

The sweeping glens and craggy ridges of Glen Rosa

How old are the mountains?

Although the north end of Arran contains our oldest rocks (over 500 million years old), much of the landscape we see today was formed a mere 60 million years ago. A great granite dome formed beneath the older rocks and was then gradually uncovered by erosion. During the last Ice Age this dome was carved by glaciers, resulting in the sweeping glens and mountainous craggy ridges we see today. Look out for the U-shaped valleys, corries and hanging valleys.

People in the past

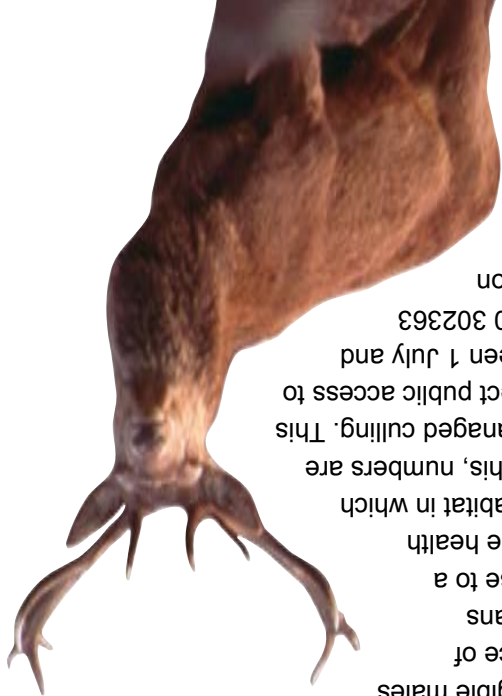
Over the millennia Goatfell has been an ideal location for humans to hunt and gather resources and later to farm and graze animals. You can see the remains of all sorts of activities across the hillside – from prehistoric standing stones to 18th-century turf and stone huts (shielings). During World War II six military aircraft crashed into Goatfell and Beinn Nuis, with the loss of 51 lives.

Arran's largest mammal

Red deer are a common sight in the hills. In autumn listen for the eerie call of the rutting stags as they contest with other eligible males

for hinds. The absence of natural predators means numbers may increase to a level that damages the health of the deer and the habitat in which they live. To prevent this, numbers are controlled through managed culling. This practice does not affect public access to the mountains. Between 1 July and 20 October call 01770 302363 to obtain information on stalking activities outside the Goatfell property.

Red deer stag



Top: Rowan over water Bottom: Slopes of Goatfell

Why no trees?

Prolonged grazing by deer and sheep reduce the chance of seedling trees and shrubs surviving into maturity. Some survive, but only by clinging precariously to steep crags or hanging over deep waterfalls. Much of the hillside has the potential for woodland cover, so the Trust has protected some sparsely wooded burns with a deer fence. This will encourage the natural regeneration of Arran's native trees and the wildlife that lives in this habitat.



Goatfell

The Arran skyline is dominated by the jagged summits and ridges of Goatfell and the surrounding hills, providing a dramatic backdrop to Brodick Castle, Garden and Country Park. It is a spectacular example of an open, rugged, upland landscape formed during the last Ice Age.

The National Trust for Scotland

Goatfell ISLE OF ARRAN

Rugged and Wild



Goatfell overlooks the Firth of Clyde. From the Brodick ferry terminal take the A841 north for 2 miles to the Cladach car park where the main Goatfell path begins.



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Please support the Trust by becoming a member today and help to protect Scotland's heritage for future generations to enjoy.

Tel: 0131 243 9300 / 01770 302462 (NTS Goatfell)
Website: www.nts.org.uk

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The NTS Ranger Service is generously supported by



3014 MP 10m 3/06 / Recognised Charity No. SC007410

Look and listen

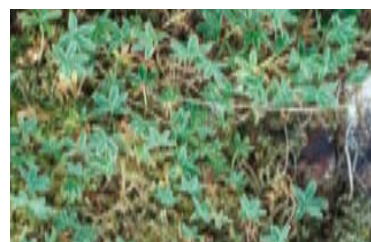
Wheatear

In summer look out for a small bird with a prominent white rump; fitting amongst the rocks. This was once served up as a delicacy on Victorian dinner tables!



