

#### For Jim and Sheilah

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# St. Cuthbert's Way Introduction

Saint Cuthbert is one of the most important figures in the history of Christianity in Britain. The exact date of his birth is lost, though it is known that he joined the monastery in Old Melrose in AD650 when aged about sixteen. Saint Cuthbert spent most of his life in the Borders region of Scotland and Northumberland, first at the monastery in Melrose and then later on the island of Lindisfarne. During his ministry he gained a reputation as the 'Fire in the North' for his passionate espousal of Christian values, and numerous acts of saintliness and kindness are attributed to him.

St. Cuthbert was reputed to have had a great affinity with the natural world. There are many stories of the way he befriended wild animals that would come to feed from his hand (today the eider duck is still known in Northumberland as Cuddy's Duck in his honour). After his death in 687, Cuthbert was buried on Lindisfarne. Two centuries later, during the Viking raids along the Northumbrian coast, his body was moved from the island for safe keeping. During this flight from Lindisfarne, the monks were said to have spent the night in what is now known as St. Cuthbert's Cave, several miles

inland. The Saint's body now lies in Durham Cathedral and the grave is regarded as a major Christian shrine.

In 1996 the St. Cuthbert's Way was officially opened, and though the route is not associated with any particular journey that Cuthbert made, it does pass through places that would have been very familiar to the saint. The walk starts at the site of Cuthbert's first ministry in Melrose and ends sixty-two miles later on the island of Lindisfarne, neatly tying up the two ends of St. Cuthbert's Christian life. Along the way, the route passes through charming border towns and villages, past many interesting historical sites and across much spectacular landscape.

I began this book in 2006 after seeing several route markers for the walk when out on photographic assignments in the northern Cheviot Hills. Intrigued, I began to research more about the St. Cuthbert's Way and realised that this would make an interesting and rewarding long-term project. I have now walked the entire route twice to create all the images in this book, and have had my initial thoughts confirmed: this has been a very

rewarding project to have worked on. Along the way I've met many interesting people, seen a wide variety of wild creatures, and also learnt a lot both personally and photographically. The two most important things I've learnt are one, don't leave home without a waterproof, and two, just how distressingly short is the time it takes a map to become useless pulp in heavy rain. This new-found knowledge will, I'm sure, prove invaluable on my next landscape project.

The sixty-seven photographs in this book are my personal interpretation of what can be seen along the route of the St. Cuthbert's Way and the surrounding countryside. The creation of these images involved being out at all times of the day and in all types of weather, over three different seasons. A walker following the route over the recommended four days could not expect to see all that I have seen\*, but I hope at least some of my images will evoke a warm feeling of recognition in this ostensible wayfarer, and enable him or her to say, 'yes, I remember that bit!'

There are many people I need to thank, all of whom had some part to play in the successful completion of this book. Firstly Tania, my wife, who was always there with soothing words when needed, and who diligently proofread the words. Secondly and thirdly my parents, Bill and Carol Taylor, who first encouraged me to take up photography, and

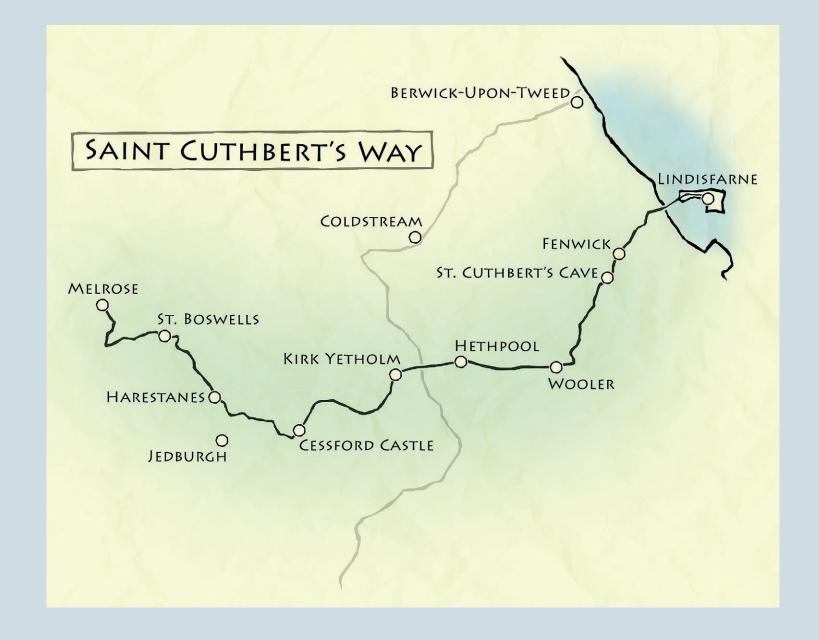
also to love being outdoors. Fourthly through to fifteenthly, Joe Cornish and the participants of the Inversnaid Isle of Arran workshop in April 2007. All who saw my early working prints during the workshop made suitably heartening noises that did much to bolster my enthusiasm for the project. Sixteenthly to, well actually this is when I begin to lose count, the members of the Hexham Photography Group. In particular Colin Dixon for all his help and advice and Gill Jones for being Gill Jones. Finally, a very big thank you to Jim and Sheilah Parr, to whom I've dedicated this book. Their unwavering friendship has been a great joy and comfort to me during my life's many adventures.

