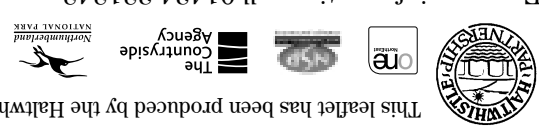




For further information on things to do in and around Hadrian's Wall Country call 01434 322002
 Or visit www.haltwhistle.org or www.hadrians-wall.org
 In planning your transport, please refer to:
 Journey Planner – www.planner.org.uk
 Traveline – www.traveline.org.uk
 Walks designed by Mike Swan (www.walkinghadrianswall.com) Tel: 01434 382620
 Photography by David G. Prakeel – PhotoWorkshops Partnership
www.photopartners.co.uk Tel: 01434 322595
 This leaflet has been produced by the Haltwhistle Partnership and part-funded by:

 For more information call 01434 321242

Walk 18
 Bardon Mill Parish
 6 miles / 9.7 km
 Moderate Difficulty


22 Walks in the Historic Parishes of Haltwhistle, Northumberland
The Haltwhistle Rings

A 6-mile walk with the dramatic scenery and architecture of Hadrian's Wall, the openness of the land beyond and the legends of other times.

O.S. Explorer OL 43 Housesteads – Hotbanks – Ridley Common – Broomlee Lough – Sewingshields

'Legions, Legends and Lawlessness'

Start Point: By Car, Bus.
 From Haltwhistle Centre take Main Street east past the Spotted Cow pub and turn left up the road for 2k to the B6318 next to The Milecastle Inn. Turn right for 4k and turn left into the car park at Housesteads Information Centre (charges apply). Bus users take the Hadrian's Wall Bus to Housesteads. (Contact 01434 322002)

1. Park in the car park at Housesteads Information Centre. If you want to visit the Fort and Museum get your ticket here. Pass through the arch between the Shop & Information Centre and take the broad track up to the Fort.

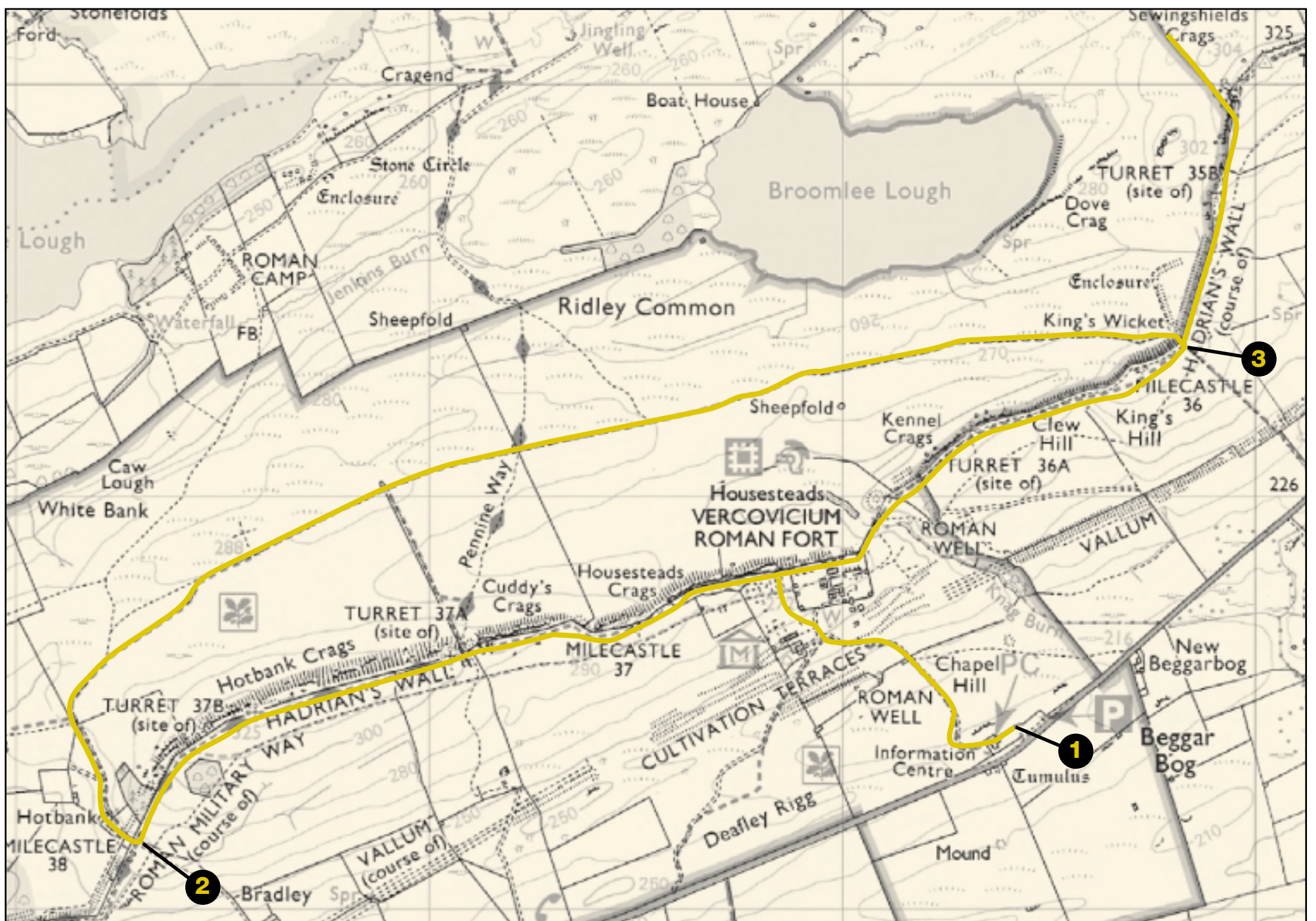
Did you know: Approaching from the south, we find a big earthwork misnamed the 'vallum' (in Latin it means 'mound') which is a big ditch, 20ft wide at the top with sloping sides, 10ft deep with continuous mounds on either side. Next, a 20ft wide road, the Military Way, for moving troops and supplies along the Wall. Next the Wall itself, 15-20ft high and stretching as far as the eye could see. Every Roman mile there was a small fort – milecastle – with its own garrison, guarding a gateway. In between each of these milecastles were two small turrets, just to keep an eye on things. North of the Wall we find another ditch, 25-30ft wide, just to make it difficult for any approaching hooligan to creep up unseen! And more! Every six or seven miles you would see a full-size fort – like the one here at Housesteads – of the type that was built to the same specification all over the Empire. And the same number of troops as that assembled for the Gulf War!

