

# *Walking North East*

Summer  
2011





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### Walking North East Issue Summer 2011

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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](mailto:trailguides@uwclub.net).

#### Photos.

Front cover. Linhope Burn and bridge.  
Photo courtesy of Geoff Holland.

**TRAIL GUIDES**   
publications

# Walking News :

## **Coast to Coast Path Improved.**

Volunteers from the Ragged Robin Conservation Group, working with the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, have built a forty metre long wall to stop the footpath eroding and falling in to the River Swale. The work was done at Healaugh in Swaledale where many Coast to Coaster's use the riverside paths in this section of the dale. The Swale is England's fastest flowing river and winter spates often cause erosion problems to the river banks and, in certain places, quite often change the course of the river.

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## **Black Grouse Numbers Increase.**

The population of one of our rarest but most striking moorland birds has shown a significant increase this year. Surveys by researchers for the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust has shown that in the North Pennines and Yorkshire Dales the male population of this bird has risen by over 50%. In recent years, due to wet weather during the nesting month of June compounded by heavy snowfalls and exceptionally low temperatures during the following winters, the number of male birds had fallen from 1,200 in 2007 to an all time low of 500 in 2010. This spring, numbers have been recorded as 820 birds proving that conservation measures, such as introducing small packets of woodland to provide both cover and an emergency food supply, are working.

On a personal note, in many years of walking the hills of this region I have never seen a black grouse. Until this year that is, and not just the one bird but on three separate occasions I was quick enough to spy them. Two in Weardale and the third spotted in Arkengarthdale where the bird actually walked out backwards onto the road as it was doing it's characteristic mating display.

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## **The Government Gives to Mountain Rescue.**

The Government has announced plans to award a grant of £200,00 to the UK's volunteer mountain rescue teams.

The move follows a long campaign by Mountain Rescue England & Wales for relief on the VAT and fuel duty that teams have to pay to the Treasury. An oddity considering that other volunteer-staffed rescue services such as the RNLI are exempt.

The grant will run for four years with at least £200,000 each year going to the 75 teams in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and will be the first time that the UK Government has made a direct contribution to mountain rescue. The Scottish Government gives £300,000 each year to the teams in that country.

A Treasury spokesperson said that the purpose of the funding was to contribute to the cost of purchasing equipment. In recent years mountain rescue teams have found themselves being increasingly called out to non-mountain emergencies such as the 2009 Cumbria floods, severe winter weather and searches for missing vulnerable members of the public.

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## **Path Network on the North York Moors in Danger.**

The North York Moors National Park have announced a review of it's spending in light of it's need to match the reduction in it's funding from central government and local authorities. Within the announcement are many proposals that will affect the walking community in some shape or fashion but the most serious are the proposed staff cuts which include halving the number of Public Rights of Way Officers to just one.

Over many year's the Park's rights of way staff have gradually improved the majority of the rights of way network from a low to a very high standard which is the envy of many other parts of the country. This network is now under threat due to these cutbacks. Although any effects will not be felt immediately, on-going maintenance and improvement work will not be carried out resulting in a gradual deterioration in an excellent network of paths and bridleways that 97% of participants in a recent survey rated as easy to use.

Once lost this network will not be easy to recover and could take years of hard effort to revert back to the present standard.

each year and establish it as a 'must attend' event for anybody who has an interest in the great outdoors. Already a number of organisations, manufacturers and outdoor retailers have expressed an interest in attending in 2012.

For more information on the event as the details unfold then e-mail [event@dalesoutdoorweekend.com](mailto:event@dalesoutdoorweekend.com) and register your interest. Please say which outdoor disciplines you follow - for instance hike, bike, running.

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### **The Dales Outdoor Weekend.**

May saw the first in what promises to be a very popular annual event for the outdoor enthusiast. Organised by a team of volunteers from the Backpackers Club to tie-in with their annual general meeting, the inaugural Dales Outdoor Weekend was a mix of activities, trade stands and displays. Even the local mountain rescue, Teesdale and Weardale Search and Mountain Rescue Team, appeared and displayed their skills and equipment to an interested public.

