



# THE HALTWHISTLE RINGS



## WALK 13

### ‘Slaggyford – Then and Now’

**Length:** 7.5 mls/12 km

**Grade:** 2 Moderate

**Ascent/descent:** 1125 ft/343 m

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

**gpx file:**

An interesting walk taking in the industrial heritage of the area. It passes through farmland, open moorland and the river valley.

**Start Point:** The car park next to Slaggyford Station. (Grid reference: NY676523)

**By Car:** From Haltwhistle, go west along the A69, take the second turning left signposted, ‘Alston, Halton-Lea-Gate and Coanwood’, passing Bellister Castle. Follow the road to a T-junction at Lambley. Turn left onto the A689 and proceed to Slaggyford which is 4 miles south of Lambley. In Slaggyford, turn right at the signpost to The South Tynedale Railway car park.

**By Rail:** The South Tyne Railway operates a limited service. Slaggyford station is the last stop on the line which begins at Alston. Check timetables. ( phone 01434 382828; [www.south-tynedale-railway.org.uk](http://www.south-tynedale-railway.org.uk))

#### **Did you know?**

*Slaggyford was anciently known as "Slagginford". It is suggested that the name means "muddy ford". Another explanation is that the ancient village was further north, where a ford crossed the Knar Burn on a bed of solidified clay known locally as "slag", hence the name. At one time, it was the market town of the valley, with its own Crown-granted annual fair every September but was eclipsed when Alston's wealth from mining made it the capital of "Alstonedale". When the railway arrived in the 1850s, things looked up for a while and a lot of coal and lime came from around the village.*

1. From the carpark, walk over the level crossing and continue down to the A689. ⚠️ Turn right and walk south – WITH CARE - along the road, past the caravan site on your right. NOTE: Remember to walk on the right hand side of the road. Turn left (signposted ‘Barhaugh Hall’) across the bridge and follow the road. Where the road turns sharp right, go straight ahead to Williamston Farm, signposted ‘Parson Shields & The Bog’.

#### **Did you know?**

*Williamston Farm comes from ‘ton’ or homestead belonging to William. William the Lion once held this land, as did William Pratt in 1256.*

Enter the farmyard, turn left after the white farmhouse to a metal five-bar-gate and follow the bridlepath up to the right. Through another gate and at a sign marked 'Bridle Path', turn left and follow the well-defined path.

2.Go through a gate, pass through a mature plantation and through another gate. Continue straight on across the field, with the fence on your left. After a gate, descend by a wooded gully on your right towards Parsons Shields Farm.

**Did you know?**

*A 'shiel' was usually a summer pasture and dwelling, which Parsons Shield Farm was at one time. However, in this case, it means land providing for, or set apart for, service to the church. 'Parsons' was originally 'person', meaning a person in the parish tending land on behalf of the church.*

Pass the back of the farmhouse and, just before entry to the farmyard, turn right off the track by way of a steel gate next to an old netty (WC). Go diagonally right towards the remains of an old stone barn and through the gate to the left of it. Follow the track up to an old lime kiln and then on the obvious path along the valley side.

**Did you know?**

*Note the views to your left up the Knar Burn, Glendue and Cold Fell, Knarsdale Barton and Church. 'Knarsdale Barton' was previously known as 'Knarsdale Hall' and is on the site of the tower built by Reginal Pratt in 1177 when he was appointed head forester of Knarsdale Forest, a royal forest, by the King of Scots, William I. This area was then known as the Tynedale Liberty and held by the Scots. The principal task of the forester was akin to the modern gamekeeper.*

*It has its own ghost - The Spectre of Knarsdale Hall'. A long-haired young woman is said to have been seen gliding from the rear door to a pond in the yard on the anniversary of her death, leaving the door hanging on its creaking hinges. She was drowned by her brother, fearful that she would betray his affair with the Lord of the Manor's wife.*

*In a low evening light, you can still see lines of circular depressions, which were once the bell pits that the early miners used before they had the technology to venture further underground. They just dug a hole into a coal outcrop and went down and in until the coal ran out. They widened the hole only just as much as safety would allow, leaving a bell-shaped cavity. When the sides round the top looked like they were about to fall in, they moved on and dug another hole.*

Continue along the track until you reach the farmyard of The Bog Farm.

