

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Hill of Barra Circular (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

The focal point of this moderate walking excursion amongst fertile Garioch farming country is the exhilarating view from the summit of Barra Hill, redolent with the memories of historical drama over the ages. There is also an interesting visit to an old country church-yard.

Duration: 2.5 hours.



Route Overview

Duration: 2.5 hours.

Transport/Parking: Stagecoach service 35 from/to Aberdeen. Check timetable. Parking available in cul-de-sac on Millbank Road at start/finish of walk.

Length: 7.190 km / 4.49 mi

Height Gain: 167 meter **Height Loss:** 167 meter

Max Height: 189 meter **Min Height:** 85 meter

Surface: Moderate. Mostly a mix of grass fields with no set path and minor tarred roads. **Note: you are likely to encounter farm livestock on this walk and access to the hill may not be advised during lambing season.**

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

Difficulty: Medium.

Dog Friendly: Yes, but dogs may struggle with the many stiles. Must be on lead on public roads and around any cattle or sheep.

Note: you are likely to encounter farm livestock on this walk and access to the hill may not be advised during lambing season.

Refreshments: Check out options in and around Oldmeldrum.



Description

Barra is a low hill with a marvellous view of the Bennachie range to the south, and sweeping open views of the fertile Garioch farmland all around. After setting out from a convenient spot on the outskirts of Oldmeldrum, the route passes a chair-shaped stone, previously situated on Barra Hill, and reputedly used as a resting place by Robert the Bruce during the Battle of Barra. The walk then ascends via a small wood to pasture land on the slopes of the hill. Stiles are conveniently placed in order to cross field boundaries as you make your ascent. Upon reaching the summit area you will immediately discern the impressive remains of three grass-covered levels of tiered earth and stone ramparts. Barra Hill is, in fact, a remarkable example of an Iron Age fort. Archaeological excavations have uncovered four prior phases of human activity: 1) early Prehistoric, 2) Neolithic to mid Iron Age, 3) late Prehistoric, 4) Pictish and Medieval. The slopes of the hill also show evidence of pre-modern rig and furrow farming practice. Historical accounts suggest that the Earl of Comyn's supporters camped on the hill-top in May 1308 before their bloody rout the next day at the hands of Robert the Bruce's kinsmen, during Bruce's savage military campaign to take over the kingship of Scotland. The middle section of our route descends to Bourtie Kirk on the Inverurie side of the hill. The present church building has an unusual pyramidal shape, and dates from 1806. Christian worship at this rural spot is believed to date back 800 years. The earliest gravestone discovered here is from the 16th Century. The final section of the walk returns on very quiet minor rural roads to Oldmeldrum. At all times, there are fine open views of rolling farmland to enjoy.



Waypoints

(1) Start from cul-de-sac on Millburn Road

(57.33224; -2.31875) <https://w3w.co/guides.grudge.unguarded>
Start the walk from the cul-de-sac at the end of Millburn Road*, on the southern outskirts of Oldmeldrum and walk west along the pavement, heading towards the junction with the main road entering Oldmeldrum from Inverurie.

** Note: The above-noted start-point is useful for parking if you have a car. If not, you may want to start and finish the walk at Waypoint 2, the junction with the main road, instead.*



(2) Cross main road and left

(57.33171; -2.32874) <https://w3w.co/retailing.surreal.donor>
After 650 m, arriving at the junction of Millbank Road and the main road into Oldmeldrum from Inverurie, cross the busy road with care and go left, walking around the roundabout for a short distance. (651 m)



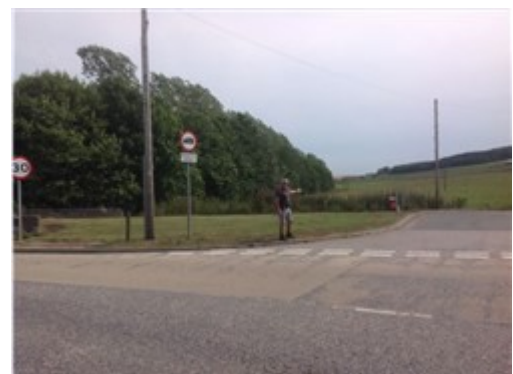
(3) Bruce's Seat

(57.33146; -2.32989) <https://w3w.co/grownup.inferior.butternut>
In about 100 m, just off the pavement on the side of the roundabout, you will find Bruce's Seat. Robert the Bruce may have used this stone, which is shaped like a chair, during the Battle of Barra, 1308. (745 m)



