

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Core Hill-Mill of Easterton Circular (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

Unusually, this walk starts and finishes on a hilltop, albeit not a very high hill. There is a wonderful panoramic view from the start, progressing to fantastic views of the Bennachie range in the mid-section of the route, from a grassy old road above the Garioch farmlands.

Duration: 3.5 hours



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: There is no public transport route close to the walk start point. There is a small rough car-parking area at the start of the walk near the Meldrum Mast on Core Hill.

Length: 8.570 km / 5.36 mi

Height Gain: 135 meter

Height Loss: 135 meter

Max Height: 244 meter

Min Height: 134 meter

Surface: Moderate. A mix of soft grassy paths, hard farm roads, and tarred minor roads.

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

Difficulty: Medium.

Dog Friendly: Yes, but keep dogs on lead on public roads and near to farm livestock.

Refreshments: Options in Oldmeldrum.



Description

From the very start, at the summit of the 285 m Core Hill, this walk provides some wonderful open views of the rich farming heartland of Aberdeenshire, covering the fertile and productive Garioch and Formartine areas on either side of the hill. All along the lengthy mid-section of the route, on what may be the remains of an old turnpike road, there are particularly stunning views of the Bennachie range, and to the faraway Grampian Mountains in the west.

The Meldrum broadcasting mast on the Core Hill, where you start and finish the walk, played an iconic role at the dawn of the television age, transmitting 405 line analogue BBC TV signals to the NE of Scotland from 1955 to 1985.

Nowadays the mast transmits FM and DAB radio to the region. There is an interesting BBC coat of arms on the transmitter building, the background to which is explained in the guidance for Waypoint #1. Also passed on the route is the base for the Mackie's Ice Cream empire, and the prominent wind turbine and solar panel farms that support the enterprise. The Mackie family have been farming at Westertown since 1912, and Mackie's of Scotland is now a very well-known Scottish food brand. Mackie's were formerly a milk retail company and in 1986 began making ice cream. In recent years, the business has committed to being self-sufficient in renewable energy and to take "... care of the land, wildlife, farm animals, staff and local environment in the best way possible". They have four wind turbines with a total capacity of 3 MW and have also installed a 10 acre site of solar panels with capacity of 1.8 MW. The slurry from the cows is pumped up to a slurry lagoon on top of Easterton Hill and mixed with waste water. It is then used as natural fertiliser and spread on the farm fields via four miles of pipe-work. All in all, an interesting, and not over-taxing, walk with some fantastic views.



Waypoints

(1) Start at Core Hill Meldrum Mast car-park

(57.38542; -2.40006)

From the little car-park at the top of the Core Hill, walk up the short access road to the main transmitting station and mast. Check out the interesting BBC coat of arms* before re-tracing your steps and continuing downhill, eventually joining a minor tarred road. Carry on until you reach the outskirts of the hamlet of Cross of Jackston, looking out for the beginning of a grassy track on your left.

**Note: The coat of arms of the BBC was adopted in March 1927. The original motto was 'Nation shall speak peace unto Nation'. In 1934 the motto was changed to the Latin 'Quaecunq̄ue', meaning 'Whatsoever'. This was inspired by St Paul's Epistle to the Philippians translated as "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Although the motto reverted to the original in 1948, for some reason it is 'Quaecunq̄ue' that appears on the Meldrum Mast building, constructed in 1955 to transmit 405 line analogue BBC TV signals to the NE of Scotland. Nowadays the mast transmits FM and DAB radio.*



(2) Left onto grassy road

(57.38265; -2.41843)

In 1.6 km, on the outskirts of Cross of Jackston, just before the road bends right and downhill between houses (there is an ornamental well in the garden ahead of you), go sharp left onto a grassy track, initially passing above a modern house then carrying on along the side of the hill between fields. There are tremendous views, particularly to the Bennachie range. Carry on taking this grassy track as it eventually passes above the Mackie's Ice Cream factory and a recently created arboretum, with a woody hillside on your left side at that point. (1.6 km)



(3) Keep going avoiding uphill road

(57.37358; -2.39858)

In another 1.6 km, as you pass the Mackie's Ice Cream* factory and farm at Westertown, below you on your right, as the grassy track passes over a concrete farm road going uphill, carry on over the concrete road. (3.2 km)

Note: The Mackie family have been farming at Westertown since 1912, and Mackie's of Scotland is now a very well-known Scottish food brand. Mackie's were formerly a milk retail company and in 1986 began making ice cream. In recent years, the business has committed to being self-sufficient in renewable energy and to take "... care of the land, wildlife, farm animals, staff and local environment in the best way possible". They have four wind turbines with a total capacity of 3 MW and have also installed a 10 acre site of solar panels with capacity of 1.8 MW. The slurry from the cows is pumped up to a slurry lagoon on top of Easterton Hill and mixed with waste water. It is then used as natural fertiliser and spread on the farm fields via four miles of pipe-work.



