

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Strichen White Horse-Waughton Hill Loop (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

Walking from the village of Strichen to a huge "white horse" laid out in stone on the hillside above the settlement. After checking out the ruin of an 18th C hunting lodge higher up the hillside, there are breath-taking long-distance views from the summit of Waughton Hill.

Duration: 3 hours

Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: Frequent Stagecoach #68 from Mintlaw or Fraserburgh. Check timetable. Easy parking on the High Street or adjoining streets close to the walk start-point.

Length: 9.030 km / 5.64 mi

Height Gain: 206 meter **Height Loss:** 206 meter

Max Height: 55 meter **Min Height:** 232 meter

Surface: Moderate. Mostly a mix of tarred minor roads, rough hillside paths and grassy tracks.

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

Difficulty: Medium.

Dog Friendly: Yes, but keep dogs on lead near to any livestock, and on public roads and streets. You are VERY likely to encounter sheep at the White Horse and on Waughton Hill in general.

Refreshments: The Old Auction Room Cafe, the Lodge Cafe at Strichen Lake, the White Horse Restaurant and Bar.



Description

A good leg-stretching half-day walking excursion offering historical interest and very fine views from the flanks and summit of Waughton Hill, to the west of the linked but better known Mormond Hill. The large Buchan village of Strichen lies on the east bank of the North Ugie Water in a sheltered valley. The combination of water power from the river, a booming local linen industry, and the potential for improved agriculture, led to the development of Strichen as a planned village in 1764. The walk starts and finishes from the impressive Town House building in the centre of the village, dating from 1816. The most obvious feature of the walk is the very large representation of a white horse laid out on the hillside in quartz stones. It is said to have been placed here to commemorate an incident during the Battle of Tourcoing in 1794 when Captain Fraser, the 9th Laird of Strichen, had his horse killed underneath him during the retreat. A sergeant by the name of Henderson offered to give Captain Fraser his horse, but was killed. On returning to Strichen, the Laird built the white horse as a memorial. Also built by Captain Fraser is the nearby ruin of the Hunter's Lodge, dating to 1779. A single room on the lower floor is described as having a fireplace large enough to roast a deer. The door lintel still bears the words "*In this Hunter's Lodge Rob Gib commands, MDCCLXXIX*". The words "Rob Gib" were used as a loyal toast in Jacobite circles and it is unclear whether the words were merely meant to invoke good cheer, or represented a political statement. On reaching the top of Waughton Hill, you can pick out, in the distance to the west: the Bennachie range; Lochnagar; Morven; Tillymorgan; Hill of Foudland; Buck of Cabrach; Ben Rinnes; and, Knock Hill. Looking to the other side of the hilltop, there is a great view of Fraserburgh, and along the coast in both directions.



Waypoints

(1) Start walk at Town House - High St

(57.58653; -2.09060) <https://w3w.co/pardon.upholding.comments>

The walk starts at a mid-point on Strichen's High Street, outside the impressive Town House building, dating from 1816. From there walk up the High Street in a NW direction towards the distinctive church.



(2) Turn right up West St

(57.58819; -2.09329) <https://w3w.co/garlic.claps.cabinets>

After about 250 m, turn right where the High Street meets West Street. Follow this street as it starts to ascend and becomes Hospital Brae. Soon, the pavement disappears and you are walking on a very quiet, narrow minor road. The road is a dead-end with only one working farm off it, so you are unlikely to see much in the way of traffic. Keep following the road as it goes uphill and then to the right. (245 m)



(3) Through gate by footpath sign

(57.59637; -2.07468) <https://w3w.co/deprives.warmers.slicing>

After 1.85 km, just after passing the abandoned farm buildings at Bransfarm on your left, go through the pedestrian gate by the footpath sign and carry on along the grassy path. (2.1 km)



(4) Left through gate along field boundary

(57.59703; -2.07058)

