



# THE HALTWHISTLE RINGS



## WALK 08

### ‘A Unique Bridge, a Family Memory and a Fine Site’

**Length:** 10m/16km

**Grade:** 2 Moderate

**Ascent/descent:** 625ft/190m

**OS explorer OL 43 Hadrian’s Wall**

A beautifully varied walk in the outstanding Tyne Valley along the banks of the river. It winds through woods and farmland, with views of old castles. It is mostly easy walking, with a few short, steep slopes and uneven riverside paths. Stout footwear is recommended.

**BEWARE:** THIS ROUTE CAN BE TRICKY AFTER PERIODS OF PROLONGED WET WEATHER. ROCKS BECOME SLIPPERY AND PATHS TURN EXTREMELY MUDDY. DETAILS OF DETOURS ARE GIVEN BUT CAUTION IS ADVISED.

**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. \*Train users may wish to start from station. From platform 2, leave via the ramp alongside the signal box. The Tyne Bridge is on your right.

**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’.

1. From the Market Place, take the cobbled path down past the Black Bull and turn left. Turn right at the end of Jubilee Park to take the path at the back of the houses, down to the road (Avenue St Meen). Cross the road and follow the path to the right. At the next road, turn left to go under the railway bridge.

\*Cross the Tyne Bridge (known locally as the ‘Blue Bridge’) over the River South Tyne and, immediately, turn right to take the riverside path upstream (signposted) to the first bridge. Cross the bridge and after 110 yds/100m, turn left onto a road. Follow the road for 220 yds/200m and then turn left onto a footpath. Take the path to descend steps to the riverside and under the bypass, then climb more steps. Continue to the next road and the finger post to Wydon Farm.

2. At the farm pass barns on your left and the farmhouse and farm buildings on your right. Pass through a field gate and along the farm track up a slope. At the top, ignore the gate to your right and take the one straight ahead. Go through the field keeping close to the hedge on your right, then through another gate. You are now on pastureland. Turn right to go diagonally across the field aiming for the bottom right hand corner where a stile leads you into an adjacent field. Follow the edge of the wood until you come to another stile on your left. Once over and into the wood, bear right and keeping parallel with the fence at the top, follow the indistinct path along the middle of the wood. Aim for a small gully leading down to a ford over a small stream. Go through the field gate opposite. Follow the wall on your left around to another field gate leading into Wydon Eals farmyard.

***Did you know?***

*The area you have just come through is known as 'Deadmanshaw', where the Ridleys clan murdered Sir Albany Featherstonehaugh, High Sheriff of Northumberland, in a border feud.*

Bear right across the yard, through another gate and onto the farm road. This leads you to Featherstone Bridge.

***Did you know?***

*Featherstone Bridge was built in 1778 after a great flood destroyed several bridges across the Tyne. Featherstone, in its idyllic setting, has a rather lopsided appearance with its strange, off-centre key stone. This is a necessity when you consider that the bridge has to drop 50ft/15m in order to span the river.*

3. At the main road and, with the bridge to your left, cross over. Bear right as if to go up the hill but turn left almost immediately on to a footpath. You now pass through woodland with the River South Tyne on your left. Keep on this path until you reach a footbridge over the river.

BEWARE - THIS SECTION CAN BE TRICKY FOLLOWING PERIODS OF PROLONGED RAIN. If you are in any doubt of the suitability of the route, take the Featherstone Bridge (the stone one), turn right and follow the road to the wooden footbridge. Cross the river and take the wooden steps. Re-join the instructions at \*\*

Do not cross this bridge but turn sharp right to climb up the hillside to some wooden steps. \*\*Pass through a wicket gate and climb to the top of the hill. Ahead you will see an old farmhouse called Horse Close. Aim for this and pass to the right of it. A rough track leads from the house to the road. After about 33yds/30m, bear right across pastureland, heading for the far right hand corner of the field. Two step stiles bring you on to the road.

***Did you know?***

*Here there is an interesting monument erected by the Hope Wallace family in memory of their father who lost his life in World War I. This spot was chosen as it was here that he said good-bye to his beloved wife.*

Cross over the road to go through the left hand field gate opposite.

***Did you know?***

*The road here is on the line of the Maiden Way. This ancient Roman Road joined Kirkby Thore, in Cumbria, to Carvoran, now the site of the Roman Army Museum on Hadrian's Wall.*

4. Go straight on, keeping close to the fence on your right. Pass through two further gates to reach Kellah Farm and hamlet.

***Did you know?***

*'Kellah' means, 'the hill where calves were turned out'.*

You come to a barn on your right. The track goes past this and brings you to another gate leading into the farmyard. Do not go through but turn left and follow the garden walls on your right to a stone stile with iron gate. Once over, turn right then immediately left at the corner of the barn. You walk again alongside garden walls to your right. A gate brings you into a large sloping field. Go straight down this field, keeping the stone wall on your right. You are aiming for a wooden bridge over a small stream, but it is hidden in the hollow until you have almost reached it. Once over the bridge, follow the contour around the steep bank into another valley. You may find it easier at this point to climb to the top of the slope. You will see the ruins of an old well ahead and a bridge down below. Cross this bridge, turn right then after 22yds/20m climb the hill, veering slightly right, towards a stone stile in the wall at the top.

***Did you know?***

*From here you have a good view of the countryside behind you and of Bateyshield Farm ahead. Bateyshield: 'Batey', belonging to the family of de Bataille; 'shield', summer dwelling.*

Go straight ahead, keeping by the fence on the left, to a field gate between two barns. This leads on to a track, which you leave immediately by the first field gate on your left. You are now on the Pennine Way.

