

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Coull-Tarland Way-Gallow Hill Circuit (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

A relatively easy walk, initially following a good way-marked trail. On the return route there is a gradual ascent into a pine wood on good forest roads before gently dropping back into the farmland surrounding the old church at Coull.

Duration: 2.5 hours.



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: No public transport nearby. See Waypoint 1 for directions to start/end point. There is a small parking area at the walk start/end point.

Length: 7.110 km / 4.44 mi

Height Gain: 150 meter. **Height Loss:** 150 meter.

Max Height: 223 meter. **Min Height:** 136 meter.

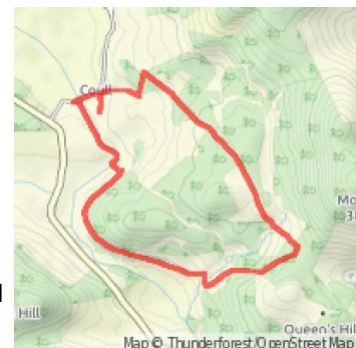
Surface: Moderate. Outward half is on good paths and farm tracks on way-marked trail. Good forest roads on return leg. We believe this route is suitable for off-road mobility scooters.

Difficulty: Easy.

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

Dog Friendly: Yes, keep dogs on lead near to any farm animals.

Refreshments: Options in Tarland and Aboyne.



Description

This gentle walk provides fine views of the pastoral landscape of the Howe of Cromar, framed by the imposing backdrop of Morven Hill. The first section is on fairly flat terrain, through farmland alongside the Tarland Burn, whilst the return route ascends onto the pine-forested slopes of Aboyne's Queen's Hill in order to loop back across Gallow Hill to the old kirk at Coull, where the walk starts. The early Scots missionary, St Nathalan, is said to have established a small church here in the 7th C. In the 12th C the church was granted to Arbroath Abbey by William the Lion. The present church building dates from the 18th C and has a Mort House in the graveyard (*for temporary storage of corpses prior to interment during a period when grave-robbers would exhume corpses and sell them for medical research*). At the start of the walk, the route passes the old manse, an interesting Georgian building with a distinctive tower and sheltered walled garden. The old manse is believed to have been built originally in the 18th C, with the main building re-designed and rebuilt around 1834 by renowned Aberdeen architect John Smith. Very soon, the walk joins the Tarland Way, a way-marked cycle/walking route between Aboyne and Tarland, and passes, across the Tarland Burn, the remains of Coull Castle, which occupied an important and commanding position along the ancient northern approach to the River Dee crossing at Aboyne. It was built by the Durward family in the 13th C, when they were one of the most important power-brokers in feudal Scotland, as their principal stronghold in the barony of O'Neill. The castle was said to be ruined by the first half of the 17th C. Later on, we pass under Coull House, now hidden by trees. It is described as a stylish Edwardian villa, built to be his own private residence by Marshall Mackenzie, the architect of Marischal College, Aberdeen. All in all, a varied and enjoyable walk in very agreeable scenery, with interesting historical associations.



Waypoints

(1) Start walk at Coull Church

(57.11021; -2.80669) <https://w3w.co/rocks.tasters.dentures>
Start the walk from the small car-park at Coull Church*. The access road to the church car-park is 570 m along the minor road signposted for Coull from the Aboyne to Tarland B9094 road. Walk back down the church access road and then turn left onto the minor Coull road, passing the old manse house, 'Kirklands of Coull'** on your left side. Soon you will arrive at a bridge over the Tarland Burn.

**Note: see Waypoint 14 for information about Coull Church.*

***Note: Kirklands of Coull is an interesting Georgian building with a distinctive tower and sheltered walled garden. The old manse is believed to have been built originally in the 18th Century, with the main building re-designed and rebuilt around 1834 by renowned Aberdeen architect John Smith.*



(2) Sharp left after bridge for Tarland Way

(57.11104; -2.81059) <https://w3w.co/spenders.chiefs.outright>
In just over 400 m from the car-park, immediately after crossing the bridge over the Tarland Burn, turn sharp left off the road onto the Tarland Way* footpath signposted for Aboyne. Walk along the footpath, with the burn on your left side. (416 m)

**Note: The Tarland Way is a 10 km cycle/walking route opened in 2011 to encourage as many people as possible to walk or cycle the route from Aboyne to Tarland. In 2015 a grass path was created along the south side of the Tarland Burn all the way from the bridge at Coull to the bridge in Tarland. The project was initiated by the Tarland Development Group and undertaken and managed by the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT) with funding from various public bodies. See: <https://www.tarland.org.uk/the-tarland-way/>.*



