



WALK 22
BROADSRUTHER
(MODERATE ROUTE)

Page | 1

Distance: 8 miles (12.9 km)

Maps: Explorer OL16

Walking time: 5 hours

Start and Finish point: Wooler Common car park (grid ref. – NT 977272). If you are going north up the A697 turn left into Wooler (Signposted, Town Centre). Continue on and take the second left (Signposted, Wooler Common) and follow the road for about 1 mile. The road becomes single track as you rise out of the town. Cross the cattle grid, continue on and park on the right in the car park with a large information board.

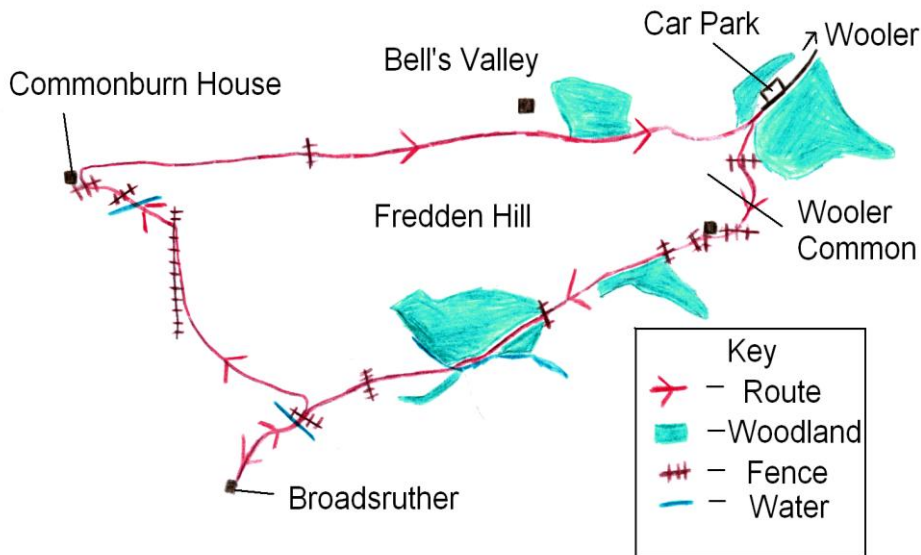
Summary

The “land of far horizons” is never more apparent than on this walk. Enjoy spectacular views of the Cheviot, Northumberland’s highest peak, the deserted farmhouse of Broadstruther, with its eerie silence, and low lying hills to the remote but lived in farm of Commonburn House. This fascinating quiet walk is a striking contrast to the more popular walks in Northumberland.

The route is good underfoot, but strong shoes and waterproof clothing are essential.

Map.

Page | 2



Route Details.

From the car park turn right along the road. Walk up the road for about twenty yards then just before you reach the road bridge turn left, up a footpath (Public Bridleway sign - Wooler Common $\frac{3}{4}$ and Broadstruther 3).

Follow the path, with the Humbleton Burn on your right. Ignore the cycle route going off to your left leading into the forest.

Continue on the path until you reach and pass over a stile, located to the left of a large gate (St Cuthbert's Way disc on gatepost). Stick to the prominent path with the wall on your right initially before the path bears away from it rising up through some gorse bushes.

Ignore the path going off to your right and continue to rise. After a little while you ignore another path, this time leading off from your left and heading towards the forest.

Page | 3

At the next marker post bear right on the prominent path, following the fence on your left.

The fence has been erected using ‘sheep netting’ and has been made a little higher by the use of a single strand of wire positioned between the ‘netting’ and the ground. This is a common practice on hill farms, as hill sheep are known for their athletic capability, especially jumping over fences.



At the next signpost bear left (Signpost - Alternative path, Broadstruther 3) and continue to follow the fence on your left, with a broken-down wall behind it. Pass through the metal gate and turn right along the track (Signpost - Alternative path, Broadstruther 3).

Continue on the track as you pass a bungalow and some outbuildings on your right before you reach a gate. Pass through the gate and continue along the track, passing a signpost on your right (Public Bridleway - Broadstruther 2 $\frac{3}{4}$) before you reach and pass over a stile, located to the left of a large gate.

Continue on the track as you rise up and pass through a large gate, located next to the plantation on your left before continuing on and crossing a stile, located next to a large gate.

The track very much opens up and you are treated to a spectacular view of the Cheviot ahead of you in the distance. On the high ground to your right you can still see the remains of some of the field systems created by the Bronze Age farming communities.

Page | 4

As the track bears around to the right you turn left off it, passing a marker post (Bridleway arrow on it) and follow the grassy path down to a small wooden gate. Pass through it and follow the path as it drops down steeply through the plantation down to the beautiful Carey Burn.



Bear right here (marker post) and follow the path with the forest on your right and the burn on your left and continue up to the footbridge. Cross the bridge and follow the path in front of you until you reach and pass through a small gate, which is situated just to the side of a 'slip hurdle'.

