

# SIGHTVISIT

Route Guide 1

Walking in the  
Hadrian's Wall Landscape



**"Get closer to the Hadrian's Wall landscape  
Your complete '*where to walk - where to stay*' guide"**

Mark Richards, author and founder of SightVisit



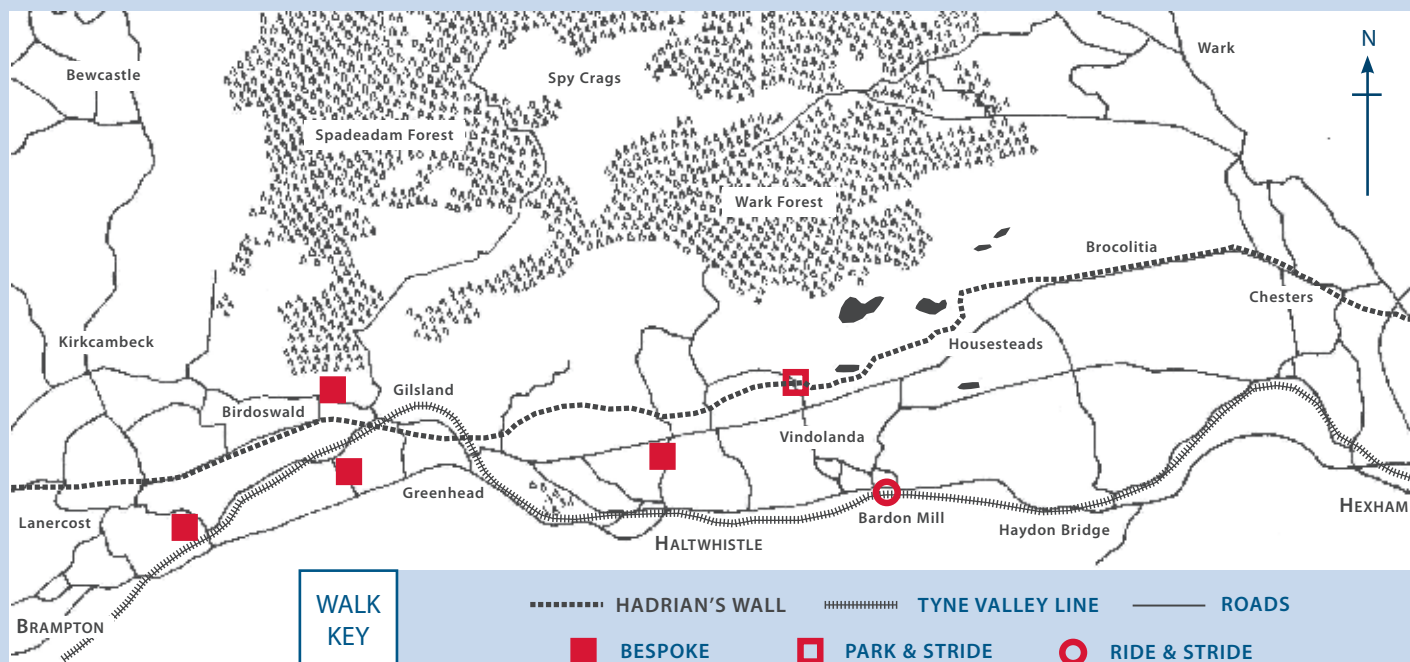
**Mark Richards,**  
outdoor author and  
founder of SightVisit

## Welcome to SightVisit — your passport to great country breaks

SightVisit is sharing its intimate knowledge of **Hadrian's Wall** in this high quality guide book. Aimed at the active visitor who wants to immerse themselves in the best walking landscapes. Within this guide you will find **ten carefully crafted walk descriptions** which match up to, and are inter-changeable with, four specially chosen 'Where to Stay' hosts. We take pride in being able to recommend the quartet of quality accommodation at the core of our Landscape Community; the energetic explorer is assured of a particularly warm welcome. This unique combination provides the basis of choice for a richly rewarding and extendable country break.

On a regular basis new Landscape Community editions are being planned to excite and unlock your adventurous spirit. We will also be publishing special cycling editions, prepared by a qualified cycling Instructor, certified by British Cycling.

Overview of walks and areas covered in this Route Guide



# Contents

## ROUTE GUIDE 1 *Hadrian's Wall Landscape Community*

### Recommended Walks

Convenient walks designed to help you make the most of your time on and around Hadrian's wall regardless of your method of transport.

- |    |  |   |   |
|----|--|---|---|
| 4  | <b>Birdoswald Roman Fort</b><br>From M6 Junction 43 (Carlisle) | <br>2hrs-2spare  | Walks designed to be completed within 2 hours |
| 7  | <b>Housesteads Roman Fort</b><br>From Steel Rigg Viewpoint     | <br>Park+Stride  | Walks which you can begin from your car door  |
| 13 | <b>Hadrian's Wall via Roman Vindolanda</b><br>From Bardon Mill | <br>Ride+Stride | Walks which you can begin from a bus stop     |

### Featured Doorstep Walks

SightVisit have teamed up with the best local accommodation providers and constructed detailed circular routes from their front door. These places are an ideal base to explore the Hadrian's Wall landscape.

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 17 | <b>Denton Hall</b><br>Luxury 4 star Bed & Breakfast Accommodation |
| 24 | <b>Bush Nook</b><br>Guest House & Self Catering                   |
| 31 | <b>Hill on the Wall</b><br>Luxury Bed & Breakfast                 |
| 36 | <b>Herding Hill</b><br>Caravan, Camping, Wigwams, Tea Room & Shop |





2hrs-2spare

### BIRDOSWALD ROMAN FORT CA8 7DD from M6 junction 43 (Carlisle)

Ordnance Survey maps:  
Explorer Map 315  
Landranger Maps 85/86



Looking east along the Roman Wall to Walltown Crags from Birdoswald

So you're heading up or down the M6 motorway - you realise you can just about allow yourself a two-hour window to catch a glimpse of Hadrian's Wall. Pity to miss it when you're so close. The solution: break from your north/south journey at Junction 43 (Carlisle).

**IN A NUTSHELL** Follow the A69 via Brampton, then minor roads via Naworth Castle, Lanercost Priory and Banks to reach Birdoswald Roman Fort and tour the fort, or walk beside a long impressive stretch of standing Roman Wall (see picture left).

This description offers you a flexible itinerary based around a primary **ROUTE**. Included are **SIGHTVISIT** choices with time allowances in minutes; these may further extend and enhance your scenic and cultural experience - not forgetting all important places of **refreshment** and **comfort** stops.

**Non-stop journey to Birdoswald 25 km/16 miles, drive-time 26 mins. With minimal stops a round-trip back to the M6 in two hours is assured. But armed with this guide you could be tempted to return for a longer stay and closer inspection; there is so much scenic heritage here to enjoy.**

**ROUTE from M6 J43** Drive east along A69 cross the River Eden at Warwick Bridge. Continue beyond the Corby Hill traffic lights to the round-about junction with the A689.

**SIGHTVISIT 40 mins** Go straight over to enter the handsome little market town of **Brampton**. Turn right and first right again by the statue of Hadrian, following Front Street into the cobbled Market Place.

**Moot Hall** is the summer tourist information centre. Of interest the red-sandstone **St Martin's parish church**, with its remarkable pre-Raphaelite stained-glass windows, and **The Moat**, a wooded little hill close to the town with encircling spiral paths to its crown. **refreshment** Off the Wall and Jacobite cafes, the former especially valuable as the proprietor (Mike Goodman) also runs heritage tours and is a mine of local information. **comfort** Public conveniences behind the White Lion Hotel. Drive out of the Market Place left by High Cross Street, turn right leaving the town by The Sands, to re-join the A69, turning left.

**ROUTE** The core route turns right with the A69 - Brampton bypass - follow this to minor cross-roads (signed Hallbankgate/Lanercost) turn left. Descend the parkland drive slowly, passing the entrance to **Naworth Castle**; an impressive stronghold, the magnificent ancestral home of the Howard family - this private residence is occasionally open for antique fairs. The narrow road unites with the road from Brampton at Abbey Mill. Turn right to cross the low road bridge and pass on by **Lanercost Priory**.

**SIGHTVISIT 10 mins** Just over the bridge you may turn in left to park in the picnic area and inspect the handsome pedestrian double-arched **Abbey Bridge**, stroll onto the top and gaze from the refuges into the peat-darkened waters of the appropriately-named River Irthing - a lovely indulgence.

**SIGHTVISIT 25 mins** The hedge-lined road leads to Lanercost, where there are three options. Firstly turn in right into **Lanercost Tea-room** car park, a quality visitor experience with a fascinating information room, a shop selling locally-sourced products, and **refreshment** a splendid café similarly serving Cumbrian ingredients and home-made food, a real taste delight **comfort**.

**SIGHTVISIT 40 mins** Turn in right through the stone archway to park the car in front of the parish church. Certainly the **Priory Church of St Mary Magdalene** composed from the nave of the original Priory thoroughly merits a few quiet contemplative minutes. Next door English Heritage are custodians of **Lanercost Priory** (entry fee), with an informative and entertaining audio-trail, a peaceful interlude to any visit to this enchanted vale. Much of the building material in the priory and containing walls was 'borrowed' from Hadrian's Wall by Robert de Vaux who installed **Augustinian Canons** in the gracious priory in the C12th. In the early C14th the court of Edward I spent six months here - preying on the hapless canons!

**ROUTE** Drive on through, passing between the primary school and cricket ground, ascend the hill towards the hamlet of **Banks**.

**SIGHTVISIT 12 mins** At the top of the initial rise, as the road forks you may take the minor road left, signed 'Kirkcambek'. After 150m a lane breaks up left and you just might find scope to park up this farm-access way to inspect **Hare Hill**, which is the tallest section of **Hadrian's Wall**, and in the care of **English Heritage** (access free). See if you can spot the letters PP on the north face, this marks the section of Wall constructed under a 'Primus Pilus' the principal centurion of a legion. When William Hutton walked the Wall in 1802 he said "I viewed the relic with admiration... I saw no higher".

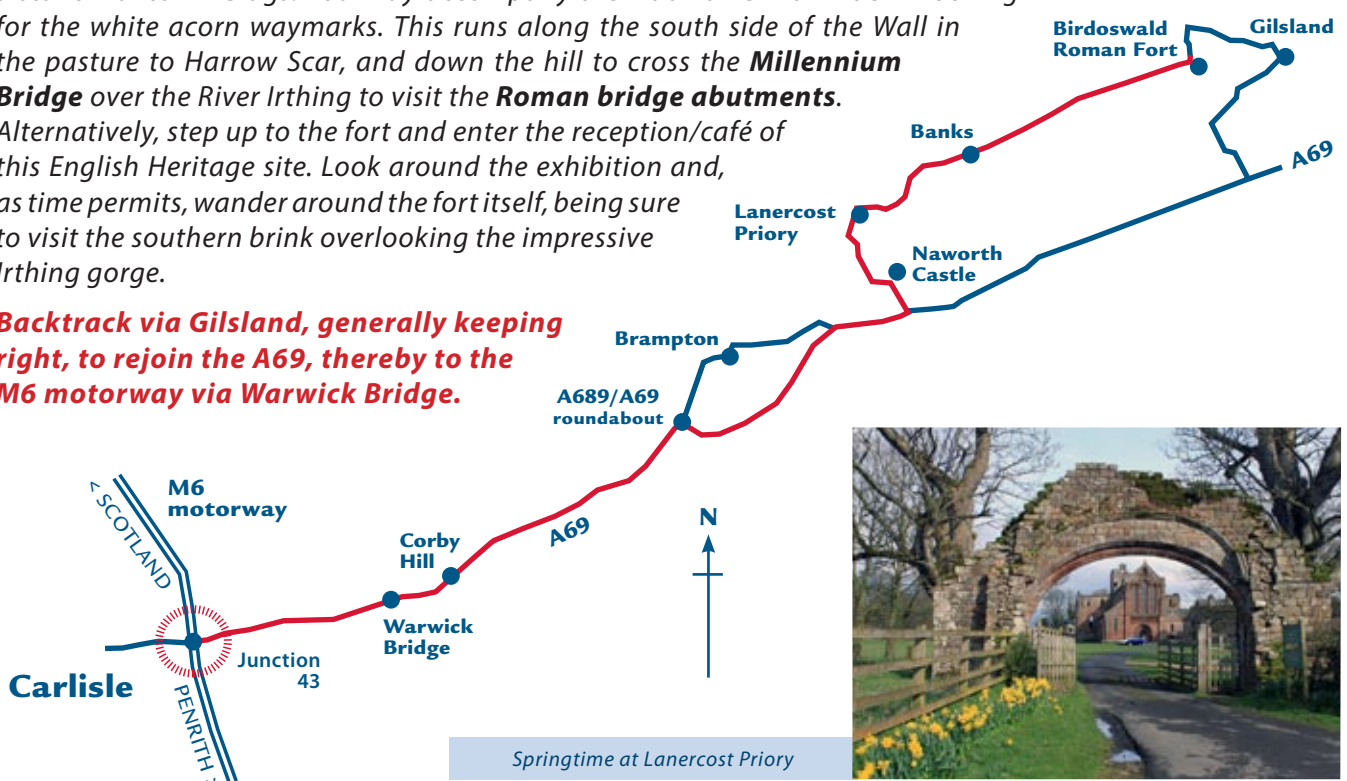
**ROUTE** The core route continues up through the hamlet passing on by **Banks Viewpoint**.

**SIGHTVISIT 5/10 mins Banks Viewpoint** car park is an irresistible break to any journey, with a fine southerly prospect over the **Irthing valley** towards the Pennines. Adjacent is a fine section of Roman Wall tied to Turret 52a; you may walk east along the confined path rising to **Pike Hill Roman signal station**. Notice the remnant stands at 45° to the line of the road and Wall, this is because it was set-up long before Hadrian's Wall, as part of a chain of communication beacons associated with the **Stanegate**, the earlier Roman frontier. Look south-west to see in the distance **Blencathra** and **Skiddaw**, high mountains in the **Lake District National Park**, the latter is 931m/3,054ft.

**ROUTE** The elevated road leads on by two roadside turrets **Leehill** and **Piper Syke**, enabling you to precisely measure a Roman third-of-a-mile. The road leads on coming beside an exciting stretch of reconstructed Wall leading to **Birdoswald Roman Fort** (entry fee) **refreshment** and **comfort**, pass on down the hill to enter the car park (pay&display).

**SIGHTVISIT 60 mins** Walk back up the hill to gaze east along the line of the stone Wall towards the distant Walltown Crag. You may accompany the **Hadrian's Wall Path** - looking for the white acorn waymarks. This runs along the south side of the Wall in the pasture to Harrow Scar, and down the hill to cross the **Millennium Bridge** over the River Irthing to visit the **Roman bridge abutments**. Alternatively, step up to the fort and enter the reception/café of this English Heritage site. Look around the exhibition and, as time permits, wander around the fort itself, being sure to visit the southern brink overlooking the impressive Irthing gorge.

**Backtrack via Gilsland, generally keeping right, to rejoin the A69, thereby to the M6 motorway via Warwick Bridge.**



Springtime at Lanercost Priory



# OFF THE WALL



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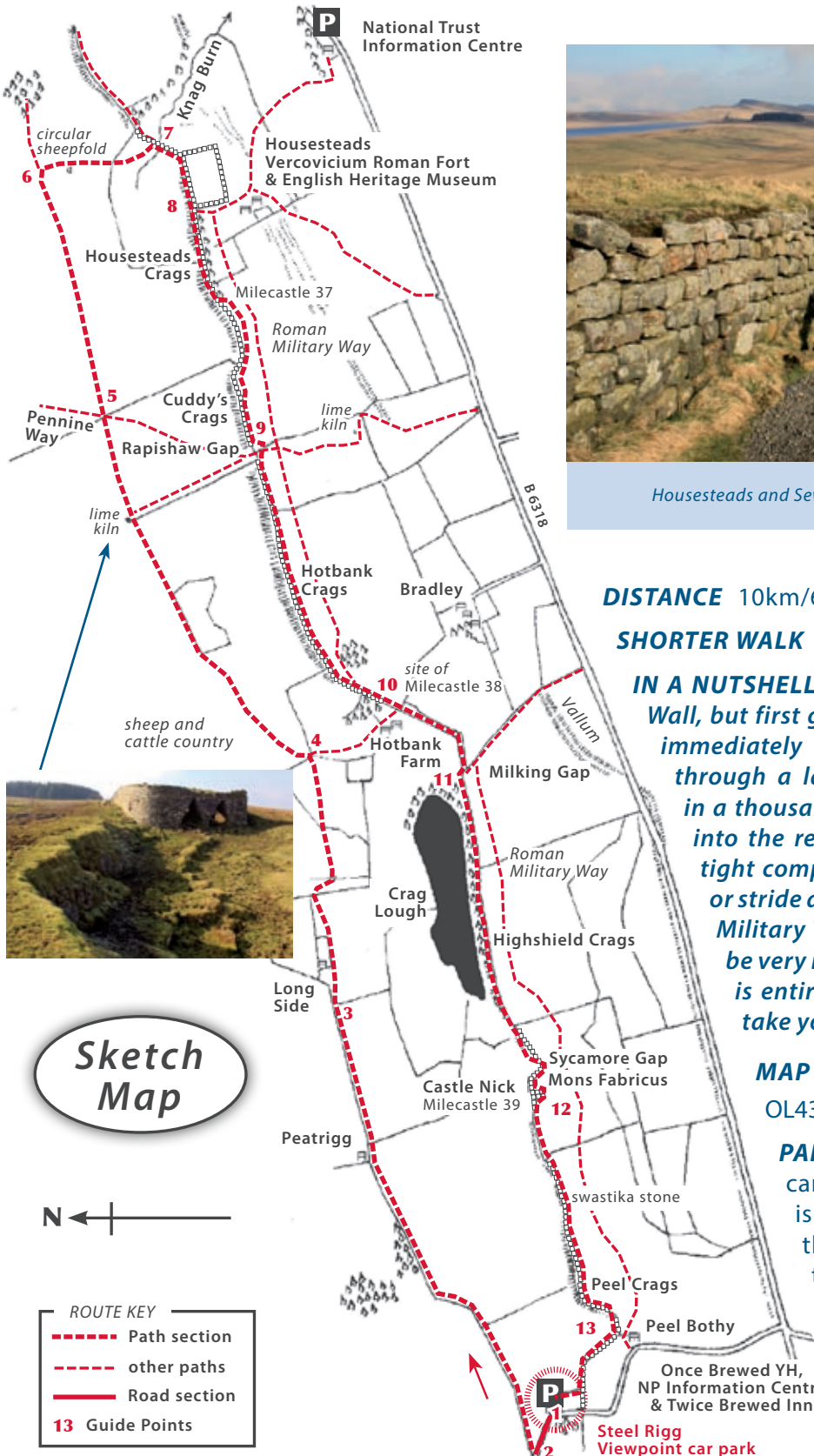
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## HOUSESTEADS ROMAN FORT from Steel Rigg Viewpoint



Housesteads and Sewingshields Crags from Cuddy's Crags

**DISTANCE** 10km/6¼ miles      **TIME** 3¾ hours

**SHORTER WALK** 5½km/3½ miles      **TIME** 2 hrs

**IN A NUTSHELL** *Inspect the finest section of the Wall, but first gain a sense of Barbarian territory immediately north of the Whin Sill, tracking through a landscape that has changed little in a thousand farming years. Before stepping into the realm of the Wall itself either keep tight company with its roller-coaster course or stride along the springy turf of the Roman Military Way. The first half of the route can be very muddy, the second energetic, but it is entirely stimulating and inspiring... so take your time, don't be in a rush.*

**MAP** (Ordnance Survey)

OL43 Hadrian's Wall

**PARK** The National Park pay & display car park at Steel Rigg Viewpoint. This is situated up the bank due north of the Once Brewed cross-roads, off the B6318, commonly referred to as The Military Road (and is quite distinct from the Roman Military Way running beside the Wall itself).

