



The Otterburn Ranges

ACCESS AREA guidelines

The maps on the Trail Downloads each show one of our suggested self-guided routes. This route and the others downloadable from this website are selected to introduce you to the different facets of this land of story and struggle.

BE PREPARED!

Routes should always be followed on the ground with the relevant OS map.

These are: Ordnance Survey Landranger 1:50,000 map no. 80 – Cheviot Hills and Kielder Water; and 1:25,000 Explorer OL16 – The Cheviot Hills or Explorer OL42 – Kielder Water & Forest.

This is a challenging area so be properly equipped. Most of the routes in this area involve exposed hill sections. The paths and bridleways are easy to follow with a map, but very little shelter is available on the highest sections and the weather can change quickly at any time of year.

Make sure you have suitable clothing, along with food and water. You are also advised to carry a compass in case of mist.

Dogs – the farms in this area are sheep farms and dogs must be kept under control and on the leash near livestock and between 1 March to 31 July.

Military – this is a military training area so please obey all signs. If in any doubt about access please phone Range Control 01830 520569.

Refreshments and Public Toilets

There are shops, cafes and pubs in the villages around the Otterburn Ranges – please support local businesses where you can!

There are public toilets at Alwinton National Park Car Park and on the Main Street in Otterburn.

SAFETY! WHICH ZONE ARE YOU IN?

This military training area has two zones which are used for different types of training:

CONTROLLED ACCESS AREA

marked MAUVE on this map.

Access is closed when red flags are flying, as firing with live ammunition may be taking place. When no red flags are flying, keep to the roads or way-marked paths.

The military roads, open when no flags are flying, are great for exploring by road bike or on horseback along the sides of the roads.

OPEN ACCESS AREA

marked CREAM on this map.

You are welcome to explore this area all year round, but please avoid troops in training. You may see soldiers but they will not be using live ammunition. However, they may be using blank rounds and pyrotechnics.

Please obey all signs and do not enter MOD roads where a red flag is flying.

Do not touch or pick up any object lying on the ground.



The Otterburn Ranges

Open ACCESS AREA

I Iron Age Ascent

(red route on map)

A walk or ride along Dere Street into Scotland to Woden Law hillfort and return.

Distance 12km (7.5 miles).

Start: Chew Green Car Park. Grid ref NT794085.

Walk up to Chew Green Roman camps. Follow the Pennine Way north for 1km to the gate on the border ridge. Cross the border into Scotland.

Follow Dere Street for 2.5km to Blackhall Hill.

Follow the track as it descends left (W) for 1.75km.

Climb Woden Law and enjoy the views.

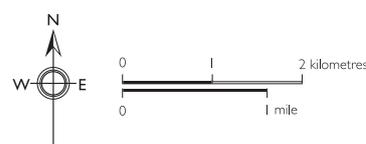
Return by the same route, but after 1km you can follow the sign to take Dere Street south of Blackhall crags.

This will return to your original path.

This follows the ancient track-way into Scotland of Dere Street and joins the Pennine Way for a brief time giving wide, panoramic views deep into Scotland.

Birds and beasts

You may be lucky enough to see merlins, buzzards or black grouse or chance upon the flocks of feral goats that roam the heather along the ridge.



The Otterburn Ranges

Open ACCESS AREA

② Mountain Refuge Circuit

(purple route on map)

A circular walk with classic Cheviot and border country views. Distance approx. 16km (10 miles)

Start: Park at Buckham's Bridge. Grid ref NT824107. Walk left along the road to Blindburn 0.5km. Turn left through the gate and up the hill for 2km to Yearning Law.

Follow the bridleway for 2km to the Mountain Refuge Hut. Follow the border ridge for 5km NE over Lamb Hill, Beefstand Hill, Mozie Law to The Street.

Go S down The Street for 4km until paths cross at Hinside Knowe. After the gate, follow the fence down the hill to the stile.

Aim for Carlcroft, the farm in the trees up the valley, 1km away.

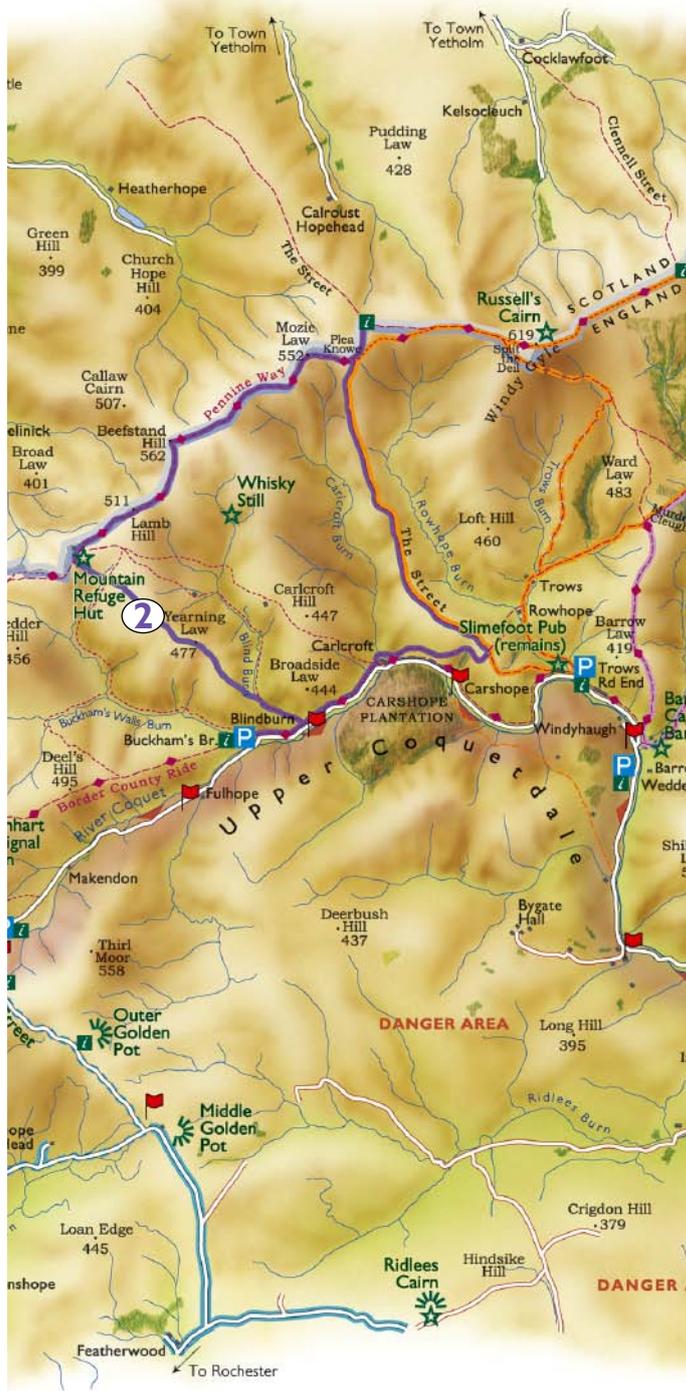
At Carlcroft cross the footbridge to the farm and follow the track to rejoin the road for 1km back to the car park.

