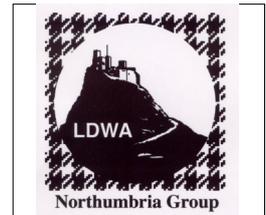


LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION
NORTHUMBRIA GROUP



THE HILLFORT ROUND

A very demanding open challenge walk of some 26 miles with almost 7,000 feet of ascent.

During the grouse shooting season some areas may be closed to walkers during a shoot. Check with Wooler TIC Tel. No. 01668 282123

The walk is circular with a start from either Hethpool car park or Wooler Youth Hostel (27.4 miles and again almost 7,000 feet of ascent).

Map required: Explorer OL16 The Cheviot Hills and Explorer 339 Kelso, Coldstream & Lower Tweed Valley.

From the Car Park at Hethpool (GR NT893280) return to the road and turn **right**. Walk down the road to the hamlet of Hethpool. Just before the road veers left, turn **right** through gate and over cattle grid (PFS **St.Cuthbert's Way**). Follow the St.Cuthbert's Way markers for approximately 6.2 miles, passing Tom Tallon's Crag, Black Law and Gains Law.

On reaching gate at junction of paths, pass through gate, leave St. Cuthbert's Way (which swings right) and continue ahead to second gate (passing old truck). Pass through gate and continue downhill for approximately 500 yards to reach gate on the **left** (PFS **Hillforts' Trail**).

Go through the gate, ignore the path to the right, and continue uphill to **Humbleton Hill Hillfort (GR NT 967283)**.

Leave the Hill in a South-Westerly direction to pick up broad track running downhill (the valley is on the left). Follow the path down to stile in wire fence. Cross the stile and continue downhill for approximately 100 yards to where track divides. Take the **left hand** path uphill through the bracken for approximately 100 yards to stones at end of ruined wall and turn **right** on feint path. Follow this path to reach a stile in wire fence. Cross the stile and continue ahead through heather and then bracken to reach small gate near junction of stone wall and wire fence. Go through the gate and follow feint path following the wall at first and gradually leaving and descending left to contour the cleugh.

When path begins to ascend turn **right** immediately in front of small pointed crag and walk steeply uphill to **Monday Cleugh Hillfort (GR NT 956284)**.

From the Sheep Stell at Western edge of the Hillfort walk on bearing of 280° to pick up feint path towards wire fence. At fence turn **right** and follow it downhill (WITH CARE) through the heather. At the bottom of the hill turn **left** through gate and continue downhill to second gate and stile. Cross stile and continue downhill to join broad track. Turn **left** along track and follow it round to join stony track. Cross this track and continue ahead uphill on broad green track. **Akeld Hillfort (GR NT 949290)** is on the **right** prior to a track on the left which crosses Gleads Cleugh.

Leave Akeld Hillfort and rejoin the track at the junction with path going **left** across Gleadscleugh. Take this path to cross the Cleugh and continue uphill past two waymarkers, eventually passing to right of sheepfold and further waymarker. Continue ahead uphill to stile over stone wall. Cross stile and bear **half left** downhill. Follow the path as it begins to ascend to the right to another waymarker. Continue on this waymarked path to gate in wire fence. Go through gate and walk uphill on broad track to junction with further track. Turn **left** on to this track to reach waymarker where bear **right** off the track on feint path uphill. Continue uphill to the summit and **Yeavinger Bell Hillfort (GR NT 928293)**.

Leave the hillfort on downhill path between summits. Where path begins to ascend bear **right** on path leading downhill to gap in the ramparts. The path is now clearly marked as part of the Hillforts' Trail. On reaching stile to the left of junction of wire fence and stone wall, cross the stile and continue on path alongside the wall. The path then continues downhill to stile on the **right** over the wall. Cross stile and continue downhill on path to farm track, which turns **left** downhill to reach ruined barn and stile. Cross the stile and continue ahead to reach gravelled track. Turn **left** on the track. On reaching cattle grid with stream on the left, do not cross but turn **right** to pass through field gate. Bear **half left** to walk diagonally across the field uphill to gate in stone wall. Go through the gate and turn **left** to almost immediately reach a further gate with waymarker. Pass through this gate and bear **right** uphill to **St. Gregory's Hillfort (GR NT 916298)**.

Leave the hillfort and retrace the path back towards waymarker, keeping between the waymarker and gorse bushes and descend **right** towards wall.