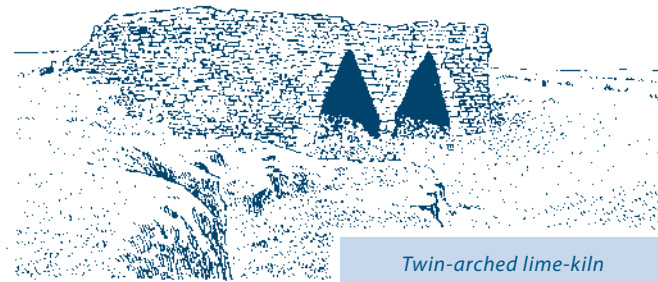
## THE WALK

**1** Step back out of the car park the way you drove in and turn right. Descend the country road to the dip where a right-of-way is signed right via a gate into a green track.

**2** Walkers wisely carrying and consulting the OS Explorer Map will notice that it is depicted as a 'byway open to all traffic', but only until the eastern end of **Peatrigg Plantation** - an old anomaly that awaits rectifying and converting into the humble public footpath, that is its true function. Follow the track which keeps close order with the left-hand field-wall; **Peatrigg Plantation** oddly contains rhododendrons. Continue in harmony with the wall beyond the plantation end to pass the barn and ruined shieling, to quickly cross a ladder-stile.



*Hotbank Crag shrouded in a magical morning mist*



*Twin-arched lime-kiln*

**3** As the wall swings left, depart from its company keeping straight on east, pass the island walled enclosure of **Long Side** with its two barns. Head across the ensuing rigg & furrow etched pasture to a ladder-stile, whereupon the path swings right to a signpost and then veers left traversing the next pasture to a ladder-stile, with muddy boots a distinct possibility on landing on the far side, this being a damp congregation point of cattle.

**4** The walk can be neatly halved at this point by promptly crossing the adjacent ladder-stile on the right and following the open track to and through the gated yard of **Hotbank Farm**. This is a busy traditional upland stock farm, so please show the utmost respect for the farmer and his stock. The full walk veers left from the muddy corner following the open track north-eastwards to where a short post with a yellow waymark blaze directs right, off the track, and along the edge of a large shallow limestone borrow-pit, probably dug to gather walling stone. Keep up onto the ridge ahead, left of the conifer plantation to get a fine view north toward **Bonnyrigg, West Hotbank** and **Greenlee Lough**. The farmland east of **West Hotbank** harbours numerous historic features including a Roman camp and a stone circle - neither discernible from this range. Tracking along the low ridge, come alongside a shallow quarry with a twin Gothic-arched lime-kiln at the far end. The path heads on to a ladder-stile by a wall-fold where the Pennine Way crosses diagonally right to left.

*Cuddy's Crag and Hotbank Crag from cattle country*



**5** Once over the ladder-stile keep strictly to the line of the open track advancing towards the distant copse of conifers. All along this section the undulating escarpment of the Whin Sill forms a dark near horizon; ahead half-left the exciting edge of **Sewingshields Crag** features prominently with the blue sheet of lonely water **Broomlee Lough** to the left. There are three main great lakes immediately north of the Whin Sill, Greenlee, Crag and

Broomlee, all bear the Irish Viking variant name for a natural body of water 'lough'. Water fowl love these quiet tracts well removed from disturbance, swans omni-present. The track traipses over decidedly damp pasture, not so much a problem in the summer.

**6** You can keep company with the footpath which threads through the middle of the copse aiming to a dip in the **Whin Sill** scarp known as **Busy Gap** - where a ladder-stile gives access to the National Trail. The better option is to turn right, passing down by the circular sheepfold (fenced to protect it from the attentions of cattle). Pass through the gate and find the least-damp line through the rushes ahead aiming for the kissing-gate in **Hadrian's Wall**, where **Knag Burn** is culverted beneath the re-constructed frontier wall. You may go through to inspect the guard-rooms, but return to the north side of the Roman Wall to continue.



*Broomlee Lough and Sewingshields Crag*



**7** Bear right over the paving slabs and up the bank on the north side of the Wall with the National Trail, coming up to the walls of **Housesteads**, Vercovicium Roman fort. Notice that the north gate of the fort is set too high to have been an active thoroughfare to the cavalry garrison. Wooden steps put the Trail onto the actual Wall at the north-western corner of the fort.

**8** At this point you have in effect four choices. The unique opportunity exists to walk actually on top of the Wall through **Housesteads Plantation**, or immediately adjacent. Alternatively, you may wish to inspect Housesteads itself by visiting the museum and purchasing a ticket to gain entry to the fort's fascinating interior, or simply opt to follow the **Roman Military Way**. In both these latter cases go through the adjacent hand-gate and walk south beside the fort wall. For the Military Way turn sharp right at the west gate upon the pasture path. This leads to a wall step-stile. Notice the sheepfold to the right mimics the outline of a Roman milecastle, as can soon be judged should you now step up to the wall and visit **Milecastle 37**.



Knag Burn and the distant Sewingshields Crags from Housesteads



Tallest Wall and north gate arch in Milecastle 37

Whether reached off the **Military Way** or out of **Housesteads Plantation**, one may inspect the milecastle, which is quite the most interesting of its genre. The arch of the north-gate, in kilter with the fort, was not a viable exit owing to the severe scarp slope to the north, but the remaining stones show the height proportions of the original arch. Of no less interest, the actual Wall in the left-hand corner of the milecastle is actually the tallest untouched section in the entire frontier: a full fifteen courses. The Wall from the fort is typical of Clayton construction, six or seven courses high capped with a turf divot. Most of the lower courses are completely untouched, though you will notice

periodically the Wall seems to jig out; it is not clear if this is a faithful pattern or something that John Clayton misconstrued. To learn more about John Clayton, the first conservator of Hadrian's Wall, make a point of visiting **Chesters Museum**, to view his collection and read the important story of his fascination with this relic.

The Military Way gives the easiest of walking all the way to the clump of trees on **Hotbank Crags**, which is the literal explanation of the term hott: 'a ring of trees'. The more common recourse is to keep closer order with the ups and downs of the Wall itself, and the National Trail accommodates this desire, with a few necessary paved steps to usher the main flow of walkers, especially important through the gap between **Housesteads** and **Cuddy's Crags**. Arrive on the brow on **Cuddy's Crags** and look back for the classic view of the Wall, which features in every guide and brochure. The name Cuddy derives from a landowner, being the local nickname for Cuthbert. Follow on west until a paling barrier guides you left to avoid the sheer drop into **Rapishaw Gap**.



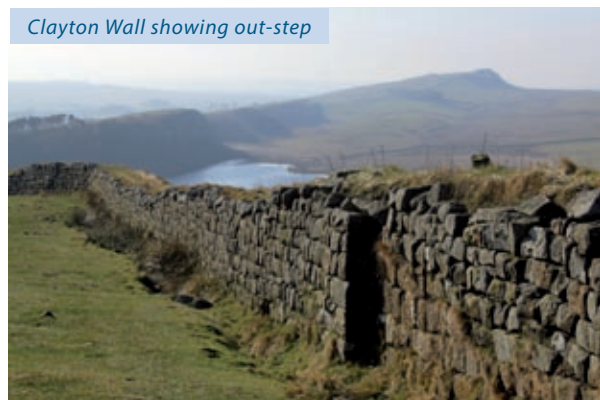
Rapishaw Gap

**9** The Wall at this point must have been impressive pitching sharply down. You can see the Wall snaked in preparation for the fall. The **Whin Sill**, a volcanic intrusive rock, appears vertically pitched. Though the cracks are not deposition bedding planes, these vertical fissures at certain points have created pinnacles on the leading face of the Sill. In the depression, cross the low ladder-stile and pass by the ladder-stile in the field-wall (no surviving Wall here). This is where the **Pennine Way** departs north bound for the **Border Forests** and the distant **Cheviot Hills**. Climb the steps to regain company with the continuing field-wall. Clayton Wall resumes where you step over the foundations of a field-wall at right-angles to the wall. You are now marching along the crest of **Hotbank Crags**; the Wall dips and rises like a Chinese ceremonial dragon. There appears to be remnant rubble underfoot, core material not used by the Clayton work team.

As the hill begins to descend, a pinch-point narrowing of the path has made the path muddy. The aim for the trail is a green sward, so it periodically needs resting and tank-traps or stakes inserted to deflect the casual walker from the normal walking line. Ideally you need to always seek a new tread line, and when walking in a group aim to walk shoulder to shoulder not crocodile fashion. The view ahead is exciting over **Crag Lough**, and **Highshield Crags** to the far crest of Winshields Crags is the highest point on the **Whin Sill** scarp.



Clayton Wall on Hotbank Crags



Clayton Wall showing out-step

**10** **The Military Way** converges on the descent to a hand-gate joining a paved section which angles round the site of **Milecastle 38**, where the short cut route also joins. This milecastle revealed at least two important finds - inscriptions recording the building by the Second Legion under the governorship of Britannia, **Aulus Platorius Nepos**. The slabs even had traces of the original red paint, confirmation of the brilliant colours that adorned these high status slabs, which will have originally been set above

the south and north gateways. **Platorius Nepos** came from Lower Germany where he had been governor and it is considered likely that he arrived in **Britannia** with **Hadrian**, a symbolic event never repeated. Hadrian never stood on British soil again - he had bigger fish to fry and monuments to build in an unwieldy and cultural complex empire, but he certainly left his mark!

The Clayton Wall is lost just before the farm, with a crumpled field-wall passing on towards **Milking Gap**. En route you get a handsome view of **Crag Lough** and the Whin Sill cliff of **Highshield Crags** in profile. Notice the boats in the lake, which is a site of special scientific interest and a National Nature Reserve. The trail arrives at the farm track via a hand-gate.

**11** One can re-join the **Military Way** by following the track left, quickly picking up its continuing course across the dip slope of the bank. Through **Milking Gap** to the south one may see a cluster of boulders that betray the site of an Iron Age farmstead, composed of five dwellings in and around a farmyard. C2nd pottery found on the spot suggests it was vacated when the Wall and **Vallum** were constructed. The Wall-side Trail steps over a low ladder-stile and turns left to cross a second ladder-stile to enter the mature plantation growing on the steep bank up from the lake. Weave through and up the flight of pitch steps to arrive at a handsome promenade overlooking the lake with its resident swans, glancing back to **Hotbank Farm** and **Crags**. When constructed this must have felt like an impregnable mural fortress, defended by a sheer cliff and an expanse of water and bog. If someday someone gets the itch to re-build a stretch of the monument, then this would be a tempting and impressive place to set it.



Hotbank Farm from Highshield Crags



Walkers on Highshield Crags

The Trail descends a flight of steps beside a newly mortared and consolidated Wall to step over the low portion in the depression of **Sycamore Gap** next to the said tree. The roots of this mature specimen penetrate a pile of Wall rubble that archaeologists would love to investigate. Hence the timorous replacement tree in the ring wall, clearly damaged to never grow beyond the proportions of a bush. The rubble is a reminder of what much of **Hadrian's Wall** looked like some two hundred years ago. A comparable body of rubble was excavated on the north side revealing a dump of late C2nd pottery and a coin hoard dating from 350s AD.



Milecastle 38 in Castle Nick

If you look at the north side of the Wall you can spot numerous **Whinstones** in the courses. It is thought that this spot was damaged to ground level and was rebuilt under **Emperor Septimius Severus** with a distinctive white mortar.

The Trail now climbs another steep flight of steps onto the little hill known as **Mons Fabricius**. The history of this outwardly authentic Roman name only goes back to 1928 when it was subscribed in honour of Ernst Fabricius, the eminent German frontier scholar. The two low walled structures snuggled up to the Wall are the remains of C16th shielings (shepherds' summer dwellings).

**12** The Trail next slips into the slightly wider depression of **Castle Nick**, containing **Milecastle 39**. The lie of the land was just too good for the Legionary builders. But for all the strict rules of measurement that dictated every last stone, this is not a Roman mile from either its predecessor (**Hotbank Farm**) nor its successor (sited on the rise to **Winshield Crags**). Another factor in its positioning was the need for eye-contact with the signal station on **Barcombe Hill**, above the Stanegate fort of **Vindolanda**, which was maintained from this point. An interesting detail on the **Military Way** is the point set back down the dip slope: this ascends a quite severe slope, showing that at that point, at least, no carts could have been used by the Roman supply, only packhorses.

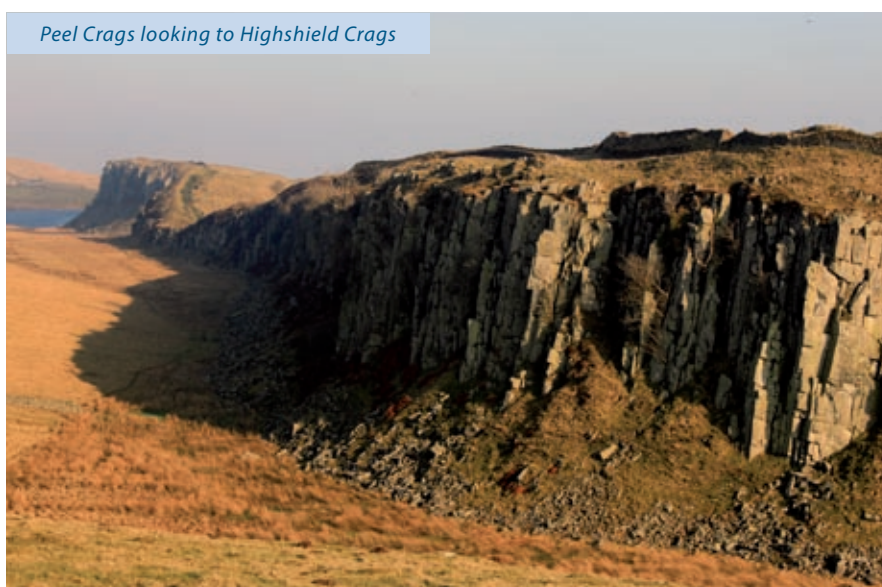
The Trail rises again with a low bank - a poor substitute for a Wall - the path declining to a ladder-stile above the natural rift of **Cat Stairs**, a reference to the long-gone playground of wild cat. Gaining the high ground, **Clayton Wall** is reborn switching along the mighty crest of **Peel Crags**. A third of the way along this section one can spot a rare undisturbed piece of Roman graffiti, set in the ground level stone course, engraved with a swastika. This may have been added after the Wall was originally built, as it is not on the more normal shoulder level. The symbol held attributes of good luck and you may find the search for it a matter of good luck too! A ladder-stile heralds the end of this high parade from where the path makes a very steep stepped descent into the hollow of **Peel Gap**.

**13** At the bottom, paving slabs assist progress over the damp ground. A turret was inserted into the gap as an after-thought, though it did not last long for all that. Among the masonry rubble was evidence of crenellations, the only real indication that anything on the frontier was crenellated, though most reconstructions and illustrations tend to show them as integral. It's like the wall-walk along the top, there is no sure proof that it existed.

Climb up the facing bank towards a hand-gate (do not go through, unless connecting from the **Roman Military Way** which passes the **Peel Bothy**). Instead switch up right beside the **Clayton Wall** rounding at the brow to take one marvellous look back along the cliff-line towards the now distant **Hotbanks Crags**. A scene that never fails to inspire and stir the spirit, the great wave of the **Whin Sill** upon which the Wall was built, was the greatest single statement of the edge of the Roman empire, a frontier in geological and historic time. Venture back to the car park via hand-gates.

### A WORD ABOUT DOGS & FARM ANIMALS

The cattle and sheep in this vicinity are hardy, and wary of people. Cattle in particular can easily become skittish if dogs are present, so keep your dog on a tight lead. If there are cows with calves give them a wide berth, and walk slowly, and quietly by. However, if cattle become excited by your dog's presence stop walking and face them. But if they run wildly towards you let your dog loose, do not cling onto the lead, in this scenario it is YOU that is at peril, not the dog.



Peel Crags looking to Highshield Crags

# Slack House Organic Farm

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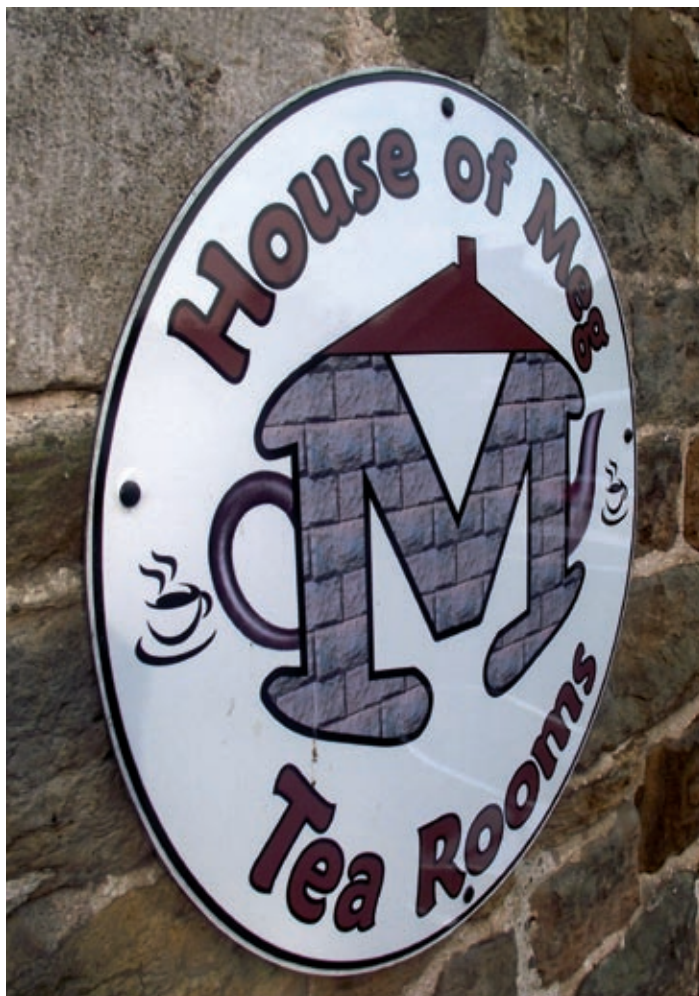
Gilsland, Brampton, Cumbria CA8 7DB  
(Near Birdoswald Roman Fort)

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[www.slackhousefarm.co.uk](http://www.slackhousefarm.co.uk)



Camping/Bunk Barn



House of Meg Tea Room is situated in the village of Gilsland. There is a wide range of food and refreshments for all the walkers and people passing through.

The tea rooms has historical connections with a notorious seventeenth century landlady called Meg Merilees and her story was written in a book by Sir Walter Scott. The poem is painted on the wall inside the House of Meg.

We are open:

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### HADRIAN'S WALL via Roman Vindolanda from Bardon Mill

**IN A NUTSHELL** Whether by bus or by train this is the perfect walk for anyone who wishes to venture into the Northumberland National Park to stand beside a classic stretch of the Roman Wall unshackled from a car.

