

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

## Tarland-Douneside House Circuit (Aberdeenshire)

### Route Summary

A short but very enjoyable and scenic walk taking in mature woodland and open farmland in the appealing landscape of the Howe of Cromar.

Duration: 1.75 hrs.



### Route Overview

**Duration:** 1.75 hours.

**Transport/Parking:** Infrequent Stagecoach bus options. Check timetables. There is a small car-parking area at the walk start/end point outside St Moluag's Parish Church in Tarland.

**Length:** 4.9 km / 3.05 mi. **Height Gain/Loss:** 152 meter.

**Max Height:** 263 meter. **Min Height:** 153 meter.

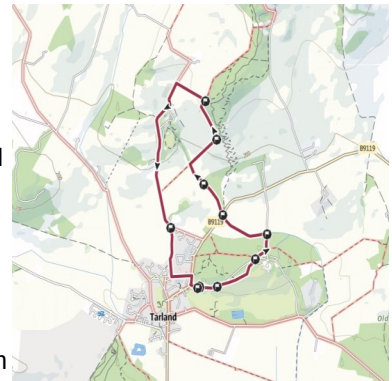
**Surface:** Moderate. A mix of well-maintained paths, rough roads and tarred surfaces. The circuit is not suitable for off-road mobility scooters due to steps after Waypoint 6, narrow gaps in safety barriers, and narrow gaps between trees with high exposed roots.

**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 public roads and near to farm animals.

**Refreshments:** Options in Tarland.



### Description

This is a very pleasant short walk in the attractive countryside around the village of Tarland, close to Deeside. The 150 m overall ascent is mostly gradual, although there is a short section within the beech avenue after Waypoint 6 where there is a steeper incline. The route is characterised by mixed farmland and woodland and there are a number of points on the track where there are fine views of the Howe of Cromar, towards Mount Keen, Lochnagar, and the distant Cairngorms. Much closer, there are impressive views of the imposing "whale's back" mass of Morven Hill ("A' Mhòr Bheinn", in Gaelic), immortalised by Lord Byron: "...when I rov'd a young Highlander o'er the dark heath, And climb'd thy steep summit, oh Morven of snow ...". In the middle stages of the route the walk passes above, then passes by, the former country mansion of Douneside House, set in open parkland and gardens. Douneside now operates as an hotel and health club, within a wider estate managed by the MacRobert Trust which follows the wishes of the late Lady MacRobert for the House to remain a place of tranquility and peace [see the notes at Waypoint 3 for a brief account of the MacRobert family tragedies around WW II]. The walk starts and finishes outside St Moluag's Church in the village of Tarland, which has a fine old Square with some buildings dating back around 300 years.



## Waypoints

### (1) Start at St Moluag's Church

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The walk starts and ends at the small car-park opposite the St Moluag's\* Parish Church in Tarland, close to the Golf Club, and just off the B9119 main road. Facing the church, turn right and follow the tarred access road into Muirton Wood, signposted for the Balhousie Alastrean Care Home. \* Note: St Moluag was an Irish Christian missionary who lived from 530 to 592. He was a major figure in promoting Christianity among the Picts of N and NE Scotland, including in the Tarland area. Thanks to Undiscovered Scotland:



<https://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/usbiography/m/stmoluag>

### (2) Veer right onto path through trees

In 170 m, veer right onto a path through the trees which passes fairly close to the golf course on your right, with great views over the Howe of Cromar to the south. Mount Keen is particularly prominent, with Lochnagar to the SW. Soon, you will pass the MacRobert Mausoleum on your left side, followed by a viewpoint bench on your right side. Follow the path as it now veers left away from the golf course and back towards the access road you left earlier, ignoring a gated path straight ahead into the grounds of Alastrean House. (170 m)



### (3) Cross tarred access road onto path - then right

In 440 m, cross the tarred west access road at safety barriers and then almost immediately go right onto a path with veers away from Alastrean House\* which you can see on your right side. In about 120 m, the path meets the tarred north access road. Go left here, walking away from Alastrean House. (610 m)