Whisky in the jar

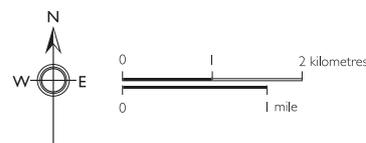
In the 1800s whisky smugglers stole their way down the drove roads that crossed the border ridge. Excise-men would patrol the hills stopping and searching carts and travellers for contraband liquor.

Smugglers like Black Rory then turned to making their own whisky by Coquetdale's fast flowing streams. You can trace the remains of these stills to this day.

Around 400 million years ago volcanoes flung out lava and ash which weathered to form the distinctive whale-back hills of the Open Access Area north of the river Coquet. Walk or ride in these hills and imagine them as smoky heaps of cooling rock!



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The Otterburn Ranges

Open ACCESS AREA

3A Reiver's Return

(orange route on map)

A walk up The Street to the border, returning by Clennell Street. Distance 15km (10 miles).

Start: Trows Road End car park. Grid ref NT859115. Cross the bridge to the foot of The Street.

Climb for 5km to the Border Ridge. Follow the Pennine Way for 2km east to Windy Gyle. Continue for 2km to Clennell Street, and descend S down Clennell Street.

After 500m take the path that forks off right.

After a similar distance take the next path right, down a long ridge, for 2km to join the track back to Trows Farm.

Follow the road back to the car park 3km.

This follows the ancient track-ways into Scotland The Street with the choice of returning by Clennell Street. It joins the Pennine Way as it follows the border ridge, giving wide views deep into Scotland.

Russell's Cairn

In 1585, at a meeting between English and Scots 'under truce' on Windy Gyle, the English Lord Francis Russell was shot and killed. The Bronze Age burial cairn on its summit was named Russell's Cairn in his memory.

More sheep than people!

Sheep have been grazed in the Cheviots since the 13/14th centuries. Look out for white-faced Cheviots which have been bred in these windswept hills for over 600 years or the horned Scottish Blackface.

The circular stone pens you see are 'stells' which offer shelter to sheep in the winter.

3B Shorter Reiver's Return

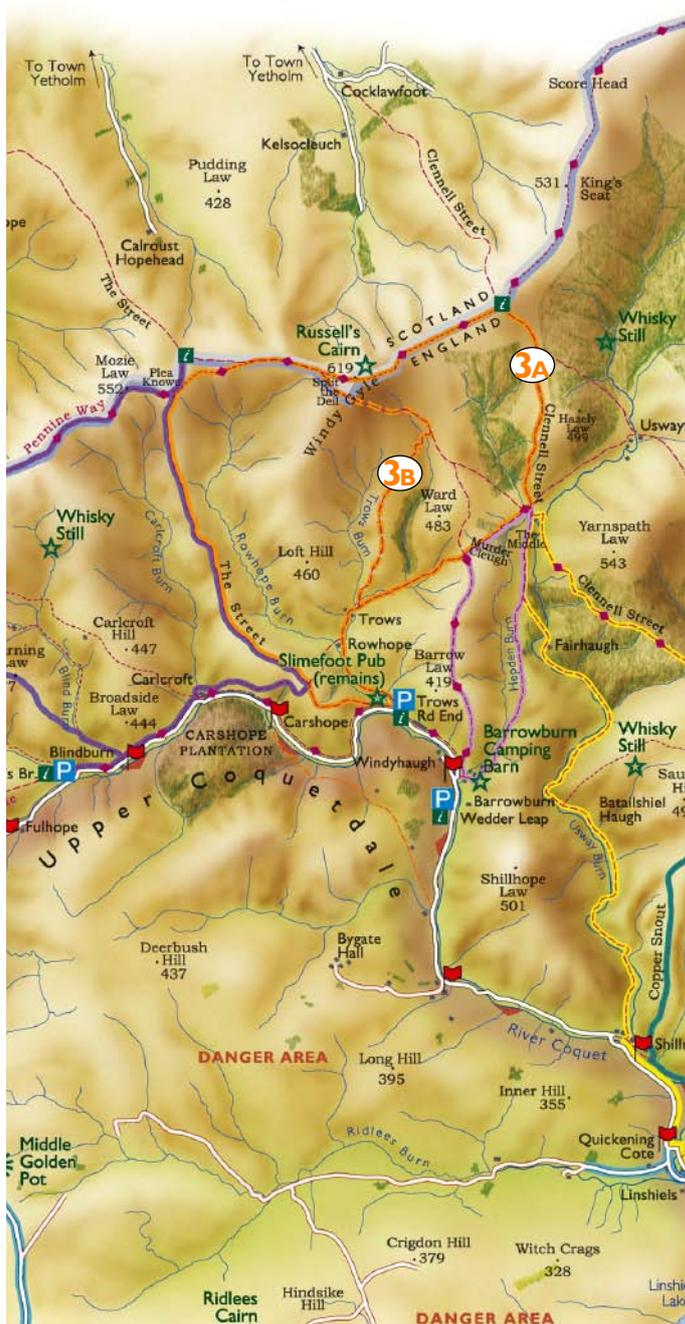
(orange route on map)

Distance 11.5km (7 miles).

Start: As route 3A but this route descends after Windy Gyle. Take the path south east off Windy Gyle.

After 1.25km take the path forking right (heading SW). This follows the broad ridge down to Trows for 2km.

Rejoin the road for 1.5km walk back to the car park at Trows Road End.



The Otterburn Ranges

Open ACCESS AREA

④ Clennell Street and Usway Burn (yellow route on map)

Distance approx. 21.5km (13.5 miles).

A ride for experienced riders on tracks and narrow paths into the heart of Cheviot country.

Start: From the car park at Alwinton turn left. Cross the bridge over the burn and onto Clennell Street. Climb for 4km to Wholehope.

Follow the track NW for 6km, to where it meets the track from Uswayford below Hazely Law. Return S by the track over The Middle and through the forest, 1.5km to Fairhaugh.

Cross the bridge to go past the house. The bridleway is a narrow path 50m on your right, after the house.

Follow this for 6km along the Usway burn – some sheer drops to your right. It becomes a wide path and then a road to Shillmoor.