5. Go straight down this field, keeping to the fence on the right. After approx. 275yds /250m, a deep gully ahead is more easily approached by swinging left and then right to cross the ford. Turn left and climb diagonally up the hill. Once at the top, continue in the same direction until you reach a field gate in the corner of the field, signposted 'Pennine Way'. Pass through the gate, bear right and continue down the hill, keeping to the fence on your right. Bear left at a small group of trees and then keep diagonally left to a steep bank above the woodland overlooking Hartley Burn. Turn right to descend, with care, to a step stile leading into a meadow. Turn left here, making for a field gate on the far side. A nearby barn across the road indicates the spot to aim for. Cross the road, pass the barn and head for a wooden bridge on the far side of the field. Over the bridge, turn left to cross a step stile almost immediately. Walk diagonally right across the next field, on higher ground, aiming for a stile in the hedge on the left. Turn right on to a farm road which becomes a track once you have passed High Burnfoot Farm on your right.

Continue along the track to Low Burnfoot House. Pass the house on your left and continue straight for 55yds/50m over rough ground to a bridge over Hartley Burn. Go over the bridge and turn right. Take a footpath to reach the north bank of the River South Tyne, keeping close to the hillside on your left. **BEWARE** - This footpath floods when the river is high and will be impassable. At other times, this path can be slippery and requires care. Unfortunately, there is no alternative route.

***Did you know?***

*From this path you have a good view across the River South Tyne to Featherstone Castle. The oldest part of the castle still standing, is a tower built by Thomas de Featherstonehaugh in the 1320s. The most recent additions were built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Featherstonehaugh family retained the ownership of the castle until the 18<sup>th</sup> century with only one gap in direct descent, which occurred in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, with the death of Abigail Featherstonehaugh. Was this the same Abigail Featherstonehaugh who, along with her bridal party, haunts the castle each 17<sup>th</sup> January? The legend says that she was to marry a neighbouring Baron's son but was in love with a local Ridley. As the bridal party rode the bounds of the estate, the spurned lover made an attack. The new bridegroom put up a good fight, however, and all were killed in the affray. At midnight, the sound of horses' hooves was heard outside the castle and, as the door opened into the banqueting hall, the ghostly apparition of Abigail and the rest of the party entered. The Baron fainted at this spectral procession and the bridal party were found dead in Píkings Cleugh the following day.*

***Did you know?***

*The remains of Featherstone Prisoner of War Camp No 18 are immediately to the west of Featherstone Castle and can still be clearly seen. It housed thousands of German officers during and after World War II. Many of the prisoners were allowed to carry out farm and forestry work. They became very well thought of by the locals. Captain Herbert Sulzbach was a German Jew and officer in the German army who fled to Britain in the 1930s. He was an interpreter in the camp and was awarded an OBE because he 'dedicated himself to making the camp a seedbed of British-German reconciliation'.*

**Did you know?**

*You pass a weir on the river where there is also a Gauging Station to measure water flow. The River South Tyne is notable for being the river with the most rapid descent, from its source near Alston to the meeting point with River North Tyne at Hexham. Consequently, it experiences rapid rises and falls after heavy rain. The whole Tyne river system is also particularly valued for its increase in salmon numbers after efforts to tackle industrial pollution in the lower reaches and improved access for fish to spawn at higher levels.*

6. Eventually you arrive back at the footbridge you were at earlier. Beyond the bridge, go through a gate and turn left along the road.

**Did you know?**

*Here you join a walking route following the course of the River South Tyne and linked to the 'Daft as a Brush' charity. The charity provides transport for cancer patients requiring hospital treatment.*

This road runs along the south bank of the River South Tyne and you stay on it, past Featherstone Bridge and Park Burnfoot.

A little way up the hill you pass the entrance to a campsite on your left. Go through a gate just beyond into the woods of Bellister Estate, a National Trust Property.

**Did you know?**

*When the footpath is passing high above the river, above Wydon Nab with good views to Haltwhistle, there is a wooden seat. The poem on the plaque was written by a local lady, Nancy Parker, a great lover of the natural world.*

Turn left down a track for 33yds/30m onto a road. Cross over through a gap in the fence into more woodland with attractive stands of oak and beech overlooking Bellister Castle.

**Did you know?**

*Bellister Castle was named by its first owner, Robert de Roos, in 1191. It translates from Norman French as 'a fine site'. The tower is now a ruined shell. The Blenkinsopp family built a comfortable house next to the tower in 1669 which was rebuilt by John Dobson in 1826. It was damaged by fire in 1901. Now owned by the National Trust, it is still inhabited and the mound on which it sits is shared by a gnarled old sycamore tree that was once used as a gallows. As with many buildings such as this, it has a ghost story. The 'Grey Man of Bellister', a minstrel mauled to death by the master's hounds, who can be seen outside the ruins at dusk. Many visitors can testify to scary manifestations inside.*

7. Follow the path to a step stile into a field above the wood. Bear left downhill, along the edge of the wood and after 88 yds/80 m, take a step stile on your left through the wood and into a field. Go straight across the field, through a small tree plantation to reach a cycle track (Sustrans route 68). Turn left and follow the cycle path for about 275 yds/250 m, through a gate on to the road. Turn right to cross to a gateway with cattle grid. Turn sharp left, through another gate and follow the concrete road, curving right, to use the underpass. Keep to the road, through another gate and straight on for 440 yds/400 m to reach Tyne Bridge and return to the Market Place.