#### **David Taylor**

August 2007 david@davidtaylorphotography.co.uk

\*unless they were to have a seriously odd few days meteorologically speaking...







lelrose to Harestanes stance: 16 miles / 26 Kilometres

There is no getting away from the fact that the first uphill climb on the St. Cuthbert's Way begins immediately after leaving Melrose. The Eildon Hills dominate the southern views from the town and it is the Eildons that form the first obstacle on the journey east. Fortunately the route does not wind its way to be summit of the hills, but cuts through the gap tween the two main peaks. After the climb the

# Along the Tweed

reward is a splendid view back toward Melrose, and looking east, a glimpse of the Cheviot Hills on the horizon.

Follow the path downhill toward woodland. The path on this stretch of the walk is good and obviously well used. Once in the woodland there are several paths and it is important to follow the frequent waymarkers and not accidentally follow another route. After leaving the wood, the path climbs over a slight rise before dropping down toward the village of Bowden.

Cross over the main road through the village, following the route marker downhill toward Bowden Kirk. The Kirk is not on the official route, though the ten minute detour to the church is rewarding. During

daylight hours the door into the church is unlocked and visitors are welcome.

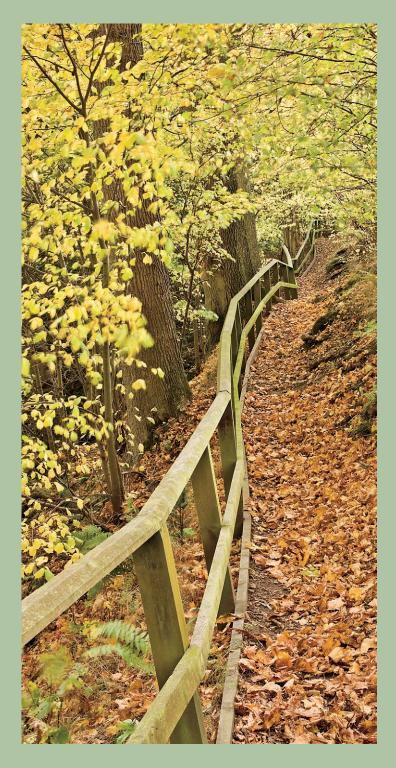
Once back onto the St. Cuthbert's Way, follow the path as it winds along the Bowden Burn. Cross over a wooden footbridge and continue on to a metalled road. Walk along this road past Whitelee Farm cottages and then into Newtown St. Boswells. Cross the B6938 following the river route signs.

The path now drops under the busy A68 and into a stretch of deciduous woodland. Follow the path as it loops along the banks of the River Tweed. An optional detour on this stage of the walk is to cross a suspension bridge over the Tweed to visit the remains of Dryburgh

Abbey, the resting place of Sir Walter Scott. Less than a mile from the bridge, the path starts to climb out of the Tweed Valley and into St. Boswells. Follow the route markers down the town's main street, toward the golf course. Follow the path around the edge of the course until it finally reaches the Tweed again.

The route now closely follows the curve of the river as it winds gradually southwards. Upon reaching Mertoun Bridge, cross over the road as indicated before dropping back down to the riverside. On the far side of the river a fine row of poplar trees is a particularly attractive feature. The path continues to follow the river before reaching Benrig, where it finally leaves





the Tweed behind for the surprisingly steep climb toward the village of Maxton. Leaving Maxton, the path continues southwest along a road until it reaches a junction onto the A68. Fortunately the St. Cuthbert's Way does not cross this busy road but runs parallel to it along the route of Dere Street.

Along this part of the walk there are several interesting architectural details to spot. Not far from the path, about a mile and a half from meeting the A68, is 'Lilliard's Stone' The stone is the alleged grave of a valiant maid from Maxton who followed her swain to the battle of Ancrum in 1544 and fel in combat. However, the most prominent architectural feature of this part of the walk is the Waterloo Monument. Although the St. Cuthbert's Way does not get close to this one hundred and fifty foot tower on top of Peniel Heugh, its sheer visibility makes it are extremely useful navigational aid.

The path now crosses into Divet Ha' Wood and the Monteviot estate. Follow the well-marked path past the grounds of Monteviot House to the popular Harestanes Countryside Visitor Centre and the end of the first leg of the St. Cuthbert's Way.