*\* Note: Alastrean House, now a care home, was built as a private residence by the tragic land-owning MacRobert family, who lost three sons in flying incidents before and during WWII. Formerly known as the House of Cromar, it is one of two large country house on the MacRobert estate, Douneside House being the other. It was built in 1905 by Lord Aberdeen, as a country retreat for his wife, and was originally surrounded by 9,000 acres of agricultural land which made up the Cromar Estate. An arrangement made in 1920 between Lord Aberdeen and his friend and neighbour, Sir Alexander MacRobert, saw the Cromar Estate and house eventually pass to Lady MacRobert in 1934. The house was to be for the use of the MacRobert boys and their families, but sadly they never had a chance to use it extensively. For the tragic story, see: <http://www.themacroberttrust.org.uk/about-the-trust/history/>*



**(4) Left off access road and through gate**

In 290 m from Waypoint 3, go left off the access road as it is about to emerge from Muirton Wood into open farmland. Go through the steel field gate, closing it carefully behind you. Now follow the grassy path with the wood on your left side initially and a ditch and fields on your right side. As you proceed towards the B9119 main road, the field used for the Annual Tarland Show replaces the trees of Muirton Wood on your left side. (880 m)



**(5) Cross B9119 main road and up rough road**

In 490 m, cross the B9119 main road and walk up the rough farm access road ahead of you. (1.37 km)



**(6) Leave rough road to join path**

In 310 m, just as the rough road bends sharply to the right towards buildings, carry more or less straight ahead onto a grassy path marked by a walks post. In just over 200 m, at a t-junction with steps, the path meets a path within an avenue of beech trees. Turn right here to follow the path as it goes uphill between the avenue of trees. (1.68 km)



**(7) Through barriers - then left at top of beech avenue**

In 530 m, having ascended to the top of the beech avenue path\*, go through the wooden safety barriers and turn left to carry on taking a path through the trees, with a farm field fairly close below you on your left side. (2.21 km)

*\* Note: there is a fine bench and viewpoint towards Mount Keen just beyond the barriers. Below you to your left you may see mountain bike enthusiasts on the Pittenderich Tarland Trails.*



### **(8) Left through barriers then downhill**

In 370 m, having recently passed another viewpoint bench, go left and downhill through another set of wooden safety barriers, following a path through another avenue of beech trees. In about 300 m, the path goes through a pedestrian gate to meet a minor tarred public road. Go left here to follow the road, soon passing a large bank of solar panels on your right and the Douneside Hotel\* complex of buildings and gardens on your left side. Keep going past the hotel grounds and the downhill, with wonderful views now to Tarland and the hills to the south. (2.58 km)

*\* Note: "Sir Alexander MacRobert purchased the Burnside Estate (now known as Douneside House) as a holiday home for his family in 1888 ... Sir Alexander and Lady MacRobert had three sons, all of whom died under tragic circumstances ... The MacRobert family were well known locally as significant philanthropists, which is why, following her sons' deaths, Lady MacRobert decided to set up a charitable trust in their honour. Today, Douneside House is owned and run by the MacRobert Trust in memory of Lady MacRobert, who wished for the House to remain a place of tranquillity and peace ..." See: <https://dounesidehouse.co.uk/about/history/>*



### **(9) Right off tarred road onto grassy path**

In 1.58 km, go right off the tarred road onto a wide grassy path, with a development of large modern houses on your left side on the initial section. Again there are great views of the surrounding countryside and more distant hills. In about 250 m the path joins the pavement on the street known as Strachan Cottages. Walk down to the t-junction at the bottom of Strachan Cottages and then turn left along School Road, passing Taraland Primary School on your left side. At the t-junction with the B9119 main road, go right and follow the pavement down until you come to the access road for St Moluag's Church (and the Balhousir Alastrean Care Home). Cross the busy road with care to return to your walk start-point opposite St Moluag's Church. (4.16 km)



