



WALK 26

THE VALLEY OF ROTHBURY (DIFFICULT ROUTE)

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Distance: 10 miles (15 km)

Maps: Explorer maps OL42 and 332

Walking time: 5 hours

Start and Finish point: Rothbury. Cowhaugh car park (Grid ref - NU 057015) situated next to the river Coquet. If you are entering Rothbury on the B6342 from the south (Cambo direction), turn left just before you cross the bridge as you approach Rothbury village centre. The car park is immediately on your right, next to the river.

Summary

This superb walk explores one of the prettiest areas in the Coquet Valley. First of all you rise up to the north of Rothbury, with great views of the old race course, before dropping down to the lovely village of Thropton, with its two pubs which make for an ideal lunch spot.

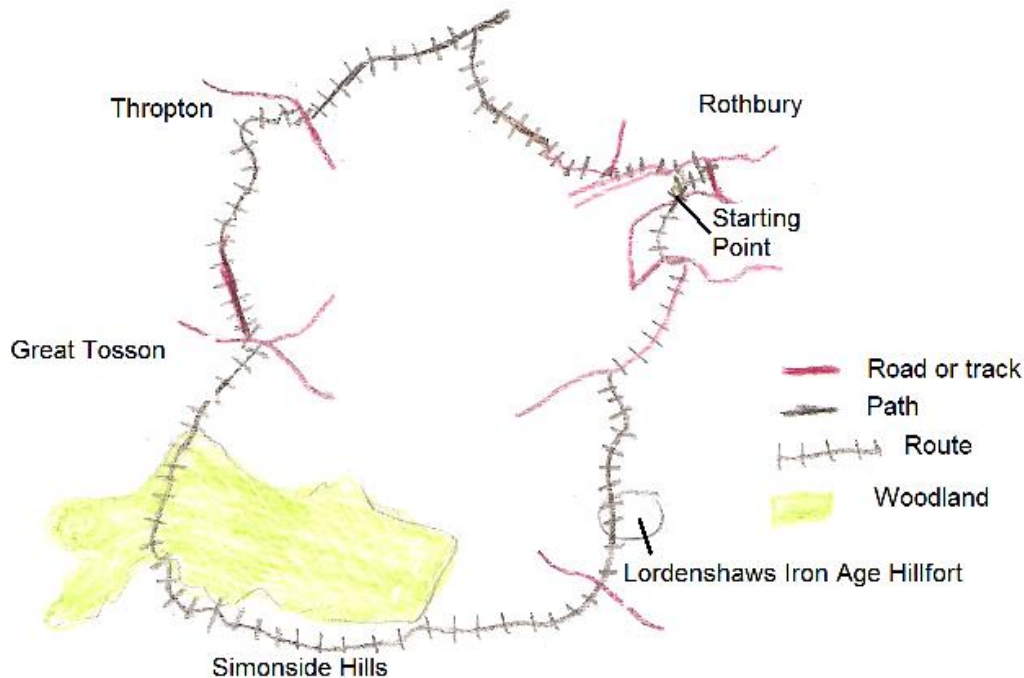
From there you cross the valley floor before you rise up and pass Tosson limekiln on your way up to the Simonside hills, from where you are treated to some superb views of the coast, Fontburn Reservoir and Rothbury.

On your return leg you pass an Iron Age hill fort and a folly built in the 18th century.

A great walk. Strong shoes are essential and don't forget your waterproofs.

Map.

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Route Details.

From the car park cross the footbridge over the river Coquet, turn right and follow the river on your right. Continue on until you reach the road bridge.

Don't go under it but turn left and pass up the side of the bridge onto the road. Turn left along Bridge Street and walk down the street.

At the T-junction turn left and walk up the main street with a row of shops up on your right.

King John gave Rothbury its charter as a market town when he visited it in 1205. For a couple of centuries the border reivers kept things lively in the valley with thousands of sheep, cattle and horses stolen

from both sides of the border. In the early 19th century Rothbury was a poor two street affair, with mostly stone cottages and houses, thatched with heather from the surrounding hills. It had lots of public houses, several small shops and of course a Parish Church. All the roads were earth surfaced.

You pass Orchard House at the top end of village on the right.

Take the next road on your right (just before Catholic Church); ignore the footpaths going off to the right as you climb up the steep road.

As you rise up you are treated to some great views of the golf course away to your left.