<https://w3w.co/swelling.smothered.heartened>

In 300 m, turn to your left to go through a pedestrian gate*. Walk through the grassy field, keeping the fence/stone dyke fairly close on your right side. The white stone horse is very clearly visible now, ahead of you on the side of the hill slightly to your right. At the end of the field, go through the next pedestrian gate and start veering right as you walk uphill towards the "horse". (2.4 km)

**Note: Be aware! You are VERY likely to encounter sheep or cattle in this field, and sheep in the area of the White Horse. Also, sheep on Waughton Hill in general.*



(5) White Horse

(57.60015; -2.06654) <https://w3w.co/luck.weaned.thatched>
In another 500 m, you will have ascended to the white horse* laid out using quartz stones, a curious construction, clearly visible from Strichen and the surrounding area. When you are ready, continue uphill on a narrow path veering right and eventually arriving at a rough road cutting across the hillside where you go right, along the road for a short distance. (2.9 km)

**Note: the white horse is laid out on the hillside in quartz stones, 162ft long by 126ft high. It is said to have been placed here to commemorate an incident during the Battle of Tourcoing (near Lille) on 18 May 1794, at which British and Austrian forces were beaten by the French. Alexander Fraser, 9th Lord of Strichen, was serving as a Captain in the 1st Dragoon Guards and had his horse killed underneath him during the retreat. A Sergeant by the name of Henderson offered to give Captain Fraser his horse, but was killed before he could do so. Captain Fraser escaped death on the sergeant's horse and, on returning to Strichen, built the white horse as a memorial to Sergeant Henderson. [Undiscovered Scotland].*



(6) Left up path to Hunter's Lodge

(57.60044; -2.06247) <https://w3w.co/fizzle.organist.targeted>
In 300 m from the white horse, leave the rough road you are now on and go sharp left up a steep path to the clearly visible ruin of the Hunter's Lodge. (3.2 km)



(7) Hunter's Lodge

(57.60131; -2.06176) <https://w3w.co/parties.shipwreck.data>
In just 100 m, or so, you are at the ruin of the Hunter's Lodge*. There are impressive views of the Vale of Strichen and much further afield to the south, east and west. When you are ready to move on, go to the NW (rear) corner of the building and veer NW, taking a narrow sheep's path, first downhill, then uphill, veering right, then left, towards the indistinct summit of Waughton Hill on increasingly rough ground. Watch out for trailing wires from broken-down fences that may trip up the unwary. At the time of writing there are two fence posts at the flattish area of the summit, with a third broken down, lying beside them. (3.3 km)

**Note: a two storey building dating to 1779, built by the Laird of Strichen (see previous waypoint). Its now missing upper floor served as accommodation for the estate's gamekeeper. A single room on the lower floor was described as having a fireplace large enough to roast a deer, and used by the Laird and his guests after a day's hunting in the surrounding area. The door lintel still bears the words "In this Hunter's Lodge Rob Gib commands, MDCCCLXXIX". The words "Rob Gib" were used as a loyal toast in Jacobite circles and it is unclear whether the words were merely meant to invoke good cheer, or represented a political statement. [Visit Fraserburgh]*



(8) Summit of Waughton Hill

(57.60511; -2.06242) <https://w3w.co/crusher.slide.announced>

In 600 m you will be at the indistinct summit of Waughton Hill. At the time of writing there is a small cairn and two fence posts at the flattish area of the summit, with a third broken down, lying beside them. The masted summit of Mormond Hill, immediately to the east is prominent, but on a clear day you can pick out, in the distance to the south and south-west: the Bennachie range; Lochnagar; Morven; Tillymorgan; Hill of Foudland; Buck of Cabrach; Ben Rinnes; and, Knock Hill. Looking to the other side of the hilltop, there is a great view of Fraserburgh, and along the coast in both directions. If you wish, you can carry on for about 150 m in a NE direction to arrive at an old boundary stone near the forestry plantation (as shown on our route), to get an even better view to the Fraserburgh area. If you do so, return to the summit and start to head downhill in a broadly SW direction, aiming for the left end of a band of conifers at the side of the rough hillside road*. (3.9 km)