(4) Cross main road again and up minor road

(57.33134; -2.32883) <https://w3w.co/matrons.flags.unsecured>
After reading the little information plaque, re-trace your steps to the exit from the roundabout that enters Oldmeldrum, cross the road with care and go right, up the minor road opposite, with a large field on your left. (815 m)



(5) Veer right off road into woods

(57.32908; -2.32909) <https://w3w.co/assets.residual.stooping>
In about 300 m, passing the entrance to Blankets Cottage on your right, veer right off the minor road onto the path into the woods. Follow the main path through the wood as it gently ascends towards a fence at the end of the wood. (1.1 km)



(6) Over stile and up through field

(57.32731; -2.32753) <https://w3w.co/prettiest.translate.wished>
In 200 m, where the small patch of woodland ends, go over the stile and walk up through the field, keeping fairly close to the fence on your left. (1.3 km)



(7) Over bridge and right for stile

(57.32578; -2.32751) <https://w3w.co/prettiest.translate.wished>
In another 200m, cross a wooden bridge over a deep ditch, go right for a short distance amongst trees and climb over the stile. After the stile, keep walking uphill with the fence closely on your left. (1.5 km)



(8) Over stile and continue uphill

(57.32406; -2.32848) <https://w3w.co/circulate.scars.mini>
In 200 m you come to the next stile. Cross over this stile and continue uphill, making for another stile very slightly to your right further up the hill. (1.7 km)



(9) Over last stile before Barra summit

(57.32229; -2.33012) <https://w3w.co/cases.emptyed.valued>

In yet another 200 m you have arrived at the last stile on the uphill approach to the summit of Barra Hill. Cross the stile and make your way up and over the ancient grassy defensive ramparts of the Iron Age fort onto the sloping summit plateau beside some rocky outcrops. (1.9 km)



(10) Summit of Barra Hill

(57.32145; -2.33070) <https://w3w.co/formation.gear.awesome>

Looking south and west, on a clear day there are marvellous views of the Bennachie range and the Garioch countryside from the summit of Barra Hill. Upon reaching the summit area you will immediately discern the impressive remains of three grass-covered levels of tiered earth and stone ramparts. Barra Hill is, in fact, a remarkable example of an Iron Age fort [see *aerial photo after last Waypoint description*]. When you are ready, walk back from the viewpoint in a clock-wise direction, heading around the top-most ridge of the summit plateau until you see a stile and metal gate a little below you, on the eastern side of the hill. (2.0 km)



(11) Over stile and downhill on other side

(57.32109; -2.32827) <https://w3w.co/jazzy.lookout.strapping>

In 300 m, cross over the stile on the eastern side of the Barra Hill summit area, and head downhill through the field towards the next stile at the edge of a small wood. (2.3 km)



(12) Over stile and right for woodland path

(57.31934; -2.32676)

<https://w3w.co/enhanced.handlebar.divisible>

In 200 m, at the bottom edge of the field, cross the stile and go right to follow the path around the edge of the wooded area. Eventually the path will leave the fence on your right side and rise up towards another stile at the other end of the wood. (2.5 km)



(13) Over stile and next one too

(57.31774; -2.32695) <https://w3w.co/elevator.chuck.sings>

In about 200 m, near the top of the wooded area, cross over the stile, head along the top of the field and over the next stile in about 100 m, or so. Carry on along the top edge of the field until you see a path veering to you left into the trees, with a large old house just visible through the trees on your right. Follow the path down towards a minor road, coming upon a house and garden on your left. (2.7 km)



(14) Right then left for Bourtie Kirk

(57.31480; -2.32590) <https://w3w.co/allowable.dice.clasping>

In 300 m, you will have arrived at a minor road. Turn right here onto the road, going gently down hill around a bend. Then, before too long, go left and downhill towards the gates of the old Bourtie church, clearly visible on your left, below you. (3.0 km)



(15) Bourtie Old Kirk

(57.31396; -2.32631) <https://w3w.co/changed.ducks.liquid>

The present church building has an unusual pyramidal shape, and dates from 1806. Christian worship at this rural spot is believed to date back 800 years. The earliest gravestone discovered here is from the 16th Century. Once you have explored the church yard, ascend back up the short access drive to the minor road again. (3.3 km)



