



# THE HALTWHISTLE RINGS



## WALK 11

### ‘Water Meadow Where the Green Sandpiper Plays’

**Length:** 7 mls/11 km

**Grade:** 2 Moderate Plus

**Ascent/descent:** 986 ft/300 m

**OS explorer OL 43** Hadrian’s Wall

A walk along the Pennine Way over Lambley Common with great views, across the magnificent Lambley Viaduct and back through the wooded valley to the charming riverside by Eals.

**BEWARE:** This walk can be wet, even after a spell of dry weather, so stout footwear is recommended. Gaiters may also prove helpful.

THE SECOND SECTION OF THIS WALK IS UNSUITABLE FOR ANYONE SUFFERING VERTIGO. There is a precipitous path through Towsbank Wood to the river. An alternative route is given.

**Start Point:** Burnstones Bridge

**By car:** From Haltwhistle go west along the A69, and take the second turning left signposted Alston, Halton Lea Gate and Coanwood, passing Bellister Castle. Follow the road to a T-junction at Lambley and turn left onto the A689. Travel 2.5 miles and look for a road sign denoting a low arch bridge. Turn left immediately, through a gap in the hedge just beyond this sign, into the car park. (GR: NY675544)

If the car park is full, there is roadside parking available around the loop road to the left of the closed Kirkstyle Inn. Please park considerately and take care walking under the low arch bridge to the start point.

1. Leave the car park and turn left on the road towards Burnstone Bridge until you see the sign for the Pennine Way (which you will follow until Lambley) on a gate on the right, at Knarsdale Hall (formerly Burnstones).

#### **Did you know?**

The name ‘Burnstones’ means ‘steppingstones over the stream (burn)’ and was probably a Roman crossing on The Maiden Way.

Take a look at the arches on Burnstones Bridge and compare the number on the Knarsdale Barton side with the other. The reason for the discrepancy is that the road arch bridge is skewed one way, to the line of the former railway, and the four arches that cross Thinhope Burn are skewed the other. The builders overcame this problem by means of a blind arch between the two.


2. Once through the gate, walk up the grass slope wicket and then bear left uphill to the wicket gate at the top. Turn right along the stony track, continuing to follow the Pennine Way. The track route goes up to the left and then curves right round a hollow on your right. Then turn right off the track, following the sign for the Pennine Way. Continue straight on, keeping a wall on your right. When the road comes into view, the path descends to the left and to a footbridge over Glendue Burn. (GR: NY671564)

**Did you know?**

*Between Burnstones Bridge and Glendue Burn you will come across some paved parts of this Roman Road which ran from Whitley Castle (Epiacum) to Carvoran near Walltown. Imagine the soldiers who came from many different parts of the Roman Empire, walking over this road over 2000 years ago. The same technique of road building had been used to construct it as was being used in the Balkans, Turkey and the Middle East. In 1776 Hutchinson, visiting the area 'found in this uncultivated country, the most perfect remains he ever saw – it is near six yards wide: the sides are formed of very large pebbles, from whence, in an easy bow, the interior pavement rose to the crown.'*

*Whitley Castle is also known as Epiacum, a very important Roman fort. There is an excellent café and farm shop here, The Nook, at which walkers are very welcome.*

3. Cross the stile beyond and turn right to follow a fence and then a wall up a steep slope to come to a stone stile in the wall on your right. Go over the stile and turn left. Follow the wall on your left for about 1.25 mls/2km/ over four step stiles at field boundaries across Lambley Common. Keep ahead, where the Pennine Way turns left (GR: NY667584) and descend to a ladder stile leading to the A689.

