

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Ballater-Monaltrie-Tullich-River Dee Circuit (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

This is an invigorating and interesting walk taking in some historical highlights and the attractive mixed countryside surrounding the popular Deeside village of Ballater.

Duration: 2.5 hours.



Route Overview

Duration: 2.5 hours.

Transport/Parking: Fairly frequent Stagecoach bus services along Deeside, from Aberdeen. Check timetables. There is a free car-park at Church Square in Ballater.

Length: 8.33 km / 5.18 mi. **Height Gain/Loss:** 128 meter.

Max Height: 301 meter. **Min Height:** 201 meter.

Surface: Moderate. A mix of paved surfaces, hard-surfaced paths, forest roads, and narrow uneven paths. The circuit is not suitable for off-road mobility scooters due to narrow, rough and steep paths, narrow bridges and a stile.

Difficulty: Moderate.

Child Friendly: Yes, if children are used to walks of this distance and overall ascent.

Dog Friendly: Yes, but keep dogs on lead on public roads.

Refreshments: Options in Ballater.



Description

This is a varied circular walk from the busy centre of Ballater taking in: an uphill section through mature conifers to a viewpoint over the Dee valley, before descending to a footbridge over the Tullich Burn in a wooded dell; an old ruined kirk; a display of ancient stones; the Deeside Way along the old railway line; and, a riverside path by the Dee. The walk starts and ends at the attractive rebuilt Victorian Railway Station, taking an old path on the perimeter of Monaltrie Park, where the Ballater Highland Games are held, to pass by B-listed Monaltrie House, dating from 1782. The history of the building is closely linked with that of the Farquharsons of Monaltrie, who lived in the house in the 19thC. At a mid-point on the route, descending from the wooded lower slopes of Creagan Reabhach hill, the route passes close to a rough grassy area to the east of Braehead of Tullich farm, which was once the location for Tullich village, the first Deeside settlement to be accorded burgh status. The outline of the buildings can still be seen in aerial photographs. The houses were abandoned in the early 19thC, with the development of nearby Ballater. Soon after, we visit the ruins of Tullich Kirk, just off the A93 main road. Although the graveyard is very much still in use, Tullich Kirk was abandoned in 1798 when the Tullich parish was absorbed into a bigger entity. The present ruins date back to around 1400, but St Nathalen founded a church here around the mid 600s. In the grounds of the graveyard now sits a modern glass-fronted display enclosure, which contains an important collection of Pictish stones associated with the kirkyard. Returning to Ballater there are fine views of the Deeside valley and surrounding hills, before enjoying a stroll along the banks of the River Dee itself.



Waypoints

(1) Start walk at Station Square

<https://w3w.co/gambles.relations.tortoises> NO3695395916
Start the walk in Station Square, facing the rebuilt Old Royal Station* at the western end, nearest to the main A93 Braemar Road that runs through the village. To the left of the building there is a path and an information board about walking around and about Ballater. Go down the path, which soon meets the pavement on Swann Place. Carry on to go right, almost immediately, onto the pavement on Provost Craig Road as it heads for Monaltrie Park. Where it joins Old Station Place, cross the road and follow the access road gently downhill towards the park entrance.

* Note: See: <https://www.visitballater.com/listings/old-royal-station/>



(2) Left along footpath

In 280 m, close to the entrance to Monaltrie Park, go left onto the footpath known as the "Cinder Path", with the gardens of houses on your left side and the park, through a line of trees, on your right side. Keep going on this path for approximately 1 km, with a field on your right side after the park is passed. Near the end of the path you will pass the white-washed Monaltrie House*. (280 m)

* Note: Monaltrie House, a B-listed building, formerly known as Ballater House, dating from 1782, with later additions. It is now used as a self-catering holiday home and regularly hosts members of the Metropolitan Police when they are looking after the Royal Family at Balmoral Castle. The history of the building is closely linked with that of the Farquharsons of Monaltrie, who lived in the house in the nineteenth century. During WWII, the stables were used by the Indian Cavalry Regiment stationed in Ballater. For more information, see: <https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/smrpub/master/detail.aspx?tab =main&refno=NO39NE0039>



