



# THE HALTWHISTLE RINGS



## WALK 05

### ‘The Roman Wall... and the Vast Solitude to the North’

**Length:** 9 mls/14.5 km

**Grade:** 2 Moderate

**Ascent/descent:** 1604 ft/ 489 m

**OS explorer OL 43** Hadrian's Wall

**gpx file:**

Not a very demanding walk, apart from two steep, but short slopes. The countryside varies from pastureland to moorland with great views of the rugged landscape on Hadrian's Wall. There is also an opportunity to visit The Roman Army Museum at Carvoran (admission charges apply). Stout footwear is recommended.

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

**For bus timetable:** [www.arrivabus.co.uk](http://www.arrivabus.co.uk) For AD122: [www.gonortheast.co.uk](http://www.gonortheast.co.uk)

**For train timetable:** [www.northernrailway.co.uk](http://www.northernrailway.co.uk)

**Start in Haltwhistle Market Place.**

**Bus users:** stop at the Market Place.

**Train users:** follow signs ‘Town Centre’ to the Market Place.

**Car users:** park at the supermarket accessed by turning into Aesica Road off Main St. – signposted ‘Swimming & Leisure Centre’ – and following the blue ‘P’ signs. Follow footpath opposite main entrance, signposted ‘Market Place’. Car users may wish to start from the car park.\*

I. From the Market Place, cross the main street to go under the archway. Walk through to Crown Court. You come to the car park in front of the supermarket.

\*Leave the car park by the main vehicle entrance and turn left. Take the second turning left, onto Woodhead Lane. Continue up the road and as it bends round to the right, take a footpath on the left, signposted, ‘Birchfield Gate Farm’. (GR: NY702642) At 330yds/300m along the path, cross over a step stile into pastureland. Keep close to the hedge on the left to reach a field gate ahead.

***Did you know?***

*On a clear day, there is a wide panorama to the south of Glendue and Cold Fell (at a height of 2037ft/621 m). This is the northern tip of the Pennines.*

Join a farm track leading to a large barn on your left. Go through the gate and follow the way markers through the farmyard at Woodhead.

2. Go through the field gate on your right, behind the house, then turn left. Continue straight past the farm buildings until you reach a gate ahead of you. Go through to another gate a short distance further, on the left. Turn right to walk in a westerly direction through three fields and across two stiles, keeping the fence on your 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 across a small footbridge. Turn left to descend to another footbridge in the dip then head up the slope facing, towards the farm buildings.

3. Before arriving at Birchfield Gate Farm, go through a wicket gate in the fence to the left (GR: NY691643) and bear right across a field towards another wicket in the fence ahead. Go through the gate onto the road. Turn right and continue along the road for about 15 minutes until at the end of a wood on the left, you see a ladder stile on the left hand side of the road. Go into the field and walk over rough pasture, with no clearly defined path. Head for the pylon but walk to the right of it.

***Did you know?***

*Over on the left, in a hollow beyond, is the site of a disused drift mine, now with industrial buildings and hard standing for vehicles. Wrytree Drift was one of the last coal mines in the North East to close, in 2002; its rich seam ran down under the A69 and the Tipalt Burn.*

Ahead of you, you will see a metalled track leading down to a farm. At the first farm building there is a field gate on the right. Go through it and walk alongside the barn to another step stile in the fence ahead. Go over, then head diagonally left down the hill, making for another step stile in the bottom corner. Once over, again head diagonally left to a gate leading on to the farm road. Walk down the road — you will see the railway line, and the A69 ahead of you. Ignore the first way marked gate on your right but go through the next way marked gate on the right, just before you reach the next farm (The College Farm). Walk through pleasant pastureland leading to the west, parallel to the A69 down to your left. Go through another field gate straight ahead of you. You will see a small wood on the far side of the field, which you head for, keeping to the top right hand side of the field. Go over the stile in the top right hand corner. This brings you on to a narrow footpath which winds its way past a garden and through the edge of the wood, then along the bank of the Tipalt Burn into Greenhead.

