

Walking North East



Welcome

to this, the first edition of Walking North East, the all-new newsletter cum magazine published by Trailguides and dedicated to all things walking in the North East of England.

So what's the purpose of this publication. Well obviously to provide news and to promote Trailguides and it's various guides and publications, we wouldn't insult your intelligence by pretending otherwise but at the same time if it was just about us you'd probably find it boring and wouldn't read it anyway. So the challenge for us then is to provide something that is interesting and is a good read in it's own right and that you, as walkers, will approve of and will ask to see more of. Have a look at the contents inside and you'll see a varied mix of articles and points of interest that will, hopefully, grab you and make you want to read further. Maybe enough to convince you that we have hit the ground walking, so to speak, with our very first edition.

Please feel free to contact us by email and give your views on the content. Your views are always welcome and as this newsletter develops and evolves then it would make sense to have you, as the reader, involved in it.

Good reading

Passionate about walking

north east
england



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Contributions from readers will always be considered for inclusion within this magazine. Please feel free to send any articles, news or other pieces that you feel would be of interest to our readers to trailguides@uwclub.net.

Photos.

Front cover. The Bridestones in heavy snow. The Neolithic stone circle above Bilsdale on the North York Moors after a day's heavy snow.
Left. The Tees Valley Railway Walk in Mid-Teesdale, County Durham.

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Walking Festivals - 2009

Ever considered a walking festival ??

There are a number of festivals held throughout the North East during the course of the year, see the panel on the right for dates and locations. Attending one of these can be fun and can open up a new aspect to your walking. Each of the events have a number of walks spread throughout the duration of the festival and you can sign up for one, a couple or even all the walks, it is entirely up to you. Look up the relevant website for each of the festivals and you will see a full listing of all the walks involved along with instructions on how to book your place.

So what are the advantages of attending one of these festivals, well there are many ways in which your walking enjoyment can be enhanced. A few are shown below.

Introduction to walking.

For those who are new to walking in the countryside, attending a walk at one of these festivals may be a good way to dip your toes into the water. There is nearly always a good selection of walks of varying distances from which to choose so you will always find something that is within your capabilities. Couple that with the fact that there will be a suitably qualified walk leader to add that little bit of reassurance and a walking festival can be an ideal introduction for a beginner.

Informative walks with walk leaders who have specialist knowledge.

One of the benefits of participating in the events of a walking festival is the local, and quite often, expert knowledge imparted by the walk leader who can point out features and items of interest that would normally be missed while walking on your own. Included within most festival's walks itinerary will be a number of themed walks whose subjects may range from wildlife to geology and even historical subjects. Again the walk leader would be chosen due to their specialist knowledge on that particular theme. This can take a walk and turn it into a fascinating adventure. The Kielder festival has a number of walks scheduled that are based around discovering the flora and fauna of both the forest and the surrounding area and other walks that seek out the art work that has been placed in the forest and also the remains from the violent and troubled past of this border region.

Photo. Kielder Water courtesy of

Social events.

For those used to walking on their own or even with the same circle of friends, participation in a festival with its group walks can give the opportunity to meet other people and share a common interest walking. Some long-lasting friendships have been formed over the years by attendees at festivals.

Walking Festivals 2009

April 25th to May 4th.

Haltwhistle Walking Festival

www.haltwhistle.org

June 13th to 20th.

Rothbury and Coquetdale Walking Festival

www.rothburywalking.co.uk

June - to be confirmed

Redcar and Cleveland Walking Festival

www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/countryside

September 5th to 13th

Kielder Walking Festival

www.visitkielder.com

September 25th to October 4th

Richmond Walking and Book Festival

www.richmondbooksandboots.org.uk

October 22nd to 28th

Morpeth Riverside Walking Festival

www.castlemorpeth.gov.uk

A number of festivals have other social activities other than walking attached to them these can range from quiet evenings at the pub to more lively ceilidh or similar. Some festivals have combined activities such as the Swaledale one which has the tag line "Boots and Books" and combines a book festival with the walking side.

Walking as a family.

Many of the festivals have some of their walks geared towards families. For those with young children this can give the opportunity to get out and about as a family unit. It can also be a good way of introducing youngsters to the pleasures of walking and the great outdoors especially if there are a number of other children within the walking group who they can interact with. Nowadays with the rise in childhood obesity it can't be a bad thing to introduce your children to walking..

Charges and costs.

Most festivals make a small charge for enrolling on one of the walks. This is really just to cover the costs of staging the festival including the expenses of the walk leader. Some festivals, such

Kielder Walking Festival

Launched in 2008 as the North Tynedale and Redesdale Walking Festival this festival returns for its second year as the re-named Kielder Walking Festival and has also been moved forward to September running from Saturday the 5th to Sunday the 13th.