(3) Right and cross road onto path

In 1.08 km, the "Cinder Path" having given way to an access road for houses for a short section, you will arrive at a t-junction with the Pass of Ballater public road. Go right here for about 25 m, cross the road with care, and follow a path into woodland. Almost immediately, the path crosses a burn on a narrow "plank bridge". Very soon after that, follow a narrow path right, with the public road (and burn, initially) fairly close on your right side, and an open area in the forest to accommodate overhead high voltage electricity cables on wooden pylons on your left side. Keep following this sometimes indistinct path with other paths running off at times. If you feel you have lost the path, there is always the option to return to the public road and walk along it instead, in a broadly ENE direction. (1.36 km)



(4) Left past gate and up forest road

In 401 m, go left past a steel gate and up a forest road. Keep going uphill on this road for approximately 1 km. (1.77 km)



(5) Right down steep path

In 1.05 km, just after passing under another line of high voltage overhead cables, where there is a partial view of the Dee valley, leave the forest road to follow a narrow path steeply downhill through the trees. In about 350 m, fairly steep descent, the path meets a narrow wooden footbridge over the Tullich Burn. Cross the footbridge and follow the path as it turns right and goes more gently downhill now, in more open woodland, in a broadly SE direction. (2.82 km)



(6) Over stile at gate then follow path left

In 880 m from Waypoint 5, the path meets a field gate where there is a narrow stone stile at the left side. Go over the stile and follow a narrow path left through rough ground, passing a modern house on your left side. In about 60 m, the path meets a rough access road close to farm buildings at Braehead of Tullich*. Follow the rough road downhill until it meets the A93 main road. Cross the busy road with care and go left along the grassy verge, soon reaching the surrounding wall of Tullich Kirkyard. (3.7 km)



** Note: *Note: The rough grassy area to the east of the farm was once the location for Tullich village, the first Deeside settlement to be accorded burgh status. The outline of the buildings can still be seen in aerial photographs. The houses were abandoned in the early 19th C, with the development of nearby Ballater.*

(7) Enter Tullich kirkyard at front gate

In 280 m from the gate and stile at Waypoint 6, turn right to go through the gate into Tullich Kirkyard, where there are many gravestones, old and new. There is an information board on your right, near the entrance. A little further on, go through a gap in an inner wall to check out the ruin of Tullich Kirk*. When you are ready, return to the graveyard path near main road, and go right to follow it around to a modern concrete and glass display enclosure** which houses a number of very old inscribed stones found at the old Kirk. After checking out the stones and information board, carry on walking on the cut grass behind the Kirk wall, heading towards some memorial benches, behind which is a pedestrian gate. (3.98 km)



** Note: Although the graveyard is very much still in use, Tullich Kirk was abandoned in 1798 when the Tullich parish was absorbed into a bigger entity. The present ruins date back to around 1400, but St Nathalen founded a church here around the mid 600s. See here for more information:*

<https://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/ballater/tullichkirk/index.html>

**** Note:** The glass-fronted display enclosure, built as a result of a community-driven project, contains an important collection of Pictish stones. An associated information board describes the stones. See:

<https://www.befs.org.uk/resources/historicenvironment-casestudies/care-protect/tullich-church/>



(8) Leave Tullich kirkyard at back gate

Go through the back gate to leave the church-yard and follow the short path south, towards another set of pedestrian gates (crossing a narrow strip of grazing pasture). Go through the gates and then follow the surfaced path down to meet the Deeside Way path where you turn right to take the path back in the direction of Ballater. (4.31 km)



(9) Go left to leave Deeside Way into woodland

After 1.92 km on the Deeside Way path (and crossing the A93 road along the way), go left to leave the Deeside Way to join a path into broadleaf community woodland. In about 45 m, go left at a y-junction and follow the path through the trees until it emerges, between houses onto Pannanich Road on a modern housing estate. Turn left to follow the pavement until you pass the last house on your left side. (6.23 km)



(10) Left to follow path towards A93 main road

In 480 m from Waypoint 9, go left off the pavement to take a narrow path over mown grass towards the A93 road, then turn right to walk along the pavement back towards the centre of Ballater, with the River Dee visible across the road and below you on your left side. In just over 500 m, cross the busy road with care to check out the rescued and reconstructed the Cambus O' May Scotch Derrick crane*, where there is an information board. (6.71 km)