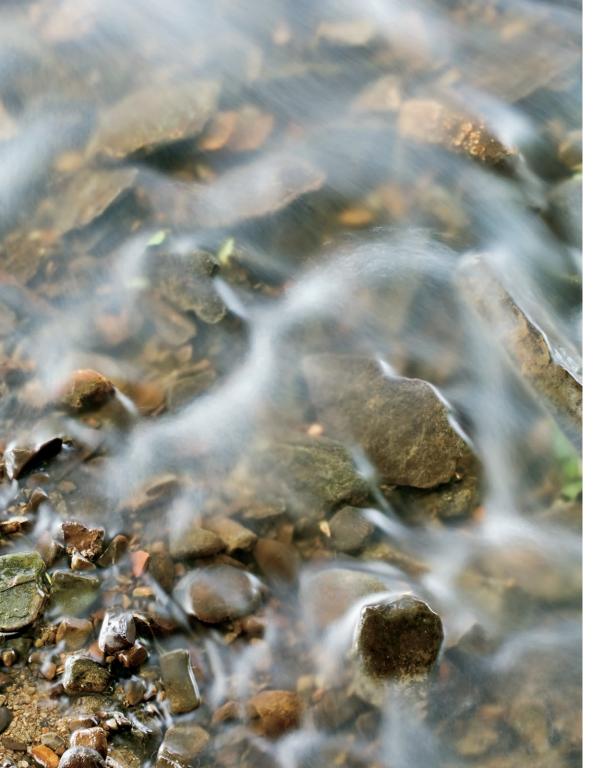
revious Pages: Mertoun Bridge 'his Page: Path to Maxton Opposite Page: Abbey Street / Melro



