The story of Bruce and the spider was created by Sir Walter Scott and based on the fact that Bruce was a fugitive from 1306 to 1307. The cave here has a popular local association with the story, and is carved out of a red sandstone cliff, about 30 feet above the Kirtle Water. Until 1927 it could only be reached by a rope from the overlap, but the council built the present path so that the cave could be visited safely.

Hightae

The area around Hightae was granted to the Brus family in 1124, and it is one of the Royal Four Towns of Lochmaben - Greenhill, Heck, Hightae and Smallmolph - founded by Bruce to provide garrison and food supplies for Lochmaben Castle. The rights granted to the tenants passed down through a small group of families to the present time, producing a proud community with a unique history.

Lochmaben

In medieval times, forest and marsh forced travellers from England up through Annandale towards Lochmaben, and it was a key point of conflict between England and Scotland. The Brucebuilt a motte and bailey castle which survives today as part of the golf course. The last castle built at Loch Castle was begun by Edward I of England c. 1300.

Encaust

In February 1306, Bruce rode north to Glasgow, having killed John Comyn at Gretnafriars Monastery Dumfries. His party halted here at the Devil's Beattub, where the Annan rises, and was met by a small riding party led by the young James Douglas, carrying a message of surrender from the Bishop of St. Andrews. Douglas pledged his loyalty to the would-be king, a promise he kept all his life.

Wallnocland

This village is the highest in Scotland, and its mines produced lead for making weapons. Gold and silver were mined for minting coins and for making the Scottish crown and regalia. Other local resources were King Robert's palfreys: small, agile ponies ideal for battle in the Scottish landscape. Today, the Museum of Scottish Lead mining here is a major visitor attraction.

Sanquhar Castle

Sanquhar Castle was captured by William Wallace during his uprising of 1297. The Castle had links with Robert the Bruce but most of what survives is from the 1400s. The Castle ruins are privately-owned and not open to the public, but may be viewed from the Southern Upland Way, which passes them.

Tibbers Castle

Only earthworks and some stone walls remain of Tibbers Castle. Early in 1306, Tibbers was garrisoned by English troops, but captured by the Scots soon after John Comyn's death at the hands of Robert Bruce. Today the site is owned by the Duke of Buccleuch.

Dalswinton

On 10 February 1306 John Comyn set out from Dalswinton Castle to meet Robert Bruce at Gretnafriars Monastery, Dumfries. A few hours later, Comyn lay dead and Bruce seized Dumfries Castle. The present Dalswinton House stands on the site of Comyn's medieval castle. It is a private home, not open to the public.
Today’s High Street would have bustled with travellers and tradesmen in Medieval times. As the town grew, a market developed in what is known as Queenberry Square.

Where next? Walk down High Street and turn left on to English Street. St. Mary’s Church is on your left at the junction with Annan Road. The site of the present church was originally Hagnans’ Hill where King Robert the Bruce’s brother-in-law, Sir Christopher Seton, was hanged in 1307 by the English. His widow, Christiana, later erected the Chapel of the Holy Rood in his memory. All that remains is the small stone pillar in front of the church (left).

Where next? Walk down English Street, right into High Street, then left into Bank Street. Bank Street was known as the ‘Stinking Vennel’, as in Medieval times a stream of waste material would drain down here into the river. At Whitesands cross Devorgilla’s Bridge, turning left on to Mill Rd. In around 1280, Lady Devorgilla of Galloway commissioned the original timber bridge in Dumfries. The stone bridge you see today was built to its foundations in the 15th century and is the oldest multi-spanned bridge in Scotland (right). Devorgilla married John Balliol of Barnard Castle, and their son John became King of Scots in 1292, after Balliol’s abdication ten years before. He stormed Dumfries Castle where the unsuspecting English justices were holding their session. They quickly surrendered and Bruce displayed Scotland’s Royal Standard for the first time since John Balliol’s abdication ten years before.

Take time to explore this lovely green space. There is the castle site itself, picnic areas, a children’s playground and quarry gardens, where there remains are the castle where Robert Bruce raised the Royal Standard.

Where next? Turn right out of the museum on to Troqueer Road. Turn left on to Pilgrim’s Way and cross the suspension bridge. Turn right and walk the riverside cycle track until you reach Castledykes park.

After Comyn’s murder in 1306, Bruce gathered his men to race the mile or so here. He stormed Dumfries Castle where the unsuspecting English justices were holding their session. They quickly surrendered and Bruce displayed Scotland’s Royal Standard for the first time since John Balliol’s abdication ten years before.

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