*** Note:** For more information, see:

<http://scotchderrick.weebly.com/>



(11) Left across car-park to riverside path

In 540 m from Waypoint 10, and moving on a very short distance from the crane, after passing the Clan shop on your left, at the entrance to the car-park of the former Monaltrie Hotel (now apartments), go left to cross the car-park and join a hard-surfaced path above the River Dee. Follow the path as it heads up-river and under the Ballater Bridge. Keep going along the path until you reach the boundary of the caravan park. Go right here along Braichlie Road, passing the caravan park reception building on your left side. we suggest turning right at the junction with Victoria Road for the centre of Ballater, but you can turn right at earlier junctions if you wish. (7.25 km)



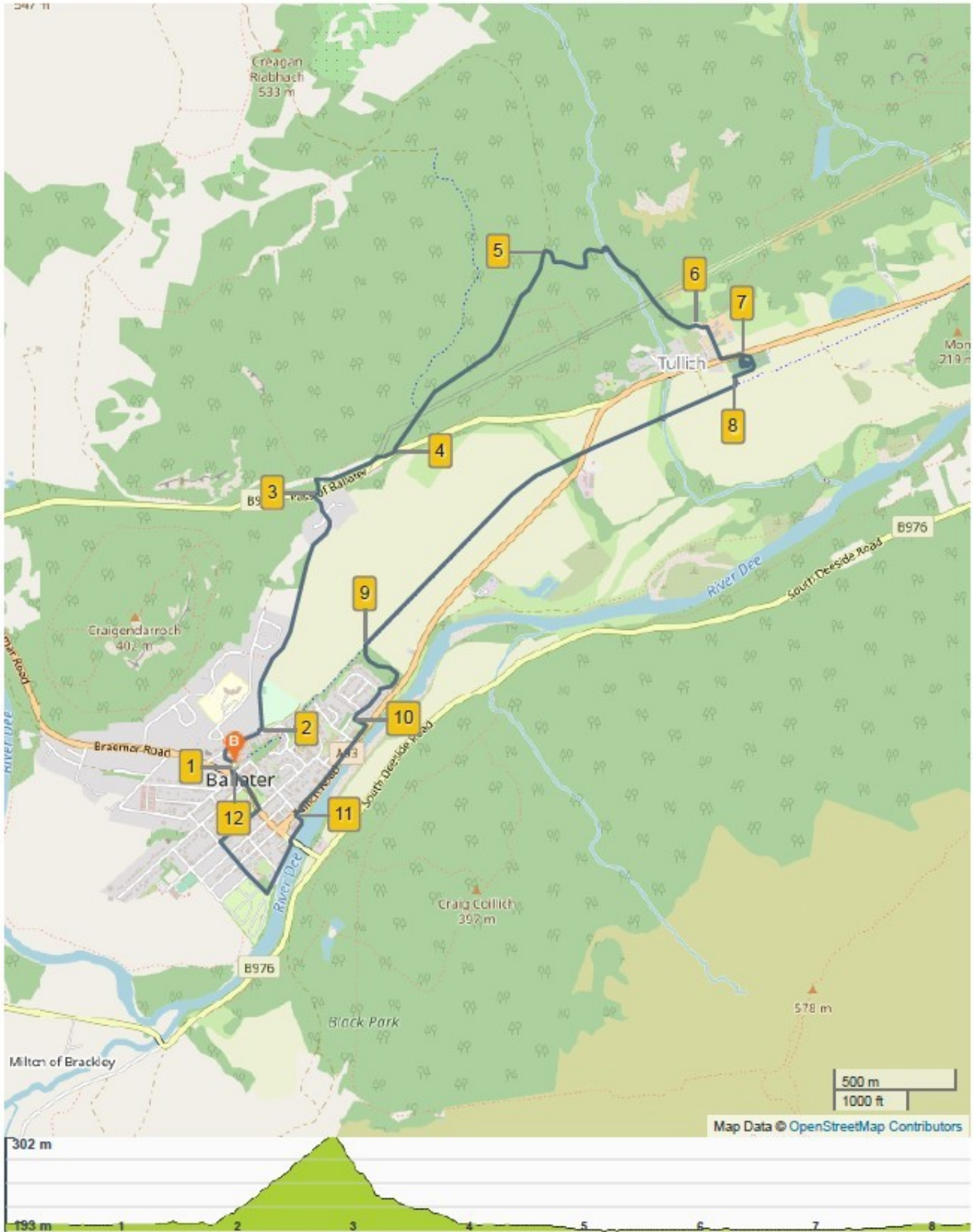
(12) Finish walk back at Station Square

After 1.08 km from Waypoint 11, you will have returned to your start-point in Station Square. (8.33 km)