**Did you know?**

*Bog Farm: soft, muddy ground probably referring to the riverside land to the west of the farm. Or possibly, 'boggle', meaning a place where goblins or phantoms are found!*

3.Go diagonally left and then right to pass through the cobbled yard with the green-doored barn on your left to a tarmac road. Continue for about 0.6 mls/1km descending to cross the Snope Burn on a gated bridge. Turn left up the track and follow down to the road with Eals Bridge on your left. Turn right on the road for about 0.6 mls/1km through Eals.

**Did you know?**

*The word 'eals' means an 'island' or 'floodable land'. Hodgson, in 1840, wrote: 'gardens stocked with old fruit trees, remain as evidence of its descent through a race of yeomen who tilled their own paternal farms...into variegated stripes of land, after the old town-field fashion, speaks little of any increase of knowledge...' The land is certainly 'floodable'. In October 1829, a major flood changed the course of the river leaving the southern part of the vale on the west side of the river.*

4. Keep left at the fork in the road and continue on as the road becomes a track at Townfoot Farm. Cross the footbridge into a clearing with newly planted trees on your right. After 22 yds/20m, turn right to cross a bridge over Glendue Burn.

**Did you know?**

Glendue comes from the Celtic, meaning 'dark or black valley'.

Turn left upstream to a marker post at the top of a slight incline. Go straight on to the stile and steps up to the old railway line. At the signpost indicating left to Slaggyford and right to Lambley, go straight on. Go over the stile signposted 'Whitwam Walk', and head diagonally left over the field, aiming for the end of the trees on your left, which flank the Glendue Burn

5. ⚠️ Cross the A689 – WITH CARE- by two ladder stiles and continue west, straight up the field to a marker post. Ignore the arrow pointing right. Go straight on towards the wall and turn left onto the Pennine Way. After 22 yds/20m cross the wall by a stone stile and turn left to follow the path by a wall and fence to a stile. Cross the footbridge over Glendue Burn then turn left. Follow the path which curves up right to cross a step stile. Go straight on, up the slope on a broad track (parts of the Roman 'Maiden Way'). When the track narrows and becomes less obvious, keep close to the stone wall on your left. You will follow this wall all the way to Burnstones.

**Did you know?**

*Between Burnstones Bridge and Glendue Burn you will come across some paved parts of a Roman road known as 'The Maiden Way' which ran from Whitley Castle to Carvoran near Walltown. Imagine the soldiers who came from many different parts of the Roman Empire, walking over this road over 2000 years ago. The same technique of road building had been used to construct it as was being used in the Balkans, Turkey and the Middle East.*

*Whitley Castle is also known to be Epiacum, an important Roman fort. The archaeologist, Stewart Ainsworth of 'Time Team' fame takes a great interest in this site. There is an excellent café and farm shop here, The Nook, at which walkers are very welcome.*

6. Cross a ladder stile over a fence and on to cross a step stile beside a gate. Continue along the track to another ladder stile by a gate and straight on, avoiding the boggy bits as best you can! When you see two houses down in the next field on your left, veer slightly right, past a marker post, and round the top right hand side of a hollow (probably an old quarry). This leads to the track heading down to Burnstones Bridge and Knarsdale Hall. The track splits into two. Take the right hand fork and continue diagonally right down the hill, heading for the gate at the bottom. This brings you onto the road next to Knarsdale Hall and the viaduct.

Turn left at the road. After 33 yds/30 m, turn right to a small parking area then right again to follow the South Tyne Trail back to Slaggyford.

**Did you Know?**

*The railway line ran from Alston to Haltwhistle. The South Tyne Trail now follows the route of the line for much of its 13 mls/21 km length. The track closed in 1976 but re-opened as a volunteer run railway in 1983. The station at Slaggyford was formally reopened in 2018. If the trains are running, you can make use of the toilets and buffet car!*