

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Tarland-Knockargety Hill Circuit (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

An enjoyable excursion into the pretty countryside around Tarland, between Donside and Deeside. The route takes a gradual, gentle ascent to the top of Knockargety Hill where there are exhilarating panoramic views. The sites of two ancient monuments are visited along the way.

Duration: 2.75 hours.



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: Infrequent Stagecoach bus options. Check timetables. Easy on-road car parking in Tarland.

Length: 8.690 km / 5.43 mi

Height Gain: 168 meter **Height Loss:** 168 meter

Max Height: 265 meter **Min Height:** 147 meter

Surface: Moderate. Mostly on good forest roads and farm tracks. May be muddy in places. Some walking on minor tarred roads. Not suitable for off-road mobility scooters between Waypoints 6 and 12 because of a stile, a fence crossing, and narrow paths affected by tree roots. Shortened route possible by returning from Waypoint 6 to Waypoint 12.

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

Difficulty: Medium.

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

Refreshments: Options in Tarland.



Description

This is a pleasant and undemanding walk in a mixed woodland and upland farming environment. At the mid-point on the route, the views the Deeside hills and surrounding countryside from the top of Knockargety Hill are breath-taking. The Tarland area is peppered with prehistoric sites, as a glance at the OS map will confirm. Although the visible remains are scant, this walk visits two of these sites. Tarland sits at the centre of The Howe of Cromar, a wide bowl on the eastern edge of the Grampian Mountains between the rivers Dee and Don. If arriving by car from Aberdeen on the B9119 it is likely that your attention will be immediately grabbed as the road passes over the hill into the Howe of Cromar, with the mountains of Lochnagar, Morven and Mount Keen setting an exceptionally beautiful backdrop to a rolling patchwork of fields and woodlands. Queen Victoria was said to be enchanted by this view of the Howe and a viewpoint is named after her – “The Queen’s View”. Try not to miss it 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. The focal point on this walk is the marvellous viewpoint at the summit of Knockargety Hill (267 m) where there are the barely discernible remains of an ancient earthwork which, in places, takes the form of a slight terrace and elsewhere a faint ditch. The enclosure is oval and measures around 260m E-W by 130m N-S. The site is conventionally understood to be an unfinished prehistoric hill fort although some authorities suggest it may have been complete in terms of its limited defensive purpose. The walk then extends westwards a little way to the remains of a probable burial cairn located on the lower hillside. What is left of the cairn forms a low turf-covered mound, about 16 m in diameter, in a field where there may be grazing sheep and cattle. See: <https://is.gd/lv45ju> and <https://is.gd/CQhyrD>



Waypoints

(1) Start walk in Tarland Square

(57.12743; -2.85910)

Start the walk at The Square in Tarland village. Facing the front of the war memorial, walk past it on your right and take the lane on your left. Soon you will cross a bridge over the Tarland Burn where you cross the road and turn right, walking on the pavement in a westerly direction.



(2) Left up road for Drummy Woods car-park

(57.12732; -2.86467)

In just over 400 m, go left up the road to the Drummy wood car-park. It is signposted for various walk options. Pass the car-park on your left (you may want to check out the information board first) and then carry on up the rough road with Drummy Wood on your left side. (417 m)



(3) Veer right at fork in road

(57.11915; -2.87468)

In 1.1 km you will arrive at a fork in the road. Take the right hand fork. In just over 600 m, go left at a junction with the rough access road to Drummy Croft (on your right). (1.5 km)



(4) Left up tarred road

(57.11864; -2.88975)

In 1 km, arriving at a t-junction with a minor tarred road, go left up the tarred road for a short distance looking out for a broad opening on your right. (2.5 km)



(5) Right onto forest road

(57.11778; -2.88940)

After 100 m, or so, at a broad opening on your right, take the forest road leading off. (2.6 km)



(6) At clearing go ahead to follow path into bushes

(57.11653; -2.90452)

After 1.1 km, the forest road ends at a clearing. Carry on straight ahead to follow a path between the broom bushes and young trees. (3.7 km)