(16) Right and keep going on minor road

(57.31429; -2.32686) <https://w3w.co/number.unicorns.blunt>

On returning to the minor road, turn right to follow the road for 2.4 km. The road is very quiet, but take appropriate care and walk on the correct right-hand side, facing oncoming traffic. There are fine, wide-open countryside views to you right all the way. (3.4 km)



(17) Left for Oldmeldrum

(57.32644; -2.29791) <https://w3w.co/convert.dispose.character>
In 2.4 km, arriving at a junction with a road-opening on your left, go left to follow this minor road back towards Oldmeldrum, passing through the hamlet of Mill of Cromlet on the way. (5.8 km)



(18) Left off road onto path

(57.33181; -2.31569) <https://w3w.co/carefully.simmer.trainers>
In 1.2 km, just after the hamlet of Mill of Cromlet, where open ground between housing developments opens up on your left, take the obvious path on your left through the grassy area back towards the cul-de-sac on Millbank Road where you started the walk. (7.0 km)



(19) Finish back at cul-de-sac on Millburn Road

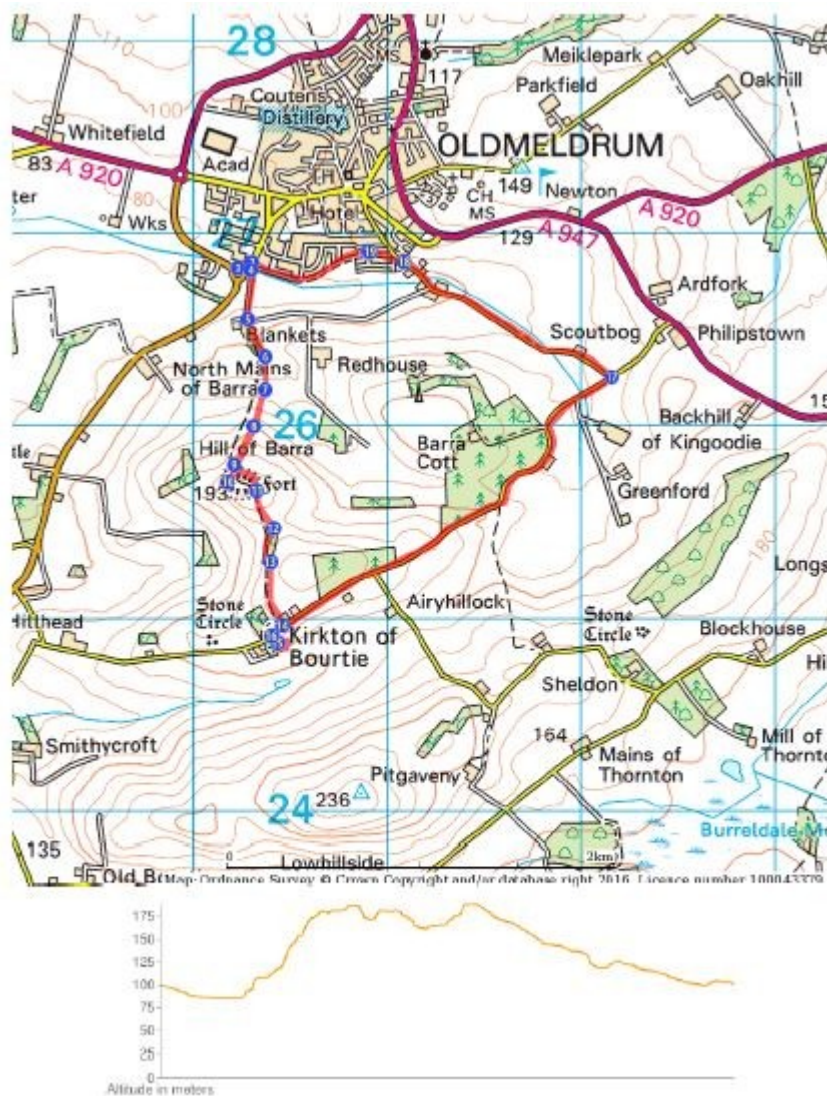
(57.33224; -2.31862) <https://w3w.co/guides.grudge.unguarded>
In 200 m, or so, from taking the path off the minor road, you will have arrived back at the cul-de-sac on Millbank Road where you started the walk. (7.2 km)



Aerial View of Barra Hill



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](#)