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Andy Goldsworthy



Striding Arches

Andy Goldsworthy is one of the world's foremost artists working directly in the landscape. *Striding Arches* – a series of grand, self-supporting arches standing on hilltops surrounding the natural amphitheatre at Cairnhead – is the first of Goldsworthy's large-scale projects involving multiple structures to be installed in a public landscape in Scotland.

Other arches made of Dumfriesshire sandstone by Goldsworthy stand in Canada, the United States and New Zealand, echoing the travels of emigrating Scots over the last 200 years or so, and of the sandstone carried as ballast by timber ships making the return voyage to North America. 'The stone is a potent symbol of the Scots who went abroad,' says Goldsworthy, 'of the tremendous upheaval they made, or were forced to make, when they left Scotland... I would hope that collectively these arches are a celebration and monument to the Scottish people and the travels they have made, and that they will act as a connection between those who have left and those who have stayed here.'

Each arch stands just under four metres high, with a span of about seven metres, and consists of 31 blocks of hand-dressed red sandstone weighing approximately 27 tons.



Crucial to Goldsworthy's selection of sites was his stipulation that no matter which arch you find yourself at, you should always be able to see the other two: the three arches are linked together by sightlines. 'What I am working is the space, the line, the stuff that is intangible, the atmosphere of the work, the feel of it, the bits in between. That for me is the work.'

At Cairnhead steading, the first of the arches to be installed (in 2005) leaps from the gable end of a disused farm building, a striking demonstration of the impulse Goldsworthy associates with this form: 'I've always liked the idea of the free-roaming arch, released from the quarry, unconfined by a building.'

The Byre – a combination of sculpture and shelter – provides a meeting point for visitors to the Striding Arches, as well as an easily accessible introduction to its partners on the hilltops. In the area around the Byre are various inscriptions on stone by lettercarver Pip Hall reflecting the human history of the place.

The *Striding Arches* project has come out of the mutual ambitions of Andy Goldsworthy, Cairnhead Community Forest Trust and the Dumfries & Galloway Arts Association to site a permanent work in a public landscape space in south-west Scotland, not far from where the artist has chosen to make his home.



Cairnhead is a beautiful and rewarding place to walk in. In time, it will become even richer.

Explore / Hills

Visiting the arches on the hill tops can be challenging, and you will need to be prepared for some fairly demanding walking, sometimes across open moorland. Cairnhead is a working forest landscape, and as the programme of harvesting proceeds, new forest tracks will be constructed, eventually forming a comprehensive network of straightforward routes up on to the hills and the arches. Meanwhile, you are free to explore anywhere within the forests owned by Forestry Commission Scotland.

You should have with you the Explorer map OS 328 (2 1/2 inch to the mile). Cairnhead is 11 km / 7 miles from Moniaive.

The nearest hill-top Striding Arch from here is on Colt Hill. At 9 km or nearly 6 miles in total, this is a strenuous walk requiring waterproof footwear. Follow the forest road 4 km / 2 1/2 miles up the glen and near the top, turn right off the track at the finger post. Continue for 1/2 km / 1/3 mile along the edge of the forestry to the arch on top of Colt Hill. To return, retrace your steps.

A 14 km / 9 mile walk will take you to the Striding Arch on Benbrack (hill-walking boots recommended). Follow the forest road up the glen for 4 km / 2 1/2 miles and, near the top, at the finger post, turn left off the track. Continue for about 200 metres along the edge of the plantation, then turn left along the Southern Upland Way for approximately 3 km / 2 miles to the arch on top of Benbrack Hill. To return, retrace your steps.

At present there are no defined forest roads or paths leading to the Striding Arch on Bail Hill, so you need to be prepared to find your own way, with the help of map and compass.

Should you wish to follow in the steps of Andy Goldsworthy – from one hill-top arch to the next around the perimeter of the glen – you should be prepared for rugged conditions and a challenging hike of roughly 16 km / 10 miles over hilly terrain, again armed with a map and compass: the route will be created gradually by those who walk it.

