BRAM STOKER AND CRUDEN BAY · A WALKING GUIDE



·Fang-like rocks rising out of the deep water· · The view over Cruden Bay to Slains Castle.

Bram Stoker saw Cruden Bay for the first time in the summer of 1892 while on a walking tour of the Aberdeenshire coast in Northeast Scotland. ·When first I saw the place, I fell in love with it. The next year I came again, and the next, and the next,· Bram wrote in *The Mystery of the Sea*, which he set in the area. It was as if the main character of the novel was echoing his words.

Cruden Bay was then called Port Erroll in honour of the local aristocrat, the Earl of Erroll, who was the resident of nearby Slains Castle. Bram is known to have visited Aberdeenshire at least thirteen times between 1892 and 1910. A part-time author for most of his life, his holidays to Cruden Bay gave him a month-long summer break from his job as the business manager of the Lyceum Theatre in London. Bram now had the time to do exactly what he wanted, to write his books in a place of peace and quiet. He was 45 years old on his first visit, and thereafter the books came tumbling out of him.

He told a local resident that he got all the ideas for his stories while walking the coastline around Cruden Bay. And in 1895, according to his biographer Harry Ludlam, he started writing *Dracula* here. The Cruden Bay area also provided the setting for two novels, *The Watter·s Mou·* and *The Mystery of the Sea*.

In the 1890s Port Erroll (Cruden Bay) was a small fishing village with a population of 487. It may seem astonishing that Bram Stoker would pick a tiny village on the Aberdeenshire coast

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for his annual summer holiday. Over 500 miles from London, it took a fourteen-hour journey to get there. Not only that, Bram Stoker mixed with the elite of London society in his job at the Lyceum Theatre, and would be expected to take the waters in a fashionable European spa resort rather than spend his one holiday of the year in a remote Aberdeenshire fishing village.

A hint of an explanation comes from the words of the main character Esse in his novel *The Shoulder of Shasta,* which was published after his second visit north. Esse is not ·in any way addicted to society life,· instead she longed ·for the wilderness·. Bram revelled in the natural scenery of Cruden Bay. His writings suggest he connected to nature here.

The beauty of the area is in its coastal scenery with spectacular cliffs and deserted beaches. Inland the vista is mostly mile after mile of fields. It·s the walk along the coast that brings you close to nature much as Bram Stoker found it. You find yourself alone with the birds and seals, whether walking along the dune fringed Cruden Bay beach or the rugged cliff tops beyond.

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF BRAM STOKER: WALKS AROUND CRUDEN BAY

Walk One: Hilton Cottage to Port Erroll Harbour (walking distance: one mile)

Hilton Cottage. The starting point for this walk is Hilton Cottage, located on the left-hand side at the top of Bridge Street, 200 metres from the Kilmarnock Arms Hotel. Bram used Hilton Cottage as his main residence in Cruden Bay, probably from 1896 onwards. Hilton Cottage is a private residence · please respect the owner·s privacy and do not enter the property.

The cottage was built in 1895 by James Cruickshank, owner of the Kilmarnock Arms Hotel. It·s a two-story villa constructed out of red Peterhead granite. Located at the top of a broad ridge, a panoramic view is seen from here over the village of Cruden Bay and the sea beyond. The left-hand side of the villa was used as a staff residence for the hotel under the name Lilybank Cottage. Hilton Cottage comprised the right-hand-side of the villa and was used as an annexe for hotel guests. It was occupied by the Cruickshank family off-season. Today, the two halves have been merged into one residence, which retains the name Hilton Cottage.

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Hilton Cottage in 1908

Bram Stoker was often spotted by the villagers writing on fine summer days at a round table in the garden at Hilton Cottage. The prospect from Hilton Cottage provided Bram with what Dacre Stoker calls his visual palette. From here he could see Slains Castle, Port Erroll harbour, the sand dunes, the Kilmarnock Arms Hotel, and on the far horizon, the village of Whinnyfold. It·s possible that he worked on the last chapters of *Dracula* here in 1896, and then the paperback version of the book in 1900.

Bram Stoker kept a bicycle at Hilton Cottage which was the marvel of the villagers who saw it as he cycled along the roads and across the beach. According to local resident Sandy Cruickshank it had ·stays all over the place and an upright saddle shaped like a hammock·. The journalist and cycling enthusiast Gordon Casely, who interviewed Sandy in 1966, recognised the make as a Dursley Pedersen with its distinctive cantilever frame and hammock-style saddle. The design made it easier to ride over the bumpy roads of the time.

At the start of his summer visit to Port Erroll in 1903, Bram arrived in the village with a dog. Who owned the dog is not known. He was then told that the Kilmarnock Arms Hotel enforced a strict no-pets policy in its rooms, and that included the Hilton Cottage annexe. He was obliged to ask around the village to see if anyone would take care of the dog for a month.

He knocked on the door of Clifton Cottage, just along from Hilton Cottage. The servants of the house were more than happy to look after the dog. I was told by their daughter Marna Cruickshank that Bram Stoker was very grateful and sent her parents a big box of chocolates when he returned to London. ·I remember the chocolate box well,· Marna told me, ·It had beautiful silk violets on the front of it·.

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Roselea Cottage: Further down Bridge Street you will pass Roselea Cottage on the right-hand side. Bram Stoker is known to have stayed here when everywhere else in the village was full. This was probably in the early 1900s when Cruden Bay underwent a short-lived tourist boom.



The Kilmarnock Arms Hotel.

Kilmarnock Arms Hotel: Bram Stoker is known to have stayed here three times; the first visit in 1892. He signed the hotel guestbook at the start of his visits in 1894 and 1895. The1894 entry reads: 'Second visit to Port Erroll. Delighted with everything & everybody & hope to come again to the Kilmarnock Arms'. The hotel is the only location where Bram is known for sure to have written *Dracula*.

The Kilmarnock Arms Hotel was built in 1877 and was named in honour of the Earl of Erroll·s father who sat in the British House of Lords as Baron Kilmarnock. The Kilmarnock name stems from the father of the 15th Earl of Erroll, who was the fourth and last Earl of Kilmarnock. He was beheaded in 1746 on Tower Hill, London following his capture at the Battle of Culloden where he had fought on the Jacobite side. His son, with a choice of titles to choose from, became the Earl of Erroll, probably because it came with the prestigious title of the High Constable of Scotland.