Alpine lady's mantle

This plant can be found higher up the mountain path, with small yellow flowers and leaves that are silvery underneath.



Common milkwort

From May to August, look out in grassy places for the distinctive flowers – mainly blue, mauve or white, but sometimes pink!



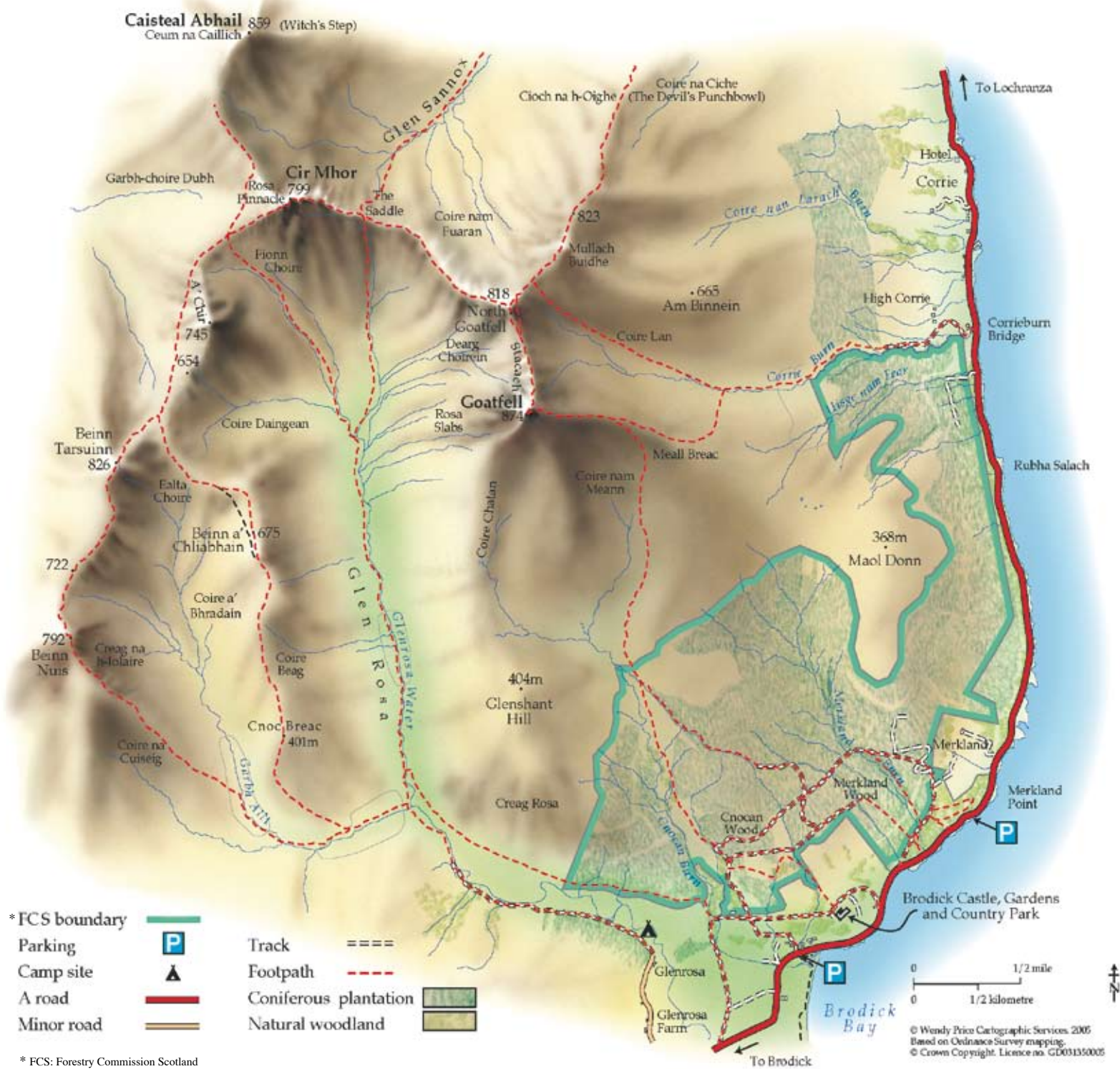
Raven

Listen for the loud throaty croak and see its black metallic sheen as it tumbles in the wind.



