

Scotia Challenge 2022

Welcome to another Scotia Challenge. Hopefully this one will be permitted to take place in one calendar year, rather than the extended 2020/21 event.

As usual, we offer a selection of checkpoints to encourage you to enjoy the wonderful scenery and roads in Scotland, and visit places and discover objects that you might not notice. This is the sixteenth challenge, and it is hard to avoid repetition, but we have tried to find new locations and unusual artefacts. Inevitably we will take some roads already travelled.

Entrants do not need to visit all 45 checkpoints. Following recent practice, we have again kept at least 20 of the checkpoints within approximately 50 miles, as the crow flies, from our meeting place in Leuchars. This is to allow older machines, or those entrants with less time, to achieve the 15 checkpoint "first hurdle" and gain an award. The checkpoints are not necessarily in any order, but some have been grouped geographically or thematically. It is your job to sort them out, and decide which checkpoints to visit. Plan any number of routes to suit your own preference and schedule. Some checkpoints may conveniently be visited in conjunction with the annual Club events. (Hint) Again we have included post codes, which may help, but may not take you to the exact spot. Please remember that a rural post code can cover many square miles!

In keeping with tradition, we have included an island, actually two. In 2008 the Scotia Challenge offered the chance to visit Mull, and this year you have an opportunity to revisit, or visit for the first time. Some travel advice is offered later. The other island is Cramond, near Edinburgh, but you cannot actually take the bike there.

The checkpoints this year include suggestions from a number of the Challenge's regular supporters, thank you to Michelle, John H, Willie H, Don McL, Davie F, and anyone else I have overlooked. Many of your suggestions may be "in the bank" – there are too many to use this year.

Remember it is not a race. The aim is to enjoy the planning, take your time, visit some of the points of interest and take all season to do it. Record a recognisable picture of the checkpoint including your motorcycle. If it is closed or inaccessible then a sign nearby will suffice. Note there is a Scotia Challenge group on Facebook so please add any information to it that will help fellow riders coming behind you. That could include campsites, recommended B&B's, fuel availability, ferry costs and times etc.

As always have a great time, enjoy yourself and ride safely in your adventures.

Note – distances are generally quoted in miles, to align with our road signs and because most of our Classic bikes have MPH dials. I may also have used metres or yards. All are approximate, rounded, and for guidance only.

Ian Bell

1. Weak Wall. We've had a weak road and a weak bridge in recent years; this year's unusual "weak spot" is a *weak wall*, (Grid Reference is NM 911 450). It is on a single track road about ½ mile south east of the picturesque village of Port Appin. Turn off the A828 about 3 miles north of the Creagan Bridge or 12 miles north of the Connel Bridge, at the junction signed for the Lismore Ferry. Nearest post code to the wall is PA38 4DQ

2. AA Box #472. This year's AA Box is at Cambus O'May - on the A93, just south west of the B9119 turn off, and about 4.5 miles east of Ballater. The nearest post code is AB35 5SE

3. Brechin Water Works Memorial – This pale blue painted cast-iron memorial is adjacent to the car park at Brechin Golf Club, Trinity. The inscription declares "Brechin Water Works, opened by The Earl of Dalhousie in 1874". Trinity is on the B966, less than a mile from its junction with the A90. DD9 7PD

4. Butterstone Village Hall. This wooden community building sits in the quaintly named village of Butterstone on the A923, a few miles out of Dunkeld on the road to Blairgowrie. Watch out for the sign to the Hall, as it is located 150 yards up a single track lane into the trees. Has its own car park. Take care on the A923 - look out for traffic to the Land Rover Experience, wildlife reserve residents i.e. waterfowl, birds of prey, and deer. PH8 0HA

5. The Davidson Legacy. The restored Davidson Cottage, sits on the south side of the B9134 in Netherton, between Aberlemno and Brechin. It was opened in 2012 and the story of its rescue can be found on <https://thedavidsonlegacy.com/> this was the former home of Sandy and Margaret Davidson, who emigrated to Wisconsin in 1858 with their 6 children. Three of their grandchildren, along with a Mr Bill Harley, were the founders of a certain legendary motorcycle company. Note – it may be open on Sundays through the summer if you want to look around inside. Or call the owners – see the website. DD9 6SH.

