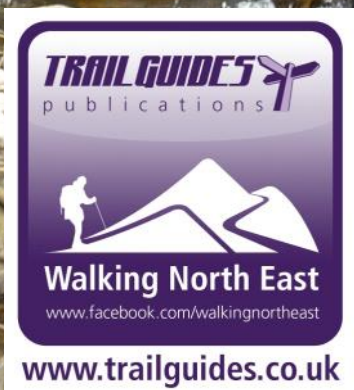


# *Walking North East*



**MARCH 2014**

**Cover photo.**

The waterfall at High Mill on the Middlehope Burn in Weardale.

This walk will feature in a new book, 'Walking in Weardale 2' which will be available later this year.



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

Despite being one of the longer months of the year, March seemed to just fly past.

And the weather seemed to be just as confused as well. The maxim for March is normally 'in like a lion and out like a lamb', but this year it seems to have got itself a little bit back to front with the nice warm weather at the start of the month and the rain and miserable stuff towards the end. But at least got out walking a bit even though one Sunday I did end up with a dusting of snow on the hat as we were following some old miner's tracks at the top end of Weardale.

One of the walks was a visit to Hamsterley Forest. It's been years since I last visited the place and despite the fact that a lot more trees have disappeared to the woodman's axe, it's still a nice place to visit. And if you go to the top end of the forest, you can still keep well away from the hordes of visitors that frequent the visitor centre. The purpose of the visit was to recce out part of a route for a possible long distance route through the dales of Durham. For years I've had an itch to come up with a long distance route through Teesdale, Weardale and to the north, the valley of the Derwent and this year I thought 'why not!'. So the maps have been dusted off, yet again, and the highlighter sharpened. Provisionally titled 'The Durham Dales Way' the walk should be ready for next year, 2015. Now this will mean quite a few walks through the dales during the summer but personally, I can't see anything wrong with that.

You'll notice as you are flicking through this newsletter that it includes a flyer for the Durham Dales Challenge. Well it's the 25th year of this annual challenge event and the organisation team are hoping to make it special and attract a larger entry for it. As a previous participant in this challenge I can wholeheartedly recommend it to all who fancy a good day out in the Durham Dales. It's not often that you get the chance to 'do' both Teesdale and Weardale in the one day so grab it while you can.

## *Walking News :*

Durham Wildlife Trust is seeking volunteers to count otters during a two-day survey being held on April 26 and 27. Last April, over 100 volunteers took part in the Trust's first survey, which revealed useful evidence confirming the return of the otter to areas across County Durham, Darlington, Sunderland, Gateshead and South Tyneside. Volunteers will be allocated a patch of river or a watercourse close to where they live and which they can then explore to identify sites within that patch that will provide a good chance of finding otter signs. These sites could be bridges or rocks where an otter regularly leaves spraint, their droppings, food remains or alternatively a patch of mud where it's easy to see tracks. The volunteers will then be asked to survey these sites on both the Saturday morning and again on the Sunday morning. Volunteers must be available on the mornings of both April 26 and 27. For more information email: [vkent@durhamwt.co.uk](mailto:vkent@durhamwt.co.uk)

---

Darlington Borough Council is proposing to create a new footpath linking the town to the village of Hurworth. The proposed route will run from Skerne Way to Snipe Lane by using an underpass near the river Skerne and then connecting with a public footpath across a golf course and farmland towards Hurworth. The consultation period on the proposal ended last week and officials will now review the feedback over the next few weeks before making a decision on whether to go ahead with the plan.

---

A number of footpath improvements have been made to improve access to paths around Northallerton. The work has been carried out by Northallerton volunteers through North Yorks County Council's public rights of way team and has included the replacement of a number of stiles by gates. The path around Romanby golf course has been upgraded and now walks between Thirsk and Northallerton are also being promoted after improvements with new gates north of Thornton Le Beans.

