

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Inverurie-East Aquhorthies Stone Circle Circuit (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

This short walk takes in a very special example of the ancient and mysterious recumbent stone circles that are unique to the North-East of Scotland. The views in all directions throughout the walk are outstanding, but especially towards the towering bulk and iconic shape of Bennachie's Mither Tap.

Duration: 1.75 hrs.



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: Inverurie is well served by bus and rail links. Check timetables. However, the route start-point is approximately a 5 km walk from the centre of Inverurie. There is a free car-park at the walk start point (see Waypoint 1 for how to get there).

Length: 4.57 km / 2.84 mi. **Height Gain/Loss:** 126 meter.

Max Height: 181 meter. **Min Height:** 105 meter.

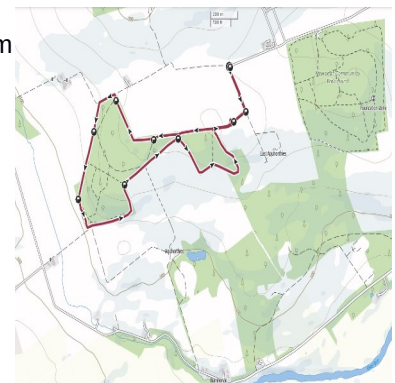
Surface: Moderate. A mix of rough woodland paths and rough roads. The circuit is not suitable for off-road mobility scooters due to narrow uneven paths, prominent tree roots, and fallen trees.

Difficulty: Easy.

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

Dog Friendly: Yes, but keep dogs on lead on access road near the start and end of the route.

Refreshments: Options in Inverurie.



Description

The outstanding feature of this walk, on the outskirts of Inverurie, is undoubtedly the hugely impressive recumbent stone circle, visited near the beginning (or end), of the route. It has an almost pristine appearance, as if built within living memory, belying the antiquity of its construction, believed to be around 2,000 BC. The route of the accompanying walk, around the perimeter of attractive mixed woodland on a south-facing hillside, offers some fantastic views of the highly distinctive and iconic Mither Tap, at the eastern end of the Bennachie massif, an eye-catching landscape feature throughout much of Aberdeenshire. On the return section, the views over mixed countryside towards Aquhorthies House and the hamlet of Burnherve are also very satisfying. East Aquhorthies stone circle is one of the best-preserved examples of a recumbent stone circle, and one of the few that still have their full complement of stones. It also seems that it may be the only one that has all its stones still standing without having been re-erected. It stands on a gentle south-west facing slope and consists of a ring of nine stones. A further two grey granite stones flank a recumbent of red granite. The discovery of a possible cist covered by a capstone at the centre of the circle indicates that there may once have been a burial cairn there, perhaps from an even earlier time. The ring of stones is not quite circular and is aligned so that the level top of the recumbent lines up with the southern moonset in the direction of the Hill of Fare. From the circle, there are also fine views of the prominent Mither Tap of the Bennachie range. On a clear day it is possible to make out the tumbledown remains of the stone Iron Age fort at the summit. The place name "Aquhorthies" derives from a Gaelic word meaning "field of prayer", and may indicate this has been acknowledged as a special place of ritual and spiritual significance from the early Bronze Age to much later, Gaelic-speaking, times. The circle's surroundings were landscaped in the late 19th C, and the circle sits within a small fenced and walled enclosure called a roundel. For more information about the stone circle, see: <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/places/east-aquhorthies-stone-circle/history/>



Waypoints

(1) Start at the small car-park for East Aquhorthies Stone Circle

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Start the walk at the small car-park for East Aquhorthies Stone Circle*. After checking out the information board, go through the pedestrian gate and go left up the rough road. * Note: To get there, take the continuation of Blackhall Road in a westerly direction, from the Blackhall Road roundabout on the A96 Inverurie bypass (signposted for Burnhervie, the Aquhorthies Stone Circle, and Anderson's Furniture shop). In about 1.3 km, at a sharp bend left, go straight ahead onto a narrow access road. The stone circle car-park is situated on your left, 1.7 km from there, and about 670 m after the entrance to the car-park, on your left, at the Newseat Community Woodland.



(2) Turn right towards East Aquhorthies Stone Circle

In 260 m, turn right onto a track towards East Aquhorthies Stone Circle, which you will see ahead of you. (260 m)



(3) East Aquhorthies Stone Circle

In 100 m, enter the gate into the enclosed East Aquhorthies Stone Circle*, where there is an information board. After checking out the stone circle and the marvellous views towards the Mither Tap of Bennachie, exit at the gate and turn right to follow a path that soon becomes a rough road on the perimeter of mixed woodland. Keep going gently downhill. (360 m)

** Note: East Aquhorthies stone circle is one of the best-preserved examples of a recumbent stone circle, and one of the few that still have their full complement of stones. It also seems that it may be the only one that has all its stones still standing without having been re-erected. It stands on a gentle south-west facing slope and consists of a ring of nine stones.*