The golf course is located on the flat 'haugh' ground that in the past was the location of the old Rothbury race course. They used to put a temporary bridge across the river to get all the horses and spectators across.

At the top of the hill turn right along 'Hillside East' and then take the first left along 'Pennystone Lane'.

Follow the road as it bends around to the right and winds its way up and turns into a track before you reach and pass through a large wooden gate.

Continue along the track with a large wall initially on your left as you rise up before dropping down.

You pass a gate on your left (don't go through it) on which there is a sign to 'Gimmerknowe' .

This surely has to be the best named cottage in Northumberland. Gimmer is a two year old sheep and knowe is a small hill. This

therefore will be the paddock next to the shepherd's cottage that the 'first time lambers' would be put in for lambing time enabling the shepherd to keep a close eye on them.

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Continue along the track on which you were previously as it passes through a wooded section before rising up and passing a remote house on your left.

The track bends around to the right and you start to follow a wall on your left.

Stone walls are actually two separate walls held together with 'through stones' which tie the two walls together. The cavity formed is filled in with small stones and then capped off with 'coping stones' to make the whole wall weather tight.

Just as the track bears right away from the wall, turn left and pass through the large wooden gate and walk down the path with a wall on your left.

Simonside can be seen on the opposite side of valley. The distinctive flat top is very easily recognisable and as it stands away from the true 'Cheviots' it is very well known in the walking world.

Continue to follow the path as it winds its way down to a metal gate and pass through it.

Ignore any paths crossing the fence lined lane and eventually you reach and pass through a large wooden gate. As you continue on the track turns into a road and you eventually reach a T-junction.

Turn right along the road and be careful as you have about 100 yards before the footpath starts on the left.

You pass Cross Keys on your right and a little further in the village of Thropton is the Three Wheat Heads. Both these establishments have always had an emphasis on quality local cuisine, so make for a great lunch spot.

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Continue down the road and cross the river (footbridge to right of the road bridge). After crossing the river cross the road, walk down the side of the road bridge. Bear right at the river (public footpath sign – River Coquet ¼). Walk along with river on your left.



*Thropton Bridge
Dating from 1810*

After a short while the path bears right and you have still got a river on your left, but this time it is the river Coquet.

The river Coquet is 40 miles in length, from its source at Chew Green to Amble where it flows out into the sea.

When you reach the footbridge on the left cross it and keep walking in the same direction just bearing slightly left towards the electricity pole, passing it and continuing in the same direction to a small bridge with a marker post next to it. Walk in the direction of the public footpath arrow following the fence on your right until you reach and pass over a stile located to the right of a large wooden gate.

Cross the stile and continue along the track, passing through a large wooden gate as you continue up to a second large wooden gate taking you onto the road.

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Cross the road and walk up the road opposite (road sign – Lordenshaws, Great Tosson).

On your right as you walk up the road you will find Tosson limekiln. There is a very good information board here and a little further up the road you will find a picnic area at the car park for the limekiln.

Over time the ground becomes acidic and therefore farmers put lime on the ground to try to bring the soil back to a more neutral pH. In modern times crushed limestone is spread on the ground but in the past limekilns were used to produce lime to put onto the ground.

Just as you enter the hamlet of Great Tosson turn right and double back on yourself (public footpath sign – Tosson Burgh Fort, Simonside). As you continue along you will have a wall on your right and the farm buildings on your left.

Just after you pass two small cottages on your right, cross the stile on your left, located next to a large metal gate (public footpath sign – Tosson Burgh Hill Fort, Simonside).

Walk up the steep path and you reach and pass through a kissing gate. Continue up the prominent path as you rise steeply to the corner of the wood. Ignore the arrow going off to the right (Tosson Burgh Hill Fort), but continue straight on, with the woods on your left.

You reach and pass over a stile located to the right of a large wooden gate and continue along the path with the woods on your left.

As you pass through this section of the walk you should see some Blackface sheep in the surrounding fields. In Northumberland we have two types of Blackface sheep, the Northumbrian type (commonly called a Hexham type) and the Scottish type, which is a far smaller sheep.

You reach and pass over a ladder stile and after a short while you reach and pass through a small gate taking you into the woodland.