(3) Look left - over burn for Coull Castle ruins

(57.10818; -2.80700) <https://w3w.co/delivers.timed.diary>
In another 400 m, or so, look out for the remains of Coull Castle* occupying a prominent position, on your left, across the Tarland Burn. Continue walking along the Tarland Way footpath, soon crossing the burn on a new bridge before gaining some height and passing through a couple of pedestrian gates at a cattle crossing point. (820 m)

**Note: Coull Castle occupied an important and commanding position along the northern approach to the River Dee crossing at Aboyne. It was built by the Durward family in the 13th C, when they were one of the most important families in Scotland, as their principal stronghold in the barony of O'Neill. The castle was said to be ruined by the first half of the 17th C. See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coull_Castle and <https://thecastleguy.co.uk/blog-post/coull-castle-fortress-sir-alan-durward/>*



(4) Through gate and go right to follow Aboyne signpost

(57.10524; -2.80351) <https://w3w.co/bravery.sank.headless>

In 500 m, after passing through another pedestrian gate, go right to follow the waymarked Aboyne signpost along a farm road with the pine forest on your left side and fields on your right side. (1.3 km)



(5) Veer left onto connecting path at Coull Home Farm

(57.10240; -2.80879) <https://w3w.co/recently.feasts.onlookers>

In 500 m, passing the Coull Home Farm buildings (no longer a working farm) on your right, veer slightly left onto a connecting footpath as the rough road bends right through the Coull Home Farm buildings. The footpath soon connects with another farm road where you go left to continue along the rough road, away from Coull Farm, with the pine forest on your left. (1.8 km)



(6) Pass wood yard

(57.09916; -2.80482) <https://w3w.co/covers.milky.sues>

In 400 m you will pass a wood yard on your right side. Note that there are large dogs in fenced compounds here. Prepare for some loud barking as you pass by. (2.2 km)



(7) Carry straight at x-roads - crossing over access road to Coull House

(57.09874; -2.80239) <https://w3w.co/shears.looked.treatable>

In another 200 m you will arrive at an angled x-roads. Carry straight on, crossing over the access road to Coull House* going uphill on your left. Keep going along the rough road with the pine forest on your left, and fields opening up again on your right. (2.4 km)

**Note: Coull House, not visible on this walk, is described as a stylish Edwardian villa, built to be his own private residence by Marshall Mackenzie, the architect of Marischal College, Aberdeen. It originally had croquet lawns, tennis courts and a swimming pool looking out towards the Howe of Cromar, although all these garden features have been overtaken by modern forestry planting.*



(8) Follow signposted road as it bends right - away from access gate to Coull House

(57.09713; -2.79105) <https://w3w.co/attention.glue.races>

In 700 m, with gates ahead of you and to your left, follow the road, signposted for Aboyne, as it bends right, away from the access gate to Coull House. (3.1 km)



(9) Left and uphill to leave Tarland Way

(57.09633; -2.79108) <https://w3w.co/community.gurgling.gains>

In just 70 m, or so, go left and up a forestry track to leave the Tarland Way. (3.2 km)



(10) Take right fork at y-junction

(57.09741; -2.78600) <https://w3w.co/popping.headlines.incorrect>

After 400 m gentle ascent on the forestry road, take the right fork at a y-junction. You will now carry on an ascent, with some undulations, through the pine forest for 1.7 km, soon heading back towards Coull, in a north-westerly direction. (3.6 km)



(11) Carry straight on downhill - ignoring road bending to right

(57.10718; -2.78739) <https://w3w.co/boomers.perfumes.slowly>

After 1.7 km, and soon after passing through a forestry pedestrian gate, you will emerge from the trees, with Morven Hill appearing in the distance ahead of you again. Carry straight on downhill here, ignoring the road bending to your right. (5.3 km)



(12) Carry straight on downhill again - ignoring road bending to left

(57.10901; -2.79055) <https://w3w.co/moped.cocoons.trimmer>
In another 300 m, again carry straight on downhill, ignoring the forestry road bending to your left. (5.6 km)



(13) Left and downhill on farm road through woodland

(57.11345; -2.80018) <https://w3w.co/outboard.revisit.charcoal>
In 800 m, after passing around a vehicle gate, and with a large farm building on your right, go left and downhill on a farm road through woodland. At the bottom of this track, at a t-junction with the access road to Mains of Coull farm-house (no longer a working farm), turn right and follow this rough road gently downhill to the minor Coull public road. Here, you turn immediately sharp left to follow the Coull Church access road back to your walk start-point. (6.4 km)