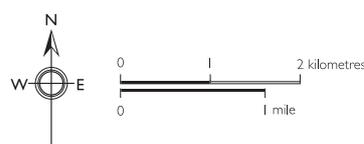
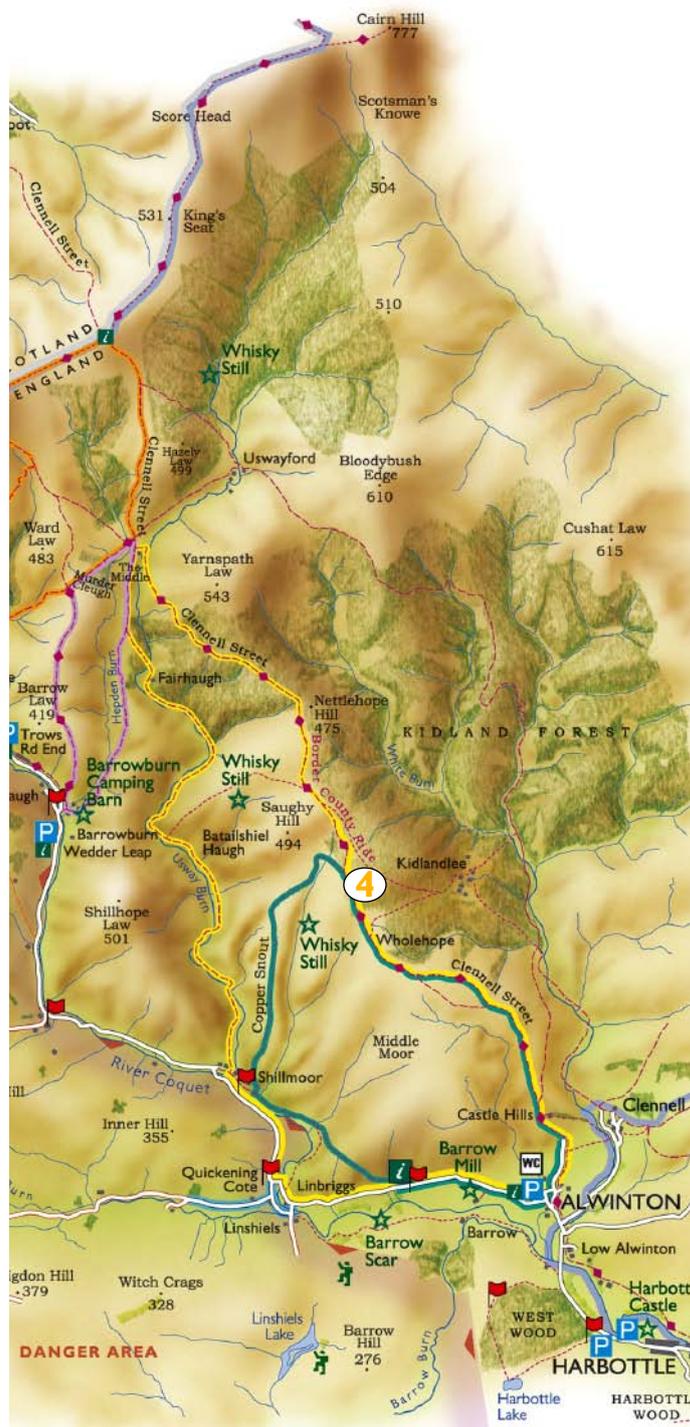
At Shillmoor cross the River Coquet. Turn left for a 4.5km return to Alwinton along the valley road.

More sheep than people!

Clennell Street is a drove road which crosses the Border Ridge where Scottish cattle and sheep were driven down for sale at English markets.

Sheep have been grazed in the Cheviots since the 13/14th centuries. Look out for white-faced Cheviots which have been bred in these windswept hills for over 600 years, or the horned Scottish Blackface.

The circular stone pens you see are 'stells' which offer shelter to sheep in the winter.



The Otterburn Ranges

Open ACCESS AREA

⑤ Clennell Street and Copper Snout (green route on map)

Distance approx. 11.5km (6.5 miles).

A shorter walk or ride on tracks and narrow paths into wild country above Coquetdale.

Start: From the car park at Alwinton turn left. Cross the bridge over the burn and onto Clennell Street.

Climb Clennell Street for 4km to Wholehope Hill.

Pick up the track north of the summit, which follows the ridge W above Wholehope Burn, SW for 2.5km down to Shillmoor.

After the farm follow the track left for 150m to the bridleway.

Follow the contour for 1km to cross the stream before climbing 0.5km up Pass Peth.

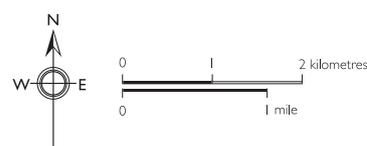
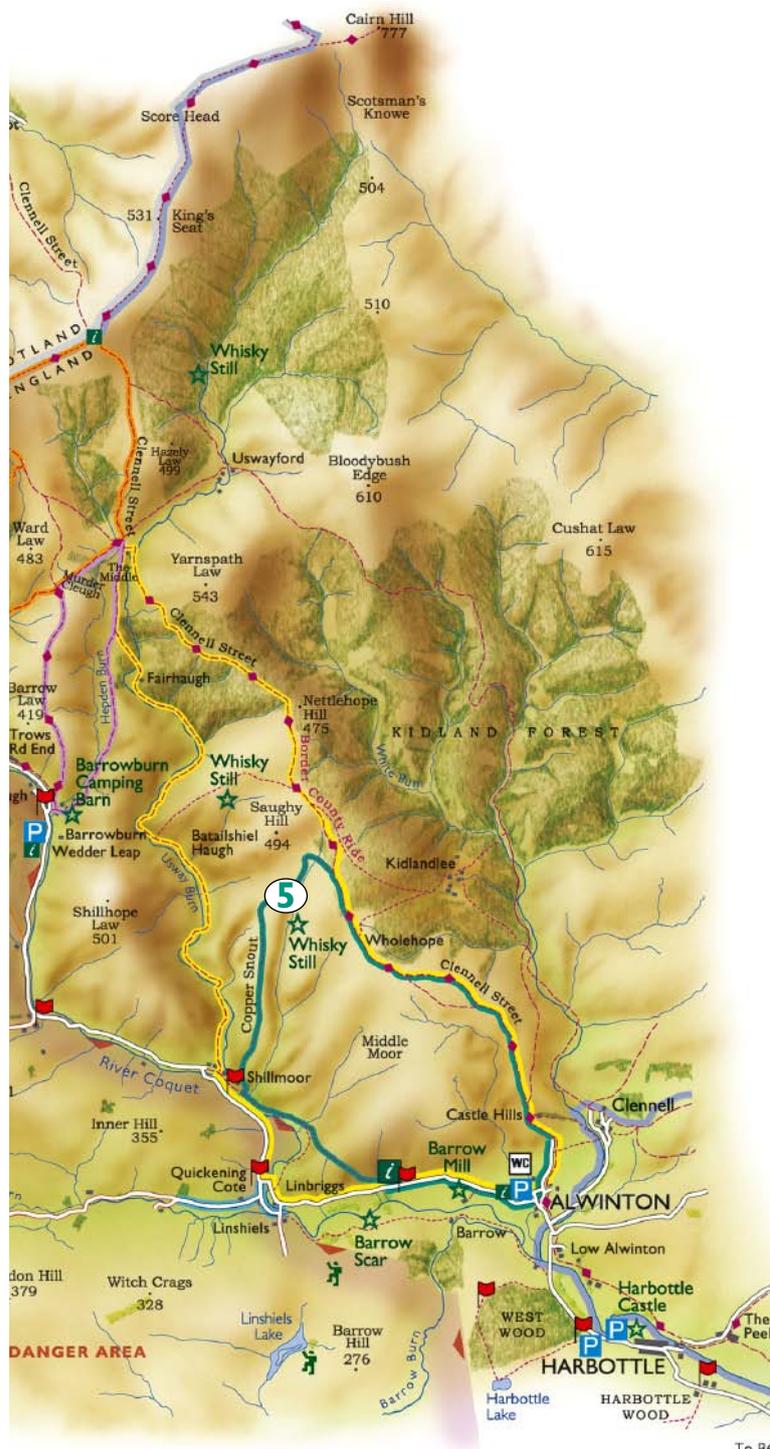
Descend 1km to the road for a 1.5km return to Alwinton.

