

# Walk the Way in a Day

Walk  
**9**

## Wark Common from Bellingham

An enjoyable walk through the heart of Border Reiver country, passing farm buildings that incorporate the remains of fortified structures. As well as enclosed pasture and rough grazing, the varied route encompasses pleasant denes, forest trails and quiet roads.



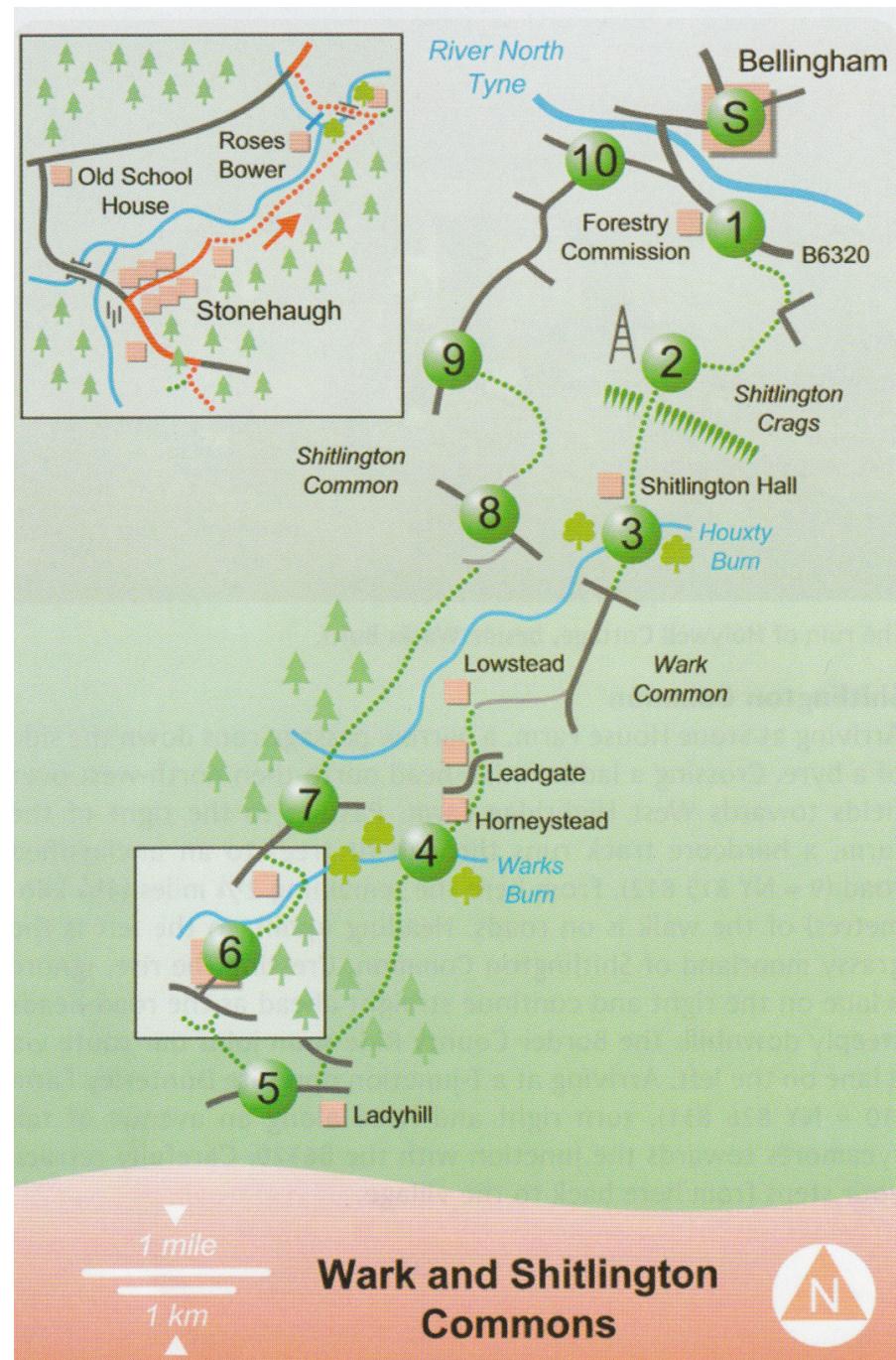
Length:	16 miles (25¾ kilometres)
Ascent:	1,657 feet (505 metres)
Highest Point:	804 feet (245 metres)
Map(s):	OS Explorer OL Maps 42 ('Kielder Water, Bellingham & Simonside Hills') (East Sheet) and 43 ('Hadrian's Wall, Haltwhistle & Hexham') (East & West Sheets)
Starting Point:	Bellingham village centre, North Tynedale (NY 838 833)
Facilities:	Full range of services.
Website:	<a href="http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/pennine-way/route/walk-way-day-walk-9-wark-common-bellingham">http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/pennine-way/route/walk-way-day-walk-9-wark-common-bellingham</a>

### Ealingham Rigg

From the Boer War memorial, follow the pavement past the village hall towards the west end of the village. Across the road from St. Oswald's RC Church a sign marks the site of the Irishmen's Grave, where around 100 navvies who died of cholera during the construction of Catcleugh Reservoir are buried. Crossing the river by a stone bridge, it is necessary to walk on the main road. Ignoring a turning on the right, continue along the B6320, passing a cemetery and the Forestry Commission offices (1 = NY 837 824).

