

Walk the Way in a Day

Walk | The Border Ridge from Kirk Yetholm

An exhilarating roller-coaster ride along the border ridge, combining alternative high- and low-level Pennine Way routes and offering exceptional views over shapely hills separated by deep valleys.

Length:	8½ miles (13¾ kilometres)
Ascent:	1,969 feet (600 metres)
Highest Point:	1,690 feet (515 metres)
Map(s):	OS Explorer OL Map 16 ('The Cheviot Hills') (East Sheet)
Starting Point:	Kirk Yetholm village centre, Scottish Borders (NT 827 282)
Facilities:	Inn. Public toilets at Town Yetholm.
Website:	http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/pennine-way/route/walk-way-day-walk-1-border-ridge-kirk-yetholm

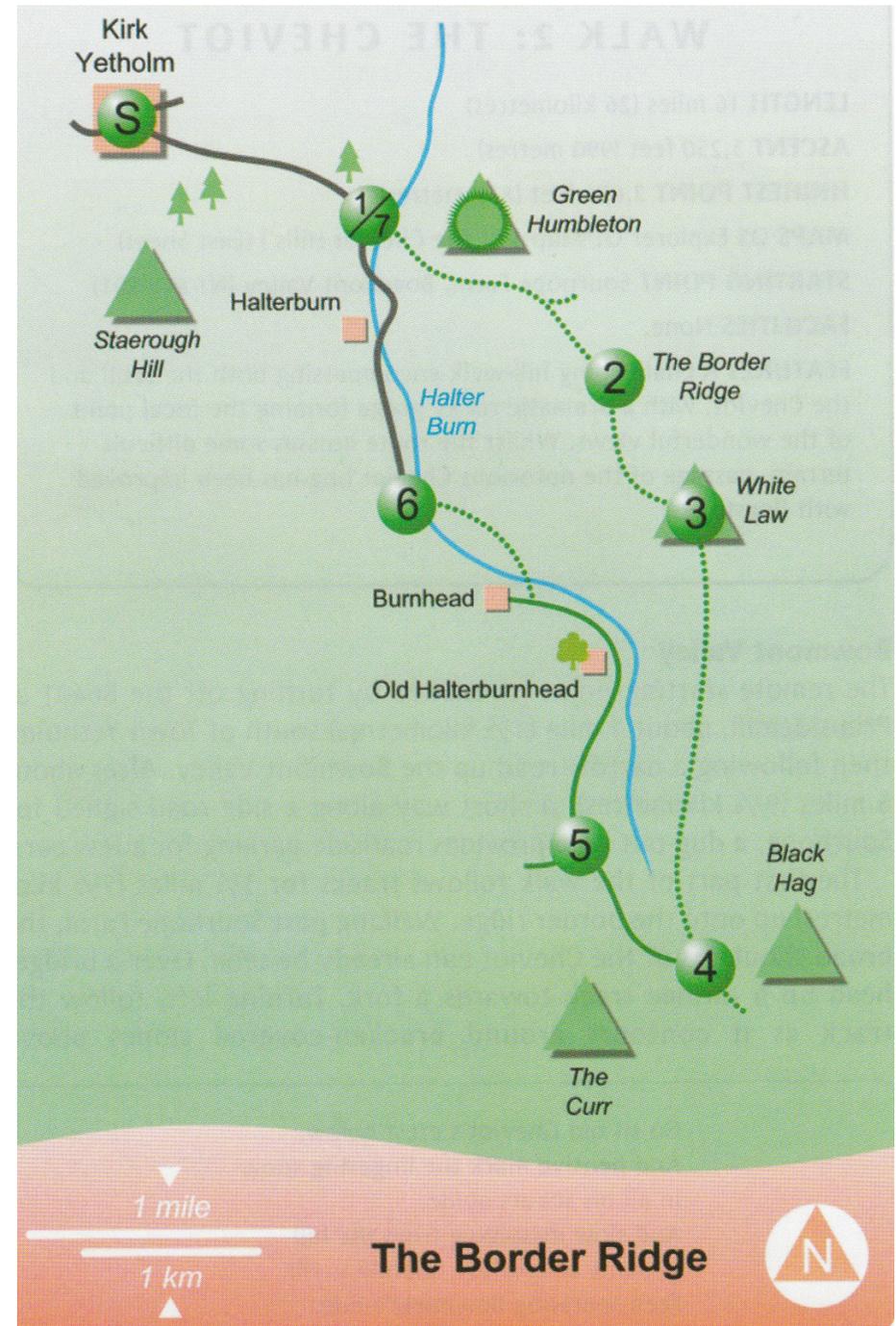
Pennine Way



Kirk Yetholm

Kirk Yetholm and its younger sister, Town Yetholm, are located on either side of Bowmont Water, about 6 miles (10 kilometres) south-east of Kelso. The narrow, winding roads hereabouts are prone to icing, so care is required during winter. There is a lay-by beside the village green, close to the Border Hotel. The latter is famous as the finishing point of the Pennine Way, and serves as a stop-over on the St. Cuthbert's Way.

