

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Tarland-The Petts Circuit (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

Leaving the rolling farmland behind, the mid-section of this varied walk involves a steady climb through mature conifers to an open viewpoint over Tarland, the Howe of Cromar, and a wider mountain landscape to the South and West.

Duration: 2.75 hours.



Route Overview

Duration: 2.75 hours.

Transport/Parking: Infrequent Stagecoach bus options. Check timetables. There is a small parking area at the walk start/end point.

Length: 9.000 km / 5.63 mi

Height Gain: 291 meter. **Height Loss:** 291 meter.

Max Height: 387 meter. **Min Height:** 148 meter.

Surface: Moderate. A mix of well-maintained paths, forest roads and minor tarred roads. Suitable for off-road mobility scooters although exposed tree roots on the beech avenue, after Waypoint 15, and two stone steps to be descended at the end of the avenue, may cause difficulties.

Difficulty: Medium.

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

Dog Friendly: Yes, but keep on lead on public roads and around farm livestock.

Refreshments: If open, options in Tarland include Tarland Tearooms, Commercial Hotel, Aberdeen Arms.



Description

This is a very enjoyable route with a stiff ascent, taking in farmland and forest in the Howe of Cromar, well known for its beautiful rolling patchwork of fields and woodlands set against a breathtaking mountain backdrop to the West. There are very few points on the track where there are not extremely fine views towards Mount Keen, ("Dark") Lochnagar, and the distant Cairngorms. Much closer, and ever-present, are constantly changing 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 first section of the route we pass Alastrean House, now a care home, but built as



a residence by the tragic land-owning MacRobert family, who lost three sons in flying incidents before and during WWII. One of the best viewpoints on the route is the Sun Seat, a community initiative comprised of a substantial stone edifice on the hillside east of Muirton Wood, concluding the first quarter of the walk. Not far from here, we pass a converted "horse mill", with the circular stone platform for the horses to walk around whilst driving the mill wheels still visible at the rear of the now private residence. On the descent from a high vantage point over Tarland above West Pett Farm, the walk overlooks 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. If arriving by car from Aberdeen on the B9119 try not to miss the "Queen's View" viewpoint on your left as you enter the Howe. There is a small car-park across the road. The village of Tarland itself has a fine old Square with some buildings dating back around 300 years.

Waypoints

(1) Start walk opposite the park on School Road

(57.13071; -2.85878) <https://w3w.co/trinkets.knitted.passages>

The walk starts at a small car-parking area opposite the park on School Road, Tarland. From here, facing the park, go left along School Road, passing Tarland Primary School on your left before you arrive at the main Aberdeen Road. Cross the road with care and take the path through Muirton Wood immediately opposite. Keep on the main path, ignoring any minor paths going off right or left.



(2) Go left at Y-junction in Muirton Woods

(57.13188; -2.85179) <https://w3w.co/alike.went.thinks>

In 500 m, at a paths y-junction, where there is a walks post and a bench, take the option veering left. This path soon joins another path coming from the Aberdeen Road direction, Go right here to follow that path in a broadly easterly direction towards Alastrean House. (504 m)



(3) Left onto tarred west drive

(57.13189; -2.84473) <https://w3w.co/waltz.caveman.outwit>

In 470 m, the path emerges onto the tarred west access drive for the nearby Alastrean House. Go left here. (975 m)



(4) Pass Alastrean House

(57.13170; -2.84289) <https://w3w.co/mountain.castle.defenders>

In about 125 m you will pass the entrance to Alastrean House*.

Keep going past the entrance, following the tarred road, with the visitors car-park on your left side, as it bends around the east side of the house and outbuildings. (1.1 km)

**Note: Alastrean House, formerly known as the House of Cromar, 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/>*

(5) Left off tarred road

(57.13118; -2.84086) <https://w3w.co/bounty.salmon.fish>
In 200 m, turn left off the tarred road onto a rough road going into the trees. (1.3 km)



(6) Cross wooden bridge and up beech avenue

(57.13129; -2.83458) <https://w3w.co/suggested.factoring.soup>
In 300 m, cross a wooden bridge and walk up an avenue of young beech trees, with fields on either side. (1.6 km)



(7) Sun Seat

(57.13317; -2.82598) <https://w3w.co/surprises.stop.stance>
In 600 m you will arrive at the Sun Seat stone structure, a fine viewpoint. When you are ready, go through the gate and follow the path** that soon meets a minor tarred road. Go left here. (2.2 km)

**Note: Known as the Sun Seat, both for its sunny position and the representation of the sun built into the wall behind the seating area. There are great views over the Howe of Cromar towards Tarland and Morven Hill. The Sun Seat was designed by Dave and Simon Power, and built by local stonemason, Dave Bullock, in 2009.*

***Note: A large hummock on your right may be man-made, from prehistoric times, but has yet to be investigated.*



(8) Old horse mill

(57.13388; -2.82402) <https://w3w.co/goodbyes.tastes.teaches>
In 200 m you will pass a private house on your left. This is a converted 'horse mill'*. The raised stone platform around which the horses driving the mill would have walked is just visible behind the house (please ensure you do not disturb the privacy of the residents). Carry on taking the tarred road as you pass the house. (2.4 km)

