



# CYCLING CLIMBS OF SCOTLAND

A ROAD CYCLIST'S GUIDE

SIMON WARREN



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Cycling Climbs of Scotland  
A road cyclist's guide  
Simon Warren



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Thanks to my family and friends for their continued support and patience, and in particular to my Dad, who accompanied me on my research trips – two weeks of wild weather, birdwatching, vicious hills, and single malts. Thanks also to all the Strava users and X followers who have suggested climbs for me to seek out, especially Duncan Firth for leading me to a couple of absolute belters.



! REMEMBER  
to check  
your bike, check  
your body, wear  
a helmet, and, above  
all, have fun!

# LEGEND

## UNDERSTANDING THE FACTFILE AND RATINGS

### LOCATIONS

You will be able to locate each hill from the small maps provided: simply, **S** marks the start and **F** marks the finish. I would suggest you invest in either Ordnance Survey maps or a GPS system to help plan your routes in more detail. The grid reference in the Factfile locates the summit of each climb, and in brackets is the relevant **OS Landranger** map. The graphic at the start of each chapter will show you where the hills lie in the context of each region.

### FACTFILE

**WHERE** Head south out of Aviemore on the B9152 then turn south-east on the B970. At Coylumberdge turn on to the road to the Glenmore Forest Park, pass the lodge, and then climb.

**GRID REF** NH 989 062 (OS36)

**LENGTH** 5400m

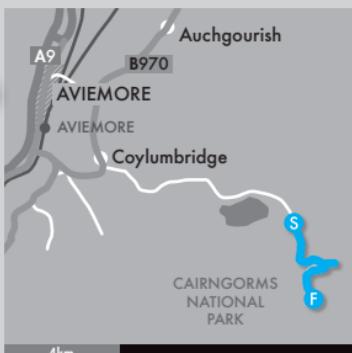
**HEIGHT GAIN** 300m

**AVG. GRADIENT** 5% | **MAX. GRADIENT** 10%



### TIMINGS

Each Factfile includes the approximate time needed to ride each hill. Timed over the distance marked, this is how long it took me to complete each climb at a reasonable but comfortable pace. Since I rode in all weathers, from blizzards to baking heat, I have adjusted the times slightly to accommodate for any adverse conditions I faced on the day. The times could be used as a target but are really just intended to help you plan your rides.



### RATINGS

The climbs are rated from **1/10** to **10/10** within the context of the book. The rating is an amalgamation of gradient, length, the likely hostility of the riding conditions, and the condition of the surface. All the climbs are tough, therefore **1/10** equals 'hard', and **10/10** equals 'it's all you can do to keep your bike moving'. Some will suit you more than others; the saying 'horses for courses' applies, but all the **10/10** climbs will test any rider.