Goatfell: possibly from the Gaelic 'Gaodabheinn' or Norse 'Geita-Fjall', both meaning 'Goat hill' or from the Gaelic 'Gaoithe Bheinn' meaning 'Windy hill'.





Top: The Stacach Ridge and North Goatfell Left: Member of path repair team stops to enjoy the view

Watch your feet

The many thousands of boots that climb these hills take their toll on the paths, quickly removing the thin layer of fragile vegetation. The steep ground beneath becomes eroded by the very wet Arran climate. The soft peat and soil becomes waterlogged and stripped away, leaving rough and boggy conditions, that are walked around, forming a wide scar on the landscape. Since the 1970s this problem has been tackled through extensive (and expensive!) repair and maintenance work, by groups of volunteers and professional footpath experts.

Enjoy the view

Goatfell is a very popular high level walk enjoyed by thousands each year. On a clear day you may see as far as Ben Lomond to the north and the coast of Ireland to the south-west. However, mountains must be treated with respect and dramatic changes in the weather conditions can occur throughout the year. The summit can be cold, wet and windy, even in summer, and visibility can be quickly reduced to a few metres. Be prepared by carrying a map, compass, torch, food and drink, and waterproof and warm clothing – it's easy to be caught out! The final 200m is steep and rocky and the path isn't always apparent, so take care on loose stones, especially in winter.



Heather

Wildlife – special species

Hen harrier – This bird (with a strikingly owl-like face) has a buoyant, graceful flight and can occasionally be spotted flying low across the heather moorland. The male bird is an unusual slate grey colour with black wing tips and the female has a distinctive white rump.

Ptarmigan – The Goatfell area is the most southerly home in Britain for this grouse. The ptarmigan is brilliantly camouflaged on the summits with a plumage that changes from mottled brown in the summer to white in the winter.

Dwarf willow – You'll have to look carefully for the smallest willow in Britain, as it grows to just 5cm tall on the higher parts of the mountain.

Dwarf juniper – If you keep an eye out on the main path up Goatfell you will almost certainly see this plant. A native to Scotland, this rare spreading plant lives in remote areas with a cool wet climate, and has short, broad needle-like leaves.

Spot the difference

Is it a bird? Yes! Is it an eagle?
 If you think you've seen a golden eagle, you probably haven't! Both can be seen, but buzzards are more common on Arran than eagles. Mottled underneath, buzzards announce their presence with a loud mewing call. Eagles are much bigger, uniformly brown and generally quiet.



Buzzard



Golden eagle



Buzzard

Importance of heather

For many people the shimmer of purple and the sweet scent of heather on the breeze symbolises the Highlands of Scotland. Heather moorland is at risk from deer and sheep grazing. It is an important habitat for birds and insects as nesting sites, food sources and shelter. Deer numbers are controlled to ensure that there is no loss in the extent of heather cover on the property.

Wet can be good

Scotland has some of the most important areas of bog in the world, and Arran is doing its bit to help keep this habitat. Some drains that were dug in the early 1900s in the wettest areas in the Goatfell area are now being dammed to retain water and allow Sphagnum mosses to thrive under wetter conditions.

Despite the damp conditions of Arran, long spells of dry weather can increase the risk of hillside fires. Dry, dead grasses can easily catch fire from sparks or cigarette ends. The last fire at Goatfell spread faster than you can run – so please be vigilant!

Hen harrier



Ptarmigan



Dwarf willow



Dwarf juniper