Just before reaching the wall turn **right** and follow track down to stream with stepping stones. Cross the stepping stones, turn **immediately left** and cross ladder stile followed by low fence. Continue straight ahead uphill to reach waymarker, where bear **half left** to

reach stile over electric fence. Cross stile, turn **half right** and continue uphill to **West Hill Hillfort (GR NT 910296)**.

Leave the hillfort and return downhill to stile over stone wall. Turn **left** and follow wall to eventually pass through gate. Continue ahead for short distance and at waymarker bear **left** across field to gate and stile. Cross the stile and turn **right** on to track. Continue on track through gate and eventually on to tarmac road between houses. On reaching the main road (B6352) turn **left** and walk into Westnewton. Shortly after crossing the road bridge in Westnewton turn **left** along road signposted to Hethpool.

Where the road bends sharply left, leave the road and continue straight ahead on track to reach waymarked gate on the **right** immediately before a wood. Go through the gate and follow fence around the side of the wood to a second gate. Go through this gate and continue **half right** across the field towards a wood aiming for a stile on the left hand side of the wood. Cross the stile and follow the path through the wood to a second stile. Cross this stile and turn **right** alongside stone wall and fence. When the wall bends off to the right at a marker post pass between the wall and post and head uphill on track with stream on the left. At first path junction turn **left** and head down to the stream. Cross the stream and continue up to the bank top where turn **right** and continue with the hedge on the left towards ruined cottage and stile over fence. Cross the stile, pass the cottage and continue uphill alongside wire fence and wood to fence junction, passing two stiles on the right. At the junction of fences cross stile, enter wood and follow waymarker and path bearing **left** through the wood to stile. Cross stile to exit wood and continue uphill following waymarkers to **The Staw Hill Hillfort (GR NT 885301)**.

From the Hillfort bear **left** to waymarker. From the waymarker continue straight ahead over second small rise. Bear **half left** to further waymarker (approximately 100 yards before corrugated shed). Follow waymarker uphill to reach **Midhill Hillfort (GR NT 881295)**.

From the Hillfort leave on a path through the ramparts and head towards the top of gully to pick up feint path on **left hand side** of gully. Follow this path to descend and cross stream. Continue down the gully to reach broad track. Turn **left** down the track. Just before reaching old Hawthorne tree in gorse bushes on the right, bear **right** to small gate in wire fence. Pass through gate and head uphill to **East Laddie's Knowe Hillfort (GR NT 883288)**.

Leave the Hillfort in a Westerly direction and follow waymarkers to corner of wood and gate. Go through gate and follow path to gate in fence below Haddon Hill. Go through gate and walk uphill on broad track to reach **Ringchesters Hillfort (GR NT 867289)**.

Continue over the top of Ringchesters on the broad waymarked path and descend to reach a track junction. Turn **left** and follow the track down to reach gate at Elsdon Burn.

Pass through gate and continue down the track for approximately 0.6 miles to second finger post (Great Hetha $\frac{3}{4}$ mile).

Leave the road at this point, cross the stile and footbridge. Continue uphill on path to the left of wire fence and ruined stone wall to reach stile over stone wall to the left of gate. **DO NOT GO OVER STILE** but turn **left** and walk to the left of stone wall and then wire fence to reach **Little Hetha Hillfort (GR NT 886280)**.

From the Hillfort return alongside the fence and wall to reach stile. Cross the stile and follow waymarked path uphill to **Great Hetha Hillfort (GR NT 885274)**.

From the Hillfort return to waymarker on broad track, turn **left** and follow the track downhill to contour round the hill and reach stile over wire fence. Cross the stile and turn **left** down the road to Trowupburn Farm. Bear **right** through the farmyard to pass through two gates. Continue straight ahead uphill on path. Turn **left** towards stream and then **right** uphill towards gap in forest ahead. At the top of the hill go through gate into forest and continue along broad track to reach waymarker on right of track. Turn **left** and follow track into forest. On reaching waymarker on left of track turn **right** following waymarked track uphill. On reaching second waymarker turn **left** uphill to **Sinkside Hillfort (GR NT 884262)**.

From the Hillfort return along the same route to waymarker on main route near entrance to the forest. Turn **left** downhill to reach stony track. Continue on stony track for approximately 700 yards to reach track on **right**. Continue down this track for 100 yards to pick up narrow track going **left** through the forest to eventually reach a stream. Cross the stream and then stile over wire fence and follow fence uphill to reach waymarker. Turn **right** at waymarker and follow waymarked track uphill to **North Blackhagg Hillfort (GR NT 883251)**.

From the Hillfort return to reach waymarker at the bottom. Turn **right** and follow the path down to the road. Turn **left** and follow road to reach Hethpool Car Park.

