

From the Car Park at the Playing Field go into the village, noting the 13th St Cuthbert's Church with its colourful stained-glass windows and cross-stepped gable at the oldest part. The name of the village may mean a settlement in the deep valley.

Created largely in its present form by Thomas Kennedy, Earl of Cassilis, as a model village in the late 18th century, the wide Main Street and its stone built cottages draw the visitor to the War Memorial at the far end. The McCandlish Hall dates from the First World War. The Black Bull Hotel is from the time of Robert Burns. Opposite are the Straiton Stores and Post Office. A little further along is "The Buck" (coffee and cakes). The toll cottage is strategically placed at the start of the Newton Stewart Hill Road and behind it stands the elegant 18th century manse.

Go towards the School. Just beyond it you will find a gate leading to the path to Traboyack Wood. Follow the track through the wood and out onto the hill. The obelisk on Craigenpower (the hill of the Goats in Gaelic) is a monument to Lt. Col. James Hunter Blair, who was mortally wounded at the Crimean War's Battle of Inkerman in 1854.

On a fine day you can see Ben Lomond, Ben Arthur, Goat Fell, and Ailsa Craig. From the summit follow the waymarkers towards Cuidoch. Cross the road to the river and up to the bridge below Craigfad. Then return via Bannan Wood. At the little gate is a marker for Bannan Hill (Option1).

Continue through the wood to Bannan Farm and Stepends Cottage to cross the river and return to the car-park. If you wish, you can join The Church Trail from here, at the cottage (Option2).



## The Monument and Bannan Circuit

4.5 miles / 7km



This modest low-level route leads from the Car Park taking you into and around the village.

Two hundred years ago, Straiton folk, in common with other Ayrshire towns and villages, were always busy with woollen cloth making. In 1791, of the 186 inhabitants, 12 were weavers while others were masons, shoemakers, blacksmiths, tailors, joiners, as well as a butcher and a baker. A change came about with the making of muslin but Straiton continued to prosper still and depended as before on water-power. Mills were built and traces can still be seen e.g. the corn-mill under Bannan, the timber mill at Milton, and a corn-mill as well. The name, Fowler's Croft, may indicate a fulling-mill to cleanse the wool. On the other hand it may refer to the home of the bird-catcher.

Go through the village to the Newton Stewart Road, then just beyond the School take the track on the right to the river bridge, Bannan Farm and Stepends. Here, either return to the village or Car Park, or continue towards Milton and The Church Trail. On the Dalmellington Road itself stands the Forestry Commission Scotland office, opened in 1984, which plays an important part in maintaining the Galloway Forest Park just to the south of the village.



## Straiton Village Ramble

1.25 miles / 2km



The route takes you to either the village or to the Fowler's Croft Development which gained an award for architectural design in 1984 from the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland.

Just beyond Scienteuch Bridge the path is now inside the hedge leading up to Lambdoughy Glen with its hard woods and conifers. The area is perhaps most attractive in the autumn, with its noisy waterfalls, one of which is known as Rossett Linn. This is because Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82) was thought to be contemplating suicide there according to his friend William Bell Scott, who had been staying at Penkill Castle the home of Alice Boyd. The Castle is known to have been a retreat for Pre-Raphaelite poets and painters.

Straiton Primary School's Pupil Council spent money given to them under the 'Determined to Succeed' initiative to add four wood sculptures to this trail. See if you can spot them. They're all creatures you can find in the area.

Footbridges cross the burn at the lower and upper ends of the gorge. Primroses and bluebells flourish on the banks. Roe deer may be encountered; hawks and finches seen.

Largs Farm was the home of Thomas McHaffie the Covenanting martyr shot by the dragoons in 1686 after a brief trial near Linnern Farm. In the churchyard stands a memorial with its poignant verses near the west door. The earliest reference to the history of Straiton is the Genoch Cup, found at the farm in 1878 which relates to a Bronze Age cemetery near Tairlaw Bridge 3000 years ago.