**Note: looking down from the summit in a southerly direction there are two sets of conifers by the rough road. We suggest aiming for the left end of the second set, to the south-west, and furthest away from the ruin of the Hunter's Lodge.*

(9) Left up rough road

(57.60329; -2.07020) <https://w3w.co/remake.dugouts.risks>

In 500 m from the summit of Waughton Hill you will have descended past the left end of a band of conifers, to the rough hillside road you left, further uphill, at Waypoint 6. Now go left and gently ascend on the rough road. There is a good view of the Hunter's Lodge slightly to your left, uphill in the middle distance. (4.7 km)



(10) Sharp right down grassy road

(57.60179; -2.06849) <https://w3w.co/tries.happy.minimums>

In just 200 m, or so, go very sharply right to effectively double back on yourself. Follow this grassy track downhill towards an old quarry ahead of you. (4.9 km)



(11) Pass quarry on high side

(57.60303; -2.07189) <https://w3w.co/tries.happy.minimums>

In 300 m, pass the old quarry on the high side, with the quarry on your left. Carry on downhill on the sometimes indistinct track, eventually veering slightly right away from the quarry. (5.2 km)



(12) Left and down at t-junction near large boulder

(57.60374; -2.07454) <https://w3w.co/saves.sunblock.duos>

In 200 m from the top of the quarry, passing a very large and distinctive boulder just off the track on your right, go left at the t-junction with another rough road (actually the same hillside road you left at Waypoint 10). Carry on gently downhill on this rough road towards a set of steel gates. (5.4 km)



(13) Through gate and follow rough road downhill

(57.60328; -2.07622) <https://w3w.co/eager.oxidation.donor>

In another 100 m, or so, pass through the set of steel gates, ensuring you securely close them behind you. Carry on gently descending on this rough road, eventually passing the large, but now disused, Newseat Quarry, on your left. (5.5 km)



(14) Sharp left along grassy road

(57.60202; -2.09010) <https://w3w.co/drape.annual.pampered>

In 900 m, after the quarry, go sharp left to take a grassy road going east between the fields. You may notice a partly fallen down walkers' sign on the other side of the road here, one direction marked for Memsie, the other for Strichen (your route). Keep going on this fairly straight grassy road for about 1 km. At the end, by the water reservoir and small wind turbine, carry on down hill on the tarred minor road you took on your outward journey, now descending towards Strichen. (6.4 km)



(15) Right by Jamie Nicoll Court

(57.58879; -2.09231) <https://w3w.co/history.gladiator.catch>

In 1.8 km, having descended to the periphery of Strichen, with North Street on your left, go right past the single storey modern houses at Jamie Nicoll Court. Near the end of this cul-de-sac, go left to follow a lane (8.2 km)



(16) Right along to end of High St by Library Gardens

(57.58854; -2.09406) <https://w3w.co/calms.presides.supper>
In 200 m, at the end of the lane, cross the final section of the High Street beside the sign for Library Gardens, and go right down towards the junction with Water Street. Go left at that junction to follow Water Street back towards the centre of Strichen, passing, on your right, the Mill of Strichen, off-road and over the North Ugie Water. Continue along Water Street to its junction with Bridge Street. (8.4 km)



(17) Left at end of Water St onto Bridge St

(57.58564; -2.09232) <https://w3w.co/windmill.insurers.scrapers>
In 500 m, go left at the end of Water Street, beside the Mormond Inn, to join Bridge Street, passing the Co-op shop on your left. (8.9 km)



(18) Finish walk back at Old Town House

(57.58643; -2.09048) <https://w3w.co/pardon.upholding.comments>
In 100 m, you will have arrived back at the Strichen Town House where you started the walk. (9 km)