Kielder Water and Forest Park covers an area of amazing country spanning as it does all the way from Redesdale over to the North Tyne valley and beyond. Recently voted as the most tranquil part of England by the Campaign to Protect Rural England, this is an area that the walker can savour with some panoramic viewpoints including the largest man-made lake in northern Europe.

The walks on offer this year feature a number of self-guided walks plus the usual guided walks led by experienced local walk leaders. As with last year where the variety of walks on offer was part of the festival's success, included in the program will be a number of themed walks based on the art, history, music and wildlife of the area. To complete the walks available and provide a mixture of walks suitable for every level of ability and fitness also included this year will be several



Kielder, the North Tyne valley and Redesdale, an area that is under-valued by walkers and well-worth a visit, Try one of the wildlife walks during the festival and take the opportunity of seeing some of the rarer species in the region.

Photo. Lewisburn Bay. Courtesy Kielder Partnership.

longer distance walks including a guided hill walk over Deadwater Fell.

Elisabeth Rowark, Kielder Partnership director, said: "We're delighted to announce the return of the walking festival and are excited to showcase the best of what Kielder Water & Forest Park has to offer. The stunning North of Tyne and Redesdale countryside is remote and tranquil. Our walks offer visitors the chance to take in all the views, breathe the clean air and enjoy the exercise in the most tranquil part of England."

Further details will be available after April 1st from the Box Office at Kielder Castle, Kielder, Northumberland, NE48 1ER. Telephone 01434 250209 during opening hours 10 am to 5 pm. See also the website www.visitkielder.com

as the Rothbury and Coquetdale, donate any funds raised to worthwhile causes, in the case of the Rothbury festival, to a number of environmental projects within the Northumberland National Park. In situations like this you could consider participation as a very enjoyable method of fund-raising.

Conclusion

There are many advantages to attending a walking festival but in the main they provide an opportunity to expand your horizons and to just generally enjoy yourself. Give yourself the benefit of what is out there this year and as a minimum just attend a single walk from one of the festivals listed and see for yourself. You just never know, you may enjoy yourself that much that you sign up for more



Walker at the Wave Chamber overlooking Kielder.
Courtesy Kielder Partnership.

Rothbury and Coquetdale Walking Festival

For many people the valley of the river Coquet presents some of the best walking countryside in the whole of Northumberland and this view is definitely echoed by Jon Monks one of the driving forces behind the new Rothbury and Coquetdale Midsummer Walking Festival being held for the first time this year.

In the view of Jon, the founder of Shepherd's Walks the North East's biggest guided walk providers and joint promoter of the festival along with Northumberland National Park, "Rothbury and Coquetdale, has a varied and often undiscovered landscape and provides what I think is some of the best walking in Northumberland. From the picturesque walk along the River Coquet itself, which is especially beautiful as it flows through Thropton and Rothbury, to the wild bleak landscape of the higher ground further up the valley when it passes up through Harbottle, Alwinton and Barrowburn before reaching Chew Green at the top of the valley. Windy Gyle up on the border ridge I personally rate as one of the best vantage points in Northumberland. It never fails to impress. The true sense of isolation is second to none."

And the festival certainly does look as if it could be something quite special being timed to run from Saturday 13th June to the following Saturday the 20th and covering the period of the midsummer equinox which in Coquetdale and especially on the surrounding Simonside Hills has meant the gathering to celebrate the summer solstice, a practice that may have existed on the summit of Simonside since prehistory.

The walks itinerary is certainly going to be full with fifteen walks over the eight days comprised of both day and evening walks and outings that range from quiet riverside walks to full-blown hill walks all led by people from the local community whether they be National Park Rangers, walk leaders such as Jon from the Rothbury-based Shepherd's Walks company or volunteers with their local knowledge. With bookings already in from places as diverse as London and the USA it may be a case of booking early to avoid disappointment. As Jon says "it is great to see such a great event being organised in what I think is the finest area in the region. The variety of walks on offer for this festival is second to none and I am certainly

looking forward to taking part in it"

All money raised from this festival will be donated to the "Good Nature Fund" to be spent on environmental projects within Northumberland National Park.

For more information about this festival visit the website at www.rothburywalking.co.uk or call Shepherds Walks on 01830 540453.