The event is already pencilled in for a repeat in 2012 when it will be held once again at the Showground at Stanhope in Weardale. The event is scheduled for the first bank holiday weekend in May. Next year it will be a stand-alone event and as such promises to be bigger and better. Indeed it is the aim of the organisers to increase the size and scope of the weekend

### **Reader's letters and emails.**

We are always willing to print reader's comments and reply to questions. Both the email and postal address are on the Trailguides website.

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## THE SHIVERING STONE by GEOFF HOLLAND

With the pale scent of early spring wafting across the rooftops I was eager to be out across the undulating tops of the Cheviot Hills. I parked near Windyhaugh in Upper Coquetdale and, as I sauntered along the rough track to the remote farmstead of Uswayford, the sleepy-eyed sun climbed above the broad-shouldered Shillhope Law.

I have visited Bloodybush Edge on numerous occasions by various well-trodden routes. Now I was intent on a totally different approach. A quick intake of breath and then I forded the Clay Burn and clambered up the steep and rarely-walked slopes of Hen Hill towards my objective, little more than 1 mile away.

A tangle of converging fences and a pristine white triangulation pillar mark the boggy top of Bloodybush Edge, the sixth highest of the Cheviot Hills. At 610 metres above sea level, I had reached the highest point of the walk. The main goal of the day, however, still lay ahead. Setting my compass, I tip-toed across a pathless minefield of heather-covered peat holes. After 400 knee-twisting metres, I reached the little-visited Shivering Stone, not so much a large single stone more a cascade of small, weather-beaten boulders.

From this lonely place, high in Northumberland, I enjoyed unimpeded views across the tree tops of the vast Kidland Forest. Concealing a complex system of slacks, cleughs, sikes and burns the forest



The Shivering Stone

covers an area which, in 1825, was described as consisting of, “a number of lofty, verdant hills, of conical form”. These days the hills are dressed in a trendy shade of ‘Forestry Commission Green’ which does little to spoil the fantastic panorama stretching from the Simonside Hills to the border-straddling Windy Gyle.

As the crow flies I was now 3 miles from my starting point but, with no straight-line return route possible, I made tracks across the unremarkable, boot-sucking summit of Yarnspath Law before descending to the former farmstead of Fairhaugh. Situated in a forest clearing on the banks of the delightful Usway Burn, this was the perfect place to catch my breath before finally making my way back to Windyhaugh and the beautiful River Coquet. I vowed to return soon.

FULL DETAILS OF THIS ROUTE ALONG WITH A SELECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN ALONG THE WAY CAN BE FOUND IN THE BOOK OF WALKS, ‘THE HILLS OF UPPER COQUETDALE’ BY GEOFF HOLLAND. THIS BOOK IS AVAILABLE DIRECT FROM WWW. TRAILGUIDES.CO.UK FOR £8.50 PLUS POSTAGE AND PACKAGING

## Something to CRoW about .....

By Keven Shevels

First things first and I have got to admit that this piece was inspired by an article in Trail magazine on the effects of CRoW and whether we were actually using our right to roam. Naturally enough the article didn't mention anywhere in the North East, in fact the magazine rarely does, to the major publishing houses we seem to live in a non-existent part of the country. But that's another issue and one that I'll probably whinge about at length on another occasion.

However, the question still remains, how much do we as walkers in the North East use our relatively new right to roam. The Countryside Rights of Way (CRoW) Act is now ten years old but during this time how effective has it been in getting us out into the open countryside.

On a personal level, I have to admit that I use it a lot. More times than not some part of my walk has a section that is away from the right of way network. However, the thing of it is, when I am on these sections I rarely meet another walker. The vast bulk of us do still seem tied to the footpath system.

But why is this, are we reluctant to venture away from the paths because we lack the self-confidence in our navigational abilities, is it because we think that access land is all hard walking across peat and heather, could it be that we don't think that there is anything interesting out on these open hillsides. Or is the real reason just that we are a little bit complacent and that it is just easier to follow a path.



