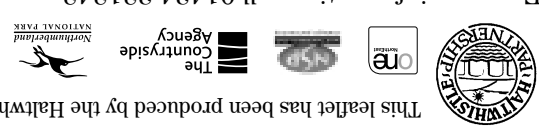




For further information on things to do in and around Hadrian's Wall Country call 01434 322002
 Or visit www.haltwhistle.org or www.hadrians-wall.org
 In planning your transport, please refer to:
 Journey Planner – www.planner.org.uk
 Traveline – www.traveline.org.uk
 Walks designed by Mike Swan (www.walkinghadrianswall.com) 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 21
 Greenhead & Thirlwall
 7 miles
 11.3 km
 Moderate Difficulty


The Haltwhistle Rings

22 Walks in the Historic Parishes of Haltwhistle, Northumberland

A figure-of-eight, 7-mile walk steeply up to wonderful views from the Roman Wall at Walltown, north to the upper reaches of the Tippalt Burn, down to spectacular remains of Thirlwall Castle and up to the views and early industrial heritage of Blenkinsopp Common.

O.S. Explorer OL 43 Greenhead – Holmhead – Carvoran – King Arthur's Well – High Old Shield – Thirlwall Castle – Blenkinsopp Common

'A Castle Full of Treasure and Treasure from the Earth'

Start Point: By Car, Bus.

Start: Greenhead is off the A69 between Haltwhistle and Brampton. There is not a car park so park thoughtfully on the road opposite the village hall by the church or school. There is a pub and tea rooms here so please use them. There are stepping stones over a ford at one point on this walk. If you find them covered after heavy rain an alternative route is provided. Greenhead can also be accessed by bus. (Contact 01434 322002).

1. Walk east past Greenhead village hall, over the Tippalt Burn bridge and turn left on to the cobbled path between two buildings (the one on the right is Glenwelt) – signposted Thirlwall Castle 1/3 mile – and through three way-marked gates into a meadow. Go straight on along the base of the slope on your right to a ladder stile and on with the stone wall on your right and over a stone stile to a gravel track.

Did you know: Greenhead developed from two communities – Glenwelt (Celtic for 'valley of reeds') on one side of the River Tippalt and Greenhead on the other. Initially, both were part of the Barony of Thirlwall and later part of the Blenkinsopp Estate. As a result of General Wade's Military Road being constructed after the Jacobite Rebellions the farm at Glenwelt became a coaching inn called The Globe in 1757 and given a Georgian facelift (note the doorway as you pass). Mining had been carried on here since the 15th century but saw a boom in the 19th as the railway arrived and there were three major pits in the area.

2. This is the Pennine Way and Hadrian's Wall National Trail. Take the track up diagonally right – turn left if you want a coffee at Holmhead Farm – and continue to a stile next to a five-bar-gate. Cross the stile and walk up the path with the stone wall on your right. At the ladder stile at the top stop to look at the views! Continue on following the line of the Wall – the remains of Magnis Roman Fort, yet to be excavated, are on your right here – and cross the stile onto the road at Walltown.

Did you know: Carvoran (Magna) Roman Fort predated the building of the Wall as it was one of the forts, like Vindolanda, built on the earlier Stanegate Road. It has not been excavated. The vallum of the Wall swings north to avoid something, so it seems to suggest – as does its Roman name – that something larger lies beneath. Walltown Quarry was closed in 1978. It had been used to provide road stone and tar – and removed a Wall milecastle, part of the Wall itself and reduced the Nine Nicks of Thirlwall to seven!

Turn right and then left into the quarry car park. (There are toilets here and sometimes the small kiosk is open. The Roman Army Museum is just a few yards down the road on your right). Walk through the picnic area and follow the path to the left of the pond and up right to the far right hand corner of the quarry. Cross the stile (this may be a gate in the future) and turn left to ascend steeply with the stone wall on your left, to join the Wall and turn right to walk on the path beside the Wall.

3. You are now on Walltown Crag, the first of the 'Nine Nicks of Thirlwall' – in fact there are only seven! Continue on past a turret, with superb views, the sharp scarp of a disused quarry and along the line of the Wall to descend to the track that comes right from Walltown Farm. Ahead of you the Wall path goes over a ladder stile but your path goes left (north) on the track. Follow through an opening in a stone wall (very boggy here at all times of year so be prepared for a wide detour!) and go diagonally left to rise up a gentle slope (no path obvious here) and then descend towards a ladder stile over a wall. If you cannot see the stile, aim for the roof of a farm you can see above the wall. Cross the stile and descend over a footbridge and onto the road. Turn left and take the next track right into High Old Shields farm – signposted Cairny Croft.

4. Before the farmhouse turn right over a stile, across a paddock with the gable end of the farmhouse on your left and over a ladder stile. Go diagonally left to the right hand side of the barn and along the back of the barn to cross a ladder stile. Follow the broken stone wall on your right and at the end of it go diagonally right down the field to a step stile. Cross, straight on and over a ladder stile in the next stone wall. Turn left and, where the wall on your left bends left, go straight on and over the next ladder stile. Walk on to a signpost – this tells you where you have come from (!) and that left is Low Old Shields. (Remember this signpost if the burn ahead is impossible to cross.)

