

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

## Aboyne Loch-Mortlich Hill Circular (Aberdeenshire)

### Route Summary

The walk enjoys a particularly rewarding section around Aboyne Loch, followed by fine hillside and summit views taking in lower and upper Strathdee. There is a steep ascent to the historically interesting summit. The route is best walked when the bracken has died back!

Duration: up to 4 hours.

### Route Overview

**Duration:** Up to 4 hours.

**Transport/Parking:** Stagecoach run regular bus services to Aboyne.

Check timetables. The start-point on Golf Road is about 1 km NE of Aboyne centre, off the A93 road to/from Aberdeen. There is on-street parking close to the walk start-point. Please consider the privacy and access of local residents. If you start the walk in the centre of Aboyne, where there is a car-park, adds 2km distance overall. **Max Height:** 374 meter **Min Height:** 128 meter

**Height Gain:** 280 meter **Height Loss:** 280 meter **Length:** 8.820 km / 5.51 mi

**Surface:** Rough and steep summit section. We found route-finding difficult between Waypoints 12 and 14 due to the path being heavily overgrown with bracken, gorse and broom. We advise doing this walk at a time when the bracken will have died back and the route between these points should be clearer.

**Child Friendly:** Yes, if children are used to walks of this distance and overall ascent. Please note comments in terms of route-finding in heavy bracken.

**Difficulty:** Hard. **Dog Friendly:** See Aboyne Golf Club link, below. Keep dogs on a short lead on the golf course and near to any livestock. **Refreshments:** Various options in Aboyne.



### Description

The Deeside area is well known for its scenic qualities and this fairly energetic\* walk achieves some fine views over the vale of Strathdee, to east, south and west. The walk at first crosses the attractive undulating fairways of the Aboyne golf course\*\*, before hugging the side of beautiful Aboyne Loch. A stone and earth dam wall was constructed around 1834 to retain the loch. At that time it also served as a reservoir for a nearby mill. The loch is now a Site of Special Scientific Interest owing to its aquatic flora and fauna and rich reed-bed and fen vegetation. It is also an important site for butterflies. It provides a valuable



habitat for waterfowl, including wigeon, goosander and whooper swans, with osprey regularly seen fishing there. After a section on the old Deeside railway line, now part of the Deeside Way, the route ascends Mortlich Hill with a final very steep section. The summit of Mortlich Hill comprises a large pile of granite stones forming a cairn and obscuring the remains of a hill fort. Although partly obscured by trees in some directions, there are some great views from the top. The age of the fort is unknown, but is possibly Pictish or earlier. It seems that it has been dismantled, partly to build field boundaries and partly to build the large modern cairn within the fort area. In the 19th C this cairn was topped by a cemented peak of stones in which a heavy cross of cast iron was implanted to commemorate the life of the 10th Marquis of Huntly. The cross has now fallen, and lying among the ruins is a slab inscribed 'Charles 10th Marquis of Huntly died 18th September 1863. Erected by Mary Antoinetta his widow and the tenantry of Aboyne'.

**\*Note:** We found route-finding difficult between Waypoints 12 and 14 due to the path being heavily overgrown with bracken, gorse and broom. We advise doing this walk at a time when the bracken will have died back and the route between these points should be clearer.

**\*\*Note:** Aboyne Golf Club have asked us to emphasise the following "...this is an active golf course and warning signs are situated warning of the dangers...". More details here: <https://t.ly/OLZqG>. See also the Scottish Outdoor Access Code guide to walking on golf courses: <https://t.ly/KlwYp>

## Waypoints

### (1) Start walk on Golf Road

(57.07970; -2.77314) <https://w3w.co/notion.texts.fragments>  
Start the walk at the northern end of Golf Road\*, shortly before it meets Queens Hill Drive on the right. Veer slightly left in a northerly direction to go along the access road for Aboyne Golf Club. In about 430 m, carry straight on, ignoring the access road veering to your right for the Aboyne Golf Club car-park and clubhouse. Continue on the rough road that heads in a northerly direction towards the golf course, passing a bungalow on your right side.