More sheep than people!

Clennell Street is a drove road which crosses the Border Ridge where Scottish cattle and sheep were driven down for sale at English markets.

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The Otterburn Ranges

Open ACCESS AREA

⑥ Wedder Leap and Barrow Law (lilac route on map)

A family route in the Cheviot foothills.

Distance 8km (5 miles).

Start: From Wedder Leap Car Park (Grid ref NT866104), turn left up the road. After 100 metres cross the bridge.

Climb the stiles and walk up to the edge of the plantation.

Turn left and continue 300 metres to Barrowburn.

Follow the track north into the valley of the Barrow Burn as it dips and then climbs 2km to become a green track into the forest.

Head north through the forest for 1km.

After the forest, keep straight ahead for 1km along The Middle to join the track to Trows Farm.

Turn left and follow for 0.75km.

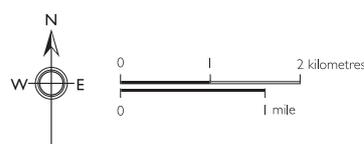
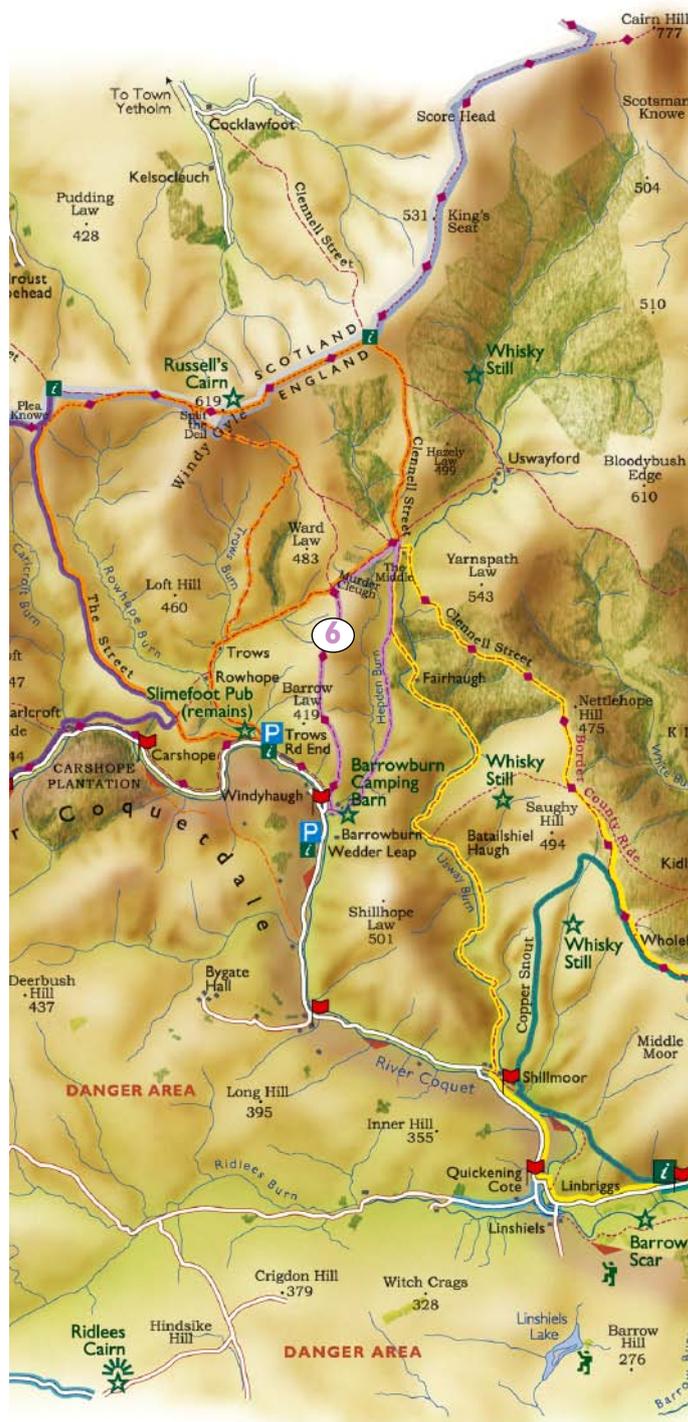
At the end of a plantation, turn left over a stile.

After 15m turn right onto a grassy track. Follow this along the ridge for 2.5km back to Barrowburn.

Barrow Scar

The steep broken face of Barrow Scar is made of geological strata from the early Carboniferous period, laid down on the floor of a tropical sea more than 350 million years ago.

In June the fields around Barrowburn come into bloom with flowers such as yellow rattle, wood cranesbill, eyebright and black knapweed.



The Otterburn Ranges

Controlled ACCESS AREA

① Ridley Crag and Stewartshiels (lilac route on map)

A walk from the Roman fort of Bremenium at High Rochester around Ridley Crag into Stewartshiels Plantation using rough footpaths and forest roads. Distance 10km (6.5 miles)

Start: The A68 layby opposite the café in Rochester. Cross the road and take the permissive path left of the café for 1km to the Roman fort at High Rochester. Before reaching the road cross a stile and take the path around the W side of the fort until you join a footpath heading NW.