Many of the festivals are staged to promote and raise an awareness of their area and stimulate tourism and this gives the opportunity to walk in locations that you may not be familiar with and even some places that you had not thought about walking in before. Guided walks can give the opportunity to explore these new areas that you may be slightly hesitant to attempt on your own. The wide-open landscape of Coquetdale as shown above is both breathtaking in its isolation and compelling in the need to visit. However it can also be a little daunting to those who are not necessarily familiar to walking in this type of environment. Having a guide who is familiar with and who has a knowledge of the area can be reassuring and at the same time local knowledge can point out places and objects of interest that would normally be missed or overlooked by the more casual walker.

Photo courtesy of Jon Monks, Rothbury and Coquetdale Walking Festival.

Forthcoming publications.

2008 proved to be an exciting year for Trail-guides with a real take-off in the new range of walking guides. The concept of small local guides that focus on a particular locality or theme seemed to catch the imagination of the walking fraternity within the North East and has encouraged us to expand our portfolio. For 2009 we aim to continue in our target of providing a complete catalogue of walking in the region and develop our range even further with a number of titles planned for release during the course of the year and a number of ideas that we aim to develop.

County Durham

We have quite ambitious plans to expand our range of walker's guides to County Durham during the coming year. Coverage of the Durham Dales will be expanded by the release of the following four guides with even more planned for the second half of the year.

Mid-Teesdale Walks.

Mid-Teesdale that area of land lying between Barnard Castle and Middleton-in-Teesdale. In a series of eight walks this book explores the varied countryside in this small area with walks that traverse the high and low moors that surround the valley, the low lying cultivated farmland of the valley itself, the deep wooded gorges of the tributaries of the Tees and even a railway walk.

Bollihope Walks.

The Bollihope Burn is a major tributary of the upper reaches of the river Wear. This set of walks explores the valley of the Bollihope and the vast expanse of low lying moor that surrounds it. An area often forgotten by walkers, this varied landscape can have a beauty all of its own especially in summer when the bloom of the heather turns the land purple.

The High Hills of Weardale.

The hills of Upper Weardale stand in their own isolation. These moorland mountains are surrounded by heather and cotton grass and form part of "England's Last Wilderness". This book covers eight walks that explore the nine highest hills of this rugged moorland setting.

Walks from Stanhope.

Stanhope, the main town of Upper Weardale lies half-way up the dale and is used as the spring board for this book of walks that explores the countryside and history of this section of the dale.



Walking along the old Roman road from the book Mid-Teesdale Walks.



Looking down onto the Bollihope valley from Carrs Top. Bollihope Walks.



The summit of Crow Coal Hill. Walks from Stanhope.

Northumberland

Primarily centred on the area covered by Northumberland National Park the existing range of titles will be initially expanded to include the two following guides with, in addition, several other titles being pencilled in for the second half of the year.

Walking in the Forests of Rothbury.

The forests and woods of northern Northumberland ranging from Harwood and Simonside in the south to Wooler in the north, collectively called the Forests of Rothbury after the Forestry Commission district that manages this area. This series of eight walks explores the landscape and history that this varied area holds. The walks range from the Simonside Hills to the foothills of the Cheviots and the sandstone escarpments between the Cheviots and the sea.

The Hills of Upper Coquetdale.

The valley of the Coquet, generally considered to be the most beautiful river in Northumberland. In its upper reaches it penetrates deep into the Cheviot Hills where this book explores the isolated and shapely hills that lie around this valley.

North York Moors

A new area for the Trailguides books to explore.

Stones of the Western Moors.

This is a series of eight walks exploring some of the enigmatic remains and monuments that date back to prehistory. From standing stones and stone circles to elaborate burial complexes, here lying across the western moors are the last remnants of past civilisations most of which are hidden from the casual visitor. Step back in time to explore the landscape and the monuments of our ancestors.



Red squirrel in Holystone Woods. Walking in the Forests of Rothbury.



Climbing Cold Law. The Hills of Upper Coquetdale.



One of the Nine Stones. Stones of the Western Moors.

Walking News

Breamish and Harthope valleys now open.

Following last September's severe flooding in Northumberland which cut-off the Breamish and Harthope valleys access has now been fully restored. So now is the time to pull on your boots and pick-up your copy of The Cheviot Hills or Walks from Wooler and go for a wander round these magnificent hills. Recommended walks to explore these little gems are The Ultimate Harthope Circuit from The Cheviot Hills book and Cold Law Considered from Walks from Wooler.

Haltwhistle Challenge.

A new twenty four mile walk called the Haltwhistle Challenge is being introduced as part of the Haltwhistle Walking Festival this year. To be held on Saturday May 9th the route will cover countryside and moorland bordering the Hadrian's Wall area and the South Tyne valley. The walk will be self-led and is to be completed within ten hours. With the event being held during lambing time no dogs will be allowed on the walk.