6. Straiton war memorial. Straiton is a small village on the River Girvan in South Ayrshire, mainly built in the 18th century, but with some recent housing. The war memorial is at the eastern end of Main Street. On the B741 / B7045. KA19 7NH

7. Celtic Cross War Memorial. This granite memorial in the shape of a Celtic Cross, stands on the north side of the main road through Craigton of Airlie, on the A926 Kirriemuir to Alyth road. DD8 5NR

8. Sanquhair Tollbooth Museum. Built in 1785, designed by William Adam, this two storey building with prominent clock tower sits on High Street, literally in the middle of this small town on the A76. There is an adjacent car park, toilets, and eateries. Note just yards south at 41 High Street is the oldest operational Post Office in the world, and an attraction for philatelic enthusiasts. It opened in 1712, and hopefully will still be there when you visit. (At the time of writing, the owners were trying to sell up and retire.) DG4 6BN

9. West Linton Clock Tower. The village of West Linton sits just off the A702, originally the Roman Road from Edinburgh, and at the cross roads with the drovers' trail from Crieff south to England. Few visit it now, and given the narrow medieval street pattern and role as a busy local centre it's just as well. In the centre, at Lower Green on Main Street you will find this clock tower, and drinking fountain. EH46 7ED

10. The Glenfinnan Viaduct. This railway viaduct has 21 arches, is 100 feet high and is the longest concrete viaduct in Scotland. Built by Sir Robert Macalpine, whose nickname was 'Concrete Bob', the viaduct was opened in 1901. Today it carries the rail traffic over the River Finnan from Fort William to Mallaig, including the 'Jacobite' steam train which featured as 'The Hogwarts Express' in the Harry Potter films. Get the best picture you can with the bike in it. There is a wee road going up to and under the bridge – you may be able to get your picture from there. If not, you can see it from the National Trust car park on the main road, A830. PH37 4LT

11. Pelton Wheel, at Kinlochleven. The village of Kinlochleven in Lochaber lies at the eastern end of Loch Leven. It was formed from two previously separate communities following the construction of an aluminium smelter requiring accommodation for its employees, some 700 in the early days. The associated Blackwater Dam was completed in 1907 and can be accessed up a 5 mile walking track. Competition from larger US smelters led to the closure by Alcan in 2000. Now the village is a popular tourist destination for walkers on the West Highland Way. Some former power station buildings have been repurposed. eg the generator hall now houses "The Ice Factor" the National Ice Climbing Centre, and the former coke bunker contains a Brewery. One of the original Pelton wheels has been salvaged and forms an outdoor feature near the Ice Factor car park for your photo. PH50 4SF

A trio of Castles :

12. Caerlaverock Castle. This is one of Scotland's great medieval castles, with an impressive twin-towered gatehouse and a moat. It has an unusual triangular shape with three curtain walls linked by high towers. Besieged and captured many times from 1300 to 1640, when it was stripped and the south wall demolished so it could never be used to defend against the English again. Operated by Historic Environment Scotland, the castle itself is currently closed but the grounds are free to visit and read about its chequered history. Small gift shop, coffees etc. Well signed, on the B725 about 7 miles south of Dumfries. DG1 4RU

13. Ochardton Tower. This is an unusual free-standing round tower, the only one of its type remaining in Scotland. It is believed to have been built as a fortified residence for a nobleman named John Cairns, who may have acquired the land after James II's overthrow of the Douglases in 1455. Maintained by Historic Environment Scotland and free to visit. Look for the brown sign off the A711, about 4 miles south of Dalbeattie. DG7 1QH

14. Kinlochaline Castle – This was an early MacInnes fort, rebuilt as a Tower House late 15thC. Attacked and burnt in 1644, and 1679, abandoned from 1690 until 1890. Extensively rebuilt in the 1990s and now a private residence. Please respect the owner's privacy and take a photo from the road. Turn off the A884 4km north of Lochaline ferry terminal for Mull. PA34 5UZ

A selection of Churches, Abbeys, and a few loosely “religious” edifices :