5. Go diagonally right for about 100m to the edge of an old stone field boundary now covered in grass but clearly visible – ahead of you is the white cottage of Cairny Croft complete with wind generator. Turn right and follow it down as it curves left towards the Cairny Croft to a stile beside a gate next to the Tippalt Burn with the stepping stones to the left. (If the burn is in flood and impassable refer to the alternative route see over. Don't be fooled by the OS map that indicates a footbridge up the burn – there isn't one!)



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6. Cross the burn and turn left and follow the road up for about 250m and come to a footpath crossing the road – signposted. Turn left and across the field over two stiles and through the field gate onto the road. Turn left and continue down through a farm yard to come to Thirlwall Castle on your left.

Did you know: This rather deserted looking landscape has provided much treasure from the ground over the years since the 1850's. Then sandstone and limestone were extracted, the burnt limestone being used to improve acid soils, and a tile works utilised clay deposits left behind by retreating glaciers. Coal was mined in the 19th century – there are many disused mine shafts to be seen – and in the 20th century open-cast mining extracted what remained. Whatever your views on open-cast mining, they certainly did a good job putting it all back.

Did you know: The spectacular remains on the Tippet Burn were once the centrepiece of the considerable town and Barony of Thirlwall, created by King Malcolm IV of Scotland in the 1150's and it remained in the hands of the 'Fierce Thirlwalls' until the 17th century. During the Civil War it was held by Scottish troops in support of Parliament but they caused so much damage while they were there – nice having allies! – that it was considered not worth repairing and by 1831 the east wall had tipped into the burn. It has now been safely restored and worth a visit. Baron John of Thirlwall returned from the Crusades a very wealthy man with a baggage train of goodies including a solid gold table guarded by a hideous dwarf called Sad Dam. (No, this is not a pantomime story; I've left out the ugly sisters.) Word of this treasure spread around the lawless borderlands and many bands of border hoodlums tried to take the castle. None succeeded until Scots raiders led by a burgher from Glasgow, McDonald, stormed the castle, killed all the defenders and burst into the room where the table was kept, only to find the table and its keeper gone. Later a wounded Scot reported that he had seen Sad Dam struggling with the heavy table across the courtyard to the well, into which he heaved the table and followed after it. When the courtyard was examined it was paved from wall to wall. No well.

Keep on the track to the entrance on your left at the bottom of the track. Opposite the entrance is a half gate – Pennine Way South – turn right and this path takes you along a grassy path beside the burn to a footbridge over the Pow Charney Burn where it joins the Tippet. Cross the bridge, cross the railway with care and pass in front of a red-bricked terrace and onto the road.

7. Cross the road – staying on the Pennine Way for the next 1½ km – and climb the slope ahead to the golf course. Bang the gong – to let the golfers know you are emerging! – and continue straight on across the golf course with the ditch on your right. (This is the Roman Vallum, which marked the southern edge of the military zone of Hadrian's Wall.) Cross the ladder stile over the wall at the end, turn left and continue beside the wall – ignoring all stiles back onto the golf course – to cross a ladder stile over a wall beside a group of trees at the top of the hill ahead. Continue over the next stile (20m) and diagonally right to the far corner of the field. Descend from this stile to the A69, cross with care, turn right on the other side and then immediately left onto a track.

8. Keep on this track uphill, making sure that when the wooded gully on your left ends you keep to the track up right – not the one that bends away to the left. Pass under some electricity pylons as the track flattens out and go through a stile by a gate to continue on the track, now fenced on both sides, to cross a stile by a gate. The Pennine Way goes right here on Blenkinsopp Common, another track goes left but your path is the one over the stile immediately on your left and diagonally left across rough pasture to the far corner of the field.

Cross the fence stile and the ladder stile over a stone wall next to it and descend half diagonally left when a ladder stile will eventually come into view. Go over and diagonally right – as you descend you will see ahead a single fence post spaced halfway between two power line poles. Aim for the pole on the left (If you miss this and find yourself passing under power cables, turn left and follow the power line down to the stile.) Cross a stile by a signpost to descend to cross the A69 again. Turn right and immediately left onto a track; after 40m turn left up some steps, over a stile and diagonally right to follow an old mine track down to go through a gate and onto the road. Turn right to return to Greenhead.

Alternative Route: Return to the signpost and take the path to Low Old Shields. Follow an old grass-covered field boundary and where it ends go diagonally left to a gate in the corner of the field to the left of a large barn. Go through the farmyard, pass the farmhouse on your left – they like cats here – and follow the track out of the farm as it bends left to cross a stream and right up a slope. Where the track straightens out pass a five-bar-gate on your right and cross the next stile on your right. Go straight across the field and over a stile at the far end of the field boundary on your left. Continue on up the field, over the next stile and straight on in the direction of the first pylon. (I suggest you fly across the gorge!) Reassume your direction of travel up the hill – south. Here you will meet the path you were on earlier to Walltown. Turn right here to retrace your steps on the Pennine Way but stay on the path past where you joined it from Greenhead and continue on past Holmhead Farm, over the footbridge to the entrance of Thirlwall Castle on your right. Opposite the entrance is a half gate – Pennine Way South – turn left and this path takes you along a grassy path beside the burn to a footbridge over the Pow Charney Burn where it joins the Tippet. Cross the bridge, cross the railway with care and pass in front of a red-bricked terrace and onto the road. Now go to 7.

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.