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(4) Go right off rough road onto woodland path

In 660 m, as the rough road bends left, away from the perimeter of the woodland, take a path on your right, through the trees. (1.03 km)



(5) Go right at y-junction

In 390 m, with a field fairly close now on your right side, veer right and downhill at a y-junction. As you follow this section of path, on the perimeter of the wood, the rough access road to Mellanbrae Farm is on your right side. (1.42 km)



(6) Join rough road and carry on downhill

In 300 m, join a rough forest road which bends to the left, and carry on downhill, with trees on your left side and fields, over bushes, on your right side. (1.72 km)



(7) Leave rough road before gates to go left onto narrow path

In 370 m, as you approach close to a set of steel gates blocking the road, take a narrow path on your left into the woodland. Now follow this undulating path through the wood, initially downhill to a corner point where there is a junction of rough roads across the fence to your right. At this point, the path veers left to follow the perimeter of the wood gently uphill, with fields on your right side. (2.09 km)



(8) Veer right at paths junction

In 650 m from the last waypoint, at a paths junction, with a field corner on your right side, follow the path as it turn sharp right to follow the woodland perimeter, with the field still fairly close on your right side. (2.74 km)



(9) Go right and downhill

In 460 m, with another field corner on your right side, go sharp right to follow the woodland perimeter gently downhill. In about 540 m, after veering left to leave the perimeter of the wood, the path goes sharp left and steeply (initially) uphill. Keep following this path uphill until it joins with the rough road near the stone circle that you walked down at an early point on the route. Turn right at that point, by a bench, to follow the path that takes you past the stone circle on your left side, and re-trace your steps back to the car-park at the start of the walk. (3.2 km)