Follow this footpath along Sillos burn for 800m until you reach a forestry plantation at which point turn R uphill. After 300m a stile takes you into Stewartshiels Plantation.

With the forest to your R and open fell on your L continue until you join a forest road. Turn L on the road and after 200m¹ turn L again to follow the forest edge path for a further 1.2km.

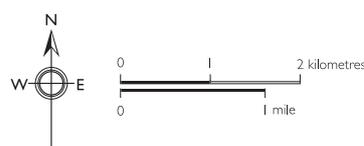
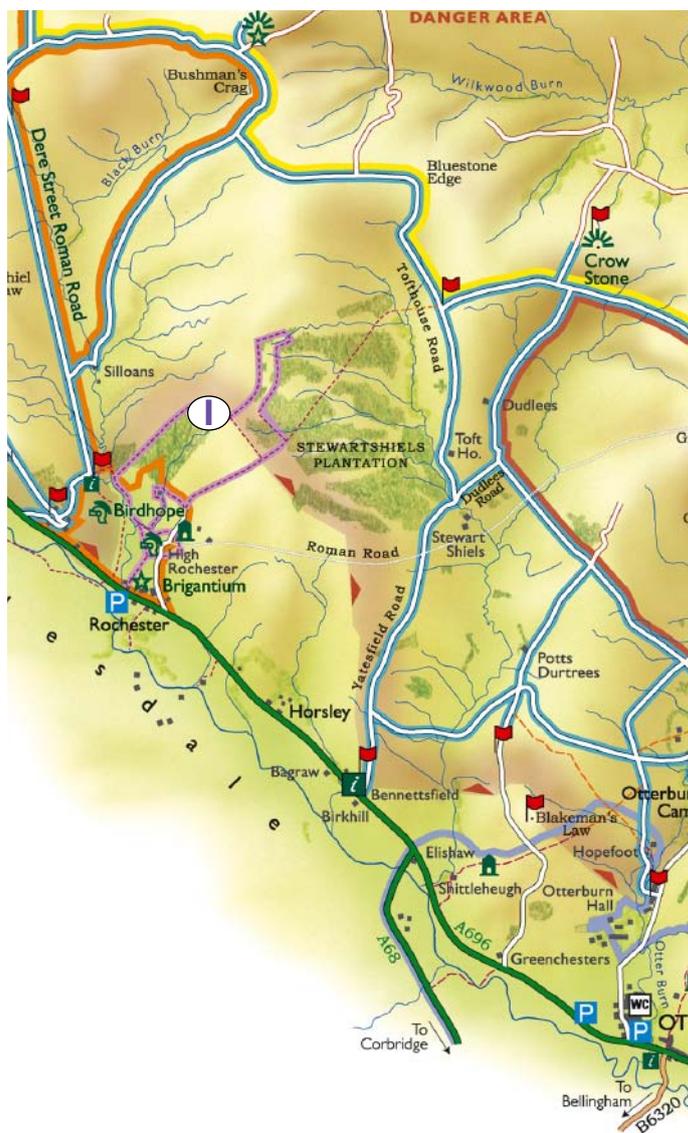
At a waymarking post turn R into the forest for 125m and R again on to a forest road. Head S for 1km and at road junction turn L for 450m to join a public footpath. Turn R for 350m and leave the forest by means of a stile².

Continue SW for 1.1km at which point the path joins a farm track. Turn R for 400m and follow the path around the N and W side of Hillock Farm and then head due south for 500m crossing a stream and back to the Roman fort at High Rochester.

Follow the path round the E and S side of the fort and you will rejoin the path back to Rochester for a well earned snack in the cafe.

NB. This route is open all year round if you proceed straight on (SE) for 600m at point¹ above and use the forest edge path to the stile at point².

This walk takes you around the Roman fort of Bremenium, which was the most northerly Roman outpost fort beyond Hadrian's Wall throughout much of its life. Look out for its gateways which are still quite visible.



The Otterburn Ranges

Controlled ACCESS AREA

② Dere Street Circuit

(orange route on map)

This 30km / 19 mile ride takes you up the western side of the Otterburn Ranges to Ridlees Cairn, to the Roman camps at Chew Green, returning by Dere Street.

NB. For cyclists the first section is on rough forest tracks, so for bikes with racing tyres the alternative start is by turning L on A68 to approach Dere Street via the road to Redesdale camp.

Start: The lay-by opposite the café in Rochester. Go right along A68 for 300m to take first road left 800m to High Rochester. Go through the gate and up the road 1km to Hillock Farm.

After the pond, take the track right into the forest for 300m. When this meets a larger track turn left downhill for 800m, until you see the straight road of Dere Street on right. Head 1km up the road.

Take first right to continue 4.5km to Ridlees Cairn. Continue in same direction 2.5km and turn right at junction back onto Dere Street.

After 2.5km turn right where the roads meet, to go for 3km along the ridge and down to Chew Green.