For further details and entry forms see the Festival website at www.haltwhistle.org.

New Walk Leaflets for Blanchland.

A series of three walk leaflets based on the village of Blanchland has just been released by the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership. Produced as part of the Living North Pennines project the leaflets have been prepared in co-operation with local residents and are designed to highlight the landscape, history and wildlife of the area with each walk describing a different aspect of the countryside surrounding the village. Designed for walkers of varying abilities the three leaflets cover a mixture of distances and terrain with

one walk being just over a mile in length, another at three and a half miles and the last at nine miles.

The leaflets can be obtained free of charge from local tourist information centres, the North Pennines AONB Partnership on 01388 528801 or download from the AONB website at

Track "n" Terrain on the move.

Track "n" Terrain the specialist walking and climbing shop in Durham City is on the move after three years of successful trading from under Elvet Arch. As from 14th March the shop, the City's only independent outdoor retailer, will be located and open for business across the road at 14 Elvet Bridge on the main thoroughfare.

An open evening is planned for Saturday 4th April where all are welcome to come and view the new premises.

Just Say No ... to Cairns.

The Yorkshire Dales National Park has urged walkers to cease the practice of using stones to build summit cairns. Rocks and stones from a number of prehistoric sites are being removed by walkers who are unwittingly causing damage to these important historical relics. A large proportion of the stone mounds that exist on our hillsides date back to the Bronze Age and earlier, many being in place for over 4,000 years.

This appeal echoes the one made by Northumberland National Park a couple of years ago where walkers were asked to stop building cairns in the Simonside Hills for exactly the same reason. The destruction of a priceless prehistoric history just to make a summit cairn.

So protect our heritage and STOP !!

Huts on the Cleveland Way.

A feasibility study has been launched by authorities in the North York Moors National Park into the building of a string of continental-style eco huts along the length of the 109 mile Cleveland Way. The huts would provide simple, low-cost accommodation for small groups or families and could provide a boost for tourism and encourage more people to walk the route.

If it does materialise, the huts would use green technology to generate power and be constructed of eco-friendly materials. The huts would also be unique being the first such project, along the route of an entire trail, in this country.

Closed for Re-surfacing.

A small section of the Pennine Way between the Wynch Bridge and Holwick Head Bridge in Teesdale is being diverted while repair work is being done on the surface of the path which has become badly eroded. The diversion will lead walkers away from Low Force but will bring them back to the trail in order to view the High Force waterfall. Over 300 tonnes of crossed stone will be brought in by helicopter to repair the path which will take two months to complete however work is obviously dependent upon weather conditions and may over-run.

Crack-down on Illegal Off-Roading.

The North York Moors National Park, Forestry Commission and Police have launched a joint crack-down on illegal off-road driving in the National Park by motorbikes and 4 x 4 vehicles. This follows a rise in these activities on the moors over the winter months. In the first weekend sixteen trail-bike riders and four 4 x 4 drivers were spoken to with one trail-bike being seized.

In a related move, the NYM authority has permanently banned vehicle traffic from a green

lane on Pockley Moor after it had become virtually impassable due to damage caused by off-roaders. Repair work has levelled the gullies churned up by the vehicles which together with drainage work has gone a long way to restoring this Site of Special Scientific Interest. The authority is currently looking at other green lanes on the Moors to see if similar action is needed.

Council Proposes Cut-backs in Footpath services.

Northumberland County Council has proposed cutting three posts from its rights-of-way and countryside management staff. For a county that is a popular holiday destination for walkers and cyclists this is proving to be quite controversial with fears that paths will become neglected, blocked or unmarked leading to a deterioration in the number of visitors to the area.

Forthcoming Challenge Walks.

The countryside of the North East is host to a number of long-distance challenge walks over the course of the year. While not claiming to be fully comprehensive the list below shows the name of the event, distance and contact details of all those that we are aware of. If you are a walk organiser and wish your details to be included feel free to email us at trailguides@uwclub.net.

Saturday April 18

22 or 12 miles from Leyburn.

Wensleydale Wander

www.wensleydale.rotary1040.org

Saturday June 27

30 or 16 miles from Wolsingham.

Durham Dales Challenge

www.ldwa.org.uk/northumbria

Saturday July 4

24 or 14 miles from Twice Brewed.

Hadrian Hike Challenge Walk

www.hadrianhikechallengewalk.piczo.com

Saturday July 4

20 miles from Wooler.

Chevy Chase

www.woolerrunningclub.co.uk entries before June 1st.

Saturday August 15

24 or 13 miles from Guisborough.