**DISTANCE** 13km/8¼ miles 5 hours

**MAP** Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 315

#### THE WALK

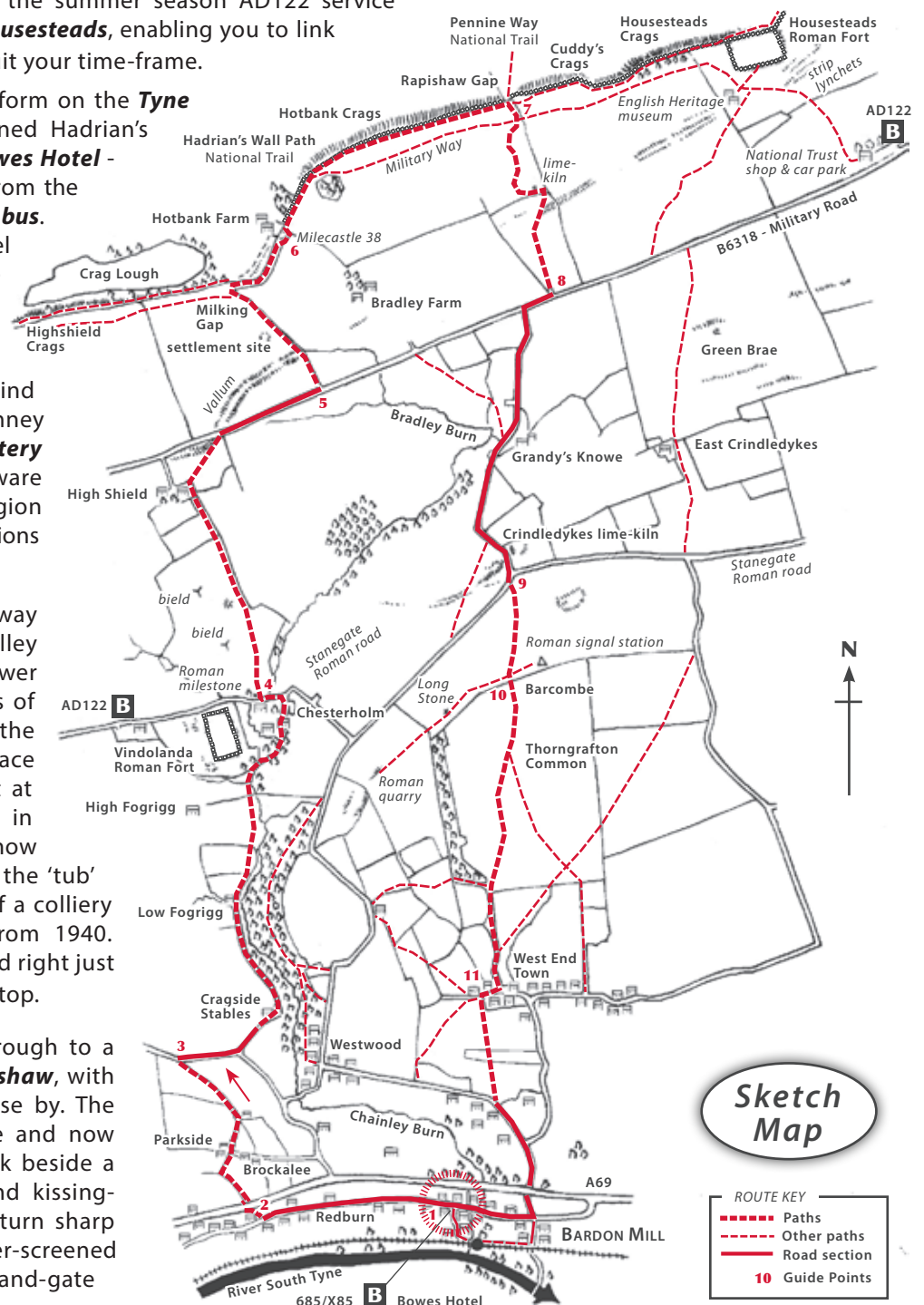
In a sense this is three walks in one. The natural choice is to begin in the valley at **Bardon Mill**, benefiting from year-round bus/train services. Alternatively, the summer season AD122 service stops at both **Vindolanda** and **Housesteads**, enabling you to link to the walk and apportion it to suit your time-frame.

**1** From **Bardon Mill** station platform on the **Tyne Valley Line** follow the exit, signed Hadrian's Wall, via Station Road to **The Bowes Hotel** - where the you may also alight from the **685 Carlisle/Newcastle or X85 bus**.

The green in front of the hotel has a set of boards, these are the stances for the Roman Empire Conker Championship held each October - they came, they saw, they conkered (sic)! Tucked in behind the hotel are the kilns and chimney flues of the **Errington Reay Pottery** works, their handsome practical ware omni-present throughout the region in gardens and domestic situations (including the author's kitchen).

Walk west along the roadside footway - as views open see across the valley the substantial gatehouse tower incorporated in the curtain walls of **Willimoteswick**. Dating from the early C16th this was the birthplace of Bishop Ridley who was burnt at the stake in 1555 with Latimer in Oxford. Passing **Redburn Park**, now a children's playground, but, as the 'tub' informs, this was once the site of a colliery which operated for 33 years from 1940. Watch for the footpath signposted right just before **Benton House** and a bus stop.

**2** A confined pathway leads through to a crossing of the busy **A69** at **Henshaw**, with a Little Chef and BP garage close by. The pathway leads to a kissing-gate and now along the foot of a pasture bank beside a field-wall. Pass through a second kissing-gate and, just before the third, turn sharp right climbing beside the conifer-screened burn to a field-gate and, after a hand-gate



which puts you into the environs of a farm. Pass on to the right of the concrete barn following the muddy track which rises via gates to meet a road.

**3** Turn right, with great pylons overbearing, advance along **Park Lane** to the entrance to **Cragside Riding Stables** on the left. Follow this gated drive up past the stables and on through the car park into the lane. The lane crosses a footbridge beneath **Low Fogrigg**, then narrows beyond the secluded cottage, rising to a galvanised gate into a pasture field. The footpath keeps forward through a hand-gate in a fence and continues via 'V'-stiles and a boardwalk into a confined passage sandwiched between **Chainley Burn** and **Chesterholm**. Cross a footbridge over the burn to emerge by the smart new **Hedley Centre** - a conference and business meeting facility. Advance to the entrance and reach the **Stanegate**, turning left descend towards **Codley**.

**4** Where **Chainley Burn** crosses, find a ladder-stile and footpath sign for 'High Shield' on the right. Immediately over, notice to the left the **Roman milestone (see right)**, probably in-situ and near its original height, set in place before the Roman Wall was even a twinkle in Hadrian's eye! Ascend the pasture, glancing back to get a handsome view of the **Vindolanda Roman fort site**. Coming alongside an old walled bank and fence on the right, rise by a stile/gate, continuing as the field constricts to a ladder-stile at the top close by **High Shield**. The footpath departs the paddock over a fence-stile and aims half-left coming close by the curving vallum bank with evidence of ridge and furrow plough corrugations adjacent, to cross a wall-stile onto the **Military Road**. Go right, the more open verge is on the north side, less invaded by bushes, though this means the speeding traffic is coming from behind - not pleasant. The blue road signs with the white crosses are to discourage stopping and are not an indication that you've crossed the Scottish border quite yet!

**5** The precarious road-verge comes to a happy conclusion at a 'severe dip' sign, where the farm-track to **Hotbank** departs left at a gate with a National Trust notice affixed. The track crosses the line of the vallum, here quite well preserved as twin banks widely flanking a central ditch. You will also notice nearby an apparently confused congregation of stones; this is the remnants of a native farmstead displaced during the construction of the frontier zone. The track leads through the natural **Milking Gap** cutting to reach the point where the **National Trail** is met. Turn right and go through the hand-gate, the path now runs on close to the traces of the **Roman Wall** within a fenced corridor turning the right-angle corner to approach the site of **Milecastle 38**. Archaeological excavation of this site revealed two particularly important inscriptions recording the building by the Second Legion under the governorship of **Britannia, Aulus Platorius Nepos**. The slabs even had traces of the original red paint, confirmation of the brilliant colours that adorned these high status slabs, which will have originally been set above the south and north gateways. Platorius Nepos came from Lower Germany, where he had been governor, and it is considered likely that he arrived in Britannia with Hadrian, a symbolic event never repeated, for **Hadrian** never stood on British soil again - he had bigger fish to fry and monuments to build in an unwieldy and culturally complex empire.

**6** Paving slabs usher visitors around the earthen remains to a kissing-gate. The view back over the farm to **Crag Lough** is a scene of exceptional beauty and interest. This glacially formed lake is a **National Nature Reserve** with the **Whin Sill** scarps of **Highshield Crags** and the distant **Winshields Crags** impressive backdrops. Immediately encounter the first solid evidence of **Hadrian's Wall**, re-built as a drystone structure with a turf cap by John Clayton in the late C19th. Hence this is commonly referred

to as **Clayton Wall** (to learn more about Clayton and his critically important Victorian conservation of the Wall, visit **Chesters Museum**). If the conditions are too wet, then veer right to traverse from just above the island plantation upon the contouring Roman military way. In normal conditions the greater fun is to be had accompanying the Wall at the top of the rise gaining the best possible view west to appreciate the grandeur of the **Whin Sill** scarp. Head east. You are now marching along the crest of **Hotbank Crags**. The Wall dips and rises like a Chinese ceremonial dragon (see above) with **Sewingshields Crags** the most distant scarp hill ahead beyond **Broomlee Lough**. The path descends into a deep nick, known as **Rapishaw Gap** (see left). At this point the **Pennine Way** skips over the ladder-stile left heading for **Wark Forest** and the **Cheviot Hills**, while **Hadrian's Wall Path** crosses the facing ladder-stile bound for **Housesteads**, the most impressively sited Roman fort upon the Wall (in the care of English Heritage, with museum and site entry fee).



Roman milestone at Chesterholm



Roman Wall on Hotbanks Crags



Rapishaw Gap looking to Sewingshields Crags



Vindolanda from Barcombe

**7** With time at your disposal that next section would give you all the magic of the **Roman Wall** in heapfuls. However, time will no doubt be a concern and so you may have to forgo it on this one occasion and veer right. Cross over the line of the Roman military way and follow the green-sward path heading downhill south, cutting left under a Gothic-arched lime-kiln to cross a ladder-stile at the corner of the field. Bear half-right, in traversing the lateral valley cross the feint shelves of cultivation terracing (of Roman origin) and the hint the Vallum. The obvious green track leads by the remains of a wall to a recessed stile accessing the **Military Road**.



Grandy's Knowe

**8** Turn right to the road junction. Next, turn left following the side road downhill. The road passes under **Grandy's Knowe**, a contemporary dwelling fashioned around a humble bastle; perhaps no other house can boast quite such a comprehensive a view on the frontier, grand indeed! Come by an

equally impressive restored lime-kiln **Crinkledykes** to reach the road junction where **Stanegate** emerges from the right-hand pasture above the limestone quarry and becomes the present east-running by-road heading down to **Newbrough**.

**9** Find a kissing-gate left just beyond the junction with a footpath sign directing to '**Thorngrifton**'. From the kissing-gate follow the path rising easily south onto the ridge. You will have noticed from earlier what appeared to be a standing stone piercing the sky and may be intrigued to take a look. In which case turn right and follow the clear path along the edge to the **Long Stone**, erected in the C19th as a memorial to nine miners who lost their lives in **Chainley Colliery**. Mention of the Roman quarry may cause you to venture further and by slipping through the wall gate you can continue down the ridge to find the old quarry. Scrutinise carefully and spot the 'phallic' graffiti,



Roman quarry etching on Barcombe

a Roman 'good luck' symbol. Backtrack to continue, though yet again you may be interested in visiting the OS column on the high point of the hill, this marked the site of a **Roman signal station**. You will notice that it aligns precisely with **Stanegate** running due west from **Vindolanda**, and must have been a key surveying point determining the line of the Roman road, a thoroughfare with a palpable 2000 year time-line.

**10** All this diversionary wandering must come to an end - and does when you slip over the ridge wall-stile, or through the nearby gateway, to follow the main path due south down **Thorngrifton Common**. The path forks: heed the right-hand yellow arrow on the waymark post, guiding down to the foot of the moorland enclosure. A galvanised gate gives entry into a green lane, this leads on by a ladder-stile to arrive in **West End Town** - a quiet hamlet not the beating heart of a city!

**11** Turn right, above the **White House** and through the yard below **West End Farm** to enter the pasture field. Bear immediately left descending straight down the field, crossing two fence stiles in quick succession to step over the wall-stile onto the road. Turn left and follow the road down under the A69 bridge to the road in **Bardon Mill**. Bus travellers turn right with the street to **The Bowes Hotel**, while rail travellers go straight on by **The Grange** to the level-crossing, to find a hand-gate immediately right and a confined path leading directly onto the platform - though you had better check it is the right one for your destination!



Errington Reay Pottery

**Walk Refreshments** **The Bowes Hotel** in Bardon Mill and the café in **Roman Vindolanda** (though you must pay the site entry fee).





## THE PEACE OF LANERCOST AND THE TRIUMPH OF ROME

**IN A NUTSHELL** Outwardly a sturdy farmhouse given a Victorian facelift, but at its core **Denton Hall** is an impressive stronghold, a defensible pele from the middle ages, with huge stonework designed to repel the most determined of **Border Reiver** raids.

All guests to **Denton Hall** should quickly appreciate its exceptional setting. Look north from the livery yard across the **Irthing** valley towards the near horizon and the largely ghostly course of **Hadrian's Wall**, a relic from classical history. Yet the tapestry of subsequent ages is writ large on this landscape; subdued sheep pasture cannot hide the echoes of the turbulent centuries that followed the fall of Rome. That sense of the past can be best appreciated by undertaking a near-country walk in the lee of the great park of **Naworth Castle**, first port of call the sequestered vale of **Lanercost**.

**DISTANCE** 8½km/5¼ miles 3½ hours

**MAP** Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 315

**AD122 BUS** Visits **Lanercost**, **Banks** and **Pike Hill** during its regular summer service.

## THE WALK



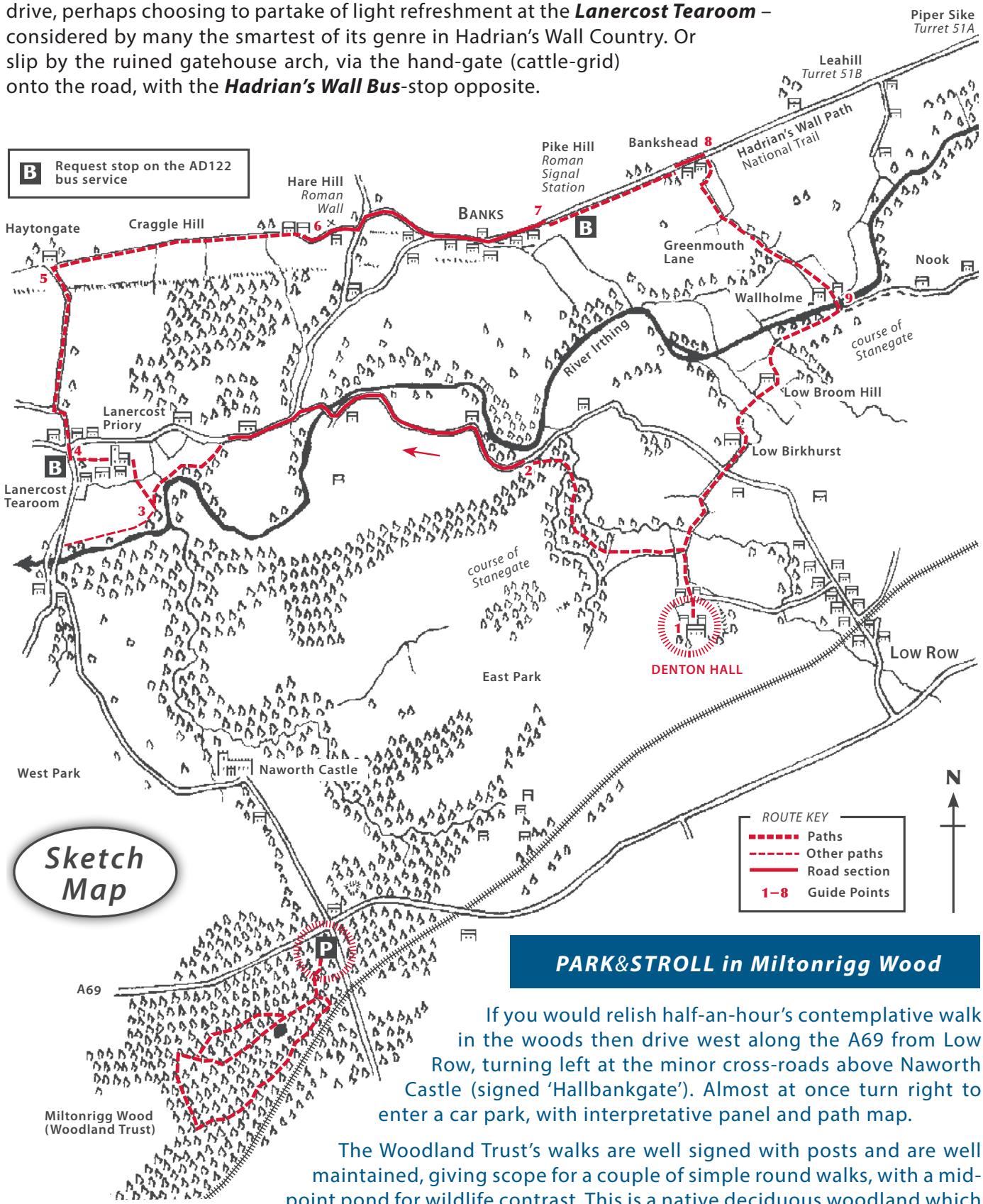
Lanercost Bridge

**1** Walk out from the yard to the access paddock gate and bear left guided by yellow footpath waymarking. Pass between the low stone hovel and the portal barn. Go through a kissing-gate and follow the track down to a galvanised gate. After which bear immediately left, following the fence/hedge to a stile and ford. Draw across the pasture with a fenced bank to the left. Coming by a mature oak contour to a fence-stile, enter **Pottsleugh Wood**. The bluebells by the stile are at once consumed by dense conifers, through which the path is channelled. Duly, birch replaces the lifeless Sitka tunnel, consistent waymarking keeps you firmly routed upon what is now a lovely woodland way coming by a wall to meet a **Naworth Estate** track. This is not a right-of-way, so pass the twin galvanised gates onto the road.

**2** Turn left following the low-hedged road by **Holmehead**. After **St Mary's Holme** cross the **Irthing** road-bridge to reach a road junction (with **Denton Hall B&B** notice). Keep forward, soon upon a roadside footpath by **Island Cottages**. Incidentally, the **Lanercost** parish sign depicts the head of **King Edward I**, should you be querying the bearded face. With his court, the '**Hammer of the Scots**' requisitioned **Lanercost Priory** in 1306, their six-month stay impoverishing the resident **Augustinian canons**. Before the **Primary School** find a kissing-gate inviting you away from the road signed 'Lanercost Bridge'. The

footpath naturally follows the line of the fence, then tree-line, to and through a gateway passing the rapidly eroding riverbanks to reach a three-way signpost. You may continue to **Lanercost Bridge** to inspect the elegant (foot) bridge, fortunately relieved of traffic bearing duty in the 1960s.

**3** Otherwise, turn sharp right as directed on the three-way signpost 'Priory'. Cross the meadow to a hand-gate and venture through to enter the churchyard, adjacent to the **English Heritage** precinct. Pervading a pious air the pink-toned masonry reflects the warmth of ancient summers. The Augustinian canons 'borrowed' the ready-tooled stone from the **Roman Wall**, bringing it downhill by the cart-load. In fact the wall bounding the priory garth looks like a mini-Roman Wall. You can indulge good time both looking within the parish church of **St Mary Magdalene** and, supported by an audio guide, within the English Heritage portion of the ruins (entry fee). Standing beside the front of the church is the old rectory, considered old enough in part to have been the temporary residence of **Edward I**. Wander out along the approach drive, perhaps choosing to partake of light refreshment at the **Lanercost Tearoom** – considered by many the smartest of its genre in Hadrian's Wall Country. Or slip by the ruined gatehouse arch, via the hand-gate (cattle-grid) onto the road, with the **Hadrian's Wall Bus-stop** opposite.



