



Walk 14 The Haltwhistle Rings

A 7-mile walk south on the Pennine Way and over Gilderdale to the Roman Fort at Whitley. Then down to the bottom of the valley, over the wide South Tyne River at Kirkhaugh Bridge and back on the eastern side of the valley, with great views and a riverside walk.

O.S. Explorer OL 43 Alston – Pennine Way – Whitley Castle – Kirkhaugh – Randalholm

'A Roman Pile and a Black Forest Honeymoon!'

Start Point: By Car.

Start: From Haltwhistle take the road to Alston (A689) south from the A69 at Bellister Castle.

1. Park in Alston. Walk south on the A686, past Alston House Hotel, to cross the bridge over the South Tyne and turn right onto the A689. Turn immediate right – signposted 'Pennine Way' (you will be on this until Dyke House) – and follow the track to the house with large wrought iron gates. Keep to the path to the left and follow the fence (barking dogs here!). Over a stone stile and follow the track with the stone wall on your right. Through a small gate and follow the obvious path ahead until you come to the imposing stone gateposts of Harbut Lodge. Go through and over the hidden bridge and follow the field boundary on your left up to the Lodge. Turn left between the Lodge and an outbuilding to pass through a gate and by some estate houses on your right. Turn right at the way-mark after the houses and follow the field boundary on your right to cross a stone stile in a wall and left onto a conifer-clad drive up to the A689.

2. Turn right on the main road and after 100m turn left over a stile, across the paddock and through a gate and straight on up the pasture. Following roughly the stone wall on your left, continue on up and as the wall bends right follow to a marker in the top right corner of the field. Cross the stile right – following the way-mark – and down through several field boundaries to cross the footbridge over Gilderdale.

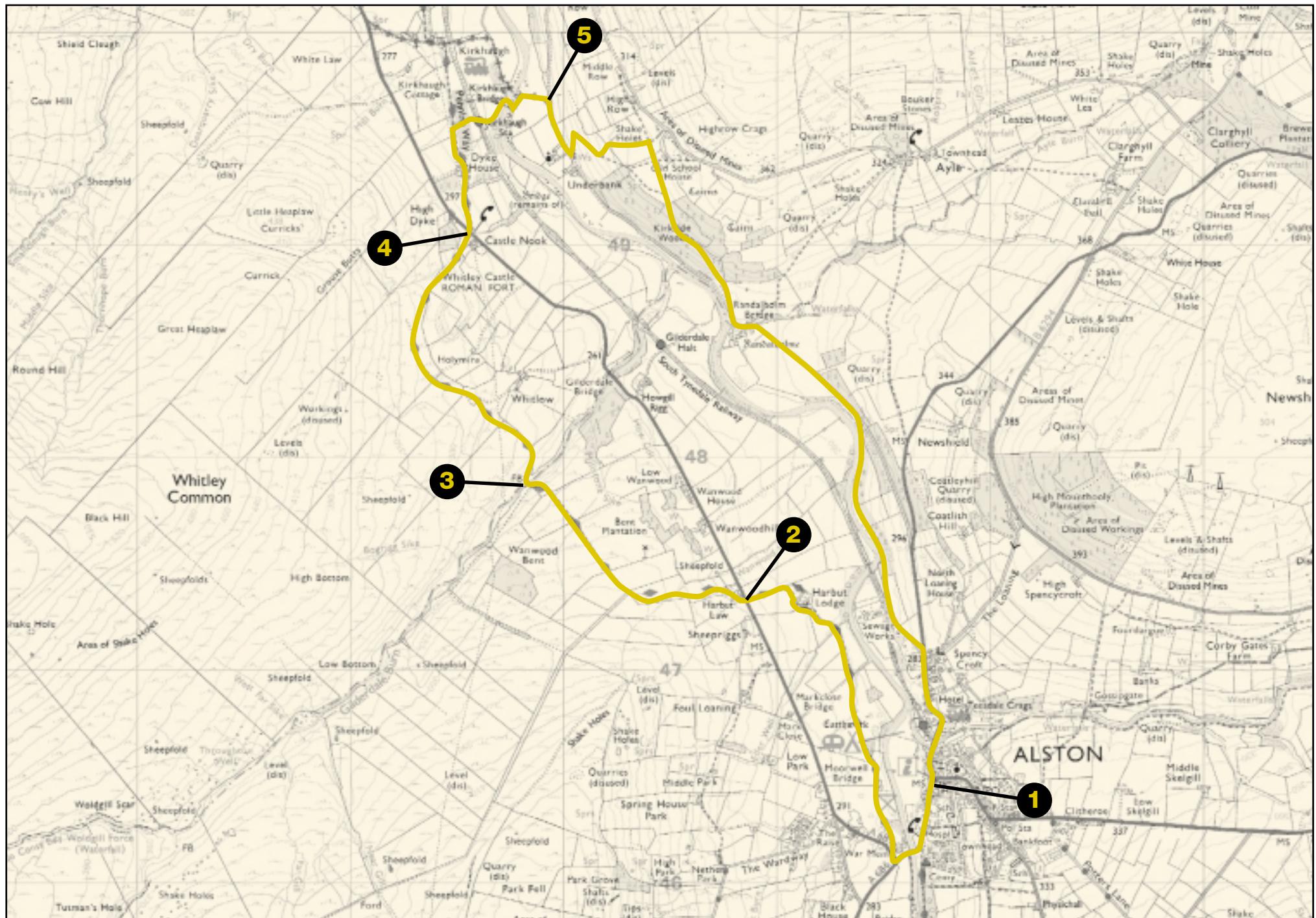
For more information call 01434 321242
This leaflet has been produced by the Haltwhistle Partnership and part-funded by:

