

# The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

## Finzean-Tom's Cairn Circular (Aberdeenshire)

### Route Summary

This is a very scenic half-day hiking excursion in a beautiful area of West Aberdeenshire, mostly through mature pine forest and on open hillside. Although classed as a "low hill", the panoramic views from the top of Tom's Cairn on a clear day are especially breath-taking.

Duration: 3.5 hours.



### Route Overview

**Duration:** 3.5 hours.

**Transport/Parking:** No public transport nearby. Parking will usually be available at the walk start/end point in the grounds of Birse and Feughside Church. Thank you!

**Length:** 10.770 km / 6.73 mi

**Height Gain:** 261 meter. **Height Loss:** 261 meter.

**Max Height:** 305 meter. **Min Height:** 122 meter.

**Surface:** Moderate. A mix of good forest roads and grassy paths. May be muddy in places. There is a 650 m section on the B976 South Deeside Road.

**Difficulty:** Medium.

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

**Dog Friendly:** Yes. Keep dogs on lead in the Finzean Estate, on public roads and near livestock.

**Refreshments:** We can recommend the Finzean Farm Shop and Cafe (located near the end of the walk).



### Description

This is a highly enjoyable walk in two halves: the first section meanders through mature forest around Finzean House, where you are likely to spot red squirrels and hear woodpeckers at work; while the final section ascends over a grass and heather hillside to a panoramic vantage point before descending to the start through open farmland with sweeping views of the Feughside valley. The area around Finzean is renowned for its scenic beauty, and was the subject of landscape paintings by the celebrated 19thC Scottish artist, Joseph Farquarson (the "Painting Laird"). Finzean, on the banks of the fast-flowing River Feugh, is set in a wide valley comprised of a patchwork of fields and small woodlands, with scattered houses, farms and hamlets. A ridge of low hills, with their highest point at Tom's Cairn (310 m), delineate the valley to the north, separating it from the River Dee. To the south and west, Finzean is sheltered by higher hills. Especially prominent in the views towards this aspect are the distinctive granite tor of Clachnaben (589 m) and Peter Hill (617 m). The Birse Community Trust has preserved three watermills for woodworking on the River Feugh, all that remains of over 40 mills that operated in the area at one time. At the mid-point of the walk, before crossing the South Deeside Road, we pass three stone monuments: the ancient Dardanus Standing Stone, the Birse Parish War Memorial and the Birse Parish Millennium Stone. Further up the wooded hillside there is another standing stone. The Dardanus Stone may have been a Bronze Age cist slab, but local tradition asserts that it marks the spot where Dardanas, a Pictish king, was killed. There are two stone cairns and a trig point at the summit of Tom's Cairn, the focal point on our walking route. From here, on a clear day, the views are breathtaking - most immediately, the hilltops of Hill of Fare, Kerloch, Mount Shade, Clachnaben, Peter's Hill, and, further away, Mount Battock, Mount Keen, Lochnagar, the Cairngorms, Morven, and Bennachie.



## Waypoints

### (1) Start the walk at the Birse and Feughside Church

(57.02195; -2.65204) <https://w3w.co/card.perch.rooting>

The walk starts at the Birse and Feughside Church, near the hamlet of Finzean, about 1 km from the B976 South Deeside Road. From the church, cross the road and take a path through the little triangle of community woodland onto the road on the other side. Turn left and walk down this minor road.



### (2) Turn sharp right to enter the South Drive for Finzean Estate

(57.01923; -2.65332) <https://w3w.co/card.perch.rooting>

In about 350 m, at the bottom of the hill, where the minor road you are walking on meets another road (the Finzean to Forest of Birse access road), turn right, then veer right immediately right into the trees to take the South Drive rough-surfaced access road to Finzean House and Estate. (347 m)



### (3) Turn left into the woods - before Finzean House

(57.02759; -2.67446) <https://w3w.co/relies.likely.sports>

After 1.65 km, with the Finzean House buildings now visible on your right, over a field, ahead of you, turn left to follow a forestry road into the woodland. (2.0 km)



### (4) Right at wide forest road junction

(57.02410; -2.67604) <https://w3w.co/gossiping.entire.buyers>

After 500 m on the gently ascending forest road, turn sharp right at a wide junction. Now follow this main forest for about 1.6 km, ignoring any minor turn-offs to right and left. (2.5 km)





## (5) Veer right onto woodland path

(57.03398; -2.68111) <https://w3w.co/doors.serves.goodbyes>  
After ascending on the main forest road for about 1.6 km, just before the road starts to descend\*, veer right off the road. There are two tracks leading off, on the right, here. Ignore the first track (on your extreme right) and take the second track, heading NE, which soon become a fairly well-worn path (very muddy the day we walked it in Feb 2020). (4.1 km)

