



8 miles
12.9 km
Moderate Difficulty

Walk 22
Thirlwall Parish

The Haltwhistle Rings

22 Walks in the Historic Parishes of Haltwhistle, Northumberland

An 8-mile walk from the Spa village of Gilsland, along Hadrian's Wall and up to the picturesque Spa Gorge, its famous hotel and 'Popping Stone' and on to the magnificent waterfalls of Crammel Linn.

O.S. Explorer OL 43

'Gorges, Ghosts, Flames and Fortune'

Start Point: By Car, Bus.

From Haltwhistle take the A69 west to Greenhead and then the B6318 to Gilsland. On entering Gilsland turn left at The Samson Inn before the railway bridge and first right to park at The Station Hotel OR take Hadrian's Wall Bus to Gilsland. Walk past the Post Office up the hill to the Village Hall. Turn right signposted 'Poltross Burn Milecastle' and go under the railway line to The Station Hotel. Don't forget to use our Post Office and pubs or call in at The Spa Hotel.

Did you know: In the late 18th century and through the 19th century, Gilsland became a famous Spa resort – the rich and the famous came here to stay in 'The Gilsland Spa Hotel', take 'the purist air in Britain' and take the 'cold, pure and health-giving' waters!' The famous poet and novelist Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) stayed here frequently, searching for source material in local ballads – which he duly found, and immortalised the area in 'Guy Mannering' and 'The Bridal of Triermain.'

1. Leave the car park in the direction of The Samson, turn right up the hill and after 100m turn left into a road and over a stile onto a path – signposted 'Gap 1/4' – and continue along the grass-covered mound until descending to a ladder stile in the far left corner of the field. You've just walked on Hadrian's Wall! Cross the stile, pass through the well-kept gardens, through the gate and across the small paddock to a kissing gate onto the road at The Gap.

Did you know: This unassuming place is notable for two reasons. One is that it is described as the 'watershed of England' or the Tyne Gap – from here all waters drain west into the Irthing and on to the Solway Firth; conversely from here all waters drain east into the Tipalt, the South Tyne and the North Sea. Secondly, it is at this point that the principal features of the Roman Military Zone, called Hadrian's Wall, run together at their closest: the Stanegate Road, the Vallum, the Roman Military Way and the Wall.

Cross the road and over a ladder stile – signposted 'Longbyre' – and follow the path until the fence on your left ends (20m) and then aim for a knee-high marker post across the field and follow the path with the stone wall on your right.

Cross another ladder stile and continue with the stone wall on your right to cross a stile beside a metal five-bar-gate onto a farm track.

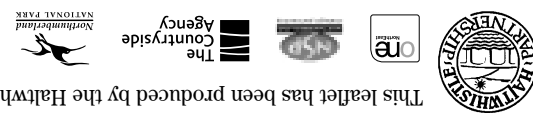
2. Turn left to the road (B6318) and turn right on the road for 200m and then left onto an unclassified road with a sign beside it for Barron House. Follow this easy road across the railway to ascend to Barron House. At the gate beside the farmhouse go straight through the farmyard to the left of a green corrugated barn to exit the farmyard through a gate to follow the track up to a small group of conifer trees. Go through the gate to a marker post and up across the field diagonally left, over a ladder stile, diagonally left to a step stile over a wire fence to meet the road opposite Wardrew House in front of you. Continue straight on over rough ground, descend to cross a stream and ascend to a gate with a way-mark sign to the right of it. Go through the gate to the road to Wardrew House, turn left and descend on the tarmac road to turn right onto a public footpath (signed) and over a stile by a small bridge to pass in front of Wardrew House and enter the Spa Gorge Woods. Cross the next stile and turn right with the fence on your right and descend into the Irthing Gorge.

Did you know: A Roman Altar was found here in the early 17th century dedicated for the health of the Empress and her family; so obviously the Romans thought that the worse something tasted the better it was for you! The monks from nearby Lanercost Priory made a procession to this 'holy well' on St. John the Baptist Day to bless the waters and, after the dissolution, locals continued the tradition with a Midsummer Sunday Fair.

Ten yards before the bridge turn right through a gate with a Woodland Trust sign beside it and follow the path with the fence on your right to cross the next bridge. Go right here to visit 'The Popping Stone'. (Note the depth of the river – if it is 'in flood' after a lot of rainfall, see Point 8 below).

Did you know: It was while on a three-month holiday in Gilsland that Sir Walter Scott met, and was captivated by, Mademoiselle Charpentier, an émigré from the French Revolution. He took her walking up the Irthing Valley, just beyond the Spa Well, and when she was comfortably seated on a large boulder he 'popped the question'. Not surprisingly, she accepted – she had no money and only a guillotine awaited her back home! The boulder became known as 'The Popping Stone' – it is locally believed to be half the size it was then as pieces used to be chipped away for young ladies to place beneath their pillows. The 'man of their dreams' would then follow Walter's example and 'pop the question'!

