



WALK 8 **UNDISCOVERED COQUETDALE** **(DIFFICULT ROUTE)**

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Distance: 14 miles (22.5 km)

Maps: Explorer OL16

Walking time: 6 hours

Start and Finish point: Alwinton car park, Coquetdale valley (Nt920063). Take the B6341 out of Rothbury and bear right at Flotterton. Continue along this road passing through Harbottle before reaching Alwinton.

Summary

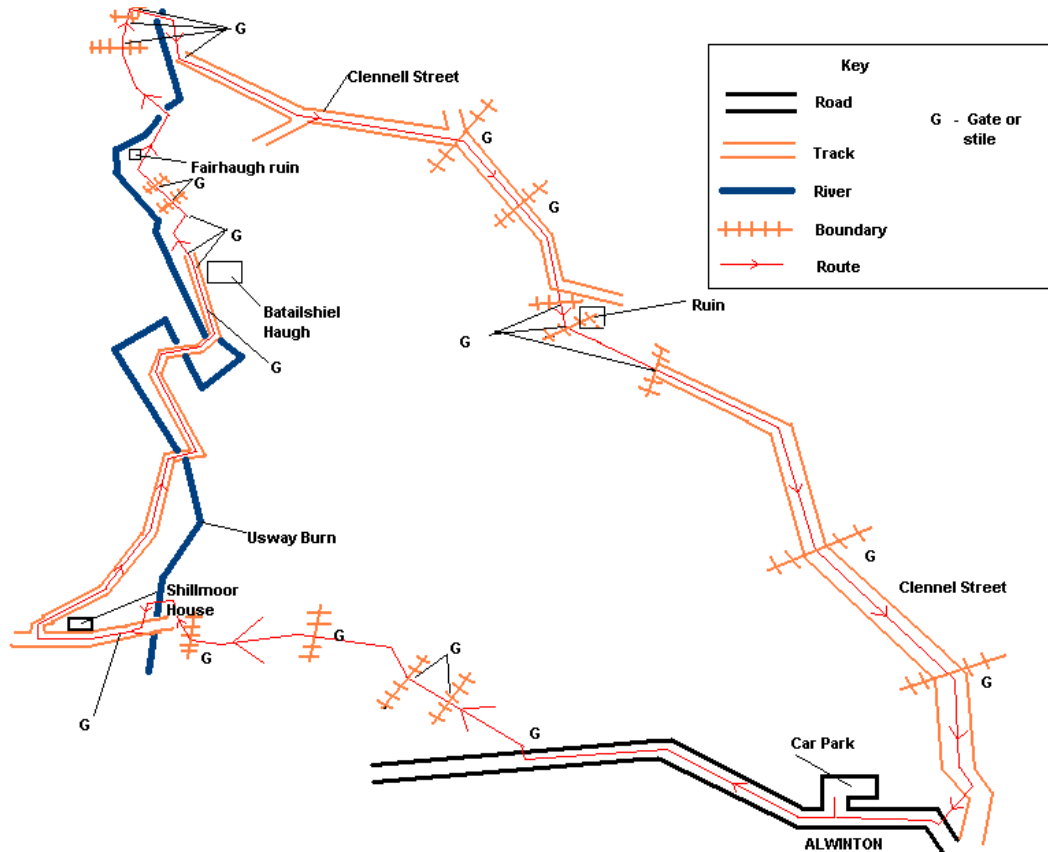
This is a spectacular walk that explores some of the little known gems around the Coquetdale valley.

It starts off with a steep climb that rewards you with a fantastic view of the valley, with the river Coquet winding its way along the valley floor. Then you drop down from this viewpoint and follow the Usway burn as it winds its way through a gorgeous deserted, and yet undiscovered, valley as you slowly gain height.

You are then truly in the heart of The Cheviots and the sense of isolation is quite unique. As you return via a higher route there are some lovely views away to the west. The track itself, Clennell Street, is an old drover's road, used in the past to drive livestock from the Scottish hills to the English markets.

Map

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Route Details

Go out of the car park on to the road and turn right and walk along the road.

Continue along the road for nearly one mile with the hill ground rising up on your right and fields down to your left. You reach and pass through a small gate up to your right (public footpath sign - Shillmoor 1 $\frac{3}{4}$)

Go up the prominent path which initially runs parallel to the road.



After a little while you reach and pass over a stile, which is located to the right of a small wooden gate.

Continue to follow the prominent path, with the ground rising up to your right. The path rises up and runs parallel to a fence, which is on your right. After a short while you reach and pass over

a stile which is located to the left of a small wooden gate.

Shortly after crossing the stile you lose the fence on your right, but continue following the path in front of you as it drops down then continues to rise up again. Ignore the track going down to your left and shortly after this also ignore the track that goes off to your right. You continue on following the main way-marked track which is heading just to the left of the higher ground.

At the high point (just under 1000 feet) you are treated to some lovely views up the Coquet Valley, with the river winding its way along the valley floor.

Continue on as you drop down and follow the



winding path before reaching and passing through a broken down fence before you reach and cross the burn. Continue on, walking in the same direction you did previously, as you follow the bridleway.

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You pass across two farm tracks as you continue to follow the bridleway, with the River Coquet and a circular sheep stoll down to your left and the ground rising up to your right.

After a little while you reach and run parallel to a fence on your left hand side for a short while before you drop down and cross a small burn, before rising up steeply to a stile and crossing it. This is located to the right of a small wooden gate.

Continue on the prominent path, with a stone wall on your left. To the far side of the wall on your left you can see how an area of ground has been fenced off to create a field. In the past this land would have been fertilised and the pasture improved to make it more productive.

