

Walk 2: Cowie to Market Square loop

Distance: 2 km / 1.25 miles - allow 45 minutes

Difficulty: Easy



On this walk, I'll point out some of the lesser known curiosities and interesting history in and around Stonehaven town centre. It's amazing how much is hidden in plain sight.

Starting Point

We start at the edge of Cowie.

Cowie and the coast immediately to the north of Stonehaven is a must see, especially at low tide when the geology of the area is more visible. Beyond Cowie are rocks more than 428 million years of age... but that's a walk for another time.



Walking along Beach Road

Just now let's go the opposite direction and walk along Beach Road keeping the sea to our left. You'll spot some shops to the right and can pick up some delicious ice cream or a coffee from aunty betty's.



The view of the crescent-shaped Stonehaven Bay is beautiful from here and in the distance, you may be able to spot The War Memorial atop the Bervie Braes. I recommend you go for a walk to the top and along to Dunnottar Castle if it's a clear day.

The Recreation Grounds



Keep going straight and you'll spot Stonehaven's Recreation grounds on the right. Fishing boats used to be built here, but by 1900 fishing was in decline and tourism was on the up, so we now we have bowling and putting greens and tennis courts.

The Crow's Nest

Continue on and we'll get to a bridge that crosses the River Cowie. Once across, you'll find what's called the Crow's Nest (Crow's Nest) which was opened 22nd September 2012. You'll find a number of mosaics set into the ground along with an information board explaining their meaning. You'll also find seating here if you'd like to relax and admire the sea view.



The Promenade

We can follow the slope or steps down from the Craw's Nest onto the long, straight promenade. This end of the beach is more sandy and is frequently used by paddlers and water sports enthusiasts alike. Stonehaven has been a Keep Scotland Beautiful Seaside award winner since 2007.



After a while you will reach another signpost. We will follow the Market Square direction. The Stonehaven Tourist Information Centre is no longer open, but we hope this website, the official guide to Stonehaven is a useful replacement.

Note that at the end of this section of road, you will be at Stonehaven Town Centre where the traffic can be busy, so keep small children and dogs close by.

The Market Square



Using the pedestrian crossing, cross the road to the Market Square buildings and clock tower. This part of the town was waste ground, until it was bought in 1795 by Robert Barclay who transformed the area into a square of 2 acres in size, surrounded by Georgian style buildings and several straight streets running parallel to or intersecting one another at right angles, much like an American town.

Other features in and around the market square that are noteworthy include:

- The Streets around the Market Square

Although I've not measured them, the streets around the square are by design exactly 48 feet wide. I should also point out that Barclay Street is on the west side of the square and Allardice Street (named after Robert's second wife, Sarah Ann Allardice) is on the east. Historical accounts vary on Robert and Sarah Ann's children, but Ann, Una Cameron, Robert, Margaret, Mary, Rodney, and David Stuart all have streets named after them in Stonehaven

- The Steeple

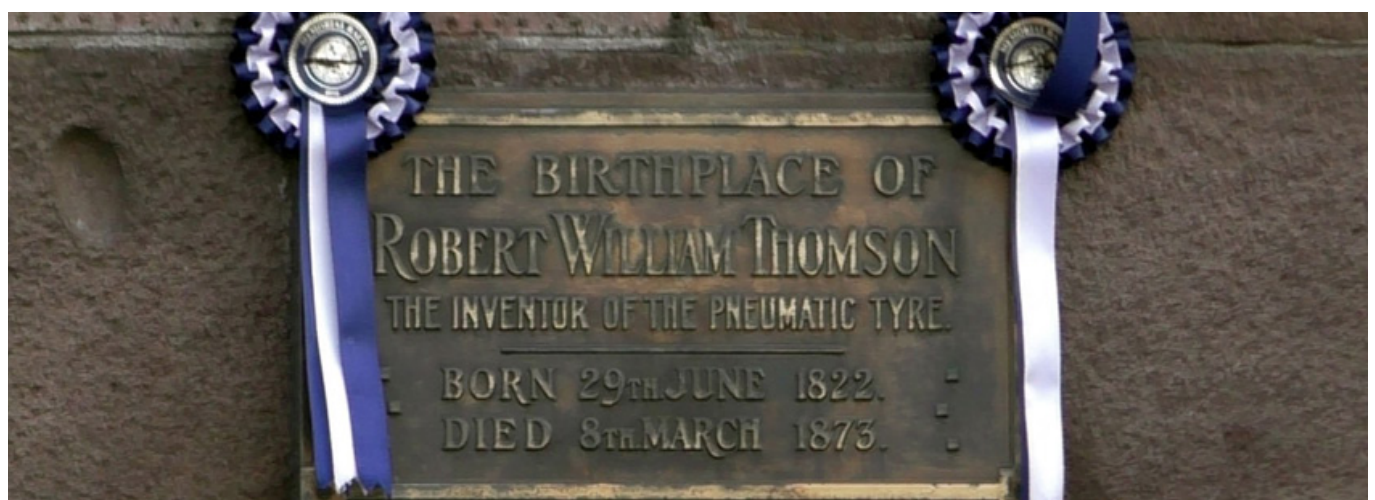
This building dates from 1826 and had a steeple, clock and bell added at a cost of £250. A public subscription (an old-time version of "crowdfunding") was opened and £277 was raised to extend the steeple to 130 feet (almost 40 metres) in height, work that was completed in 1857

- The Fountain

In the north-east corner of the Square you'll find a fountain constructed of Aberdeen, Peterhead, Norwegian and Kemnay granites. It was presented to the town in 1897 by George Barrie who was native to Stonehaven and became a successful conveyancer and notary-public in Edinburgh.

