



# THE HALTWHISTLE RINGS WALK 06



## ‘Bastles and Burn, Railways and Reivers’

**Length:** 3 mls/5 km

**Grade:** 1 Easy

**Ascent/descent:** 172 ft/52.5 m

**OS explorer OL 43** Hadrian’s Wall

**gpx file:**

An easy stroll around the sights of this historic border town for those without walking boots and a preference for tarmac. The route includes the three remaining cobbled streets of Haltwhistle.

**Start Point:** By Car, Bus, Train.

**For bus timetable:** [www.arrivabus.co.uk](http://www.arrivabus.co.uk) for AD122: [www.gonortheast.co.uk](http://www.gonortheast.co.uk)

**For train timetable:** [www.northernrailway.co.uk](http://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. Train users may wish to start and end at station (**section 3**).

**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’. Car users may wish to start and end at the car park (**section 2**).

*Before starting this walk, it is worth taking a few minutes to read the information boards and other items of interest in the Market Place. The signpost reflects the town’s status as ‘the Centre of Britain’.*

1. From the Market Place cross the main street to go under the archway.

**Did you know?**

*The two buildings on either side of the archway were once bastles. They were basically defensible houses and were the only protection for local people against the Scottish and English raiders. Animals were sheltered in the lower level and the family lived on the first floor. Haltwhistle has the highest number of surviving bastles in England.*

Walk through to Crown Court, admiring the stone-built houses to your right. You come to the car park in front of the supermarket.

**Did you know?**

*The sheltered accommodation on the left is called ‘The Mart’ commemorating the fact that the whole area was the site of the old cattle market. A monthly market was held until late in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.*

2. Leave the carpark by the main entrance and turn left when you come to the road (Fair Hill). Cross the road and turn left, passing Willia Road on the right.

**Did you know?**

*On the corner of Willia Road is the 19<sup>th</sup> century Church School, now converted into 4 private houses. The names on the property reflect its former status, eg First Class, Eleven Plus and The Old School House B & B.*

Continue straight on and follow the road as it bends round to the right and Aesica Road goes off to the left (signposted 'Town Centre'). This is Comb Hill.

**Did you know?**

*The small, low, stone building with its windows bricked up is another former school, the very first in Haltwhistle. In 1719 Lady Dorothy Capel, Baroness Dowager of Tewkesbury, gave an endowment to set up this school. The road off to the right is named in her honour. The land on the opposite side of the road, in which Comb Hill Park is situated, was also part of Lady Dorothy's endowment. She wanted to establish an area for the local children to play in.*

Walk past the building then cross the road to Comb Hill Park. Follow the path until you reach Woodhead Lane.

3. Cross the road and turn right. Continue straight until you reach Gibson Close then turn left down a very narrow passageway. At the end turn right to take a path with the entrance to the Leisure Centre to your left. Go through the gates at the far end, past the open-air swimming pools on your left, to reach the driveway to Haltwhistle Academy. Use the crossing to reach the footpath and turn left. Continue straight, past the Youth Club (Hillside) until you meet the junction with Fell View and Park Avenue. Turn right into Park Avenue and continue until you meet another road (Park Road).

Cross Park Avenue and then turn left to walk along Park Road.

**Did you know?**

*The tall building on the right is a former mill transformed into flats. (GR: NY701639)*

Continue to Greenholme Road and cross to reach the corner of the War Memorial Hospital grounds. Cross the road on your right to reach Station Road. Turn right and pass the Railway pub. Use the crossing, turn right and follow the road round to the Railway Station. (GR: NY704638)

4. Follow the ramp down to reach the station.

**Did you know?**

*Haltwhistle Railway Station was opened in June 1838 and most of the buildings. Including the water tower, are Grade II listed. The Station Booking Hall has been preserved and is hired out for community activities. The Station Master's house is now in private hands.*

Go over the footbridge then turn left to pass the Signal Box.

**Did you know?**

*Haltwhistle Signal Box was constructed in 1901 and is unusual in design because it had track on both sides of it. The line to Alston went to the south side of the box (ie behind present platform 2). The station buildings are periodically open to the public.*

*The bridge to your right is the Old Tyne Bridge (known locally as 'the Blue Bridge') and was built in 1875 by George Gordon Page, son of Thomas Page who built Westminster Bridge in London. It was the first bridge across the South Tyne at Haltwhistle.*

5. Ignore the path on the left and continue straight ahead, passing Kilfrost Factory. You arrive at the Alston Arches Viaduct. (GR: NY709636)

**Did you know?**

*The Alston Arches Viaduct was built to carry the branch line from Haltwhistle to Alston which opened in 1852 and closed in 1976. An unusual feature is the openings within its piers. A pedestrian walkway was part of the plans but was never constructed. The South Tyne flows under the Arches then down a weir where salmon can be seen leaping in the autumn.*

**At the Arches you have 2 options. The first is slightly longer in distance and goes over stony tracks and grassland which can be muddy after rain. BEWARE: The area under the railway bridge can become impassable after prolonged heavy rain.**

**Option A** – Continue along the bank of the South Tyne. After going under the road bridge and through a kissing gate you can either go along the wide grassy track alongside the football pitch or take the narrow footpath closer to the South Tyne. BEWARE: Water erosion has caused the banks to become unstable. Rabbits have also been busy and there are many holes.