15. Ruthwell Church. The current church was built around 1803 and extended in 1887 to house the famous Ruthwell Cross. This red sandstone Anglo-Saxon carved cross was initially erected here in the early 700s, but was broken up in the 1640s and “lost” in the graveyard until found in 1818. The cross was rebuilt by the then minister, Rev Dr Henry Duncan, who is also famous for founding the world’s first commercial Savings Bank, now a tiny museum located nearby. (You may spot the lair of my great grandfather William Bell, 1862-1929, in this graveyard). Follow for the brown signs for “Ruthwell Cross” from the B724 about 12 miles west of Annan. There is a small car park to the side. DG1 4NP

16. Dundrennan Abbey. This was a Cistercian monastery in the Romanesque architectural style, established in 1142 by Fergus of Galloway, King David I of Scotland (1124–53), and monks from Rievaulx Abbey. Now extensively ruined, Dundrennan was built from very hard-weathering grey sandstone, so the original architectural forms and mouldings are well preserved in the surviving transepts. Mary, Queen of Scots, after the Battle of Langside, spent her final night in Scotland here, in 1568. From neighbouring Port Mary, she crossed the Solway Firth to Workington, and shortly after was imprisoned by the English. In 1587, following the Scottish Reformation, the land passed to the Crown. The site fell into ruin after which it was used to house livestock. Historic Environment Scotland maintains the site, but it is currently closed for repairs. It can be easily photographed from the car park, on the A711, 6 miles south east of Kircudbright. DG6 4QH

17. Kingoldrum Kirk. This former rural parish church is located on a prominent mound overlooking a small valley in this rural Angus village. It sits within a fairly large, round graveyard, common to earlier Christian church sites. The current church was built in 1840, more or less on the site of a medieval predecessor, and an early Celtic church first recorded in 1178 dedicated to St Medan. The church closed in 2009, and sold. Please respect the privacy of the owners and take a photo from the adjacent parking area, right on the B951. It’s on the western edge of Kirkton of Kingoldrum, about 6km west of Kirriemuir. DD8 5HG

18. Obelisk, near Kinross. This impressive tall obelisk commemorates the formation of the first Secession Church presbytery, at Gairney Bridge in 1733. Erected in 1883, it sits in a small car park on the west side of the B996, south of Kinross / Loch Leven, and just north of the B9097 junction. It is easily accessed from Junction 5 of the A90. Note it’s not identified by name on Google Maps, but is clearly visible in Street View just across the road from the Gairneybridge Cattery. KY13 9LD

19. Edinample Mausoleum. This is believed to be the mausoleum of Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Campbell of Monzie and Fonab, who bought Edinample in about 1717. An original commander of one of the 6 companies of soldiers established in 1729 and subsequently amalgamated to form the Black Watch Regiment. The date of Alexander Campbell's death is unknown. You will find this off-white building near the entrance to Edinample Castle (private), less than a mile along the South Loch Earn road. Turn off the A84 1km south of Lochearnhead. FK19 8QE

20. The Twelve Apostles Stone Circle. The Twelve Apostles (grid reference NX9470079400) is a large stone circle located between the villages of Holywood and Newbridge, about 3 miles north of Dumfries. It is the seventh largest stone circle in Britain and the largest on the mainland of Scotland. It is similar in design to the stone circles of Cumbria, and is considered to be an outlier of this group. Its south-westerly arrangement aligns it with the midwinter sunset. Turn off the A76 at Holywood village onto the B729 heading west, after 500 yards turn left at a right hand corner. Not well signed by the way, and the stones sit in the middle of a field, hence the grid ref above! DG2 0HZ

21. Glen Lyon Church. The present white painted building dates from 1828. It is the smallest of a large number of 'Parliamentary Churches' built throughout the Highlands to the Thomas Telford design. It was built on the site of an earlier 18th century church. It's on the unclassified road from Ben Lawers to Fortingall, less than a mile east of Bridge of Balgie. Note across the road from the church is the prominent stone cairn landmark of Meggernie War Memorial, erected in 1921. PH15 2PP

22. Glen Artney Church. This small church dates from about 1905, and can be found near the end of the single track road through Glen Artney, Perthshire. Follow the B827 south from the centre of Comrie and turn right onto the minor road going past Cultybraggan camp. After about 5 miles, you will find Glen Artney church and its car park. A walking track continues through the hills to Callander 8 miles. A photo of the car park sign is fine. PH6 2JJ

Some churches in Glen Esk, near Brechin.