### The Bellingham Gingall

Bellingham village hall is the site of a Chinese gingall. This small



*artillery piece was brought back from the Boxer Uprising of 1900 by Commander (later Admiral Sir) Edward Charlton of HMS Orlando. A plaque records that it was captured at North West Fort Taku on 17th June 1900.*

Here a finger sign marks the start of a permissive path, which thankfully reduces the time spent on the main road. Reaching the top of a wooded slope, turn east, heading towards the point where the Pennine Way used to leave the road. Following a quad track south, then a short section of walled lane, a ladder stile marks the start of a faint path heading south-west over rough grazing. Arriving at a drystone wall, a finger sign marks a right turn, onto a track running towards the Ealingham Rigg transmitter (2 = NY 832 817). This is a bit of an eyesore, being located on the crest of the ridge, but doubtless provides an important service to local people.

Another finger sign shows the route turning over a ladder stile, heading down through the sandstone outcrops of Shitlington Crags. Continuing along the edge of a couple of fields, pass through the farmyard at Shitlington Hall and join a track heading south-west (here it is necessary to switch maps, taking up Sheet 43). A marker post indicates a left turn, crossing a small stream and following a path along the tree-lined banks of Houty Burn. This in turn is soon crossed by a footbridge (3 = NY 829 798).

### **Wark Common**

Heading uphill on pasture, the route converges with a fence running south-west. Crossing straight over an unclassified road, continue up a pleasant lane along the edge of Wark Common. As the road heads towards a craggy hillock, a finger sign shows the Pennine Way turning onto an access road. Veering left at a fork, head towards Low Stead farm, which stands above the dene of Blacka Burn. A couple of gates lead around the farm, the thick walls betraying its origin as a bastle house. Exiting by a waymarked stile, head south towards Leadgate farm. Crossing straight over an unclassified road, a finger sign shows the Pennine Way heading across pasture towards Ash farm, where it passes beside a barn before continuing over fields. Another finger sign shows the route hooking around Horneystead farm,

which includes the remains of a peel tower dating from around 1600. Heading south-west, a marker post indicates a turn down into the dene of Warks Burn (4 = NY 813 771).

Crossing the gorge by a footbridge, head up through a narrow defile, with a marker post indicating a right turn. Arriving at a ladder stile, a finger sign shows the Pennine Way turning south, heading uphill beside a fence. Cresting the rise, ignore routes to right and left and continue straight ahead, crossing a ladder stile. Dropping down to a rushy area, a quad track is joined as it heads uphill beside a bracken-filled gully (note the attractive little waterfall). The track swings around to head south-west, converging with the edge of a forest. Passing through a gate, the route runs along a firebreak, crossing straight over a hardcore track and an unclassified road, before arriving at another road, close to Ladyhill farm. Here a finger sign shows the Pennine Way turning right, heading down the road (at this point it is necessary to re-fold the map). Off to the right is Willowbog farm, which is now a bonsai nursery. As the Pennine Way turns off the road, we begin our return route (5 = NY 798 752).

### **Stonehaugh**

A finger sign points through a gate on the north side of the road, with a bridleway route running north-west beside a drystone wall. Ignoring gates on the right, the faint path runs over the side of a hillock. The fenced area to the right was once a pleasant stand of norway spruce, but is now desolate. Before reaching an unclassified road, pass through a gate on the right and cross some rough ground beside a knot of fir trees to arrive at the road. Turning left, head towards Stonehaugh, where an access road runs between the terraces to arrive at a farmhouse beside a campsite (6 = NY 795 763).

### **Stonehaugh Forestry Village**

*Stonehaugh was built by the Forestry Commission during the 1950s to provide housing for its workers. The village comprises a couple of rows of terraced houses, just 35 homes in all, on the edge of Wark Forest. It is known affectionately as 'dodge city' - a reference to the*

*three totem poles that overlook Warksburn picnic place. Wark Forest takes its name from the village of Wark, and refers to an earthwork (Wark-on-Tyne being the site of a Norman motte and bailey).*

Here a finger sign shows a footpath to Low Roses Bower, heading east then north-east along a firebreak, with marker posts confirming the route (which is shared with a line of electricity poles). Soon it becomes necessary to again refold the map. The path runs above the dene of Warks Burn, at one point following a dark passage through the conifers as it hooks around a gully. At a fork the route turns steeply downhill towards a footbridge. This is close to the overgrown ruin of Holywell Cottage, which is named for a nearby sulphur spring. Heading uphill on a ramp-like track, the route tips-over onto the reverse side of the map for a short way. Close to the ruin of Low Roses Bower, perched above a waterfall, is a privy known as the ‘Long Drop’. Here a finger sign marks a right turn, heading over fields towards an unclassified road. Following the road north-west, as it bends sharply to the right, a finger sign marks the start of a bridleway, passing through a gate (7 = NY 801 775).

This is followed north-east over grazing land for 1¾ miles (3 kilometres), crossing Blacka Burn before continuing parallel to the edge of the forest. Arriving at a crossroads of routes, continue straight ahead, with the forest now receding on the left. Heading gently downhill through fields, a hardcore track is joined, leading to an unclassified road. A short way to the right is the location of a standing stone marked with a cross, although we turn left and head north-west up the road, switching maps once again (returning to Sheet 42). A finger sign soon marks a turn onto a hardcore track (8 = NY 817 800).

### ***Shitlington Common***

Arriving at Stone House farm, a narrow passage runs down the side of a byre. Crossing a ladder stile, head north then north-west over fields towards West Highridge farm. Passing to the right of the farm, a hardcore track runs through fir trees to an unclassified road (9 = NY 813 812). From here the remaining 2¾ miles (4½ kilometres) of the walk is on roads.

Heading uphill, to the left is the grassy moorland of Shitlington Common. Cresting the rise, ignore a lane on the right and continue straight ahead as the road heads steeply downhill. The Border County Ride soon joins our route via a lane on the left. Arriving at a ‘T’-junction opposite Dunterley farm (10 = NY 826 831), turn right and head along an avenue of tall sycamores towards the junction with the B6320. Carefully retrace your steps from here back to the village.