The hotel is a two-storey building built out of red granite on an L-shaped plan. The shorter arm faces onto Bridge Street with three bay windows; the longer side with five bay windows looks over the front lawn and the Water of Cruden. An attractive motif separates the windows between the ground and upper floor, a horizontal strip made up of black and white diamonds. The crest of the Earl of Kilmarnock is displayed in white and green on the side facing Bridge Street.

An 1896 advertisement gives an idea of what the hotel was like in Bram Stoker·s day:

THIS HOTEL contains 12 Bedrooms, 2 Bathrooms (hot and cold water), Sitting Rooms, Dining Hall, etc; and is admirably adapted for small parties or families. Excellent Bathing

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Beach within seven minutes· walk; Bathing Houses for use of Visitors. All Visitors may have Trout Fishing in Cruden Water free of charge. There is good sea Fishing, and boats may be had for hire, also a good Golf Course. The proprietor is Lessee of over 6000 acres of Shooting (well stocked with low ground Game, which includes a small Grouse shooting). Gentlemen residing at the Hotel may have Shooting by previous arrangement, with use of dogs, etc, on reasonable terms. Horses and Machines kept for hire. Postal and Telegraph Office in the Hotel.

JAS. CRUICKSHANK, Proprietor.

The location of the post office in the hotel was convenient for Bram Stoker (today it·s the public bar). The post arrived daily by the horse-drawn mail gig from the nearby town of Ellon at 11 a.m. The gig passed back through the village again at 3 p.m. and collected outgoing mail on the return journey. The postmistress Mrs Cruickshank later recalled, ·Bram himself had a fine sense of humour, always joking about something. I met him quite a lot as he was always getting telegrams and letters from the Lyceum Theatre·. The door of the post office was left open during the summer, and Mrs Cruickshank would shout a greeting to Bram and Florence if she saw them passing by.

Have a look inside the hotel. The reception area gives you the typical ambience of a Scottish hotel with its stag·s head staring at you as you enter and a roaring log fire along one side. On the wall is a photograph of the former owner James Cruickshank and a close friend of Bram Stoker. The dining room on the left-hand side is much as Bram Stoker knew it.

Bram described the breakfast fare there back in the day · a smoked haddock on his plate, and one that would have been caught and smoked by the local fisherfolk. In 1906 he opened a flower show in the nearby town of Peterhead. At the start of the speech the author professed his great love for this part of Scotland, ·which he had visited for many years. He hoped to come there as long as he lived·, he said, mentioning to laughter and applause his intention ·to live on herrings all the time·.

The bridge next to the hotel is where the dramatic opening scene of *The Mystery of the Sea* is set. The hero of the novel, Archibald Hunter, is sitting here when he notices a funeral procession passing down the road in front of him. Across the road stands the mystic old woman Gormala who stares intently at him. What Archibald Hunter is about to find out is that he has the second sight, and that he has foreseen the funeral procession which will take place later that day.

Main Street: Cross the road and walk down Main Street on the way to the harbour. Formerly known as The Terrace, this was where the tradesmen of the village lived. They kept themselves separate from the fishing community who lived in the Harbour Street area further along. Up a side street is the Port Erroll Village Hall which was opened in 1896. Here, in 1900, Bram Stoker gave a recital at a concert given by visitors to the village.

On the right-hand side is a single-story building currently in use as a newsagent and general store. Built in 1897, the year *Dracula* was published, it housed three shops including a boot-

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maker shop run by Jimmy Beagrie. Jimmy was also Bram·s chauffeur when he arrived at the railway station, and would bring Bram, Florence, and their luggage to wherever he was staying.



Port Erroll as Bram Stoker would have known it.

Harbour Street and the fishing village: A bit further on is Harbour Street, which together with four side roads, makes up the former fishing village. This is how Bram described it:

·The village, squatted beside the emboucher of the Water of Cruden at the northern side of the bay is simple enough, a few rows of fishermen·s cottages, two or three great red-tiled drying sheds nestled in the sand-heap behind the fishers· houses.·

The houses are of two types, the larger two-story cottages with dormer windows and the single storey ·but and bens·. The latter held two rooms, essentially a kitchen and a bedroom. The floors were uncarpeted, and sand was used for the covering. The fisherwoman·s job every morning was to brush up the sand and replace it with a new supply from the beach. Two but and bens survive close to their original form in Green Street with their red pantile roofs topped by Victorian chimney pots.

The fishing village was overcrowded and a population of 300 persons lived here. Some of the houses held as many as twelve occupants. The two rooms of the single storey house at 5 Harbour Street held eleven members of the Summers family according to the 1891 census. It was said that in the smaller houses the occupants scarcely had enough space to breathe.

Bram was friendly with the fisherman and quickly picked up their distinctive Doric dialect. His 1895 novel *The Watter·s Mou'* gives a sympathetic account of the lives of the fisherfolk. It was a hard life for the men and women. The men risked their lives every time they went out to

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6 / 28
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sea. The women, apart from their domestic duties, spent hours baiting the fishing lines for the next day·s catch. Bram would often see them in front of their cottages, chatting to their neighbours while working or singing songs to while away the time.

The fisherfolk were very superstitious, and many of their traditions were pre-Christian in origin (pagan). Although they were deeply religious, once out at sea they would revert to the pagan attitudes of old. It was taboo to mention anything to do with the Christian religion such as a minister or a church while out in a boat. Bram Stoker took the old pagan beliefs seriously. He wrote in one of his non-fiction books that ·in times when primitivity holds sway, we are most in touch with the loftiest things we are capable of understanding...· And in *Dracula*, Van Helsing asks, ·Is there fate amongst us still, sent down from the pagan world of old...?·

The view opens up at the far end of Harbour Street with Cruden Bay beach now to be seen on the right-hand side. Behind the sandy strand are the dunes and their lime-green coat of marram grass. Here too is the estuary of the Water of Cruden, ·it runs to the sea over a stony bottom,· wrote Bram Stoker. ·The estuary has in its wash some dangerous outcropping granite rocks, nearly covered at high tide, and the mouth opens between the most northerly end of the sandhills and the village street...·



The estuary of the Cruden Water.

