

Xpert Xplorer

ROUTE 1 - 0.6 miles / 1km
(approx. 15 minutes at an average walking pace)

ROUTE 2 - 1 mile / 1.7km
(approx. 25 minutes at an average walking pace)

Start both routes from the interpretation board by the wall of Ballengeich Cemetery below the east side of Stirling Castle. Head away from the Castle over the grass towards a set of steps on your right. At the top of the steps you'll see another interpretation board. Follow the paved trail next to the board as it curves down past a woodland trail on your left, then curves right to an orchard. Just as the path curves left again you'll see a grassy path on your left. Take this up to a grassy plateau where there are two more interpretation boards. From the interpretation board with a view of Mote Hill, take another grassy path down the hill and back to the paved path.

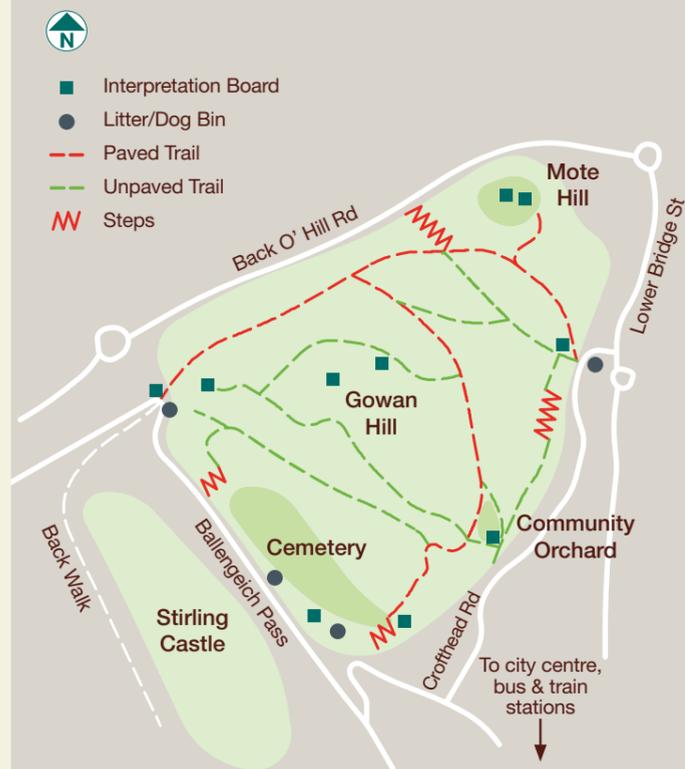
To complete Route 1, turn right at the junction and follow the paved path back to your start point.

To complete Route 2, turn left at the junction and follow the paved path through a wooded area. At the junction with another paved path turn right. You'll pass steps on your left. Continue to another paved junction. Take the paved path on your left up to Mote Hill with two more interpretation boards. Retrace your steps turning right at the junction, past the steps again but this time going straight on at the next junction. This path will take you to the Ballengeich Pass where you can turn left and walk back to your start point along the road (be careful of traffic). For an even longer walk you can cross the road and take the Back Walk around the Castle and into the centre of Stirling.

Find out even more at:
The Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum,
Dumbarton Road, Stirling FK8 2RQ



Ben Venue by David Young Cameron, © Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum



This leaflet is intended to help you explore Stirling Heritage Trails and enjoy Stirling as a "Walkable City".

Visit travelinescotland.com to help you plan your journey to, in and around Stirling.

Visit walkit.com to help you plan your way around Stirling on foot.

Remember to follow the **Scottish Outdoor Access Code** while exploring the Stirling Heritage Trails.

Enjoy Scotland's outdoors responsibly

- take responsibility for your own actions
- respect the interests of other people
- care for the environment.