(4) Don't go uphill-keep going

(57.37345; -2.39609)

In another 200 m, as the farm road proceeds uphill, veer slightly right to join the grassy track that carries on along the side of the hill, in a similar way as before, between Waypoints 2 and 3. (3.4 km)



(5) Again don't go uphill-keep going on grassy path

(57.37069; -2.38758)

In 600 m, when the grassy track meets a farm road going uphill, DON'T take that farm road but cross over it to take the far less obvious grassy track that carries on along the side of the hill. The grassy track is more narrow at this stage than it has previously been. It eventually passes houses on your right at Mill of Easterton. (4.0 km)



(6) Sharp left onto overgrown road

(57.36734; -2.36693)

In 1.3 km, after passing the houses at Mill of Easterton, on the tarred access road, look out for a grassy road* going sharp left and past a steel gate. This overgrown road hugs the edge of a conifer plantation on your left side, with fields on your right side. Keep following the indistinct path as the old road swings right after a couple of hundred meters, then veers a little left through an avenue of beech trees uphill towards gates and a minor road. (5.3 km)

**Note: if you find this section too overgrown for your taste, then stick to the tarred road, taking a left turn and then another left turn at North Bethelnie Farm to arrive at the same point on the minor road, as above. This adds about 450 m to the overall distance.*



(7) Pass gates onto minor road-then left

(57.37292; -2.37150)

In about 800 m, reaching the end of an avenue of beech trees, clamber past the steel gates and onto the minor tarred road. Turn left and follow this very quiet farm access road as it first passes Newton of Tullich and then Baikiehowe farms. After Baikiehowe, the tarred surface ends and becomes rough hardcore as you gently ascend back towards Core Hill and its summit masts. (6.1 km)



(8) Right and uphill towards trees

(57.38301; -2.39897)

In 2.1 km, just before the hardcore road descends past a house, go right and uphill to follow a rough road as it veers left past an old quarry on your right, and then into the conifer plantation, passing one of the smaller summit masts on your left. When you emerge from the tress, go left to quickly arrive at your starting point. (8.2 km)



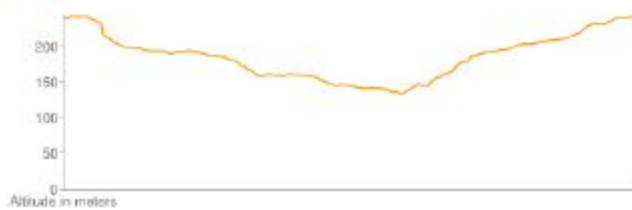
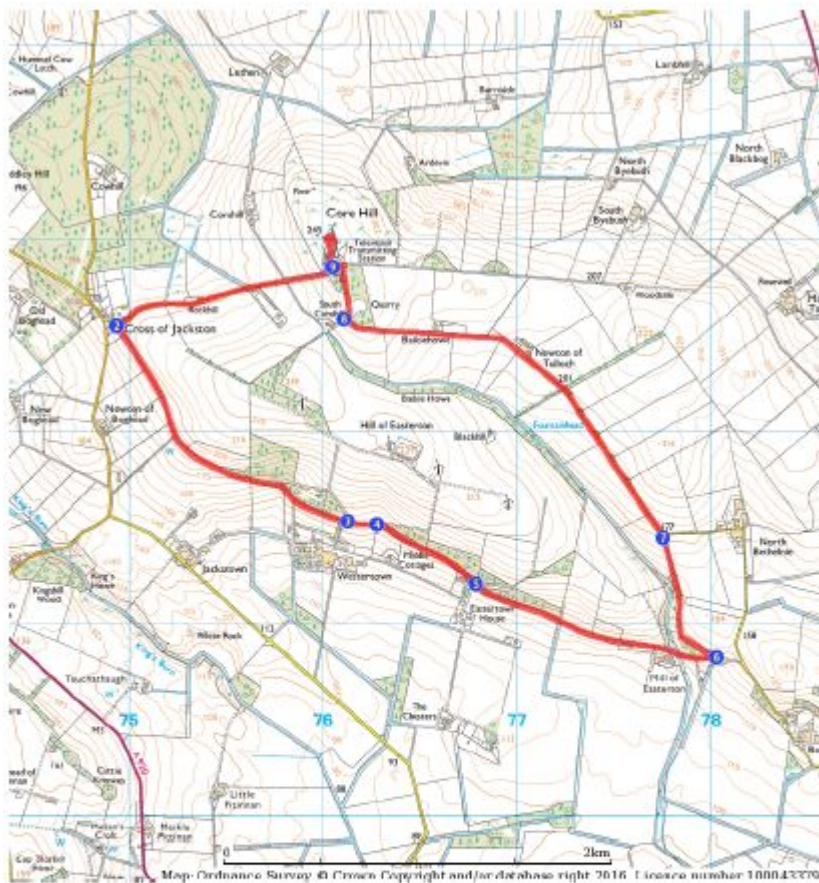
(9) Finish walk back at Core Hill transmitters

(57.38544; -2.39997)

In 400 m, you will have arrived back at your starting point in the little car-park near the Meldrum Mast. (8.6 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 Wikiloc](#)