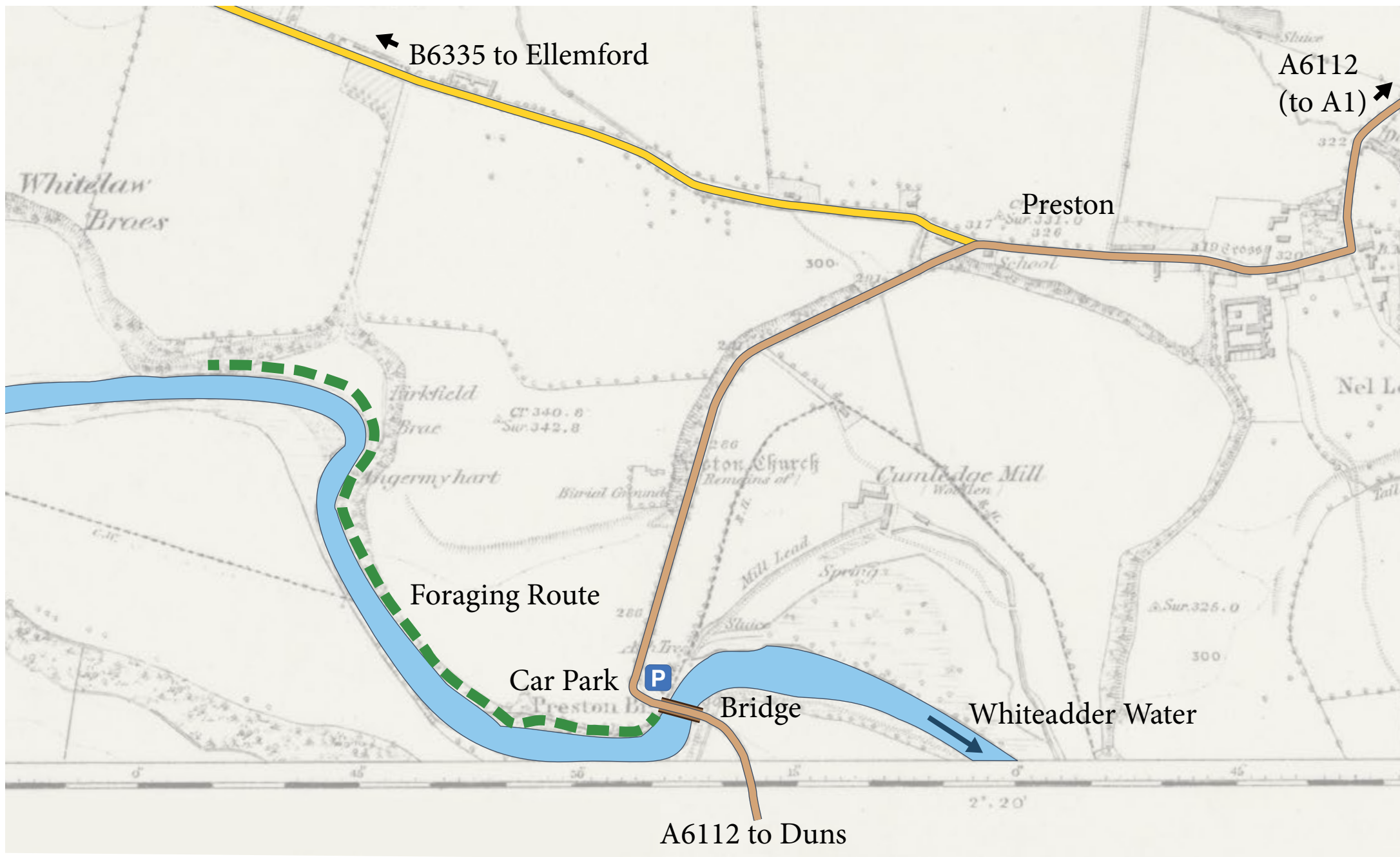




Spring Foraging Walk
Along a section of the Whiteadder River



0 100m



Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*)

Scots - milk gowan, Deil's milk pail.

An early spring flowering perennial herb, with great medicinal value recorded over centuries.

All parts of the plant are valuable and edible. The young leaves are a good addition to salads, they are pungent though, so need to be tempered with less bitter leaves and a good dressing. Tea can be made from the flowers, or leaves, and the roasted roots are often used as a coffee substitute.

Medicinally, a decoction of the roots was taken for stomach and liver disorders and a fusion of the flowers used to be drunk for colds. It's milky sap was applied to warts (hence it's Scots name the deil's milk pail perhaps) and it is a well known diuretic.



Nettle (*Urtica dioica*)

Scots - Heg beg or Jag.

An interesting and ubiquitous perennial herb which was actually semi cultivated throughout the Highlands and Islands of Scotland for centuries for food, medicine and indeed cloth. The edible young leaves are like a 'spring kale' for use as a pot herb in broths and porridge. Saint Columba's Broth is a nettle soup which was traditionally eaten for a set number of days in Spring. Nettle ale and tea were also readily consumed.