The road bends in response to a short dogleg in the ancient cliff line that lies behind the houses. Here the slope is gentle enough to carry a rough track up to a grassy area known as Ward Hill. A small house once overlooked the cliff here, and a bit further on is where the tiny coastguard lookout station was located. What is left of it can be found at the far south-eastern corner where a few granite blocks mark the outline of the hut·s foundations. Bram Stoker spent many hours chatting to the coastguards on look-out duty at the hut, hearing all the gossip about the village in turn. The coastguard·s names are recorded in the 1891 census: Frederick Dyson from Leeds and Walter Heron who is listed as having been born in England. The opening scene of *The Watter·s Mou* is set in the coastguard hut.

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Port Erroll Harbour: Round the far side of the bend in the road are a small cluster of buildings: the Salmon Bothy on the right-hand side and the single-story building of the Rocket House on the left-hand side (mentioned in *The Watter·s Mou·*). The Board of Trade life-saving apparatus was stored in the Rocket House; hefty rockets which could be fired towards any ship stranded on the rocks around Cruden Bay; a rope trailing behind the rocket. Once the rope was secured onboard the marooned vessel, a steel hawser and a breeches buoy was dragged across from the shore, essentially a cradle and harness which would be used to pull the men to the safe reaches of solid land.

Further on is the harbour: ·The harbour of Port Erroll is a tiny haven of refuge won from the jagged rocks that bound the eastern side of Cruden Bay,· wrote Bram Stoker. ·It is sheltered on the northern side by the cliff which runs as far as the Watter·s Mou· and separated from the mouth of the Water of Cruden, with its waste of shifting sands by a high wall of concrete. The harbour faces east, and its first basin is the smaller of the two, the larger opening sharply to the left a little way in. At the best of times, it is not an easy matter to gain the harbour, for only when the tide has fairly risen is it available at all, and the rapid tide which runs up from the Scaurs makes in itself a difficulty at such times.·

The drying green for the fishing nets can be seen on the right-hand side. The original wooden poles the nets were hung from still survive. A few old fishing boats can also be seen in the harbour area.

Now return to the Kilmarnock Arms Hotel, altogether a round trip of about a mile.

Walk Two: Kilmarnock Arms Hotel to Slains Castle (walking distance: two miles)



Slains Castle and the Watter·s Mou·

This walk starts outside the Kilmarnock Arms Hotel. A word of warning - part of the walk skirts the cliff tops, please keep to the main path. The walk is unsuitable for young children and dogs should be always kept on a leash.

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Cross the road and walk to the end of Main Street where you will see the Port Erroll Congregational Church on your right hand-side. It·s curious that Bram doesn·t mention any of the three local churches in his Cruden Bay novels. The following excerpt from *The Mystery of the Sea* suggests there may have been some tension here:

·Doubtless I could have found out all I wanted from some of the ministers of the various houses of religion which hold in Cruden; but I was not wishful to make public, even so far, the mystery which was closing around me. My feeling was partly a saving sense of humour, or the fear of ridicule, and partly a genuine repugnance to enter upon the subject with anyone who might not take it as seriously as I could wish.·

Repugnance · ouch! One can guess what happened here. I can only imagine that the local ministers would not have approved of the devilish themes and popish practices set out in *Dracula*...

From the congregational church, take the sign-posted path to Slains Castle via the car park and the woods. Once through the trees you will emerge on the left hand-side of a ravine carved into the local red granite. This formed when the glaciers melted at the end of the Ice Age and huge torrents of water cascaded to the sea by any means possible. All that remains now is a small stream called the Back Burn which seems far too small for the gorge it sits in.

At its sea end the stream takes a dogleg southward through a deeply incised channel. This is the Watter·s Mou· (The Water·s Mouth) and it provides the title for a novel.

Bram Stoker describes it thus:

·It·s a natural cleft · formed by primeval fire or earthquake or some sort of natural convulsion · which runs through the vast mass of red granite which forms a promontory running due south. Water has done its work as well as fire in the formation of the gully as it is now, for the drip and flow and rush of water that mark the seasons for countless ages have completed the work of the pristine fire. As one sees this natural mouth of the stream in the rocky face of the cliff, it is hard to realise that nature alone has done the work.·

This excerpt resonates with Van Helsing·s description of the location of Dracula·s Castle in *Dracula*, published two years after *The Watter·s Mou*came out.

·The very place, where he have been alive, Undead for all these centuries, is full of strangeness of the geologic and chemical world. There are deep caverns and fissures that reach none know whither. There have been volcanoes, some of whose openings still send out waters of strange properties, and gases that kill or make to vivify.·

This is a theme which runs through Bram Stoker·s gothic novels: where evidence for a geological upheaval is found it appears to signify a hotspot of supernatural activity.

*The Watter·s Mou*is based in Port Erroll and around this part of the coast. It·s a smuggling tale which revolves around the conflict imposed by circumstance on local coastguard Sailor Willie and his fiancée Maggie McWhirter. Sailor Willie has been asked to look out for a

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smuggling operation which the authorities believe is about to happen. He discovers that his fiancée·s father is involved and when Maggie hints that he should turn a blind eye to the operation; Sailor Willie·s strong sense of duty to his job prevents him from doing so. Maggie, who is also steeped in the all-powerful Victorian sense of duty, has only one option left - to sail out from the Watter·s Mou to warn her father that he will be apprehended when he arrives at Port Erroll harbour with the smuggled goods. It will be a highly dangerous undertaking - a storm is brewing up.



The Watter·s Mou· and the ·cluster of rocks· resembling ·a ghostly mouth·.

Sailor Willie, guessing Maggie·s intention, points out how hazardous the Watter·s Mou· can be for a boat during a storm:

·To try and get in there in this wind would be to court sudden death. Why, lass, it would take a man all he knew just to get out from there, let alone get in, in this weather! And then the chances would be ten to one that he·d be dashed to pieces on the rocks beyond.·

Willie ·pointed to where a line of sharp rocks rose between the billows on the south side of the inlet. Truly, it was a fearful-looking place to be dashed on, for the great waves broke on the rocks with a loud roaring, and even in the semi-darkness they could see the white lines as the waters poured down to leeward in the wake of the heaving wave. The white cluster of rocks looked like a ghostly mouth opened to swallow whatever might come in touch.·

The entrance to the inlet does indeed resemble a mouth. At high tide sharp pyramids of granite rock rise just above the sea at the entrance on the southern side of the inlet. There are

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about ten ·teeth· altogether, similar in size, and evenly set. The waves surge out revealing the rocks and then surge in covering them again. It creates the impression of a gnashing pair of teeth at the southern entrance of the Watter·s Mou·.