This leaflet has been produced by the Haltwhistle Partnership and part-funded by:



For more information call 01434 321242

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



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3. Retrace your steps to the bridge, but do not cross it again. Continue up the bank and through a white kissing gate and follow the path uphill – passing a seat on your left – to a sharp left hand bend that crosses a stream. Do not cross the stream. Turn sharp right up a path signposted ‘Butterburn Road’ to cross a stile. Walk straight on aiming for the left hand corner of a plantation of conifer trees following the line of a broken fence on your left. Continue to cross a railway sleeper bridge by a group of three large Scots Pine trees. Go diagonally left across reed-strewn ground following marker posts to a ladder stile.

4. After the stile follow the sign diagonally left 20m to the next marker post and follow the rough path up a gentle slope, with the wall on your right and the trees on your left. After your path flattens out and descends, your path leaves the wall and goes diagonally left up to the road through an avenue of trees (a fire break).

7. After 20m turn left through the wall – way-marked – and continue towards a marker post on the other side of a stream. Cross the stream and take the path left, downstream, to the next marker post, onto the next one, where your path leads away from the stream to another marker in front of a tree with its ‘top’ broken off. Turn right here to go uphill to another broken-topped tree and follow marker posts until you see the path on the right beyond the stone wall you took earlier through the plantation. Continue on following the marker posts until you see in front of you the ladder stile you crossed earlier. Don’t try to go straight towards it! Your path follows the line of the trees on your left above the gorge until you pick up more marker posts that take you up to the stile.

8. Cross the stile to retrace your steps to the Spa Gorge and the ‘Butterburn Road’ sign. Don’t turn left here but cross the stream to continue up the obvious path to The Spa Hotel keeping the fence on your left.

Did you know: If on this walk at dusk you sense a small, cold hand touching your arm don’t think that you are imagining things or that it is one of the locals trying to be friendly! It is only the ghost of ‘The Gilsland Boy’ and you have nothing to worry about unless you have ancestors in the area. The story goes that the Boy stood in the way of an uncle from gaining a rich inheritance, so in the depths of a cold winter the uncle abandoned the Boy on a snow-covered Thirlwall Common and left him to die. The Boy’s dying agony passed into the form of a pathetic phantom that appears whenever a descendant of the uncle is about to be taken ill. If the illness is to be fatal the Boy would touch with his frozen hand and whisper, ‘Cauld, cauld, aye, cauld. An’ ye’ll be cauld for evermair.’

Did you know: In 1740 the first spa hotel was built. It was known as ‘The Shaws’ and the coming of the railways made it a fashionable resort. In 1859 it caught fire in a tremendous blaze, which even fire engines brought from Carlisle by train could not put out and it was totally destroyed. It was rebuilt as ‘The Spa Hotel’ at a cost of £12,000 and competed with Harrogate and Bath as a popular resort. Early in the 20th century it was acquired by the North of England Co-operative Society and was used variously as a maternity hospital and convalescent home. Today it is a hotel once again.

Cross the stile onto the road and turn right. Continue on the road to cross a cattle grid, stream and Ministry of Defence signs to a car park/lay-by on your right. Take the path to follow the direction of the signpost ‘Crammel Linn/Gilsland Spa’ to the left hand corner of a fenced enclosure.

5. Turn right here with the fence on your right – take time here to view the waterfall and even wander up beyond it along the gorge if you wish – and right again following the enclosure fence to descend to a stile. Cross the stile and turn right to walk along to the end of a fenced avenue beside the Gorge. At the end of the avenue continue to the yellow-topped marker post diagonally right and then on towards the next one that is on the other side of a stream. Cross the stream by the fence and follow the path up past a large boulder to a stile where the fence ends.

6. Cross the stile with the hand post (not the one on the right) and straight on to follow the marker posts along the track over broken ground and newly planted trees. Some marker posts are missing but the path is reasonably obvious. Look at the map! The path roughly follows the contours and after the first bend to the right your objective is two prominent trees. After 250m, cross a sleeper bridge over a ditch by these trees, advance to the way-marked post and turn right with the wall on your left.

When you come to the car park by the main entrance take the road on the left down to the church at the road junction. Turn left and at 10m turn left to take the path ‘Gilsland via the Stepping Stones’. (If the river was in flood at The Popping Stone – Point 2 above – the stepping stones will be covered by flood water so continue left on the road at the church, to pass the green Orchard House, over the bridge and first left to the Post Office*.) Descend with the burn and ravine on your left, straight on initially, through a kissing gate to cross the stepping stones and up the stone steps on the other side. Turn right to follow the river bank through a succession of gates to emerge on the main road in Gilsland by the Bath House.* Turn left past the Post Office – they sell great biscuits here! – and up to the village hall on your right. Turn right here – signposted ‘Poltross Burn Milecastle’ – and follow the signs to go under the railway line and then left to return to the car park at The Station Hotel.

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.