Go up over the field to the left of the fort and right of the Museum over to a gate in a stone wall. Go through, turn left onto Hadrian's Wall National Trail – signposted 'Hot Bank' – and continue on the Trail over Housesteads Crag to Cuddy's Crag.

Did you know: When the Roman Army left in about 380 the community surrounding it soon disappeared and the frontier land became a wasteland. Fit only for passing armies, (perhaps Artur, the Northumberland mercenary, on his way to fight for King Arthur in the west country) and outlaws, it was not until the 16th century that some settler sought to return to the cultivation terraces you have passed on your way up to the fort. An Act of Parliament in 1555 made it compulsory for everyone living in the twenty mile Border Zone to build their own defences against reivers and cross-border raiders. There were no government grants for this so they were pretty basic structures; all were oblong with the gable ends shorter than the side walls, all had just two chambers – store room downstairs, living room above – and all had a high pitched roof. These structures were called 'bastles' and in all cases the walls were more than three feet thick and contained a fair bit of stone taken from Hadrian's Wall. The ground floor door was in the centre of one of the gable ends and only 27 inches wide – so that only one man could enter at a time. The upstairs door was in one of the long sides and reached by a removable ladder. There were just two slits for ventilation in the ground floor and a trap door into the living quarters above for the person who barred and bolted the ground floor entrance. In the living room were two small barred windows and provision was made for a fire. The settler who returned here built his bastle just by the south gate of the fort.

At the top of Cuddy's Crag look backward at the most famous view of Hadrian's Wall. Continue to Hotbank Crag until you descend to Hotbank Farm on your right with Crag Lough beyond. From this point, on a clear day, you will be stunned at the distances you can see. You should be able to see four counties. North is Northumberland; north-west, Scotland (Dumfries and Galloway); south is Durham and south-west is Cumbria and the Lake District.

2. Just before the farm turn right here onto the path that goes through the farmyard to the right of the farm buildings. At the gate at the end of the field after the farm bear right and then keep right – look for the marker post – to take you past a limestone quarry and lime kiln (the arched structure) to the stile at the next wall. The Pennine Way runs north-south here (right-left), but you continue straight on (east) over Ridley Common – rough pasture with 'beasts' – with Housesteads Crag on your right. (The view of the Wall the Scots and Picts would have had!). Aiming for a plantation of conifer trees pass a circular sheep fold on your right, Broomlee Lough – home to the legend of the Sunken Treasure of one of the Lords of Sewing Shields Castle – on your left, and go through the plantation via stiles.



