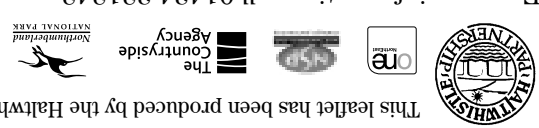




For further information on things to do in and around Hadrian's Wall Country call 01434 322002
 Or visit www.haltwhistle.org or www.hadrians-wall.org
 In planning your transport, please refer to:
 Journey Planner – www.planner.org.uk
 Traveline – www.traveline.org.uk
 Walks designed by Mike Swan (www.walking-hadrianswall.com) Tel: 01434 382620
 Photography by David G. Prakeel – PhotoWorkshops Partnership
www.photopartners.co.uk Tel: 01434 322595
 This leaflet has been produced by the Haltwhistle Partnership and part-funded by:

 For more information call 01434 321242

Walk 01
 Haltwhistle Parish
 4 miles
 6.4 km
 Easy


The Haltwhistle Rings

22 Walks in the Historic Parishes of Haltwhistle, Northumberland

Although this 4-mile route is an easy walk with no steep ascents, it does cross some rough moorland, and stout footwear is recommended. The walk is varied, going through farmland, moorland and a beautiful beech wood. There are fine views of Hadrian's Wall and the open moors to the south of Haltwhistle.

O.S. Explorer OL 43 Croft Path – Whitchester – The Doors – Haltwhistle Burn

'Beech and Burn'

Start Point: By Car, Bus, Train.
 Start in Haltwhistle. Bus users start at the Market Square. Train users follow signs 'Town Centre' to start at the Market Square. 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.

1. With your back to the supermarket, take the signposted footpath leading through Crown Court to the Market Square. Pause for a moment in the Market Square – most of the buildings surrounding it are at least 200 years old and many much older. This was the scene of fairs and hirings, hangings and bull baiting – probably the reason the Black Bull acquired its name!

Did you know: The Holy Cross Parish Church dates from the early 13th century and has several historic connections and many interesting architectural features, but a favourite anecdote relates to its incumbent vicar of border warfare days. It is said that the vicar of the parish Robert de Pykewell in 1311 was taken hostage by Robert the Bruce in a cross-border raid and a ransom demanded. The good people of Haltwhistle responded by stating the demands would not be met – and that they could therefore keep the vicar! The inside is worth a visit if the door happens to be open. If you are not in too much of a hurry, perusal of some of the gravestones to either side of the path is an interesting insight into times gone by.