*\*Note: The start-point on Golf Road is about 1 km NE of Aboyne centre, off the A93 road to/from Aberdeen. There is on-street parking close to the walk start-point. Please consider the privacy and access of local residents. If you start the walk in the centre of Aboyne, where there is a car-park, add 2km distance overall.*



### (2) Veer right across golf course

(57.08526; -2.77147) <https://w3w.co/gashes Depending.stove>  
In 660 m from the start, veer right on a golf course\* pathway to cross the golf course, heading towards Aboyne Loch. (660 m)

*\*Note: Please beware of flying golf balls on the golf course. Take care to observe golfing activity. Look left and right and give way to golfers taking their shots. Do not speak loudly if close to golfers playing their shots. Aboyne Golf Club have asked us to emphasise that - "...their course is an active golf course and warning signs are situated at all entry points warning of the dangers of being hit by a ball. We will not be liable for any accidents and our safety notices reflect that. When crossing the golf course, stick rigidly to the pathway and be aware you are in an active golfing area where golfers are hitting 'blind shots' so may be unaware of your presence. Do not stop till you reach the Loch side...". More details here: <https://t.ly/0LZqG>. See also the **Scottish Outdoor Access Code guide to walking on golf courses**: <https://t.ly/KlwYp>*



### (3) Veer right onto loch-side path

(57.08858; -2.76861) <https://w3w.co/cheerily.spruced.myths>  
In another 440 m, having safely crossed a couple of golf fairways to the side of Aboyne Loch, veer right off the golf course road onto a narrow path that will take you around Aboyne Loch. (1.1 km)



### (4) At signpost carry on along loch-side path

(57.08884; -2.76815) <https://w3w.co/alarm.provoking.dreaming>  
In just 40 m, or so, you will pass an arrow-marked post and a path uphill to your left. This is your return route. Ignore the path to your left and carry on taking the path around the loch-side. Eventually the path will take you onto an open grassy area in front of the "Lodge on the Loch" complex. Walk over the grass with the Lodge buildings on your left. (1.14 km)





### (5) Go right along Lodge on Loch access road

(57.08877; -2.76352) <https://w3w.co/undivided.cope.shun>

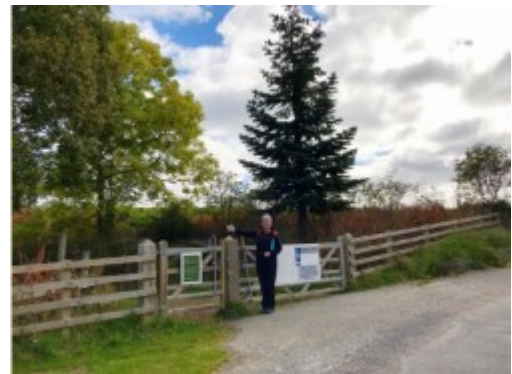
In 370 m, passing the Lodge on the Loch buildings on your left, go right when you join the narrow tarred access road. Carry on, with golf fairways on your left side. (1.5 km)



### (6) Left through gate along old railway line

(57.08771; -2.75992) <https://w3w.co/grumbling.snowmen.hikes>

In 200 m, go left through the gate onto the old railway line, now part of the Deeside Way. (1.8 km)



### (7) Left to pass cattle grid and straight on

(57.08947; -2.74543) <https://w3w.co/vegans.harshhest.explains>

After 1 km, emerging onto a minor access road, turn left and pass by the side of the cattle grid. Carry straight on veering very slightly left, ignoring the turn-offs to right and left. (2.7 km)



### (8) Over stile and carry straight on

(57.09154; -2.74750) <https://w3w.co/summit.stylists.engine>

In 200 m, having ignored a turn-off to the right for a large modern house, cross over the stile by the steel gate and carry on towards trees and hill ahead of you. (2.9 km)



### (9) Right and uphill on rough road

(57.09481; -2.75830) <https://w3w.co/stopped.javelin.refilled>  
In 800 m, go right and up a rough road. (3.7 km)



### (10) Left at signpost

(57.09622; -2.75713) <https://w3w.co/expanded.wept.culminate>  
In 200 m, by an arrow-marked signpost, go left. The track soon becomes a more narrow path heading uphill and veering right towards Mortlich Hill. (3.9 km)



### (11) Follow stepping stones

(57.09955; -2.76243) <https://w3w.co/crawling.slurs.qualifier>  
In 500 m, descending gently into an area of heather and bog, with an isolated house a short distance away on your right, take the path over the stepping stones and then veer left through bushes with the fence on your right, towards a pedestrian gate (this area may be badly overgrown with bracken, gorse and broom). (4.4 km)



### (12) Through gate - right then left and uphill

(57.09966; -2.76340) <https://w3w.co/hips.written.endlessly>  
In 100 m, or so, go through the kissing gate. The area was very overgrown when we were there and the path onwards is not clear. We went very briefly left towards the field gates and then found an indistinct path taking us uphill through heavy bracken, with the branches of gorse and whin bushes sometimes partially obstructing the way. (4.5 km)