---

Council officers have done a U-turn on plans for wind turbines close to the 4,000 year old Duddo stone circle in Northumberland. Planning officers at Northumberland County Council had recommended approval of proposals for two generators close to the stone circle near Berwick. However, now councillors are being urged to throw out the plans after a recent decision to allow another turbine to be erected in the area. The original application for generators had faced objections from residents on the basis that the turbines have not been sited so as to minimise any impact on the Neolithic period scheduled ancient monument. Yet council planning officers recommended approval, arguing the generators "would not cause 'substantial harm' to the setting and significance" of the stones. However, the application was instead deferred when it emerged that an objection from Duddo Parish Council had not been reported to the county councillors but since the deferral, a government planning inspector has allowed another turbine to be erected in the same area, at Shoreswood. Now councillors are being advised by their own planning committee to refuse the application as "The proposed turbines in conjunction with the recently approved Shoreswood wind turbine will cause substantial harm to the setting of the Duddo Stones Scheduled Ancient Monument."

---

The Forestry Commission has published new maps and statistics that show that Great Britain has about two and a half times more forest and woodland than it had 100 years ago. Currently Britain has almost 3 million hectares (7.5 million acres) of forest and woodland. This represents 13 per cent of the total land area, and equivalent to almost 4 million football pitches. It is estimated that a century ago the woodland cover of the country was between only 4 and 6 per cent. The new reports and maps form part of the National Forest Inventory (NFI), and comprises separate reports for Britain, England, Scotland and Wales. The England and Scotland reports include regional breakdowns. They, and other NFI products, can be downloaded free from the NFI area of the Forestry Commission website at [www.forestry.gov.uk/inventory](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/inventory).

**Dr Who crashes the Tardis in William Gill, Arkengarthdale.**



A walker taking part in a challenge event that raises funds for one of our local mountain rescue teams had to be rescued by the very team that she was helping. The walker was one of 136 taking part in the Falcon Flyer, a 32km (20-mile) circular walk starting in Ravenscar on the North Yorkshire coast and organised by the Scarborough and Ryedale Mountain Rescue Team to raise funds for the team. A member of the group that the walker was with rang the event's emergency number from their position high on Burn Howe Rigg after the woman had injured her leg. A Scarborough and Ryedale MRT spokesperson said: "The casualty's location was between checkpoints at Burn Howe Duck Pond and Jugger Howe and inaccessible even to our 4x4 vehicles. However the walk sweepers were quickly on site to administer immediate casualty care. Other team members were rapidly pulled from checkpoints and walked in from the end of the Jugger Howe tank road while our response vehicles drove around to the duck pond from which team members carried in essential medical equipment and one of our Bell stretchers. Once sufficient team members reached the find site the sweepers left to continue to provide cover for the rest of the walkers while the lady was treated, helped onto the stretcher and into the casualty bag before being carried around 2km to the waiting vehicles. After transfer to one of the Land Rover ambulances she was subsequently evacuated to hospital for further treatment."

---

A free information pack of walks around Hartlepool is now available to both residents of the town and visitors. Hartlepool Council's Parks and Countryside team has produced the guide, which contains pull-out maps for nine walks around the borough which cover distances from 2.5 to 6.5 miles. The pack is available from main council buildings including the Civic Centre, 1 Church Street, Hartlepool Art Gallery and local libraries.

---

Work has started on repairing landslips on the main B6270 Richmond to Reeth road in Swaledale. The road will be completely closed for the next twelve weeks until the end of May. Swaledale and Arkengarthdale are an extremely popular walking area in the Yorkshire Dales and this road closure will cause delays for anybody venturing into that part of the National Park. The main alternative for anybody wanting to go up the dale will involve a high level seven mile diversion over Grinton Moor. North Yorkshire County Council has placed maps of all the diversions on its website

---

Volunteers have taken out almost a third of a 6,000 square metre rhododendron plantation that has been threatening indigenous vegetation along the River Tees. The bushes near Romalldkirk are thought to have been planted two generations ago to serve as habitat for game birds but their effect on the acidity of the soil has also prevented anything else from growing. Volunteers from the Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership and the Tees Rivers Trust have been leading the effort to remove the invasive plants which had taken over a stretch of about a quarter of a mile alongside the river. Despite rhododendrons being notoriously difficult to eradicate, results have already been achieved and the removal is starting to make a difference. Rhododendron-bashing only takes place during winter to lessen the impact on birds and other wildlife. The most difficult part of eradicating the plants is coping with their ability to grow back after being cut down; they can also spread very quickly because any branch hanging down from the bush can take root to create a new plant. Because of this, it is thought that it will be some time before the plantation is completely removed; probably around three years dependent upon the number of volunteers come forward.