Inevitable disaster ensues. Maggie takes a rowing boat out from the Watter·s Mou· and makes contact with her father on his boat. She returns to the Watter·s Mou· in a raging storm and is ship-wrecked while doing so. Sailor Willie finds her body there, attempts to retrieve it, and is drowned in the process. The book ends on a grim note:

·There, on the very spot whence the boat had set sail on its warning errand, lay its wreckage, and tangled in it the body of the noble girl who had steered it · her brown hair floating wide and twined around the neck of Sailor Willy, who held her tight in his dead arms.

The requiem of the twain was the roar of the breaking waves and the scream of the white birds that circled round the Watter·s Mou·.·

It·s a sad end for the two lovers.

On the face of it *The Watter·s Mou* is pure melodrama, yet it hides a deeper supernatural theme. A journal Bram kept in his younger years, has recently been published together with a commentary provided by the editors, Elizabeth Miller and Dacre Stoker. It·s a commonplace book full of anecdotes, jokes, and ideas for stories. Item 41 written in 1881 is the plot for a story with the title *The Angry Waters* · which ·wishes ill to person & kills them then murmurs sorrowfully for ever·. Bram Stoker·s handwriting is underneath with the word [Written]. The editors· footnote suggests that this is probably a reference to *The Watter·s Mou*. The implication is that the sea in *The Watter·s Mou* is a supernatural entity prone to powerful emotions. The mouth of the Watter·s Mou·, with its rocks resembling teeth, has swallowed up the two lovers in a fit of anger, and has left them dead.

This mouth with its sharp teeth is thus linked to a pagan sea spirit. Two years later, Count Dracula will be revealed to the world, an undead supernatural monster who also has sharp teeth.

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Slains Castle.

Slains Castle: A short walk takes you to Slains Castle, clearly visible up ahead. Slains, with its dramatic cliff-top setting, is popularly said to have inspired *Dracula*. Not quite, as we will see.

But first, some practicalities: Slains Castle is a ruin and is not safe to enter. There is an ever-present risk of being hit by falling masonry or taking a tumble on climbing the stairs inside. The cliffs next to it are also dangerous. It is common for unguarded dogs to fall off, and accidents have happened to young children here. Be warned.

Slains Castle as a ruin appears far more gothic today than it did in Bram Stoker·s time. Then it was an oversized mansion lived in by the local aristocrat, the Earl of Erroll. It fell into ruin in the 1920s when the earl ran out of money. A demolition company removed the roof for its lead and slates and sold off parts of the masonry and fittings.

The oldest part of the castle is the tower at the southeast corner built around 1600 or so. Slains Castle isn·t the first building of that name. The original castle of medieval age was located four miles down the coast. It was blown up by King James VI in 1594 when the earl took part in a rebellion to reinstate the Catholic faith in Scotland. The earl was exiled for three years, and only allowed to return providing he kept the peace and renounced his Catholic faith.

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12 / 28
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A substantial addition to the castle was made in the 1820s following the marriage of the 18th earl to the illegitimate daughter of William IV. The earl, having married into royalty, now felt the need to build a royal palace to house his Lady Elizabeth.



Slains Castle back in the day.

The connection between *Dracula* and Slains Castle is nuanced. The oft-stated myth that Slains Castle inspired the plot for *Dracula* is wrong. Bram had already planned much of *Dracula* before ever setting foot in Cruden Bay, and this included the castle setting. The castle he had in mind at this point was inspired by drawings he found in books about Transylvania.

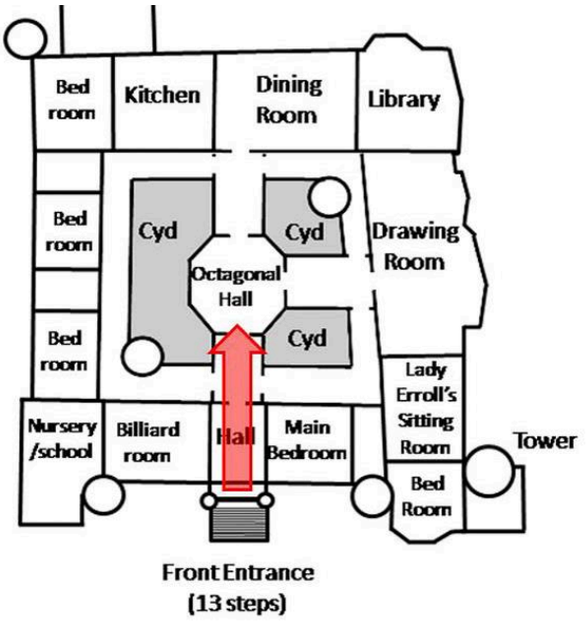
Nevertheless, one of the rooms in Slains Castle turns up in Castle Dracula. This is the octagonal room. Here is the description from chapter two of *Dracula*:

·The Count halted, putting down my bags, closed the door, and crossing the room, opened another door which led into a small octagonal room lit by a single lamp, and seemingly without a window of any sort.·

And here·s the description of the octagonal room from a 1922 sales document for Slains Castle:

·On the Principle Floor: Entrance Hall (heated with stove) leading to Central Octagonal Interior Hall (heated with stove and lighted from above).·

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13 / 28
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The Count halted, putting down my bags, closed the door, and crossing the room, opened another door, which led into a small octagonal room lit by a single lamp, and seemingly without a window of any sort. Passing through this,

The octagonal room was used as a waiting room for guests before being shown into the drawing room to meet the earl. It·s plausible that Bram Stoker sat there. There is no direct evidence that Bram was ever inside Slains Castle, although relatives of the earls believe that Bram Stoker was invited in on at least one occasion by the 20th Earl of Erroll.

It·s tempting to speculate that the other rooms in Slains Castle were used during the writing phase of the novel. However, there is not an exact correspondence here. The entrance to Castle Dracula was through a ground floor door, whereas Slains Castle was accessed through a door at the top of a flight of steps. One similarity should be noted: Jonathan Harker couldn·t find a door knocker or bell at the front door of Castle Dracula; and likewise, no bell or door knocker was provided for the front door of Slains Castle. The family crest carved in stone above the front door of Slains Castle included the motto, ·Gang Warily· - Go Warily. This would have been good advice for Jonathan Harker in Castle Dracula.