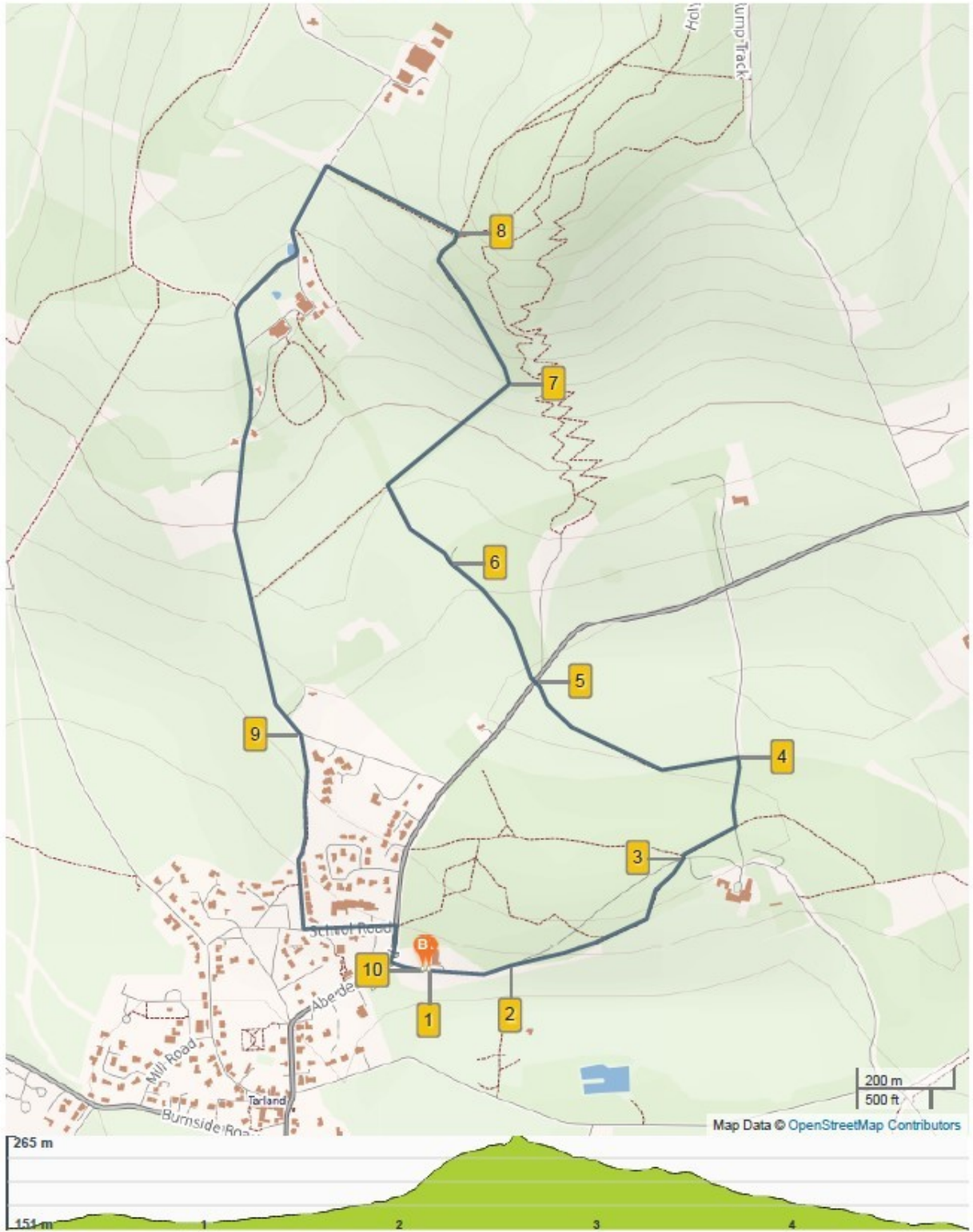
### **(10) Finish walk back at St Moluag's Church**

In 740 m, you will have returned to your start-point at the car-park for St Moluag's Church. (4.9 km)