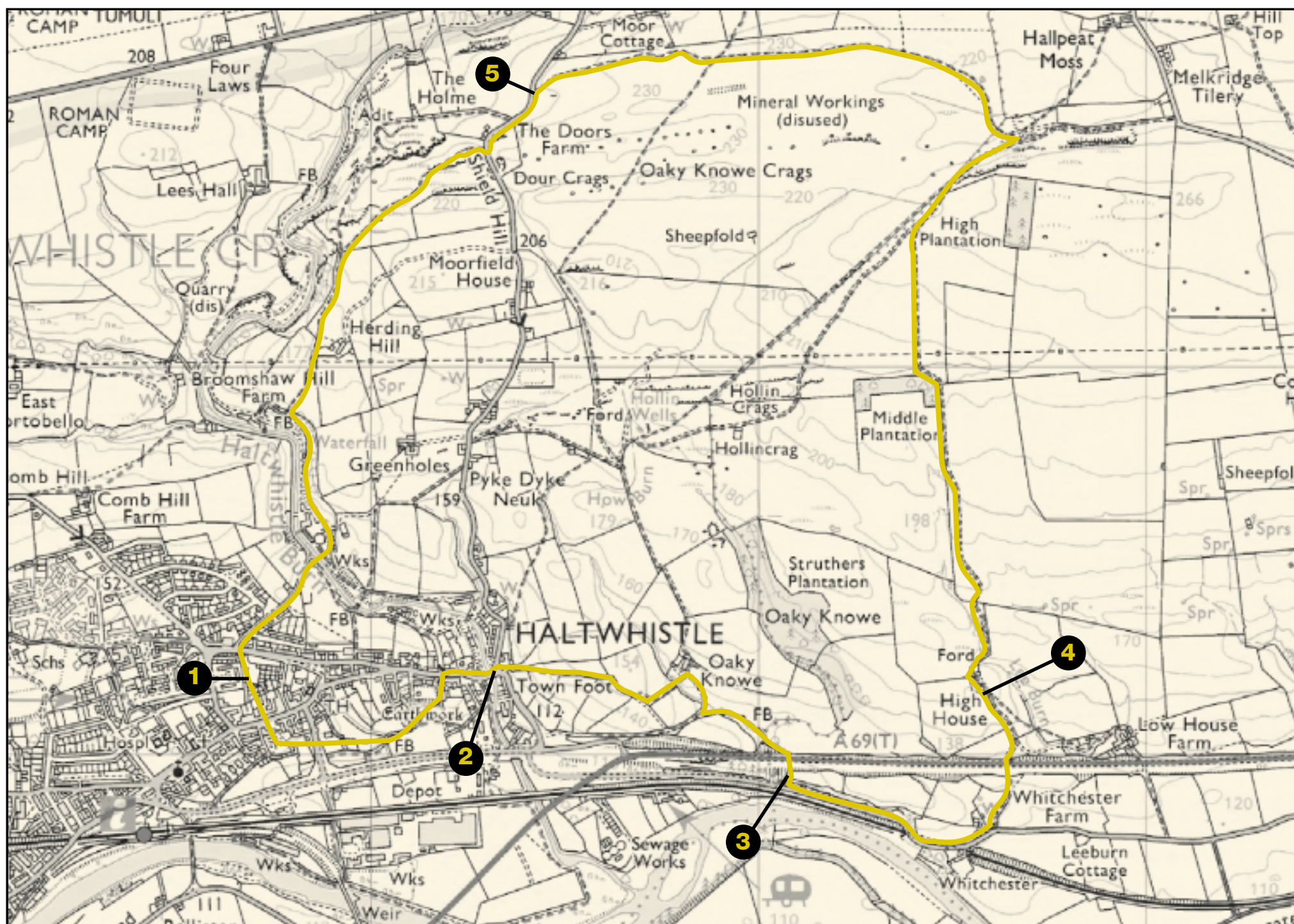
On emerging from the archway go straight across the square past the large block of whinstone and down the old cobbled lane leading past the Black Bull. Turn left past the Black Bull down another old cobbled lane. Turn left into the churchyard by a small iron gate below the church.

Did you know: The Black Bull is the oldest public house in Haltwhistle. It is on the site of the medieval church house or church hall. In 1623 the landlord was one John Ridley who was tried by Church Courts for keeping his cattle in the churchyard and using it as a stockyard. The name Black Bull may be derived from the crest of the Ridley family – a rampant bull.

Carry straight on along the footpath to the eastern end of the church yard, through the gate and along the path until you come to the road leading down to the Avenue St. Méen. Turn left, then look out for the signpost which points across the road to the path behind the Working Men's Club where you will pass between a stone wall and a tall conifer hedge. The path makes a right-angled bend down to the right following a stone boundary wall. Once through a kissing gate you are following the line of the Avenue St. Méen below. Ignore a footpath to the right which you meet after crossing a small stream, but take the next footpath up to the left at the end of a low stone wall. Once over the stile bear diagonally right up the hillside making for the top right hand corner. Go over another step stile, then straight on till you come to a stone stile in the wall on the right just beyond a house. Once over it turn left to join Castle Hill then turn right to go down past the Spotted Cow to the bridge over Haltwhistle Burn at Townfoot.

Did you know: Castle Hill was once the location of an early tower – believed to have dated from 1415 – unfortunately it became unsafe and was demolished in 1963 – and an even earlier Celtic earthworks. One theory is that this mound gave Haltwhistle its name. In Old English, 'twisla' meant the meeting of a tributary with a main river, that is Haltwhistle Burn and the South Tyne, and the land within the fork, and 'Halt' was Norman French for a height or hill. Close by on the hillside you can still see the remains of the stone abutments of the railway bridge, which used to go over the road. This was the line built to bring stone down from the quarry at Cawfields by the Roman Wall and coal from the mines up the Burn. At the turn of the century it was a regular venue for 'pitch and toss' – a suitable place where a lookout could be kept lest police should disturb their gambling.

