



THE HALTWHISTLE RINGS



WALK 04

'Reivers, Ghosts and Celts'

Length: 7 mls/ 11.25 km

Grade: 2 Moderate

Ascent/descent: 800 ft/244 m

OS explorer OL 43 Hadrian's Wall

Much of the first half of this walk is through attractive woodland with fine views of the river below. Look out for a lovely display of bluebells in May and orchids in July. The walk continues via a picturesque burn and across moorland from where there are good views of the Pennines to the south and Hadrian's Wall to the north.

BEWARE: This route can be extremely muddy and boggy in sections. Stout footwear is recommended. Navigation over open moorland can be tricky in poor visibility.

Start Point: By Car, Bus, Train.

For bus timetable: www.arrivabus.co.uk For AD122: www.gonortheast.co.uk

For train timetable: www.northernrailway.co.uk

Start in Haltwhistle Market Place.

Bus users: stop at the Market Place.

Train users: follow signs 'Town Centre' to the Market Place. You may also choose to start at the Railway Station. Leave via the ramp from Platform 2, passing the Signal Box. The Tyne Bridge is on the right. Begin walk from *

Car users: park at the supermarket accessed by turning into Aesica Road off Main St. – signposted 'Swimming & Leisure Centre' – and following the blue 'P' signs. Follow footpath opposite main entrance, signposted 'Market Place'.

Did you know?

The Market Place is the ancient heart of the town, with the 14th century Centre of Britain Hotel to the east and the 13th century Holy Cross Church to the south. It has been the venue of fairs, hiring, bull-baiting and hanging in years gone by. It was also the scene of a major raid in 1598 by the notorious Reiver gang, the Armstrongs of Liddesdale. They entered Haltwhistle in daylight, burnt houses, killed or captured many residents and drove off cattle. Satisfaction for this raid was demanded from King James VI of Scotland. He declared that the Armstrongs were not his subjects and the Warden, Sir Roberet Carey, could take his own revenge. This he did by a retaliation raid into Liddesdale, during which Sim Armstrong of the Cathill was slain by one of the Ridleys of Haltwhistle. This led to yet another raid on Haltwhistle by the Armstrongs, during which Wat Armstrong, a clan leader, was shot through the eye with a longbow arrow fired by Alec Ridley. A solution was found by Sir Robert Carey in 1601 when he laid siege to the Tarras Moss stronghold of the Armstrongs. By skilful strategy, the leaders were captured but released, on condition that they never again raided into his Wardenry. This was a huge success and there was a Union of the Crowns of England and Scotland in 1603. A ballad, 'The Fray of Hautwessel' was penned by Sir Walter Scott to commemorate the raid.

Take the cobbled path down past The Black Bull, turn left and with the church on your left, take the next right - at the Eden's Lawn sign - and follow the path down to the road. Turn right, cross the road and then left under the railway bridge. *As you cross the Tyne Bridge, look east and you will see the Haltwhistle landmark of Alston Arches.

Did you know?

The cast-iron Tyne Bridge (known locally as 'The Blue Bridge') was built in 1875 by George Gordon, son of Thomas Page who built Westminster Bridge in London. It was the first road bridge across the river and was relegated to pedestrian only status in the 1950s.

The Alston Arches viaduct once carried the Haltwhistle – Alston branch line, one of the most picturesque lines in England. Sadly, the line was closed in 1976.

Turn right at the "T" junction onto Bellister Road. Continue along the road for about 0.6 mls/1 km, passing through a gate, under the A69 and continue to meet a minor road. Cross the road – WITH CARE - and turn left. Pass through a gateway and then turn immediately left on to a narrow cycle track alongside the A69. Continue until you see a stile on your left and turn immediately right on to a thin track through trees. Cross a step stile into a field and, keeping the hedge and fence on your left, go slightly right to a step stile into a wooded slope. Continue up the slope through the wood and over another stile at the top. Turn sharp right and keep close to the fence to reach another stile allowing you to re-enter the wood. Turn left to follow the clearly defined path - this is a 'permissive path' on National Trust property - right through the wood, until you reach the highway.

Did you know?