If you take the B966 Edzell to Fettercairn road, and turn left about 1 mile after Edzell signed Glen Esk, you will find no less than three small and active churches in this picturesque glen. Our checkpoints are two of these three :

23. Maule Memorial Church. The first is Maule Memorial, restored in 1990, but originally built by Fox Maule Ramsey in about 1852 following the Free Church schism from the Church of Scotland in 1843. It's in trees on the left in the hamlet of Tarfside, some 8 miles up the glen. DD9 7YU

About 400 yards further along the road and still in Tarfside, St Drostan's Church sits on the right. The present church was built in 1879, the forth Episcopal Church in Glen Esk, with history dating back to the arrival of St Drostan in the early 600s. The car park can be popular with hill walkers we're told. (possibly because the church lodge offers self-catering accommodation for up to 17 people.) Take the left fork opposite St Drostan's signed Invermark.

24. Lochlee Parish Church. After about 4 miles is Lochlee Parish Church, on the right. It was built in 1803 replacing earlier ruined churches a mile west dating back to the 600s. The road does go on west a bit further past Invermark Castle, but I'm afraid it ends for us at a NO VEHICLES sign just before the castle. It's hikers only past there. DD9 7YZ

Memorials to famous people, and animals :

25. John Carnie Memorial. This takes the form of a roadside drinking trough and pink granite slab. Erected in memory of John C Carnie who served in the Boer War and died in 1900. It's on the north side of the B974 less than a mile from Strachan heading towards Banchory. It's not prominent, but sits beside a double field gate, on the outside of a slight right hand bend, with a small pull-in. Half way between AB31 6LG and AB31 6NL

26. Symington Memorial, Leadhills. William Symington was born in this small mining village in 1764. At 19, while employed at the Wanlockhead Mines superintending one of Watt's Engines, he conceived an idea for adapting steam to boat propulsion, and built a working model. Successful larger scale experiments between 1788 and 1801 led to the interest and support of Lord Dundas, a proprietor in the Forth and Clyde Canal, and he employed Symington to make a series of experimental steam-boats, as substitutes for the horses then used on the Canal. In 1803 came the "First Practical Steam-Boat," named the "Charlotte Dundas," in honour of his Lordship's daughter. In 1891 this Memorial to William was erected in his birthplace. It's located on the hillside to the north of the village, below the cemetery, and stands 30 feet tall. It's not signed, and not easy to access by road, but is prominent enough to find. A photo from an adjacent street will suffice. ML12 6YB

27. Khan, the war hero dog, Strathaven. A bronze statue to Khan sits in the Common Green, a few hundred yards north of the A71 in the centre of Strathaven. Rifleman Khan was a German Shepherd Dog who was lent to the War Office to become a military dog during World War II. He was assigned to the Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) and took part in the Battle of the Scheldt. He earned the Dickin Medal, which is considered to be the Victoria Cross for animals, for saving the life of his handler in 1945. The sculpture is by John McKenna, who also crafted the statue of Bon Scott in Kirriemuir by the way. ML10 6AQ

28. Horse and rider statue, Peebles. This modern art work commemorates the sporting achievements of show jumper and local lad, Scott Brash M.B.E. It sits near the big car park in Peebles, beside the A703 a few yards north of the junction with the A72 ie the roundabout and petrol station. EH45 8AZ

29. John Cameron Memorial Obelisk. This prominent obelisk shaped memorial will be found up a wee lane off the A830, just east of Drumfada Terrace in Corpach. Turn north at the blue sign for Kilmallie Church of Scotland at the lane end. (beside Kilmallie Manse on google.) Cameron was mortally wounded in action at Quatre Bras near Brussels on June 16 in 1815 while commanding the 92nd Highland Regiment the Gordon Highlanders. He died just 48 hours before the Duke of Wellington's famous victory over Napoleon Bonaparte at Waterloo and his family was later honoured for Cameron's part in the campaign. PH33 7JS

30. Memorial Cairn to Calum Macpherson. Calum Piobair, from Laggan (1834 to 1898), was a famous Scottish piper to the Clunys of Cluny Castle. The cairn is beside the A889 Dalwhinnie to Spean Bridge road, on the left hand side about 5.5 miles north of the distillery. Look out for the snow gates; there is a parking area just after them on the left. Google does show Piper's Cottage further on round the corner by the way. PH20 1BT

This year's (eclectic) distillery and brewery collection.

