

Kiltearn Footpath Network



Balconie Castle

The footpaths here at Kiltearn and Balconie have been used by local people and visitors since medieval times.

As far back as the 13th century a church stood on the site of the present ruins of the Kiltearn Old Kirk behind you.

These paths cross the lands of the former Balconie Estate, one of the oldest in Easter Ross, dating back to the 1200s. The original lands were one of the Seats of the Earl of Ross, one of the most powerful Houses in Scotland.

“Balkeny” is clearly marked on a map from around 1630. The last Balconie Castle, shown on the adjacent map, was demolished in the 1960s but the former stables, walled garden and gardener’s cottage which you pass on the River Path, still remain.

The **Glebe Path** goes around the edge of the field (glebe) on the left, to the footbridge over the River Sgitheach. A glebe is a piece of land within a parish used to provide income to support the local priest. This path runs along the top of the old sea-wall, built to protect the glebe from incoming tides.

The **River Path** turns left after the footbridge alongside the river, continuing up to the village passing the former stables and walled garden of the now demolished Balconie Castle.

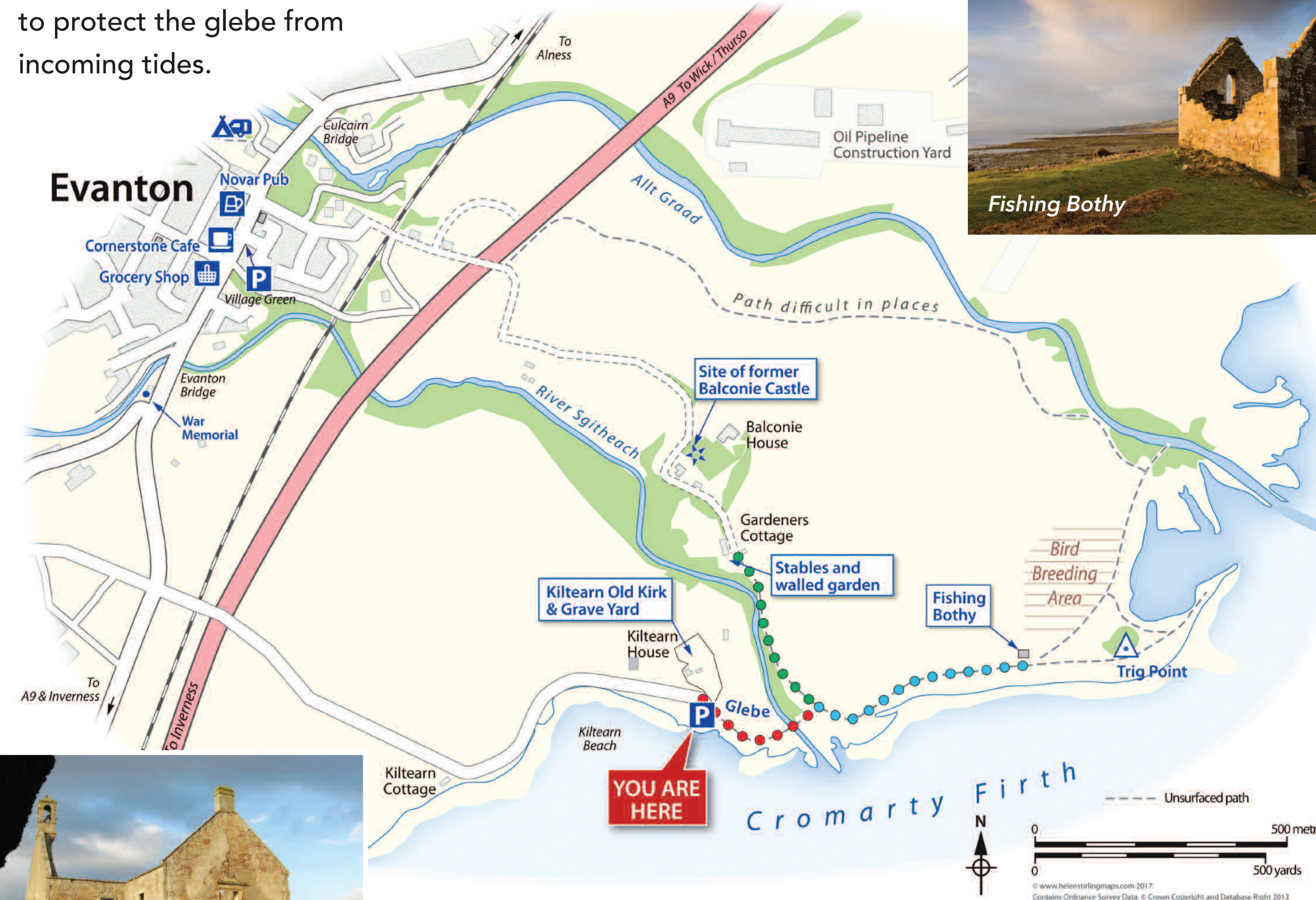
The **Shore Path** goes from the footbridge along the shore of the Firth and along a sea defence bank to the ruins of a stone bothy (origins unknown). Whilst marked as a fishing bothy, it is also possibly related to the ancient Castle Craig, a former seat of the Bishops of Ross, on the opposite shore of the Firth.

Continuing on the unsurfaced path (shown grey) leads to a small stand of Scots Pine. In front of these is a small stone triangular trig point, once used for map surveys. The path circles these trees and returns to the car park.

Taking the left fork just beyond the bothy the unsurfaced path runs past tidal mudflats on the right towards the River Allt Graad. Turning left before the ford the route leads up to the village. This path can be rough and muddy in places. It crosses the site of an old military airfield dating back to 1922 and across the river a number of wartime remains can still be found.



Castle Craig



Kiltearn Old Kirk

In 2017, the Evanton Community Trust carried out a project to improve and upgrade sections of these paths, which are marked in colour on the map.

Remember... please treat the countryside with respect. Please don't drop litter, but take your rubbish home for disposal. Thank you.

Here is a description of Balconie in 1762, from the Journals of Right Rev. Robert Forbes, M.A. July 26th 1762:

“We arrived at Balcony half an hour after 6 o'clock, upon which place Nature has luxuriantly shed her Beauties. It is sited on the Verge of a rising Ground, with a Den on the North side, and washed on the West by the Water of Skiag, with a delightful vista of Cromarty-Bay. Near to Balcony is Plenty of Lobsters and Crab-fish. Down from the Castle to the Bay, and then along the side of it at Ebb, you have a charming Walk upon the green Grass of a long mile at least. There is a good Orchard here, and never did I see Trees more loaded with Pears and Apples than in it.”

The Trust would like to thank the Postcode Lottery Trust, the Highland Council and Kiltearn Community Council for financial support.