Hanging Stone Leap

www.ldwa.org.uk/cleveland

Saturday August 29

26 or 16 miles from Robin Hoods Bay.

Smuggler's Trod

www.ldwa.org.uk/YorkshireCoast

Saturday August 29

24 or 18 miles from Alwinton.

Cheviots Challenge

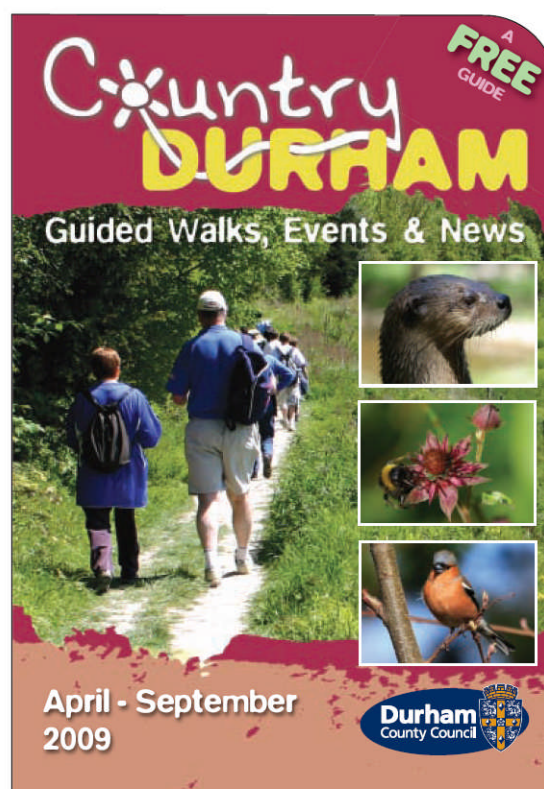
www.cheviotschallenge.org.uk/

Durham County Council Release New Walks Program.

Art, photography, history, nature, geology - whatever your interests are, we have something to get you outdoors this spring. From guided walks and cycle rides to treasure trails and rock pool rambles - we have it all. Walks vary in length from 1 mile to 15 miles, and from easy to hard, so whatever your fitness levels, just pick the walk that suits you best.

Full listings are available in the new issue of *Country Durham*. This guide also contains details of what we are currently doing to make the Durham countryside a better place to be.

For your free copy of *Country Durham*, please contact the Countryside Service on 0191 383 4144, e-mail rangers@durham.gov.uk or download a copy at www.durham.gov.uk/countryside



Viewing the past - looking at historical remains and sites as you walk.



Burial mounds on the skyline above the Rookhope valley in County Durham. Shown as a "cairn" on the Ordnance Survey map, the OS doesn't always show objects such as these correctly and sometimes doesn't show them at all. On occasions they don't even figure on the archaeological record either. With these particular cairns a known settlement at Hanging Wells in the valley below dates back to the Bronze Age and it would seem likely that there would be a connection between the two.



Shown simply as "Earthworks" on the OS map this set of lumps and bumps in the ground within Harwood Forest, Northumberland turn out to be the remains of a fortified settlement from over two thousand years ago when this site was open hillside. Ditches have been dug and the removed soil used to form embankments on top of which a wooden palisade would have been placed. All this to protect a community of two or three round houses which will have probably housed an extended family of between twenty to thirty individuals.

We all love going for a walk and there could be any number of reasons for why we do it, relaxation, keeping fit, meeting the challenge, admiring the landscape and the views. The list could go on but no matter the reason, we all enjoy and get great pleasure from being out whether we are in the high hills or the lower lying more urban areas surrounding our towns and cities.

However no matter where we go, one thing is certain, our landscape has a history and one that can be as wild and turbulent or as exotic and mysterious as any best selling novel. The knack is in uncovering it and interpreting the clues that lie around waiting to be seen.

Not everything is obvious and there are objects and sites out there where you really do need to be a Tony Robinson with your own personal Time Team to discover them. However, there are still many fascinating things in the countryside that are accessible to the average walker and these can and do add a great deal of interest to any walk and sometimes, they can even form the focus of a great day's walking especially if you know a little bit about the site before you visit and then you can begin to really begin to appreciate it as you explore your way around.

The uplands of the North East are guardians to a sizeable number of historical sites. Being an island, the area of land available is finite and obviously at a premium which means that over time the land has been used over and over again with the result that sites and remains get damaged and ultimately disappear. The uplands are more isolated and less productive, at least in modern times, and so there is less pressure on them and the survival rate of sites and artefacts is much higher. This is superbly illustrated by the number of Iron Age hillforts in the Cheviots, the highest number of anywhere in England.