www.photopartners.co.uk Tel: 01434 322595
Photography by David G. Parkel – PhotoWorkshops Partnership
Walks designed by Mike Swan (www.walkinghadrianswall.com) Tel: 01434 382620
Traveline – www.traveline.org.uk
Journey Planner – www.journey-planner.org.uk
Or visit www.hadrianswall.org or www.hadrianswall.org
In planning your transport, please refer to:
For further information on things to do in and around Hadrian's Wall Country call 01434 322002

Did you know: It is well worth spending some time exploring England's highest market town although you will have to be fit to climb the cobbled main street – it is a 60m ascent from the bridge over the river to the top of the town. The first recorded evidence of Alston's existence was in 1280 when the Scottish King, William the Lion, confirmed the ownership of 'Aldeneston' upon William de Veteriponte, a descendent of one of William the Conqueror's knights from the parish of Vieux Pont in Normandy. It is thought that the Romans mined lead here, that silver found in the lead was used in a medieval Royal Mint in Carlisle, but it was the 18th century that saw the great boom in mining. The Quaker London Lead Company led the way in the boom, having benefited from the acquisition of estates formerly belonging to Jacobite sympathisers, but they were also responsible for social welfare policies that included compulsory education. A stroll round this fascinating town will reveal a variety of interesting shops, the church of St. Augustine, the Market Cross, erected by a local made good, one William Stephenson who was Lord Mayor of London in 1764, the Butts where compulsory archery practice took place, and Gossippgate – not where human tongues wagged but where water tipped through fissures in limestone rocks.

3. Follow the path up to the right on what was once a bridlepath, keeping the stone wall on your right. Where a stone wall ahead joins this wall, go over a stile 30m from the junction of these two walls. Go diagonally right over some quarry remains to join the track out of Whitlow Farm up to a ladder stile beside a five-bar-gate. Follow the grass track to another stile beside a gate and follow the track that bends right with the remains of the Roman Whitley Castle on your right.

