

# The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

## Stonehaven-Cowie Chapel Ramble (Aberdeenshire)

### Route Summary

The perfect walk to stimulate the senses and blow away the cobwebs, combining a sweeping bay, one of the most picturesque harbours in Scotland, and a breath-taking cliff-top path, with the historical curiosities associated with the Auld Toon of Stonehaven and Cowie Village.

Duration: 2.5 hours.



### Route Overview

**Duration:** 2.5 hours.

**Transport/Parking:** Bus and rail services to Stonehaven. Parking at the harbour in Stonehaven, or on-street nearby.

**Length:** 8.180 km / 5.11 mi

**Height Gain:** 172 meter **Height Loss:** 172 meter

**Max Height:** 46 meter **Min Height:** 1 meter

**Surface:** Moderate. Mostly smooth paths or paved surfaces. Section at Cowie cliffs before Waypoint 2 may be muddy. Not suitable for off-road mobility scooters due to steep and narrow paths.

**Child Friendly:** Yes, if children are used to walks of this distance and overall ascent.

**Difficulty:** Medium.

**Dog Friendly:** Yes. On lead in built-up areas and public roads.

**Refreshments:** A number of options at Stonehaven harbour and elsewhere in the town.



### Description

This is a very varied walk around and about the coastal town of Stonehaven, sampling its distinctive character and charm. Nestling around a large crescent-shaped bay, the town sits in a sheltered amphitheatre with the quirky Auld Toon close by the impressive and picturesque harbour. A breakwater was first built here in the 16thC and the harbour-side Tolbooth, now a museum, was converted from an earlier grain store in about 1600. The old town lying behind it is full of character and interest. The Ship Inn was built in 1771, predating the unusually-towered Town House which was built in 1790. The walk sets out along the wide bay, passing the once separate fishing village of Cowie.



Until the 16thC, Cowie was the more important of the two settlements. Leaving the shore-side, the route then ascends on a narrow path to the cliff-tops where there are marvellous views back to the bay and town, with the craggy ruins of Dunnottar Castle just visible. Blink and you miss it - only a small section of the masonry of Cowie Castle survives today as you pass it on the coastal path. Cowie Castle is thought to have been the site of a royal hunting lodge and staging post for itinerant Royals in the Middle Ages. Soon you arrive at the evocative ruins of a 13thC chapel, dedicated to St Mary, and known locally as St Mary of the Storms. The fascinating circular churchyard traditionally marks the site where a chapel was established by the Scottish saint Nachlan, in the 7th century. Returning to the town, the route enters the expansive green space of Mineralwell Park with its pleasant riverside walk, railway viaduct, and old fountain. Nearer to the town centre, a visit is included to the intriguing Robert Burns Memorial Garden on the way to the historic market square, before finally ascending Bervie Braes for a memorable view of the harbour, old town, and bay.

## Waypoints

### (1) Start walk at harbour car-park

(56.96124; -2.20201)

Start the walk at the harbour car-park behind the Tolbooth Museum, walking in a northerly direction along the boardwalk, with Stonehaven Bay on your right side. In the first section look out for the unusual metal sculptures on the sea side and a metal dolphin sculpture on the town side. Continue walking all along the bay-side, progressing to a promenade before eventually passing the Cowie area, once a separate village. At the end of the bay, take a narrow path around the cliffs and follow this path in a northerly direction as it rises to the clifftops. About 200 m from Cowie Chapel as you approach it along the clifftop path, watch out for the barely visible remains of a wall from Cowie Castle\*, on your right, almost completely covered in grass and turf.