So how can you tell what it is that you are passing and, just as importantly, find out the history of something that you have seen.

We all use Ordnance Survey maps, they are a prime requisite for any walker so that they can tell where they are going. Without them we would be lost, quite literally.

But read them quite carefully and you'll see that these maps do give a lot more information than most people give them credit for. Cairns, curricks, earthworks, standing stones, stone circles, tumulus, these are all marked on the map if



An air-raid shelter on top of the moors above Guisborough in Cleveland. A more modern historical site but why is it placed in such a lonely spot. To protect the people who manned the false buildings used to distract the German bombers away from industrial Teesside during the war.



Sometimes there doesn't have to be anything visible to convey a sense of history. These fields at Ketton near Darlington were the scene of one of the most important developments in agriculture. During the early 1800's giant cattle were bred here by the Collin brothers, an act that revolutionised animal husbandry. This development was not only of national but also international importance as all the breeds of shorthorn cattle in both Britain and the USA can be traced back to the giant bulls that were bred by them. Recognition was almost immediate with the prize bulls and cattle becoming quite celebrated and there was even a travelling exhibition of the animals. As always pub names can be taken as a sign of recognition and popularity and a number of local pubs are named after individual beasts including the Ketton Ox at Yarm and the Comet at Hurworth Place. Do a "Google" on the Durham Ox and see how many pubs nationally are named after this particular bull.

you look closely. And its not just these prehistoric sites that are marked, there are often more modern points of interest as well. In fact OS maps can be a great help in pinpointing historical features that are passed on any walk however they do have their limitations which is not surprising as giving history lessons are not their purpose in life.

Sometimes they may even be a bit puzzling, the site pictured on the front cover is a good case in point. The Bridestones above Bilsdale on the North York Moors are just named on the OS map with no indication as to what the site actually is. Granted something like that can spark the old curiosity and as a result a walk was planned just to find out what the Bridestones were. It was a very pleasant surprise to find quite a well preserved Neolithic stone circle set on the edge of a ridge overlooking the junction of Tripsdale and Bilsdale. Even when half covered with snow the location and viewpoint was breathtaking with views right down the valley heading towards Helmsley.

In the North East we're very lucky, in the north there is Northumberland National Park and further south there are the North York Moors and Yorkshire Dales National Parks and in-between most of the Durham Dales and the Northumberland Pennines are covered by the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. All quasi-governmental bodies set up to protect and promote their respective areas. However as part of the promotional side of things they quite often support local history and archaeological groups and the National Park Visitor Centres can be a mine of information on their area and normally this will include displays, books and other literature. Some of the best information that I've had concerning points of interest have come courtesy of a visitor centre.

Guidebooks are can also be a good place to start when you want to find out more about a walk. Be careful not all guidebooks out there are of the same quality but some can be a bit specialised in the subject of the walks covered and can provide a lot of background behind the walk. And on this subject never under-value the little walk leaflets that are issued by local councils, they can often contain an interesting walk made even more interesting by the associated detail included in the leaflet.

Lastly, have you ever thought about a guided walk. Quite often the bodies that organise these walks, be they council, national park or private organisations will have themes or subjects of interest for their walks where a local expert will explain about the subject matter as you walk. Make a point of following up on the walking festivals, the Durham County Council guided walks program or Shepherd's Walks, all mentioned earlier in this newsletter.

Keven Shevels

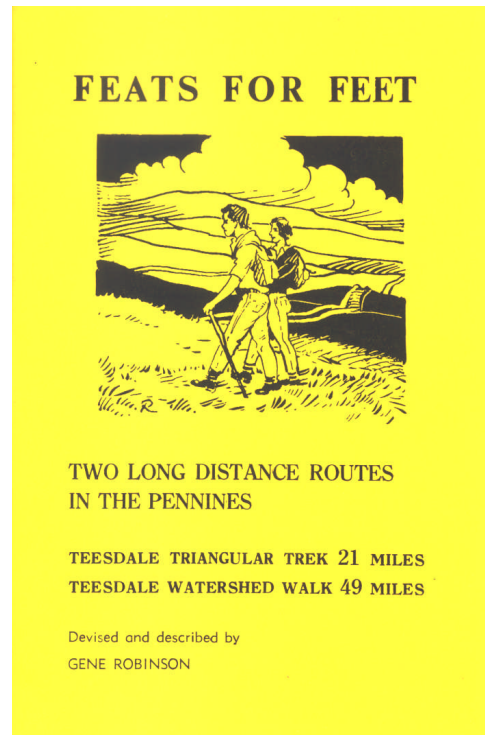
Review - looking at a little-known guide to Teesdale from the 1980's.