Did you know: Whitley means a wide dry expanse of land – probably why the Romans chose this site for their fort, near to the lead mines. This was a Roman outpost fort on the Maiden Way, which runs the length of this valley to the Roman Fort of Carvoran on Hadrian's Wall, but seems not to have had a Latin name as most had. One suggestion has been that it was the Alione of the Third Cohort of the Nervii, the tribe that Caesar overcame in Mark Antony's speech. But, whatever its name, it must have been a most welcome stopping-place for marching troops on their way to Hadrian's Wall after a hard slog over the cold shoulder of Cross Fell. It is also unlike most Roman forts in that it is not quadrilateral but trapezoid, or lozenge-shaped. It stands under the ridge and is hemmed by banks of earthworks. Little serious excavation has taken place at Whitley Castle, but an altar dedicated to Hercules was found in the fort's burial ground at the beginning of the last century. Just south of Whitley Castle is a mystery! In the barn next to The Castle Inn – now Castle Nook Cottage – it is recorded that an inscribed altar was used as a door lintel in the 18th century. Its whereabouts are not now known.



Copyright: Ordnance Survey (Explorer OL 31)

Come to a stile on your right, go over and follow the field boundary on your left down towards Castle Nook Farm. Just before the farm cross a stile on your left and take the path that crosses over the burn on your left down through the wood to join the main road.

4. Cross the road and through the gate – signposted ‘Pennine Way’ – and go diagonally left across the field to a gate in front of the gable end of Dyke House through the gate, diagonally right to a stile and over the stile to pass in front of Dyke House.

Did you know: ‘Dyke’ means an embankment or ‘something dug’. The Celts, who retreated here from Romans and later from Anglians, dug dykes and there is evidence south of here of burial mounds from this period. High Dyke is on the higher land to the west and may suggest a Celtic hill fort like that at Warden Hill. There is further evidence of embankments north of here, west of Lintley. Or, more likely, the embankments may have been Roman work in the construction of the Maiden Way.

Continue on through two field boundaries and then leave the Pennine Way and go diagonally right across the field to the bridge over the railway just north of Kirkhaugh Station.

Did you know: Derived from ‘kirk’ or church on a ‘haugh,’ flat land by a river. Under the ‘Defence and Security Act’ in July 1803 – (Napoleon was a bit of a menace at that time!) – the Parish of Kirkhaugh had 71 men between the ages of 15 and 60. Of these, 24 were willing to serve in the name of the King, 19 on horseback and 5 on foot. There was one problem though: the only arms available to take with them was 1 pitchfork!

Go over the bridge and then diagonally right down to the stone stile onto the footbridge over the river. After the bridge turn left and then keep right on a track up to a gate and onto the road.

5. Turn right and pass Kirkhaugh Church at Underbank on your right and turn left opposite to the church up a bridlepath – signposted.

Did you know: The church at Underbank – Kirkhaugh Church – is well worth a visit. One reason is that it is the only church in England dedicated to the ‘Paraclete’ or the Holy Spirit. The other reason is that it has been modelled on a Bavarian church – steep sloping roof for the snow to slide off, a narrow spire and two big fireplaces. The reason for this is a honeymoon trip round Europe by one of the Featherstonehaughs whose new bride was much taken by the style of churches in The Black Forest. On their return, and the old church being in need of replacement, we have what you will see today. Please leave a donation.

The path bends to the right and then left to a gate. Go diagonally right up across the pasture (the path is not obvious here). The Old School House comes into view and, 30m before the gate at the end of the bridlepath, turn right to cross the ladder stile in front of The Old School House. Go diagonally right down towards the conifer plantation, over a ladder stile beside a gate and follow the track down through the trees to join the road. Turn left and keep on this road, over Randalholm Bridge and half a mile after this turn right on to a path – signposted ‘Alston’ – to descend on a slippery path through trees to a stile into a field. Over the stile and follow the wall boundary on your right along beside the river. At the point where the river goes right under the railway bridge, go straight on over a stile beside a field gate and on past a white house to join a track that takes you onto the main road (A686) and then right to return to Alston.

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.