Bram liked to cherry pick the distinctive features he encountered during his travels for use in his novels. The octagonal room in Slains Castle is an example. Otherwise, where Slains Castle matters in *Dracula* is that it was usually visible by Bram Stoker while he was writing it. The sight of the castle dramatically perched on the edge of the cliff top undoubtedly acted as a stimulus to Bram·s imagination as he was putting the words together.

For the record here are the instances, apart from *Dracula,* where Slains Castle has appeared in actual or disguised form in Bram·s novels. It obviously made a huge impression on him:

The Watter·s Mou·

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·...on one side a steep grassy slope leads towards the new castle of Slains, and on the other rises a sheer bank, with tufts of the thick grass growing on the ledges, where the earth has been blown.·

The Mystery of the Sea:

·My own section for watching was between Slains Castle and Dunbuy, as wild and rocky a bit of coast as any one could wish to see. Behind Slains runs in a long narrow inlet with beetling cliffs, sheer on either side, and at its entrance a wild turmoil of rocks are hurled together in titanic confusion.·

The Man:

Slains Castle doubles up as Castle Lannoy:

·Lannoy was on the north-eastern coast, the castle standing at the base of a wide promontory stretching far into the North Sea... No habitation other than an isolated fisher·s cottage was to be seen between the little fishing-port at the northern curve away to the south, where beyond a waste of sandhills and strand another tiny fishing-village nestled under a high cliff, sheltering it from northerly wind.·

If the similarity to Cruden Bay isn·t made clear enough, Lannoy also has a dangerous reef of rocks called the Skyres similar to the Skares near Cruden Bay.

The Jewel of Seven Stars:

Kyllion House appears to be modelled on Slains Castle:

·A great grey stone mansion of the Jacobean period; vast and spacious, standing high over the sea on the very verge of a high cliff. When we had swept round the curve of the avenue cut through the rock, and come out on the high plateau on which the house stood, the crash and murmur of waves breaking against rock far below us came with an invigorating breath of moist sea air.·

The ancient spirit of an Egyptian mummy was brought to life at Kyllion, a scene in the novel which inspired several Hollywood films. As an in-joke, Bram Stoker named Kyllion after the editor of *Dracula*, Otto Kyllmann.

From Slains castle, return the way you came, or alternatively, for the energetic, walk up the coast for about a mile to the spectacular arch of Dunbuy. To reach Dunbuy, walk westwards along the path leading to the car park on the main road. Pass by a deep narrow gorge and the

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cliff-top path runs along the western side of the gorge. You will need to step up on the low-lying wall to access the path. It·s a spectacular walk, taken many a time by Bram Stoker, but do keep to the path - the cliffs are dangerous.

Walk Three: Kilmarnock Arms Hotel to Whinnyfold (five miles round trip)



The Lady·s Bridge.

Practicalities · wear walking shoes or boots. The walk along the beach is easy enough, although you will cross three shallow streams on the way. At the far end, a bit of a scramble is involved on ascending the path to Whinnyfold. It can be muddy following wet weather, so watch where you step - it is possible to sink ankle-deep into the mud in places.

From the Kilmarnock Arms Hotel walk down Main Street and then onto Harbour Street. On the right-hand side is the Lady·s Bridge which takes you over the Cruden Water onto the beach. The Lady·s Bridge is named after the women of the village who collected money to have the original bridge built in 1923. It was rebuilt in 2016.

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Cruden Bay beach.

Cruden Bay beach is a wide sandy beach, one and a half miles long, which lies between two rocky promontories. Its broad curve is backed by sand dunes covered in lime-green marram grass. Two-thirds of the way along can be seen the prominent hill of the Hawklaw rising above the dunes.

Here·s how Bram saw this view: ·If Cruden Bay is to be taken figuratively as a mouth, with the sand hills for soft palate, and the green Hawklaw as the tongue, the rocks which work the extremities are its teeth·.

Not many would see Cruden Bay beach as a mouth with teeth, although Bram Stoker did. Later in the novel from which this excerpt is taken, *The Mystery of the Sea*, he writes about ·fang-like rocks rising out of the deep water·. The resonance with *Dracula* is deliberate; it was while walking along the beach or sitting on the rocks at the far end that he thought through the writing phase of his famous novel.

Bram liked to take a walk along the beach at 7 a.m. every morning before returning for breakfast. Mrs Cruickshank, who worked at the Port Erroll Post Office, recalled that Bram dressed in tweeds with a round beret on his head. ·He became a familiar figure with his stout walking-stick as he strolled along the sands and the cliffs,· she said. Another resident remembers him wearing a long cape and a wide-brimmed hat. His pose was highly distinctive; Bram Stoker walked along the beach with his hands behind his back, head down with a slight stoop, and looked as if he was utterly absorbed in intense thought. A rapid walker, his morning trips took him along the beach to the tiny fishing village of Whinnyfold and back again.

A sense of how he marvelled at the nature around him comes from *The Mystery of the Sea*. Bram keeps repeating variations on the first line of a psalm throughout the book. He probably sang it as he walked along the Cruden Bay shoreline:

Heaven and earth, and sea and air,

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All their Maker·s praise declare;

Wake, my soul, awake and sing:

Now thy grateful praises bring.

See the glorious orb of day

Breaking through the clouds his way;

Moon and stars with silvery light

Praise Him through the silent night.

See how He hath everywhere

Made this earth so rich and fair;

Hill and vale and fruitful land,

All things living, show His hand.

On other occasions he walked along the beach with his wife Florence. This probably inspired the following excerpt from *The Mystery of the Sea* · his main character is on Cruden Bay beach at twilight with his fiancée:

·The spirits of my companion and myself yielded to this silent influence of the coming night. Unconsciously we walked close together and in step; and were silent, wrapt in the beauty around us. To me it was a gentle ecstasy. To be alone with her in such a way, in such a place, was the good of all heaven and all earth in one. And so for many minutes we went slowly on our way along the deserted sand, and in hearing of the music of the sounding sea and the echoing shore.·

That last phrase sums up the experience of walking along Cruden Bay beach · one does indeed hear *·the music of the sounding sea and the echoing shore*·.