Bellister Castle was named by its first owner, Robert de Roos, in 1191. It translates from Norman French as 'a fine site'. The tower is now a ruined shell. The Blenkinsopp family built a comfortable house next to the tower in 1669 which was rebuilt by John Dobson in 1826. It was damaged by fire in 1901. Now owned by the National Trust, it is still inhabited and the mound on which it sits is shared by a gnarled old sycamore tree, known locally as 'The Hanging Tree' as it was once used as a gallows. As with many buildings of this type, it has a ghost story. The 'Grey Man of Bellister', a minstrel mauled to death by the master's hounds, who can be seen outside the ruins at dusk. Many visitors can testify to scary manifestations inside.




Cross the road- WITH CARE - turn left and go up the hill, following the signs to Park Village. At the top of the hill, turn right and take the clearly defined path through the wood with lovely views over the river below. Ignore another path to the left over a step stile. Continue through a small section of field and follow the fence line to take the gate into North Wood (National Trust).

Did You Know?

In late spring this path takes you through a most impressive display of bluebells. The Daft As A Brush Charity was set up to transport cancer patients to hospital for treatment, free of charge.

Follow the 'Daft As A Brush' waymarkers until you reach the road. The Caravan and Camping Site is just to your right.

3. Turn right along the road and almost immediately before reaching the farm, you will see a small layby on the left.  Cross the road – WITH CARE- and take the footpath, signposted 'Park Village'. Skirt around the high ground on the left and after about 110yds/100m climb up to the meadow above Park Burn gorge, keeping close to the trees on the right. Go through a wicket gate over a footbridge and up a flight of steps by the water treatment works on the right to reach the highway. Turn right along the road and at the road junction, turn right again to walk through Park Village. Turn right at the main road and after a short distance, turn left onto a farm track, signposted, 'Broomhouse Common'. Follow the track to Lynnsfield Farm and then turn right immediately before the farm buildings through a clearly signposted gate.

4. Turn sharp left and keep close to a stone wall with a deep gorge on the right, passing a cottage on the left. After passing the farmhouse on the left, pass through a gate at the corner of the plantation. Head up hill, bearing away from the plantation and keep roughly parallel with the wall. Continue over the brow of the hill and at the wall corner, bear diagonally right towards the right-hand plantation in the distance, until you come to a ladder stile over a stone wall. (GR: NY700615) Go over the stile and head straight on downhill, aiming for a ruined cottage in the distance. At the marker post, (GR: NY701616) bear left (heading roughly north), cross a boggy section and pick up a track up the slope facing you. Continue over the brow of the hill and down to another marker post. (GR: NY702621)

Did you know?

There are few documented pre-Roman sites in this area. The landscape was very different then. The valley of the River South Tyne was marshy and the hillside to the north was a tangled mass of low shrub and forest. To the south though, in the area through which you are now walking, it was much less forested. A nearby moor, Plenneller, is a surviving Celtic name meaning 'bare hill'. As such, it was an ideal site for a settlement of the Brigantes (an iron based Celtic society). There would have been a stockaded pound with sunken hut circles inside. You may be able to make out the line of the boundary walls.

5 To the left is the site of a Celtic settlement. Continue straight up the slope ahead. From here there is a clear view towards Haltwhistle to the north. As the track curves left and loses height and a wall comes into view below, strike slightly right across rough ground towards a set of long, low industrial buildings in the distance and look for a ladder stile in the wall. (GR: NY702625) Once over, go down a fairly steep slope aiming for a metal gate. The gate leads on to a disused railway.

Did you know?

The disused railway was once the branch line from Haltwhistle to Alston, which closed in 1976 and is now the South Tyne Trail.

7. Cross the trail, over a ladder stile and straight up the field to a stone stile next to a field gate. Once over, cross the field on a slight right diagonal to reach a dip. You will notice a step stile on the left, at the edge of the wood. Do not cross this but turn right and follow the wood edge and onto the next stile on your left. Go over this and retrace your steps back into Haltwhistle by heading back to the A69, turning left on to the cycle track. Cross the minor road and take the left hand track under the A69.

Alternative return route:

If you do not wish to retrace your steps along Bellister Road, take the next path on the left after passing under the A69. When you reach the riverside path, turn right. Follow this path (up to, and over, the south end of Bellister Bridge) until you reach the Tyne Bridge. Turn left and continue into Haltwhistle.

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