



**A short, easy 3-mile walk, mainly through farmland, with some fine views over the high ground to the south of Haltwhistle, finishing with a short stretch along the well wooded banks of the lovely Haltwhistle Burn.**

O.S. Explorer OL 43 Woodhead Farm – Birchfield Gate – Edge Hill – Haltwhistle Burn

## ‘From Old Dames to Clay Pipes’

**Start Point:** By Car, Bus, Train.

Start in Haltwhistle. Train users follow signs ‘Town Centre’ to start at the Market Square and take the arched alley way 20m to the left of the The Centre of Britain Hotel to the supermarket car park. Bus users start at the Market Square. Car users park at the supermarket accessed by turning into Aesica Road off Main Street, signposted ‘Swimming & Leisure Centre’ and following the blue ‘P’ signs.

**1.** Leave the car park by the main entrance and turn left. At the junction of Fair Hill and Willia Road, on your right, the large building on the left hand corner is the former Church School; built in 1872 it is now transformed into private dwellings with such give-away names as ‘Eleven Plus’. Take the second turning left which is Woodhead Lane and signposted ‘Greenholme Aged Persons’ Home’. Just beyond the signpost look out for a low stone building with windows bricked up, at the bottom of the hill. It is the old Dame School.

**Did you know:** Dating back to 1722 and endowed by the Dowager Baroness Capel of Tewkesbury who died in 1721. She had made a will in 1719, bequeathing income from one of her estates to twelve Church of England Schools for the education of the poor. As she did not live here, one can only presume that Haltwhistle figured in the twelve since Lady Capell had cousins in the area. Indeed, one of the executors of her will was Christopher Featherstonehaugh, probably a member of her family and a name with close associations with Featherstone Castle, just south of the town. The building is still in use today, as the practice room for Haltwhistle Silver Band.

Follow the lane until the last school gate, then take the footpath signposted to ‘Birchfield Gate’. This path follows a small stream through a mixture of oak, birch, hawthorn, blackthorn, bramble and dog rose. After approximately 300m cross over a stile and walk straight ahead through two field gates, taking in fine views to the south, looking over the west end of Haltwhistle to the high ground at Plenmeller and Wydon. The panorama of hills to the south is the northern tip of the Pennines. Cross Fell, usually just visible in the far distance, is the highest point, reaching 2,930 ft. and the source of the River South Tyne.

**2.** When you reach a large barn at Woodhead Farm go between the barn and the fence and through a field gate. Turn right, go through another gate and then immediately left past the farm buildings. Cross a step stile and be careful not to miss another stile, where you cross the fence on your left. Once over, turn sharp right to walk in a westerly direction through three fields parallel to the hedge on the right. At the end of the third field, before the land descends sharply to a small stream, go over a step stile in the fence to your right then cross a small footbridge. Turn left to descend to another footbridge in the dip, then go straight up the slope towards the farm.

**3.** Just before the farm gate turn right and head diagonally across the field in a north-easterly direction to re-cross the same stream, this time by a ford, to reach a field gate. Through the gate turn diagonally left then, after crossing an old hedge bank, continue up the next field to cross a ladder stile in the far right hand corner. Once over go straight on, passing on your left the meagre remains of an old wind pump (now just slabs of stone on the ground) and, with Fell View Farm well to your right, cross the farm track and aim for a ladder stile over a low stone wall opposite Edge Hill House.

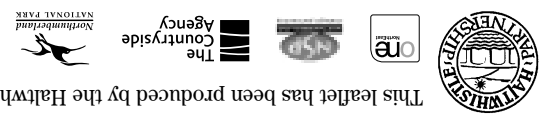
**4.** Turn right and head down the road for approximately 500m until you reach a ladder stile on your left. Cross the field, gradually veering away from the fence on your right to cross a step stile just below the farm. Now gradually head down towards the wooded slope on your left. Keep to the edge of the gorge to descend the hill. At the bottom, jump across the stream to go over the step stile on the other side. Go diagonally left across the small field to climb over a stone stile near a white cottage.

**5.** Here you can either turn right to reach Haltwhistle by road, or turn left and very shortly go over a stile next to a field gate on your right. After a short distance use a footbridge on the right to cross the Haltwhistle Burn.

**Did you know:** This footbridge was used to carry the wagonway over the Burn. You can still see the track rail along which the tubs were pulled by little tank engines. The line ran from Cawfields Quarry, on Hadrian’s Wall, to the main Newcastle-Carlisle Railway line. Well into the 20th century the tubs came rumbling down the Burn gorge filled with whinstone from the quarry. The South Tyne Colliery also made use of part of the line.

The next section of the walk passes the sites of two 18th century woollen mills – High Mill just past the footbridge and Low Mill further along near the Cats Stairs on your left and the narrow footbridge on your right. Both were powered by water wheels and produced baize cloth until the late 19th century. If you are still feeling energetic at this point, you might like to climb to the top of the Cats Stairs, but be prepared, there are well over a hundred steps! However, there is a seat at the top where you can pause

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



For more information call 01434 321242

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and get your breath back, and enjoy a good view of the gorge below. The cliffs at your feet are home to a colony of jackdaws. Now follow the very well defined path, with a picnic area on your right, to eventually reach a gate and a group of buildings with the old brickworks chimney still standing. Apart from industrial relics, look out for grey and pied wagtails and dippers, flying low over the water or bobbing up and down on the stones.

**Did you know:** This part of the Burn was clearly a hive of industry producing bricks, clay pipes and coal. The South Tyne Colliery, which once employed 700 men, closed in 1930 whilst the South Tyne Fireclay Company was based here from 1848 to 1960.

Turn right over the bridge to regain the road to the town centre. After a few hundred yards turn left at the T junction and the car park can be seen on the right.

**Did you know:** Older maps show a mysterious grid where the car park now stands. The clue is in the name of the housing development to the west side of the car park – The Mart. Quality Fare is indeed the site of the former Haltwhistle Mart where sheep and cattle reared in the surrounding area were sold well into the 1980s.

Whilst Walking in and around Hadrian's Wall Country please remember that "every footstep counts" particularly during the wet winter months. You can help protect Hadrian's Wall Country and one of the great wonders of the world by following the simple advice below:

- Many of the routes are permissioned by landowners - enjoy the countryside and respect the livestock and the land
- Always follow the signed paths
- Guard against risk of Fire at all times
- Fasten all gates
- Keep dogs on a lead
- Remember walking on Hadrian's Wall can cause it to collapse
- Try to avoid walking alongside the wall in very wet conditions.