The first part of the walk crosses to the valley of Halter Burn before heading up onto the border ridge - a total of 2 miles (3¼ kilometres). Close to the village green, a finger sign shows the Pennine Way heading up a road signed for Halterburn, passing a row of whitewashed cottages that includes the famous Gypsy Palace. The road climbs between lichen-covered walls until, cresting the rise, the view ahead suddenly opens out



to reveal a stunning panorama. Heading down into the valley, just over a cattle grid, a finger sign shows the Pennine Way turning left, off the road (1 = NT 839 277).

Little Egypt

Kirk Yetholm gained the title 'Little Egypt' when the ruling Faa family of Scottish gypsies held court here. As early as 1540, King James V of Scotland signed a treaty with John Faa, the 'lord and earl' of Little Egypt. A cottage known as the Gypsy Palace was the home of the last queen of the Scottish gypsies, Esther Faa Blythe, who died in 1883. Today the gypsies are gone, although a few words from their language are still used by local people.

Halter Burn can usually be forded without difficulty, and there is a footbridge nearby. From here a path is followed south-east, climbing steeply towards the border ridge. Marker posts confirm the route, which initially contours around the bracken-covered slopes of Green Humbleton. This is crowned with an Iron Age hill-fort, the grassy ramparts of which can be seen as height is gained. Parting company with the St. Cuthbert's Way, the border ridge is soon reached (2 = NT 853 269).

The Border Ridge

The next part of the walk follows the Pennine Way as it runs along the crest of the ridge for 2¼ miles (3¾ kilometres). A finger sign shows the path turning south, following a drystone wall. Climbing steeply towards a raised col (Whitelaw Nick), the route turns south-east, following a fence towards the top of White Law (3 = NT 857 261). Although at a modest 1,394 feet (425 metres), the top offers fine views. The prominent hill to the south is the Curr, below which the remains of old settlements can be discerned. Heading steeply downhill to a saddle, a broad track heads south-south-west, gently climbing a long ridge (Steer Rig) between deep valleys. Returning to a south-east heading, the walk tops-out on a short section of made path, with impressive views towards the Cheviot. Over a ladder stile, the Pennine Way diverges from the fence, contouring around the side of Black Hag until arriving at a finger sign marking the point where the

alternative high- and low-level routes meet (4 = NT 858 236). From here the Pennine Way continues along the border ridge towards the Schil (the conical hill in the foreground), although we follow the low-level route back to Kirk Yetholm. On the grassy slopes above is a prominent outcrop known as Corbie Craig ('crow rock'), which is worth visiting before starting the return route. This involves a stiff ascent, although it provides a fine perch upon which to have lunch while admiring the wonderful views.

Halter Burn

Heading west-south-west towards a saddle, a 'there-and-back' visit to the summit of the Curr (1,850 feet / 564 metres) might be in order. This involves a significant amount of ascent, but is once again rewarded with fine views. Otherwise, stay on the track as it passes through a gate and starts downhill. The track is cut into the steep, bracken-covered slopes above Curr Burn, heading north-north-west. Arriving at a finger sign beside a gap in a broken wall, switch to a track following the valley of Halter Burn (5 = NT 852 243).

Marker posts confirm the route, which heads north on a track that is generally easy to follow. Arriving at a ruin (Old Halterburnhead), this is flanked by aged sycamore trees and enjoys a beautiful setting in the upper reaches of the remote valley. From here the track swings around to head west-north-west. A finger sign shows the Pennine Way leaving the track and heading down to cross the burn by a footbridge (the route having been diverted to avoid Burnhead farm). Soon a ladder stile leads to a farm access (6 = NT 842 260). This becomes a tarmac road, which is followed all the way back to Kirk Yetholm. Peniel Revival Centre (a Christian-run retreat, marked on the map as Halterburn) is passed along the way, and bridges provide an opportunity to watch fish darting about in the burn. The road is often frequented by Highland cattle, which stubbornly block the progress of pedestrians and vehicles alike. Passing the point where the road was earlier left (7 = NT 839 277), retrace your steps back to the village.

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