Of more recent times is a connection with Robert Burns. He is mentioned in a letter written to Lord Provost of Edinburgh when the Ayrshire poet was visiting the city. On his patron's death, Scotland's national poet wrote an elaborate elegy and, though he decried the quality of the verse, he claimed the the sentiment was sincere.



## Lady Hunter Blair's Trail

2.5 miles / 4km



## The Hill Wood Trail

3.25 miles / 5km



Cross the Fowlers Croft to Dalmellington Road. Just beyond Scienteuch Bridge go up to Glenhead and turn left through the gate a quarter of a mile beyond the steading. Views open up as you head towards Altizourie noting Blairquhan Castle (1820-24) beyond the water meadows.

The castle was the home of the Hunter Blair family. It is a regency mansion of Tudor design by William Burn. The site has a long and varied history including connections with Robert Burns and links with the renowned road builder, John Loudon Macadam. It is beautifully situated on the left bank of the river. On the edge of the moor you might be lucky enough to spot roe deer, sparrowhawks, and buzzards.

Return by the same route, with Straiton Monument and Bannan Hill providing an impressive backdrop. If you choose to return by road please take extra care.

## The Church Trail

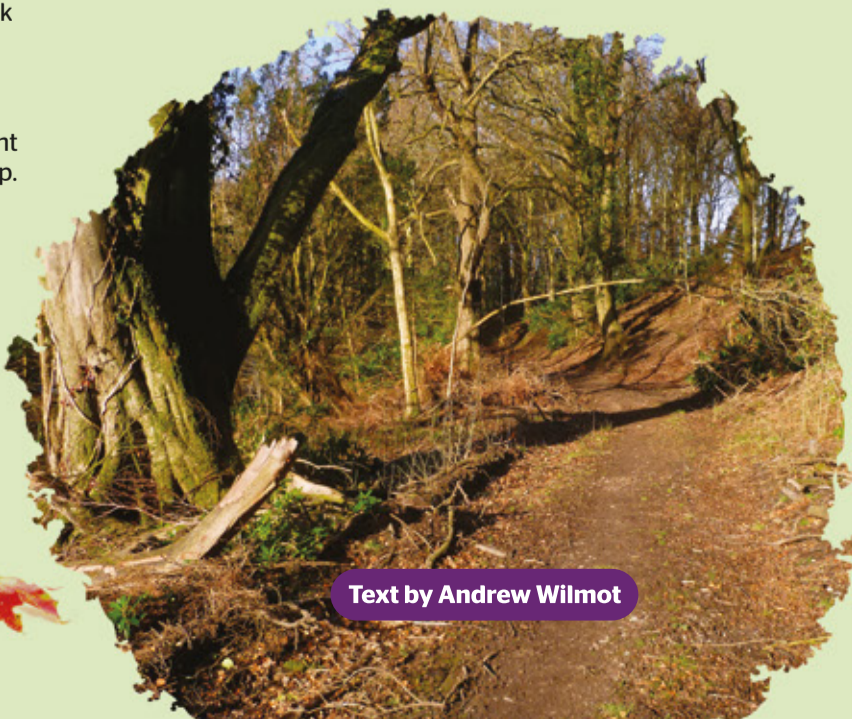
1.25 miles / 2km



The name refers to the Victorian practice of walking to church going from the Castle and the Dower House via the mill-lade. Points of historical interest on the Old Pond Road are: the dam at the curling pond now with shimmering poplars, the arch of the bridge at Milton, and the lade built to maintain a steady flow at the mill itself.

Eddie's Island with its two foot-bridges, its bamboo thickets and firs is an attractive addition to the paths. Squirrels, dippers, and kingfishers may be seen here as may snowdrop, primroses and comfrey in their seasons.

Repairs to The Church Trail were supported by North Carrick Community Benefit Company.