**Note: See this link for more info about horse mills:
<http://www.alfordimages.com/picture/number867.asp?c=ok>*



(9) Veer left up grassy track at Tillychardoch House

(57.13529; -2.82445) <https://w3w.co/stormy.wrist.typical>

In another 200 m, just after passing the fine-looking TillyChardoch House* on your left side, leave the tarred road and veer left up a grassy track. Follow this farm track as it wynds its way to meet the B9119 main Aberdeen Road. Cross the road with care and follow the minor tarred access road for 'The Petts' (West Pett, (formerly) East Pett, and North Pett)

*Note: A former farmhouse, built in the late 18th century. See: <https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/smrpub/master/detail.aspx?tab=main&refno=NJ50NW0084>



(10) Pass by West Pett Farm and uphill through trees

(57.14595; -2.83131) <https://w3w.co/bandaged.contact.terribly>

In 1.4 km, pass by West Pett/East Pett Farm and follow the rough road going uphill through the trees, passing the entrance to North Pett house on your left in about 300 m. (4.0 km)



(11) Left and uphill through trees

(57.15115; -2.83067) <https://w3w.co/decrease.thinks.kiosk>

In 600 m, go left to follow a forest road uphill through the trees. Fine views open up on your left side at various points. (4.6 km)



(12) Left and downhill at high point on walk

(57.15507; -2.83481) <https://w3w.co/sped.palace.tries>

After climbing for 600 m you will have reached the highest point on the route. A signposted rough road goes uphill to your right, but you now veer left and downhill to follow the main forest road. Soon, this road will take you out of the trees onto open hillside where there are fine views of Mont Keen, Lochnagar and Mormond. Continue taking the rough road downhill. (5.2 km)



(13) Follow rough road as it bends left and downhill

(57.151115; -2.84407) <https://w3w.co/rooms.multiples.trombone>
In 700 m, where a path on your right enters the trees, continue to follow the rough road as it bends left and downhill, with good views on your left side. (5.9 km)



(14) Right and uphill at y-junction

(57.14914; -2.84206) <https://w3w.co/empire.composes.alarm>
In 300 m, at a pile of old logs in a clear area where a y-junction opens up before you, take the grassy road going right and uphill towards an electricity pylon, past a quarry on your left side. Soon, the road bends left and goes downhill through trees, with the fields of Ranna Farm on your right side. Keep following this rough track, with the fields fairly close on your right side. (6.2 km)



(15) Follow path right and down beech avenue

(57.14059; -2.85084) <https://w3w.co/overhear.custodial.regular>
After 1.5 km, follow the path as it goes sharp right to go down, then up, an impressive mature beech avenue. You now have a good view of Douneside House*, across a field, on your right side. At the end of the beech avenue, go through the gate and turn left to walk down the tarred road. (7.5 km)

**Note: [from the MacRobert Trust website - thanks] '...Sir Alexander MacRobert purchased the Burnside Estate (now known as Douneside House) as a holiday home for his family in 1888. During the early 1900s, the MacRobert family added extra*



rooms and a tower, transforming the property into the spectacular country house and gardens which are to be admired today. Sir Alexander and Lady MacRobert had three sons, all of whom died under tragic circumstances. The eldest, Sir Alasdair, was killed in pre-war times during an aviation accident in Luton. His younger brothers were both commissioned in the Royal Air Force, Sir Roderic as a pilot and Sir Ian as a pilot officer. Both of them were killed within six weeks of each other during the Second World War. 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 ...'
<https://www.dounesidehouse.co.uk/about/history/>

(16) Right down grassy path in front of houses

(57.13413; -2.85761) <https://w3w.co/ketchup.observers.lawn>

In 1 km, leave the tarred road to veer right onto a grassy path passing some large modern houses on your left side. Soon the grassy path meets the tarred access road for Strachan Cottages. Walk down the pavement from here to meet School Road. Turn right to soon arrive at the point where you started the walk opposite the park. (8.5 km)



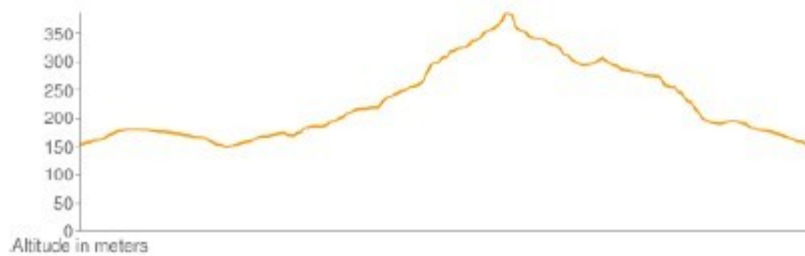
(17) Finish walk back at School Road

(57.13071; -2.85885) <https://w3w.co/trinkets.knitted.passages>

In 500 m from Waypoint 16, you will have arrived back at the small car-parking area where you started the walk, opposite the park. (9.0 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](#)