***Did you know?***

*Greenhead is a pretty village with a simple, early English style church (John Dobson, 1826 -28), and a former station. In the 1840s, passenger trains used to stop at Greenhead for half an hour on a Sunday morning, to allow passengers to attend services in the church.*

*There is a hotel and a tearoom here which offer a warm welcome to walkers.*

4. Turn right onto the B6318 for about 55 yds/50 m.  Cross the road – WITH CARE - to join the cycle track which heads eastwards up the hill along the side of the main road. Towards the top of the rise, where the road bends away to the right, look for a signpost for the Pennine Way, pointing into the field to your left, signposted 'Carvoran'. Go through the gate to follow the path, gradually bearing right up the field. You are aiming for a stone stile in the wall (GR: NY663657) which borders the field on your right. Climb over the stile, and then up the path ahead over sharply rising ground, aiming for another stone stile in the top left hand corner of the field. Pause for breath — and admire the lovely view over towards Cumbria. At this stile, you will see another one just a few metres away on your left. Proceed over this one and go straight across rough ground to a ladder stile over the far wall. Over this, and you reach the vallum.

***Did you know?***

*The vallum was the ditch on the south side of the Roman Wall, which marked the limit of the military zone.*

Turn right to follow the edge of the vallum, looking for an easy crossing point to the other side of the ditch, then continue to follow the vallum eastwards to a gate leading on to the road at Walltown. This is still the Pennine Way. Turn right and walk for a short distance to reach the quarry car park. (There are toilets, picnic benches and a kiosk serving refreshments here.)

**Did you know?**

*The Roman Army Museum at Carvoran is just a few metres down the road, on the right. Known to the Romans as 'Magna', this Roman Fort predated the building of the Wall as it was one of the forts serving it — much like Vindolanda, to the south east, built on the earlier Stanegate Road. The vallum swings north, as though avoiding something which seems to suggest, as does its Roman name, that something larger lies beneath. 'Magna' means 'great'. It was a place of great strategic importance as it was the junction of the Stanegate and Maiden Way, from the south.*

5. For this stretch of the walk, the Pennine Way and Hadrian's Wall Path follow the same route. Following the signs for the Pennine Way, walk through the picnic area, to the left of the pond. Continue up to the right and the far corner of the quarry. At the bench, turn left and go through the gate to ascend steeply, with the stone wall on your left. Turn right to join the path as it follows the line of the Wall. Walk past Turret 45A, with information board, and superb views to every direction. Here you are atop Walltown Crags, the first of the "Nine Nicks of Thirlwall.

**Did you know?**

*Walltown Quarry was used to supply road stone and tar and was closed in 1978. Quarrying on the site led to the destruction of a milecastle and parts of Hadrian's wall itself, and defaced the landscape meaning the 'Nine Nicks of Thirlwall' were reduced to seven!*

Descend into a gully to the track to Walltown Farm, where you leave the Pennine Way. Follow the track towards the farm, but do not pass in front of it, instead turn left onto the farm road. (GR: NY680665)

**Did you know?**

*Walltown Farmhouse is a handsome structure with a complex history, largely built of Roman Stone. An early tower was replaced at some stage; Hodgson, the historian, (A History of Northumberland, 1840) recorded a date of 1713 above one of the doors.*

*Though the house may have changed at various periods, it is interesting to read Hodgson's account from 1820: "The beauty spot of this gentleman's place is however, the broad dark green meadow before it, environed with a tall and healthy growth of forest trees, the wild woods....the Roman Wall...and the vast solitude to the north."*

6. About 165yds/150m along this road, a signpost down on the right, signposted 'Fell End' indicates the continuation of the walk through two field gates to Lowtown Farm, on the right. From here, go through the left hand gate to take the bridlepath down to a field gate, leading into access land. Go through the gate. Just beyond, a marker post indicates the bridleway going to the right, and another footpath going diagonally to the left. Take the left fork, gradually climbing the slope. Aim for a ladder stile over the wall that you can see facing you. When you reach a shallow gully, turn right and work your way to the top of the slope. You will reach a wicket gate at the top. (GR: NY688657) Once through this, continue to the top of the hill before heading downwards towards a step stile and a gate leading into a small plantation next to a bungalow. A ladder stile at the far end of the wood brings you out on to the B6318 Military Road.  Cross the road - WITH CARE - and take the road opposite, signposted to Haltwhistle.

6. Follow the road down towards Haltwhistle, which you can follow all the way into town, and back to the car park.

Alternatively, just after Dunholme Farm on your right, you will see a ladder stile on the left, leading into a field. Cross it, turn right and head towards another stile, just below a farm. Cross this into another field and bear steeply left downhill (at approx. 45-degree angle) towards a line of trees above a small gorge. NOTE: This track can be very muddy. Follow the tree line along the edge of the gorge, and when you reach the burn at the bottom, cross it to go over the step stile on the other side. Go diagonally left across the next field to climb over a stone stile, to the left of a white cottage. This brings you on to Willia Road. Turn right and follow the road. Turn left at the end and you will see the car park on your right a short distance ahead.