Copyright: Ordnance Survey (Explorer OL 43)

Did you know: This is a natural lake formed by water collected in depressions left by glacial erosions during the last Ice Age and is one of many in this area – Greenlee Lough being the largest. Broomlee, of course, has its legend. A Lord of Sewingshields sunk a huge box of treasure in the lough and cast a spell that it could only be recovered by the use of “two twin yands, two twin oxen, two twin lads, and a chain forged by a smith of kind.” (“Yands’ being horses and ‘of kind’ being of the seventh generation of a family of smiths.) Centuries later a smith from generations of smiths called Ridley attempted the recovery. Having located the box, the chain was attached, the horses and oxen driven forward by the twin lads and as the box emerged a link in the chain snapped and the box sunk once again into the muddy mists of the lough. It was said that Ridley was not too good at counting!

The path bears right here after the plantation over some drainage ditches to Kings Wicket Gate on the Wall. This is Busy Gap – so called as it was a passing point for raiders and thieves (the Reivers) through the Wall in the middle-ages, bent on plunder in the south.

Did you know: Extracts from a letter by William Ratcliffe during the 16th century to his son indicate the problems of cross border reiving: “Ye shall perceive that on Saint James’ Day even, the 24 day of July came Liddisdale men to the barony of Langley to the number of six score, and laid them at the ‘Buisse Yappe’; and sent forth 7 men and seized six oxen.” Local gentry in Haydon Bridge and twenty six men set off in pursuit of the seven raiders, unaware of the larger force waiting for them at Busy Gap. “And our men wist the Scots brake upon them, and took them all both horse & man saving 2 persons: so the Scots rode in all haste with their prisoners. Son, if there be no remedy for Liddesdale the country is in a schroved point, and true men that is oppressed for fear of their life and lossing of their goods say plainly that they will leave the country.”

3. Turn left here on the National Trail to visit the summit of Sewingshields Crags – great views! – then return to King’s Wicket (1½ k). Continue on along the Wall over King’s Hill, Clew Hill and by the fir plantation on Kennel Crag.

Did you know: North of here the map indicates many references to royalty; King’s Crags, King Wanless, Queen’s Crags etc. and a tower was built here on dry ground in the middle of this boggy wild landscape in the 14th century. A location as unromantic as this needs legends, and these abound. King Arthur, his Queen, Merlin and the Knights were all here in the big Hall, playing ‘Squabble’ – a popular 7th century board game – on the Round Table. Merlin, who was getting on a bit and probably past his sell-by-date as a top rate wizard, let out a curse as he missed a triple bicker score and lost the game. Unfortunately his curse was a spell from years back that he had forgotten over time and all those in the room were turned into silent statues! The spell was such that they were all condemned to remain that way until someone broke the spell by drawing a sword from its scabbard, cutting a garter with it and then blowing a bugle. Centuries passed until a young shepherd found the Hall, the statues inside and the sword, garter and bugle conveniently on the table. Instinctively (the legend gets rather weak here!) he drew the sword, cut the garter ... and the statues began to stir, frightening the lad so much that he fled from the Hall! As he fled he heard the booming voice of Merlin echoing across the dreak and misty moor:

“O woe betide that evil day
On which the witless wight was born,
Who drew the sword, the garter cut,
But never blew the bugle horn.”

Bad loser, Merlin!

Descend alongside the great piece of Wall to the Roman gateway in the Wall and up past the north wall of Housesteads Fort to ascend steps to the gate you used on your way to Hotbank Crags. Return to the car park at the Information Centre.

Whilst Walking in and around Hadrian’s Wall Country please remember that “every footstep counts” particularly during the wet winter months. You can help protect Hadrian’s Wall Country and one of the great wonders of the world by following the simple advice below:

- Many of the routes are permissioned by landowners - enjoy the countryside and respect the livestock and the land
- Always follow the signed paths
- Guard against risk of Fire at all times
- Fasten all gates
- Keep dogs on a lead
- Remember walking on Hadrian’s Wall can cause it to collapse
- Try to avoid walking alongside the wall in very wet conditions.