

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Strachan-Scolty Hill Circuit (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

This quieter approach, from the southern side, to the summit of the popular Scolty Hill near Banchory, provides fine scenic opportunities at every turn on the route. The tower monument at the top can be ascended by an internal staircase to provide even better all-around views.

Duration: 3.5 hours



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: There is no public transport nearby. There is parking at the village hall where the walks starts/ends. If there is an event at the hall, we suggest parking at the war memorial in the centre of Strachan, and adapting the early stages of the route accordingly.

Length: 6.750 km / 4.22 mi

Height Gain: 314 meter. **Height Loss:** 314 meter.

Max Height: 291 meter. **Min Height:** 80 meter.

Surface: Moderate. A mix of paved surfaces, rough roads, grassy and stony paths.

Difficulty: Medium.

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

Dog Friendly: Yes, but keep dogs on lead on public roads and near farm animals.

Refreshments: Options in Banchory.



Description

This stimulating short walk, with a fairly relentless ascent, provides fine views of the valley of the Water of Feugh and the surrounding hills, including Kerloch, Mount Shade, Clachnaben, Mount Battock and Peter's Hill. Of course, the well-known summit of Scolty Hill, overlooking Banchory, provides an all-around panoramic viewpoint from Aberdeen, by the North Sea, to the Buck of Cabrach in upland Moray. The forest trails from the Scolty Hill car-park on the outskirts of Banchory, are very popular with walkers of all abilities, especially families. See our walk "[Banchory-Scolty Hill March Trail](#)". The Hill is also a magnet for mountain-bikers, with some challenging routes on the steep wooded and heathery inclines. The ascent from the little village of Strachan (pronounced "Strawn"), on the opposite side of the hill from Banchory, is a less well-known approach, but makes for a very attractive walk all the same, if you are prepared for the steep-ish climb up through farmland and forest to the heather-clad moor-land summit area. Scolty Hill, with its distinctive monument, is a very well-known landmark in lower Deeside. At only 289 m, Scolty is a relatively low, but well-defined (i.e. sharply inclined!) hill on the eastern edge of the Grampian Mountain range. However, the views from the top are extensive and very rewarding, assisted by two toposcopes (hilltop-finders), one fixed on the southern aspect, one on the northern. All of the town of Banchory is seen nestling underneath the hill, with a section of the River Dee running through it. The distinctive Scolty Hill monument is a 20m tall tower, built in 1840 as a memorial to local man, General William Burnett, who campaigned with Lord Wellington in the Napoleonic Wars, culminating in the Battle of Waterloo. The tower was restored in 1992 by the Rotary Club of Banchory-Ternan, and a viewing platform added. It is worth ascending the steel spiral staircase to enjoy even better views over Banchory, the Dee Valley and the Grampian Mountains.



Waypoints

(1) Start walk from Strachan Village Hall

(57.02225; -2.53005) <https://w3w.co/trickling.maps.fatter>

The walk starts from the Strachan Village Hall, which is on the eastern edge of the village (nearest Banchory). With your back to the hall noticeboard, turn right and walk along the pavement on the B974 road towards the centre of the village.



(2) Turn right up Bowbutts Brae

(57.02069; -2.53554) <https://w3w.co/think.flopped.blueberry>

In about 380 m, just after passing Strachan Cottages, go right up Bowbutts Brae. (382 m)



(3) Cross road and left up footpath

(57.02131; -2.53539) <https://w3w.co/condense.library.hurricane>

In just over 70 m, cross the Bowbutts Brae road and go left up a footpath which soon meets a rough access road. Turn right here and go uphill on the rough road which soon bends left at a house. In a short distance after that, ignore a road going off to your left and continue quite steeply uphill on the rough access road. (458 m)



(4) Right onto Ardlair Path to Scolty Hill

(57.02502; -2.53801) <https://w3w.co/downhill.slimy.unafraid>

In 540 m from Waypoint 3, go right off the rough road at walks signpost for Scolty Hill. Go through the pedestrian gate and follow the narrow Ardlair Path uphill, at first going in an easterly direction between fields, before veering NE and entering a conifer woodland. Keep following the path along the southern, then eastern perimeter of the wood. (1 km)



