

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Aboyne-River Dee-Bell Wood-Belwade Circuit (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

The route provides a very enjoyable and scenic mix of walking environments taking in the banks of the River Dee, a mature pine wood, and open pasture for horses, with wide-open and long-distance views.

Duration: 3.75 hours.



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: Frequent Stagecoach bus services along the A93 Deeside route. Check timetables. Free parking in the car-park off the A93, close to the walk start/end point, or in Station Square.

Length: 11.010 km / 6.88 mi

Height Gain: 141 meter. **Height Loss:** 141 meter.

Max Height: 173 meter. **Min Height:** 113 meter.

Surface: Moderate. Good paths, forest and farm roads throughout. A short section on pavement at the start of the walk, and a bit longer in the final section.

Difficulty: Medium.

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

Dog Friendly: Yes, but keep dogs on lead on public roads and on the mid-section through Belwade Farm and its surrounding fields.

Refreshments: Options in Aboyne.



Description

Slightly longer than our normal distance, this is a very varied circuit, never far from the River Dee, where the gradual ups and downs are hardly felt. The route passes the very pleasant centre of the village, by Charleston Green, before taking an extended wander downstream along the banks of the River Dee. Passing a fishers' hut, the route then heads away from the river, making for the mature conifers of Bell Wood on the eastern outskirts of Aboyne. This extensive woodland is popular with walkers and cyclists although you are unlikely to find yourself in a crowd! Leaving the forest, the route then takes an amble around the southern perimeter of Belwade Farm before passing through the equine centre onto an open track with excellent views of the Deeside valley and surrounding hills. The return is mostly through Bell Wood, some of which is being regenerated with natural broadleaf trees, with a short section at the edge of the wood on the Old Deeside Road, now a farm track, before a pleasant stroll through the residential areas to the east of the village centre. Any walk around and about the large Deeside village of Aboyne offers many opportunities to enjoy views of the pleasant Strathdee countryside. With its large open "green" at the centre, and well-preserved and re-vitalised railway station square, the settlement has a very relaxed ambience, making it particularly popular with summer visitors. As noted above, the mid section of our walk meanders through tracks on Belwade Farm. The farm is the Scottish Home for World Horse Welfare, rehabilitating horses, ponies and donkeys from all over the UK. *As at July 2021 the visitor centre and café/restaurant are closed due to the Covid 19 pandemic.*



Waypoints

(1) Start walk at information board on Charleston Road

(57.07576; -2.78039) <https://w3w.co/shaver.circling.rolled>

The walk starts from the Aboyne Heritage Walk information board with the main A93 Ballater Road. This is across from the main car park in Charleston Green park in the centre of the village. With your back to the road to take the pavement along Charleston Road, away from direction.



(2) Left off pavement down to riverbank

(57.07196; -2.78416) <https://w3w.co/eradicate.styled.constrain>

In about 550 m, soon after passing the Aboyne Canoe Club premises on your left side, go through a gap in the fencing to take a path* to the Dee riverbank. When you reach the riverbank, turn left to take the riverside path in a broadly easterly direction for about 2 km, eventually passing the waste water treatment plant on your left side where the riverbank has been strengthened by piles.

**Note: initially, there is a short but steep section on the path to the riverbank. If you prefer, you can continue along Charleston Road for another 300 m, passing the Boat Inn on your right side, where there are steps down to the riverbank path. This will add 600 m to the length of the walk.*



(3) Left up access road after fishers' hut

(57.07175; -2.75240) <https://w3w.co/implore.steeped.enjoys>

In 2 km, just after passing a fishers' hut, turn left onto the rough access road, walking away from the river. (2.6 km)



(4) Right to cross bridge into Bell Wood

(57.07292; -2.75696) <https://w3w.co/casually.constrain.spud>

In 300 m, turn right to cross a wooden pedestrian bridge into Bell Wood. Follow the path as it winds into the wood. (2.9 km)



(5) Right at junction along forest road

(57.07395; -2.75713) <https://w3w.co/narrating.become.licks>

In 100 m, where the path meets a junction on the forest roads at a picnic bench and information board, turn right to take the long straight forest road in a broadly SE direction. (3.0 km)



(6) Right onto path off forest road

(57.07119; -2.74442) <https://w3w.co/overdrive.amuses.inserted>

After 800 m on the forest road, at a post signed for the Bell Wood Bike Park, turn sharp right away from that direction to follow a path into the trees. (3.8 km)



(7) Swing left after bench and info board

(57.07119; -2.74432) <https://w3w.co/supper.woof.onlookers>

In about 700 m, at a picnic bench and information board swing left onto a narrow path* through the trees with a fence now fairly close by on your right side. (3.9 km)

**Note: You will see a stile across the fence behind the picnic bench. Don't cross this stile as the path from there down to the Belwade Farm road is indistinct and overgrown.*