**PARK&STROLL in Miltonrigg Wood**

If you would relish half-an-hour's contemplative walk in the woods then drive west along the A69 from Low Row, turning left at the minor cross-roads above Naworth Castle (signed 'Hallbankgate'). Almost at once turn right to enter a car park, with interpretative panel and path map.

The Woodland Trust's walks are well signed with posts and are well maintained, giving scope for a couple of simple round walks, with a mid-point pond for wildlife contrast. This is a native deciduous woodland which has been coppiced. The southern portion, spliced by the railway, verges on damp peaty ground where birch predominates. But in the main it is a lovely oak wood, with every chance of hearing a diversity of bird song and a fleeting glance at roe deer. *All entirely on the flat, it's the perfect place to idly amble.*

4 Turn right, and at the junction bear up the lane between the houses heading north. Where this bends, go right over the grid rising with the metalled lane to **Haytongate**. At the top look through the rank hedge to find a garden gazebo adapted for the use of **Hadrian's Wall Path** trekkers, an honesty box provided to avail of the fridge-stored refreshment.

5 Turn right, accompanying the National Trail upon the line of the 'lost' Hadrian's Wall up onto Craggle Hill – don't you just love this name? Lost as in all the stones have found service in a diversity of structures in the area, the very best at **Lanercost Priory** itself. The view from **Craggle Hill** is most striking to the west towards the Solway lowlands backed by Criffel. The trail is suitably equipped with kissing-gates to **Harehill Farm**, watch the mud short of the access lane. Follow the lane down to discover your first section of real **Roman Wall**.

6 Step off the road and give the tall Wall some study. 3m high, the core is original, the facing stones added in the C19th. Find on the north face a centurial stone, with the letters 'PP', this referred to a primus pilus, or senior centurion of the first cohort. This was discovered two fields away and inserted during the Victorian reconstruction. Two hundred years ago **William Hutton** commented "I viewed this relick with admiration, I saw no part higher". At the foot of the lane bear left and first right, the road jinking off the strict line of the Wall. Rising up through the hamlet of **Banks**, a name that suggests, in origin, recognition of the earthworks associated with the Roman frontier.

7 The trail follows on with the road and, beyond the houses, finds a field-side fenced passage adjacent right. Come upon a turret and length of authentic re-constructed Wall, after which a car park provides a popular station to look across the **Irthing valley** towards the **North Pennines** and half-right to the distant **Lakeland** fells, with **Blencathra** and **Skiddaw** prominent. Ahead, largely obscured by rank hedge growth half-left, see a gothic-arched limekiln. The trail heads along a further confined passage to reach **Pike Hill Roman signal station**. Notice that the base of this structure sits at an awkward angle to the west/east alignment of the Roman Wall. This is because it was built before Hadrian's grand design as a signalling beacon (the mobile phone of its time). Continue within the field until forced back onto the road short of **Bankshead**.

8 At the farmyard entrance (camping barn) at **Bankshead**, go through the yard via gates and swing right below the yard within the field on a track advancing by a bath-tub to a wooden gate. Swing left by a second tub, descending **Greenmouth Lane**, passing a holly bush to go through a hand-gate. Continue in harmony with the old drove lane, a damp hollow-way down into a pasture to a wooden gate. It's now a green drove-way with mature trees on the bank to the right coming down by rustic gates to **Wallholme Farm**.



Senior centurion primus pilus at Hare Hill

9 Cross the access bridge over the **Irthing** and bear right, classed as a by-road signed 'Crookstown' (hence the red waymark arrows). At the end of the pasture dip down the bank, cross the stile and footbridge left of the gate. Follow on up the shallow hollow-way with fence right to ascend the pasture bank close left of the barn on the brow. Go right crossing the open access track to the island cottage, **Low Broom Hill**, with four-way footpath sign.

Follow the pointer to Low Birkhurst. Traverse the pasture to a strand of briefly barbless barbed wire plank and subsequent stile. Follow on beside the rank hedge to a galvanised gate and then bear half-left up beside the bank, to come alongside the concrete block shed and beyond, by the fence, to a galvanised gate onto the access track at **Low Birkhurst**. Follow this up the rise by the pigeon loft to reach the minor road. Go straight over within a green lane. From the gate at the end drift leftward with the damp sunken way down to a ford/stepping stones of **Carling Gill**, a Viking name which translates as 'the old woman's stream'. Follow on with the farm track re-uniting with the walk's beginning, via gates rising to **Denton Hall** yard.

#### VERDANT PAGEANT OF THE IRTHING

**IN A NUTSHELL** A merry green wander by pasture paths, quiet droveways and through a secret wooded gorge, with a delightful beachcombing passage at its outset. So close to Hadrian's Wall yet touching on a Roman road that preceded Hadrian's decree. The valley section of the walk, linking the mirrored meadows of two riverside farms, holds attention on a tight twist in the river caused by a rib of resilient carboniferous rock. **Comb Crag** woodland is a Nature Reserve managed as a detached part of the **Geltsdale RSPB** estate - red squirrel have their defenders here against the onslaught of their unwelcome long-tailed rodent cousin, the American grey.

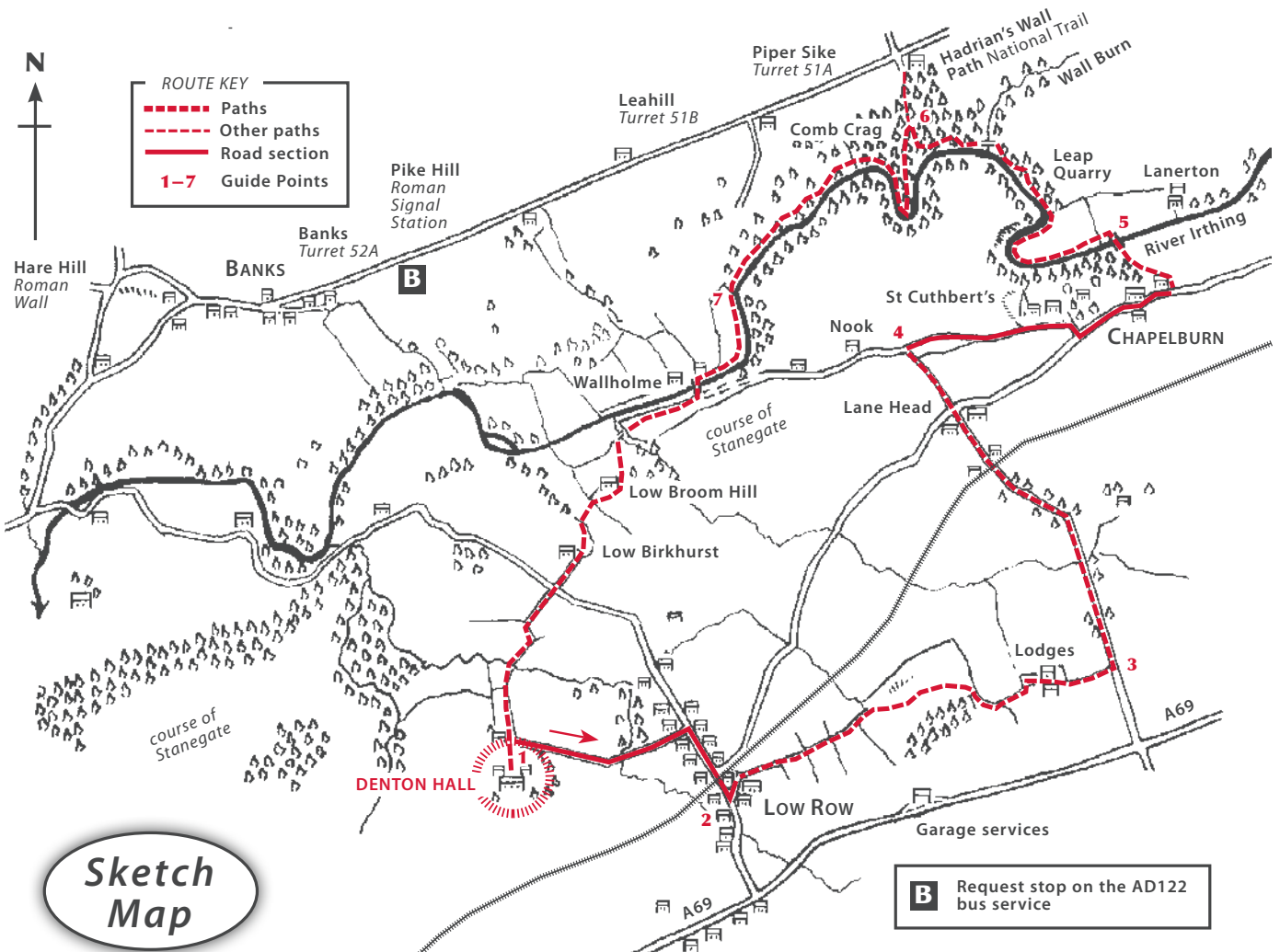
**DISTANCE** 8km/5 miles 3 hours

**MAP** Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 315/43

#### THE WALK

**1** Stroll back along the gated country lane that forms **Denton Hall's** union with **Low Row**. Reaching the main street turn right, passing by the Old School rise to the level-crossing. A train normally passes every half-hour so your progress may be interrupted by a couple of minutes while the crossing gates are down.

**2** Beyond the level-crossing, spot a footpath signed 'Lodges' pointing left. Follow the side road, its alignment suggests it preceded the arrival of the railway, it forms the access to the smart modern signal box and the **Railway Inn**, presently closed and for sale. At the end a further footpath sign directs you along a field passage to a stile.





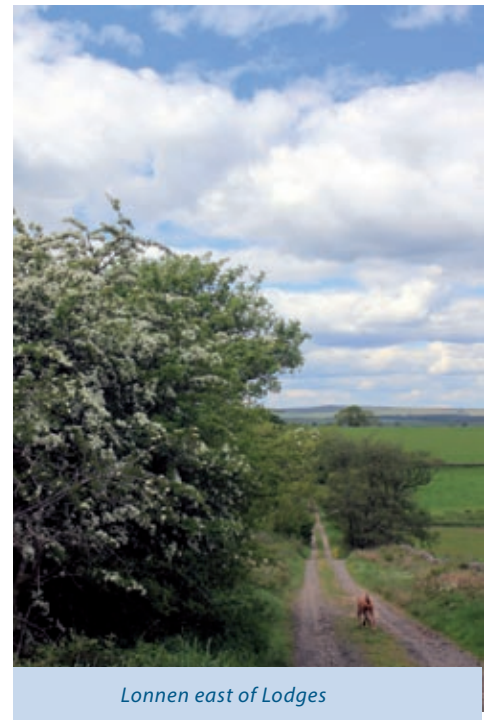
Field-path east of Low Row

Traverse a sequence of pasture fields cross two ladder-stiles, keeping a wall close left to a gate. Now keep with the green way and the foundation of a wall right with a shallow quarried rocky knoll left. This raised ground gives a fine stance to survey the view north across the Irthing valley to the near horizon, where once ran **Hadrian's Wall**, and beyond towards **Gillalees Beacon**, where the Romans set a beacon creating smoke-signal communication between the outpost fort at **Bewcastle** (Fanum Cocidi) with **Birdoswald** (Banna). At the end of the pasture come to a string-tied hurdle, where join a rough track which curves by the left-hand wall coming to a wall-stile with footpath sign. Cross and follow the

wall passing beneath a line of sycamore trees; at a corrugated shed heed the waymarking left and right via gates advancing to the farmhouse of **Lodges**. A gate gives access through the concreted yard and out along the access track to gate onto a lonnen (green lane) descending from the A69.

**3** Turn left, then descend and rise before a further quick descent brings you to the **Lanehead** level-crossing. You are obliged to press the buzzer and wait for the man in the cabin opposite to ring, advising his controller at the Low Row signal box of his need to open the railway gate. Duly he comes over and unlocks the padlock and allows you over, doubtless exchanging a conversation about life and his contribution to your safety. And it is true, trains are frequent enough to be a real hazard for the unwary. Complete the descent with plenty of noisy clucking from the free-range hens adjacent. Go straight over the road into the narrow and old hollow-way, leading down to an unenclosed by-road.

**4** A left turn to Wallholme would almost halve your walk and more significantly rob you of the highlight of your journey, the **Comb Crag gorge**. So unless time is of essence, turn right and follow the tarmac - latterly in harmony with the Roman road, which since the middle ages has become known as **Stanegate** (the stone road). The prominent church ahead, **St Cuthbert's** and its graveyard, rest full-square upon the banked outline of an innominate **Stanegate** fort, a contemporary of and connected with, the more illustrious **Vindolanda**. There is a Roman stone altar at the church door as a gentle reminder of long-past Roman age. Follow the lane to its



Lonnen east of Lodges

junction with the **Chapelburn** road. Turning left pass through the hamlet. Watch for a bridleway sign after the last house, called **White House**. This guides by The Barn conversion to a hand-gate. Head down the ramp into the meadow, with a tumbling burn close left. Advance to the suspension footbridge beside a seldom-crossed ford. The bridge is impressive and must have cost a pretty penny, it gives a sensation is of rocking boat. Taking a photo from its midst is nigh-on impossible, even so much as a dog walks across, the vibrations are so sensitive.



A spot of beachcombing

**5** On the far bank go left via a gate keeping close company with the riverbank. At the bend venture onto the stony shingle if the river is low enough - the mixture of stones is fascinating. The writer spotted a fossilised giant fernstone and an array of colourful stones from disparate origins, as well as washed down water-worn bricks. Regain the bank, watch for the great rock step in the riverbed where it falls a good metre. When the river is in strong flow this is an amazing linear fall. A fence-stile spells entry into the gorge. Early on the path runs along a concrete shelf, a costly addition, vital to provide the basis of a path where the violent action of the river had washed it away. The path next runs on beneath an old cliff, known



River Irthing in the gorge

as **Leap Quarry**, where the bedding planes give a jolly view of the geology. The path undulates through the typical debris and life of a living wood before coming over an elegant little bridge spanning **Wall Burn**. Great fractured bedrock form the bed of the burn, which flows swiftly into the main river. It's an impressive place to stand at the bottom of the burn looking up. The continuing path duly comes to a rising turn as the primary ridge intervenes, curving up to a rock cutting right at heart of the **Comb Crag gorge... and much rock cutting it has too!** There is all manner of graffiti names and dates, with Wood-Warden 1850 the



Ridge-top path

tidiest, suggesting it was chiselled by a mason on behalf of the named-person. See if you can spot the large Victorian benchmark, on the leading corner.

**6** You can either follow the path right - this leads up to the **National Trail at Comb Crag Farm** - or it is a further way to continue downstream. By far the more enjoyable route is left, along the spine of the ridge, adorned with bilberry, heather and Scots pines. As you descend, notice the pines at the foot, closest to the river's edge. Being protected from climatic torment they are outrageously tall in contrast to those on the ridge-top. Follow on naturally to a path junction and go left, hopping over a small burn to reach and go through a wicket-gate. The path contours with some notable damp ground in a light woodland environment, crossing stiles to exit the wood altogether.

**7** Keep the riverside fence close left beside the stone flood-bank and continue with the fence all the way to a gate at **Wallholme Bridge**. Cross the access bridge over the **Irthing** and bear right, classed a by-road signed 'Crookstown' (hence the red waymark arrows). At the end of the pasture dip down the bank and cross the stile and footbridge left of the gate. Continue on up the shallow hollow-way with fence right, ascend the pasture bank close left of the barn on the brow. Go right crossing the open access track to the island cottage, **Low Broom Hill**, notice with four-way footpath sign. Follow the pointer to 'Low Birkhurst' traversing the pasture to a strand of briefly barbless barbed wire plank and subsequent stile.



Victorian front of Denton Hall

Follow on beside the rank hedge to a galvanised gate, then bear half-left up beside the bank, to come alongside the concrete block shed and beyond, by the fence to a galvanised gate, onto the access track at **Low Birkhurst**. Follow this up the rise by the pigeon loft to reach the minor road. Go straight over within a green lane. From the gate at the end, drift leftward with the damp sunken way down to a ford/stepping stones of **Carling Gill**. Follow on with the track re-uniting with the walk, opening strides rising via gates to the livery-yard of **Denton Hall**.

# Denton Hall Farmhouse

Luxury 4 Star Bed & Breakfast



**Denton Hall** is a lovely country house boasting unique period features. Both the building and its immediate environs are hosts to medieval structures of considerable historical interest. This comfortable home is a great place to soak up the atmosphere of times past with the sensitively restored original stonework presenting a warm, characterful aura the moment you cross the threshold.

Two of the bedrooms look out towards Hadrian's Wall and Pike Hill with its signal tower predating the Roman Emperor's fortification. The third guest room looks over the paddock and ancient motte to the farmland beyond and there is a cosy guest sitting room with comfy sofa and chairs for you to relax.

With two family rooms and one double room (all en suite), we welcome everyone - from single travellers to groups of eight. We can also provide kennels, if required, but clean, well behaved dogs are welcome within the house. Please chat with us about the options.



Denton Hall Farmhouse, Low Row, Brampton, Cumbria, United Kingdom, CA8 2JA

[www.dentonhallfarmhouse.co.uk](http://www.dentonhallfarmhouse.co.uk)

016977 46412

## CRAMMEL LINN via Hadrian's Wall and Gilsland Spa

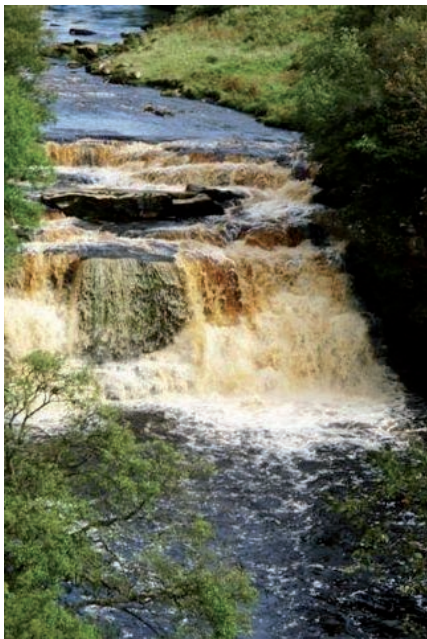
**IN A NUTSHELL** A circular valley walk with several possible variants tempting you into the richly wooded gorge by the Popping Stone and venturing on to the spectacular cataract of Crammel Linn, in the upper reaches of the Irthing. Return by Gilsland Spa, with its sulphurous well and the village of Gilsland. The sub-plot to a quest for fabulous relics of Hadrian's Wall, accessed from the National Trail.