2. As the road bends sharply right, cross over (watch for traffic) to walk up the drive of Briarwood House – signposted 'Oakey Knowe.' At the top of the drive pass through a metal field gate. Do not go straight up the very bottom of the gully but along the slope to the right, shortly to veer right to climb the steep slope aiming to pass between two large trees on the horizon. Once by the trees make for a step stile straight above at the top of the hill. Walk along the brow of the hill after admiring the view over the town and the Tyne Valley. Continue until you approach an electricity pole with a stone wall beyond. Here turn left and, with the farm in full view on the hillside opposite, walk down to some steps with wooden rails on each side. Go down the steps, across the bridge then across the field to a metal field gate opposite. Turn right down the road and over the bridge. Just before the cattle grid turn left down a grassy slope, through a gate to reach a ford over the stream below. The path continues the other side following the course of the stream through a magnificent beech wood. Cross over a small tributary flowing into the stream; ahead you will see a flight of steps going up the slope opposite. Once in the field at the top you will find a step stile on your right which leads you onto the busy A69. Cross – with care – straight over to where a signpost on the other side indicates the way to more steps that lead down a steep slope to another quieter road to Melkridge.



Copyright: Ordnance Survey (Explorer OL 43)

3. This used to be the main Carlisle-Newcastle road. Turn left along it – there is a narrow path on the right hand side of the road. When you reach Whitchester Farm (the first on the left) leave the road and walk up the track with the farm buildings on your left. The small, single-storey cottage to the east of the farm is called the Toll Bar Cottage and was indeed a toll house in the days when the road was a turnpike or toll road. The name Whitchester has strong Roman connotations meaning a white Fort or camp. Once past the buildings head for a gate at the end of a stone wall, then for another step stile below a line of trees at the top of the field facing. Cross – with care – the A69 to join another footpath opposite. Almost immediately it bears right for a very short distance. Do not continue in the direction of the farm visible to the east but turn left through a gate to walk in a northerly direction up the slope. When you reach the ruins of a small farm, High House, turn left to go between the remains of the farmhouse and the barn.

4. Follow the track round two sides of the barn and down a slope to cross a ford at the bottom. Continue up the slope, ignoring the gate on the right, to pass through the gate straight ahead. Continue up the slope bearing slightly left to follow the left hand boundary, till you come to a gate near the top left hand corner of the field, with a small conifer plantation to the left. Through the gate follow the edge of the plantation down the slope. At the corner of the plantation bear left a very short distance, then go straight up the middle of the field. A second conifer plantation is visible at the top of the field but keep well to the left of this. Go through a field gate at the top and down the track on the other side. From here is a fine view of Hadrian's Wall to the north, and beyond it the dark green spread of Wark Forest – the southerly tip of Kielder Forest – Europe's largest man-made forest. Note the straight line of the Military Road in the foreground. The road is not a Roman road, as many people think, but planned by General Wade in 1746 – as a speedy marching route across the country. When you spot a ladder stile in the wall on the left cut down the slope to go over it. You now have to walk over very rough moorland with marshy ground in parts. You first go right, but start veering gradually away from the wall so that you are eventually walking in a westerly direction parallel to another wall on your right. Keep straight on until you come to a ladder stile leading on to a metalled road (this is Shield Hill Road running from Haltwhistle to the Milecastle Inn on the B6318).

5. Turn left along this road until you come to a cottage on the right called The Doors. Just beyond go through a field gate on your right. First go straight ahead, then bear left near the end of the small crags. Ahead you see the corner of a stone wall at the top of a slope. First make towards it then veer to contour the small hill on the right staying just below the summit, until you are just above Haltwhistle Burn. Here, there is a stone stile over the wall on your left. Once over the stile go down the field keeping near the wall and the trees on your right until you spot the ladder stile over the wall at the bottom, just below the farm. Cross the next field, never venturing very far from the wall on the left, the line of the footpath is usually fairly clear. Go through the kissing gate at the bottom and down the footpath and steps locally known as the 'Cat Stairs' which lead onto the Haltwhistle Burn footpath. Turn left along the path, leading to a bridge near the old brickworks' chimney (South Tyne Fireclay Brickworks) which was once a thriving local industry; one of many that existed up the burn including two woollen mills, a coal mine, tile works, lime kilns and whinstone quarry on the Hadrian's Wall. Cross the bridge then go left along the road that brings you to the bottom of Fair Hill, more or less opposite the entrance to the car park.

Whilst Walking in and around Hadrian's Wall Country please remember that "every footstep counts" particularly during the wet winter months. You can help protect Hadrian's Wall Country and one of the great wonders of the world by following the simple advice below:

- Many of the routes are permissioned by landowners - enjoy the countryside and respect the livestock and the land
- Always follow the signed paths
- Guard against risk of Fire at all times
- Fasten all gates
- Keep dogs on a lead
- Remember walking on Hadrian's Wall can cause it to collapse
- Try to avoid walking alongside the wall in very wet conditions.