston villagers.
Look at the gravestone (flat on the grass) commemorating John
Tod of Swanston.

24 ii) What was his job?

24 iii) When was he born and when did he die?

24 iv) What was his wife's name?

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CLUE 10 (for everyone)

Make your way to the Swing Café.

**25. Why is the church café called The Swing?
(You can find some words on the glass window, at the entrance to help you).**

Inside the café, cross to the window overlooking the manse garden. Look at the poetry panel to your left to find out about the Yew tree you see. Perhaps you will see the inspiration for the poem hanging on the Yew tree.

Read the poem aloud and see if you can make the words 'swing' high and low, just like RLS did so long ago.

Finally enjoy a drink and a snack there as you share all the evidence you have gathered on the RLS Poetry Trail.

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ANSWERS

CLUE 1

1. Ancient times - can you find out what that means?
2. Robert Andrew McFie, who was the wealthy landowner of Dreghorn Castle Estate.
3. Boulders, grass, wooden poles, or wooden treads.

CLUE 2

1. Shady parlour, dusty attic, hayloft and the garden.
2. Birdies squalling, squeaking mouse, howling dog, a bat.
3. From his bedroom window perhaps?

CLUE 3

1. The Flowers
2. Bachelor's buttons, lady's smock, Lady hollyhock.
3. Note: the illustrations from left to right correspond with the order of the named flowers in the poem.

CLUE 4

1. The gardener should play at Indian wars in the garden.
2. Gardener, cook. A nurse or nanny was employed to look after the children.
3. 'Cummie' was RLS's beloved nurse or nanny.

CLUE 5

1. Looking-glass river. Why was it thus called? Because both the river and looking glass show reflections.
2. The Water of Leith. It flows from the Pentland Hills all the way through Edinburgh to Leith.
3. Dipper, Marten, Trout, Otter and Heron.

CLUE 6

1. One to read and one to write in.
2. The house where the minister lived with his family.
3. The Reverend Lewis Balfour.

CLUE 7

1. 4 eggs coloured blue.
2. Keepsake Mill.
3. A memory of the mills which he will always keep in his mind's eye.
4. Hole Mill, Kirkland Mill.

CLUE 8

(23)

- i) 30th April 1777 at Pilrig House.
- ii) 24th April 1860 aged 83.
- iii) Aged 10.

CLUE 9

(24).

- i) Andrew Scott Paper maker.
- ii) Shepherd. Swanston.
- iii) 1809 - 1881
- iv) Ann Somerville.

CLUE 10

(25)

The café is named after the poem "The Swing".