



WALK 19
MITFORD CASTLE
(EASY ROUTE)

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Distance: 2 miles (3.2 km)

Maps: Explorer 325.

Walking time: 1 ¼ hours

Start and Finish point: Take the A6343 heading West from Morpeth. In Mitford village cross the river, pass the Plough Inn on your right and at the top of bank turn left (signposted, Mitford Church ¼, Mitford Steads 1, Molesden 2 ½). Cross another bridge, pass the church on your right and park just after this on your left in the lay-by (Grid reference NZ 168855).

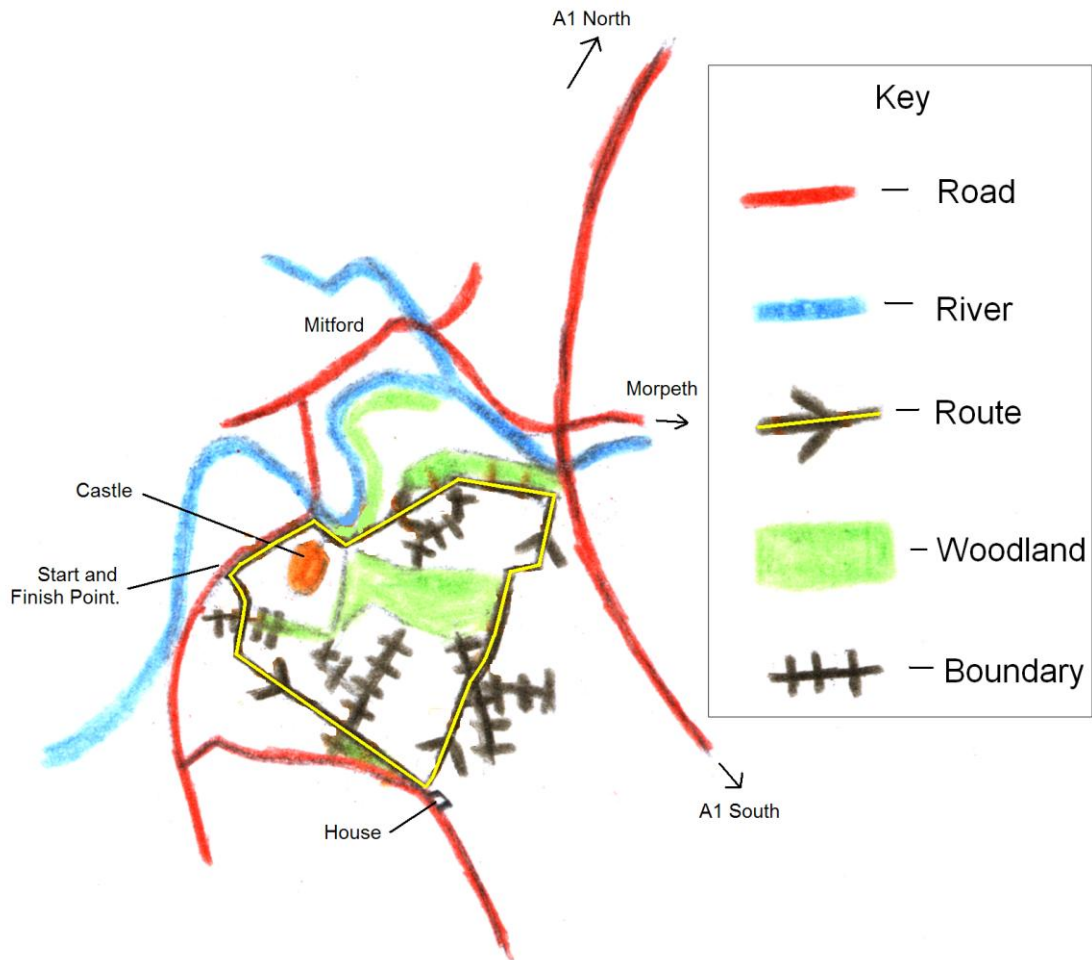
Summary

This delightful short walk discovers an idyllic, yet undiscovered part of Northumberland. This walk encircles the wonderful Mitford Castle, which boasts the only five-sided keep in England. This imposing castle stands high on a rocky ridge with the river Wansbeck skirting around one side.

The walk takes you through some lovely ancient farmland before following the river Wansbeck for a short while. You then pass and visit the picturesque St Mary's Magdalene Church before returning to your car.

This walk is very gentle and is suitable for all levels of fitness. It does cross through farmland, so please wear appropriate footwear.

Map



Route Details

At the bottom end of the lay-by you have parked in turn right (Public Footpath sign, Mitford Steads ½). Cross the stile and follow the prominent path through the field with Mitford Castle in front of you, just to your left.

Mitford Castle has the only five-sided keep in England. It was built on an ideal location on a rocky ridge. Much of the West wall and the shell of the keep still survive. The castle was built about 1118 by William Betram, the founder of Brinkburn Priory, and was occupied in 1175 by William the Lyon, and by King John in 1216. The Scots under Alexander III later destroyed it in 1318.

Just after the pillbox on your right bear right, cross over an old stone bridge and climb steeply up to the stile in a fence line.

Cross the stile into the field and walk in the direction of the yellow arrow aiming just to the left of the wood, situated at the far side of the field.

Cross the ladder stile over the wall, next to a gate and walk up the field sticking to the left-hand side of the wood.

Just before you reach the white house on your right you come across a stile also on your right. Do not go over it, but turn left through 90 degrees and walk directly across the middle of the grass field to a ladder stile on the far side of it.

Cross the ladder stile, bear left and cross the small footbridge. Continue walking in the same direction heading for the corner in the fence, with a newly planted wood on its far side. Upon reaching the corner continue straight on, passing the electricity pole (Public Footpath arrow on it) until you reach the bottom right hand corner of the field.

The road you can hear on your right is the busy A1, commonly known as the Great North Road. The Great North Road is the largest, longest object in the country and leads North from London to Edinburgh.

Do not cross the stile, but turn left through 90 degrees and follow the fence on your right with the woods on the far side of it.

Page | 4 Turn left here and follow the fence on your right, with a wooded section on its far side dropping down to the river Wansbeck.

The river Wansbeck joins up with the river Font just a little way downstream. It flows through the heart of Morpeth and more than 1,000 properties are at risk from flooding in Morpeth from the River Wansbeck. Although there has not been a major flood since the 7th March 1963, the risk still remains and is currently being acted on by the Environment Agency.

In the corner of the field cross the stile, follow the prominent path down to and cross the footbridge.

Continue on the path, running parallel to the river Wansbeck as you pass just up to the left of the road bridge called Foss Bridge.

Turn left along the road. Pass St Mary's Magdalene Church on your right.

Mitford Church is in the form of a cross and was built shortly after the Norman Conquest. It was severely damaged like the rest of the village by King John's troops in 1216. The church has had many famous vicars over the years including Cannon MacLeod, who was one of the MacLeods of MacLeod, chief of the whole clan and Lords of Skye. He was an excellent photographer who recorded every day life in Mitford on glass stained slides during the forty years he was vicar.

Continue up the road and return to your car.

Revised August 2004