Medicinally, nettle alleviates rheumatism and nettle ale is said to help jaundice. It is an excellent spring tonic full of vitamins and minerals. I make it myself with a sauteed onion, a vegetable stock cube and finely chopped young nettles, water, salt and pepper.

The stalks of the old nettles were equal to flax and nettle linen was reputed to be very long lasting. The leaves create a green dye and the roots a yellow one.

Spring Green Chips!

A recipe from The Guardian "Nettle and Dandelion Chips"

"Drizzle your leafy greens with a little olive oil, and a pinch of salt and toss to coat. Spread out on an oven tray and bake at 150 degrees C / Gas Mark 2 for 15 - 25 minutes or until they dry out and go crisp. The crisping time will depend on the thickness of the leaves and the proximity to the edge of the tray. Remove those which dry out first onto a kitchen towel, cool and consume within a day."



GROUND ELDER (APRIL)

(*Aegopodium podagraria*)

Ground elder (*Aegopodium podagraria*)

Also known as Goutwort, is a perennial herb and ground cover which is commonly seen as a garden pest. It is likely to have been introduced by the Romans and is another good spring tonic full of vitamins and minerals so much needed after a long Scottish winter. The leaves are edible raw in salads, cooked in soups and in butter as spinach. They have a nutty flavour.

As its common name suggests it was used as a poultice to reduce the swelling of gout in olden times, and in modern, it is used in the same way for wounds and joint pain. The leaves can be taken as an infusion for rheumatism and inflammation of the joints. In Anglo Saxon times, ground elder was used to clarify beer.

Ground elder and tempeh recipe

There is an excellent recipe for ground elder and tempeh which you can find on the 'eatweeds' website at:

<https://www.eatweeds.co.uk/ground-elder-tempeh-recipe>

Tempeh or tempe is a traditional Indonesian soy product, that is made from fermented soybeans. It is made by a natural culturing and controlled fermentation process that binds soybeans into a cake form.



Wood Sorrel
(*Oxalis acetosella*)

Wood sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*)

Scots - sourock, gowk's (fools) clover.

Wood sorrel is another perennial ground covering and delicate herb which, due to its' high oxalic acid content, should be used sparingly. It can be eaten in salads and brewed as tea for its' very very tangy flavour so well deserved by the name 'sourock', but oh so high in vitamins (especially C) and minerals.

Medicinally it was used in Medieval times to treat scurvy and fevers. Now it is consumed as a spring tonic, the tea is used to treat heavy menstrual cycles and topically, on the skin, it soothes arthritis and rheumatism.

Sorrel and mint tea recipe

To brew some sorrel and mint tea, place a double handful of sorrel leaves and a teaspoon of dried mint leaves in a tea pot. Cover with boiling water and let it steep for ten minutes. Drink hot or cold. This tea contains vitamins which will combat intestinal worms, kidney stones and hepatitis. Besides that it's very good, especially if sweetened with one teaspoon of honey to each cup of tea.



Lady's Smock
Cuckoo Flower
(*Cardamine pratensis*)

Cuckoo flower (*Cardamine pratensis*)

Also known as Lady's Smock this perennial found near streams and in fields, the leaves and young shoots of which taste a bit like watercress and make a sharp addition to any salad, rich in vitamins and minerals. The flowers are edible and can be used to decorate salads.

The Cuckoo flower is so named as they are said to appear when the first cuckoo is heard in spring.

Cuckoo flower salad dressing

Put the following in a food processor and whiz together, or into a jar and shake hard:

- 6 tbsp sunflower oil or rapeseed oil
- 1 tbsp Dijon or coarse-grain mustard
- 1 tbsp honey (nearby 'Chain Bridge' honey is excellent)
- 1 clove garlic, peeled and crushed
- 1 tsp balsamic vinegar and 2 tbsp cider vinegar
- a pinch of coarse salt and a grind of black pepper



Wild Garlic (*Allium ursinum*)

Also known as Ramsons, this is the most distinctive native garlic and is a perennial ground level herb with broad leaves, also bulbous - but take care if digging up bulbs as the reproduction rate of this delicious herb will fall. I prefer the leaves anyway which are delicious, in salads, as a pot herb, made into pesto and garlic butter. The seeds after flowering can be stored in oil or brine to substitute capers. One Easter my brother and his family came on a picnic to Duns, and he wrapped boiled eggs in wild garlic leaves, plucked from where we sat by the Whiteadder.

In olden days, medicinal and culinary uses were generally combined and this plant has been used throughout history as an early spring tonic to clean the blood, boost the immune system and to boost our internal organs after a sluggish winter. It is a real all rounder!