(5) Through gate and left uphill - signed for Scolty

(57.03010; -2.53061) <https://w3w.co/slurred.depending.clearing>

In 900 m, approaching a walks signpost*, go through a pedestrian gate and then go left, uphill, signed for Scolty Hill. (1.9 km)

**Note: you will return here, from the direction signed for Banchory, at Waypoint 13, after descending from Scolty Hill.*



(6) Sharp right and uphill at arrow signpost

(57.03052; -2.53182) <https://w3w.co/myself.flow.chosen>

In 100 m, or so, after the uphill path through the trees has veered left for a short section, turn sharp right and steeply uphill at an arrowed walks post. After ascending for about 250 m, the path goes left at a stone wall, and in a short distance crosses over a partial gap in the wall where there is a walks signpost that indicates the continuing uphill route, veering left. (2.0 km)



(7) Left down path at walks signpost

(57.03316; -2.53379) <https://w3w.co/nodded.nanny.chuckling>

After ascending for 400 m from Waypoint 6, at a t-junction, now in open moorland where there is a walks signpost, turn left* and gently downhill on a wide path. There are some fine views of the hills to the south and to the west, along the valley of the Water of Feugh. (2.4 km)

**Note: you have the option to turn right here for a shorter ascent to the summit of Scolty Hill. We think turning left, although the route loses some of the height gained, adds some scenic value to the walk.*



(8) Right up path to Scolty Hill summit

(57.03363; -2.53761) <https://w3w.co/gains.plays.downcast>

In 300 m, now walking in a northerly direction, after passing a large boulder on your left, and as you approach an arrowed walks post, also on your left, go sharp right and uphill on a narrow path, passing a very large boulder on the hillside. As the path starts to level out on the broad summit of Scolty Hill, you will join a well-made path heading towards the monument ahead of you. Keep going towards the monument. (2.7 km)



(9) Arrive at Scolty Hill summit

(57.03553; -2.53094) <https://w3w.co/pines.saturate.dandelions>
In 500 m, you will have arrived at the 20 m tall tower monument at the summit of Scolty Hill where there is also a trig point and a toposcope indicating the hilltops all around, near and far. After admiring the excellent views, head toward the south-eastern side of the tower, walking in the direction of the Durris mast in the middle distance. (3.2 km)

Note: The tower was built in 1840 as a memorial to local man, General William Burnett, who campaigned with Lord Wellington. The tower was restored in 1992 and a viewing platform added. It is worth ascending the steel spiral staircase to enjoy even better views over Banchory, the Dee Valley and the Grampian Mountains.



(10) Leave Scolty summit on path going East - in direction of Durris Mast

(57.03542; -2.53062) <https://w3w.co/taps.gloves.handrail>
On the SE side of the Scolty Monument, with the Durris mast downhill on a narrow stony path (there are two paths here, which join again about half way down the heathery slope, but, again, soon join moorland, the path goes through a pedestrian gate. Carry on down forest road. (3.2 km)



(11) Go right along forest road

(57.03578; -2.52082) <https://w3w.co/disprove.advising.suspends>
After a 600 m descent, the path meets a forest road at a t-junction. Go right here to follow the forest road which soon begins to gently ascend.



(12) Left for return path to Strachan

(57.03007; -2.52988) <https://w3w.co/buying.nuzzling.blotchy>
After about 1 km, the forest road ends at a clearing* where you bend a little to the right and walk up an embankment, veering a little to the right where you will soon spot an arrowed walks post. Go left for a short distance here, following the slightly indistinct path through the trees in a westerly direction, and soon arriving at the walks signpost you encountered on your earlier ascent at Waypoint 5. (4.8 km)

**Note: you may spot a narrow path on your left heading downhill from the clearing in a southerly direction. Ignore this path.*



(13) Through gate and left to re-trace steps to Strachan

(57.03007; -2.53053) <https://w3w.co/slurred Depending clearing>
In about 50 m from the arrowed post at Waypoint 12, go through the gate by the walks signpost you encountered earlier at Waypoint 5. Now, re-trace your steps to return to the Strachan Village Hall where you started the walk. (4.8 km)