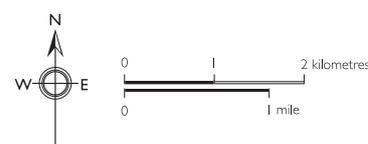
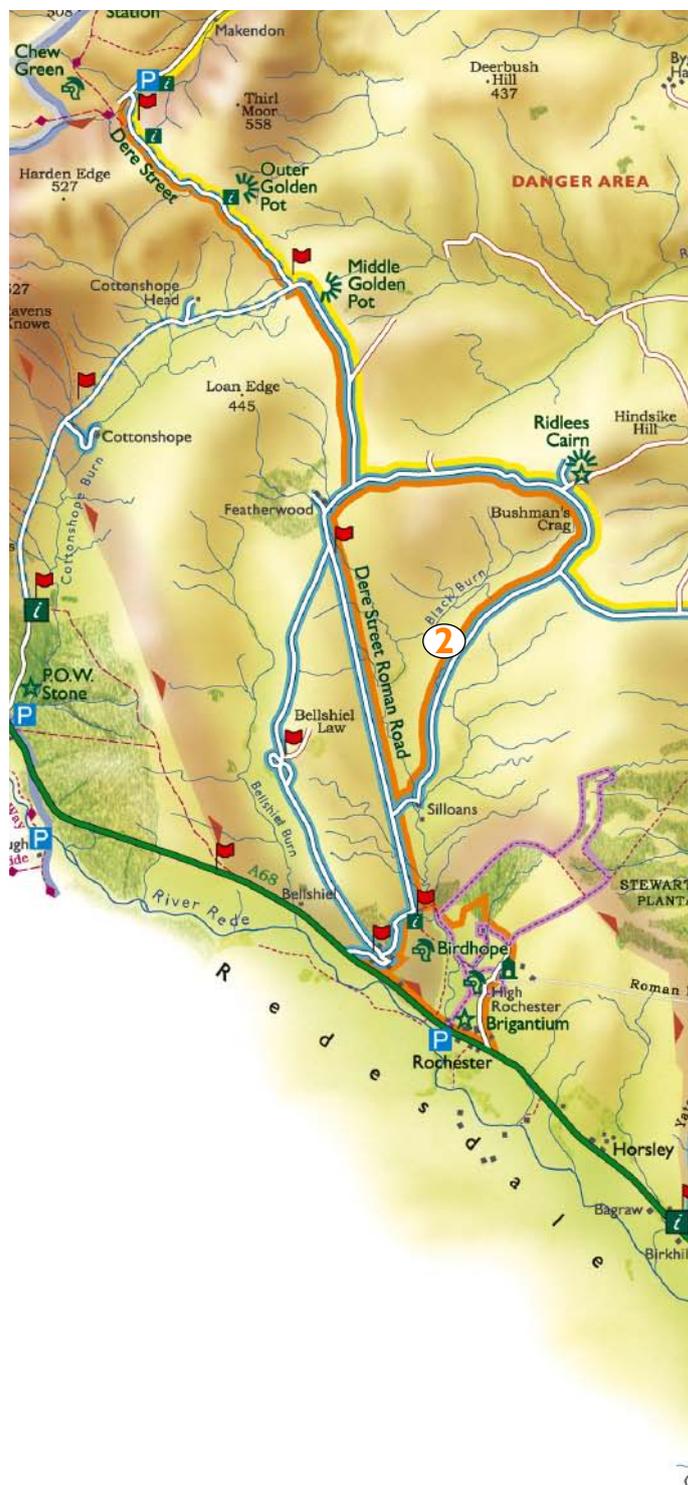
Return the same way, but keep on Dere Street the whole way for 10km, with a great straight descent to the 'T' junction.

Turn right to go past Redesdale camp 1km and rejoin the A68 for 500m left back to the café.

Edge of Empire

The Roman road of Dere Street crosses the estate. Built in 71-81AD by Governor Julius Agricola it carried troops and supplies from York to the legionary outpost fort at Inchtuthil, near Perth. Roman soldiers marched up this road to control the tribes north of Hadrian's Wall.

You can visit the earthworks of Roman camps at Chew Green and Birdhope at points on this exploration of Dere Street.



The Otterburn Ranges

Controlled ACCESS AREA

③ 50K Challenge (yellow route on map)

This circular cycle route takes you from Alwinton through the remote beauty of Coquetdale to the Roman camps at Chew Green and then back along the upland spine of the military training area. (50km / 31 miles)

Start: The National Park car park at Alwinton. Turn right to follow the road up the Coquet Valley 20km to Chew Green.

Continue SE from Chew Green on Dere Street for 3km to junction of military roads – go left, continue 2.5km then take the road left 2.5km to Ridlees Cairn. After 1km keep left.

After 3.5km turn left again to follow the 'Burma Road' for 10km to descend through Holystone Forest to Holystone village. Turn left, leaving Holystone, to continue the final 7km N, through Harbottle to finish in Alwinton.

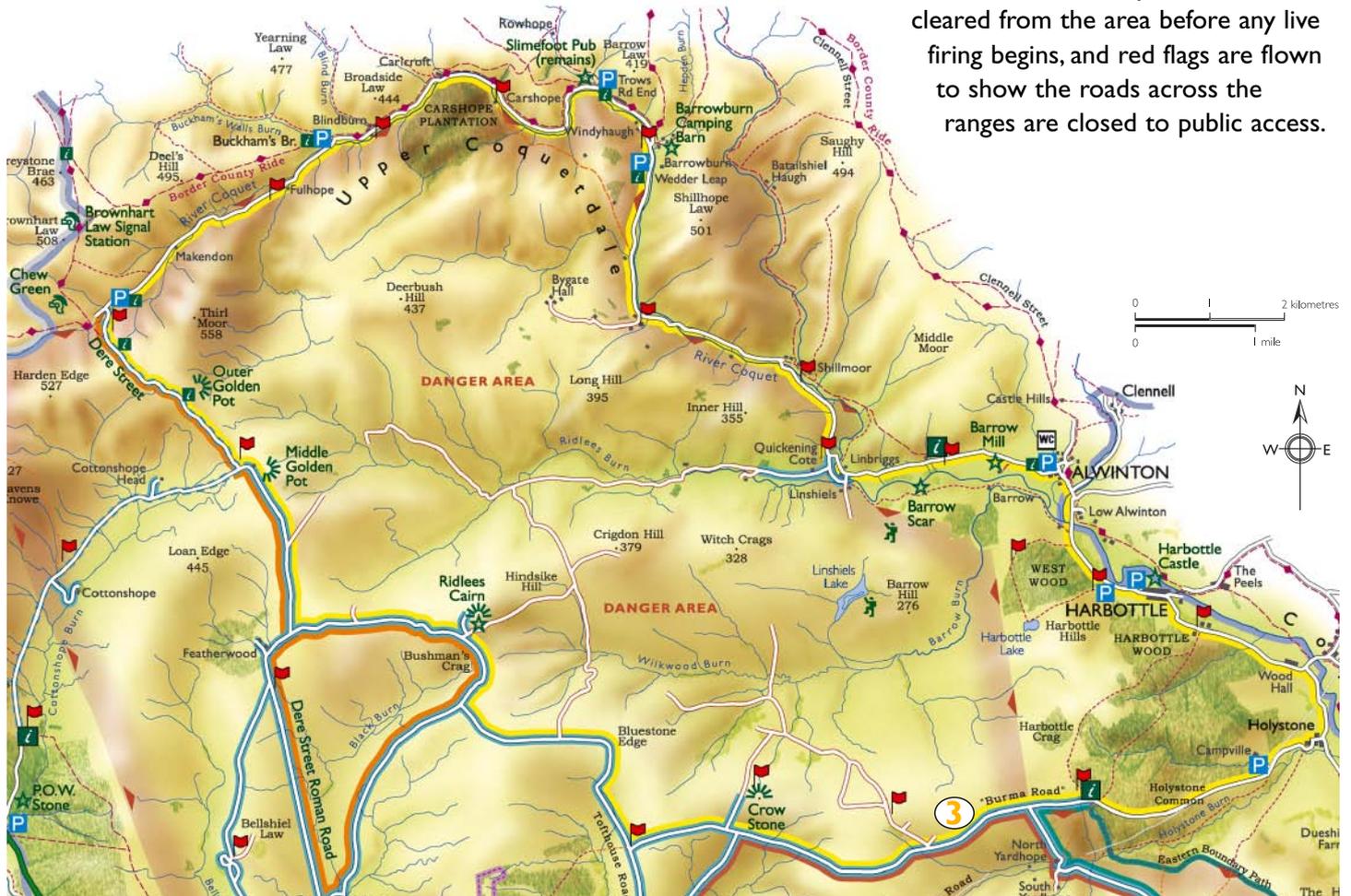
Birds and beasts Because of its remoteness the Otterburn Training Area is a haven for wildlife. The MOD's conservation team based at the Camp have provided Barn Owl nesting boxes at farms on the estate. There has been a marked increase in Barn Owl chicks raised here over the last few years!

