

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

## Kemnay-Fetternear-Cot-town Wood Circuit (Aberdeenshire)

### Route Summary

An easy ramble through broadleaf and pine woods, punctuated by areas of mixed farmland. Fetternear has links to the mediaeval city of Aberdeen and, later, to the Leslie Clan. The walk passes by the ruins of the House of Fetternear, built upon the earlier Bishop's Palace.

Duration: 2.5 hours.



### Route Overview

**Duration:** 2.5 hours.

**Transport/Parking:** Stagecoach provides a bus service from Inverurie to Kemnay. Check timetables. There is a small rough surfaced car-park at the walk start/finish. Beware deep potholes on access road!

**Length:** 7.680 km / 4.80 mi

**Height Gain:** 135 meter.

**Height Loss:** 135 meter.

**Max Height:** 149 meter.

**Min Height:** 82 meter.

**Surface:** Moderate. A short section on a tarred private road. Otherwise, a mix of rough estate roads and good paths. May be muddy in places.

**Difficulty:** Easy.

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

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

**Refreshments:** Options in Kemnay, Monymusk and Inverurie.



### Description

This is an enjoyable little hike in mixed woodland interspersed with rolling farmland on part of the ancient Fetternear Estate, on the outskirts of Kemnay, in the Garioch area of Aberdeenshire. The ups and downs along the way account for an overall ascent of 135 m, but the gradients are so gentle that this is hardly noticeable. The route is never far from the River Don and, in the mid-section offers some fine views of the Bennachie range, with the eastern profile of the Mither Tap particularly prominent. The historical focal point on the route is the ruin of the House of Fetternear (signposted "Bishop's Palace"), which was destroyed by fire in 1919. The lands of Fetternear were owned by the mediaeval Bishops of Aberdeen, and the original building was a Bishop's Palace, built by Bishop Ramsay of Aberdeen in 1226 as a summer retreat, and later extended in 1330. The earliest of the ruins still standing, however, originate from 1566, after the ownership transferred to John Leslie, 8th Baron Balquhain. Additions to the structure were made at various later dates, most notably by Count Patrick Leslie, who was responsible for the 1693-dated armorial panel over the central doorway incorporating his honorary coronet as a Count of the Holy Roman Empire, an important figure in the Counter-Reformation. See: <https://canmore.org.uk/site/18684/fetternear-house-old-house-of-fetternear-and-bishops-palace> . At a later point on the walk, the route diverts to the riverbank in order to visit the remnants of St Ninian's Chapel. The present ruins date from 1878, when a new chapel was built directly on the ancient foundations enclosing the Leslie tombs. The ancient parish church, dedicated to St Ninian, dated from the 12th C. A map of 1769 showed it standing in its church-yard and its walls still stood to a height of four feet in the mid-19th century. See: <https://canmore.org.uk/event/669605>



## Waypoints

### (1) Start the walk at the gates to Fetternear Estate

(57.23451; -2.45245) <https://w3w.co/husky.lunged.reapply>

Start the walk from the small car-park at the entrance gates to the Fetternear Estate. The car-park is just past the bridge over the River Don on the western outskirts of Kemnay, off Riverside Road. Enter through the gates past the lodge house on your left and walk up the tarred driveway.



### (2) Left off tarred road onto rough track through trees

(57.23726; -2.45546) <https://w3w.co/migrants.kickbacks.sensual>

In 365 m, veer left off the tarred driveway onto a rough road through the trees. Keep following this rough road as it goes through the wood and then between an avenue of mature trees. (365 m)



### (3) Straight ahead at x-roads for Bishop's Palace

(57.24259; -2.46046) <https://w3w.co/ethic.claps.swerves>

In 835 m, emerging from the avenue of mature trees, you will arrive at a signposted x-roads. Carry straight on (signposted for Bishop's Palace) here, over the bridge towards the ruins of Fetternear House, clearly visible ahead of you. (1.2 km)



#### (4) Bishop's Palace

(57.24365; -2.46033) <https://w3w.co/developed.songs.braved>  
In 100 m, or so, you will arrive in front of the ruins of Fetternear House\*, where there is an information board. The ruins are dangerous, so please don't cross the fence surrounding them. When you are ready, re-trace your steps back over the burn to the signposted x-roads. (1.3 km)

*\*Note: The focal point on the route is the ruin of the House of Fetternear (signposted "Bishop's Palace"), which was destroyed by fire in 1919. The lands of Fetternear were owned by the mediaeval Bishops of Aberdeen, and the original building was a Bishop's Palace, built by Bishop Ramsay of Aberdeen in 1226 as a summer retreat, and later extended in 1330. The earliest of the ruins still standing, however, originate from 1566, after the ownership transferred to John Leslie, 8th Baron Balquhain. Additions to the structure were made at various later dates, most notably by Count Patrick Leslie, who was responsible for the 1693-dated armorial panel over the central doorway incorporating his honorary coronet as a Count of the Holy Roman Empire, an important figure in the Counter-Reformation. See:*  
<https://canmore.org.uk/site/18684/fetternear-house-old-house-of-fetternear-and-bishops-palace>



