



THE HALTWHISTLE RINGS



WALK 16

‘The Queen Mother, Dormice and Dicky of Kingswood’

Length: 8.5 mls/13.7 km

Grade: 3 Energetic

Ascent/descent: 2183 ft/665 m

OS explorer OL 43 Hadrian's Wall

gpx file:

A walk through the charming village of Beltingham, by Ridley Hall and up the spectacular gorge walk of Allen Banks by Plankey Mill to the site of a fairy tale castle, Staward Pele.

Start Point: By car, bus, train

For bus timetable: www.arrivabus.co.uk for AD122: www.gonortheast.co.uk

For train timetable: www.northernrailway.co.uk

Start: from The Bowes Hotel, Bardon Mill

Bus users: stop at The Bowes Hotel, Bardon Mill

Train users: From station, walk through parking area and bear right to reach the road. You will see the chimney of Errington Reay Pottery directly in front of you. The Bowes Hotel is to the left.

Car users: From Haltwhistle take the A69 east towards Newcastle and turn right after 4 miles to Bardon Mill. There is limited parking on the approach to the village from the east or by the recreation ground. Please park considerately.

Did you know?

Bardon Mill is said to derive from a woollen mill built here in the 1800s yet there are a number of buildings which are at least 200 years before that. Perhaps it was a village before 1800 but its name changed; strange that we have no records. The Bowes Hotel extends a warm welcome to walkers and the shop offers a range of items.

1. From the Bowes Hotel, walk east along the road and turn right at the war memorial to cross the level crossing and on to cross the footbridge over the River South Tyne. Turn left onto the road and when it bends right, take the footpath on the left through the woods alongside the river. Re-join the road at the Nature Reserve information board. Turn left and continue to the green in the centre of Beltingham.

Did you know?

Beltingham (pronounced Belt-in-jum) is a classic Northumberland village on the Ridley Estate. After a succession of owners, it ended up in the hands of a junior branch of the Ancient Scottish line whose chief was the Earl of Strathmore and Kinghorne in the 1880s. Otherwise known as the Bowes-Lyon family, the fourteenth Earl was the father of Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, who visited here frequently and enjoyed the paths up the River Allen that you will walk today; indeed, most of them were laid on the instruction of the family.

2. Turn right at the green and immediately left down a grassy bank between two houses (signposted 'Ridley Bridge ¾ Allen Banks 1¼') and follow the footpath to a kissing gate at the end of a wire fence. Continue, with the field boundary on your right, to the road.

Turn right and go through Ridley. After a double bend turn left on to a path (signposted, 'Allen Banks Estate') and follow first a farm track and then a moated mound (known as a Ha Ha) on your right to enter Allen Banks. Ridley Hall is on your left.

Did you know?

Ridley was previously a village with a dozen houses but now comprises only of a farm, Ridley Hall and a bastle (a defensible house) from the time of border reiving. The latter was once called 'Ivy Cottage' but is now 'Ridley Bastle'. Note the upper door and the corbels that originally supported a chimney stack. Keep your eyes and ears open for the glimpse of a rare red squirrel and roe deer as you walk through the woods from here.

Turn right after the wicket gate and keep right on the main way-marked path up to the top of Allen Banks.

Did you know?

At a promontory with views up the valley, the National Trust have built a Summer House. There are also benches, a table and further information about the history of Allenbanks.

Continue right for about 0.6 mls/1 km. When you reach Hoods Burn, turn left to descend to the river, right over a footbridge and follow the path beside the river through Briarwood Banks.

Did you know?

This area is the largest continuous block of ancient woodland in the North of England and a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest. An area of woodland planted with non-native trees is being restored to provide suitable conditions for a range of rare species, including the dormouse which is at their northerly limit here. They spend most of their lives fast asleep but are also agile climbers, up in tree canopies eating buds, hazelnuts, berries and insects in the summer months.

3. Cross the light coloured footbridge over Kingswood Burn (note this for your return) and drop down left to cross the footbridge over the river to Plankey Mill. Turn right through a wicket gate and follow the path beside the river to re-enter Allen Banks through a wicket gate and turn right along an obvious path through the trees which undulates beside the river. Cross the next footbridge over the Harsondale Burn to a marker post.

4. Follow the yellow waymark straight ahead through the trees beside an old stone wall (note this for your return) – a permissive path to your right is an option for a walk by the river – until a waymark beside a pair of gate posts takes you left – straight on if you took the river option. After a short ascent, keep left at the fork and on to a stile into a field. Follow the waymark diagonally left across the field to a wicket gate at the entry into a wood but don't enter it. Turn right up a grassy track to follow a stone wall on your left to the ruin of Gingle Pot Farm.

Did you know?

This is a good place for a snack and to enjoy the views.

Return to the wicket gate, now on your right, and continue on the track to enter Staward Pele Wood.

5. Continue on the path to the first remains of Staward Pele – the gate house – and then on to the right of the north wall and follow the path round to descend to the old stone wall (noted earlier).

Did you know?

Just a few ruins stand on one of the most impregnable sites in Northumberland which has been, in its time: a Roman temple to Jupiter, a fenced enclosure for Anglian settlers, a barracks for 40 'hobilar' or light cavalry in the 14th century, a castle for Edward II that he never had time to occupy as he was deposed and murdered, adored by Queen Philippa as her 'secret hideaway' until she returned south to produce 11 children, held by canons of Hexham until King Henry turned them out and, as a declining ruin, became the headquarters of a cattle thief called Dicky of Kingswood! Dicky was full of cheek. Having stolen two oxen from one farmer he drove them 50 miles sold them to another, stole the second farmer's best mare and then, returning to the scene of his first crime, sold the mare to the first farmer who was seeking his two stolen oxen, and told him where he had last seen them!

Turn right to cross the footbridge over Harsondale Burn and return on your earlier path, first to cross the footbridge at Plankey Mill and then the footbridge over Kingswood Burn (noted earlier).

Immediately turn left onto a path (not waymarked) to ascend a steep bank, keeping right at a fork, to the kissing gate with Briarwood Farm on your right. Go straight on to meet the track out of the farm and turn left up the farm track.

6. At the road turn left for 275 yds/250 m to a gate beside the second field boundary on your right. (GR: NY785624) Go through the gate and follow on with the wall on your left. Cross a small burn, pass through the left hand of two gates and, with the stone wall now on your right, descend to a gate at the end of that wall and turn right into the farmyard of Wool House.

Turn left out of the farmyard and descend on the farm track towards a copse. Where the track swings right, and with a wooded ravine on your right, fork left for Shaw's Farm. Turn right through a wicket gate at the entrance to the farmyard and pass the farmhouse and then conifers on your left. Go straight on down to a five-bar-gate. Once through the gate walk straight on, then diagonally left to the far left hand corner of the field by a copse. Cross the ladder stile and then turn left along the road. Turn right across the footbridge and return to Bardon Mill.

Did you know?

Bardon Mill Pottery was founded in 1878 by William Reay and Robert Errington, on the site of an old woollen mill. It originally specialised in drainage and sewage pipes but when plastic pipes took over in the 1970s, it began to produce clay garden pots. It is the last commercial pottery in Britain still producing salt glaze pots. It is well worth a visit.