This leaflet is one of many produced in partnership with Stirling's communities to help you explore the rich and varied heritage of our wonderful city. You'll find them at www.stirlingheritagetrails.co.uk

For more information on led walks in the area see the Stirling Walking Network at www.activestirling.org.uk

Gowan Hill Heritage Trail

Xplore Stirling

HERITAGE TRAILS



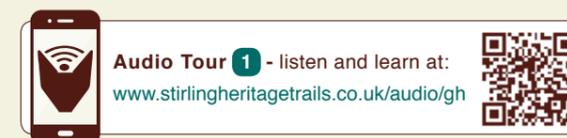
www.stirlingheritagetrails.co.uk

Welcome to the Gowan Hill Heritage Trail



The Gowan Hill is one of Stirling's largest public parks - covering around ten hectares of land between Stirling Castle and the River Forth. There are two distinct hills in the park: the larger Gowan Hill and the smaller Mote Hill overlooking the river. The park is accessible via a series of paths - some surfaced and some unsurfaced, natural paths. Sturdy footwear is recommended! The Gowan Hill is rich with local and national history and on your visit you will learn about events spanning two thousand years. The park also has an interesting geological and ecological story.

- 1] **19th century sketch of Stirling**, © Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum
- 2] **Battle of Stirling Bridge, 19th century postcard**, © Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum
- 3] **Stirling Rail Bridges, 19th century**, © Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum
- 4] **The Old Bridge, Stirling by Isabel Morley, 1910**, © Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum
- 5] **The Railway in the 19th century**, © Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum



Audio Guides

Look out for interpretation boards along the trails with more information on the story of Gowan Hill. Each board is numbered, with each number corresponding to an audio guide you can access using a smartphone or tablet at www.stirlingheritagetrails.co.uk/audio/gh. The audio story of Gowan Hill features the voices of local residents, historians, archaeologists and soldiers. You'll also hear from the Stirling Council Rangers who are responsible for maintaining the Gowan Hill's biodiversity.

www.stirlingheritagetrails.co.uk

A project by community volunteers and Mercat Cross & City Centre Community Council



Ballengeich Cemetery

Nestled next to the castle is Ballengeich Cemetery. It opened in 1888 and is one of five cemeteries surrounding Stirling Castle. The other four are located on the far side of the Castle: the “Valley”, “Mar’s Walk Garden”, “Snowdon” and “Holy Rude”. It is also recognised by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission as being the final resting place of 58 soldiers from either the First or Second World War. The graves include that of Private W Ferguson of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders who died aged twenty on 20th November 1918, four days after the Armistice was signed and Lance Corporal James Norris of the Home Guard who died aged fifty-six on the 10th June 1942.



Jacobites

At 2pm on Monday 6th January 1746, Bonnie Prince Charlie and the Jacobites arrived at Stirling as they retreated north. They were let into the town by the Provost, but the Commander



of Stirling Castle, General Blakeney, refused to surrender. The Jacobites built gun positions on the Gowan Hill. A number of cannonballs were fired at the castle, but at least one overshot and destroyed the roof of the Earl of Mar’s home at the top of Broad Street. The Jacobites cannon were no match for the castle walls or its fixed cannon and eventually Blakeney’s troops opened fire and destroyed the Jacobite guns. They fled north on the 2nd February, just before government forces led by the Duke of Cumberland arrived in the town.



Community Spirit

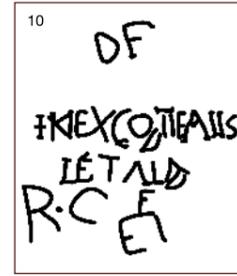
The Gowan Hill, or “the Gownie”, has a fond place in the hearts of the communities that surround it. Along with the

network of trails, the community has planted dozens of fruit trees in a new orchard. Mercat Cross and City Centre Community Council, along with the Rangers of Stirling Council, organise regular litter picks and vegetation clearing. You’ll often see historians, archaeologists and metal detectorists on the hill alongside dog walkers and children playing football. In 2012 the Community Council organised a midsummer festival, with musicians from the nearby Riverside Music Project performing three new songs to celebrate the Gowan Hill.



Roman Stone

There is a stone on the Gowan Hill which is said to have been carved by a Roman Centurion who was in the area as part of the invading army of General Gnaeus Julius Agricola in the 1st century AD. There is no evidence to link these carvings directly to the Romans but, intriguingly, they were made many centuries ago. Another theory is that the markings were carved in the 17th century to entertain royalty who would have taken walks out on the hill from the palace at Stirling Castle.