Shallow streams cross the beach and are normally easy to cross. The first of these, the one closest to the village, is known locally as the Bleedy Burn. The name is age-old and recalls the memory of a battle between the Vikings and the Scots army said to have taken place in 1012. The battle raged over the sand dunes behind the beach and on the land now forming the golf course. The stream is said to have ran red with blood for three days after the battle; and as such would have made a stark contrast with the flesh-coloured sand as it trickled over the beach...

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On windy days look out for the sand devils on Cruden Bay beach, which appear when gusts of wind blow dry sand along the foreshore. As the sand grains speed along and writhe for a second or two they resemble ghostly serpents. Once the wind dies down, the lighter sand settles over the underlying wet sand to form patterns which resemble the outlines of dancing ghosts. Perhaps a similar sight inspired the famous scenes in *Dracula*, when the three vampire sisters appeared before Jonathan Harker:

·Something made me start up, a low, piteous howling of dogs somewhere far below in the valley, which was hidden from my sight. Louder it seemed to ring in my ears, and the floating moats of dust to take new shapes to the sound as they danced in the moonlight... Quicker and quicker danced the dust. The moonbeams seemed to quiver as they went by me into the mass of gloom beyond. More and more they gathered till they seemed to take dim phantom shapes... The phantom shapes, which were becoming gradually materialised from the moonbeams, were those three ghostly women to whom I was doomed.·



The grassy knoll on the nearest of the Sand Craigs. Slains Castle is in the background.

The Sand Craigs: At the southern end of the beach are two rocky crags which Bram Stoker refers to as the Sand Craigs. The nearest is accessible at low to medium tide (be warned: it becomes an island at high tide). It·s a grassy knoll with a stone cairn on its summit. This was probably one of Bram·s favourite spots in Cruden Bay. Here·s how he describes it in his short story *Crooken Sands* · the main character Mr Markam is on holiday in Cruden Bay, and has taken a late evening walk:

·The tide was out and the beach firm as a rock, so he strolled southwards to nearly the end of the bay. Here he was attracted by two isolated rocks some little way out from the edge of the dunes, so he strolled towards them. When he reached the nearest one, he climbed it, and, sitting

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there elevated some fifteen or twenty feet over the waste of sand enjoyed the lovely, peaceful prospect.·

First published in 1894, and the year of Bram·s second visit to Cruden Bay, the tale hints why the author returned year after year:

·For a good while Mr. Markam sat and looked at the rising moon and the growing area of light which followed its rise. Then he turned and faced eastwards and sat with his chin in his hand looking seawards and revelling in the peace and beauty and freedom of the scene. The roar of London - the darkness and the strife and weariness of London life seemed to have passed quite away, and he lived at the moment a freer and higher life.·

The view is spectacular: ·The full moon was behind him, and its light lit up the bay so that its fringe of foam, the dark outline of the headland, and the stakes of the salmon-nets were all emphasised.· He could see in ·the brilliant yellow glow· the lights in the windows of Port Erroll and ·those of the distant castle of the laird trembled like stars through the sky·. It made a lasting impression: ·For a long time he sat and drank in the beauty of the scene, and his soul seemed to feel a peace that it had not known for many days.·

You can look out from the Sand Craigs today and see this view more or less exactly as written. The lights of ·the distant castle of the laird· were those of Slains Castle. The only difference is that Slains Castle is now a ruin, whereas it had been inhabited in Bram Stoker·s time.

A newspaper interview given by Florence Stoker suggests that this spot was where Bram spent hours mulling over the writing of *Dracula*. Florence told the reporter in 1927:

·When he was at work on Dracula, we were all frightened of him. It was up on a lonely part of the east coast of Scotland, and he seemed to get obsessed by the spirit of the thing. There he would sit for hours, like a great bat, perched on the rocks of the shore, or wander alone up and down the sandhills thinking it out.·

Bram was edgy while writing *Dracula* at Cruden Bay and Florence and Noel were disturbed by this behaviour. They found him distant and prone to an outburst of temper if interrupted while writing or thinking over the novel. It·s possible that Bram may have been using the method acting techniques of Henry Irving to get into the mind of his characters. If so, he must have presented a fiercesome sight as he marched up and down Cruden Bay beach in the embodiment of Jonathan Harker or Count Dracula!

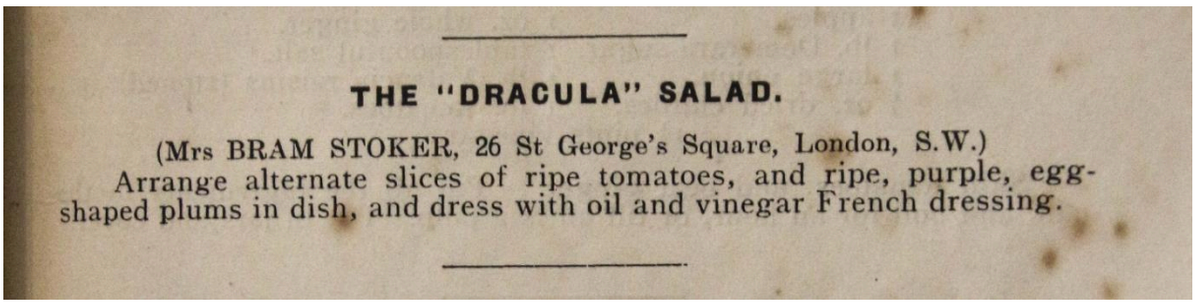
Sometime later, Florence was asked to make a contribution to a booklet of recipes published in 1912 by the Cruden Parish Church. The booklet *Cruden Recipes and Wrinkles* was printed as a souvenir for a bazaar to be held in the church grounds to raise money for renovation of the church. The recipes had been contributed by the congregation and friends. In amongst them are the ·wrinkles· · pithy phrases of wisdom and advice. One of the two recipes contributed by Florence Stoker is this:

THE ·DRACULA· SALAD

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(Mrs BRAM STOKER, 26 St George·s Square, London, S.W.)

Arrange alternate slices of ripe tomatoes, and ripe, purple egg-shaped plums in dish, and dress with oil and vinegar French dressing.



THE "DRACULA" SALAD.