Scott's View
Eildon Hills • Scottish Borders

Stained-Glass Window
Bowden Kirk • Scottish Borders





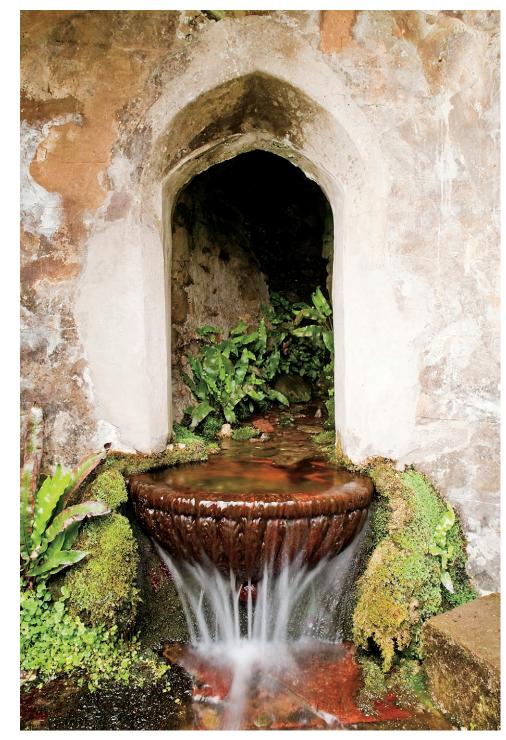
Bowden Burn

Bowden ♦ Scottish Borders

Poplar Trees (opposite)
St. Boswells ◆ Scottish Borders





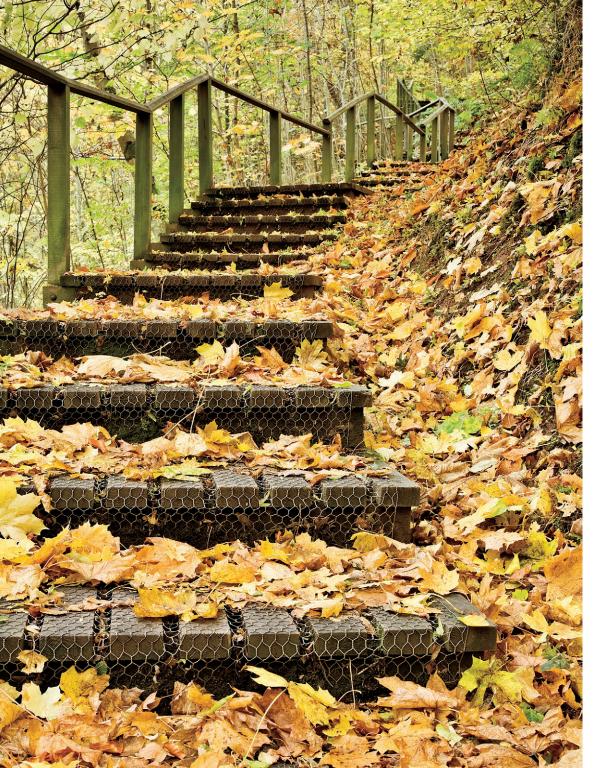


The Crystal Well

Maxton ◆ Scottish Borders

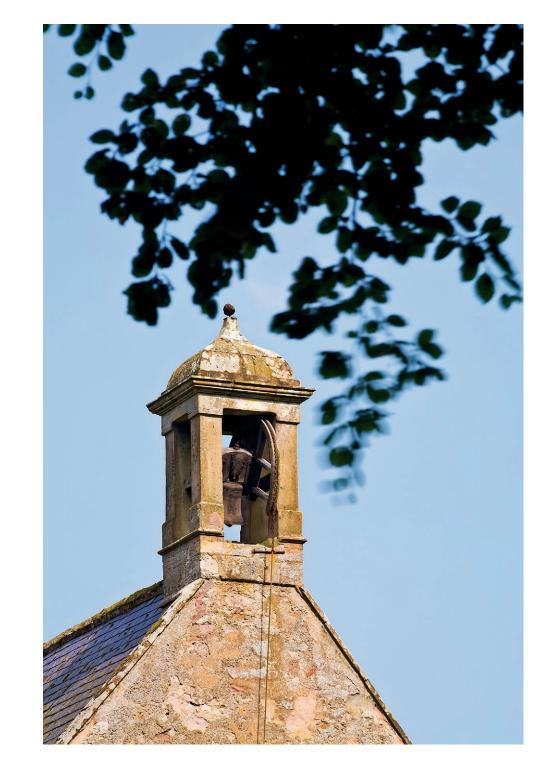
Autumn Colour
River Tweed ♦ Scottish Borders





Woodland Walkway
Maxton ♦ Scottish Borders

Maxton Church
Maxton ◆ Scottish Borders





Lady Lilliard's Stone
Ancrum • Scottish Borders

Baron's Folly (opposite)
Ancrum Scottish Borders





Spring in the Scottish Borders

Monteviot Estate Scottish Borders

Harestanes (opposite)
Monteviot Estate • Scottish Borders





Harestanes to Kirk Yetholm Distance: 16 miles / 26 Kilometres

Leave Harestanes Visitors' Centre and follow the signs marked 'Path Routes' through woodland, past the grounds of Monteviot House. The path snakes its way through rhododendron bushes that are a cheerful sight during the summer flowering season. Leaving the trees and bushes behind, follow the edge of an open field to woodland beyond. Turn right to follow the path as it runs parallel to the course

### Over the Border

of the River Teviot. Eventually the path breaks out of the trees onto a modern suspension footbridge over the Teviot.

Cross over the bridge and walk along the banks of the river, keeping the water to your left. At the confluence of the Teviot and Jed Water, turn right to walk through woodland to the A698. Cross over the road to follow a country lane down to another stretch of the old Roman road, Dere Street. Walk uphill along Dere Street to Chestercleugh Plantation. At the plantation turn left and follow the path through the wood.

Chestercleugh Plantation gradually peters out and when it finally does, the St. Cuthbert's Way climbs uphill along a

narrow country lane. Near the top of the hill leave the road and enter another stretch of woodland. Cross over a footbridge and onto open farmland. The path now steadily climbs toward Littledeanlees Farm. When crossing the field toward the farm look out for a herd of curious cows who regularly graze here.

There is now a steep climb from Littledeanlees to Blindwells Plantation along a narrow lane. Follow the path through the Plantation to the Crailing road. Turn right onto the road and follow the road down to Brownrigg Farm. At the farm, skirt around the edge of an arable field toward Tod's Dean, through more plantation, and on to Cessford Moor and the village of Cessford beyond.

Cessford is notable for a line of farm cottages and the impressive ruins of Cessford Castle. Although the castle is now unsafe to enter, there is still a grandeur to the structure that makes it a perfect point to stop and ponder. From the castle follow the road north-east until it reaches the B6401 and turn right onto this road for the village of Morebattle.

After leaving Morebattle, turn right to follow a country lane to a junction. At the junction turn right again and follow the road to a wooden footbridge over Kale Water. This is the start

Previous Pages: Wheat Field / Harestanes

This Page: Teviot Stones

Opposite Page: Bridgfe over the Tevio



of the most demanding part of the walk as the path climbs steeply toward the summits of Grubbit Law and Wideopen Hill. Once at the summit of Wideopen Hill, a sign gives the welcome information that not only is this the highest point of the walk, but also that this is the half-way point between Melrose and Lindisfarne.

Another notable feature of this stretch of the walk is the view across the Weary Valley to Hownam Law Hill. The hill is topped with the remains of an Iron-Age fort, a common feature of the hills in the Cheviots. After summiting Wideopen Hill the going is easier as the path gradually drops down toward Crookedshaw Hill. On reaching a narrow lane, turn right and begin the descent into the Bowmont Water Valley. When the lane reaches a metalled country road turn left onto the road and follow it to a clump of farm cottages. Here the St. Cuthbert's Way joins the B6401 to Town Yetholm. Although this is a B-Road, there is still a reasonable amount of traffic and so it is advisable to stick to the verge as much as possible.