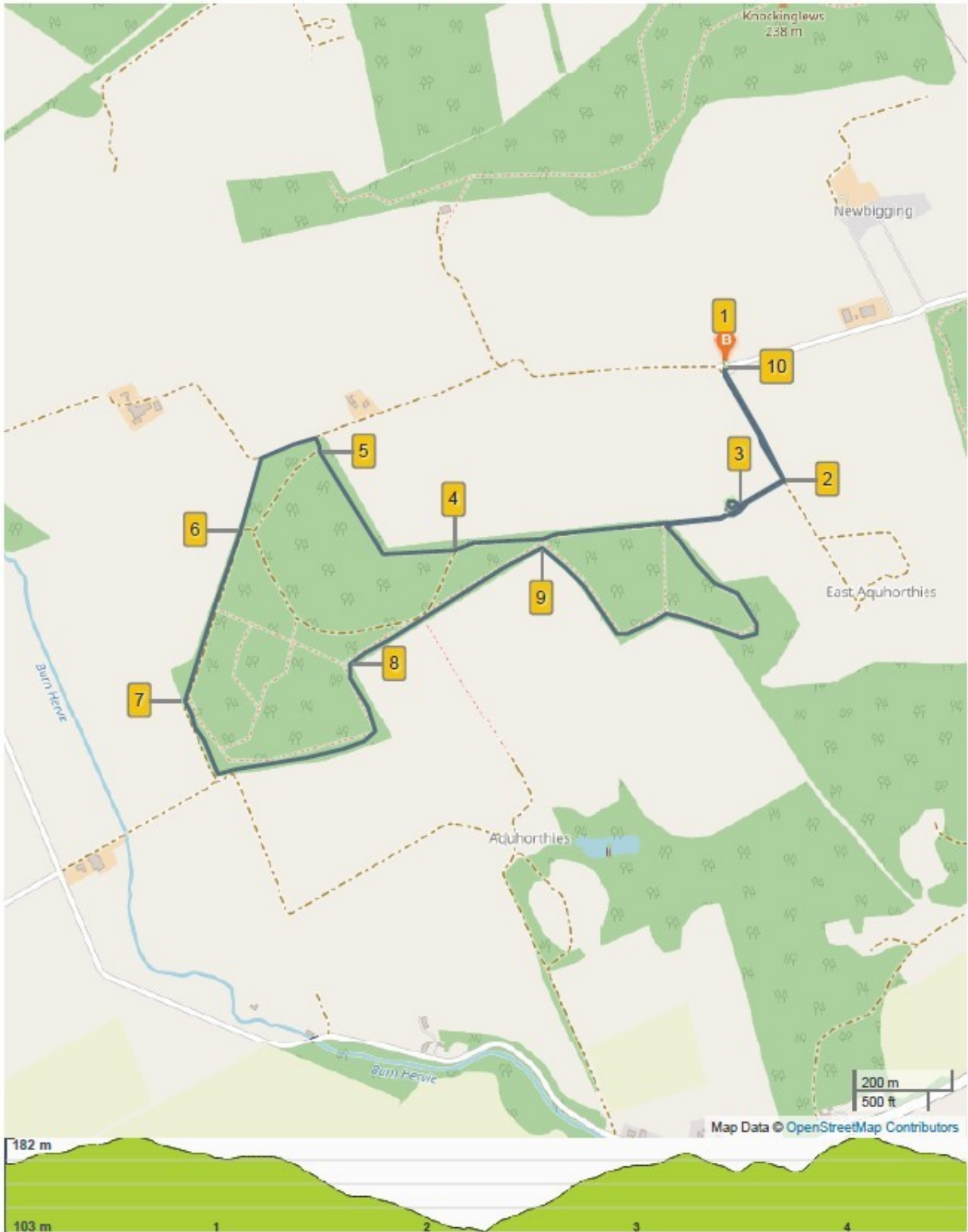
(10) Finish walk back at the car-park

In 1.37 km from Waypoint 9, you will have arrived back at the carpark for Aquhorthies Stone Circle where you started the walk. (4.57 km)

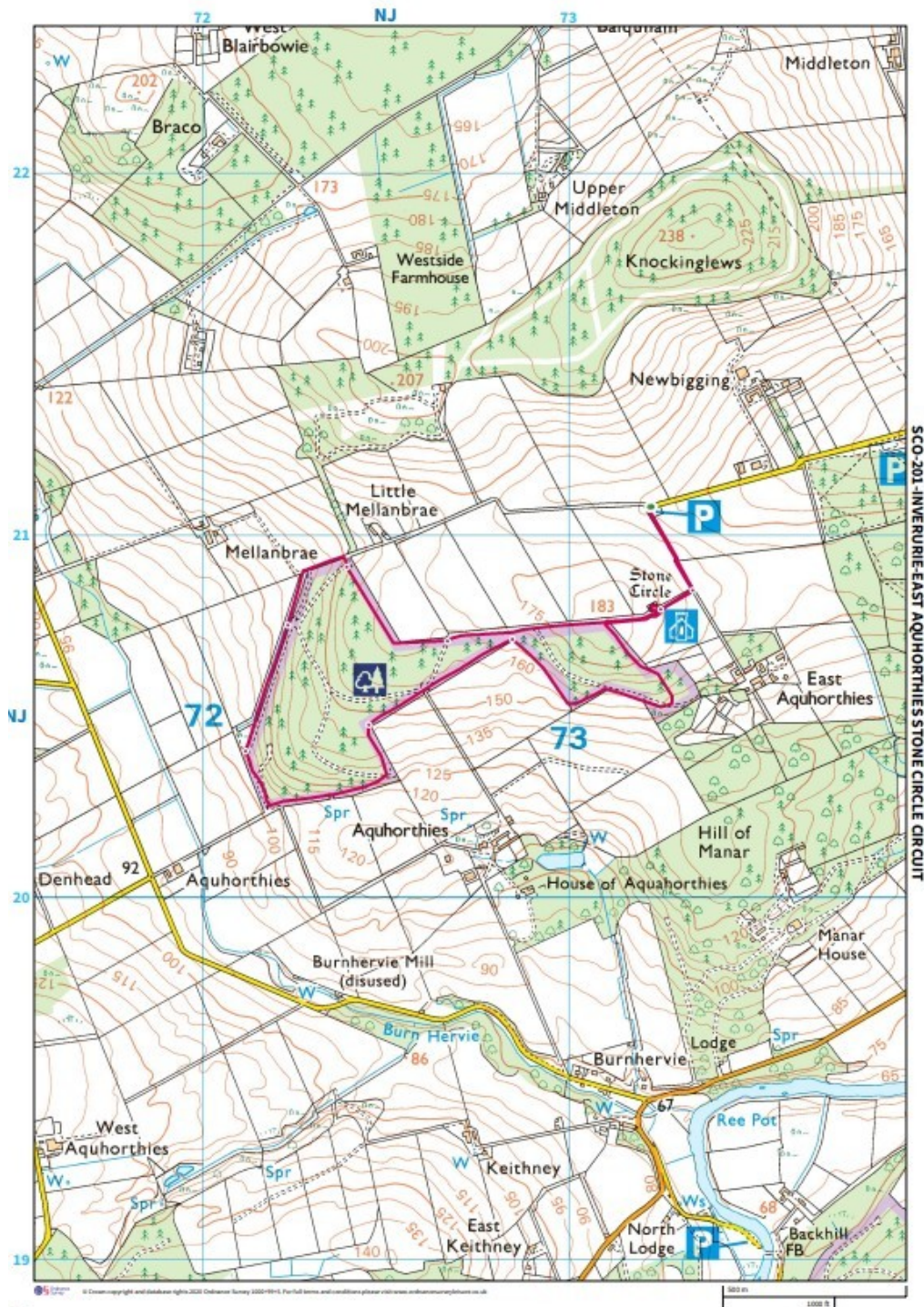


Route Map (with waypoints)

201-Inverurie-East Aquhorthies Stone Circle Circ.



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](#)