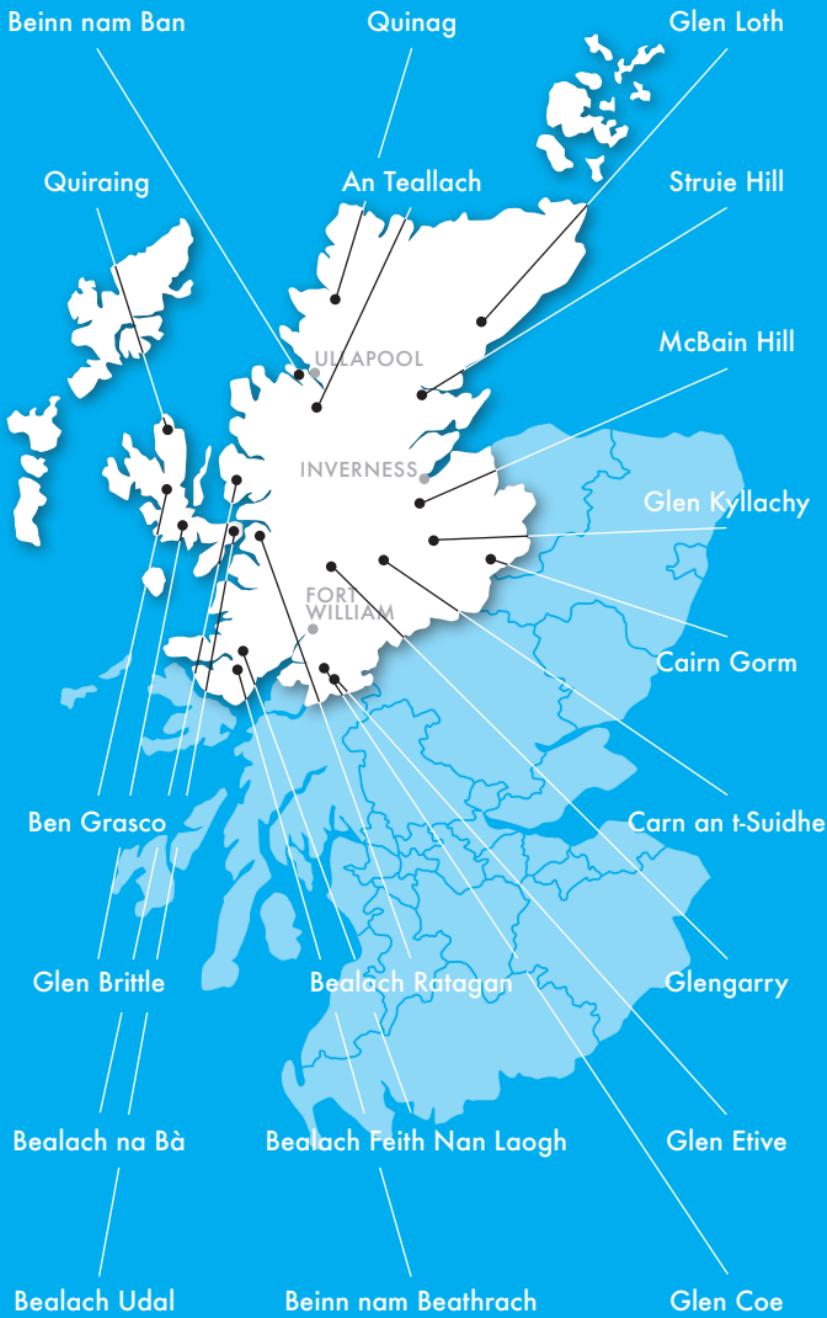
### MAP KEY

Motorway	
A Road	
B Road	
Minor Road	
Rail line	
Hill route	
Town	
Scale	

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# HIGHLANDS

A scenic road through the Scottish Highlands. The road curves through a landscape of green hills and mountains. In the foreground, a large, weathered metal pipe runs along the side of the road. The sky is overcast and cloudy. The word "HIGHLANDS" is overlaid in large, white, sans-serif capital letters across the middle of the image.