Fortunately the time spent walking on the road-side is relatively brief. At a route-marker, turn right past the grounds of a cemetery. From here the walk follows a pleasant country path to a road bridge over the River Bowmont and then into Kirk Yetholm.

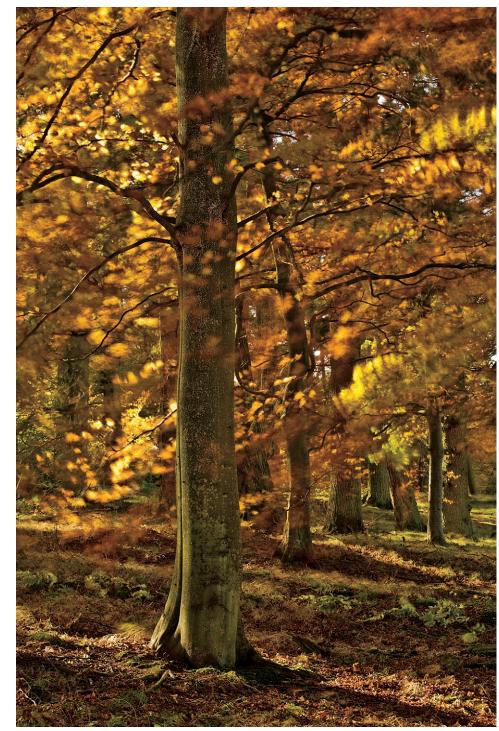




Reflections (opposite)
River Teviot • Scottish Borders

Suspension Bridge
River Teviot ◆ Scottish Borders





Wind-Blown Trees
Crailing Scottish Borders



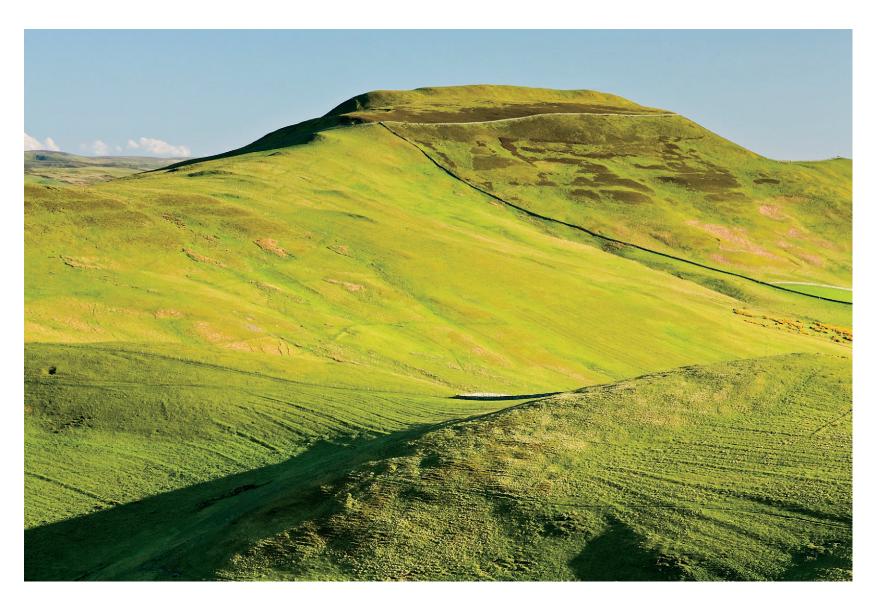
**Farmland**Crailing ◆ Scottish Borders



Lone Tree
Cessford ♦ Scottish Borders

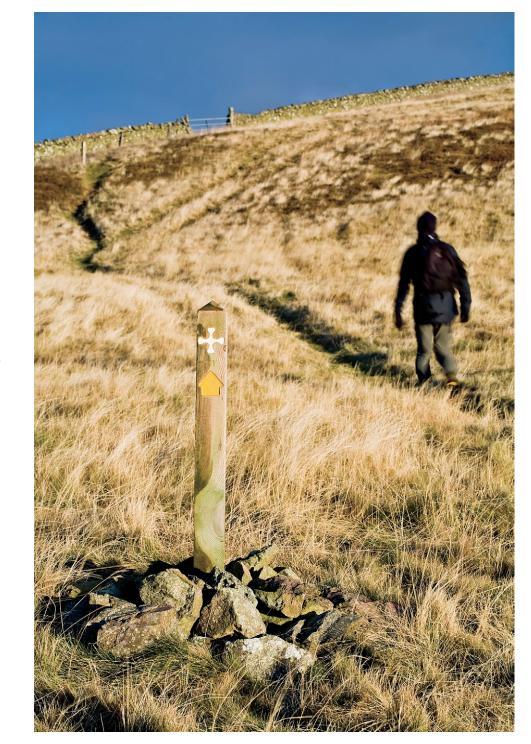
Cessford Castle (opposite)
Cessford Scottish Borders