(7) Left and uphill

(57.11583; -2.90617)

In about 100 m, at an indistinct y-junction, go left and uphill on the narrow path. Follow this path as it rises above the trees and heads around the top of Knockargety Hill in a broadly easterly direction. (3.8 km)



(8) Over stile and right for summit area of Knockargety Hill

(57.11548; -2.90205)

In about 300 m you will arrive at a stile over the fence on your right. Climb over the stile. There are indistinct paths veering slightly right and left. Take the path veering slightly left and downhill to soon arrive at a large flat stone. (4.07 km)



(9) Viewpoint on Knockargety Hill*

(57.11526; -2.90430)

In 30 m you will have arrived at a large flat stone which makes for a suitable place to take a seat and admire the marvellous views of the Deeside countryside, looking down to Loch Davan and Lock Kinord, then on to Mount Keen. Turning to your right you will spot Lochnagar, in the distance. You may also take some time to try and discern the line of the earthen rampart/ditch making up the periphery of the presumed prehistoric fort. When you are ready, follow the indistinct path on your right gently ascending up and over the flat summit, walking broadly in a westerly direction, with increasingly good views of the looming mass of Morven Hill, ahead of you. (4.1 km)



**Note: '...the remains of a slight earthwork, possibly an unfinished hillfort, situated on top of a ridge. The enclosure is oval and measures around 260m E-W by 130m N-S. It is marked by a single earthwork, which in places takes the form of a slight terrace and elsewhere a faint ditch. On the S of the enclosure, where the hill slope is quite steep, there is no trace of the earthwork ...'. From: https://ancientmonuments.uk/124054-knockargety-wood-unfinished-hillfort-200m-to-370m-north-of-upper-ruthven-aboyne-upper-deeside-and-donside-ward#.XQDXH_mJLIW*

(10) Through fence and veer left for Fernyhowe Cairn

(57.11559; -2.90612)

In 250 m, or so, the path veers right towards the fence again, where you can climb through the two levels of protective tubing (over the barbed wire). Once through the fence, veer left and downhill to take a narrow path through the bushes and trees, soon arriving at a field ahead of you, and to your left. (4.35 km)



(11) Remains of Fernyhowe Burial Cairn

(57.11546; -2.90798)

In 150 m, or so, the path passes an area of stones and a low mound on the edge of the field on your left. This is what remains of the prehistoric Fernyhowe Burial Cairn, most of the original stones having been presumably plundered for building field boundary walls in more recent times. When you are ready, re-trace your steps back up the path through the trees, but carrying on past the access path from the summit of Knockargety Hill. Soon you will arrive back at the terminus of the forest road (Waypoint 7). From there re-trace your steps back along the forest road to the junction with the minor tarred road at the the prior Waypoint 6. (4.5 km)



**Note: '...the remains of a probable burial cairn located on sloping ground some way to the W of an unfinished hillfort. The probable cairn forms a conspicuous mound in a pasture field. The mound, which is a turf-covered pile of stones, is about 16m in diameter and around 1m high. No kerb stones are visible at the edge of the cairn but the margin of the monument is obscured by stones cleared from the field ...' From: <https://ancientmonuments.uk/123642-ferny-howe-cairn-200m-ese-of-aboyne-upper-deeside-and-donside-ward#.XQDZGfmJLIV>*

(12) Left onto tarred road

(57.11780; -2.88945)

In 1.2 km from the Fernyhowe Cairn you will have returned to the minor tarred road you encountered during the outward segment of the route. Go left to follow the road past some houses on your right and left. (5.7 km)



(13) Right down grassy track

(57.12246; -2.89041)

In 600 m, the tarred road comes to an end. Take the grassy field access road veering off to your right and gently downhill. Carry on taking this old road as it enters birch woods, ignoring a turn-off to your left (marked 'Private') on entering the woods. Eventually you will catch a glimpse of the pond and walled garden for Corrachree House on your left, through the trees. Emerging from the wood, carry on with fields, now, on either side. (6.3 km)