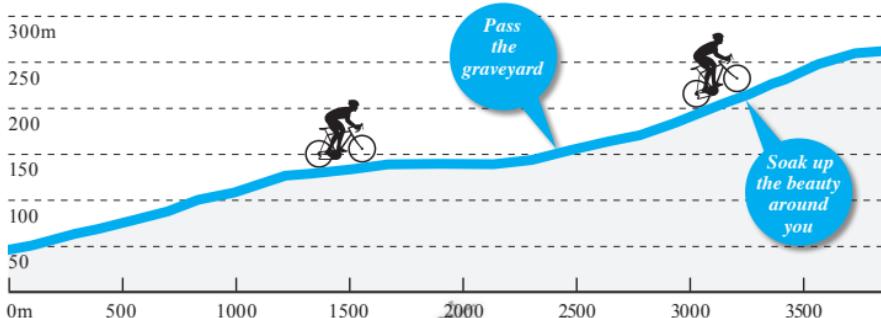
RATING

6/10

# QUIRAING

BROGAIG, ISLE OF SKYE

Atop the Isle of Skye lies a road so stunning you will never want it to end – the grandeur of its final bends have few peers in these isles. Starting at the junction with the A855 it is steep from the get-go, rising up and away from the scattered houses of Brogaig. Take care to stay right at a confusing junction and continue to climb up to a cattle grid. After this the road levels and you cross a plateau beneath the jagged peaks of Quiraing. Bumping up and down slightly, you pass a small cemetery before reaching a hard, straight 15% stretch to some fantastic corners at the top. First left, rocks jutting up either side of you, boulders strewn along the roadside, then right into the hardest stretch of climbing. Although not even this will spoil your enjoyment of these bends, set in their own natural amphitheatre. Finally, you turn sharp left and all too soon the gradient eases and you reach the summit where you are simply left wanting more.



## FACTFILE

**WHERE** Travelling north up the east side of the Isle of Skye, turn off the A855 at Brogaig and start the climb from the junction.

**GRID REF** NG 437 678 (OS23)

**LENGTH** 3850m

**HEIGHT GAIN** 217m

**AVG. GRADIENT** 5% | **MAX. GRADIENT** 15%

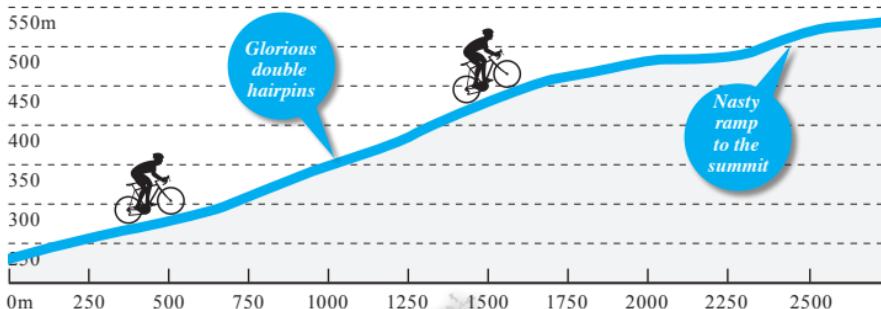




# GLEN QUAICH

GARROW, PERTH AND KINROSS

As you will see, I have included both sides of this pass in the book as they are both totally awesome, yet totally different in character. The south side casts its spell as you approach through the glen – up ahead you will see a dark line rising over the hillside. At first glance it resembles a stone wall, but it is too wide ... It couldn't be the climb, surely not – that would be insane! But as you get closer, it slowly starts to dawn on you that it is in fact the road, and your heart begins to thump. Starting from the small bridge at its base it is steep straight away and the surface is just wonderful, as smooth as rolled icing. The slope eases past some trees on your left and then it is hard up to the first cattle grid. It backs off a little again on the approach to the right-left switchbacks. Past these it is steep all the way to the second cattle grid, where there is a final lull in the action before one last vicious ramp that takes you to the summit.



## FACTFILE

**WHERE** Leave the A822 near the village of Amulree; turn right into the glen and ride past Loch Freuchie. When you reach Garrow the climb starts on the sharp right turn over the bridge.