*\*Note: Cowie Castle is thought to have been the site of a royal hunting lodge in the Middle Ages, and may have served as a royal lodging during progresses through the north east of Scotland. Only a small section of masonry survives today on the site.*

### (2) Check out Cowie Chapel and graveyard

(56.97650; -2.19220)

In 2.4 km from the start of the walk enter the graveyard of Cowie Chapel\* by the lower metal gate in order to check out this interesting historical site. When you are ready to move on, leave the graveyard by the higher gate and take the path uphill, with the golf course on your right, before going left, away from the golf club-house, towards the former main road into Stonehaven, now a spur off the A92. (2.4 km)



*\*Note: the ruins of a 13th-century chapel, dedicated to St Mary, and known locally as St Mary of the Storms. The circular churchyard traditionally marks the site where a chapel was established by the Scottish saint Nathalan, or Nachlan, sometime in the 7th century. See:*

<https://www.britainexpress.com/attractions.htm?attraction=5032>

### (3) Left and down pavement towards Stonehaven

(56.97736; -2.19423)

In 200 m, or so, from the Cowie Chapel, the path meets the former main road into Stonehaven, close to the railway line and a railway bridge. Go left here to follow the pavement as it goes gently downhill towards Stonehaven. (2.6 km)



#### (4) Right and up B979 road at roundabout

(56.96986; -2.20709)

In 1.2 km, at the small roundabout at the entry point to Stonehaven, go right, taking care as you cross the road, and follow the pavement along the B979 road, with an apartment block on your left-hand side. (3.8 km)



#### (5) Left along Cowie Mill street

(56.97023; -2.20926)

In about 200 m, go left at a road junction into Cowie Mill Street, with apartments buildings on both sides. (4.0 km)



#### (6) Veer right for riverside path and bridge

(56.96983; -2.20974)

In just over 50 m, veer right for the riverside path. Cross the pedestrian bridge and go right along the Cowie Water riverside path with the access road to the sports fields on your left. Keep going in the direction of the railway viaduct ahead of you, passing sports buildings and sports fields on your left. (4.05 km)



#### (7) Follow path up then down at water fountain

(56.97269; -2.21780)

In 600 m, under the railway viaduct, take the uphill path to the left of St Kieran's Well\*, once an iron-rich water source. In a short distance up the path, take a left turn to follow a path down to Mineralwell Park and follow the path around the western perimeter of the park until you reach the entry point for the park by the Cowie Water. (4.6 km)

Note: <https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/200398247-mineralwell-park-st-kierans-well-stonehaven-and-lower-deeside-ward#.XBeSdOj7TIU>



## (8) Right to leave park and follow access road by river

(56.96889; -2.21108)

In 800 m, at an entry point to Mineralwell Park beside the Cowie Water river, go right to follow the access road in the direction of the town centre. (5.4 km)



## (9) Check out Robert Burns Memorial Garden

(56.96750; -2.20978)

In 200 m, upon reaching the main street (David Street) cross the Belmont Brae road with care and enter the Burns Memorial Garden\*. It's a very pleasant spot, with an interesting information board and statue featuring a bust of Robert Burns and carvings depicting some of his famous poetic figures. When you are ready, leave the garden, cross Belmont Brae road again and go up the that road, crossing over where the road bends left to ensure you are always walking on the pavement. At the junction with Bath Street, cross over again and follow the pavement up Bath Street. (5.6 km)



*\*Note: the Burns Memorial Garden commemorates the fact that the father of Robert Burns, Scotland's national poet, was born and brought up in the Stonehaven rural area. Being a humanitarian, a libertarian, and an egalitarian, Burns' sympathies were for the poor and the oppressed, and extended to include nature and the animal kingdom. See: <http://www.burnsfatherland.co.uk/Memorial%20Garden.html>*

## (10) Left along Gurney Street

(56.96761; -2.21280)

In 300 m from the Burns Garden, go left off Bath Street onto Gurney Street. Follow Gurney Street to the end, then go left and downhill on Mary Street until you reach Barclay Street, on the level. (5.9 km)



## (11) Right along Barclay Street then around Square

(56.96507; -2.20929)

In 500 m, at the junction of Mary Street and Barclay Street, go right towards the Town Square. When you reach the Square go left to take a walk around the old market square, passing Stonehaven Town Hall across the road on the main street, Allardice Street, as you make your way around. (6.4 km)