For those who wish it a completion certificate is available. Please send a brief report including times at each summit along with an C5 (6" x 9") S.A.E. and two first class stamps to cover expenses to: Ron Chambers, 8 Handley Cross, Consett. DH8 6TZ.

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE FROM WOOLER

WOOLER TO HUMBLETON

The youth Hostel in Wooler is located on Cheviot Street GR NT991278. From the bus station entrance cross the road and turn left. Cross Ramsey Lane and bear right to go up Cheviot Street. The Youth Hostel is on the right hand side.

Immediately past the Youth Hostel entrance turn right on a path which runs behind the hostel. Continue on this path to reach a road. Cross the road and walk down Broomey Road. At the end of this road continue in the same direction following a footpath with a fence and hedge on the right. At the corner of the fence and hedge do not turn right but continue ahead to a gate leading into a field. Go through the gate and head downhill towards a caravan site where there is a gate leading into the site. Go through the gate into the site and cross the grass to reach a road. Turn right down the road and walk down the road to a junction, turn right and walk down the road to the site entrance. Turn left along the road in front of the site entrance and just prior to reaching the de-restriction road signs turn left through a gate into a field PFS Humbleton ½ mile. Follow the path as it crosses the field half left to a field boundary and another gate. Go through the gate into a second field and follow the path to a gate onto the road. Go through the gate, turn left and follow the road to the hamlet of Humbleton. On reaching the crossroads beside the telephone box turn left onto a track. Immediately past a bungalow on the right go through a gate and continue on the track ignoring the signpost "Gleadsclough 1½ miles". Continue along the track until reaching a gate in a stone wall on the right PFS Hillfort Trail.

NORTH BLACKHAGG to WOOLER

From the Hillfort return to reach waymarker at the bottom. Turn **right** and follow the path down to the road. Turn **right** and follow road to reach the war memorial at Southernknowe. At the road junction beside the memorial take the left hand fork signposted "Southernknowe ½ mile" walk along the road, pass Southernknowe, cross cattle grid and after about 100 yards reach a sign on the left "Commonburn House 3 miles". Turn left off the road and walk uphill on the track. Towards the top of the hill

about 100 yards past a sheepfold where the path forks take the right hand fork. The way ahead is now on a clear track. On reaching a sliding gate in a wire fence do not go through the gate but bear right on the path with the fence on the left. On reaching a stile over the fence on the left, cross the stile and turn right on the path with the fence now to the right. After about 100 yards reach a stile over a wire fence, here there is a sign on the ground "Commonburn 1¾ miles" cross the stile, pass a sheepfold and after about 150 yards there is a path junction with a waymarker. Carry on straight ahead. At a second path junction with waymarker continue straight ahead on a broad path. Ignore any paths to left or right continuing ahead. On reaching the top of the last rise Commonburn House comes into view, Continue downhill to a junction with a track, turn left initially towards a wood, go through a gate in a wire fence and continue on the path. The path now gradually moves away from the wood and heads towards a copse beside Commonburn house. Just prior to reaching a gate beside the copse turn left off the track towards a stile over a fence. Cross the stile. Go across the field to reach a farm track and turn left down the track. Walk down the track past a farm entrance and continue ahead on the stoned track. Cross a cattle grid and continue on the track ignoring any paths to the left or right. The track becomes tarmac then changes back to stone before finally becoming tarmac. Pass through Brownslaw and Petersfield before reaching a picnic area. The track eventually reaches the outskirts of Wooler and becomes Common Road. Continue down Common Road until reaching the junction with Broomey Road and turn right to walk along the path leading to the Youth Hostel.

MILEAGE AND ASCENT TABLE

	Grid Ref NT	Distance from previous	Cumulative Distance	Ascent in feet	Cumulative Ascent in feet
Hethpool Car Park	894281				
Humbleton Hill	967283	7.37	7.37	1482	1482
Monday Cleugh	956284	0.85	8.22	230	1712
Akeld	949290	1.02	9.24	260	1972
Yeavinger Bell	929293	1.62	10.82	590	2562
St. Gregory's	916298	1.84	12.70	375	2937
West Hill	910296	0.77	13.47	190	3127
The Staw	885301	2.87	16.34	720	3847
Mid Hill	881295	0.50	16.84	100	3947
East Laddies Knowe	883288	0.70	17.54	110	4057
Ringchesters	867289	1.25	18.79	560	4617
Little Hetha	886280	1.70	20.48	330	4947
Great Hetha	886275	0.60	21.09	430	5377
Sinkside	884262	1.75	22.84	690	6067
North Blackhagg	883251	1.30	24.14	584	6651
Hethpool Car Park	894281	1.86	26.00	186	6837
Wooler to Humbleton Hill		2.06			719
North Blackhagg to Wooler		8.57			956