Stone circles The circular stone pens you see are 'stells' which offer shelter to sheep in the winter.

Barrowburn Village Hall Coquetdale was a thriving community in Victorian times. Farmers from the valley held dances, markets and mass-clippings of their sheep in Barrowburn village-hall.

Chew Green Viewpoint Stop at this exposed spot on the route of Dere Street for a 'bird's eye view' of the Roman camps at Chew Green.

Outer Golden Pot One of the viewpoints used by the military to observe artillery and missile training, with views across the Redesdale Range – an 'all-arms' range where modern soldiers train for operational deployment across the world. Sheep and cattle are cleared from the area before any live firing begins, and red flags are flown to show the roads across the ranges are closed to public access.



The Otterburn Ranges

Controlled ACCESS AREA

④ The Eastern Boundary

(green route on map)

A challenging walk over rough terrain requiring navigation skills, with one long stretch of military road. Rewards with views across to the River Coquet and Simonside. Distance 17.5km (11 miles)

Start: Park at the lay-by by Ovenstone Plantation. Grid ref NY964987. After the gate follow the wall NW for 500m until the wood. Go through the gate for 500m through the wood, keeping parallel to the wall.

After the wood follow the waymarked path N for 1km up to forest below The Beacon. This will be hard going!

Follow path 1km around the forest which climbs to The Beacon (301m). From here the way is clear along the fence line for 3km.

At the forest follow the path which skirts its perimeter for 2km. Cross the bridge over the Holystone Burn. 100m to a gate to join the track along the edge of the wood. Follow the track for 1km to the metalled 'Burma Road'. Turn left.

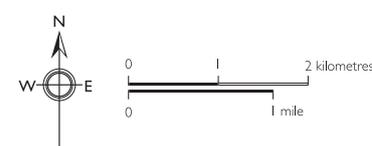
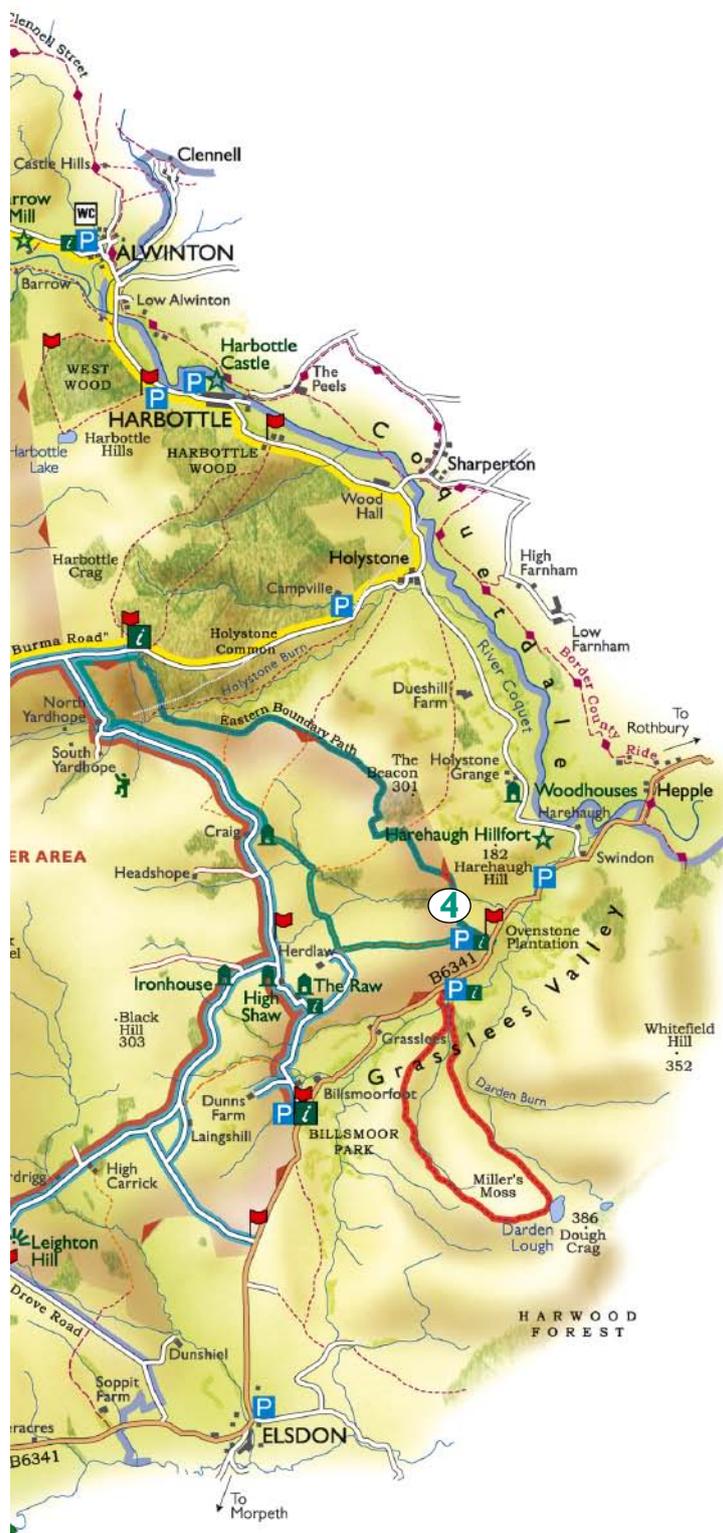
Take 2nd left, after 800m. Follow the road down into the valley and up to the wood 2.5km.

Continue 700m to Craig. Take the footpath SE through a field, 600m down to cross the stream and recross after 75m over a ford, to head up the hill to a gate.

After the gate keep on the rough track 1km, until the bridleway heads E for 2km back to the starting point.