It was a rainy Sunday morning in Barnard Castle and I was waiting for a bus to take me to Middleton-in-Teesdale just so that I could walk back down the dale in the rain and what later turned out to be snow. Beats me why the weather always manages to turn a little bit miserable for a Sunday but it does. Anyway, to get out of the rain I thought that I'd pop into the Teesdale Mercury shop and just have a browse and lo and behold there on the walking book shelves were two copies of a yellow covered booklet called Feats for Feet. With a quick skim through and a price of £1.99 the next thing I knew I'd bought it and was reading it while waiting in the bus stand.

The booklet describes two long-distance routes in Teesdale, the Teesdale Triangular Trek of 21 miles and the 49 mile Teesdale Watershed Walk. Both routes being written by Gene Robinson, a local accomplished long-distance fell walker and the booklet being published in 1980 by the Teesdale Mercury itself.

Being now almost thirty years old, I thought that it might be interesting to compare both the book and the routes to what they would be like now and see whether they would still be relevant and capable of being followed in the modern day.

The booklet and its presentation is obviously quite dated but that is not meant as criticism in any way. As most of us are aware the printing industry has been one of the most heavily affected by the advance of new technologies, changes in printing have made things possible now that weren't capable of being done even in the more recent past or were just simply too expensive to be feasible. However after saying that the writing style of the author has not really dated and is quite relaxed and laid-back and very easy to read and follow as are his directions and there was no trouble outlining the routes on the map.



Teesdale Triangular Trek. 21 miles starting and finishing in Barnard Castle.

This route is easily plotted onto the map from the directions given in the book and from my knowledge of the area will give a varied and enjoyable walk to try. The one reservation that I have is over a one and a half mile stretch that crosses over Brownberry and Swarthy Top that is neither on rights of way or access land and as the author himself states requires the climbing of a couple of stone walls. In these days of modern access this is not something that is advisable nor to be encouraged however with a few alterations it is possible to bypass this section and keep everything above board although it does add a little bit extra road walking.

One big change that will be experienced now compared to thirty years ago is the quality of the waymarkers on this walk. Generally speaking the marking of footpaths in Teesdale is very good and the paths covered on the walk are pretty well defined and waymarked so following them should be a lot easier than when the author first walked this route.

Teesdale Watershed Walk. 49 miles starting and finishing in Middleton-in-Teesdale.

Make no mistake this walk is a monster, 49 miles across wild, pathless, uninhabited country. The Tees Watershed Walk has got to be one of the toughest walks around following as it does the watershed of the river Tees over vast tracts of remote moor, of which the majority is at an altitude of over 2,000 feet. There can't be many walks in this country that can boast that.

The text of this walk is more of an account of the author's undertaking rather than a detailed route description but as he says himself the route is defined by the walk's title and directions are a bit meaningless anyway as the route is almost totally pathless. As a challenge walk this has got to be an epic and whereas it is possible to complete in under twenty four hours the author suggests that thirty hours is more realistic.

As with the Triangular Trek I have reservations over one section of this walk which follows the watershed over Mickle Fell, Little Fell and Murton Fell a route which passes through the MOD land that forms a big chunk of

this part of the North Pennines. I can't comment on access thirty years ago but it was obviously a bit more relaxed. Nowadays access is limited to non-firing days and to specific routes which must be followed and then they only go to the top of Mickle Fell, none of which fits in with the intention of following the watershed. A more practical alternative would be to drop down from Hagworm Hill, cross Cronkley Fell and make your way to the High Cup Plain that way, keeping just outside of the MOD land. It would reduce the amount of the route spent above 2,000 feet but would make the walk more accessible even though, for a distance, you are away from the watershed and closer to the river.

Conclusion.

Do I think that this little booklet is worth the princely sum of £1.99 ??

Well actually yes.

It's always nice to have a look back at how things used to be, it makes you appreciate what you have now and the legal right of access is definitely worth appreciating. But the walks themselves are well-worth doing although they may need a little bit of jiggling to make them totally usable and to avoid the perilous sport of leaping walls.

The Triangular Walk will definitely be done during the summer. Most of the route I've already walked in short sections on other walks so I have a good familiarity with the area but it would be good to link it all together for one longer route. As to the much-longer Watershed Walk, travelling 49 mile over that sort of country in one day may not happen. I'd love to be able to say "yes I will" but nowadays I'm built more for comfort than speed and hardship. However the thought of doing it over a couple of days with one or two nights bedding down in a bivy bag does still appeal even at my age so you just never know all I need to do now is to work out an acceptable alternative to wandering over the Mickle Fell ranges. Keep your eye on this newsletter I'll let you know what happens.