#### (5) Left at x-roads

(57.24258; -2.46039) <https://w3w.co/ethic.claps.swerves>  
In 100 m, having re-traced your steps back over the burn to the signposted x-roads, go left along the rough road, with the burn on your left side. (1.4 km)



#### (6) Left across bridge

(57.24148; -2.45773) <https://w3w.co/surfaces.weedy.cluttered>  
In about 200 m, turn left to cross over another bridge. (1.6 km)





### (7) Left fork at y-junction

(57.24250; -2.45642) <https://w3w.co/mystery.endearing.troll>

In another 200 m, or so, at a y-junction, take the left fork. Follow the rough road for 1 km (in total) as it proceeds between fields, then bends left at a modern house, soon passing the old Fetternear Estate walled garden on your left, and the old Fetternear Estate farm steading on your right (1.8 km)



### (8) Right up rough track before houses

(57.24762; -2.46614) <https://w3w.co/jobs.joins.equipment>

In 1 km, just before arriving at a set of modern houses on your right, take the rough track on your right going gently uphill. The track soon becomes a path, passing St John's Church (now a private residence) on your left as it bends slightly right and continues uphill between fields towards a wood. Great views now open up to Bennachie in the west, and also to the south-east. (2.8 km)



### (9) Left fork at paths y-junction in trees

(57.25077; -2.45970) <https://w3w.co/forehand.globe.majors>

In 600 m, at a paths y-junction, take the left fork to carry on walking through the trees. Soon, you will arrive at a rough forest road. Carry on down the forest road. (3.4 km)



### (10) Follow higher path around wood

(57.25508; -2.45268) <https://w3w.co/keepers.splashes.direction>

In another 600 m, where the forest road offers to bend left and go more steeply down hill towards a minor public road, follow the path that continues around Cot-town wood, soon bending slightly right and gently ascending. Follow the clear path, now going in a broadly southerly direction, with trees on both sides. (4.0 km)



### (11) Left and down through wood

(57.25200; -2.44647) <https://w3w.co/chairs.cashew.baker>

In about 400 m, ignore a path through a broken fence to your left. Instead, after 800 m, at old gate posts, take an option to go left and downhill into the trees. (4.8 km)



### (12) Right along rough road at walk signpost

(57.24940; -2.44446) <https://w3w.co/enlighten.dated.flip>

In 400 m, where the path meets a rough road at a t-junction with a green walks signpost, turn right along the road. (5.2 km)



### (13) Left down old road to St Ninian's Chapel

(57.24851; -2.44540) <https://w3w.co/monorail.courage.pausing>

In about 100 m, turn left down an old rough road which will take you down towards an embankment overlooking the River Don. There is a copse of mature yew trees on your left which hides the ruins of St Ninian's Chapel. (5.3 km)



### (14) Ruins of St Ninian's Chapel

(57.24755; -2.44358) <https://w3w.co/presuming.skate.moped>

In 100 m, or so, you will have arrived at the ruins of St Ninian's Chapel\*, and the overgrown small graveyard. When you are ready to move on, re-trace your steps 100 m, or so, back to the hard-surfaced rough road you were on and turn left to carry on back towards Kemnay and the walk start-point. (5.4 km).

*\*Note: The present ruins of St Ninian's Chapel date from 1878, when a new chapel was built directly on the ancient foundations enclosing the Leslie tombs. The ancient parish church, dedicated to St Ninian, dated from the 12th C. A map of 1769 showed it standing in its church-yard and its walls still stood to a height of four feet in mid-19th century. See:*

<https://canmore.org.uk/event/669605>





### (15) Left fork at y-junction

(57.24265; -2.45594) <https://w3w.co/ulterior.cubic.defeat>

In 1.2 km, at the multiple y-junction you encountered earlier at Waypoint 7, take the left fork. (6.6 km)



### (16) Left at t-junction - signed for Kemnay

(57.24145; -2.45765) <https://w3w.co/sues.blubber.tables>

In 200 m, after crossing the old bridge over the Marshes Burn, turn left to take the signposted direction for Kemnay and your route start-point. (6.8 km)



### (17) Finish walk back at gates of Fetternear Estate

(57.23457; -2.45235) <https://w3w.co/husky.lunged.reapply>

In 900 m, you will have arrived back at your walk start-point in the car-park on the outskirts of Kemnay. (7.7 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](#)