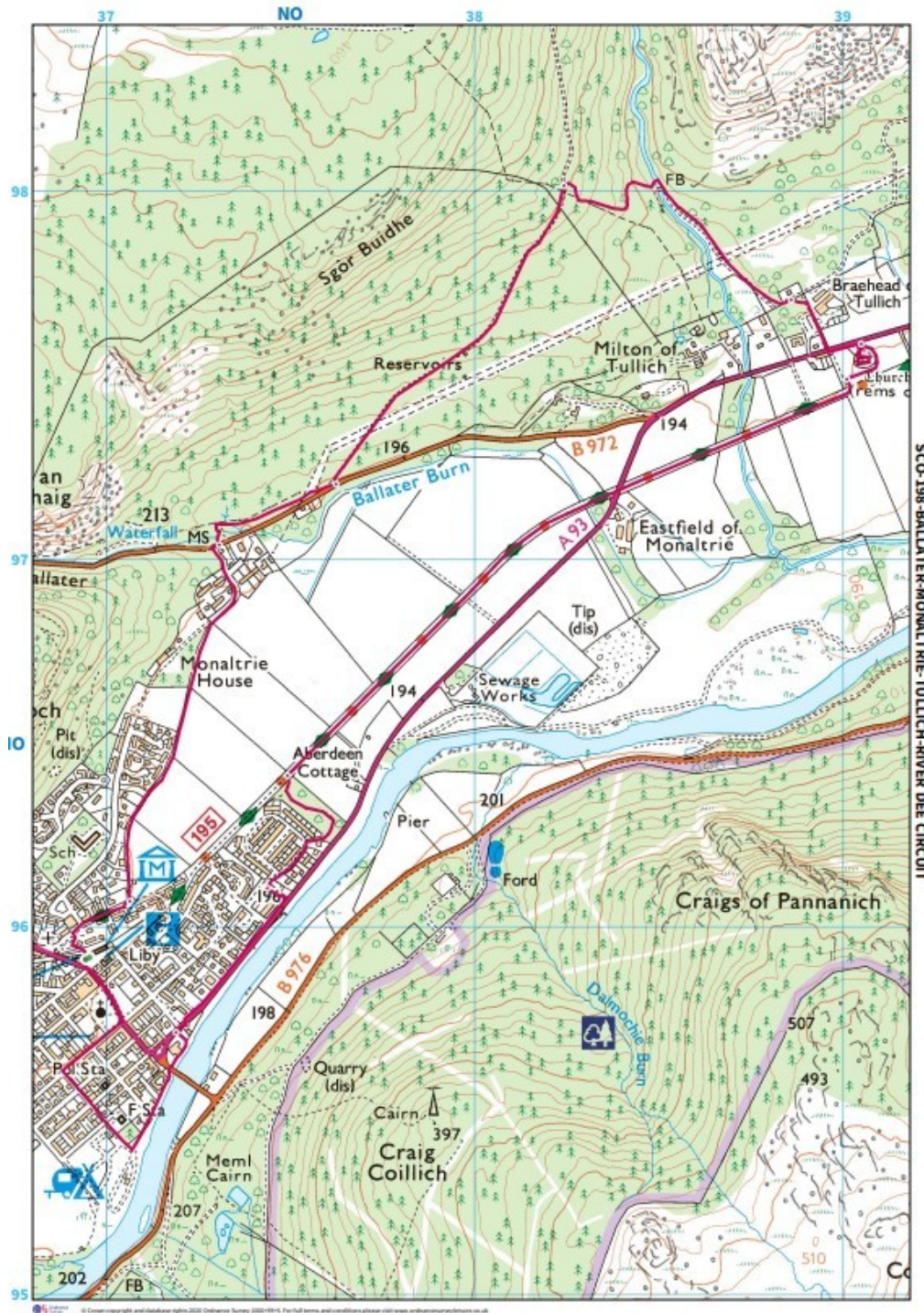


Route Map (with waypoints)

198-Ballater-Monaltrie-Tullich-River Dee Circuit



Route Map



Links:

[Photos from walk](#)

[Download Route Guide](#) (PDF with illustrated Waypoints)

[Download GPX file](#) (GPS Exchange Format)

[Access Walk on OutdoorActive](#)

[Access Walk on OSMaps](#)

[Access Walk on Alltrails](#)

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