

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

## Hill of Tillymorgan (Aberdeenshire)

### Route Summary

A relatively short hill walk over varied terrain with a mostly gradual ascent. There are excellent views at many points on the route. The modern wind turbines and old abandoned slate quarries that surround the summit each provide interest and spectacle in their different ways.

Duration: 2.5 hours.



### Route Overview

**Duration:** 2.5 hours.

**Transport/Parking:** It is a 1.4 km walk from the bus-stop on the A96 at Colpy. Check Stagecoach timetables. You can park on the grassy verge by the old churchyard at the start of the walk, or beside unused (some) farm buildings (ask permission as you see fit - the farm-house does not appear to be occupied at present).

**Length:** 5.190 km / 3.24 mi

**Height Gain:** 256 meter **Height Loss:** 256 meter

**Max Height:** 374 meter **Min Height:** 181 meter

**Surface:** Moderate. Partly on hard-surfaced rough roads and partly on open, grassy hillside. **\*\*\*Please note you must cross over a sheep fence after**

**Waypoint 3 and again, after Waypoint 6. This may not suit all walkers.\*\*\***

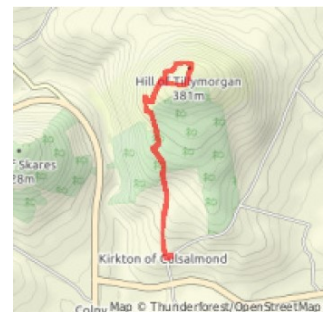
**Child Friendly:** Yes, if children are used to walks of this distance and overall ascent.

**\*\*\*Please note you must cross over a sheep fence after Waypoint 3 and again, after Waypoint 6. This may not suit all children.\*\*\***

**Difficulty:** Medium.

**Dog Friendly:** Yes, on lead on public roads and near farm animals. You are likely to encounter sheep on the open hillside.

**Refreshments:** We can recommend Morgan McVeigh's cafe, just off the nearby A96.



### Description

This walk through farmland, conifer forest and on open grassy hillside, provides wonderful views from the summit of Hill of Tillymorgan, especially of the Bennachie range. The pastoral setting belies some important aspects of Scottish history over the last few centuries. The walk starts and ends at the ruins of the Old Kirk of Culsalmond, built, like many of its kind, to support the agricultural improvements that were gathering pace, and transforming our rural landscape, in the late 18th C. The church bell-tower is striking, and very similar to the one at the Old Parish Church in Insch. Like many rural churches, the Old Kirk was the scene of violent protest in the period running up to great schism of 1843, known as "The Disruption". For more info see: <https://bit.ly/2Kno8w1>. After leaving the old churchyard, the route takes what remains of a section of the Old Turnpike (Toll) Road (named Lawrence/ Laurence Road for reasons unknown). It was the main road between Aberdeen and Inverness before the arrival of motorised vehicles. Nowadays, modern technology is represented on the Hill of Tillymorgan by three large wind turbines, but, in times past, a different kind of technology made its mark on the landscape – slate quarrying. The Hill of Tillymorgan (and nearby Hill of Foudland) quarries were opened up in the mid 18th C. At their peak a century later, the quarries produced almost one million hand-split slates per year. The quarries closed more than 100 years ago, due to depressed demand and competition opened up by the new rail network. The quarries, spoil heaps, and stone shelters you will pass on the walk are a fascinating insight into a lost world. For more info, see: <https://www.e-architect.co.uk/scotland/scottish-slate> (thanks to Mark Chalmers) <https://bit.ly/2KmTLWC> (thanks to Aberdeenshire Council)



## Waypoints

### (1) Start walk at the Old Kirk

(57.38515; -2.58425) <https://w3w.co/tickling.cinemas.ounce>

Start the walk at the ruin of the Old Kirk (Parish Church)\* at Kirkton of Culsalmond. We suggest that you have a look around the remains of the church and the graveyard beside Kirkton Farm. When you are ready, leave the graveyard and turn right to take the old rough road\*\* going away from the farm in a westerly direction and gently uphill.

