

Don't let ancient land pass you by



THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

A new way to explore the outdoors has been launched on ViewRanger, the free outdoor discovery app.

Called Skyline, this revolutionary augmented reality technology allows you to use the camera on a phone or tablet to annotate and interact with the surrounding landscape.

It has been designed to help people explore the countryside with greater confidence.

Skyline is free with the latest version of the ViewRanger app.

Craig Wareham, ViewRanger co-founder and CEO, said: "Skyline tells you what you're looking at and shows you which way to travel, fundamentally changing the way in which you use maps and how you interact with the landscape around you."

■ See www.viewranger.com/en-gb/skyline

GET PEDALLING WITH NEW PALS

A CLUB for cyclists brings together a growing community of riders who like to explore Britain by bike.

Not-for-profit Touring Cyclist Club are run by unpaid volunteers who aim to provide members with useful information and put them in contact with each other.

Founders Rob Gullen and Dennis Snape said: "The Touring Cyclist Club is for anyone who wants to tour by bicycle, on road or off road, be it for a few hours, a day or for multiple days, exploring the countryside, towns and villages."

■ The initial membership fee is £4. See www.touringcyclistclub.com.

BOOK OF THE WEEK

Following the success of *Moonwalker*, Alan Rowan has published his second book about walking after dark, called *A Mountain Before Breakfast*.

Alan is an avid peak bagger and his latest book is filled with tales of nocturnal hikes of the Scottish mountains called Corbetts.

The book reveals many stories of walking after dark, including madness, mayhem, midnight dashes across the country, wild pigs, staring goats, supermodel posties, giant chickens and snake-infested hillsides.

■ The book is priced £9.99. See Amazon and www.munromoonwalker.com

BOULDER AND WISER Standing stone on Lewis



FIONA RUSSELL

There's history everywhere you step in Scotland – you just have to know what to look for. Now, thanks to a fascinating book, you can delve into the diene past of our land

Have you ever looked at a field and wondered what the lumps and bumps are? Or stared at a church or stone circle and wondered how old it is?

Do you know what reaves are – and how to hunt for them?

Wherever you go in Britain, there's history woven into the landscape – now *Hidden Histories: A Spotter's Guide to the British Landscape* reveals all.

Written by TV broadcaster and anthropologist Mary-Ann Ochota, the book offers a wealth of fascinating information to help you to read the landscape.

Mary-Ann said: "There is history all around us but often we overlook it. For example, the shape of a field, the wall of a cottage, a standing stone or churchyard, even the grass under your feet hides secrets to the past."

"My book is a guide to explain what you might be looking at and what story it reveals."

It includes many Scottish highlights. We reveal 10 hidden history highlights to discover:

1 Prehistoric reaves

Dry stane dykes were built without using wet mortars where stone was plentiful.

To age a wall you should look at the land, the shape of the wall and the stone surface

If the stone remains of a wall are barely visible through a covering of peat, you may well be looking at a prehistoric reave.

If it's a low wall without peat, it may be medieval and, if the walls are straight, or regular and have square corners, they are likely to date to the 1700 or 1800s

2 The Gask Road

This is evidence of efforts made by the Romans to secure the Gask Ridge, a line of high ground in Perthshire. It was built from



HIDE AND SEEK Mary-Ann Ochota digs into our history

AD 78 to 84 and the Gask Road, with its signal stations and watch towers, reveals the Romans came farther north than many people know.

3 The Fortingall Yew

Yew trees officially become "ancient" at 800 years. One of the oldest in Europe is the Fortingall Yew in Perthshire, which is 4000-5000 years old.

4 Lie of the land

If you take a fresh look at land you might spot the remains of communal farming that existed in Scotland until the Highland Clearances.

The shielings, long houses and runrig cultivation can be spotted in different ways, such as a single crumbling wall, low banks of grass indicating the footprint of a building and old ridges where land was previously cultivated.

The last known shieling to be used was on Lewis until 1946.

5 Symbol stones

Symbol stones were carved by the Picts and more than 300 survive. The stones are usually carved with abstract animal and

paired symbols. Four symbol stones stand on Aberlemno village road and in the churchyard at Forfar.

6 Scotland's Stonehenge

There are more than 20 stone circles and monuments around Calanais, or Callanish, on Lewis.

Mary-Ann writes: "If it wasn't for their remote location, I'm sure the Calanais stone circles would be as famous as Stonehenge."

7 Marvellous mound

One of the five "finest round mounds" picked out in Britain is the Linear Cairn Cemetery in Kilmartin Glen, Argyll.

It runs for more than a mile along the valley in a complex, ancient landscape.

The cairns contain stones decorated with rare bronze axe-head carvings.

8 Glasgow Necropolis

Described as "one of the most remarkable Victorian cemeteries in the country", the Necropolis – "city of the dead" – contains more than 50,000 bodies.

There are 3500 named memorials and the entire site offers a fascinating visit.

9 Ghastly gargoyles

Distorted heads and figures were used to decorate Norman and Gothic churches.

Twelve gargoyles were carved for Paisley Abbey in 1991 to replace damaged 13th century originals, including one which looks like a carving of a sci-fi monster from the Alien movies.

10 Coffin roads

Many routes in the Highlands were used for carrying the dead. They include a track linking Glen Quoch bridge to Glen Shiel and the Strathfarrar to Kintail road.

● *Hidden Histories: A Spotter's Guide to the British Landscape*, published by Frances Lincoln, £20. Also see www.maryannochota.com

Advice and ideas

Join me on my adventures in Scotland's great outdoors by checking out my award-winning website at www.fionaoutdoors.co.uk – you'll find lots of great information about walking, cycling, running and other outdoor activities, as well as kit reviews.