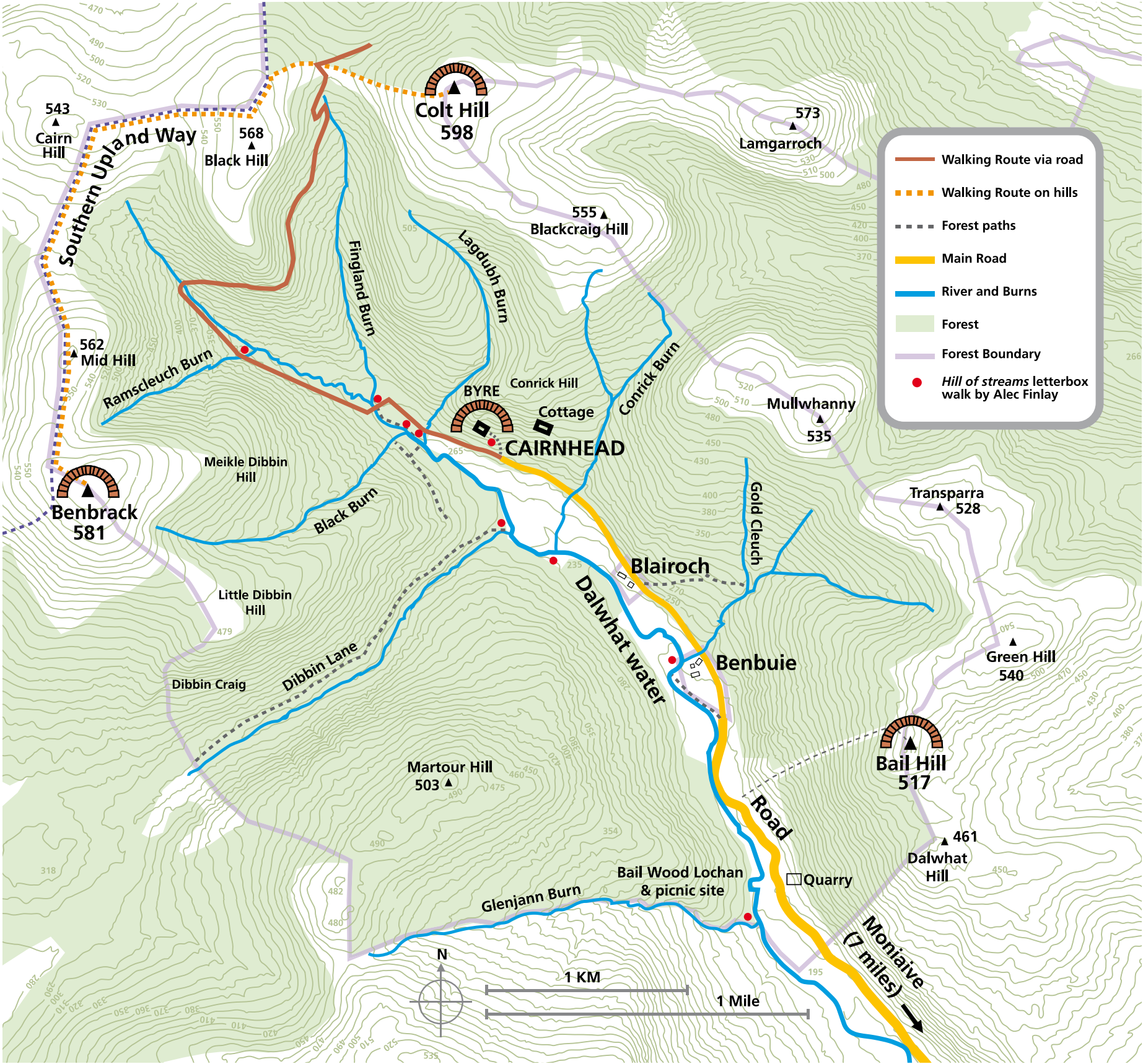
The plantations at Cairnhead are mainly of Sitka spruce, established for timber production. In common with other forests in Dumfries & Galloway, Cairnhead has proved a welcome refuge for red squirrels whose numbers have actually increased in this area. Small birds such as the coal tit, siskin and crossbill all make their homes here and are relatively easy to see. Red deer and roe deer roam through the forest, and birds more usually seen in deciduous woodland, including song thrushes, goldcrests and chaffinches, frequent areas of mature trees.

The clear waters of Dalwhat Water and the numerous small burns and ditches feeding it from the hills support an enormous variety of insect life. Keep a look out, in summer, for damselflies and the golden-ringed dragonfly, mayflies and caddis flies. Dalwhat Water itself provides an important nursery habitat for Atlantic salmon: after the eggs laid in gravel nests here have hatched, juvenile salmon remain in the burn for two to three years before migrating to sea.

Several birds of prey have increased significantly in number around Cairnhead: goshawks, which are swift and agile flyers, navigate their way effortlessly into areas of mature trees in the forest, the more remote the better; short-eared owls prefer the young plantations, where they can nest and raise their young on the ground, and easily move in and out of the cover afforded by trees; and barn owls, which hunt over meadow and grassland, are drawn to the valley bottoms where they nest in abandoned farm buildings and bothies.

Birds associated with open scrub such as whinchats, stonechats and meadow pipits make use of the open areas on the hilltops above the forest, whilst ravens nest on craggy outcrops and soar above the glen.

The ongoing Forest Design Plan for felling and restocking Cairnhead will link and enlarge remaining fragments of mixed native woodland using the corridor network of the burns here. In time, more diverse habitats will develop and a greater range of species will repopulate the glen, from Scotch Argus butterflies to nightjars and black grouse.



Bail Hill arch



Colt Hill arch



Benbrack arch



The Byre



The Byre



Letter carving by Pip Hall, Cairnhead



Alec Finlay letterbox, Cairnhead



Buzzard



Scotch Argus butterfly