These fields can therefore hold far more stock than the rougher hill ground. This will be invaluable at such times as lambing where it will make it far easier to have a number of your sheep (usually those carrying twins) a little more accessible than having them on the hill ground, so that the shepherd can keep a watchful eye on them.

You reach and bear left along a track and continue along it, ignoring the footpath going off to your right. As you follow the track you have the wall on your left.

You bear right off the track, pass over the stile and cross the footbridge, which takes you over the Usway Burn.

Bear left back down to the track for a very short while and turn right along the main track again and continue on with the farm buildings on your right. You reach and pass through a large gate.

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Turn up the first track up to your right after the main farmhouse (Shillmoor), this is before you reach the houses leading down towards the main road bridge.

Follow the track as it rises up behind the farmhouse and you reach and pass over a cattle grid.

Continue up the valley, staying to the main track with the burn down to your right and ignore the track going up to your left.



On the far side of the burn you can see a sheep stell with a fenced enclosure to the right of it. Inside the stell you can see a small hut with a tin roof on. This will be used by the shepherd at lambing time.

If he has to assist or finds a ewe which has had a difficult lambing, or the lamb is not thriving they will be brought down to the stiel and may end up in the small roofed pen. This will protect the lamb from the worst of the weather and also make it possible for the shepherd to assist, which could be a number of tasks including assisting the lamb to suckle the milk from its mother.

As you continue up the track you pass another sheep stiel just before you go over a cattle grid. You reach and pass over a bridge and continue up the track with the burn now on your left.

As you continue up the valley you reach and pass over another bridge, so now you have the burn on your right again. The valley sides get ever steeper the further you pass up.

You are bound to see some bird life during this lovely section of the walk. Herons are in abundance.

As you continue on you reach and pass over a cattle grid then you pass through the gate in front of you taking you into a small enclosure around the bungalow. Ignore the kissing gate to your right, before the walled enclosure.

You will eventually pass through a gate and then as you continue on you pass a bungalow on your left hand side (Batailshiel Haugh). After crossing a small stream you pass through two gates as you skirt to the left of the farm buildings.

After passing the last farm building on your right pass through a small gate also on your right (public bridleway arrow) and rise through the small paddock up to a stile and cross it. After crossing the stile turn left and walk along the path with a fence on your left.

At the fork in the path bear left and continue along the bridleway and then you reach and cross over a stile located to the side of a small wooden gate. Continue along the prominent path with a fence to your left hand side.

You reach and pass over a stile to the right of a small wooden gate with a wall initially on your left.

You pass some sheep handling pens on your left that have fallen into disrepair. This is due to farms growing larger and fewer shepherds being needed to shepherd an area of ground due to the advent of quad bikes. In the past a shepherd would live and shepherd these remote areas and therefore would gather his sheep into and work in these remote pens. Now these sheep will be taken a little bit further away to a more centrally located set of handling pens which will be used to work on sheep from a far larger distance away.

Pass over a stile taking you into the edge of the forest. This is located to the side of a wonderful old sheep stell, with grass growing out of the top of it. As you enter the corner of the forest turn left, and walk up the edge of the forest, with the burn on your left and the forest on your right.

You pass a marker post and bear left down a track until you reach Fairhaugh', which has recently been renovated.

Turn right just before Fairhaugh House and follow the path that runs behind it and continue along the path to a footbridge.

Cross the bridge and climb steeply up to the main track in front of you and turn right along it and continue on as it steeply rises up through the trees. At the T-junction at the top turn right and you drop down and pass over a ladder stile.

In front of you is 'The Middle'. You walk directly over the middle of it sticking to the path as you descend down the other side to a stile.

Page | 8 Cross over the stile, continue on and pass the shed on your right.

Follow the fence on your right and after the shed, which is also on your right cross over the stile (on your right) and go down the steep hill to the stile, located to the right of a small wooden gate.

Bear right and cross the footbridge taking you over the burn and follow the prominent path as you gradually rise up the side of the hill. As you rise up on your right you have 'The Middle', which you climbed a little earlier in the walk.

You have now joined Clennell Street. You will follow this all the way back to Alwinton. This old road runs from Alwinton in Northumberland to Cocklawfoot, in the valley of the Bowmont Water, which is on the Scottish side of the border. This ancient route has been traced back to prehistoric times but was used more recently by smugglers.

You reach and cross over a stile taking you into the forest.

Stick to the forest track and when you reach the main forest track bear left along it (i.e. keep straight on).

After a while you pass through a gateway, without a gate on it, and you lose the forest on your right. Continue on as the track rises up and bear right along another track and immediately cross the ladder stile which is located next to a large gate.

As you continue along the track you have the forest on your left and hill ground on your right.

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You pass through a gate, again without a gate on it, as you pass back into what would have been a mature forest before it was felled. After a while the track starts to drop down and you reach a sharp left corner in the track. Leave the main

track here and carry straight on at this point down the bridleway (marker post showing route).

You go down to a large wooden gate and go through it.

Continue along the track with a wall on your left until you reach and pass over a stile, located to the right of a large gate near the hut and ruined building (Wholehope).

Continue on, passing a bridleway marker post and continue following the prominent grassy track as you drop down to and cross a stile located beside a large gate.

As you continue on pass through a gate and bear right at the fork (i.e. do not follow path leading down to the corner of the wood)

You then pass over a stile located to the right of a large gate and a little further on a ladder stile located to the left of a large metal gate as

you descend to Alwinton via Clennell Street, down a steep and stony track.

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As you come down into Alwinton cross over the footbridge to your right and continue past the Rose and Thistle public house on your left to the car park.

Sir Walter Scott is said to have stayed in the pub while collecting information for his novel 'Rob Roy'. Other stories say that the outlaw himself haunts the 300-year-old pub and that the hollow behind the fireplace was one of his hiding places.