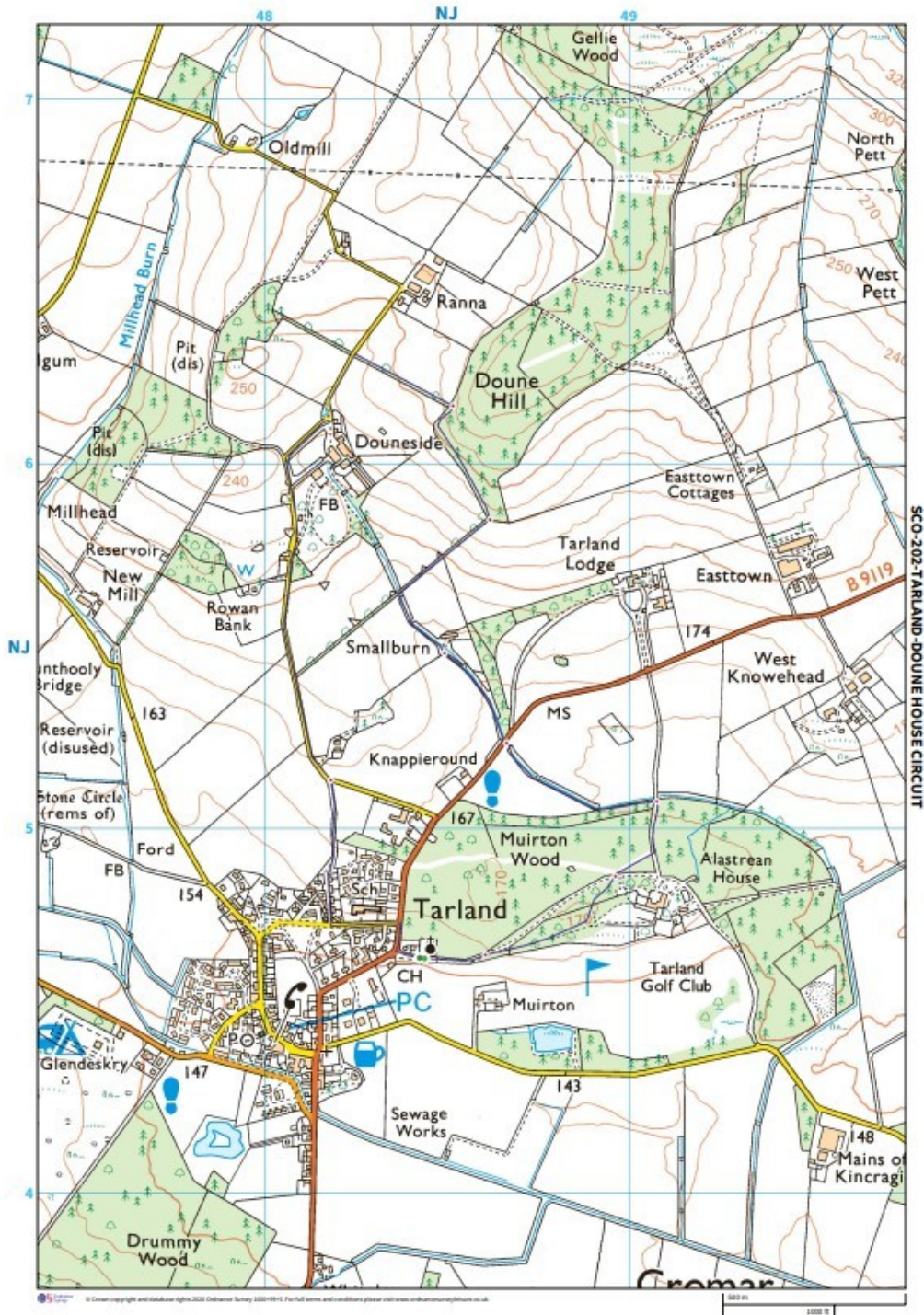


# Route Map (with waypoints)

## 202-Tarland-Douneside House Circuit



## 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](#)