(14) Right onto tarred road back to Tarland

(57.12985; -2.87321)

In 1.3 km you will have arrived at a t-junction with a minor road leading out of Tarland. Turn right here, taking care to walk by the right-hand side verge as there is no pavement or pathway. Soon you will pass the Tarland Camping and Caravanning Site on your right where a pavement will lead you back to the outskirts of Tarland. (7.6 km)



(15) Left onto Mill Road

(57.12736; -2.86318)

In 700 m, upon entering Tarland, go left up Mill Road, heading towards the junction with Melgum Road where you turn right to soon arrive at The Square where you started the walk. (8.3 km)



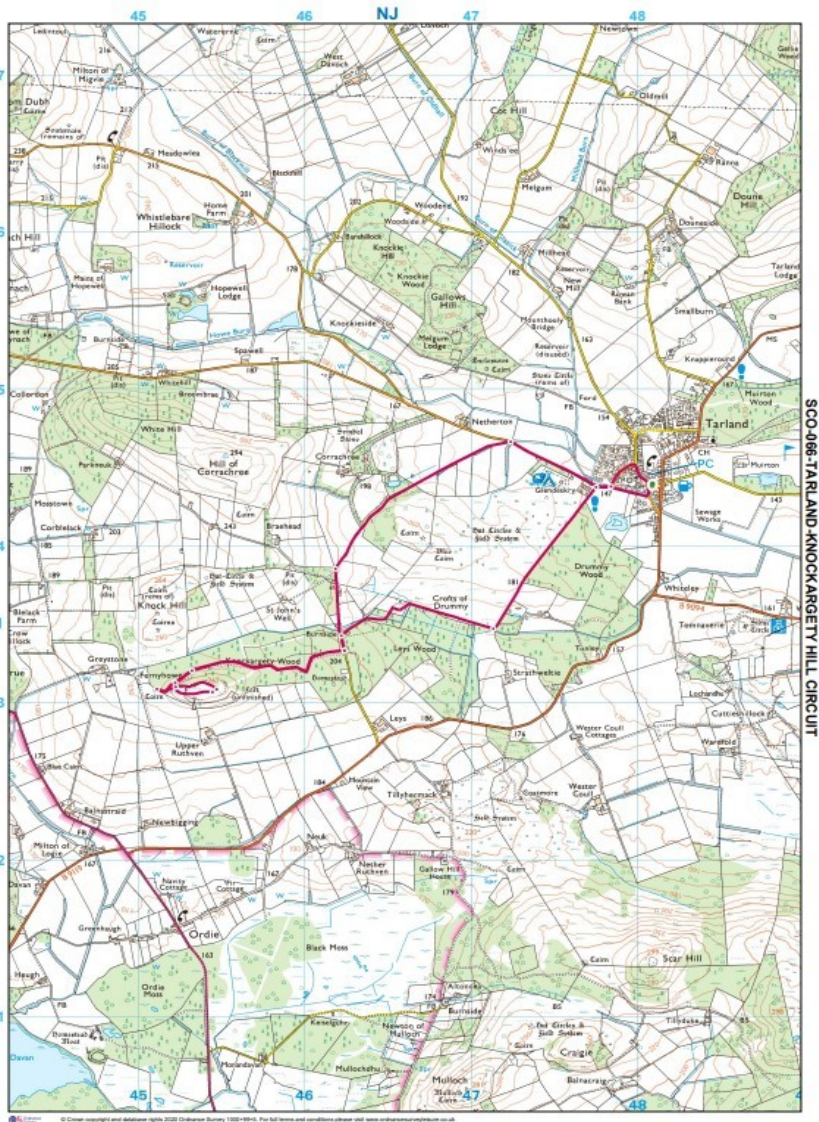
(16) Finish walk back at Tarland Square

(57.12754; -2.85909)

In 400 m you will have arrived back at Tarland Square where you started the walk. (8.7 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](#)