4.  Cross the road – WITH CARE - turn left then immediately turn right, signposted 'Featherstone'. Turn right up the drive of the last house in the terrace. There is a sign to Lambley on the opposite side of the road. Pass the garage on your right, to a stile. Continue straight on across three fields and through the tunnel under the Coanwood Road. Keeping to the right of a stone wall and, with a hedge on your right, cross a lawn in front of a white house on the road in Lambley. Turn left and immediately right on a footpath, signposted 'Lambley Viaduct'. This path then goes right, along the back of some cottages and then left to descend towards the Viaduct. After a flight of steps, you come to a signpost. Take the right hand path and climb the steps up to the Viaduct.

**Did you know?**

*The Haltwhistle-Alston line was opened in 1852, before Lambley Viaduct was complete. Work started at the termini of Haltwhistle and Alston. Passengers had to disembark the train, cross the river and then catch another train. The viaduct opened eighteen months later and is a great tribute to Victorian engineering. The magnificent viaduct is over 100 feet/ 30.5m high and underwent a thorough repair and facelift in 1996.*

*Look down from the viaduct to the meadow beside the river. This is Waughold Holme and an interpretation of this name by Godfrey Watson in his book, 'Good Wife Hot', says, 'water meadow where the green sandpiper plays'. It must have reminded our Nordic forebears of home as this bird is a seasonal visitor from Scandinavia!*

**For those wishing to avoid the precipitous path, continue following the South Tyne Trail to return to the starting point.**

5. Cross the viaduct and pass the information board on your right. After 110yds/100 m, turn right up a bank beside a wooden five-barred fence and through the broken fence to follow the path (not signposted) through the woods. The path passes Castle Hill on your right and then bends left to descend to a stile out of the wood.

**Did you know?**

*Castle Hill is probably an early Iron Age Celtic settlement of the Brigantes tribe and used by the Romans as a signal station to link the one on Lintley Farm to the south and Carvoran to the north.*

6. Cross the stile and follow the fence on your right for about 220 yds/200 m. When the fence turns sharply right, head diagonally to the top right hand corner of the next field, stepping over the decrepit wall and then a boggy ditch (unfortunately, this is no better higher up). Continue across the field in the direction of the houses (Asholme) aiming for a ladder stile over a stone wall in the right hand corner. Go over the stile and turn right

onto a track to descend towards the woods again. This path can be very muddy but is easy to follow and offers fine views of Lambley Viaduct.

***Did you know?***

*You may begin to notice groups of younger trees, including oak, birch and hazel, which have been planted to enhance the existing traditional mature woodland in the valley. It is hoped that this will favour the woodcock, a secretive wading bird that lies low in dense undergrowth during the day, probing the damp earth for earthworms and beetles to eat. Its cryptic mottled plumage makes it difficult to spot.*

7. At the entrance to the woods, go through the five-bar-gate and turn left to follow the path through the top of the woods. Continue over a low fence and stream, ignoring a metal field gate on the right. Follow a track on the left, keeping straight on beside a stone wall. When the wall ends, cross another stream that runs down from Towsbank. Go over the ladder stile and at about 160 yds/150 m, take a marked, narrow footpath which descends steeply to the River South Tyne. BEWARE – take care here in wet weather. The path eventually descends to a footbridge over the burn. Cross and turn left through the meadow beside the river. Cross a ladder stile and follow the track to the footbridge over the river, just north of Eals.

***Did you know?***

*The word 'eals' means an 'island' or 'floodable land'. Hodgson, in 1840, wrote: 'gardens stocked with old fruit trees, remain as evidence of its descent through a race of yeomen who tilled their own paternal farms...into variegated stripes of land, after the old town-field fashion, speaks little of any increase of knowledge...' The land is certainly 'floodable'. In October 1829, a major flood changed the course of the river leaving the southern part of the vale on the west side of the river.*

8. Cross the river, up through the clearing with groups of young trees on your right. Turn right to cross a footbridge over Glendue Burn. Turn left upstream to a marker post at the top of a slight incline and straight on to the stile and steps up to the old railway, now the South Tyne Trail. (GR: NY 677567) Turn left and follow the Trail back to the car park.