**GRID REF** NN 807 419 (OS52)

**LENGTH** 2735m

**HEIGHT GAIN** 248m

**AVG. GRADIENT** 9% | **MAX. GRADIENT** 20%

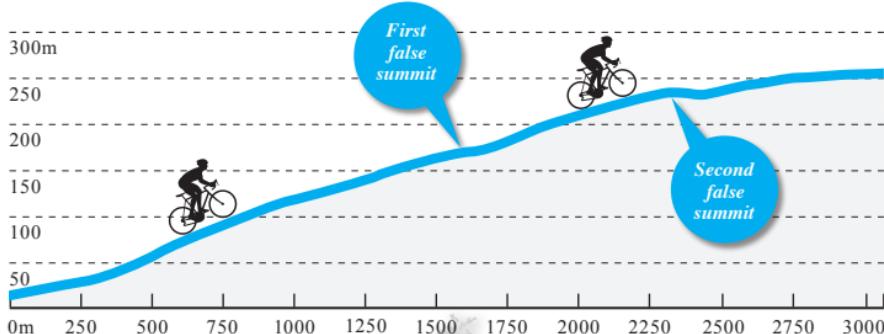




# FAIRLIE MOOR

FAIRLIE, NORTH AYRSHIRE

I was out before breakfast to ride this climb and, as you can see in the photo opposite, it was a stunning morning offering breathtaking views out over Bute. To climb it, leave the A78, pass under the rail bridge, and plunge briefly into darkness under a thick canopy of trees. Immediately the gradient is nasty, touching 15%, and the road continues to rise sharply as it bends left. Ahead there are numerous clumps of conifers and once you reach them the slope relaxes. Next you cross a cattle grid and ahead see a brow on the horizon of the now open moor. As you close in on it you realise this isn't the top, and another summit reveals itself a few hundred metres further on. But this isn't the end either – a third pronounced brow soon appears. Following a small dip the climbing is a little tougher, but this time you do arrive at the summit, where you must turn round to survey the view out over the islands below.



## FACTFILE

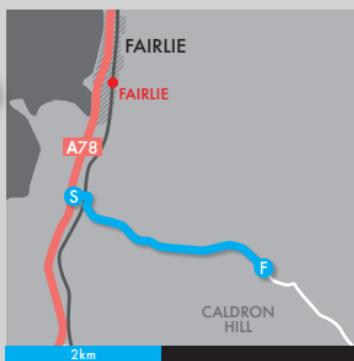
**WHERE** Head south from Fairlie on the A78, cross the roundabout, then take the second left, following the signpost to Dalry.

**GRID REF** NS 232 519 (OS63)

**LENGTH** 3050m

**HEIGHT GAIN** 236m

**AVG. GRADIENT** 7% | **MAX. GRADIENT** 15%



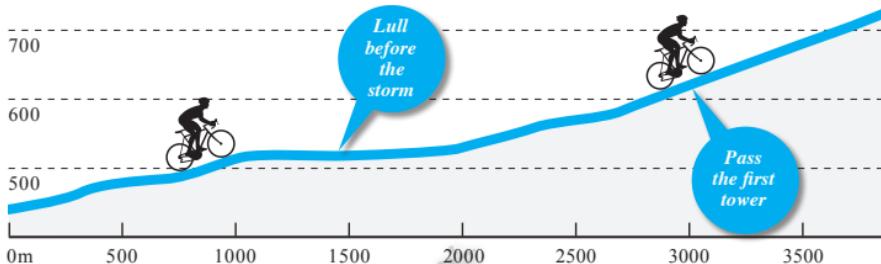


# LOWTHER HILL

WANLOCKHEAD, DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY

Any big race organisers out there looking for the perfect mountaintop finish, look no further. If you add on the ascent of the Mennock Pass, you get around 15 kilometres of fabulous climbing through truly awesome scenery. Leave the B797 just outside of Wanlockhead: take the right-hand turn, negotiate the gate at the base, and then start your effort to reach the radar at the top. The initial slopes are gentle, twisting through the silence of the rolling hills. Then there is a stiff 100-metre stretch followed by a faint dip, from where you will see a tower on the horizon. The closer you get to this, the tougher and more Alpine the climb becomes, with countless bends and stunning views. The tower does not sit at the top, though – you must press on, up the perpetually tough slope, until you reach the giant golf ball-shaped radar that lies in the clouds, just waiting for cyclists to find it.

800m



## FACTFILE

**WHERE** Start the climb just out of Wanlockhead and head up round the gate up the service road.

**GRID REF** NS 890 108 (OS78)

**LENGTH** 3850m

**HEIGHT GAIN** 273m

**AVG. GRADIENT** 7% | **MAX. GRADIENT** 14%