Agriculture

The Gowan Hill was used for farming until the middle of the 20th century. On the open space at the Gowan Hill summit you might be able to make out the classic shape of the “ridge and furrow” farming method, where a plough has dug into the soil and pushed it to one side, creating a series of peaks and troughs in the landscape. Over many years of ploughing, these peaks and troughs become permanent features. This is known as a “runrig” with alternating “runs” or furrows and “rigs” or ridges. When Stirling Castle was a military garrison, grazing animals kept vegetation low so that soldiers had a clear line of sight of any potential attackers.



Ecology

A very diverse range of plants, insects and animals are found on the Gowan Hill. You might be lucky and see the largest residents, a family of Roe Deer who hide in the dense woodland during the day. In the Spring you’ll see lots of flowers beneath the trees – look out for snowdrops and daffodils, followed by violets and strawberries as the summer approaches. In the summer, you’ll see Honey and Bumble Bees in and around the tall pink spikes of the Willowherb flowers. In the Autumn, listen for the Broom bushes “popping” when their seeds explode and fly into the air. There are many Rowan Trees on the Gowan Hill, with their white flowers in Spring and red berries in Autumn. Legend has it a Rowan tree can ward off evil and even today many people in Scotland will never cut these trees down.



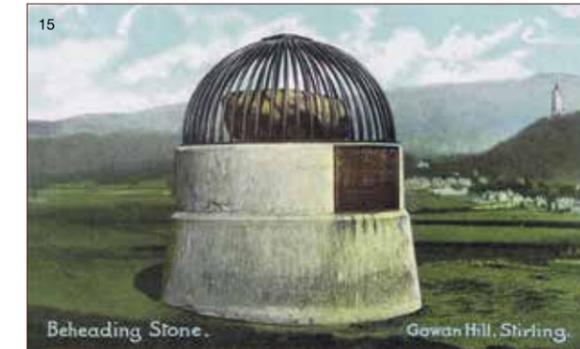
Mote Hill

The Mote Hill is also known by a more sinister name – the Heiding Hill, or Beheading Hill. In the 15th century, public executions were carried out here. The most prominent of these was in 1425 when Murdoch Stewart, the Duke of Albany, was found guilty of treason. Between 1420 and 1424, the

Duke had been Governor of Scotland, in absence of King James I who was being held prisoner in England. The King was finally ransomed in 1424 but soon after returning had the Duke arrested and tried for abuse of power while running the country. He was beheaded on the Mote Hill along with his two sons.

Beheading Stone

The stone under the cage is said to be where prisoners laid their heads before the executioner’s blade fell. The stone has channels cut into it where it is said the blood from severed heads would run. Executions eventually moved into the town’s Broad Street, where Allen Mair was the last person to be killed in Stirling on the 4th October 1843 when he was hanged for murder. The beheading stone had long since disappeared by then, until it was rediscovered and brought here by the Stirling Natural History and Archaeology Society in 1887. Whether this is the actual stone used in 15th century executions is open to debate.



Cannon

There are two cannon on the Mote Hill, pointing out over the River Forth as if ready to defend the castle against attackers from

the water. They were purchased by Stirling Council from the army stationed in Stirling Castle. They were placed here purely for decorative purposes and were never fired from the hill in anger. These are one of three sets of cannon in Stirling; there are also cannon next to Cowane’s Hospital and cannon at the Mercat Cross in Broad Street.

Iron Age Fort

The Mote Hill was once the site of a hill fort. The golden age of hill fort construction was during the Iron Age, which began around 700BC and lasted until around 100AD. The fort would have been smaller than a modern family house and would have been used by people living and working on the surrounding land. The fort was eventually destroyed by a fire that burned hot enough to melt the stones; a process called vitrification. Carbon dating on the remains of this fort suggest it was vitrified in the early days of the 1st century AD – which means it could have been destroyed by Roman centurions, who were in Scotland at that time.