Hownam Law
Morebattle • Scottish Borders

Walking the St. Cuthbert's Way
Morebattle Scottish Borders





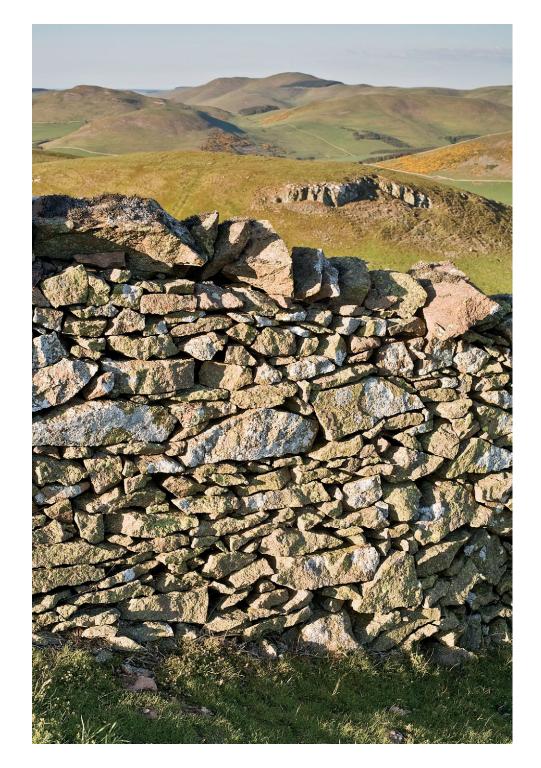


#### Stile

Morebattle ◆ Scottish Borders

#### Descent into Bowmont

Bowmont Valley • Scottish Borders





Farm Gate
Bowmont Valley ◆ Scottish Borders

Yetholm Gypsies
Kirk Yetholm ♦ Scottish Borders





Kirk Yetholm to Wooler
Distance: 13 miles / 21 Kilometres

At Kirk Yetholm, the St. Cuthbert's Way briefly joins the Pennine Way, which starts its long journey south from here. Follow the waymarkers from the village square southeast, first up and then down a steep road for approximately one mile. At a farm building, the path leaves the road and fords a stream before continuing up a grassy bank around the flanks of Green Humbleton. Just under a mile

## The Cheviots

later the border is reached, and at a farm gate the trail crosses from Scotland into England and the Northumberland National Park. Continue climbing from the border marker, noting Eccles Cairn on the top of a hill to the left, before the path starts to drop down into a valley. Walk downhill toward and then through a coniferous plantation, keeping watch for the trail waymarkers that can be easily lost in the undergrowth. Once through the wood the path crosses Scaldhill Shank before continuing its gentle descent toward Elsdonburn Farm, and onto the metalled road that leads eventually to the village of Hethpool.

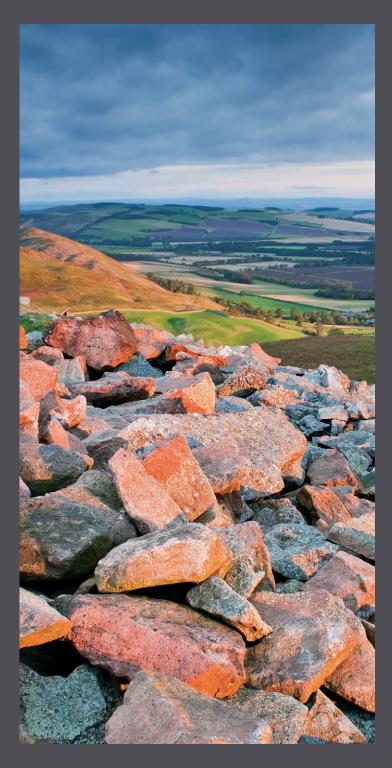
Hethpool lies at the head of the College Valley, one of the most northerly valleys in the Cheviots. The village itself is small, though notable for its fine row of stone cottages built in 1926 in the Arts and Crafts style. At the cottages the trail wends its way downhill before crossing the College Burn by footbridge before cutting through a conifer plantation. The well-marked path now disappears as the route crosses grassy moorland, skirting around the base of the impressively steep Wester Tor.

At this point of the walk a visit to Hethpool Linn is well worth the short detour from the trail. Linn is a local dialect word for waterfall. Though not one of Northumberland's largest or most dramatic waterfalls, Hethpool Linn is a charming spot to rest before continuing with the walk.

Back on the trail once more, the path briefly joins a road leading out of the Hethpool valley, past Torleehouse Farm cottages, before veering right and climbing steeply between the hills of Yeavering Bell and Easter Tor Yeavering Bell sports the finest example of an Iron-Age fort in Northumberland, and though a detour up the steep slopes of the hill is only recommended for those with the time and the energy to do so, the view from the top of the hill is ample reward for the effort.

