

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Woodhead-Windy Hills Circular (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

This is an excellent short walk through very pleasant and quiet natural woodland. There are no steep slopes, making for easy walking. The area is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest due to the underlying quartzite gravels from an ancient river-bed.

Duration: 2 hours.



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: There is no public transport service to Woodhead. Park in the Woodhead Community Centre car-park at the start/end of walk.

Length: 5.51 km / 3.42 mi

Height Gain: 77 meter **Height Loss:** 77 meter

Max Height: 130 meter **Min Height:** 108 meter

Surface: Moderate. Mostly good woodland paths and rough, grassy roads. Some sections may be muddy.

Child Friendly: Yes, if used to walks of this distance.

Difficulty: Easy.

Dog Friendly: Yes, on lead on public roads and near farm animals.

Refreshments: There are options at Methlick and Fyvie.



Description

This is a very enjoyable walk, mostly in open mature pine woods and through mossy heather, but with some areas overlooking farmland, where there are good views of the surrounding rural scene. Woodhead and Windy Hills is a geological Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), lying to the north and east of the village of Woodhead, between Methlick and Fyvie, where semi natural pine woodland forms a lovely natural cover for underlying quartzite gravels. The SSSI is the location for quartzite pebbles and gravels that, together with flint gravels, form a unique set of deposits often known as the 'Pliocene' gravels of Buchan. They are river deposits which accumulated during the Neogene (between 23 and 2.6 million years ago). It is understood that Windy Hills is of exceptional importance in providing a uniquely long record of some of the geological processes and environmental conditions which have shaped the Scottish landscape over the last 20 million years or so. Information on the geological history of the SSSI is provided on information boards at the quarry at Waypoint 14. The area provides some excellent walks through very pleasant quiet woodland. There are no steep slopes, making for easy walking. Despite evidence of previous quarrying (and associated dumping of vehicles), the environment is mostly very natural. The walk starts in the car park behind the community centre in Woodhead, where interpretation panels show the lay-out of the woods and some of the wildlife that can be seen. Thanks to the Formartine Partnership for much of the information noted above:

(<http://www.formartinepartnership.org.uk/walking-in-formartine>). Thanks, also, to Scottish Natural Heritage for the SSSI detail: <https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/1642>



Waypoints

(1) Start the walk at Woodhead Community Centre car-park

(57.44053; -2.34610)

Start the walk from the car-park behind the Woodhead Community Centre* where there is a colourful 'What To Look Out For' guide. As you walk away from the car-park towards the trees there is a walk information board on a concrete base. Keep walking towards the pine trees, looking for a path with signed post veering off to your left.

**Note: the Woodhead Community Centre is signposted on the B9005 from Methlick. Turn right down a short access drive at the road-sign for the Centre. Access to the walk from Woodhead Community Centre is by an agreed path crossing private croft land, to protect domestic animals and wildlife, dogs should be kept under particularly close control in this section.*



(2) Veer left to follow path around the wood

(57.44266; -2.34783)

In just under 300 m, follow the marked post and veer left into the wood. Now follow this path as it circles around the wood for about 1.4 km. (284 m)



(3) Go left at wooden sign

(57.44568; -2.34673)

After going around the wood for about 1.4 km you will arrive at a paths junction, facing the rear of a large wooden sign. Take the path to the left here, passing across the front of the wooden sign on your left. (1.7 km)



(4) Left onto tarred access road

(57.44666; -2.34279)

In 200 m, arriving at a t-junction with a tarred farm access road, go left onto the road. The road immediately bends right for a short distance. Where the road then bends left, leave the road and carry straight on ahead onto a grassy rough road going straight ahead, with fields on either side, in the direction of another wood about 350 m ahead of you. When you arrive at the wood, keep going on the rough road, with trees on your right side now, and a field on your left side. (1.9 km)



(5) Veer right at y-junction in woods

(57.45069; -2.33270)

In 800 m, having now entered the wood on the rough road, veer right at a fork in the road, heading further into the wood. (2.7 km)



(6) Left at x-roads

(57.45043; -2.33057)

In 100 m, or so, at a x-roads, go left towards a more open area with a mix of tress and heather/mossy moorland. Follow this rough road as it soon goes around an old quarry on your left, and through an area with the corroded remains of old vehicles on your right side. (2.8 km)



(7) Veer left at y-junction

(57.45124; -2.32808)

In 300 m, after the quarry, and emerging from the area with rusted sections of vehicles, veer left at a y-junction in a fairly open area of moorland. Follow this rough road until it arrives at a t-junction with the road through the wood that you were originally on between Waypoints 5 and 6. Turn right here, and walk back in a westerly direction, looking for the x-roads you met at Waypoint 6. (3.1 km)



(8) Left on return to x-roads

(57.45043; -2.33050)

After 400 m, arriving back at the x-roads you encountered earlier at Waypoint 6, now go left on a rough road into the trees. (3.5 km)



(9) Veer right onto path before field and gate

(57.44954; -2.32990)

In 100 m, or so, as the rough road heads towards a gate into a field, take the narrow path on your right. Follow this path for about 600 m as it proceeds around the perimeter of the wood, with open fields always fairly close to you on your left side. In the final section, the path swings right to head north, but still with a field close by on your left side. (3.6 km)



(10) Left off path onto rough road

(57.44837; -2.33839)

In 600 m, the path you are on around the wood emerges onto the rough access road you were on between Waypoints 5 and 6. Turn left here to re-trace your steps back to the section of tarred road and the first area of woodlands you walked through in the initial part of the walk. (4.2 km)



(11) Right off tarred access road into woods

(57.44665; -2.34265)

In 300 m, turn right off the tarred access road to follow a path into the woods. (4.5 km)



(12) Left after wooden sign

(57.44565; -2.34664)

In 300 m, arriving back at the large wooden sign that you encountered at Waypoint 3, now go left at the t-junction. (4.8 km)



(13) Go right to take path to quarry

(57.44460; -2.34634)

In 100 m, or so, take a path to your right by a signed post. This path takes you to a quarry area where there are a couple of information boards. (4.9 km)



(14) Pass quarry and info boards

(57.44394; -2.34675)

In 100 m, check out the quartzite stone quarry where there are a couple of interesting information boards about the geological history of this area. When you are ready, walk away from the quarry on the rough access road. (5.0 km)



(15) Right off rough road onto signed path

(57.44298; -2.34673)

In 200 m, turn right off the rough road onto a path, where there is a marked post. (5.2 km)



(16) Left at t-junction

(57.44275; -2.34783)

In another 70 m, at a t-junction with a wider path, go left, now heading back towards the start-point of the walk. (5.3 km)



(17) Finish walk back at community centre car-park

(57.44063; -2.34614)

In 200 m, you will have arrived back at the start-point of the walk at the Woodhead Community Centre car-park. (5.5 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](#)