**FULL CIRCULAR** 15km/9¼ miles 4¾ hours

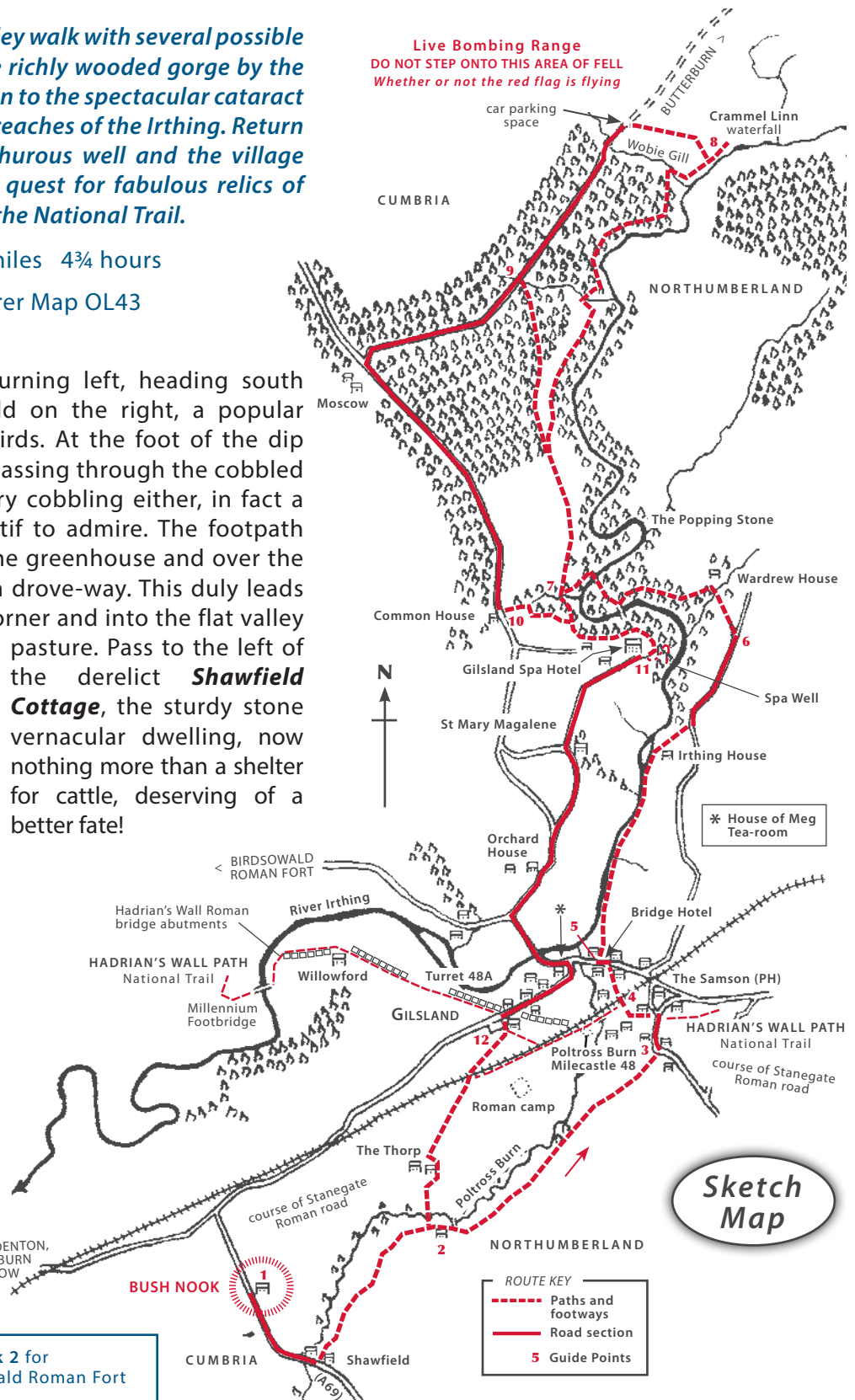
**MAP** Ordnance Survey Explorer Map OL43

### THE WALK

**1** Step out onto the road turning left, heading south - notice the pool in the field on the right, a popular transitory resort of wading birds. At the foot of the dip turn left signed 'Gilsland 1¼' passing through the cobbled yard of **Shawfield**. No ordinary cobbling either, in fact a quite remarkable circular motif to admire. The footpath goes through a gate beside the greenhouse and over the subsequent stile onto a green drove-way. This duly leads down to a gate in the fence corner and into the flat valley pasture. Pass to the left of the derelict **Shawfield Cottage**, the sturdy stone vernacular dwelling, now nothing more than a shelter for cattle, deserving of a better fate!



Crammel Linn, in summer spate



Consult **BUSH NOOK Walk 2** for the Comb Crag gorge and Birdoswald Roman Fort





**2** Step through the mud passing on by the double-gates. The footpath heads on as a green track above the **Poltross Burn** over a minor ford to a ladder-stile, then by a green way sheltered by a conifer copse with a gorse bank right. Advance to come beside a field boundary curving right to meet the road in **Gilsland** at a gate.

**3** Turn left walking down the road by **Crooks Cottage**, coming to the crossing point of Hadrian's Wall Path, with its distinctive white acorn logo. Turn left through the kissing-gate following the trail past the site of the old Gilsland livestock market pens, on the line of **Hadrian's Wall** itself, though only the faint banks of the Wall ditch are visible

ahead, after the next kissing-gate. The path ushers right to a kissing-gate and a colourful interpretative panel adjacent to the old **Gilsland Spa Station**. Go left in the passage.

**4** Quickly you come to a point of choice. If you are intent on matters Roman then you are encouraged to continue through the door and down the steps to cross the Poltross footbridge, climbing the corresponding flight of steps to arrive at **Poltross Burn Milecastle 48**. This was composed of a barrack and stabling block and, a rare survival, the original base steps (*see above*) would have led onto the Wall parapet. Your Roman Wall quest can continue with the **National Trail** which crosses the railway; 'stop, look and listen' via facing hand-gates and descend the pasture ramp, step over a flag bridge and along the flag path leading to the road, between the village car park and **Primary School**. Note the, with pride, OFSTED 'Outstanding' award on the school panel, a mighty achievement for so small a school. The National Trail leads right then left along the farm access track to **Willowford**, a fine opportunity to inspect more sections of **Roman Wall** and a turret, **48A**, showing off Broad Wall connecting wings. The turret was built ahead of the Wall and before the decision to narrow the Wall's width. Where the farm track slips through the 'lost' line of the Wall and into the deep Wall ditch, the Trail runs on, fenced tight to the Wall. Stepping down a decking and across the farm track at the entrance to the farmyard, head on down the flight of steps beside the Wall to visit the **Roman bridge abutment**. *Consult BUSH NOOK Walk 2 for the continuing story to Birdoswald - though be aware, it is described FROM the Roman Fort!*

Walkers with their mind set on **Crammel Linn** should turn right, passing under the railway and down the steps through the 'adventurous' children's playground - don't you just love the slide and the zip wire? Coming to the street, turn left.

**5** *House of Meg Tea-rooms are handy at the road junction beyond the Bridge Hotel (subject to seasonal opening)*. However, the thread of the walk turns right at the kiosk, upon the footpath signed '**Irthing House**'. The path keeps close company with the river coming past **Irthing House** to a fence-stile, rising up the pasture bank to another fence-stile onto the minor road. Go left passing by a scenically sited seat facing across the valley to **Gilsland Spa**, continue over a cattle-grid, after which watch for the fork in the open road.

**6** Take the left-hand option signed '**Wardrew House**', via the plank and stile to avoid the cattle-grid. Where a footpath is signed left, off the drive, follow this path left via two stiles, the latter with a welcoming **Woodland Trust** notice affixed. The path naturally veers right beside a fence with the gorge woodland to the left. Formerly a metal fence had protected the track from the slope and it is strange to find a remnant gate part-way down the inclining shelf-way: an improbable site, what can have been its practical purpose? The track comes down to an impressive footbridge spanning the **River Irthing**, which rises in the extensive forest lands to the north and can rise rapidly in stormy weather. Do not cross the Irthing at this point. Instead go right through the hand-gate passing the **Irthing Gorge Woodland** interpretative panel advancing to a second long footbridge; this time accept the invitation and stride across with handsome views of the broad **River Irthing**, thus crossing from **Northumberland** into **Cumbria**, from **North-East to North-West England**, a linguistic regional divide, though birds sing in no different harmony! Bear left rising with the trail into the wooded dingle, via a kissing-gate.

**7** Coming to a small plank bridge, find a footpath signed right '**Butterburn Road**'. Step up this narrow trod right to a fence-stile and traverse the oft damp pasture keeping along the top of woodland.



After a plank bridge watch for the tall waymark posts, which line up the path in a long rushy pasture traverse to a ladder-stile spanning a wall. Two paths lead on from here, the left-hand path leads to **Butterburn Road** and can be your line of return. But the outwalk follows the path bearing half-right, still sustained by a sequence of tall waymark posts (*lichen on several see left*), keeping along the upper fringe of light native woodland at the lip of the gorge. Coming over a ford, angle through a wall gap with a permissive path notice. The path swings left over a plank bridge and through a birch corridor to exit the woodland at a fence-stile. Drop by a large erratic boulder to hop over **Wobiegill Sike** and turn into the fenced passage with some further damp moments to reach the viewing spot to admire **Crammel Linn**.

**8** The term 'linn' refers to the pool in front of the fall. In Welsh the term Llyn means a lake. Step back to cross the fence-stile and rise up the rough pasture to gain a higher view of the cataract and the wild moorland setting. The path is guided left at the fence corner and traverses the damp moor to reach the open road at a lay-by. Whatever you do don't wander on the open ground to the north of the road: this is a live army training area, with real bombs, or what certainly sound like real bombs - they can make you jolt when they go off! Follow the road left passing the range notices to cross the cattle-grid. The road is your guide into a coniferous countryside. You have the choice of either following the road to the **Moscow Farm** junction with the busier Military road where you turn left to just short of **Common House**. Or, renewing your acquaintance with the rough bounds of the forest by following the footpath signed "**Gilsland Spa**" crossing the fence-stile. This leads down a break to regain the ladder-stile crossed on the outwalk, thereby retracing your steps to the dingle above the Irthing gorge (at point 7), only this time follow the graded path on up to a path junction drawing close to **Gilsland Spa Hotel**.

**10** Should you have followed the road this point can be reached neatly by going through the unsigned kissing-gate (stiff) and down the pasture to a second kissing-gate (loose). The path enters the upper dingle keeping right to reach the path junction. Now continue along the level hedge/fence lined path around by the hotel car park to join the approach road. A visit to the **Spa Well** can be considered, set below the grounds.

**11** Follow the access road footway passing the church, turning left coming down by the handsome pale green **Orchard House** to the junction with the road to **Birdoswald**. Keep to the footway crossing the river bridge entering the village of **Gilsland** by Gordon Graham's yellow-lorry yard. Bear right passing **House of Meg Tea-rooms** (or more than likely stop for a welcome cuppa). Follow the road passing up by the **Methodist Chapel** crossing the line of Hadrian's Wall amid a sorry sight of a collapsing house and poached pasture. The **Primary School** by stark comparison is a model of achievement and hope.

**12** Join the National Trail where it breaks off the road left via a kissing-gate, striding along the line of flags to go over the flag bridge and bear right, off the line of **Hadrian's Wall Path**, to reach a crossing point of the railway, by facing ladder-stiles. Bear up half-right (damp ground and mud difficult to avoid en route to a gate). Continue on the same rising line to pass to the left of the new barn via a hurdle gate to go through a wall-stile in the enclosure corner.

Now very much within the environs of **The Throp Farm**: turn left, via a double-gate, following the walled lane down to a gate and continuing forward towards a footbridge. The intervening flat meadow is prone to marshiness, but does not impede a straight course. Cross the **Poltross Burn** footbridge to rejoin the outwalk bearing right, en route to **Shawfield**.



Red alert on the range



Gilsland Spa Hotel

## BIRDOSWALD ROMAN FORT via the Comb Crag gorge

**IN A NUTSHELL** A magical frontier discovery trail rich in intriguing heritage and scenic splendour. En route visit Upper Denton Bastle and the old church of St Cuthbert, an ancient saintly trail. Journey on to Chapelburn to explore the Comb Crag gorge nature reserve. Climbing onto the near horizon, stride on in the company of Hadrian's Wall upon its National Trail to inspect Birdoswald Roman Fort. Beyond, descend to cross the Millennium footbridge over the Irthing and pass the Roman Bridge abutment at Willowford, and so venture on to reach the village of Gilsland, before backtracking via The Throp.

**FULL CIRCULAR** 11¼km/7¼ miles 4 hours

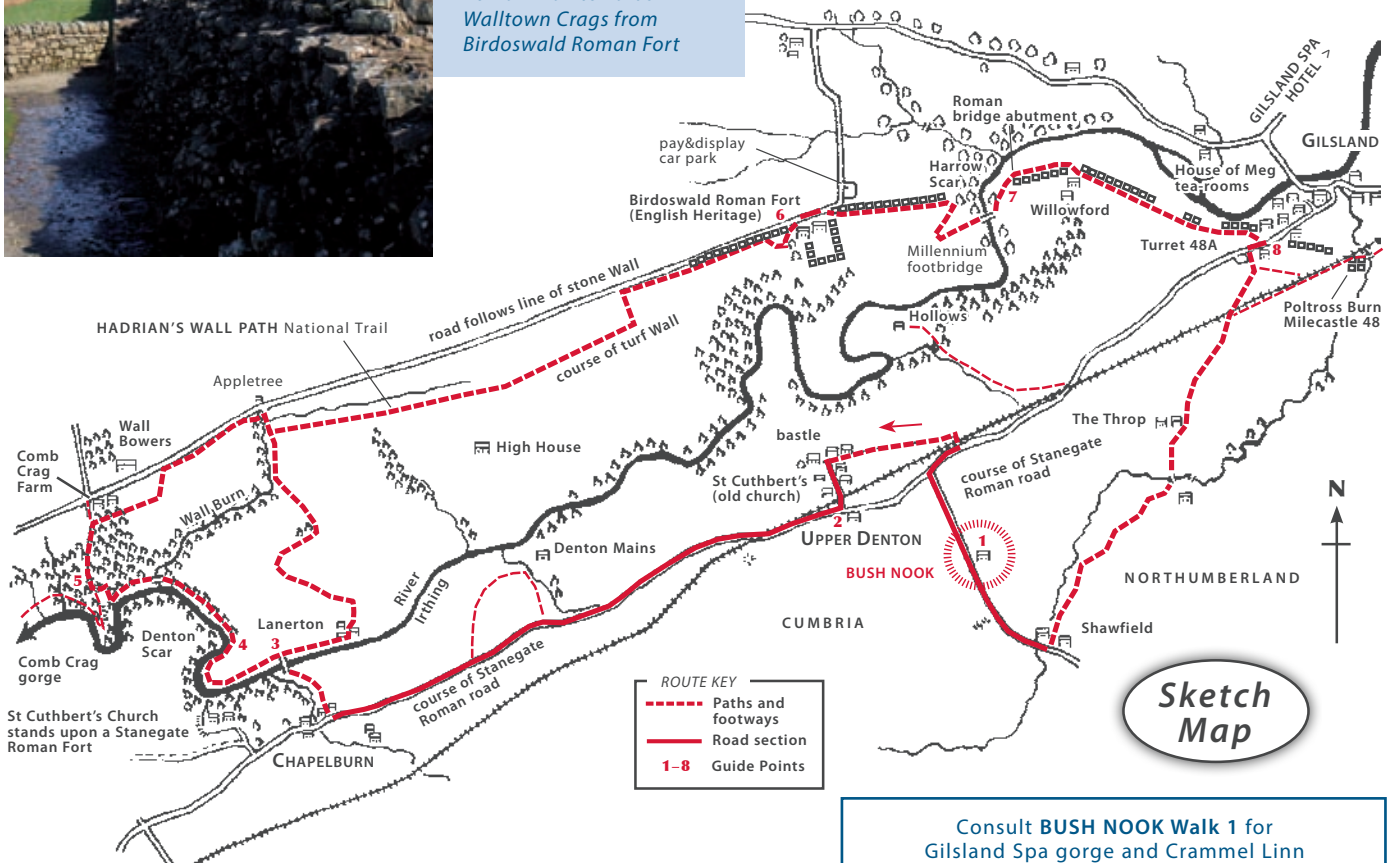
**MAP** Ordnance Survey Explorer Map OL43

### THE WALK

**1** Step out onto the road turning right, heading north. At the road junction keep right to find a footpath signposted left '**Upper Denton**'. This crosses the busy railway by facing gates - take care! Entering the field, turn left through the near gate to take a long diagonal line, part-right with evidence of use confirming the line of the ground. By gates go through a fenced paddock in the farmyard, a concrete roadway leading onto the quiet street, in the hamlet of **Upper Denton**. Immediately right at the lane-end see the roofless remains of a bastle, an iron frame inset to help secure the historic building, one of only a few late-medieval defended farm-houses to survive. It would make a magnificent house, all the more so because it faces north to the near wooded scarp horizon of **Birdoswald Roman Fort**.



Looking east along the Roman Wall towards Walltown Craggs from Birdoswald Roman Fort





Adjacent is a sleeping churchyard, the privet occasional trimmed, leading to a further relic of better times: **St Cuthbert's (seen left)**, retired from active service as a house of God, but retaining some lovely external detail, the lead guttering bearing the date 1881. Turn left and carefully go through the facing hand-gates at the level crossing, the adjacent portacabin remarkably manned - a chance for a conversation perhaps?

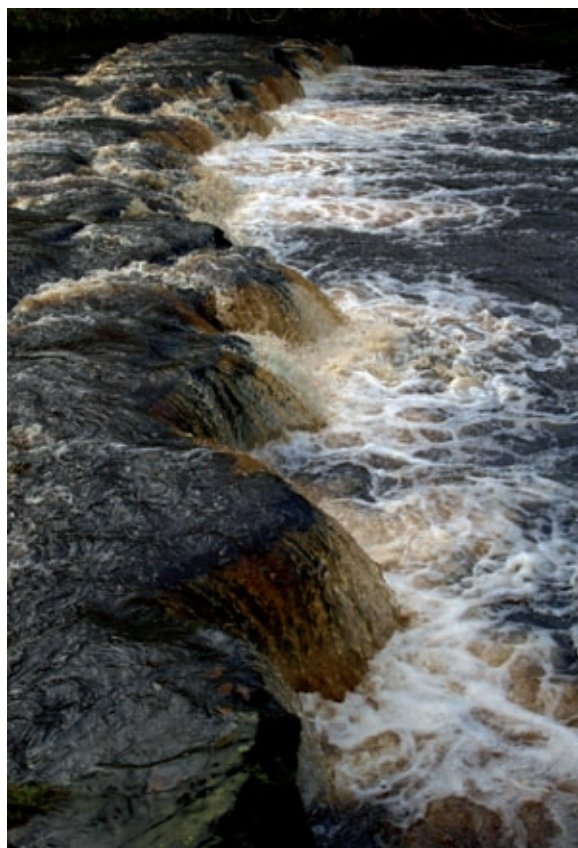
**2** At the junction turn right retaining company with the minor road to **Chapelburn**. The road lies faithfully on the course of Stanegate. So you are in fact right on a Roman frontier, the edge of empire before Emperor Hadrian made his momentous visit in 122AD. At the first house on the right in the hamlet bear right - a brideway sign directing by the White House -

through a garden to a hand-gate and down a greenway into the meadow, with a lovely little waterfall to admire on the left in **Chapel Burn** itself. The path arrives on a hollow-way leading to a daunting ford of the **River Irthing**, but the cavalry have come to our rescue as a handsome suspension bridge has been set up to simplify our crossing. You may find the lateral motion interesting, though the structure is immensely secure, impressively so!

**3** Once standing in the meadow on the northern bank, you have two choices. The swifter option, enjoying spacious views, turns right. Follow the river-bank upstream to go through the gated farmyard at **Lanerton**, rising with its approach track winding up the hill to connect with **Hadrian's Wall Path** by **Wall Burn**.

But the really magical moments are to be found within the wooded **Comb Crag** gorge, a treasure trove of wildlife, particularly song birds. Hence, turn left downstream via the near gate in the fence. Once across turn left and go through the field-gate in the meadow-partitioning fence. Keep company with the river along the meadow's edge with a high wooded bank on the far side. The river swings right creating a large stony shore, which is really worth beach-combing; the variety of pebbles is amazing. I spotted a water worn Kirkhouse brick and what appeared to be the remains of a geologically ancient giant fern stone. The river-name describes the rich dark earthy tone; it is a healthy river for all that, caused by the intensity of peat carried in suspension, the river-source being the massive peaty wastes of **Paddaburn** and **Butterburn Flow** amongst the dense conifers of **Spadeadam Forest**. The river tumbles over a three-foot step in the river-bed providing the first excitement as the gorge proper is entered ([see below](#)).

