

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Newtonhill-Burn of Muchalls Ramble (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

A good, there and back, coastal walk with a couple of diversions to take in fantastic views of the rugged coastline punctuated by rocky headlands, steep cliffs, and outstanding stone sea stacks, standing tall amongst the swirling waves.

Duration: 2.5 hours.



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: Stagecoach #7 bus service. Check timetable. Park in the Bettridge Sports Centre car-park at start/finish of walk.

Length: 7.430 km / 4.64 mi **Height Gain/Loss :** 265 meter.

Max Height: 80 meter. **Min Height:** 19 meter

Surface: Moderate. Some paths may be muddy after rain. Watch out for sharp brambles on the clifftop path near to the Burn of Muchalls return point. The route is not suitable for an off-road mobility scooter due to the wall to be crossed at Waypoint 13.

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

Dog Friendly: Yes. Must be on lead on public roads and around any cattle or sheep encountered.

Refreshments: Teacake Cafe, Newton Arms and Quoiters Bar in Newtonhill. The Stack Restaurant/Bar in Muchalls.



Description

***** As of April 2021 we have a report that the path to Grim Haven bay (see Waypoints 10 and 11) is closed due to landslips. Also, at Waypoint 16, the waymarked path is meantime being directed around a building site. *****

This invigorating coastal walk, mid-way between Aberdeen and Stonehaven, provides some spectacular views of cliffs, headlands, and rocky sea stacks. Our original ambition had been for the route to reach Doonie Point, about 1.5 kilometres south of Muchalls village but, unfortunately, the footbridge over the Burn of Muchalls is no longer there, and the water level in the burn was too high for us! The walk starts and finishes in the lower part of Newtonhill. Now a commuter settlement, it was originally a fishing village known as Skateraw (Gaelic for "a row [of houses, presumably] on a rock"). The 19th C railway station above the village was named "Newtonhill" and so gradually that name took precedence. It is believed that the last thatched roof on an old fisher cottage was replaced in the mid 20th C. The old houses that remain have all been modified and extended but an old 18th C smokehouse still stands on Skateraw Road. The best views (and best access to the rugged cliffs and stony beaches) on the walk are achieved after passing through Muchalls. It is here that footage was recorded for the 1990 film "Hamlet". Charles Dickens visited Muchalls and declared that the area was remarkably beautiful. Between 1849 and 1950 the village was served by the Muchalls Railway Station, catering for day-trippers from the city of Aberdeen. All that remains of the railway station is an intriguing "Peace Sign" monument, passed on the walk, that commemorates the end of the Great War in 1919. From the seashore here there is a smugglers cave, believed to be one mile long, and reaching Muchalls Castle. It is now boarded up, which may be just as well as it is reputed to be haunted by a "green lady"!



Thanks to Julie Graham for the following suggestions for enhancing the walk: <https://t.ly/ePA8b>

Waypoints

(1) Start outside Bettridge Sports Centre

(57.03036; -2.14848) <https://w3w.co/clarifies.bullion.radiates>

Start the walk outside the Bettridge Sports Centre on Greystone Place in Newtonhill. Walk downhill into the small park between the Centre and the clifftops. Walk around the park in a u-shaped clockwise direction, veering slightly left as you gain height again, heading towards the railway line.



(2) Follow grassy path parallel with railway line

(57.02861; -2.14887)

In 450 m, as you approach the railway line, veer left to take a grassy path between bushes and low trees, with the railway line on your right side. (452 m)



(3) Cross stile and along field edge

(57.02729; -2.14935)

In 150 m, the grassy path leads to a stile. Cross the stile and keep to the field edge path, parallel with the railway line. (602 m)



(4) Right and over Silvers Bridge

(57.02439; -2.15137)

In another 350 m, go right and over the Silvers railway bridge. (949 m)



(5) Veer right off road and up field edge

(57.02456; -2.15215)

In 50 m, after crossing the bridge, veer right off the road and uphill, keeping to the field edge. At the top of the field, go sharp right and follow the field edge path towards the communications mast. (1.0 km)



(6) Left past mast

(57.02576; -2.15349)