THE HILLFORT ROUND

INFORMATION ON HILLFORTS

Humbleton Hill

The hillfort is situated on the summit of the hill. It consists of the tumbled remains of a massive drystone wall which must have once stood about 2 metres high and more than 3 metres wide. A second inner wall was built later, perhaps to reinforce the weakest part of the hillfort on its north and east side. Amongst all of the rubble, some of the original stone wall has survived, in places six courses high. Within the ramparts are scoops in the surface, 4m to 8m across; all that remains of the timber roundhouses that once dotted the interior.

An outer enclosure surrounds the hillfort. It may have been used by the hillfort dwellers to keep their cattle safe, though some archaeologists believe that it may be several centuries older- only careful excavations will reveal the answer.

The hillfort overlooks the site of the Battle of Homildon, fought between English and Scottish armies on the 14th September 1402. Archibald, Earl of Douglas, together with some of the most able noblemen of Scotland, was returning from a raid on the County which had taken them to the gates of Newcastle. With only a few miles to the Tweed and safety, they were ambushed by the garrison from Bamburgh Castle led by Henry 'Hotspur' Percy, bolstered with men raised from the surrounding districts. The English archers decimated the Scots and as many as 800 fell where they stood, with a further 500 slain as they fled. The English lost but 5 men. To this day the battle site is known as Red Riggs from the blood of the Scots spilt on that day.

Monday Cleugh

The hillfort is situated on level ground at the head of a deep crag-sided hollow called Monday Cleugh which forms part of its defences on the east side. Although the site is overlooked by Harehope to the north east and Gains Law to the south it commands extensive views to the east, north and west. The enclosure is roughly semi-circular in shape and is surrounded by three earth and stone banks on the north and west, two scarped banks on the south and one on the east where the crags provide natural defences. Within the ramparts are the foundations for three stone-built roundhouses, a later rectangular building near the west entrance, and two sub-rectangular building foundations attached to the outer rampart on the north side of the enclosure. A later sheepfold overlies the ramparts on the west side of the hillfort.

Yeavinger Bell

This powerful and imposing hill has drawn people for millennia. Over four thousand years ago, Stone Age people aligned a henge monument to face it. Two thousand years later Iron Age people built a massive drystone rampart, enclosing both summits of the hill.

Today, the ramparts, which once stood perhaps 2m high on the outer face and up to 3m wide, have long since tumbled. The hillfort was one of the largest Iron Age settlements in northern Britain and includes within its ramparts some 130 scoops for timber-built roundhouses.

St. Gregory's Hill

Situated beneath Yeavinger Bell, this small Iron Age hillfort was built to take advantage of the steep scarp on its north and west sides. Impressive double ramparts survive on these sites, but curiously the east side, which is overlooked by higher ground, was relatively lightly defended. This perhaps indicates that hillforts were not built for defence but for display. Only a single timber-built roundhouse has been identified within. At 95m² in floor area, this would have been surprisingly spacious but even so this site would have housed no more than an extended family unit. The site was completely remodelled on two occasions during the Roman period, when two farmsteads comprising at least 10 stone-built roundhouses were built within the earlier hillfort, leaving the interior much disturbed. Stone-robbing of the site and steam ploughing of the adjacent area in the 19th century, in the interests of land improvement, further denuded the monument.

West Hill

Earliest feature on the site is a bank and ditch which precedes the building of the ramparts but is of unknown date. The hillfort itself comprises the fairly well preserved remains of a massive stone rampart, with a single east-facing entrance. The sites of ten probable and three possible buildings lie within the circuit. All but one probably date from the Roman period, and only one possible platform for a timber-built roundhouse, dating generally to the construction of the hillfort, can be seen. A large outer enclosure is likely to date to the Roman period and may have been a stock enclosure. This is overlain by an extremely well preserved Roman period farmstead consisting of at least two stone built roundhouses and eight ancillary structures, with associated yards.

THE STAW

There were two large Iron Age timber roundhouses in the interior. At some point in the Iron Age, a second rampart was added to the first, apparently for 'show'. In the Roman period, the area enclosed by the second rampart was converted to a 'scooped settlement' and two stone-built roundhouses were built within the main rampart, parts of which were rebuilt using the tumbled rubble of the collapsed Iron Age rampart. In the medieval period, two sheepfolds were built up against the tumbled remains of the prehistoric ramparts.