(Mrs BRAM STOKER, 26 St George's Square, London, S.W.)
Arrange alternate slices of ripe tomatoes, and ripe, purple, egg-shaped plums in dish, and dress with oil and vinegar French dressing.

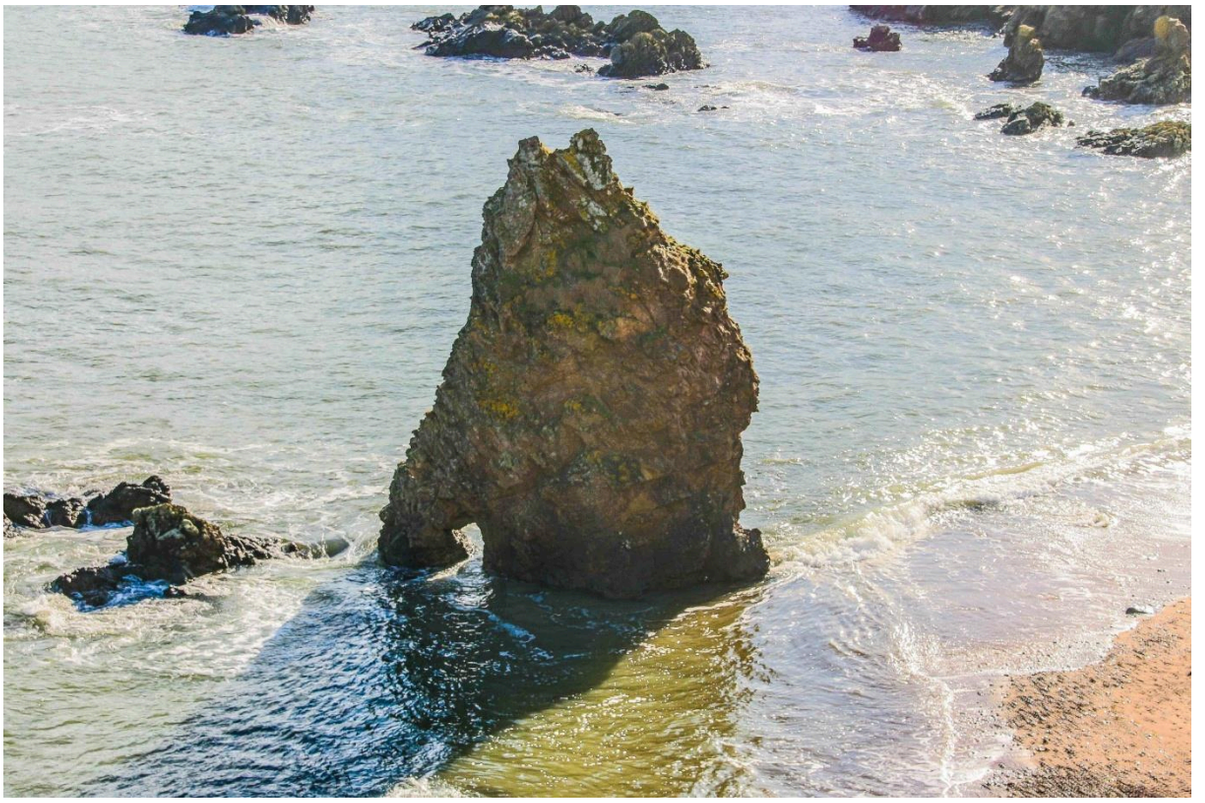
It was included within the booklet to honour the long-standing association between Bram Stoker, Cruden Bay, and his novel *Dracula*. The recipes were Florence·s poignant memorial for her late husband who had died three months before the bazaar was held at the end of July 1912.



Whinnyfold.

From the Sand Craigs, take the rough path to Whinnyfold. The path is accessed by walking along the stony part of the beach and then through a gate on the shore. Take care on walking up the slope here as the ground can get boggy. A path takes you around the headland to Whinnyfold. On the way you will pass by the site of a seal colony on rocks near the waterline. They are not used to humans, although you will not scare them. Curiosity will take hold - they will jump off the rocks and swim towards you to get a better look.

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The Puir Mon

Pass by the rocky beach of Broadhaven with its distinctive rock arch called ·The Puir Mon· [The Poor Man]. Bram described the rock, ·through whose base, time and weather have worn a hole through which one may walk dryshod·.

Reach the headland from where you can catch sight of both the houses of Whinnyfold and the reefs of the Skares. This is the spot where the hero of *The Mystery of the Sea* builds his home. It·s also I suspect the spot where Bram Stoker would have built a retirement home had he had made his fortune from the sales of *Dracula* (which he didn·t).

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Dacre Stoker, great-grand nephew of Bram, pointing to the Skares

One of the locals said that Bram spent hours on this spot looking over the deadly reefs of **The Skares**. Here·s Bram·s description of the reefs:

·For half a mile or more the rocks rise through the sea singly or in broken masses ending in a dangerous cluster known as ·The Skares· and which has had for centuries its full toll of wreck and disaster. Did the sea hold its dead where they fell, its floor around The Skares would be whitened with their bones, and new islands could build themselves with the piling wreckage.·

There have been many shipwrecks on the Skares down the centuries, and the seabed is undoubtedly littered with wreckage and the remains of the drowned sailors. Perhaps Bram was hyper-sensitive to the mood of a place and would have deeply empathised with the fate of these lost souls as he stood on the cliffs.

The Skares is an area of geological disturbance akin to the Watter·s Mou· and Bram·s fictional Castle Dracula on top of an old volcano. The local granite, once molten magma, had thrust upwards through the solid rock at its margins. The boundary between the two rocks is visible at the northern edge of the pebbly beach of Broadhaven:

·That union must have been originally a wild one; there are evidences of an upheaval which must have shaken the earth to its centre. Here and there are great masses of either species of rock hurled upwards in every conceivable variety of form...·

Whinnyfold and Crookit Lum Cottage: Walk into the hamlet of Whinnyfold with its dense cluster of 24 houses lying almost flush with the cliff top. Note that if you visit the village by car, it is difficult to park here.

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Crookit Lum Cottage, Whinnyfold.

Whinnyfold had been a fishing village in Bram Stoker·s time. Bram spent the summer of 1910 in residence at Crookit Lum cottage (at the far end of the main street). He is only known to have stayed there once. Today the Crookit Lum is a private residence · please respect the privacy of the residents and don·t disturb them. It·s a two storey-house with gabled windows and a small extension which was once the washhouse. The chimney leans slightly into the street, hence the name of the cottage in the local dialect which means ·crooked chimney·.