*\*Note: the main forest road you were on starts a long descent from this point to eventually reach the B976 South Deeside Road at a point well west of where you want to be. If you start descending you have gone too far, and missed this waypoint!*



## (6) Cross B976 South Deeside Road at War Memorial and take path uphill

(57.03501; -2.66837) <https://w3w.co/smart.tailing.acclaimed>  
In 800 m the path reaches the B976 South Deeside Road where there is a war memorial, standing stones (modern and ancient), and an information board. When you are ready, cross the road with care and follow the signposted route for Tom's Cairn uphill, into the trees. Stay on this path as it ascends steeply up into the forest, ignoring any turn-offs to right or left. Eventually, after the path dips a little, you will meet a gate at the edge of the woodland, giving access to the grass and heather hillside on the western flank of Tom's Cairn hill. Keep following the mostly grassy track over the open hillside, with the summit of Tom's Cairn visible ahead of you, in an easterly direction. Some wonderful views in all directions open up as you make your ascent. (4.9 km)



## (7) Trig point at summit of Tom's Cairn Hill

(57.03856; -2.63442)  
<https://w3w.co/landmark.crumbles.marathon>  
After 2.3 km from the signpost at the B976 road you will have reached the trig point at the summit area of Tom's Cairn. In fact, there are two cairns at the summit area, one on the south side and one on the north side. On a clear day, the views are breathtaking - most immediately, Hill of Fare, Kerloch, Mount Shade, Clachnaben, Peter's Hill, and, further away, Mount Keen, Lochnagar, the Cairngorms, Morven, and Bennachie. When you are ready, re-trace your steps from the summit area for about 600 m, looking for a paths y-junction ahead of you. (7.2 km)



## (8) Veer left at y-junction on hillside paths

(57.03695; -2.64278) <https://w3w.co/nappy.verge.unsightly>  
In 600 m from the Trig Point, re-trace your steps on the ascent, you will arrive at a paths y-junction ahead of you. Take the left fork. (7.8 km)



## (9) Follow path left and downhill for Tillycroy Farm

(57.03649; -2.64316) <https://w3w.co/fruit.diggers.immune>

Very soon, in 50 m, or so, there are a couple of walks signposts. Go sharp left here, signed for Tillycroy Farm. Soon the path veers right and more steeply downhill towards a set of large field gates. (7.85 km)



## (10) Through field gate

(57.03545; -2.64182) <https://w3w.co/cornering.logged.backs>

In 150 m, or so, go through the large set of gates (very muddy here in Feb 2020) and then keep following the path downhill on the open, grassy hillside. In about 350 m in an area of open trees, the path goes sharp right with a fence now on your left side. Ignore a field opening that goes directly down to Tillycroy Farm and carry on a little way, looking for a footpath gate on your left side. (8.0 km)



## (11) Through footpath gate and continue descent

(57.03221; -2.64391) <https://w3w.co/devours.perch.ballparks>

In 600 m from the large gates at Waypoint 10 go through a footpath gate on your left side and carry on following the path, with the fence now on your right side. Soon, the path bends left for a more direct descent of the hillside. From here, that path follows the field edge down to a footpath gate at the side of B976 South Deeside Road. Turn right to follow this fairly quiet road in a westerly direction for about 650 m, ensuring you walk on the right side to face oncoming traffic. For your safety, step up onto the verge, if you can, when traffic approaches. (8.6 km)



## (12) Left off B976 at Finzean School junction

(57.03150; -2.65445) <https://w3w.co/carpentry.label.delighted>

In 1 km from the previous waypoint on the hillside above Tillycroy Farm, having walked along the B976 South Deeside Road in a westerly direction for about 650 m, you will arrive at the road junction just above Finzean Primary School. Turn left and downhill, off the B976, to pass Finzean Primary School on your right side. Just after the school, veer right onto a path running downhill, parallel with the road. In just over 500 m from the school you can divert to the Finzean Farm Shop and Cafe on your left if you wish. Otherwise, keep following the footpath downhill, back towards your start-point at the church. (9.6 km)



### (13) Finish walk back at the Birse and Feughside Church

(57.02200; -2.65209) <https://w3w.co/card.perch.rooting>

In 1.2 km, after passing through a little area of community woodland in the final section, cross the road to finish the walk back where you started at the Birse and Feughside Church. (10.8 km)





## 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](#)