## (12) Stonehaven Square

(56.96383; -2.20828)

In 200 m, or so, at the southern end of the square, on Allardice Street, there is an orientation point for the town and an information board about the engineer R.W. Thompson, inventor of the fountain pen and the pneumatic tyre, who was born in Stonehaven. From here, continue walking around the Square alongside the street know as Market Square until its junction with Ann Street, slightly uphill and inland from the Square. (6.6 km)



## (13) Left along Ann Street then across bridge

(56.96375; -2.21039)

In 100 m, or so, at the junction with Ann Street, go left and down towards the Carron River. Cross the pedestrian bridge at a pretty spot, looking back at the unusual Art Deco Carron Restaurant. Once over the Carron Bridge, go left down Arbuthnott Street, with the St James Episcopal Church on your right side. (6.7 km)



## (14) Right along Bridgefield Street

(56.96230; -2.20839)

In 200 m, at the junction of Arbuthnott Street with Bridgefield Street, cross the road with care and go right with the Police Office building ahead of you. At the next junction, where Bridgefield Street bends sharp right and becomes Dunnottar Avenue, go left briefly onto the High Street, then cross the road and proceed up Bogwell Lane to New Street, passing between the Police Office on your right side, and the Dunnottar School building on your left side. (6.9 km)



## (15) Up path at end of Bogwell Lane

(56.96092; -2.20844)

In 200 m, upon reaching the junction between Bogwell Lane and New Street, proceed straight on, veering very slightly right, to find the path protected by a bollard that will take you up onto the pavement of the Bervie Braes road. When you reach the pavement, go left and carry on uphill towards the Bervie Braes viewpoint. (7.1 km)



## (16) Bervie Braes viewpoint

In 400 m, you will arrive at the Bervie Braes viewpoint with an information board. There is an especially fine view of the harbour and bay from here. When you are ready, looking in the direction of the harbour, take the narrow path that winds downhill to the harbour area. Here, you can choose your own route to explore the harbour area, including the Stonehaven Clock Tower\* on the High Street, close to the harbour. When you have completed your appreciation of the pretty and distinctive harbour area, head towards the car-park behind the Tolbooth Building where you started the walk. (7.5 km)



*\*Note: The Clock Tower in Stonehaven is a Category B-listed structure located in the Old Town near the harbour. Erected in 1790, the Tower is an important landmark within the Old Town, forms part of the historic skyline of the harbour area, and has significant importance to the historical development of Stonehaven.*

## (17) Finish walk back at harbour car-park

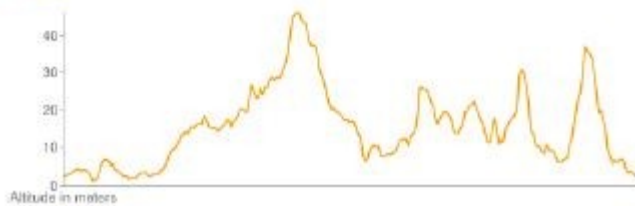
(56.96120; -2.20187)

In 700 m, or more depending on how extensively you explored the harbour area, you will have passed the Lifeboats base and will have arrived back at the car-park behind the Tolbooth Museum, where you started the walk. (8.2 km)

*\*Note: The Stonehaven Tolbooth is thought to have been founded by George Keith, 5th Earl Marischal (c. 1553–1623), with the original purpose of the rectangular building being to act as a storehouse during the construction of the nearby Dunnottar Castle. In 1600, an Act of Parliament provided that the building become the administrative centre for Stonehaven. See: <http://www.stonehaventolbooth.co.uk/about-us.html>*



## Route Map



### Links:

[Photos from walk](#)

[Download Route Guide](#) (PDF with illustrated Waypoints)

[Download GPX file](#) (GPS Exchange Format)

[Access Walk on OutdoorActive](#)

[Access Walk on OSMaps](#)

[Access Walk on AllTrails](#)

[Access Walk on Wikiloc](#)