*\*Note: The church was built in the late 18th C. The belltower is striking, and very similar to the one at the Old Parish Church in Inch. Like many rural churches, the Old Kirk was the scene of riots in the period running up to great schism of 1843, known as the Disruption. This resulted in approximately one third of ministers and congregations leaving the Church of Scotland and constituting themselves as the Free Church of Scotland.*

*\*\*Note: this old road is a section of the Old Turnpike (Toll) Road that ran between Aberdeen and Inverness before motorised vehicles and the establishment of the current public highway system in general, and the A96 in particular. The line of the old road is now lost in an area of brash and tree stumps, on your left, where trees have been felled, about 1.2 km from the start-point for this walk.*



### (2) Carry on uphill past electricity sub-station

(57.39295; -2.58471) <https://w3w.co/blackbird.loosed.tend>

In 1 km, just after passing an electricity sub-station (for the wind turbines on the hill above you), continue uphill on the rough road for 700 m, until you arrive at the base of the first wind turbine. (1 km)



### (3) Take indistinct path northerly away from turbine

(57.39833; -2.58641) <https://w3w.co/envy.carting.tutorial>

In 700 m, arriving at the base of the wind turbine, carry straight on (leaving the rough access road which bends sharp right and uphill towards the next turbine) to go north to find an indistinct path that ascends through heather and grass to a sheep fence. Clamber over the the fence, taking care to avoid the barbed wire and avoiding causing any damage to the fence. You are now in an open area of hillside where you continue going N for a short distance before veering slightly NW, to your right, gently ascending the hill on sheep tracks, walking away from the turbine, behind you. You are looking to meet an old grassy access road beside the first set of old slate quarries you will encounter. (1.7 km)



#### (4) Sharp right at 1st spoil heap to follow old road uphill

(57.39997; -2.58761) <https://w3w.co/downcast.snail.bonds>

In 200 m, or so, walking on the open hillside, you should meet a rough, grassy access road to the quarries. Turn right to continue uphill for on this road as it heads at first east, then bends uphill and towards the north-west. Soon the road peters out. From here just make your own way (taking appropriate care) up the hill passing a number of abandoned quarries\* and quarry workers' stone shelters\*\*. We suggest circling around and up the hillside in a north-westerly direction at first, then northerly. Passing the largest of the quarries on your right, near the hilltop, you will spot the trig point ahead of you. Head in that direction. (1.9 km)



*\*Note: The Hill of Foudland and Hill of Tillymorgan quarries were opened up in the mid 18th C. At their peak a century later, the quarries produced almost one million hand-split slates per year. The quarries closed more than 100 years ago, due to depressed demand and competition. Thanks to Mark Chalmers for this info. For more, see: <https://www.e-architect.co.uk/scotland/scottish-slate> (thanks to Mark Chalmers)*

*\*\*Note: The quarriers sat on the ground whilst cleaving the slate in small stone shelters that they created. These shelters, called 'scathies', originally had timber roofs to protect from the worst of the weather.*

#### (5) Trig Point

(57.40411; -2.57919) <https://w3w.co/explains.twee.dividing>

In 800 m, or so, you will have arrived at the trig point at the flat summit area of Tillymorgan where there are wonderful all-around views. When you are ready, head back down the hill. With your back to the trig point, and facing the mast on Hill of Foudland to the South West, we suggest veering left to pass a large quarry near the summit on your right side. Carry on walking away from the summit area, going gently downhill, and gradually swinging around towards the SW with the mast on Hill of Foudland, over the Hill of Skares, acting as an approximate direction-finder. The boundary fence you crossed earlier is always some distance away on your left. Before too long, you should meet the old rough grassy access road first encountered at Waypoint 4. Carry on down that old road to that point. (2.7 km)