Slip hurdles are used when livestock occasionally need to pass through a fence. They are far cheaper than incorporating a gate into the fence, but are also far less convenient. Therefore if the slip hurdle needs to be opened only a couple of times a year it can prove a cost-effective option.

Continue along the grassy path, which is lined with heather on both sides.

Heather needs to be managed correctly. Thick 'woody' overgrown heather has no nutritional value for livestock and therefore needs to be

either burnt or mechanically chopped (with a tractor and mower), so that younger grass and heather can be allowed to grow. Burning is done in early spring so that it does not affect nesting birds.

Page | 5

Away to your left is the Broadstruthers Burn. You can see how in recent years this area has been fenced off and planted with trees. Unusually the top wire on this fence isn't barbed. This will have been done to cut costs, as it would have been thought that the fence would have very little stock 'pressure' along its length due to it being on hill ground.

At the next marker post continue straight on, following the fence on your left, ignoring the path going off to your right. We will be returning to this marker post after visiting Broadsruther Farm.

Cross the stile, situated to the side of a large wooden gate and drop down to a small footbridge taking you over the Broadstruthers Burn. Cross the bridge and follow the path as it bears around to the left before rising up to a large track.

Bear right along the track and follow it as it bends around and rises up to the remains of Broadstruther farm.

If you have a map you can see how all the footpaths and bridleways head for these old farm steadings. These rights of way have come out of the old routes used by the people in the area to visit each other, deliver post and get supplies to these isolated communities. I find these deserted buildings very sad, as they would have a thousand tales to tell. You can see the remains of the old garden, which now has just been incorporated into the surrounding ground.

After visiting Broadstruther farm retrace your steps back down the track and follow the track around as it bends to your right. Thirty yards after the track bends around turn left off it and follow the path

with the burn down to your right. Retrace your steps and cross the small footbridge, taking you back over the Broadstruthers Burn.

Rise up and pass over the stile. Continue to the marker post you visited earlier in the walk and turn left (Public Footpath arrow on marker post). Follow the prominent path as you rise up, passing a number of marker posts.

Away to your right the ground rises up to a rocky outcrop, which stands at 353 metres above sea level.

Continue to follow the prominent grassy path until you reach a marker post located just in front of a fence. Turn right and follow the path, which is running parallel to the fence on your left.

Just after the junction of the fences on your left, you turn left and cross a stile. Walk in the direction of the arrow on the stile along the grassy path as it drops down, crosses a small burn and continues on, heading in the direction of Commonburn House.

You reach and bear left along a prominent path and after a few yards bear down to your right to a footbridge over the Common burn. Cross the footbridge, turn left and follow the path, with the burn on your left. Cross another small burn and after a few yards turn right, passing through a large gate. Follow the prominent track as it rises up, following a fence on your right.

Pass over a stile, located to the left of a large gate and continue on the prominent path heading for Commonburn house.

As you reach the house pass through the large gate and turn right along the access road. Follow the road as it drops down and crosses the road bridge over the burn, before crossing a cattle grid.

Continue on the track, before crossing another cattle grid taking you through a wall, which would have been the boundary of the forestry ground. The wall has a number of wires above it held in place by large fence posts. When there is a mature forest against your ground it is essential to make that boundary stock proof. If you lose sheep in a mature forest it is quite often the last time you will ever see them. They will live happily, but you will never find them again.



As you continue along the track it makes you realise how remote Commonburn House is. They will have become very self-sufficient, with their own generator to supply electricity and their own water source. They will be used to and able to survive for lengths of time isolated after heavy snow falls.

The track rises up and as you start to drop down you can see the small habitation of Bell's Valley down to your left. You can see how in the past the ground around the farmhouse had been walled in and improved. The ground rising up behind the house is south facing therefore making it very productive, as it will get more sunlight. These fields would have been used to grow hay crops. As these small farms have become uneconomic you can see how this ground has just been incorporated into the surrounding pasture once again. The walled boundaries have fallen into disrepair.

Just after you pass the entrance to Bell's Valley you drop down on the track and cross a cattle grid. You have a plantation on your left before you pass through a gate taking you out of the plantation as you join the public road.

Continue along the single-track road, crossing a redundant cattle grid with a Bridleway signpost located next to it. Ignore the footpath to Humbleton going off to your left and continue along the public road, with the burn down to your right.

As you start to drop down, the hillside up to your left is completely covered in gorse. Gorse comes from the Anglo-Saxon word 'gorst' meaning wasteland. In early spring the vivid yellow flowers can often transform the landscape. Many insects are attracted by the sweet scent (like coconut) and birds such as yellowhammer and linnet raise their young in the safety of the dense, prickly stems.

Ignore the bridleway going off to your right as you continue along the road, passing a number of houses on your right as you drop down and return to your car.

Revised January 2006