- Robert William Thomson's house

On the south side of the square, look out for a plaque above one of the doorways. This marks the home of one of Stonehaven's most notable residents, Robert Thomson, the inventor of the self-filling fountain pen and the pneumatic tyre. A Thomson Memorial Rally for veteran and vintage vehicles takes place annually to remember him.



- Millinery | outfitting | costumes

If you look around the square, to the west you'll notice a building with large lettering on it's front. At one time, this whole building was Ramsay's, a department store selling everything from hats and head-wear, ladies and menswear to fabrics and haberdashery.

The Shops on Evan Street

If we move across the square towards Boots and the Co-op (the building with Millinery, outfitting, costumes on it) we can cross the road. Note the mosaic-tiled step which carries the Ramsay name at the Co-op doorways. Continue walking up Evan Street and you'll shortly come to another crossroads with the Far & Wide Charity Shop on the corner. Can you see the shops just up from this with their art deco metalwork and glass features above the windows? These date from 1936 and include motifs above each doorway, depicting the uses of the original shops there (an apothecary, a baker, a butcher and a grocer).



Let's turn right at the crossroads, walk along Ann Street for a short distance, then down Mary Street towards The Market Square again. If you're still with me (let's hope so) you'll find Nikki's café on the corner. Take a left down Barclay Street, which we're going to stay on for 200 metres.

Clashfarquhar House

As you walk, to your left you may notice now and again a very large 3-storey building that overlooks Stonehaven. This building was opened in 1903 by Sir Alexander Baird and used to be a very grand hotel called The Stonehaven Bay Hotel. During its time as a hotel, it had many notable guests including films stars such as James Stewart (Vertigo, The Philadelphia Story) and his

his wife Gloria. The hotel was purchased by James Gray Nicol in 1968 for £50,000 and given to the Church of Scotland, who converted it into a residential care home. The home is now called Clashfarquhar House, named after one of Mr Nicol's farms.



The Burns Memorial Garden



Once at the end of Barclay Street, stay to the left-hand-side and you will notice a small but well-kept garden with a bust of Robert Burns, the national poet of Scotland. Robert's father was born just south of Stonehaven, as were his forebears.

I should mention that a brewery was once sited here, which in the middle of the 19th century supplied all the hostelrys in Stonehaven. The dungeons and cellars are hidden beneath the garden and road, but one part of the brewery is still visible – the remains of the brick chimney at the top-right corner of the garden.



Baird Park

Let's cross the Belmont Brae and move onto the bridge which helps us cross the River Cowie again. This three arched bridge was originally built in 1730 but was replaced with something more sturdy in 1827.

The small field beside the river was in the past used to practice quoiting by the Dunnottar Quoiting Club. Quoits are metal rings weighing between approximately 2 and 6 kilos, that players throw at a pin buried in a clay bed. Players take it in turn to throw the quoits and points are scored by getting closest to the pin.

Amongst other things, Baird Park is now used to host the Midsummer Beer Happening, an event which offers a range of beers, food and live music over 3 days.

Glenury Viaduct

If we continue on, you may see in the distance to your left, Glenury Viaduct which spans 335 metres and is over 30 metres in height. Originally, the viaduct had wooden arches, but these were replaced with more substantial materials in 1885, having served since the opening of the railway line in 1850.

Stonehaven Leisure Centre

If we cross the road, we will continue on for a short while until we reach Stonehaven Skate Park, a free, outdoor, concrete park for BMX, scooters and skaters. Beyond that we see the playpark and Stonehaven Leisure Centre which was built for £650,000 in Queen Elizabeth Park and opened in 1985. This indoor sports complex houses a gym, large games hall and a 25 metre heated swimming pool. It is open to the public.



Open Air Swimming Pool



Now close to the end of our walk, I have perhaps saved the best 'til last. If we go into Queen Elizabeth Park, you will see a red-tiled building. This is Stonehaven's Open Air Pool – an Art Deco, 50 metre long, open air, saltwater, heated swimming pool, which attracts visitors from far and wide.

The pool was built from concrete at a cost of £9529 and was opened by local MP Mr C M Barclay-Harvey in 1934. Threatened with closure in 1994, a community group called The Friends of Stonehaven Open Air Pool was formed to lobby for its retention. They succeeded and the group continues to work in close partnership with Aberdeenshire Council to help keep it open.