#### (6) Head east for lowest turbine off the old road

(57.39981; -2.58750) <https://w3w.co/downcast.snail.bonds>

In 800 m, at the rough grassy quarry access road you encountered at Waypoint 6, turn left to head towards the fence and the lowest of the 3 wind turbines. Cross the fence where most convenient and arrive at the wind turbine. From here, you re-trace your steps back to the start-point at the Old Kirk at Kirkton Farm. (3.5 km)





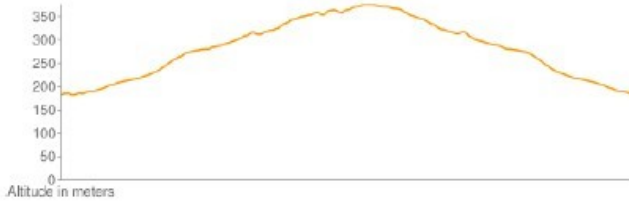
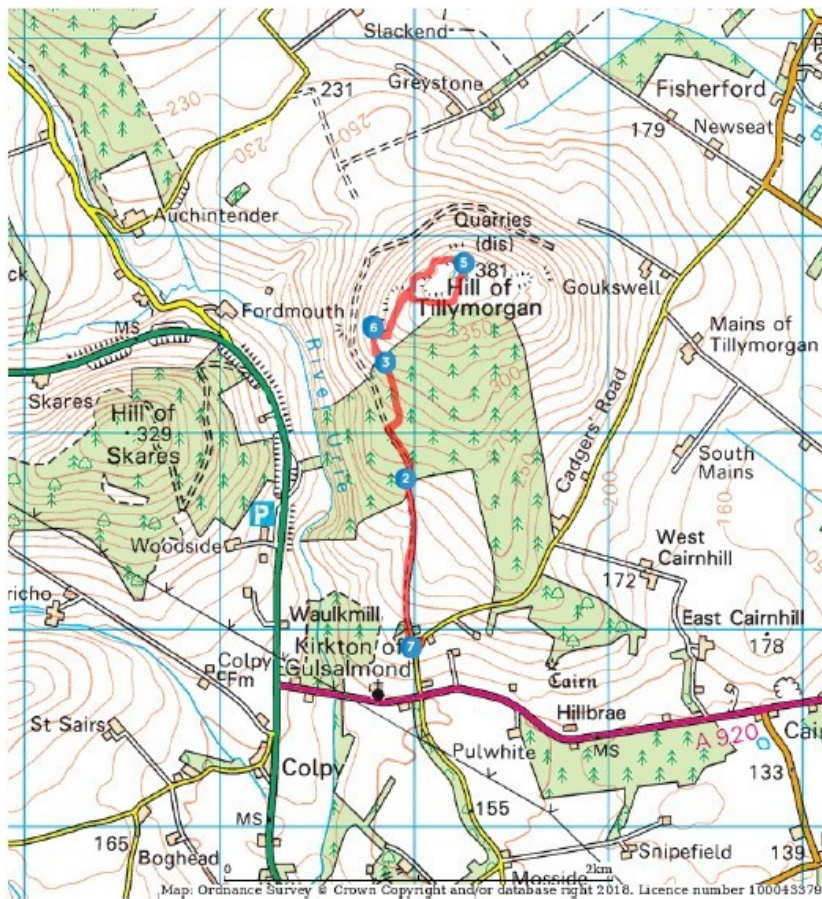
## (7) Finish walk back at the Old Kirk

(57.38515; -2.58405) <https://w3w.co/tickling.cinemas.ounce>

In 1.7 km you will have arrived back at Kirkton Farm and the Old Kirk of Culsalmond where you started the walk. (5.19 km)



## Route Map



### Links:

[Photos from walk](#)

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

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

[Access Walk on Viewranger](#)

[Access Walk on OutdoorActive](#)

[Access Walk on OSMaps](#)

[Access Walk on Wikiloc](#)