31. Persie Distillery. This new gin and vodka distillery is at Auchenflower, just north of Bridge of Cally. Travelling north on the A93, pass the Bridge of Cally Hotel on your left. After about 1.5 miles, pass the drive with the 'Persie' sign, and it is the white house and steading in 200 yards on your left. Follow the brown tourist sign instead of the sat nav! Open most afternoons, but see <https://www.persiedistillery.com> or Email snifter@persiedistillery.com to book a tasting. PH10 7LQ

32. Ogilvy Distillery. This potato vodka distillery is beside the A928 between Glamis and the A90. Look for the sign at Hatton of Ogilvy Farm, just over a mile south of Glamis. (it's not yet on Google maps) There is room to park and take a photo of the sign. The shop is open weekend afternoons only. For info see <https://ogilvyspirits.com/> DD8 1UH

33. Abernyte Brewery. South Latch Farm, about a mile north of Abernyte village. If you take the B953 from Balbeggie to Abernyte, turn left on the minor road signposted Woodside and Burrelton. Or approach this junction from the A90 through Abernyte itself. A short way on the right you will see the Brewery at South Latch Farm. It has a large car park and visitor centre. <https://www.abernytebrewery.co.uk/> At the Southern end of the car park is a track to the south east across fields. If you walk about 250 yards along the track you will come across an abandoned Royal Ordnance Corps underground bunker. This is a relic of the cold war and would have housed a handful of observers with instruments to measure and report the extent of damage and fallout from a nuclear attack on Dundee! PH14 9SU

34. Lindores Abbey Distillery. One of our most local whisky distilleries, this is located on Abbey Road in Newburgh. Well signposted - turn off the A913 by the Gulf garage at the eastern edge of the town. Claiming to date back to 1494, their latest incarnation was bottled for sale in 2021. Visitors centre, tours, times and bookings on <https://lindoresabbeydistillery.com/> KY14 6HH

35. Fettercairn Distillery. Founded in 1824, this is currently owned by Whyte & Mackay, and can be found on Distillery Road, Fettercairn. ("foot of the mountain") Follow the brown signs from the town centre, at the junction of the Cairn O'Mount Road and the B966. At the time of writing, Distillery Tours are suspended but a photo of the extensive white buildings and prominent name sign can be taken from the road. <https://www.fettercairnwhisky.com/> AB30 1YB

The other “island” checkpoint this year :

36. Cramond Island. This is a tidal island in the Firth of Forth reached at low tide by a ¼ mile causeway from the village of Cramond. It is quite common for visitors to become stranded on the island by the incoming tide - there is a noticeboard at the end of the causeway showing times when it may safely be crossed. About a third of a mile long, rising to a height of 68ft above sea level, the island offers extensive views east to Granton and Leith; west to North Queensferry and the Forth Rail Bridge; and north to the other small islands in the Firth, and to Fife coast. Don't be tempted to take the bike over, just leave it in the car park, take your picture, and walk over if you want to. EH4 6NU

And 3 more “Dam” checkpoints :

37. Megget Dam. Megget Reservoir is an impounding reservoir in the Megget valley in Ettrick Forest. The 259 hectares reservoir is held back by the largest earth dam in Scotland, and provides water to Edinburgh via storage reservoirs in the Pentland hills nearer the capital. Excess water flows into St Mary's Loch down the Megget Water. Megget, and the adjacent Talla reservoir, are accessed from the unclassified but well surfaced and scenic single track road between Tweedsmuir A701 and Cappercleuch A708 (our old friend AA box #723 is at this junction!). TD7 5LQ

38. Ben Lawers Dam. This is a 344 metre long buttress-type dam, 42 m high. Due to the height of this reservoir the static head of water is 415m, the highest available on any hydro-electric scheme in Scotland. Located about 2.5 miles north of the A827 Killin to Kenmore road, follow the brown Ben Lawers sign and enjoy this narrow twisty hill road up to Glen Lyon. FK21 8TX

39. Loch Bradan, the “drowned” dam. The reservoir at Loch Bradan was officially opened in 1912. A new dam was completed in 1972, and the original dam is now submerged in the new reservoir. The plaque from the old dam was transferred to a cairn beside the road by the new operators. Take the unnamed road (a continuation of the B7045) south from Straiton, heading for Newton Stewart. After about 7.5 miles, turn left at Stinchar Bridge on to an unidentified single track dead-end forest road. In about a mile is Loch Bradan – look for the cairn. KA19 7NT

MULL.