Crags and Craig

350 million years ago a shallow, tropical sea washed against the bare volcanic Cheviot hills. Massive river deltas fed into it, pushing great fans of sands and silts westwards. This compressed into the rocks of the Carboniferous period (about 354 to 290 million years ago) that form the crags and hills on the Controlled Access Area. The craggy outcrops of Fell Sandstone that you can see from the walk along the Eastern Boundary Path were once sands swept along in the currents of these ancient rivers.



The Otterburn Ranges

Controlled ACCESS AREA

⑤ The Bastle Circuit

(brown route on map)

A 25km circular cycle route to the heart of the Training Area starting near the bastles of the Grasslees valley.

Warning: there are some long climbs!

(25km / 16 miles)

Start: Billsmoorfoot car park (Grid ref NY943968) on B6341 and enter Training Area.

Head N for 7km past The Raw, High Shaw and Craig. Turn left onto the Burma Road. Head W for 4.5km.

Take left to descend 2km past Dudlees Farm. At fork keep left for 6km to take left at Leighton Hill.

A steep descent and ascent takes you 2km to High Carrick. Continue NE for 2km back to the bastles and down 1.5km back to the car park.

Wood and Iron

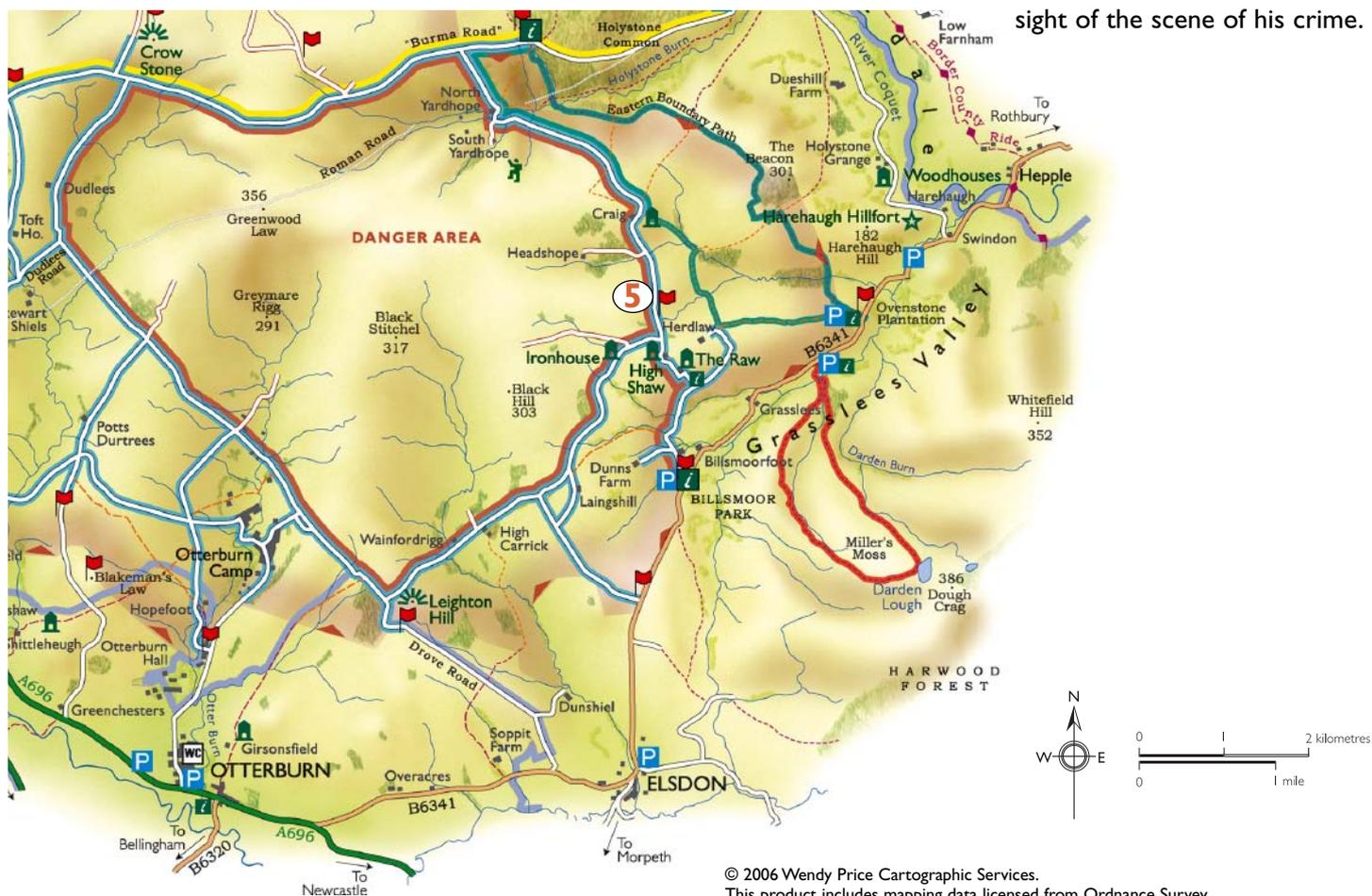
The Grasslees Valley once rang to the sound of the iron furnaces that brought wealth to this area. Maybe it is because of this wealth that the farmhouses here are strong and defensible.

On this route you can see remains of these 'bastles' at High Shaw, Craig and Ironhouse. The Raw is one of the best examples standing.

Stop in passing to see how its thick, strong walls protected the family inside. Ponies and blood-stock like bulls and rams were kept secure in the byre below and the family lived on the upper floor reached by ladder.

Murder!

In 1791 seamstress Margaret Crozier was murdered by William Winter at The Raw. He was arrested, tried and executed and his body condemned to hang in chains near Harwood Forest within sight of the scene of his crime.



The Otterburn Ranges

Controlled ACCESS AREA

⑥ Darden Lough

(red route on map)

A well marked walk into the Fell Sandstone of the Simonside hills, with spectacular views from the heights. Distance 7.5 km (4.5 miles)

Start: Park in the lay-by (Grid ref NY958981) on the Rothbury to Elsdon Road (B6341) and go through the gate. Follow the trail until the bridge over the Grasslees Burn.

Cross the bridge and head SE up the hill following the white posts to Darden Lough 3.5km. From the Lough, head WSW for 500m to the cairn.

Return 3.5km by the track heading NW and then NE back to the starting point.

Fell Sandstone

Around 350 million years ago a shallow, tropical sea washed against the bare, volcanic hills of the Cheviots. Massive river deltas fed into it pushing great fans of sands and silts westwards. These compressed into the rocks of the Carboniferous period (about 354 to 290 million years ago) that form the crags and hills of this part of Northumberland.

The craggy outcrops of Fell Sandstone that you can see from the walk up to Darden Lough were once sands swept along in the currents of these ancient rivers.