At the end of this narrow path, turn right to carefully pick your way through to the confluence of Haltwhistle Burn and the South Tyne. (GR: NY712636) Retrace your steps to the path but this time bear right and follow the narrow path with Haltwhistle Burn to your right. Continue to bear right until you reach a stony track. Turn right and follow this track as it winds its way under a railway bridge (Lanty's Lonnen Bridge) and eventually comes out at the Avenue St Meen. (GR: NY713640) Cross the road and take the footpath signposted 'Townfoot ¼m'.

**Option B** – Take the road almost directly opposite the weir.

**Did you know?**

*The land and buildings to the right were the former property of Crown Paint Works, manufacturers of paint and varnish exported around the world. As early as 1850, varnish works had been established in Haltwhistle by Smith and Walton. Azko Nobel took over the factory from Crown in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. It closed in 2002.*

6. Go under the railway bridge to Avenue St Meen and cross the road. Turn right along the pavement and continue until just before you reach the stone wall of the bridge. Take the footpath on the left signposted 'Townfoot ¼m'.

**Options A and B re-join here:**

**Did you know?**

*The buildings on the other side of the burn used to house a brewery and the tall building was another mill.*

With Haltwhistle Burn on your right, you come to a cobbled street which leads to the bottom of Castle Hill.

**Did you know?**

*One theory is that the mound known as Castle Hill gave Haltwhistle its name. 'Hal' was Old English for a height or hill. 'Twistle' comes from two Old English words, 'twise' (meaning the division into two) and 'wella' (a stream or brook). The combination of words suggests "a high tongue of land between two streams where they join". The two streams in this case being Haltwhistle Burn and the River South Tyne.*

Cross the road and turn right. Take the narrow road on the left with the burn on the right. (GR: NY713642) The lane leads to a row of miners' cottages, built in approx. 1830. Continue along the track, pass two houses on your right and ignore a road off to the left.

**Did you know?**

*The next house on the right used to be the Manager's house and is all that remains of the Gas Works. Construction of The Haltwhistle Gas Light Company began in the 1850s and was in use until the town converted to natural gas in the 1960s.*

7. Continue in the same direction but now on a narrow footpath. When you reach the footbridge, turn left up the steps then immediate left to take a path to a kissing gate. This leads on to Fair Hill, opposite the rear entrance of the Grey Bull. (GR: NY709642) Turn right to pass a housing development.

**Did you know?**

*Note the inscription on a stone wall bordering the front of the housing development: Haltwhistle District Schools 1875. When a new First School was opened in 1984, the old Board School was closed down and the new houses and flats built. This stone was retained to commemorate the site.*

Cross the road to go down a narrow cobbled street (all that remains of the old pig market), just past the last of the old stone houses. Walk down to Main Street and turn right. On your right is Town Hall Crescent, so named because the last building on the right was once the Town Hall. Follow the path round until you reach The Centre of Britain Hotel.

**Did you know?**

*If you turn down the adjacent lane on your right (St James Lane), you can see the old entrance to the hotel under an archway. Previously called the Red Lion, it was mentioned in surveys in 1415 and 1541. Back in Main Street, observe the old Pele Tower which forms part of the hotel to the right of the entrance.*

8. Cross the road and take the archway opposite St James Lane. Continue down past the cottages on the left until you see a right-hand path running alongside the churchyard. Follow this path, past the door of the 13<sup>th</sup> century church to the gate at the end. (GR: NY707640) Go down the steps and go up another cobbled lane leading back to the Market Place.

**Did you know?**

*This is the ancient heart of the town, with the 14<sup>th</sup> century Centre of Britain to the east, the 13<sup>th</sup> century Holy Cross Church to the south and the Market Place itself which 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. As they were about to leave one Alec Ridley, hiding in one of the houses, fired his longbow and killed Wat Armstrong with one shot through the eye! The Armstrongs were not very happy about this and vowed to return for vengeance. Their threat was taken seriously by the authorities and led, ultimately, to the killing, capture and end of the gang forever. (Did one of their descendants end up on the moon?)*