**4** The footpath crosses a fence-stile and strides along a concrete platform, fit for a harbour landing-stage. The path steps off and runs below the old **Leap Quarry** cliff - spot the bird-box set into the rocks. Rising over a bluff it descends and crosses a single arch-bridge over **Wall Burn**; one wonders why such a beautiful little bridge was constructed here, it looks Victorian. The burn cascades down a solid rock bed. The name **Wall Burn** gives a clue to another nearby historic feature. Higher up, the stream slices through **Hadrian's Wall** in the vicinity of turrets 50B. The plural because there have indeed been two, one on the turf Wall and one on the stone Wall, almost a unique moment as the two frontier features ran on separate courses at that point. Hereon the gorge path advances to turn sharp right and climbs easily up the woodland bank beneath a large broken cliff of sandstone. Again there is evidence of ancient quarrying, in all probability Roman. Coming up to a rock-cutting there is a three-way footpath sign. The cutting has been afflicted by names and letters always interesting to observe, the oldest I spotted was a 'Wood-Warden 1850', though somewhere in this vicinity there is said to be **Roman graffiti** too. The most eye-catching is the Ordnance Survey benchmark on the left-hand side - an arrow pointing to a precise indent spot on the corner.



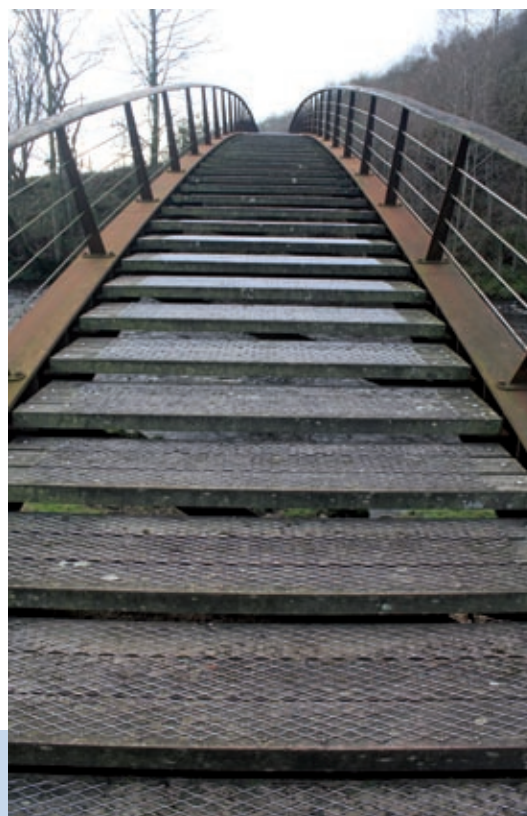
**5** Follow the footpath right leading towards **Comb Crag Farm**, meeting up with **Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail**. Go right through the woodland with the Trail exit by a kissing-gate. Follow on with the fence left to bear up left as directed to the turf banked outline of **Milecastle 51**. The fencing ushers the path beside the roadside wall, installed to segregate walkers from cattle. A small footbridge spans **Wall Burn** at the top of a line of beech trees to join the **Lanerton** farm-access track. Go right, soon coming to the steps and kissing-gate putting the trail on course beside the line of the turf Wall. Follow on with this via several further kissing-gates till a wall-stile spells an end. Cross and turn down left beside the field-wall to meet the roadside-wall, turning east soon encountering the emerging remains of **Hadrian's Wall**. Pass **Turret 49B**. The path leads on via kissing-gates veering part-right into the trees close to **Birdoswald Roman Fort**. The path bears left and comes onto the road at the authentic rounded corner of the fort.

**6** The **English Heritage** site deserves every second you can spare - the reception/café a sufficient excuse to pause your energetic ramblings at the very least! The **National Trail** steps onto the road and runs through a fringe of trees to enter the pasture with the restored **Roman Wall** close left. See an odd drain feature and thirty strides on keen eyes might spot the Roman 'good luck' raised-relief phallus (*see right*). There is another two-thirds of the way to the end of this lovely long stretch of Wall. The path steps over the remains of **Milecastle 49** onto the track and follows this right, down the steep incline. The track to the **Underheugh** meadow is vacated where a stone waymark directs left, via flag steps cutting back via a kissing-gate to reach the elegant **Millennium footbridge**, installed in 1999. Once across bear left and via three kissing-gates enter the confines of the Roman bridge abutment. You can judge the erosive shift of the **River Irthing** over the intervening nineteen centuries. The **Harrow Scar** bank is much steeper today than when the Wall ran up from the **Roman river-bridge**, perhaps a chariotway accompanying the span over the river. The native growth of trees suffers from the continual shifting ground even now. Read the information panel which shows the various phases of the Roman bridge during almost three-hundred years of its active frontier life.



**7** The path is fence confined to steps running up to the entrance to **Willowford** farm-yard. Notice on the small barn to the left an engraved Roman stone (read plaque). You may either follow the farm-access track running within the exaggerated Wall ditch, or venture, by the decking, with the Path, fence-confined beside the restored Wall. Emerging at the end kissing-gate, follow on with the farm access track passing **Turret 48A**. You'll see **Broad Wall** 'wings' to the turret. This shows that the structure was constructed not only before the connecting Wall but before the decision came to narrow the lateral dimensions. Further along, before meeting the road, you will see Broad Wall foundations beside the Wall. A hand-gate/cattle-grid puts the National Trail onto the village street beside **Roman Wall Villa**.

**8** Turn right and immediately after the **Primary School**, keep to the National Trail which turns left along a flag path to a flag bridge, where it breaks off the road left via a kissing-gate. Striding along the line of flags go over the flag bridge and bear right, off the line of **Hadrian's Wall Path**, to reach a crossing point of the railway, by facing ladder-stiles. Bear up half-right, damp ground and mud difficult to avoid en route to a gate. Continue on the same rising line to pass to the left of the new barn via a hurdle gate to go through a wall-stile in the enclosure corner - now very much within the environs of The **Throp Farm**. Turn left, via a double-gate, following the walled lane down to a gate and continuing forward towards a footbridge; the intervening flat meadow is prone to marshiness, but does not impede a straight course. Cross the **Poltross Burn** footbridge to rejoin the outwalk, bearing right, en route to **Shawfield**.



Millennium footbridge spanning the River Irthing close under Harrow Scar

# Bush Nook

## Guest House & Self Catering



Experience the wildness, freshness, culture and two millenia of history.

Bush Nook Guest House situated within the wonderful Hadrian's Wall countryside, overlooks Birdoswald Roman Fort and the River Irthing valley at Gilsland, with panoramic views east to Northumberland National Park, Keilder Forest and north over the "debatable land" of Reiver history to the Scottish Lowlands.

The area around Bush Nook has numerous opportunities to be active, with excellent walking and cycling routes to suit all abilities. Likewise the openness of the countryside, peacefulness, and fresh air, enable those wishing to have a restful holiday to be equally contented.



Bush Nook, Upper Denton, Gilsland, Cumbria, CA8 7AF

[www.bushnook.co.uk](http://www.bushnook.co.uk)

016977 47194



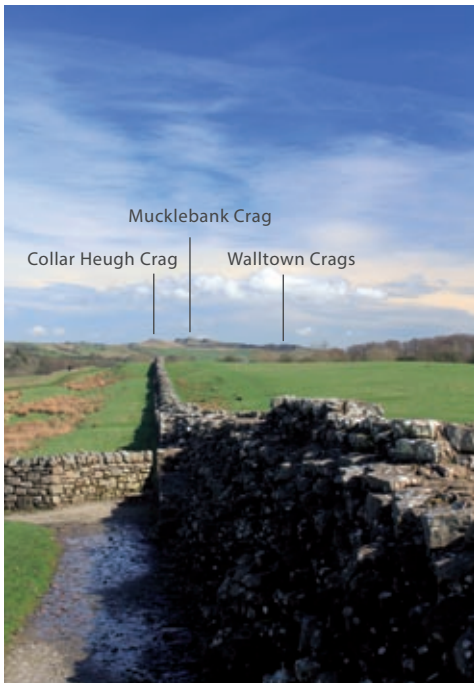
## TO ROME AND BACK IN TWO HOURS via Birdoswald and Gilsland

Revel in this exceptionally scenic corner of the Roman frontier. Within a small compass pick from two thoroughly rewarding circular country walks striding direct from our door.

### YOUR 'FROM OUR DOORSTEP' CHOICE

**WALK 1** a brilliant exposé of the Roman Wall between Birdoswald and Gilsland.

**WALK 2** a figure-of-eight expedition following the Maiden Way Roman road north to the remote holy well on King Water, adopted by the Augustinian canons of Lanercost Priory.



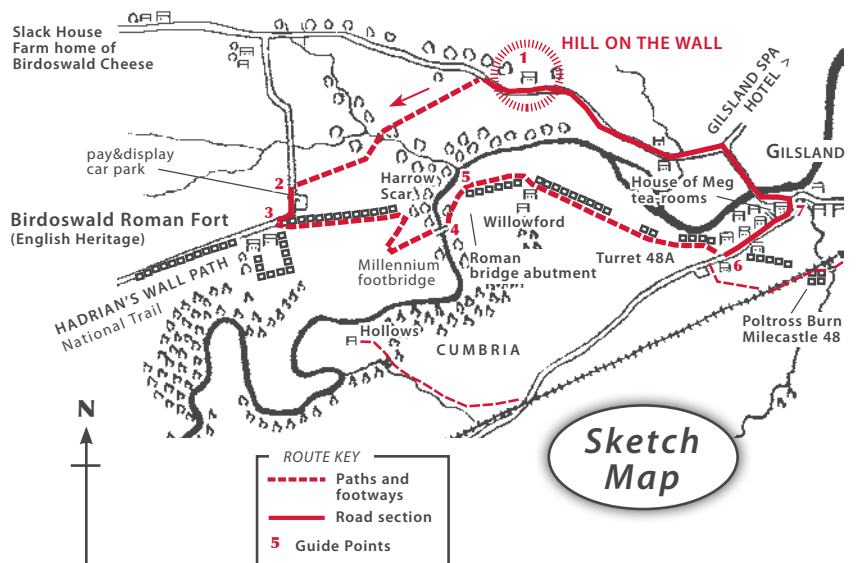
Looking east along the Roman Wall towards Walltown Crags from Birdoswald Roman Fort. A great moment for all travellers

FOR WIDER VIEW CONSULT  
Ordnance Survey  
Explorer Map OL43

4.25km/2¾ miles

2 hours

**1** Step out onto the road turning right, heading west, and almost at once go through the field-gate opposite signposted 'Birdoswald'. The marshy hollow draining towards the wall is beautifully accommodated by a narrow boardwalk - an early test of your balance! Keep forward as the wall ends, glancing by a further small rushy hollow to go through a kissing-gate in a lateral fence. Continue to a second kissing-gate in the fence bounding the wooded ravine. The path leads attractively through the wooded **Harrow's Beck** valley aided by steps and a footbridge, rising to a corresponding kissing-gate. Traverse the pasture to a muddy gate onto the road. Go left, passing up by the **Birdoswald** car park.



**2** Coming by the standing **Roman Wall** a real wow moment! Straight as an arrow look east along the line of the Wall to see the far off craggy headlands of **Walltown Crags**, the beginning of the famous **Whin Sill** within the **Northumberland National Park**. You can stroll into **Birdoswald** reception (café) and gain access (entry fee) to the fascinating detail of the fort interior and wander around the periphery armed with the **English Heritage** guide to the site. Be mindful that you will be absorbed for a full hour, so this walk's two-hour tag could be well exceeded in happy heritage attention detention.

**3** To continue the round walk, go through the kissing-gate with the National Trail's white acorn, adjacent the fort's eastern corner (adapted into a corn-drying kiln in C16th). As the Wall begins see an odd integral drain feature and some thirty strides on keen eyes will spot the Roman 'good luck' raised-relief phallus. There is another two-thirds of the way to the end of this lovely long stretch of Wall. The path steps over the remains of **Milecastle 49** onto the track and follows this right, down the steep incline. The track to the **Underheugh** meadow is vacated where a stone waymark directs left, via flag steps cutting back via a kissing-gate to reach the elegant **Millennium footbridge**, installed in 1999.



**4** Once across bear left and via three kissing-gates enter the confines of the Roman bridge abutment. You can judge the erosive shift of the **River Irthing** over the intervening nineteen centuries. The **Harrow Scar** bank is much steeper today than when the Wall ran up from the **Roman river-bridge**, perhaps a chariotway accompanying the span over the river. The native growth of trees suffers from the continual shifting ground even now. Read the information panel which shows the various phases of the Roman bridge during almost three-hundred years of its active frontier life.

**5** The path is fence-confined leading to a handsome flight of stone steps running up to the entrance to **Willowford** farm-yard. Notice on the small barn to the left an engraved **Roman stone** (read plaque). You may either follow the farm-access track running within the exaggerated Wall ditch, or venture, by the decking, with the **National Trail**, fence-confined beside the restored Wall (*see right*). Emerging at the end kissing-gate, follow on with the farm access track passing **Turret 48A**. You'll see **Broad Wall** 'wings' to the turret. This shows that the structure was constructed not only before the connecting Wall but before the decision came to narrow the lateral dimensions. Further along, before meeting the road you will see Broad Wall foundations beside the Wall. A hand-gate/cattle-grid puts the Path onto the village street beside **Roman Wall Villa**.



**6** Turn left, averting your gaze from the decrepit building on the right and its poached pasture through which the continuing Wall runs, in equally poor circumstances. Follow the footway passing the **Methodist Chapel** to round by **Hall Terrace**, with No.4 **House of Meg Tea-rooms** a wonderfully appointed place of refreshment (subject to opening). As Mumps Ha this old building featured in Walter Scott's romantic writing.

At the junction keep left by Gordon Graham's lorry park to cross the River Irthing with the footway. The river-name reflects its origins in the peaty wastes of **Spadeadam Forest**, hence the dark brown waters. At the top of the first rise bear left signposted 'Birdoswald', passing up the quiet **B6318** (watch for oncoming traffic). As the houses are left behind, the valley again becomes the focus of attention, particularly so before the village road-sign as a recessed stone bench gives a fine excuse to sit and gaze down upon **Willowford Farm** and the Roman Wall's progress towards the wooded banks of **Harrow Scar**. Holly bushes and mature trees herald your return to **Hill on the Wall**.



*Birdoswald farmhouse and fort walls*



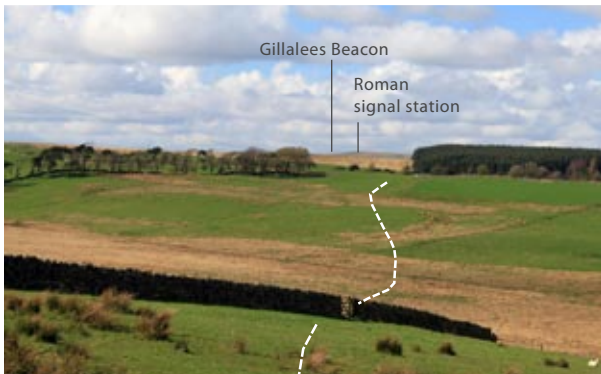
#### PILGRIMAGE TO AN ANCIENT HOLY WELL along the Maiden Way

Revel in this exceptionally scenic corner of the Roman frontier. Within small compass pick from two thoroughly rewarding circular country walks striding direct from our door.

**YOUR 'FROM OUR DOORSTEP' CHOICE** WALK 1 a brilliant exposé of the Roman Wall between Birdoswald and Gilsland. WALK 2 a figure-of-eight expedition following the Maiden Way Roman road north to the remote holy well on King Water, adopted by the Augustinian canons of Lanercost Priory.

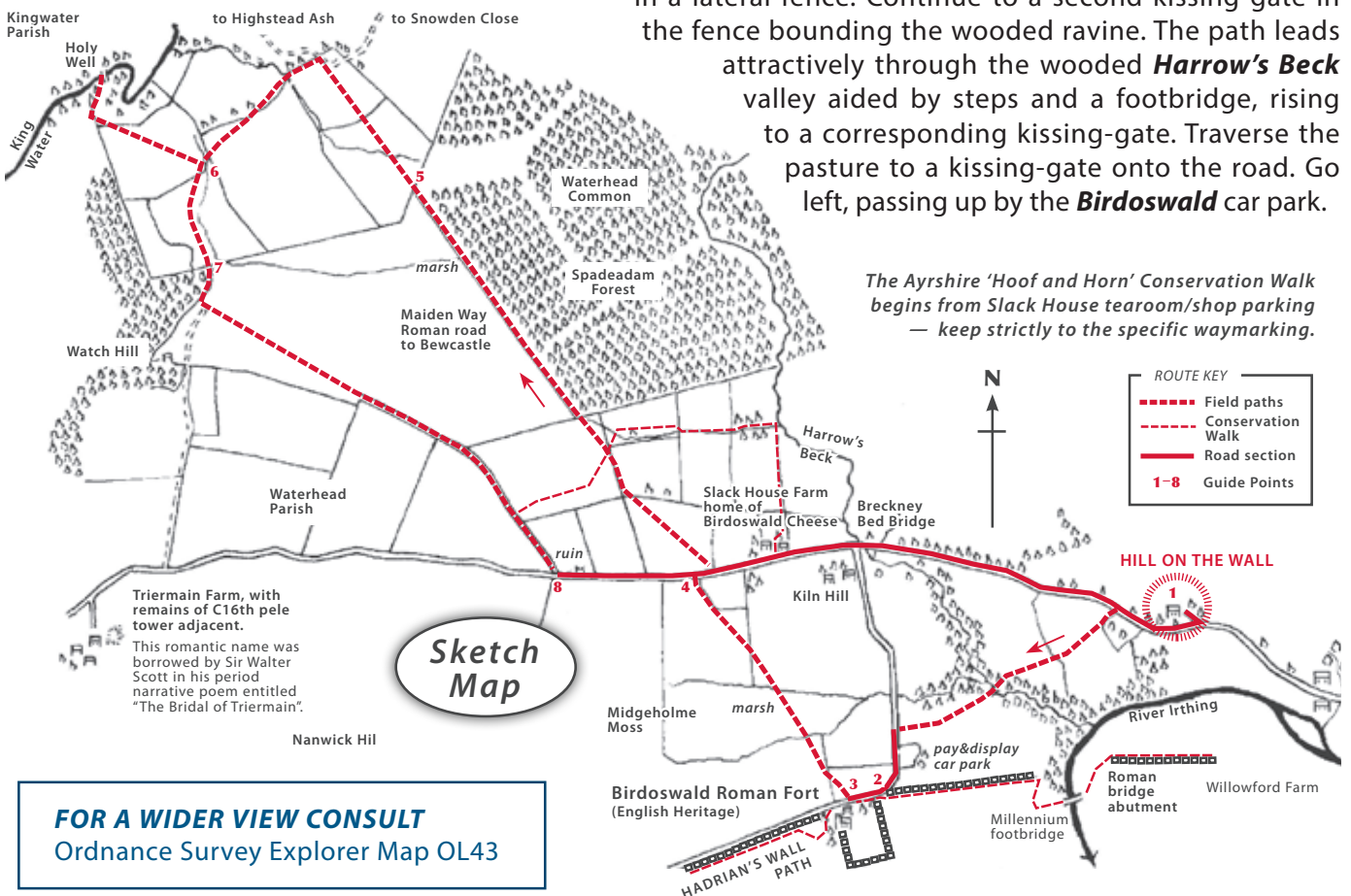
9km/5½ miles

3½ hours



Looking north-west along the Maiden Way from Birdoswald

**1** Step out onto the road turning left, heading west climbing steadily with a moment, just before the village sign, where a curved bench gives you a chance to admire the view down on the Irthing and the Roman Wall below **Willowford Farm**. Passing on beyond the entrance to Hill on the Wall guest house, go through the field-gate left with its footpath sign 'Birdoswald'. The marshy hollow draining towards the wall is beautifully accommodated by a narrow boardwalk - an early test of your balance! Keep forward as the wall ends, glancing by a further small rushy hollow to go through a kissing-gate in a lateral fence. Continue to a second kissing-gate in the fence bounding the wooded ravine. The path leads attractively through the wooded **Harrow's Beck** valley aided by steps and a footbridge, rising to a corresponding kissing-gate. Traverse the pasture to a kissing-gate onto the road. Go left, passing up by the **Birdoswald** car park.