---

The leaders of England's national parks have welcomed a coalition Government decision not to allow disused barns to be converted to houses. The Government had proposed relaxing the planning rules on converting unused agricultural buildings into homes sparking concerns that unrestricted housing conversions could have a detrimental effect in those areas with a sensitive landscape such as the Yorkshire Dales National Park where there are an estimated 6,000 unused barns. Now the Planning Minister, Nick Boles, has announced that Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks will now be excluded from these proposals and will retain local planning control.

---

Hamsterley Forest is hosting a discovery day on Sunday, March 30, as part of a national event by the Forestry Commission to get more people exploring England's woodlands. The event aims to offer an insight into the past and present of timber production and to also look at the wildlife that lives among the trees. As part of this Hamsterley Forest, in County Durham, is offering free parking on the day. For more details about what is being planned visit [www.forestry.gov.uk/discoveryday](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/discoveryday)

The head of planning for Durham County Council says that he cannot see any more large-scale wind turbine proposals being put forward in Teesdale and that the value of the landscape and other factors put too many constraints for another major project to come forward. This could mean that the gigantic turbines being proposed for Hamsterley would be the last major application in the dale, the only other wind turbines that could be built would be smaller-scale agricultural ones. The constraints that are stopping developers putting forward large-scale plans in Teesdale include the impact on the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, terrain, ecology, impact on heritage, the effects on radar, effect on people's homes and visual dominance. The plans to build a wind farm between Hamsterley and Woodland have been on the table for four years but the £12.4million scheme to build five 115-metre turbines has been hit by delays and led to protests. The energy company applying for the permission, Banks, has been asked to include more information on the effects on wildlife in their planning documents and the scheme has not yet gone before Durham County Council's planning committee. However, a proposal to build five turbines at Punder Gill near the A66 is being lodged with the county council but these turbines would be 47 metres high, considerably smaller than the the gigantic turbines planned at Hamsterley.

---

The latest stage in fund-raising to save the iconic Victorian suspension footbridge at Allen Banks in Northumberland has been a success. The 'Wobbly Bridge' as it is popularly known, was severely damaged by floods last year and a total of £100,000 is required to restore the suspension bridge to its former glory. As part of the fund raising the National Trust, which is responsible for the bridge, had to meet a £10,000 fund-raising target by last week or risk losing every penny if it fell short. The target was reached early in the week, when the trust revealed that an impressive £10,400 had been raised through the online Crowdfunder scheme. This sum will cover the cost of restoring wooden planks, and fixing the original Victorian chains. It will also be used to install a set of stepping stones to give another way to cross the river. Nearly £45,000 has now been raised so far through local funding and partnerships. The National Trust is aiming to raise the remaining funding through public, individual and charitable trust donations, and hopes to achieve this by June this year so that the bridge can be reinstated over the summer months. Following last May's floods, the bridge was found to be too badly mangled to be repaired and will be rebuilt in the form of a like-for-like replacement.

---

The RSPB is asking people across the region to keep an eye out for one of England's most threatened birds of prey and has launched a special hotline to report sightings of the endangered hen harrier. The of Northern England should have at least 320 pairs of breeding hen harriers but last year not a single chick was raised in the whole of England. Amanda Miller, Conservation Manager for the RSPB in Northern England, said: "This lack of breeding success is not through lack of effort. The male is famous for his spectacular courtship display known as skydancing in which he tries to attract a female with a series of high altitude swoops and somersaults. It's like watching nature's equivalent of the Red Arrows." The main reason for their low numbers is due to illegal persecution by shooters who kill the predators to stop them getting the grouse. Ms Miller said: "As hen harriers tend to breed in remote moorland areas, we rely on walkers, cyclists, and other people who spend their free time in the uplands to help our on-the-ground team by letting us know if they see one." Male hen harriers are an ash-grey colour with black wing tips and a wingspan of just less than a metre. Female hen harriers are slightly larger, owl-like in appearance, and have a mottled brown plumage which camouflages them when they nest on the ground. Sightings can be reported to the Harrier hotline on 0845-4600121.

---

Part of the proceeds from the sale of The Wainwright Society 2014 calendar have benefited a couple of the mountain rescue teams in our region. A total of £4,550 was split between seven northern teams that cover the area through which Wainwright's Coast to Coast Walk runs, these teams included both Swaledale and Cleveland. As well as the donations to the rescue teams, money from the sales of the calendar was also used to fund waymarking of the C2C walk route.