**Bronze Age field walls in Swaledale, often the remains of the past can only be explored by venturing away from the public rights of way network.**



**The summit of Hindhope Law in the Cheviots.**

Venturing across open access land can certainly be more navigationally challenging than just following a well laid out path. However, it doesn't necessarily have to be, open access land covers a multitude of areas some of which are more difficult to navigate than others. Choose your area with a little bit of thought and you can find plenty of handrails such as fence lines and tracks to help guide your way. Navigation can be as hard or as easy as you make it, the secret is planning a route that suits your abilities and there is plenty of scope for that on access land.

The bulk of all open access land is on the hillside and yes there can be rough walking involving peat hags, heather beds and plenty of soft boggy ground. Sometimes this is all part of the challenge of walking, pitting yourself against rough, open country. But not every walker likes this challenge and I have to admit to myself that there are some days when I am up for it and some other days when I would rather not. However, not all access land has this sort of terrain, many of our hillsides are clothed in moorland grass and although not smooth are certainly no worse than walking across the fields of rough pasture that occur at the lower levels of our hills. Even if you are totally averse to walking over open hills, most moorlands in our region seem to cater for the shooting of grouse and as a result have a network of vehicle tracks running over them which were once closed to us as walkers but which can now be freely used.

As we know, the open hillside is far from being boring and just as there are many different walkers then there are many different reasons to go walking. Open access land has opened up many of the summits of our hills, few of which were crossed by footpath. For those of us who like to scale the top of these hills, to experience the challenge of the walk, to see the view beyond and to just, basically, say that we have been there well now we can without the fear of meeting the gamekeeper and being asked what the hell are we doing there.



**Many of the moors in our region, like this one at Bollihope in County Durham, have been utilised for grouse shooting and because of this have quite a developed system of tracks crossing them many of which, under CRoW, can now be used by the walker.**

But it is not just about the views no matter how attractive they are. For those with an interest in the landscape and it's place in history then the hillside remains one of the few easily accessible custodians of our past. On an island where land is limited and where it has been exploited and reused time after time then the open hillside can quite often provide the only link to the past that has not been destroyed or hidden. From the archaeology of the prehistoric to the more modern industrial archaeology of the lead mines and smelt mills, it all lies here waiting to be discovered by the interested walker and much of it lies away from the paths.

If you have not tried striding out away from the path then give it a go. A right to roam is just that, a right to the freedom of the hillside, to go where the fancy takes you and see that which eleven years ago was hidden from us. Who knows what you might discover.

**Many of the walks in our books contain sections over access land. Let the feet wander somewhere new and exciting.**



# The High Seat Ridge.

For this issue of WNE we are having a look at a range of hills at the far edge of the region. Go far up Swaledale, beyond Keld, as far up as you can get, even beyond the birthplace of the Swale itself and you will find a range of hills that do not see too many visitors. At least not from the Swaledale side.

The Swale itself is born from the confluence of the two streams, the Birkdale Beck and Great Sleddale Beck and this happens right underneath the main spine of the Pennines. The High Seat ridge acts as both the backdrop and the gathering ground for the small streams and water courses that give birth to these two becks. The ridge lies slap bang on the Pennine watershed, on the one side is the Eden valley and the west of the country while on the other is the embryonic Swaledale and the east.

Unlike the other hills in Swaledale that flank the dale and run west to east to follow the flow of the river, this ridgeline forms part of the spine of the Pennines and runs north to south, effectively being the stopper at the end of the valley. The B6270 road rises up from a distant Keld on it's way to Kirkby Stephen to cross the col between the High Seat ridge and the ridge that forms the Nine Standards range and at this top end, the valley is little wider than the road.

From the Swaledale side the ridge is accessed from the B6270 road but the walk in from this



Looking into Wensleydale from Hugh Seat.



High Seat from Gregory Chapel.

side is hard and rough. Peat hags and heather bashing abound but again if your walking is about the high places then you will be used to encountering this type of terrain. By comparison, the ridge itself is far easier walking, for the most part paths and a quad bike track provide an easy route.