The path now continues to head south-east across open moorland for approximately one and a quarter miles. The moor is bleak in winter, but rich and vibrant when cloaked in the reds and purples of late-summer





heather. Along this stretch of the walk, the enigmatically named rocks of Tom Tallon's crag can be seen poking up through the vegetation to the left. The moorland is fairly featureless and care must be taken to follow the path markers. Eventually the trail starts to weave roughly north-east, striking for Gains Law, and it is quite easy to miss this change in direction. Follow the path across Gains Law to Coldberry Hill. To the left from Coldberry Hill can be seen Humbleton, the site of another fine Iron-Age fort.

Having crossed the moors, the path quickly descends downhill through a conifer plantation and into a car park. Cross over the road at the far side of the car park following the signs for the walk onto the pastures of Wooler common beyond. After crossing the common, the trail plunges back into the conifer plantation for the short walk to the town of Wooler and the end of the third leg of the journey.

Previous Pages: Humbleton Hill From Coldberry Hill This Page: Humbleton Hill Opposite Page: Cheviot



Place to Rest
Kirk Yetholm ◆ Scottish Borders

Eccles Cairn (opposite)
The Cheviots • Northumberland

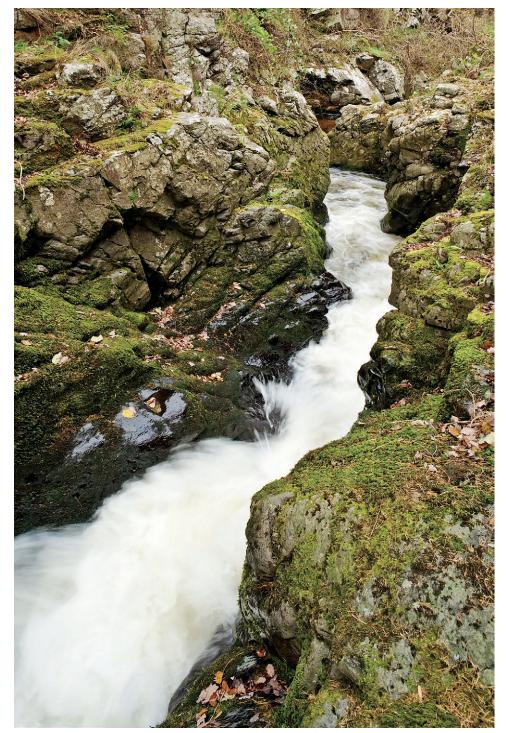




Staring Contest
The Cheviots • Northumberland

Tom's Knowe (opposite)
The Cheviots • Northumberland





**Hethpool Linn**Hethpool ♦ Northumberland



Arts and Crafts Cottages
Hethpool • Northumberland





Tom Tallon's Crag
The Cheviots • Northumberland

Bell Heather (opposite)
The Cheviots • Northumberland

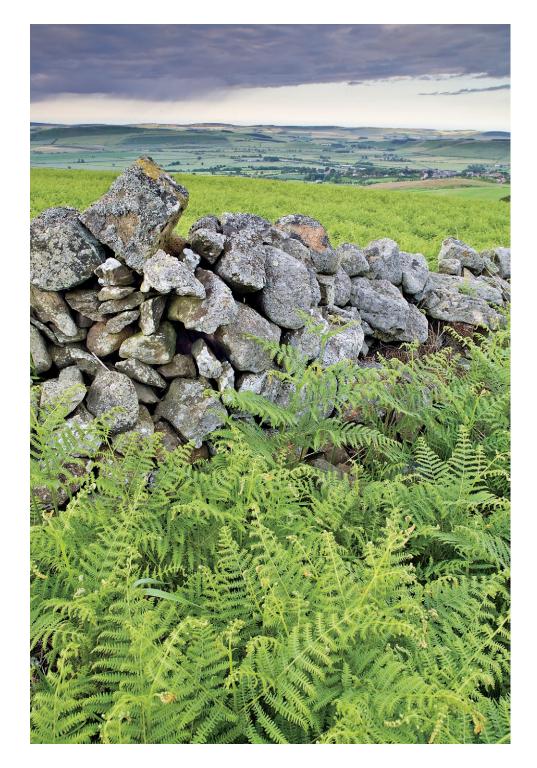




Coldberry Hill Cairn
The Cheviots • Northumberland

Bracken

The Cheviots • Northumberland







Wooler from Humbleton Hill
The Cheviots • Northumberland

Waud House
Wooler ♦ Northumberland



#### Wooler to Lindisfarne

Distance: 17 miles / 27 Kilometres

From Wooler town centre follow the route signs downhill past Saint Mary's church. On the right look out for a stone cross at the top of a small rise. The cross commemorates the dead of Wooler from the First World War. The area the cross stands on is known locally as the 'Tory' and was once the site of a long-gone castle. At the bottom of the hill cross over the A697 to a metal bridge.