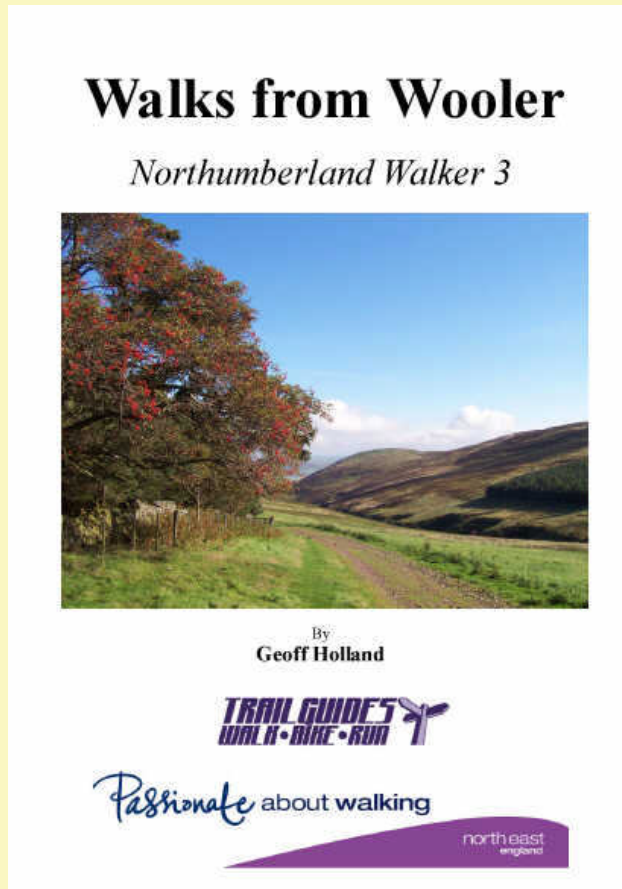
The booklet Feats for Feet is still available for sale via the Teesdale Mercury website at www.teesdalemercury.co.uk/

Ed Coles

Photo. High Cup. One of the highlights of the Teesdale Watershed Walk.



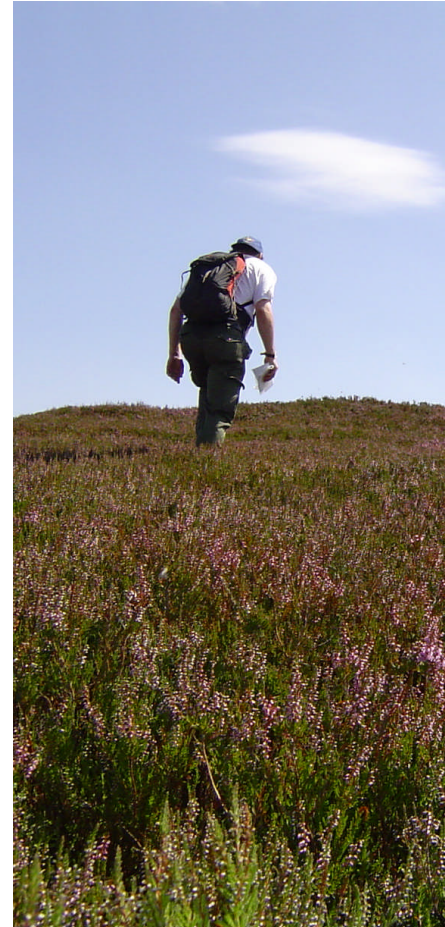
Latest Publication



A huge amount of rain has trickled down the burns of the Cheviot Hills since W. Ford Robertson's book, 'Walks from Wooller' was first published in 1926 and, at first sight, the hills seem pretty much the same as they did all those years ago. Yet there has been change, that much is inevitable.

This book, by the author of the popular book of walks 'The Cheviot Hills', sets out to discover how that change has affected route descriptions now more than 80 years old and to find out whether those routes are still relevant to the 21st century walker.

On eight totally new self-guided walks, this book peeps into a walking past whilst keeping both feet firmly planted in a high-tech walking present. Along the way, it uncovers a world of tackety boots and stout sticks.



Looking forward to a decent summer.

Reader's letters and emails.

Being the first issue there is obviously no reader's letters or emails. I did think of making some up but I always have the opinion that you can tell when they are a put-up job. However, after saying that we are always willing to print reader's comments and reply to questions. Both the email and postal address are on the Trailguides website.

Contributions from readers will always be considered for inclusion within this magazine. Please feel free to send any articles, news or other pieces that you feel would be of interest to our readers to trailguides@uwclub.net.