There are a number of high points along the ridge with the tallest, High Seat, being the summit included in the list of HEWITTS. The other points, Hugh Seat, Gregory Chapel and High Pike although being higher than the necessary two thousand feet, don't have the required drop between their tops to meet the requirements of the list. Being a ridge this walk provides the opportunity for some high level walking and from Hugh Seat to High Pike is three miles of continuous walking above the magic two thousand foot mark.

This is a walk for a day with good visibility. As befitting any walk on the watershed of the Pennines the views over the surrounding hills and valleys are superb, the ridgeline of High Seat certainly makes an exceptionally good viewing platform. High peaks all surround you, from the Cross Fell massif in the far Northern Pennines, to the mountains of eastern Lakeland and then the closer hills of Wild Boar Fell, the Howgills range and the other big tops of the Dales, Pen-y-Gent and Whernside. If there is a walk in Swaledale that makes you feel as if you are walking amongst mountains then this is the one.

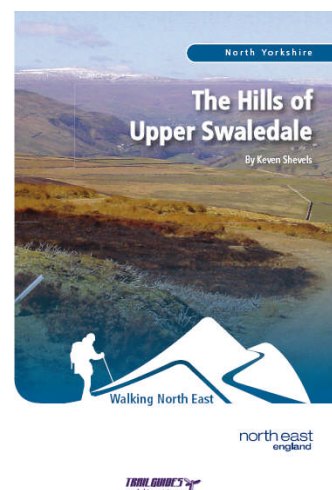
This is a wild walk and feels like it. Despite the proximity of the B6270 and the fact that it is

visible from most of the route there is sufficient distance both horizontal and vertical to make you feel very distant from it. This is the top end of Swaledale, as far up as you can go, the nearest habitation is at least two miles away even from the start of the walk. Be prepared to feel isolated in these upper reaches of the valley and in this crowded world enjoy that rare moment.



Looking down onto the Eden valley from High Pike.

Fancy the walk across the High Seat Ridge then try the book *The Hills of Upper Swaledale* by Keven Shevels.



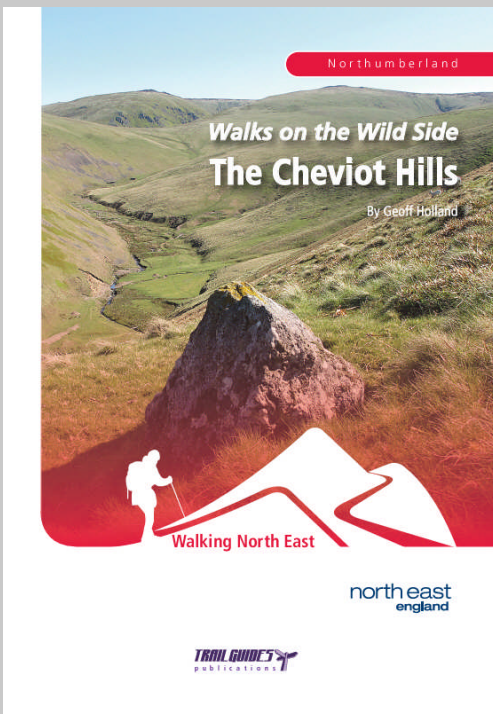
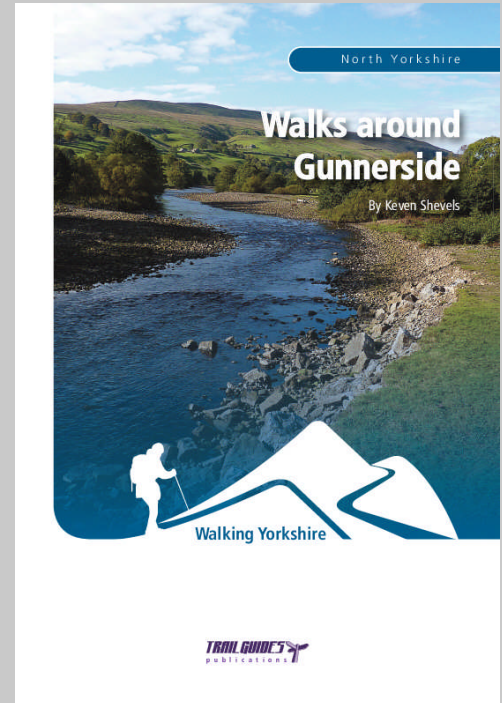
# New Publications