Mid Hill

There were as many as seven large Iron Age timber roundhouses in the interior. The largest of these, with a floor-space of 95 square metres was not much smaller than a modern bungalow. This cluster of houses may have been enclosed within a timber palisade, which was replaced at some point in the Iron Age by the stone built rampart. The rampart is impressive on the north-west, but tiny on the south-east, although this side was the weakest in defensive terms, with a big 'blind spot'.

Conclusion: above all, ramparts were about showing off to the arriving visitor, not about defending against a well planned or prolonged attack. In the Roman period, the interior was divided precisely into two halves by a fence or hedge, and a stone-built house with an attached yard was built within each of these paddocks. A new entrance was created on the east to give access to that half of the interior, and the perimeter was rebuilt (unusually carefully) using the tumbled rubble from the Iron Age rampart. The surrounding landscape has been ploughed in the medieval period and later, but prehistoric cultivation terraces survive in places.

East Laddie's Knowe

The settlement is situated on the summit of a spur with steep slopes to the north- west and south-east. It comprises an oval shaped area of c.0.7ha enclosed by a double rampart. The ramparts have been

constructed by cutting into the natural hill slope to form a vertical face which was then revetted by stone, in places this incorporates natural stone outcrops. The earthworks are slight and the site is best appreciated from the air. The south-west side is abutted by a Roman period enclosed homestead. The circular stone foundations of two prehistoric buildings are visible. One building, c.13m in diameter, is set into the south-east side of the enclosure. A second, c.6m in diameter, lies outside the enclosure and is built against the northern bank. Immediately to the south of the homestead lies a turf covered Bronze Age burial cairn.

Ringchesters

Evidence from field survey suggests that a palisaded enclosure existed on this site before the hillfort was constructed. This was superseded by the construction of the hillfort formed by a circuit of two near circular stone-revetted earthen ramparts, probably topped by some form of palisade or hedge. It contained only a handful of timber-built roundhouses dating to the period when the ramparts were constructed. One of the houses

is particularly large at 65m² in plan and, with an apparent absence of subdividing boundaries within the hillfort, suggests relatively few occupants, perhaps an extended family. A number of much smaller, later stone built roundhouses can also be seen.

Little Hetha

The hillfort settlement, roughly oval in shape, is situated on the summit of a spur with steep slopes on all sides except the south where the ground falls away gently and then rises sharply to overlook the site. The settlement is enclosed by two ramparts except on the north side where there are three; there is a berm between the ramparts. The ramparts are made up of earth and stone and large revetting boulders are visible around the perimeter of the outer rampart. There are two entrances, one facing north east and the other facing north west. The interior of the site, which was much disturbed in the medieval or later period when two rectangular buildings were built in the central area, contains the remains of at least three stone-founded roundhouses.

Great Hetha

The hillfort on Great Hetha consists of two ramparts, the outer being the earlier in construction. The outer face of the inner rampart may have been as high as 3.5m for much of the circuit but on the north east side there appears to have been a bank virtually no wall at all. This suggests that this section was less significant and that the main approach to the hillfort was from the opposite side where display was more important. However, the dominant location and strength of the ramparts makes this site one of the most well defended prehistoric settlements in the Cheviots. The remains of platforms for timber roundhouses can be seen arranged around the crest of the hill.

Sinkside

The hillfort is situated in a naturally defensible position overlooking the valley of the College Burn and is enclosed by a broad stone rampart. Although ungrazed and hummocky, the interior formerly contained visible traces of Iron Age timber roundhouses and probable Romano-British stone-founded roundhouses and internal divisions. The south-east circuit is overlain by a modern sheep stell. The rampart now consists mostly of the scree core, but sections of the original prehistoric masonry survive in places. A simple gap entrance, 3m wide and defined by large upstanding boulders, is clearly visible in the north-west circuit.

North Blackhagg

The hillfort is the most southerly of a linear series of defended settlements which extend along the west side of the College Valley. It is situated on a prominent summit on the north-east shoulder of Blackhagg Rigg overlooking the steep western slopes of the College Valley , and is enclosed by two concentric stone ramparts. Traces of at least four scooped platforms for timber-built roundhouses are visible along the western edge of the interior. The exterior face of the rampart is abutted by the foundations of two later stone- built roundhouses. A medieval or later sheep stell was built over the northern part of the interior, and this appears to have been replaced by a second stell built over the northern ramparts. The site has been damaged in recent years by the erection of three walkers cairns along the east and south-east ramparts.