In 200 m, as you approach the mast, go left, following a path towards a rough road. (1.2 km)



(7) Left along rough road

(57.02584; -2.15593)

In 200 m, go through the pedestrian gate and then left along the rough access road. When you reach the cottages and buildings, veer right and downhill onto an obvious path. The path takes you over a bridge at the Pheppie Burn as you head towards the hamlet of Muchalls. Follow the path into Muchalls. (1.4 km)



(8) Left down Dunnyfell Road

(57.02121; -2.16135)

In 700 m, at the centre of Muchalls, having proceeded along Monduff Road, between old cottages, go left down Dunnyfell Road, then take the path on the right that joins a rough road over a railway bridge and past a house on your left to a steel gate to a field. (2.1 km)



(9) Through steel gate and left to clifftop

(57.01959; -2.16067)

In 300 m, after passing the house on your left, go through the steel field gate, carefully closing it behind you. Go left and downhill towards the clifftop, following a path in a circle around the field. There are some marvellous views of the cliffs and an upstanding rock stack. Return to the gate and re-trace your footsteps back to the centre of Muchalls where there is a community notice-board and telephone box on Marine Terrace (at Waypoint 8). (2.4 km)



(10) Left down Marine Terrace

(57.02115; -2.16149)

In 500 m, having returned to the centre of Muchalls, go left along Marine Terrace past the community notice-board, post-box and telephone kiosk. Follow Marine Terrace as it leads out of the village in a southerly direction. Go left through the railway tunnel at the bottom of the road and follow the path past an old house that leads down to the cliffs and stony beaches. Follow the main path as it bends left down towards Grim Haven beach*. (2.9 km)

****Note: As of April 2021 we have a report that the path to Grim Haven bay and beach is closed due to landslips, meaning it is not possible to reach Waypoint 11. Follow guidance at Waypoint 12 to continue walk.***



(11) Grim Haven beach

(57.01648; -2.16210)

After 800 m from the centre of Muchalls, having just passed some 2nd World War concrete blocks, you are looking down at Grim Haven beach from a narrow twisting path. It is up to you whether you go all the way down to the stony beach. The path looked very muddy the day we were there. When you are ready, re-trace your footsteps back to just before the railway tunnel. (3.7 km)



(12) Left into field before railway tunnel

(57.01692; -2.16465)

In 200 m, just before the railway line tunnel, go left past the wall and post to follow the field edge path down towards the cliffs again. Follow the clifftop path. (3.9 km)



(13) Left over wall for clifftop path

(57.01508; -2.16413)

After 300 m, walking around the field edge, above the clifftop, look out for a partial break in the stone wall at the corner of the field. Make your way across the broken-down wall to follow the clifftop path as it heads south towards the Mill of Muchalls area. (4.2 km)



(14) Burn of Muchalls

(57.01228; -2.16450)

Follow the path for 400 m until it leads down, past some ruined buildings on your left (old mill?) to the wooded slopes of the Burn of Muchalls. Unfortunately, the footbridge over the burn shown on the OS map is no longer there, so this is your turning point!* Re-trace your steps (missing out the detours to Grim Haven beach and the clifftop at Muchalls) all the way back to where you joined the rough access road at Waypoint 7 (after you passed the communications mast at Waypoint 6). (4.6 km)



**Note: thanks to Julie Graham, Muchalls, for pointing out that you can reach the Doonie Point headland, where there are marvellous coastal views, by taking the path near Waypoint 14 to the little cluster of houses at Mill of Muchalls. Here you pass the old mill-pond on your right before crossing a stone bridge, veering left onto a coastal path after the houses. From Doonie Point you can carry on north along the clifftop to reach the position of the missing footbridge, just across the burn from Waypoint 14. Here, there is a sign describing the scenic spot where there are pools and waterfalls. This place is now known as Ophelia's Pool in recognition that scenes from the Franco Zeffereilli film, Hamlet, were filmed here! To walk to Doonie Point and back to Waypoint 14 adds 1.6 km. Also adding in the section to Ophelia's Pool increases that overall distance to 2.4 km.*