Bram·s landlady at The Crookit Lum was Isy Cay (pronounced Isee Kigh), who lived with her aging mother Jane. One of the locals recalls her mother telling her that Isy Cay ran a teashop in the Crookit Lum, and Bram and Florence would often stop off for tea and scones on their walks from Cruden Bay. Only later did they stay in the cottage. Isy and her mother moved into the washhouse, the northern end of the house and the part with the crooked chimney. The rooms in the rest of the cottage were rented out.

Bram Stoker was ailing badly on his last visit in 1910; he suffered from kidney disease and had suffered a stroke a few years previously. Mrs Cruickshank from the post office came to visit him at the Crookit Lum: ·It was plain to see he was very ill·. Local resident, George Hay, mentions how Bram Stoker would lie in a hammock for hours at a time staring at The Skares. On other occasions he would rise up and go for a walk along Cruden Bay beach, ·the tall,

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24 / 28

bearded Irishman, his cloak flying in the wind tamping about the heavy sand, prodding it with the heavy stick, waving his arm and shouting at the great rollers as they thundered up the beach, and altogether behaving in such an outlandish way that George's second cousin, Eliza, who worked at the Kilmarnock Arms, was afraid to walk home across the sands to Whinnyfold, and took the long way round·. These observations tie in with a comment by his biographer and a relative of Bram Stoker, Daniel Farson, who was told by his mother that by this stage he was ·rather dotty.· When Farson queried this, she replied, ·Well, really very dotty.·

Despite his illness, he managed to find the energy to work. According to his biographer Harry Ludlam, Bram·s publishers had asked for a new thriller, and he started writing *The Lair of the White Worm* while at Whinnyfold.

Near the Crookit Lum cottage is a path down to the shore: ·asteep zigzag path running down to the stony beach far below where the fishers keep their boats and which is protected from almost the wildest seas by the great black rock·the Caudman, · which fills the middle of the little bay, leaving deep channels on either hand.·

A walk down takes you to the pebbly shore where the fishermen left their boats. Look northwards and you can see the entrance to the cave where the Spanish treasure was found in *The Mystery of the Sea.* To the right of the cave entrance can be seen Lord Nelson·s Rock. Mentioned by Bram Stoker, it·s said to resemble the famous admiral in profile.

A dramatic scene in *The Mystery of the Sea* ensues here. A procession of ghosts of the sailors drowned at the Skares emerges from the sea:

·Up the steep path came a silent procession of ghostly figures, so misty of outline that through the grey green of their phantom being the rocks and moonlit sea were apparent, and even the velvet blackness of the shadows of the rocks did not lose their gloom. And yet each figure was defined so accurately that every feature, every particle of dress or accoutrement could be discerned. Even the sparkle of their eyes in that grim waste of ghostly grey was like the lambent flashes of phosphoric light in the foam of moving water cleft by a swift prow. There was no need for me to judge by the historical sequence of their attire, or by any inference of hearing; I knew in my heart that these were the ghosts of the dead who had been drowned in the waters of the Cruden Skares.

Indeed, the moments of their passing·and they were many for the line was of sickening length ·became to me a lesson of the long flight of time. At the first were skin-clad savages with long, wild hair matted, then others with rude, primitive clothing. And so on in historic order men, aye, and here and there a woman, too, of many lands, whose garments were of varied cut and substance. Red-haired Vikings and black-haired Celts and Phoenicians, fair-haired Saxons and swarthy Moors in flowing robes. At first the figures, chiefly of the barbarians, were not many; but as the sad procession passed along, I could see how each later year had brought its evergrowing tale of loss and disaster and added more and faster to the grim harvest of the sea.·

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After walking up the zigzag path, the ghosts make a procession along the cliff tops to Cruden Bay beach. They then turn inland towards the sand dunes, their destination - St Olaf·s well. Here they disappear back into the earth. The well was once a spring where pilgrims drank water to cure their disease. Before then it was a pagan well where the spirit of flowing water was worshipped. It·s now surrounded by Cruden Bay golf course, and a traditional wooden well feature marks its location.

The march of the ghosts has mistakenly been reported by Bram·s biographers as based on local folk lore. It actually derives from scenes in Walt Whitman·s poem *Sleepers*. Bram Stoker was obsessed with the American·s poetry.

From Whinnyfold, return back to Cruden Bay the way you came retracing in part the procession of the ghosts!

Miscellaneous

This section deals with localities associated with Bram Stoker which do not fit neatly into the three walks. Two of these are located on Aulton Road, which is the main road leading south from the bridge next to the Kilmarnock Arms hotel

About 50 yards beyond the bridge on the left-hand side is the Cruden Bay Garage, which is located in an old grain store. Bram used the building as the location for the wedding in *The Watter·s Mou*The scene in the novel was inspired by a village bazaar held in the grain store in 1894 to raise money to build the village hall. Bram was there with Florence and his son Noel.

A bit further along and opposite the St Olaf Hotel is the entrance to Station Road which led to Cruden Bay Railway Station, now demolished. It was built in 1897 and was used by Bram en route to and from his London home. Before the line was built, he took the train north to the nearby town of Ellon and from there, a pony and trap to Cruden Bay. It·s curious that these travel arrangements resemble the journey taken by Jonathan Harker to Castle Dracula in Transylvania!

On the left-hand side of Aulton Road is the entrance to Cruden Bay Golf Course where the magnificent Cruden Bay hotel was opened in 1899 as a luxury destination for the upper class. The hotel was demolished in the 1950s. Bram never stayed there, and he isn·t known to have played golf on the course either. His wife Florence, however, was a keen golfer and was said to have been the prettiest woman ever to have graced the fairways.

One other locality outside Cruden Bay was visited by Bram Stoker. About a mile north of the village is the coastal feature known as the Bullers of Buchan. Stop off at the car park and walk along the path through a small group of houses. A short distance to the north along the cliff path takes you to the Bullers (a dangerous spot for children and dogs). Here you look directly down at a collapsed sea cave where the narrow entrance arch has remained intact. During a storm the sea below ·boils· when the waves rush in through the arch.

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