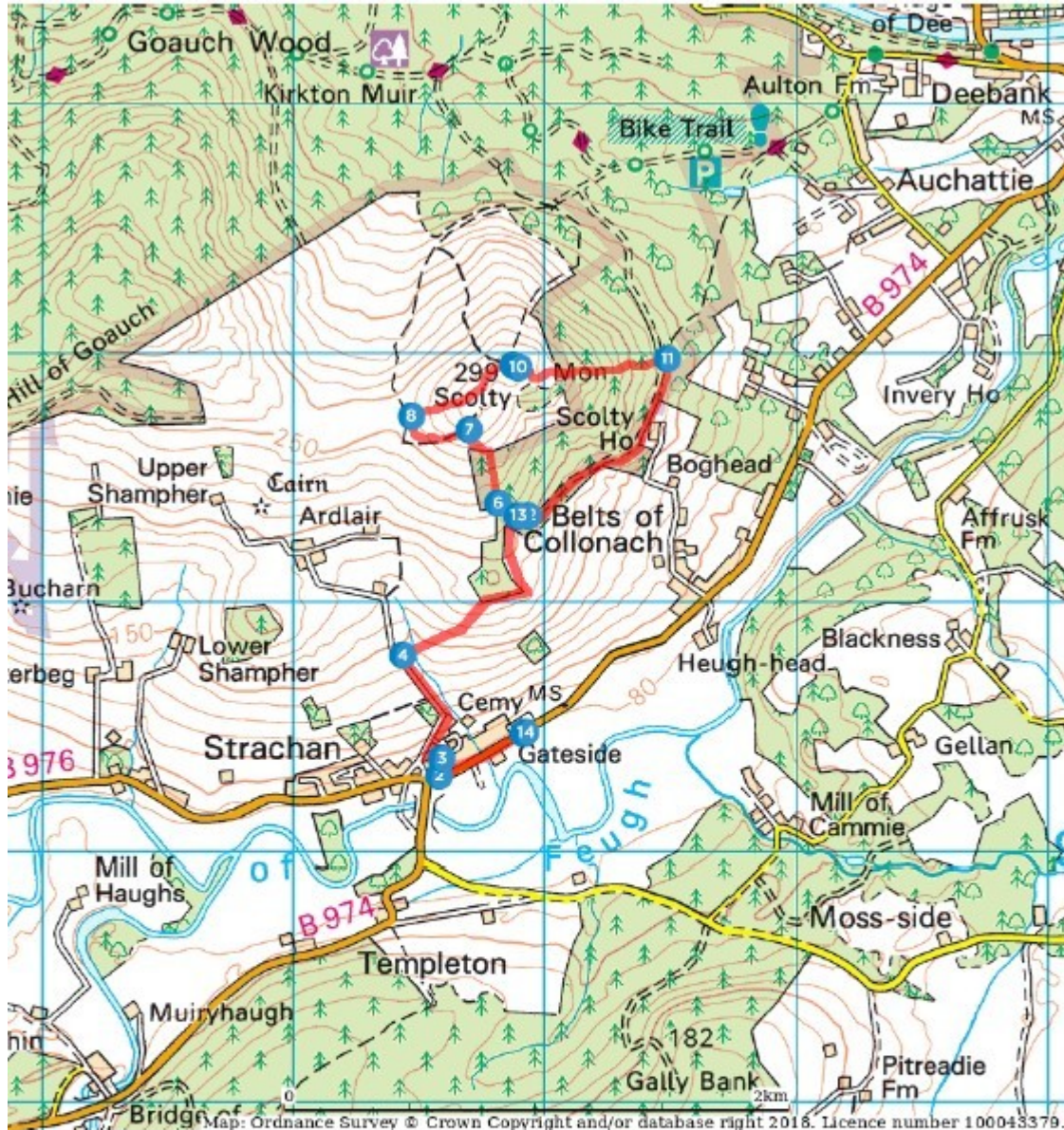


(14) Finish walk back at Strachan Village Hall on B974 road

(57.02227; -2.52992) <https://w3w.co/trickling maps fatter>
After 2 km, you will have returned to your start-point by the village



Route Map



Links:

[Photos from walk](#)

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

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

[Access Walk on Viewranger](#)

[Access the Walk on OutdoorActive](#)

[Access Walk on Wikiloc](#)