(15) Carry on down rough road at mast turn-off

(57.02587; -2.15599)

After re-tracing your steps back towards Newtonhill for 1.9 km, carry straight on down the rough road, ignoring the path that turns off to your right for the communications mast passed earlier on the walk. (6.5 km)



(16) Veer right for path through gorse to village

(57.02643; -2.15602)

After 65 m, or so, veer right to take the obvious path through the gorse bushes towards Newtonhill village. Keep going as the path eventually joins Park Place, heading towards the centre of Newtonhill*. (6.56 km)

****Note: As of April 2021 we have a report that the waymarked path at Waypoint 16 is meantime being directed around a building site. Follow temporary footpath signs.***



(17) Right and over railway bridge at church

(57.03137; -2.15025)

In 650 m, go right off Park Place onto Newtonhill Road opposite the village church. Cross the railway bridge and turn right down Greystone Place towards the library and Bettridge Sports Centre where you started the walk. (7.2 km)



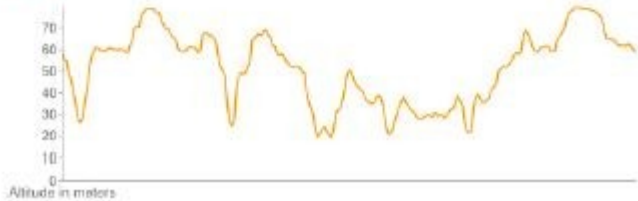
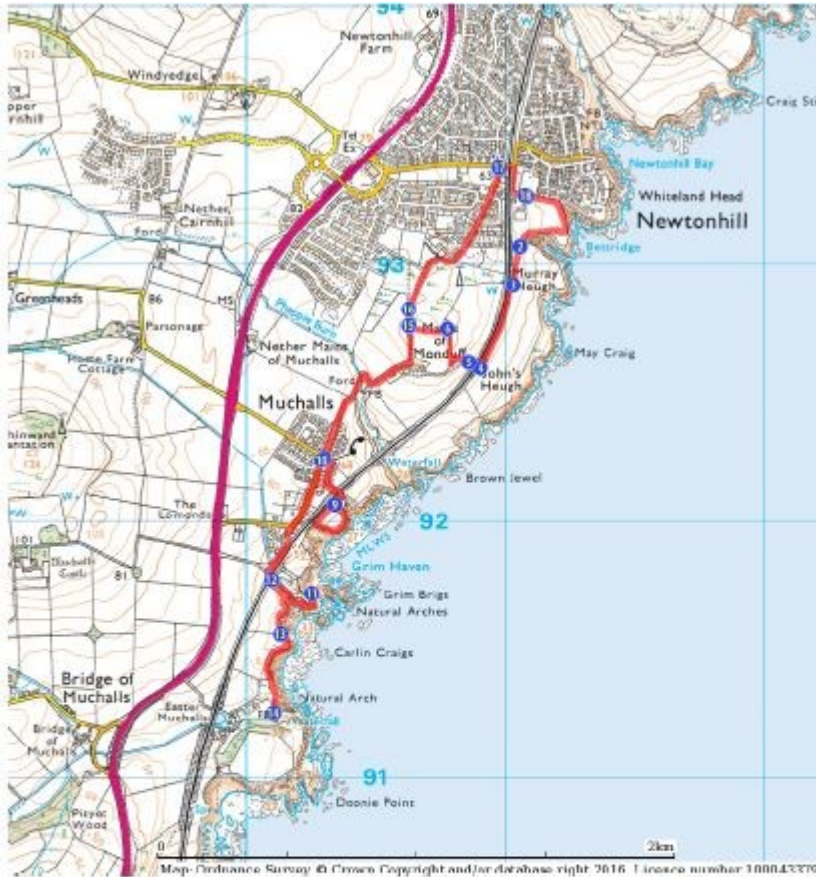
(18) Finish walk back at Bettridge Sports Centre

(57.03041; -2.14857)

In a further 200 m you are back where you started in the car-park of the Bettridge Sports Centre. (7.4 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](#)