Text by Andrew Wilmot

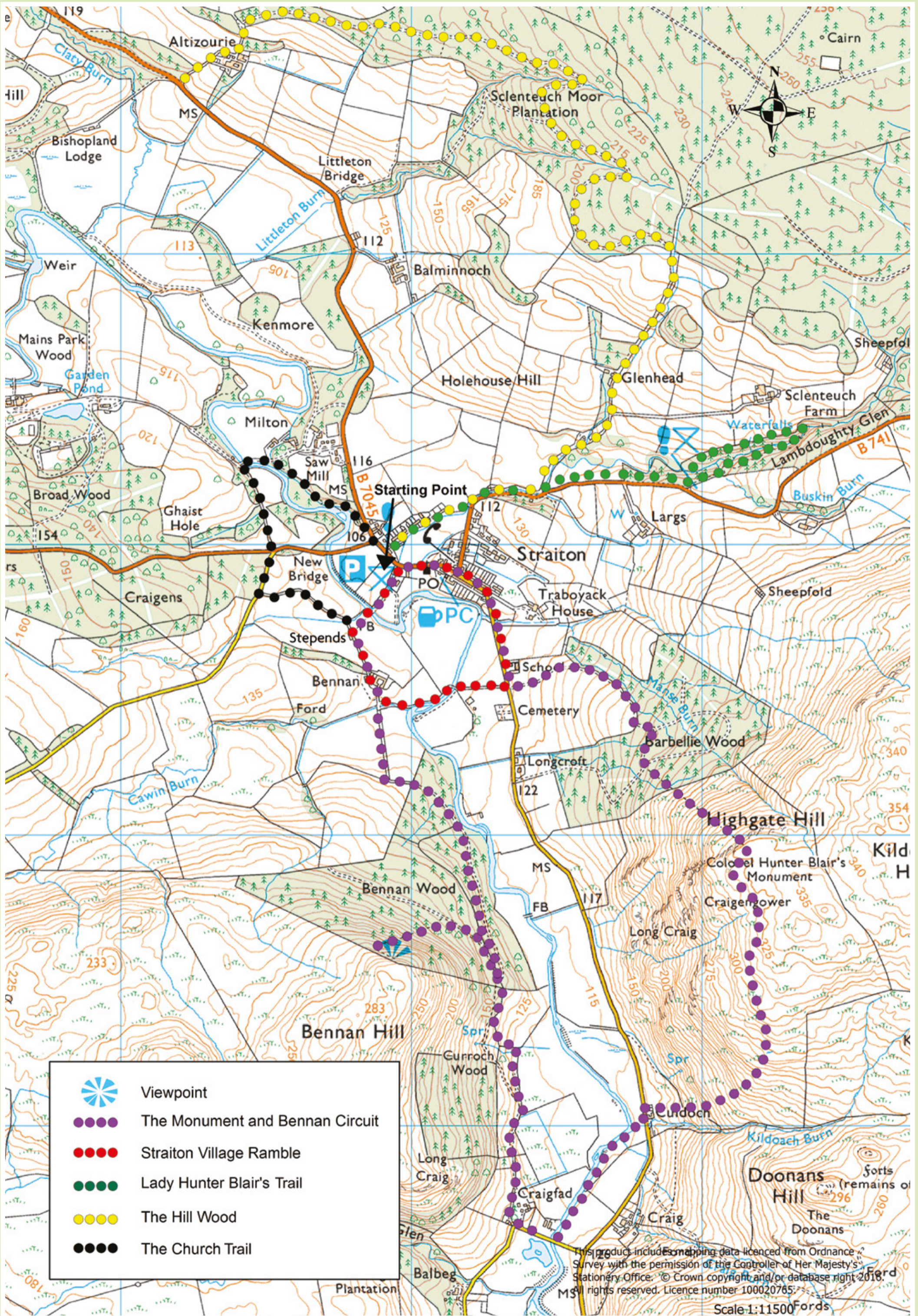
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COUNCIL







# Straiton Trails



Map with routes inside...





-  Viewpoint
-  The Monument and Bannan Circuit
-  Straiton Village Ramble
-  Lady Hunter Blair's Trail
-  The Hill Wood
-  The Church Trail

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