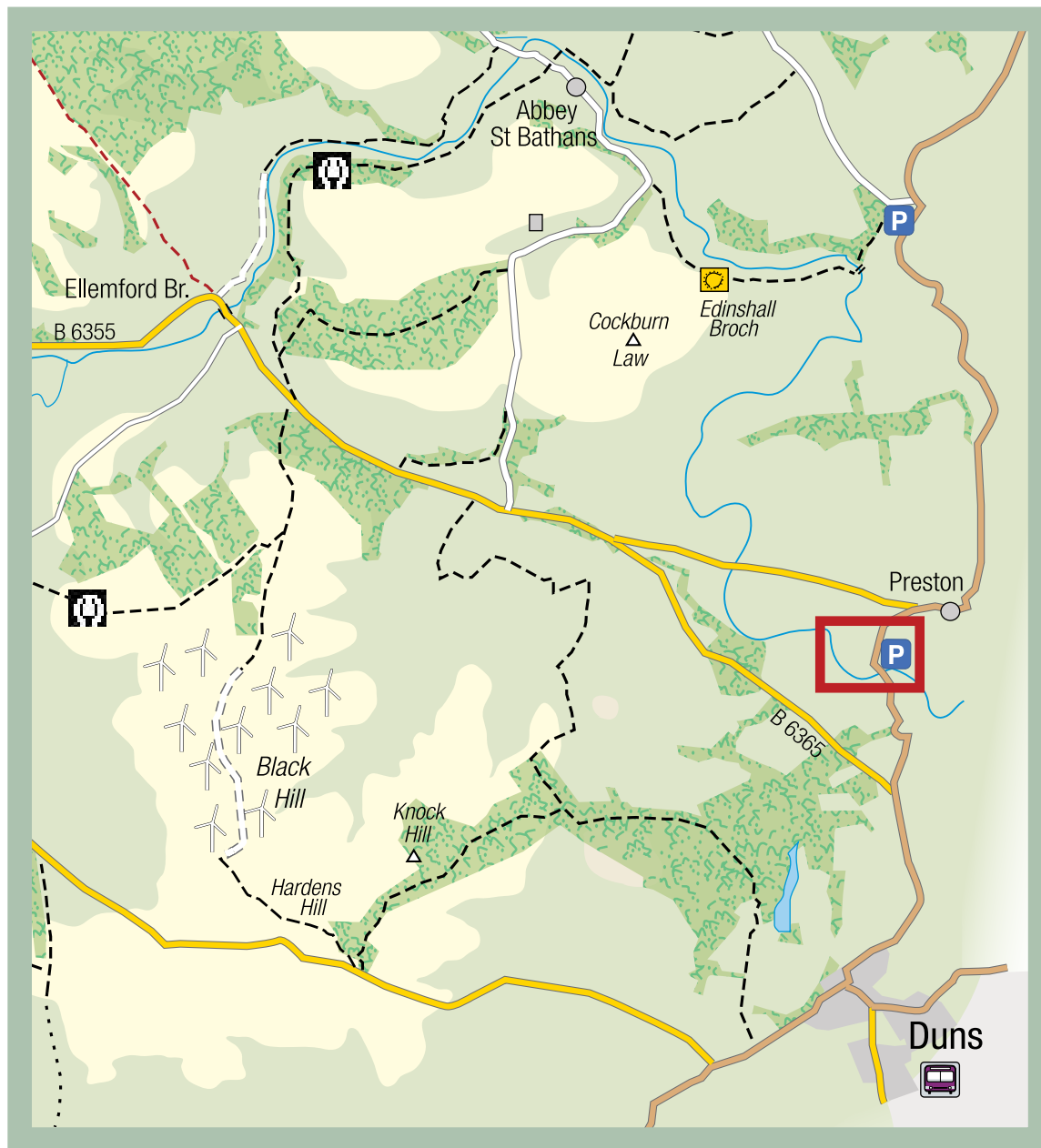
The leaves are best harvested before flowering, in April and May.



Three cornered leek (*Allium triquetrum*)

This is a little bulb of the onion family, introduced from the Mediterranean in 1759, now well established in the wild, in damp and shady areas. It has thin strap like leaves and a triangular (as opposed to round) flower stem. The three cornered leek reappears in winter when everything else is dormant so it is one of the first to be foraged for in spring. After May it disappears. It is used in salads and soups for its' lovely pungent garlic flavour. After it has flowered, the seeds can be preserved in brine, fermented or stored in oil and used as capers. It is classed (see Schedule 9 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act) as an invasive, non native species and it is an offence to plant it, so good to forage!

Medicinally, the essential oils from the Allium family are widely used for their antibacterial, antimicrobial, anti- fungal, antiviral and antiseptic qualities. If the leaves and bulbs are used regularly in one's diet, this garlic (and others) reduces blood cholesterol levels, is a great tonic and boost for the digestive system and it purifies the blood. Again, such a blessing after a long Scottish winter. I am using it liberally these days, especially as social distancing precludes any embarrassment about garlic breath!



Remember to forage responsibly

Always be sure you can positively identify any plant before you pick it and never eat any plant you are unsure of. When foraging, ensure that you leave plenty for wildlife and only take enough for personal use so that others can forage too. Enjoy Spring by the Whiteadder!

References:

Scottish Plant Lore by Gregory J. Kenicer published by The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh 2018

www.natural-healy-guide.com

www.permaculture.co.uk

www.eatweeds.co.uk

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