The first half of the year has been a busy time at Trailguides with a number of new publications becoming available

## Walks around Gunnerside.

The small village of Gunnerside lies in the heart of Swaledale, which is regarded by many as the most stunning of all the Yorkshire Dales. Originally settled by the Vikings in the dark years following the end of the Roman occupation, Gunnerside has seen many changes over the millennia but nowadays it is perhaps best known for being one of the traditional, stone built little villages that inhabit these rugged dales. However, step away from the well-worn tourist trail to discover the country surrounding it and you will find a rich and varied heritage lying hidden amongst the fields and moors of this landscape.

In this series of eight walks starting from the village, the author explores the countryside surrounding it and the legacy that a hard and stern history has left behind.



## Walks on the Wild Side: The Cheviot Hills.

In the great scheme of matters mountainous the Cheviot Hills are not especially big hills, rising to a mere 815 metres (2674 feet) at their highest point. However, these are lonely hills of sweeping vistas and far-off horizons, where wild goats roam and the call of the curlew echoes across centuries of a violent and bloody past. These are predominantly grass-covered hills of long, shapely ridges and deep hidden valleys. These are hills which offer walking of the finest quality.

Written by the author of three popular books of walks, '*The Cheviot Hills*', '*Walks from Wooler*' and '*The Hills of Upper Coquetdale*', this latest book contains eight totally unique self-guided walks with detailed, simple to follow route descriptions and a sandwich box full of easily digestible information. These are walks designed to tempt inquisitive and adventurous walkers outside their normal walking boundaries. These are walks for the connoisseur with a taste for something just that little bit different. So pull on your boots and take 'a walk on the wild side'.

**Coming soon :**  
**Walks Around Rothbury and Coquetdale**

# Dates for the Diary

**Thursday August 11** Come to the book launch of Geoff Holland's latest publication and meet and walk with the author. Meet at Barrowburn Tea Room in Upper Coquetdale at 10:00 am for the official book release and have your copy signed by the author of some of the most popular walking guides to The Cheviot Hills. After the launch and signing why not join Geoff for a walk up the nearby Shillhope Law.

**Sunday August 14** and the Trailguides travelling stall will be appearing at the Simonside Country Show at Forestburn Gate. As proud sponsors of the show's annual fell race, we will be located over by the registration area of the race. So why not come on over and say hello, we're always glad to have a word with existing and potential new readers. As well as ourselves we'll also have the full range of our many books with quite a few offers on the go.

Thursday August 11 Northumberland	Meet and Walk with the Author - Geoff Holland Book launch of 'Walks on the Wild Side: The Cheviot Hills'	
Sunday August 14 Northumberland	Simonside Country Show Trailguides 'travelling stall' sponsoring the show's fell race.	Forestburn Gate.
Saturday August 23 North York Moors	Hanging Stone Leap www.ldwa.org.uk/cleveland	24 or 13 miles.
Saturday August 27 North Yorkshire coast	Smugglers Trod www.ldwa.org.uk/YorkshireCoast	26 or 16 miles.
Saturday September 10 Kielder Forest	Kielder Challenge Walk www.kielderwalking.co.uk	26 miles.
September 23 to October 2	Richmond Walking and Book Festival Yorkshire Dales	www.richmondbooksandboots.org
Saturday October 1 North York Moors	Saltergate Circuit www.srmrt.org.uk	24 or 16 miles.
Saturday October 8 North York Moors	Pathfinder 25 Challenge www.ormesby-pathfinders.org.uk	25 or 15 miles.
October 8 to October 16	Haltwhistle Walking Festival Northumberland	www.haltwhistlewalkingfestival.org
Sunday November 20 Yorkshire Dales	Wensleydale Wedge www.ldwa.org.uk/Nidderdale	23 miles.

If you have any entries that you want to make to the diary then email them to [trailguides@uwclub.net](mailto:trailguides@uwclub.net)