---

The Wainhope Bothy near Kielder Forest in Northumberland will be closing to walkers as from this coming Saturday until August. The shelter will be out of use throughout the summer to avoid disturbing a pair of ospreys which have just arrived at the site from Africa. Further details are on the [Mountain Bothies Association website](#).

# CHALLENGE YOURSELF to go that little bit further

The Northumbria Group LDWA organises the annual DURHAM DALES CHALLENGE, two separate and circular walks of 16 and 30 miles starting from Wolsingham in Upper Weardale. This event is not a competition, but a personal challenge, proving that you are above the average, capable of more than the humdrum of everyday life. You could walk on your own or with old friends or chance acquaintances. You could walk fast or slow. You will always meet encouragement, whether from fellow entrants or from the helpers manning the checkpoints.



*"That certificate and badge says that you've walked your first challenge event. So, it's nothing much, but YOU did it. YOU kept going when every fibre in your body says that should have been at home, with a cuppa, in front of the TV. You proved that YOU are not a quitter. You have done something that those in the office haven't. Somehow it seems to rub off in your everyday life. You can cope, you can do it, and usually you do"*

quote from a previous entrant

## DURHAM DALES CHALLENGE Saturday 28th June 2014

**2 separate and circular walks of 16 and 30 miles  
from Wolsingham School in Upper Weardale.**

*This annual event is a unique opportunity for walkers and runners of all abilities to explore the remote and wild landscape that Durham has to offer, whilst completing either a 16 or a 30 mile route within 12 hours. There will be refreshments at checkpoints and a hot meal at the finish.*

To enter, visit [www.ldwa.org.uk/Northumbria](http://www.ldwa.org.uk/Northumbria) and follow 'Latest News',

Other enquiries, email: [northumbrialdwagroupsecretary@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:northumbrialdwagroupsecretary@hotmail.co.uk)



**Northumbria Group  
LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION**



The Forestry Commission at Kielder Water and Forest Park will host a Forest Discovery Day on Sunday, March 30, as part of the Forestry Commission England's nationwide event to invite more people to explore England's woods and forests. Visitors to Kielder Water and Forest Park can enjoy free parking for the day and also 2-for-1 bike hire. There will also be a guided Goshawk Walk with expert birder Martin Davidson, where visitors will have the chance to witness these magnificent birds "sky-dancing" over England's last great wilderness.

---

The heritage group, Friends of the Darlington and Stockton Railway, have outlined plans to develop a 26-mile walkway along the route of the original Darlington to Stockton Railway. The route itself, ran from Witton Park Colliery near Bishop Auckland to a point near the Riverside in Stockton, it's original purpose being to move coal from the Durham coalfields to the port on the river. It is hoped that the walkway will be open by 2025.

---

The Government has pledged £1/4m for the UK's volunteer mountain rescue teams in the next fiscal year, Parliament was told last week. Transport minister Stephen Hammond told the Commons that funding would continue after the end of the current round of annual grants this year. Mr Hammond said: "We have listened carefully to the concerns raised and will therefore provide in 2015-16 grants totalling £250,000 to mountain rescue organisations in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland for use towards the cost of their equipment and training. That is in addition to the grants totalling £600,000 that we have made available over the past three years and the £200,000 to be payable this year for 2014-15."

The campaign to exclude mountain rescue teams from paying VAT on their expenditure, in a similar way to that which the RNLI has exemptions, is continuing.

Chancellor George Osborne announced in last week's Budget that air ambulance charities, many of which are involved in rescuing injured walkers, climbers and mountain bikers, would be given tax relief on their aviation fuel.

---

Northumberland National Park plans to turn to charity to help it cope with Government funding cutbacks. By 2016-17, the Park will be facing a real terms reduction of around 40% of its Government grant and so is now exploring the potential for philanthropic giving from organisations and individuals who want to see one of the most unspoilt areas in the country both safeguarded and enhanced. The concept behind the move being that givers would be much more likely to donate to a charity than directly to the National Park Authority. The proposal is to set up a programme to encourage and allow philanthropic fund-raising for park projects and would involve employing a fund-raising officer and setting up a charitable body called the Northumberland National Park Foundation to support the work of the authority. The foundation's formal purpose would be to "make grants and to provide other support for conserving and enhancing the natural beauty and cultural heritage of Northumberland National Park and promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the park by the public". It is expected that the foundation would receive donations from trusts, other foundations, corporate sources and individuals who value the National Park and what it offers and then ensure the effective distribution of these funds to the Northumberland National Park Authority for specific projects. The foundation itself would be an independent body run by a board of trustees.