The Ayrshire 'Hoof and Horn' Conservation Walk begins from Slack House tearoom/shop parking — keep strictly to the specific waymarking.

Triermain Farm, with remains of C16th pele tower adjacent. This romantic name was borrowed by Sir Walter Scott in his period narrative poem entitled "The Bridal of Triermain".

**Sketch Map**

**FOR A WIDER VIEW CONSULT**  
Ordnance Survey Explorer Map OL43

**2** Coming by the standing **Roman Wall** is a real wow moment! Straight as an arrow look east along the line of the Roman Wall to see the far off craggy headlands of the **Nine Nicks of Thirlwall**, the dramatic start of the famous Whin Sill escarpment within the **Northumberland National Park**. You can stroll into **Birdoswald Visitor Centre** (café/loos) and gain access (entry fee) to the fascinating detail of the fort interior (left) and wander around the periphery armed with the **English Heritage** guide to the site. Be mindful that you can be happily absorbed for a more than an hour and this will impact on the overall duration of your walk.

**3** Adjacent to the **AD122** bus stop find a field-gate on the right, from where a bridleway is signposted. Go through and embark on the course of the **Roman Maiden Way**. It is not known what the Romans actually called this military road. Features with unknown origins were often attributed magical qualities, hence the folk-link with dancing maidens... virgins in Spring skipping along this road, I think not! In the days of empire, regular detachments will have travelled by foot and on horse to **Bewcastle**, then known as **Fanum Cocidi**. Hence it is significant, the survival of this route as a bridleway, sustaining its adapted purpose over the intervening nineteen centuries. Descend the pasture to the hand-gate and continue on the same north-westerly line to hand-gates and a plank bridge spanning the draining watercourse of **Midgeholme Moss**. The path treads through the soft rushes; the Romans may have laid stakes to provide a firmer footing. You will not go in above the ankles at worst. The path leads through a further hand-gate in a rising fence and comes by a fence on the right to a hand-gate onto the road.

**4** Go right and at once leave left at a field-gate left with a bridleway signpost and 'Hoof & Horn' organic farm trail waymarker. Follow the open tractor track upon the line of the Roman road passing through a double-gate with Scot pines ornamenting the scene. Rise onto a brow and go through a field-gate in a wall. Maintain direction with more evidence of the Roman way edging in the rushes leading to a hand-gate into the corner of the forest enclosure. The course of the Roman way fixed the western limit of the **Spadeadam Forest** plantation and makes a striking divide. The bridleway does not get a lot of use so the walking can be considered quite tough through the moor grass tussocks. Spot the pair of old milk churns - a reminder of the laborious side of dairying before the advent of bulk collection. The forest margin path gently rises then dips into the catchment of a stream where soft rushes confirm damp ground. Advice: walk on the rushes to minimise submersion.

**5** Eventually the forest-edge way ends at a hand-gate with an area of newly felled conifers close right. Traverse the improved pasture descending to a hand-gate in a lateral fence, continuing to the open roadway junction at the foot of the slope, with a sign-stone pointing to **Highstead Ash** and **Snowden Close Farms**. Turn left and follow the concrete roadway over two cattle-grids.

**6** After the second grid, embark upon a spur path, a there-and-back journey to the sulphurous **Holy Well**. Go through the galvanised field-gate and traverse the field half-left, crossing over the brow to reach the corresponding gate in the far left corner (the nearby footpath stile in the fence has intimidating barbed wire, hence the preference for the gate). This has an old cattle-tether chain fastener and two styles of railway sleeper for gateposts. Draw slightly right to view the great bend in **King Water** before entering the birch wood and finding the old path, which leads down the steep earthen bank to the sturdy, but not crossed, footbridge. Adjacent, find the flight of old stone steps used by pilgrims from **Lanercost Priory** to reach the gushing sulphurous spring with a pewter tankard attached, as if you'd be tempted to sample such stinky water! The scene is enchanting and is a place to idle a while sensing the history of the place; no doubt people have come here from pagan times to 'take' the waters. Backtrack to the open road and now head right. Some 200m after the next cattle-grid, with **Watch Hill** house in view ahead, break left onto a green track running through the soft rushes. This lovely way marches easily on to enter a gated lane (at hand a bench may tempt you to halt briefly). The gorse-lined bridleway leads down to the road. A curious ruin above a retaining wall close left may detain you a few moments before completing the walk east with this lovely rural road passing Slack House Farm.



The Holy Well

# Hill on the Wall

## Luxury Bed & Breakfast



## Welcome to Hill on the Wall Bed & Breakfast

Located within half a mile of the Hadrian's Wall National Trail, Hill on the Wall is a unique B&B establishment on the Cumbria / Northumberland border and at the heart of Hadrian's Wall and Reivers country. The property is a Grade 2 Listed Building and has been part of the historic landscape since it was built as a fortified "bastle" farmhouse in 1595, on an outstanding hilltop location overlooking Hadrian's Wall.

Now providing Bed & Breakfast facilities of the highest standard, with a 5 Star Gold rating from Visit Britain, the Hill on the Wall probably provides the ultimate Bed & Breakfast experience on the Hadrian's Wall walking and cycling trails. Although luxury is our standard, your host Elaine provides the warmest of welcomes within a relaxed atmosphere and ensures that the needs of all guests are accommodated. Muddy boots and dirty cycles are welcome.



Hill on the Wall, Gilsland, Cumbria, CA8 7DA

[www.hillonthewall.co.uk](http://www.hillonthewall.co.uk)

016977 47214



#### AN ADVENTURE WITH ROMANS, REIVERS AND DARK ROCKS

**IN A NUTSHELL** A brilliant little expedition sampling a choice stretch of reconstructed Roman Wall towards the highest point on the Whin Sill, before striking north into a landscape made infamous by the cattle thieving antics of Border Reivers. Enjoy a land of big skies and whispering wind, shared with bleating sheep and the rippling cries of curlew. The walk leads through a landscape dotted with isolated steadings, threading through pastures rampant with soft rushes and by quiet byways and paths.

Seek out the cleverly engineered 6-mile long Roman aqueduct that gathered water from Caw Burn at Fond Tom's Pool then, taking a serpentine course, captured a string of feeder streams to supply the cavalry fort of Great Chesters - to slake the thirst of upwards of eight-hundred men and their horses. Also encounter the striking evidence of basalt quarrying and coal mining melding into the landscape.

**DISTANCE** 15km/9¼ miles 5½ hours

**MAP** Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 43

**AD122 BUS** Visits Herding Hill, Milecastle Inn and Cawfields Quarry during its regular summer service.

#### THE WALK

**1** Step out onto **Shield Hill** turning left walking along the winding road to the **Milecastle Inn** cross-roads, very carefully cross straight over (speeding traffic a real hazard).

**2** At the slight bend go through the hand-gate and continue north within the pasture to cross the line of the Roman frontier vallum (ditch) to reach **Hole Gap**, sometimes called Pilgrim's Gap. Up to the left a section of Wall climbs to the quarry cliff-top, a fine spot to consider the jauntily perched **Milecastle 42**. But why was this milecastle not built in Hole Gap? Presumably there was a strategic logic. Yet the steep dip slope and awkward north gate exit made it far less practical. The natural northern whinstone buttress will inevitably have brought Roman traffic down to Hole Gap anyway! But probably more significant the position will have fitted the strict letter of measurement handed down from the legion high command. Follow the open path leading east alongside the Wall.

This is a fine opportunity to witness a classic stretch of reconstructed **Roman Wall** running along the brink of a consistent cliff, **Cawfields Crags**. The upper fringe of trees adds to the textural outlook. The cliff-and farm-name might be old, but they are still representative of a daily reality: that of the constant presence of raucous rooks, where 'caw' simply referred to the sound in the air evident to this day!

The path passes the **Thorny Doors** gate, tackling a notable jump in the ridge, aided by a flight of stone steps. Keep close to the wall least you find yourself on the wrong side of curious comparatively modern mosaic field-wall.



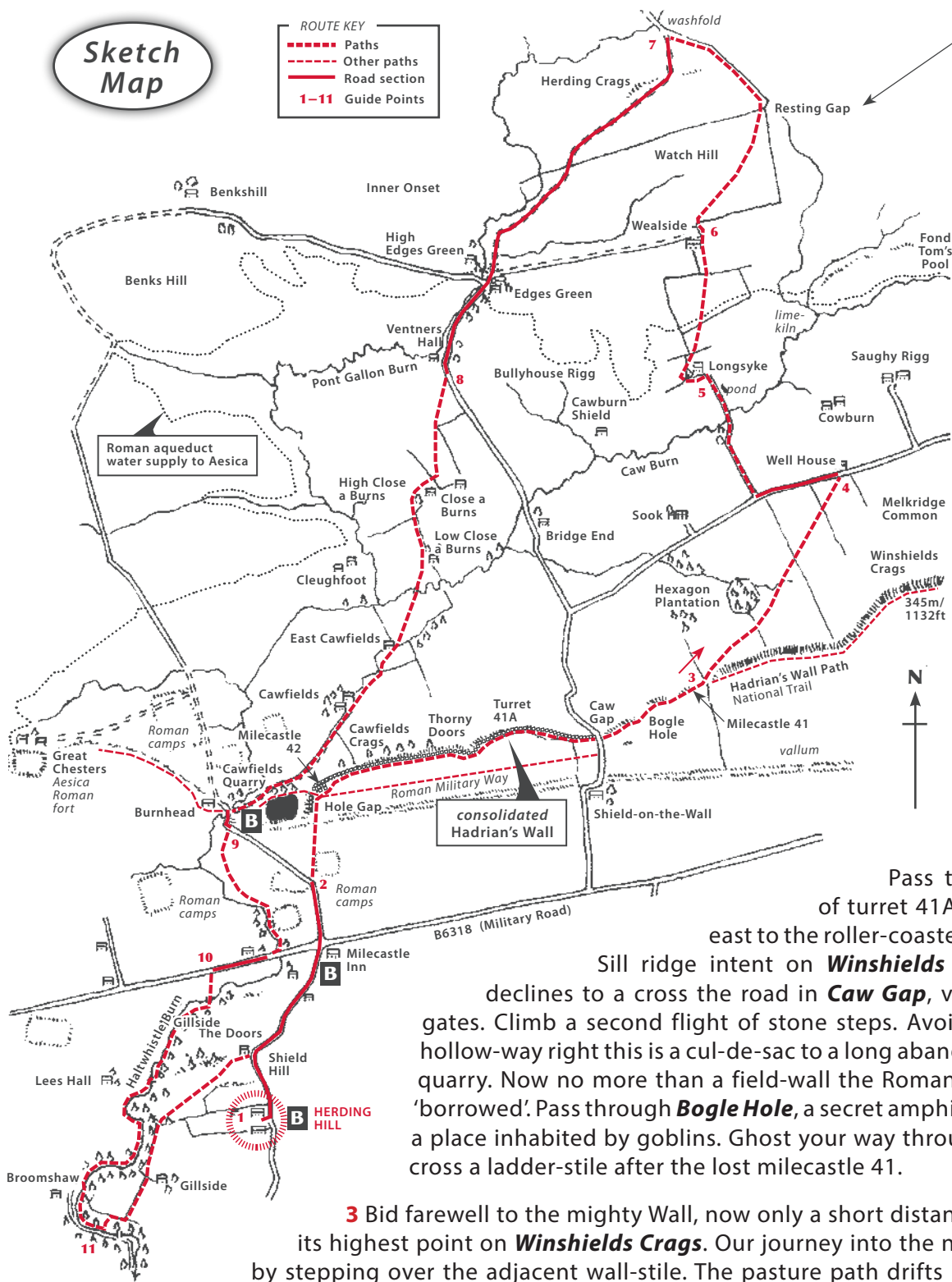
Herding Crags looking to Wark Forest



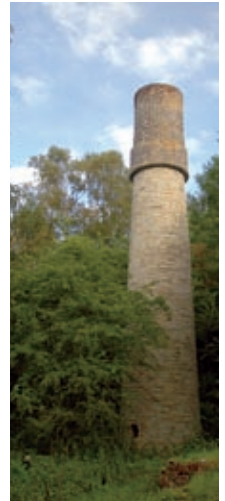
Impressive man-made cliff at Cawfields Quarry

## Sketch Map

ROUTE KEY	
	Paths
	Other paths
	Road section
	1-11 Guide Points



**Resting Gap** retains the folk memory of when this obscure fold in the hills was a resting place exploited by Border Reivers during their rapid transit with stolen cattle from the Tyne valley. Hence the cautionary Watch Hill. The marsh will ensure your progress will be held up too!



Fell End chimney, Haltwhistle Burn

Pass the low evidence of turret 41A with a fine view east to the roller-coaster ride of the Whin Sill ridge intent on **Winshields Crags**. The path declines to a cross the road in **Caw Gap**, via facing kissing-gates. Climb a second flight of stone steps. Avoid the lure of the hollow-way right this is a cul-de-sac to a long abandoned whinstone quarry. Now no more than a field-wall the Roman structure totally 'borrowed'. Pass through **Bogle Hole**, a secret amphitheatre evidently a place inhabited by goblins. Ghost your way through advancing to cross a ladder-stile after the lost milecastle 41.

**3** Bid farewell to the mighty Wall, now only a short distance from reaching its highest point on **Winshields Crags**. Our journey into the northlands begins by stepping over the adjacent wall-stile. The pasture path drifts north-east below the scarp, upon what was once **Melkridge Common**, keeping above **Hexagon Plantation**. Cross the line of a broken wall heading through the damp tussocks to a ladder-stile. Maintain course with yet more soft rush to weave through to successive stiles in the wall and fence with a ditch plank in between. The footpath angles down to the road crossing a nice fence-stile, with slip resistant steps, close by **Well House**.

**4** Turn left and wend down the road to turn right with the lane to **Longsyke** and **The Goose Barn** self-catering, with footpath sign 'Herding Crags'. Descend to cross the neat stone bridge and with a duck pond right come up towards the farm.

**5** Short of the Goose Barn go through the hand-gate left, with the diverted footpath. This passes on to a field-gate beyond the trees, bear back right to a field-gate into the yard behind the barns, angle half-left to a gate into the pasture. Head off the trackway to a fence-stile up the field. Invisible now, the Roman aqueduct for **Great Chesters** ghosts left to right across the pasture parallel with the fence. This amazing piece of engineering here runs just below the 220m contour. Advance up the pasture to a ladder-stile and continue passing to the right of the **Wealside**, with two-way footpath sign against a telegraph pole.



Resting Gap

**6** In the left field corner, beyond the gate into the farmyard, cross the ladder-stile and embark on the rough ditched pasture. The tall wooden stand over to the left was set up for birds of prey. There is no path underfoot, but plenty of soft rush to slalom through until the open sheep pasture of **Watch Hill** eases progress. Coming over the swell of the ridge, find a ladder-stile in the far corner defended by damp rushy ground. This sits in the midst of **Resting Gap**, a secretive hollow where cattle rustled by reivers paused during long journeys to far horizons. Follow with the wall north-west through the tussocky herbage to reach the open road.

**7** Turn left and follow the road south and south-west by the shallow **Herding Crags**, a further hint to those thankfully long gone evil days of **Border Reiving**, when distrust was rife even with families. The road provides wide views over a quite barren landscape with the conifers **Wark Forest** forming the horizon. The road comes down to **Edges Green**, where the aquaduct can be sought once more, this time with a little success as it may be seen in the pasture west of High Edges Green where it bends, betrayed by the rushes. The route keeps south with the road at the top of the little rise beyond Ventners Hall. Find a wall-stile on the right.

**8** Cross the stile and aim for the projecting wall corner half-left. Pass the waymark posts aiming south for the gate behind **High Close a Burns**. Advance behind this tree-shrouded rear of the property. At the sharp fence corner turn down to a gate, continue beside the line of ash trees to pass the beautifully renovated cottage **Low Close a Burns**. Now veer half-right descending the bank to cross a footbridge spanning **Caw Burn**. Traverse the meadow rising to a gate beside **East Cawfields**. Pass on by the cottage to join its approach track running through the damp paddock, going through a gate en route to and through the environs of **Cawfields Farm**. The rooks implicit in the farm-name will greet you, you'll not pass unnoticed! The open access road leads on past the entrance to the **Cawfields Quarry** picnic site.

**9** Watch for the stile in the fence at the right-hand road bend. Cross and follow the emerging course of a causeway. This in fact was the trackbed of an iron road tramway built to convey the whinstone extracted in **Cawfield Quarry** all the way down the **Haltwhistle Burn** valley to the mainline railway in South Tyne. Go through a kissing-gate where the burn is culverted under the embankment of the **Military Road**, slanting up right to follow the road verge west.

**10** Watch for the kissing-gate on the south side of the road. At this point carefully re-cross the Military Road and follow this new footpath which leads downdale via footbridges. This is **Haltwhistle Burn** at its best. There is evidence of quarrying and spoil from bells pits and drift colliery extraction but the abiding feeling is of nature's reclaiming of a beautiful dingle, alive with bird song. See the gothic arches of a C19th lime-kiln on the right bank and then **Fell End Chimney** in the trees, an elegant survival from the **East End Pit**. A century ago this valley was industrially vibrant, to modern senses calamitous and not at all a place for idle rambling, with an roller ropeway occupying the line of the valley track carrying coal, clay and whinstone downdale. Below the pine fringed cliffs and tree-shrouded quarries find a solid path with gabion-edges to the burn. After the third footbridge watch for a flight of steps climbing the wooded bank on the left.

**11** Climb the steps - how many steps are there? At the top the path veers right to a hand-gate now in the quiet pasture above the gorge. With a fence to the left, head north to cross a ladder-stile, close to the original **Herding Hill Farm**. Continue north now beside the gorge-bounding wall to a wall-stile and bear right passing an old birch fringed quarry. Coming back onto the **Shields Hill** road at a ladder-stile, turn right to complete your fabulous adventure.

*Now where's that welcome café and WigWam hot tub?*

*Why **Herding Hill** of course!*



Milecastle 42 at Hole Gap, Cawfields Quarry

#### ROMAN FRONTIER QUEST

**IN A NUTSHELL** A grand little round trip to unravel Hadrian's grand design. With all the constituent parts of the 1900-year old frontier encountered: vallum, Roman supply road, re-constructed stone Wall, milecastle and a fort that stubbornly remains a rustic farm paddock. En route enjoy the freedom of Northumberland, a land of big skies, alive with piping curlews, raucous crows and whispering wind.