(8) Veer right to follow path past Belwade Farm sign

(57.07136; -2.74303) <https://w3w.co/timing.munch.kickbacks>

In another 100 m, or so, after the fence on your right has ended, veer right towards a prominent Belwade Farm* sign. Take note of the guidance on the sign as you pass it on your right side. The narrow path soon bends to the right to take you down a set of rough steps. Keep going after the steps for a short distance to arrive at a grassy farm road. Turn left here to follow this rough road with fields, which may contain grazing horses, now on your left side. The Tarland Burn is running through the trees on your right on its way to joining the River Dee. Keep following the farm road as it eventually turns left and uphill towards Belwade Farm. Follow the road gently uphill through the farm and visitor centre buildings. (4.0 km)



**Note: Belwade Farm is the Scottish Home for World Horse Welfare, rehabilitating horses, ponies and donkeys from all over the UK. As at July 2021 the visitor centre is closed due to the Covid 19 pandemic.*

(9) Left and uphill onto rough road signed for Farm Walks

(57.07549; -2.73183) <https://w3w.co/burst.pest.childcare>

In 1.5 km, go left and uphill onto a rough road signed for Farm Walks, passing a Belwade Farm staff building on your right side. Follow this path/track away from the Farm, eventually reaching an open area between fields where the track goes west, with great views of the surrounding countryside and hills. (5.5 km)



(10) Left and downhill to trees

(57.07833; -2.74568) <https://w3w.co/joystick.brave.dish>

After 1 km, with a cut area of grass ahead of you for exercising horses, go sharp left and follow the track downhill towards trees. Go through the gate, carefully closing it behind you, and continue taking the path through the trees as it soon turns left, heading back towards Belwade Farm. (6.5 km)



(11) Right off rough road onto path through trees

(57.07464; -2.73464) <https://w3w.co/weeps.roadshow.nature>

In 900 m, as you begin to approach Belwade Farm buildings ahead of you, turn sharp right off the rough road onto a path through trees. (7.4 km)



(12) Right at t-junction to follow Bell Wood path

(57.07414; -2.73653) <https://w3w.co/mint.flitting.plus>

In about 200 m, turn right at a t-junction where there is a small information board, to follow a path through Bell Wood. Soon, the path enters a more open area where conifers have been felled and young broadleaf trees (at July 2021) are re-generating. Keep following the path in a broadly NW direction as it eventually re-enters the mature conifer forest. (7.6 km)



(13) Left at y-junction

(57.07876; -2.75102) <https://w3w.co/framework.from.manicured>
In 1.1 km from Waypoint 12, and about 150 m from re-entering the mature conifers of Bell Wood, you will arrive at a junction where a more minor path veers away gently uphill to your right. Your route, however, is to go left and keep following the main path in a W direction. (8.7 km)



(14) Right and uphill after walks post

(57.07899; -2.75586) <https://w3w.co/liability.champions.subject>
In about 300 m, just after passing a post, marked with a blue painted cut-out, turn sharp right and follow a path uphill to the edge of the wood. (9.0 km)



(15) Left down rough farm road

(57.08034; -2.75586) <https://w3w.co/diagram.widget.shackles>
In about 100 m, having emerged out of Bell Wood, turn left and gently downhill on the rough farm road*, with fields on your right side. At the base of the incline, the track bends left with the rear gardens of houses now on your right side. When you come to an access point for Bell Wood, turn right and emerge onto Belwood Drive, with houses on either side, where you turn left and follow the road as it goes gently downhill then bends right. Keep following the road as it passes Aboyne Hospital on your left. After the hospital, walk through a car-parking area towards the main A93 Ballater Road which is adjacent at this point. (9.1 km)



**Note: this farm track is, in fact, part of the Old Deeside Road, the turnpike road that ran from Aberdeen to Braemar, predating the modern A93 road.*

(16) Join pavement on main road into Aboyne

(57.07766; -2.76922) <https://w3w.co/clattered.disposing.vase>
In 1.1 km, follow a path from a car-parking area onto the pavement at the side of the main A93 Ballater Road. Walk towards the village centre for a short distance. (10.2 km)



(17) Left down Low Road

(57.07761; -2.77156) <https://w3w.co/grace.intruders.thick>
In about 200 m, go left off the pavement on the main road down Low Road to pass through pedestrian barriers on a short path that takes you to a pedestrian bridge over the Tarland Burn. Cross the bridge and turn right. Keep walking along this continuation of the Low Road back into the centre of Aboyne, passing Station Square on you way back to your start-point. (10.4 km)



(18) Finish walk back at entrance to Charleston Green park

(57.07573; -2.78035) <https://w3w.co/shaver.circling.rolled>
In 600 m, you will have arrived back at your start-point near the gates at the entrance to Charleston Green park. (11 km)



Route Map



Links:

[Photos from walk](#)

[Download Route Guide](#) (PDF with illustrated Waypoints)

[Download GPX file](#) (GPS Exchange Format)

[Access Walk on Viewranger](#)

[Access Walk on Outdooractive](#)

[Access Walk on Wikiloc](#)