### (13) Right onto grassy road and veer slightly left uphill

(57.09960; -2.76764) <https://w3w.co/town.showering.purple>  
In 300 m, or so, we emerged from the bracken\* onto a grassy road going uphill. We turned right onto this grassy road and followed it for a short distance as it veered slightly left uphill. It soon became just a path and then the path became very indistinct with heavy bracken cover. We advise that you continue following the path as best you can, continuing to traverse the hillside in a westerly direction, and going gently uphill where possible. Soon, you will arrive at a fence on your right which you follow towards a steel gate and pedestrian kissing gate (broken down at our visit). (4.8 km)

*\*Note: we may have lost the "proper" path before this point and, possibly, should have been slightly higher up the bracken, gorse and broom covered slope. We advise doing this walk in Springtime when the bracken will have died back and the route should be clearer.*



### (14) Right through broken gate and steeply uphill

(57.10071; -2.77174) <https://w3w.co/establish.jumpy.forum>  
In 200 m, making possibly difficult, at times, progress through heavy bracken, you will arrive at a fence that quickly leads you to a steel gate and pedestrian kissing gate (broken down at our visit, Sep 2018). Go through the gate and follow the path uphill, with a fence in the trees on your left. The first section may have heavy bracken cover, but the path will soon become clearer as the slope to the summit of Mortlich Hill gets steeper. (5.1 km)



### (15) Summit of Mortlich Hill

(57.10423; -2.76802)

<https://w3w.co/commented.discloses.qualifier>

After 500 m steep ascent, and crossing a partly broken down fence, you will have arrived at the summit of Mortlich Hill, comprising a large pile of granite stones forming a cairn and obscuring the remains of a hill fort\*. Although partly obscured by trees in some directions, there are some great views from the top. When you are ready, re-trace your steps down the hill to the gates at Waypoint 14. (5.5 km)

*\*Note: The age of the fort is unknown, but is possibly Pictish or earlier. It has been robbed partly to build field boundaries and partly, no doubt, to build the large modern cairn within the fort boundaries. In the 19th C this was surmounted by a cemented cone of stones in which a heavy cross of cast iron was implanted. The whole has been cast down, presumably by natural forces and lying among the ruin is a slab inscribed 'CHARLES 10TH MARQUIS OF HUNTLY/ DIED 18TH SEPTEMBER 1863./ ERECTED BY MARY ANTOINETTA HIS WIDOW AND THE TENANTRY OF ABOYNE'. [from Canmore]*



### (16) Through gate and straight downhill

(57.10070; -2.77180) <https://w3w.co/establish.jumpy.forum>  
After 500 m descent from the summit, go through the kissing gate and follow the path more or less straight ahead going downhill, back in the direction of Aboyne Loch. The path may be indistinct at times, with heavy bracken cover. Continue downhill. (6.0 km)



### (17) Take path veering left by signpost

(57.09796; -2.77425) <https://w3w.co/talkers.flitting.bronzed>  
After 400 m descent, and soon after passing a wooden field gate on your right, take the narrow path veering to your left, passing an arrowed signpost on your right. (6.4 km)



### (18) Cross boggy area by signpost

(57.09743; -2.77399) <https://w3w.co/cavalier.magic.talents>  
Soon, in 60 m or so, after crossing a slight rise, the path descends to a small boggy area. Here you will find an arrowed sign-post. Follow the signed path over the boggy area. The path will start to gently ascend again and veers to your left. Keep following this path as it enters an area of open natural woodland, with a modern forestry plantation on your right side. (6.46 km)



### (19) Through gate and follow path

(57.09507; -2.77059) <https://w3w.co/screen.rural.backs>  
In 340 m, the path meets a pedestrian kissing gate. Go through the gate and keep following the path, veering slightly left eventually and through gaps in thick (stone consumption) dykes. The path then veers right and goes downhill through mature trees towards Aboyne Loch, with a part of the golf course visible on your right as you approach the Loch. (6.8 km)



## (20) Right along loch-side path by signpost

(57.08884; -2.76823) <https://w3w.co/alarm.provoking.dreaming>  
In 900 m, at the loch-side, take the path going right. You are now re-tracing your footsteps at the initial section of the walk, soon crossing golf-course fairways on a rough road. As before, take great care to look left and right, and give way to golfers playing their shots. See guidance and links at Waypoint 2. After safely crossing the golf course on the rough road, head back towards the start point on Golf Road. (7.7 km)



## (21) Finish walk back at the start on Golf Road

(57.07970; -2.77314) <https://w3w.co/notion.texts.fragments>  
In 1.1 km you will have arrived back at your start-point on Golf Road where you now end the walk. (8.8 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](#)