The Challenge visited Mull in 2008, so we are overdue a return.

Mull is the second largest island of the Inner Hebrides (after Skye), and the fourth largest in Scotland. Most of the 3,000 or so residents live in the capital Tobermory, well known as the setting for the CBeebies programme Balamory. Mull is a popular tourist destination for those interested in early Christian history and the gateway to Iona, or just seeking to escape from the mainland and observe wild life, particularly the white tailed sea eagle.

The roads are mostly single track, and shops have somewhat limited opening hours, so plan ahead. There are enough fuel stops – in Craignure, Ardfenaig, Salen, Corrie Glen, Ledaig, and Tobermory, but they may not be open before 10am on Sunday, and probably closed by 6pm each day.

Caledonian MacBrayne operate 3 ferry routes to Mull - Oban to Craignure, bookable, taking 45 minutes and more suitable if approaching from the south. The other two routes are shorter, non-bookable options - Lochaline to Fishnish, or Kilchoan to Tobermory. These are more suitable if you are coming from the Fort William direction. Calmac also operate the Fionnphort to Iona crossing.

40. Mull Aquarium – Tobermory's newest visitor attraction, opened in 2015. This is a sustainable catch and release aquarium, where creatures stay for a maximum of 4 weeks before returning to the sea. Open Easter to October, small fee. Located in the car park at the southern end of Main Street, Tobermory. Also here are the distillery visitor centre and shop, plus fuel, eating and drinking services. PA75 6NR

41. The Columba Centre, Fionnphort. This Community building is situated just before the ferry terminal for Iona, at the westernmost tip of Mull. Signed off the "main road", and contains a small gift shop and some offices. It's a convenient place to park if the port is busy, as it can be in the summer, if you are inclined to take the short ferry over to Iona. A photo in the car park at the Centre is fine. PA66 6BL

42. Old Byre Heritage Centre. Located in Glen Bellart, just west of Dervaig. Turn off the B8073 and follow the signs for less than a mile. Open Monday to Friday, 10:30 – 17:30, 01688 400229 - Tea room with rolls and hot meals all day, a gift shop and mini-museum. (a photo at the road end "brown sign" will suffice, if you are not hungry or interested !)
PA75 6QR

43. Macquarie Mausoleum. This is the resting place of Major General Lachlan Macquarie, who was born near here on Ulva in 1762. He is better known as the governor of NSW from 1809, the instigator of major social changes in the then penal colony, and widely regarded as the "Father of Australia". The Australian Government still pay the upkeep of his mausoleum. Look for the "brown sign" off the B8035 about 2.5 miles south west of Salen. The actual mausoleum is a short walk from the road, so a photo by the sign is fine.
PA71 6HS

44. Loch Beg Bridge. The A849 Craignure to Fionnphort road now crosses the head of Loch Beg on a modern bridge; you are looking for the old disused bridge a few yards to the west. Look out for it at the junction with the B8035 to Gruline and Salen. Now a tourist attraction, with its own wee car park!

PA70 6HG

45. Aros Castle. This 13th century castle has had a number of owners in its short violent history; Clan MacDougall, Clan Donald, and Clan Maclean. A ruin since the 18th century, it sits on a promontory some 2 miles north of Salen. The closest access is $\frac{3}{4}$ mile down the track signed Aros Mains (PA72 6JP), off the A848 about 2 miles north of Salen. The ruin is not accessible by road, so please respect local residents "no parking" signs and take a photo across the fields from the track. Alternatively the castle can be seen from the opposite side of the sea inlet; there is a convenient pull-in on the A848 beside a ruined cottage, look north.

PA72 6JG