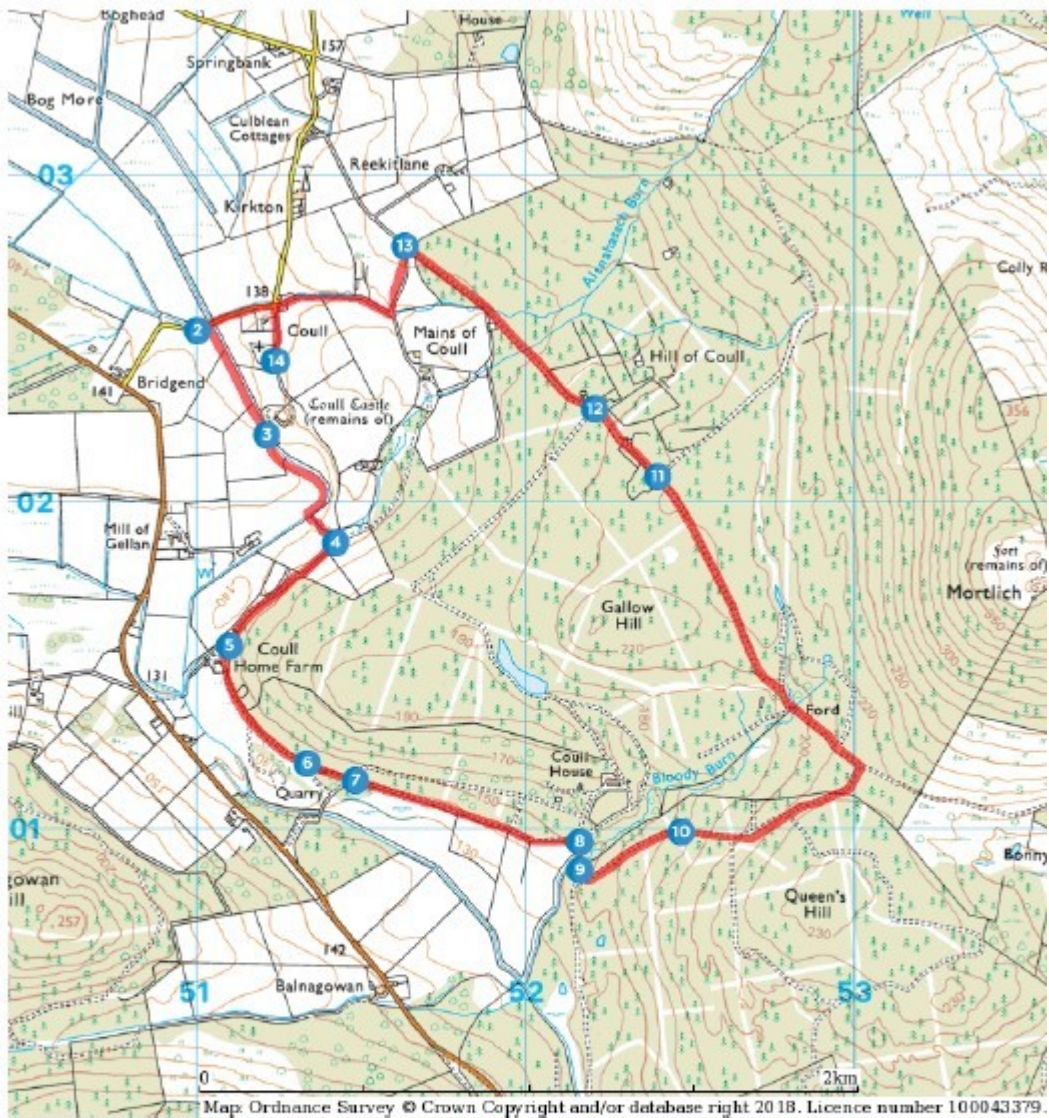
(14) Finish walk back at Coull Church

(57.11020; -2.80661) <https://w3w.co/rocks.tasters.dentures>
In 700 m, you will have arrived back at your start-point in the little car-park for Coull Church*. You may wish to explore the large church yard. (7.1 km)

**Note: Coull Parish Church had an early association with Coull Castle, a former stronghold of the Durward family, the remains of which are located a short distance to the south-east. The early Scots missionary, St Nathalan, is said to have established a small church here in the 7th C. In the 12th C the church was granted to Arbroath Abbey by William the Lion. The present church dates from the 18th C and has a Mort House in the graveyard (for temporary storage of corpses prior to interment during a period when grave-robbers would exhume corpses and sell them for medical research). In the unlikely event that the church bell, in the distinctive bird cage belfry, rings of its own accord during your visit then you may speculate that a descendant of the Durward family has just died – as local legend has it that when a Durward dies, the church bell at Coull Kirk tolls of its own accord!*



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](#)

[Access Walk on Wikiloc](#)