---

A bus stop on the North York Moors has made it on to a list of the loneliest bus stops in Britain. The stop, recognised not just as one of the most remote bus stops, it is also one of the most interesting around, is more than a mile away from the nearest house standing on an isolated road on the northern edge of the North York Moors. With the nearest villages of Commondale and Castleton about one and a half miles away and with a bus service that runs just once every fortnight, if you need to get anywhere in a hurry then you would be in for a lengthy wait. The brick built bus shelter has been nicknamed the Shaun the Sheep bus stop thanks to a graffiti image of the cartoon character painted on to the inside of the bus stop. The Shaun the Sheep bus stop was listed in the BBC News Magazine's list as one of the loneliest bus stops across the country, as submitted by readers.

---

Woodland footpaths are to be improved in Prudhoe in a bid to encourage the community to enjoy the wilderness on their doorstep. The scheme, which seeks to improve woodland in West Wylam and Castlefield woods, is due to start in April. The environmental charity Groundwork will be carrying out the works on land owned by Northumberland County Council using funding from the Forestry Commission. The project wants to im-



prove access to the woods by widening and clearing footpaths and also improving the natural habitats for birds in the area. Groundwork is now appealing for volunteers from the local community to help them carry out the work which will include, coppicing, pruning and putting up bird boxes .

---

A new study commissioned by the Moorland Association has found dramatic gains in the population of merlin, Britain's smallest bird of prey, on globally recognised heather moorland that is managed by gamekeepers for wild red grouse such as that in the North Pennines. Using the respected British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Atlas data, consultant ecologists, Penny Anderson Associates, have highlighted significant increases in the distribution of breeding merlin in England. It also found that 78 per cent of records were on protected and conserved iconic heather landscapes that is kept for red grouse and more importantly, it suggests numbers of breeding records have doubled on grouse moors in the last 20 years. BTO data shows breeding records within 10 kilometre squares, this makes it possible to establish that where there are gamekeepers, there are four times more merlin. These gains in population on the grouse moors have helped maintain the protected bird's population, rather than see it join the Red List' of endangered species.



**The Debenhams blue cross sale 'branches' out to Hamsterley Forest.**

**Following the Pennine Way over Sleightholme Moor.  
This will feature as part of a route in our forthcoming book 'Walking in Arkengarthdale'.**



## **PUBLICATION LIST 01.04.2014**

Below is a full list of all of our current Walking North East publications.

### ***Durham***

Ancient Stones.  
Hamsterley Forest.  
The Barningham Trail.  
Mid-Teesdale Walks.  
Walks from Stanhope.  
Walking in Weardale.  
[Walking in Teesdale.](#)

**Now released.**

### ***Northumberland***

The Cheviot Hills.  
The Hills of Upper Coquetdale.  
Walks from Kirknewton.  
Walks Around Rothbury & Coquetdale.  
Walks from Wooler.  
Walks on the Wild Side: The Cheviot Hills.  
Walks in Hadrian's Wall Country.

### ***North Yorkshire***

Walks from Gunnerside.  
Walks around Reeth and Upper Swaledale.  
Walking the Hills of Upper Swaledale.  
Walking around Osmotherley and the Cleveland Hills.

### ***Long Distance Walks***

The North West Way. **New publication.**

### ***New publications on the way***

[Walking around Helmsley and Ryedale.](#)  
[Walking in Arkengarthdale.](#)  
[Walking in Weardale 2.](#)  
[Walking around Darlington and the Tees Valley.](#)

All books can be obtained via our website at [www.trailguides.co.uk](http://www.trailguides.co.uk) , via Amazon or alternatively just ask your local book shop to order them.

Walking North East is published by Trailguides Limited and is the promotional newsletter for the walking publications produced by the company. The newsletter is issued free of charge via email on a monthly basis to those customers and other interested parties who subscribe to it via the company website at [www.trailguides.co.uk](http://www.trailguides.co.uk) .

Subscriptions can be ended at any point via the 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](mailto:trailguides@uwclub.net).