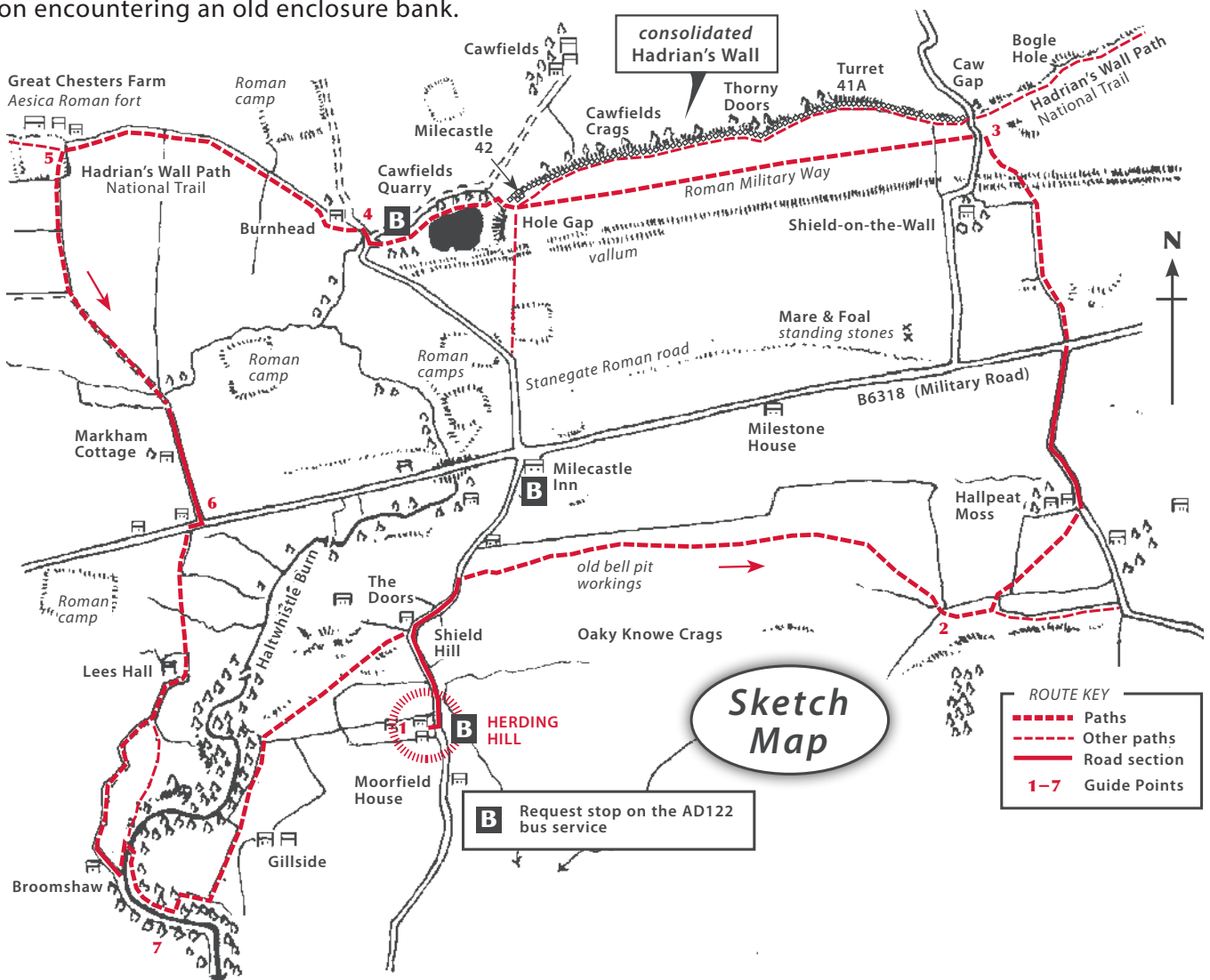
**DISTANCE** 9½km/6 miles 3¾ hours

**MAP** Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 43

**AD122 BUS** Visits Herding Hill, Milecastle Inn and Cawfields Quarry during its regular summer service.

#### THE WALK

**1** Exit the car park from the café turning up left by the bus stop. Ascend Shield Hill - watchful of its blind corners. Coming over the brow by The Doors advance to where a ladder-stile invites you into the rough pasture on the right signed 'Hallpeat Moss'. A green track leads on, north of the low Oaky Knowe Crag scarp, initially slanting slightly leftward in rising, drawing closer to a wall. The path weaves through an area pockmarked with grassed-over and safe coal bellpit shafts. The Whin Sill ridge dominates attention to the north from Mucklebank Crag in the west to Winshields Crag in the east, with Great Chesters and Cawfields featuring nearby. As the wall is lost, stick with the clear track, eventually diminishing to an indefinite trod on encountering an old enclosure bank.



After 15m the path slants half-right over the bank and down through soft rushes in a hollow to cross a ladder-stile beside a narrow gate in a wall.

**2** The path swings left under the quarry spoil bank. As a wall is met bear left to a ladder-stile, bear right to a further ladder-stile beside a gateway, then slant up the pasture slope to the right of Hallpeat Moss farm to cross successive stiles onto the road above Melkridge Tilery (Hadrian's Wall Caravan & Camping Site). Turn left to reach the B6318 Military Road. With the utmost care cross straight over - speeding traffic a real hazard. From the gate/stile follow on with the wall close left in rough cattle pasture. As the wall ends continue to cross the Roman vallum via a plank bridge. The vallum defined the southern boundary of the frontier military zone. So now you are entering what in Roman times would have been a sensitive area, your movements strictly controlled by the auxiliary guard. Your movement is now restricted only by the cattle poached ground. You'll notice an old basalt quarry up to the right before joining its access ramp to reach a ladder-stile onto the road close under Caw Gap.

**3** While you may relish following the **National Trail**, in close order with the partially restored **Roman Wall**, it is a no less attractive option to cross the stile and follow the line of the **Roman Military Way** almost due west, with only one ladder-stile to interrupt your free-flowing strides all the way down to **Hole Gap** and **Milecastle 42**. Pass through the kissing-gate and follow the regular way at a second kissing-gate leading by the deep dark pool at the old **Cawfields Quarry** picnic site. In August the heather beneath the quarried cliff mingles with the birch growth most attractively. Pass on through the car park to the entrance go left, with picnic tables resting on the site of a Roman corn-mill adjacent the alder carr. Then cross the **Caw Burn** road-bridge right.

**4** Almost at once find a wall-stile left, waymarked with the white acorn of the **National Trail** this puts you into the grassy margin which rises beside **Burnhead Cottage**. The path runs on with the Wall ditch apparent over the field-wall right. The wall rests upon the original line of the **Roman Wall** and in places you can detect residual stones that have survived the casual 'borrowing' process. Two ladder-stiles negotiate intervening walls before passing **Great Chesters** farmhouse and a further ladder-stile up a slight bank where enter the interior of **Aesica Roman Fort**. The situation is odd, only three miles east of **Magnis (Carvoran)**, near Walltown). The suggestion is that this cavalry fort was a later implant. The location presented a practical problem – a natural water supply was non-existent. Roman surveying guile was tested in bringing a head of water some six miles along a serpentine aqueduct from **Fond Tom's Pool** in upper **Caw Burn** (two miles as the crow flies).

**5** Turn left and follow the farm-track passing the votive altar to exit at a gate and follow the track down to a further gate where join an open track merging from the right. Follow this roadway leftward, beyond a gate becoming a confined lane leading to the **Military Road** once more. This straight highway was constructed after the **Jacobite Rebellion** of 1745, when **Bonny Prince Charlie's** Highland army caught the King's garrison on the wrong foot some fifty miles distant in **Newcastle**, skipping down the west side by **Carlisle**. For all the effort that went into creating the Military Road and the sheer quantity of Roman Wall ruined for foundation east of the **Whin Sill**, it was never called upon to meet a military need.

**6** Reaching the road at Lees Hall Gate bear right 25m and left, crossing with care to the gate accessing the farm-track. This track leads to and through the peripheral fenced yard of Lees Hall (farm) via gates, continuing down the road into the valley of Haltwhistle Burn. At the foot, as the road bends right, go left guided by the 'Haltwhistle Burn Footpath' sign via the gate. After 50m cross the broad wooden bridge over the burn and follow the path downstream passing a picnic table and pass under a great bowing beech to reach a three-way footpath sign.

**7** Take to the ascending flight of steps signed '**The Doors**'. At the top, the path is guided right by the wall to a hand-gate and then up the field with a fence close left to a ladder-stile. Keep forward now with a wall close left, above the wooded gorge. At the next wall-stile bear half-right passing an old birch decorated quarry onto a green track leading to a ladder-stile onto the road at the top of **Shield Hill**. Turn right to return to **Herding Hill** and a lovely cuppa in the cafe.



Roman Wall looking east towards Winshields Crags



# Herding Hill Farm

Caravan, Camping,  
Wigwams, Tea Room & Shop



## Herding Hill lies in the shadow of Hadrian's Wall just 1 mile north of Haltwhistle.

Herding Hill nestles in a stunning part of the Northumberland countryside intimate with the inspirational monument of Imperial Rome, Hadrian's Wall. Sited in a sheltered fold of the hills less than a mile from the famous frontier, we provide year-round facilities for touring caravans and campers. For the ultimate in glamping luxury and comfort we also have Wigwam cabins, some even with outdoor hot-tubs!

A high-quality VisitBritain accredited family-owned & run site, we even have an under-floor heated amenities block and a traditional tea-room and shop. Herding Hill lies less than 1 mile north of the little town of Haltwhistle, which lays claim to lie at the 'Centre of Britain'.



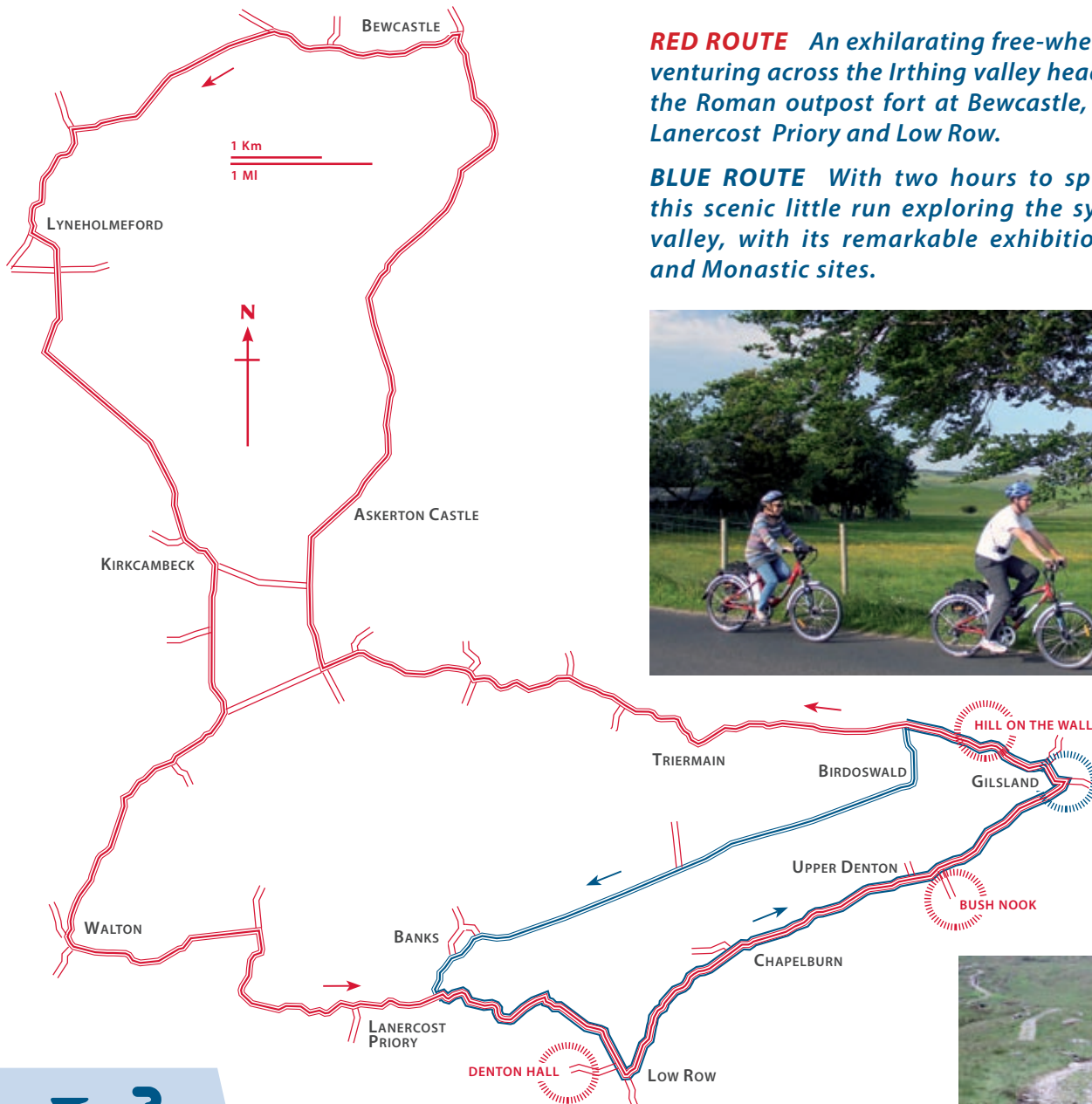
Herding Hill Farm, Shield Hill, Haltwhistle, NE49 9NW

[www.herdinghillfarm.co.uk](http://www.herdinghillfarm.co.uk)

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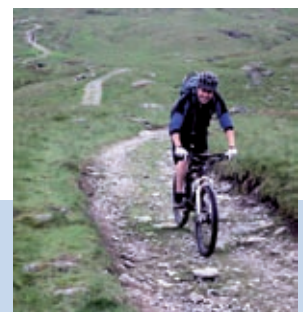


Anti-clockwise from GILSLAND — 28-mile red route & 10-mile blue route



**RED ROUTE** An exhilarating free-wheeling day out venturing across the Irthing valley heading north to the Roman outpost fort at Bewcastle, returning by Lanercost Priory and Low Row.

**BLUE ROUTE** With two hours to spare, revel in this scenic little run exploring the sylvan Irthing valley, with its remarkable exhibition of Roman and Monastic sites.



 **Coming Soon...**

A dedicated cycling edition of this RouteGuide is to be prepared by local guide and biking expert Daniel Richards (British Cycling MTB (L2) Leader). Based from our 'Where to Stay' hosts, you can venture forth along the quiet lanes of this ancient frontier discovering some iconic views with a hint of the wild! Easy-to-use maps and descriptions will enable you to relax into the experience, as you personally explore some of the finest cycling in the country. Whether it be a gentle lunch-time adventure with an electric bike...or tasting a few miles of a 'Tour of Britain' stage...there is plenty to feast the eyes of a SightVisit free-wheeler.

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# Introducing **GuideUs**, official sponsor of **SightVisit** and publisher of the highly acclaimed map of the Wainwright fells; the **Lake District Hill Chart**

**GuideUs** is a small Cumbrian publishing company specialising in mountain maps with tick-lists for walkers. As sponsor of SightVisit we have been working closely with Mark Richards and the team giving assistance and advice during the production of this Route Guide. It has been a pleasure working with a group of people as passionate about the outdoors as we are. The walks contained in this first guide to the Hadrian's wall landscape are truly inspiring and the perfect way to explore and get to know this exceptional part of the UK.

Our most popular publication to date is the Lake District Hill Chart, from Scafell Pike to Castle Crag the Lake District Hill Chart shows the locations of all 214 Wainwright fells and includes a complete fell tick-list to record your progress.

Each hill is drawn to scale and is clearly named and numbered in altitude order with their book colours defined. The chart is both a functional and informative piece of artwork for the home and the perfect poster for any Lakeland walker.

## COMING SOON! - THE MUNRO CHART

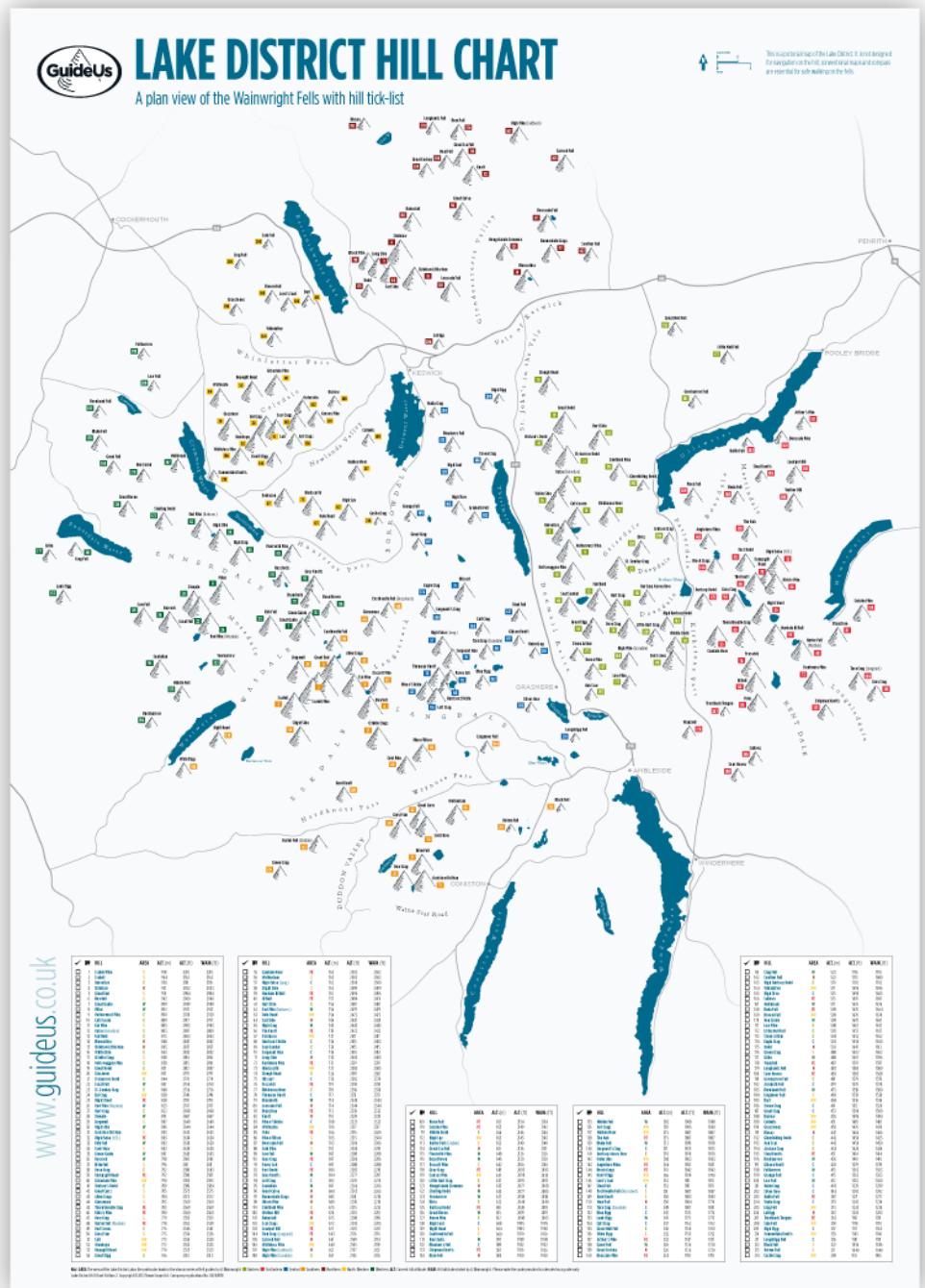
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# SIGHTVISIT



**SightVisit** is embarking on an ambitious programme providing a comprehensive modern reference to intimate walking experiences throughout Britain. Authentic accommodation is central to our mission, the warm welcome provides the rest, refreshment, and stimulus to underpin your best experiences and memories. The combination of *Where to Walk* and *Where to Stay* forms the basis of our unique Landscape Community.

This first issue gives a flavour of some of the exciting discoveries in store as new aspects of the Hadrian's Wall landscape are revealed - our rich rural heritage encountered in your own time and at your own pace.

**SightVisit** is the inspiration of Mark Richards ([www.markrichards.info](http://www.markrichards.info)). Mark is author of the *Lakeland Fellranger* series, and specific to this first Landscape Community, *The Spirit of Hadrian's Wall* and the *Cicerone Guide to Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail*, both published by Cicerone Press Ltd ([www.cicerone.co.uk](http://www.cicerone.co.uk)).

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