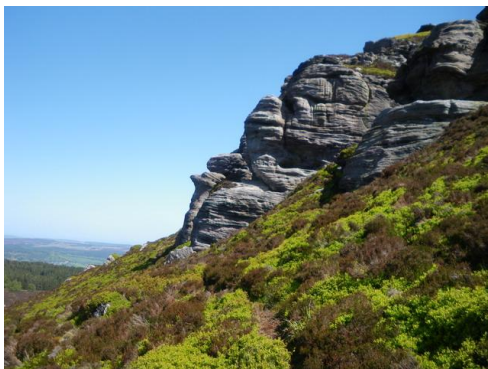
Bear right along the track and after about 30 yards turn left (public footpath marker post). Follow the footpath as you pass up between the trees.

At the crossroads in the path continue straight on, passing the marker post for the red and orange walking trails.

At the next marker post bear left, continuing up the red and orange walking trail.

When you reach the track turn left along it.

The sandstone crags, situated below the summit of Simonside on your right, are very famous. They were mentioned in “The Climbers Journal” dated 1902. As such they were the first crags, in Northumberland, to be recognised by climbers and there are more than one hundred different routes up the rock face.



Simonside Crags

At the fork in the track bear right and continue on as you gradually climb. When you reach the second marker post on your right, turn right and pass through felled trees before climbing up through heather clad hill ground.

When you reach the T-junction in the path turn left and drop down and cross the ladder stile and continue along the prominent path along the ridge.

Away to your right you can see Fontburn Reservoir. Fontburn Reservoir was built in 1910, to supply water to 300,000 people in Morpeth, Ashington and Whitley Bay. It holds 730 million gallons, covers 84 acres and supplies five and a half million gallons of water each day.

In front of you the Northumbrian coastline can be easily recognised and Rothbury can be seen away to your left.

As you drop down bear left down to the car park and pass directly across it.

Continue on the main path and away to your right you have Lordenshaws Iron Age Hillfort.

The defended settlement at Lordenshaws was built at least two and half thousand years ago, during the Iron Age, although it is possible that the remains may be earlier. The settlement is enclosed by three sets of banks and ditches. The remains of seven round houses can still be seen inside the settlement today.

At the crossroads in the path continue straight on (St Oswald's Way marker disc) and follow the path as it drops down, passing through a broken down wall before you pass down to and over a stile.

Follow the white marker posts and at the T-junction bear left. Up to your left you will see some small holiday chalets.

Just before the farmhouse turn left through a gate and pass to the left of the house to and through another gate.

Bear left along the farm track, continuing in the same direction you were previously walking.

At the bend in the track follow it around to the right and join the track coming in from your left.

After a short while you pass Sharp's Folly on your left.

Sharp's Folly was erected by the Rev. Dr Thomas Sharp. He was the rector of Rothbury 1720–1758 and it was built for the Archdeacon, who was interested in astrology. It is the oldest Folly in the county and a listed building.

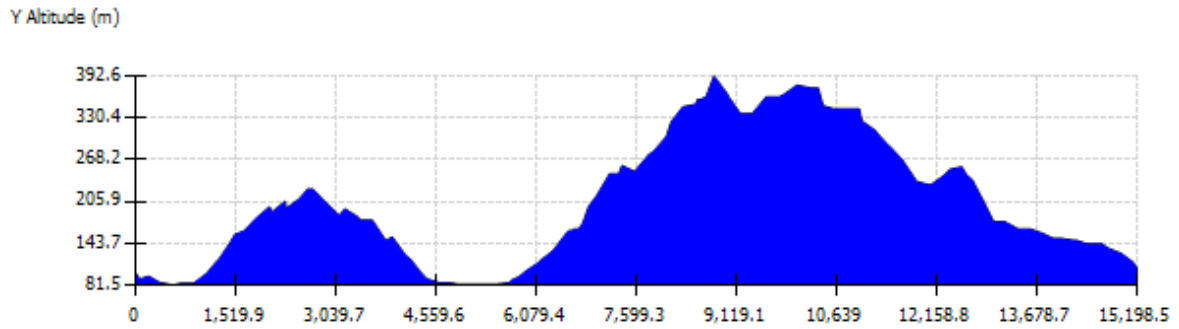
At the fork in the track bear left then left down the road.

Just before you reach the road junction turn right and pass through a kissing gate (public footpath sign – Rothbury ½). Pass through the field on the prominent path and you reach and pass through a kissing gate in the bottom corner of the field.

At the fork in the road bear left and drop down steeply. At the bottom turn left and the car park is on your right.

Route Profile

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shepherds
walks

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- The complete walking experience.