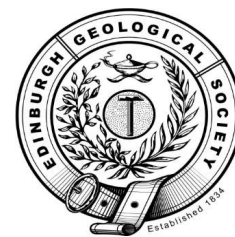


Edinburgh Geological Society – Excursions 2026



Excursion title:	Spireslack
Date & start time:	Saturday 11 th July 2026 Coach departs Waterloo Place 09:00 Excursion starts at Spireslack 10:30
Finish time:	16:30
Leader(s), organisation:	Drs. Graham Leslie, Mike Browne

Excursion summary:	<p>Spireslack is an abandoned surface coalmine (SCM) at Glenbuck, East Ayrshire, an area with a long history of mining beginning with bell pits sunk for ironstone in the late 18th century. Underground coal extraction in the late 19th/early 20th century, accessed via the Grasshill Pit, was followed by the later surface operations. Underground mining ceased in 1931, presaging the final decline of Glenbuck village – of which there is little trace today. Surface mining began around 2000 and ended in 2008 with the terminal decline of the Scottish coal industry.</p> <p>Spireslack SCM preserves marvellous exposures of coal-bearing Carboniferous strata of Visean to Namurian age. The entirety of the Limestone Coal Formation is now exposed in a one kilometre long, over 130 m thick section within the high wall of the Main Void at Spireslack, whilst most of the Lawmuir, Lower Limestone and Upper Limestone formations are exposed throughout the remainder of the SCM. Natural, clean and continuous exposures of these economically important strata are rare, and therefore the exposures at Spireslack give an opportunity to better understand the geology and structural evolution of this part of the Carboniferous within central Scotland, and to study key features in multi-scalar 3-dimensional detail.</p>
Meeting point:	Glenbuck Heritage Village Car Park [NS 27460 63050], via access from the A70 trunk road, immediately west of Glenbuck Loch at [27530 62880].
Transport details:	Travel by (shared) cars, or if numbers sufficient by coach. (Please tick coach option if required)
Extra pick-up points for coach:	GLASGOW ROAD (A8) (please inform excursion secretary if required.)
Outline of the excursion route:	From the Glenbuck Heritage Village, the party will walk up to the Spireslack SCM Main Void on a graded track (c. 1km, 80 m ascent) then spend the day exploring the main void, and return to the vehicle(s).
Terrain, walking distance, height gain:	From the Glenbuck Heritage Village, the party will walk up to the Spireslack SCM Main Void on a graded track (c. 1km, 80 m ascent) then spend the day exploring the main void, and return to the vehicle(s). In the void area, there are areas of uneven ground underfoot but these can be easily avoided – c. 1km walking distance around void floor, minimal (c. 30 m) ascent/descent
Excursion Grade	<p>B - Moderate field trips all participants should have good balance and be used to walking up to 3 miles (4.8 km), sometimes on uneven ground (such as rocky shores).</p> <p>Note these grades are not an extensive list of difficulty so please read the full excursion form or inform the excursion secretary if you have any questions or concerns.</p>

Additional Hazards not included in the <i>EGS Excursion Handbook</i>:	Nothing additional, but note that no close approach (<10 m) to the base of the high wall section should be attempted, except under the closest supervision and examination of the local conditions of the rock face on the day. Hard hats should be worn at all times whilst in the void area. Careful of trip hazards, spills or wet steps. Take care not to fall down the steps.
Control measures required to mitigate against any Hazards referred to above:	Hard hats are required. Hard hats should be worn at all times whilst in the void area.
Hard hats or Hi-viz clothing needed?	The party should stay together but Hi-viz clothing is recommended. Hard hats should be available where needed on approach to high outcrop.
May dogs be brought on the excursion?	Yes, dog must be kept on lead.
Toilet information:	None available on site, and nearest public conveniences likely to be Cumnock!
Geological map sheet:	Sheet 23W Hamilton OS Sheet 71
References:	A general knowledge of the stratigraphical succession will be useful (see published maps listed above) or e.g., <i>Geology of Scotland</i> (5th Ed.). 2024. See also Ellen, R., Browne, M.A.E., Mitten, A.J., Clarke, S.M., Leslie, A.G. and Callaghan, E. (2019). <i>Sedimentology, architecture and depositional setting of the fluvial Spireslack Sandstone of the Midland Valley, Scotland: insights from the Spireslack surface coal mine</i> . Geological Society, London, Special Publications, 488, 181–204. I will also supply a printable guide in. pdf format for participants.

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Excursion grade key

A grade field trips participants should be able to walk 1 mile (1.6 km), on good coastal paths and beaches of sand and pebbles.

B grade field trips all participants should have good balance and be fit enough to walk up to 3 miles (4.8 km), sometimes on uneven ground (such as rocky shores).

C grade field trips all participants should have very good balance & be fit enough to walk up to 4 miles (6.5 km), sometimes on more uneven ground than for B grade (such as rocky shores with small boulders), on steeper slopes, & for light scrambles.