## On, to Lindisfarne

Once over the bridge take a right turn and follow the path as it skirts around a housing estate for approximately a quarter of a mile. Turn left, past a school and follow a quiet road uphill toward Weetwood Moor. Once the climb is complete there is an opportunity to see the splendid and strangely comforting sight of Wooler nestling at the foot of the Cheviots. Continue across the moor until the path drops down again toward Weetwood Bridge. Cross over the road at the bottom of the hill and onto the bridge itself.

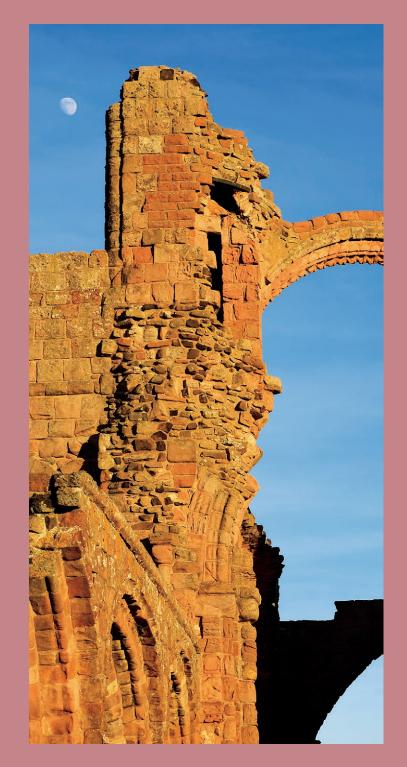
The route now follows a quiet country road up to the hamlet of Horton. Once in Horton walk past a series of farm buildings to a clearly marked left turn opposite a row of bungalows. Follow this road out of the village to the first right turn further on.

The route loops around Town Law before gradually descending in the Hetton Burn Valley. One noteworthy architectural detail of this stretch of the walk is a well preserved pillbox. The pillbox was built here during the early 1940s to watch over the valley and guard against invaders coming in from the coast.

Once at the bottom of the valley cross over the Hetton Burn and begin to walk uphill along a stony track. At a small clump of buildings cross over the Chatton road and toward Dancing Green Hill along a country lane. Follow this road past arable fields to a small plantation. Go through a gate past what looks to be a small quarry to another gate of the right. Pass through this gate to walk across rolling grassland to a stile. Cross over the still and head for a thin line of trees. At the trees take the path on the right and head uphill toward a large plantation. On reaching the plantation turn left.

About a quarter of mile further on, look to the right to see St. Cuthbert's Cave through the trees. The cave is reputedly where the saint's body was sheltered when it was moved from Lindisfarne during a period of Viking raids in the ninth century. Though not deep, it is more of a rocky overhang, the cave is still an atmospheric place to visit. When not being

Previous Pages: Pilgrim's Causewa This Page: Lindisfarne Priory Opposite Page: Lindisfarne Castle



buzzed by low-flying RAF jets, the area is a place of calm and serenity.

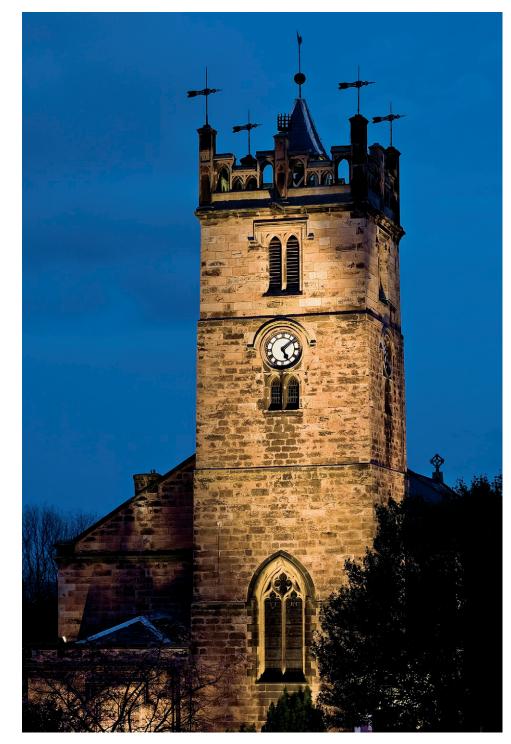
Return to the path and, turning right at the edge of the wood, continue uphill to a gate. Go through the gate and start the descent across moorland, keeping the crags of Greensheen Hill to the left. The path now takes a slightly circuitous route toward Shiellow Wood, but upon finally reaching the plantation follow the route-markers along a forest track to reach Blairwearie Farm. The path now follows a quiet country lane to the village of Fenwick.

From Fenwick walk toward the A1. The A1 is the east-coast main road to Scotland and is always busy, so particular care must be taken

when crossing. On the other side, follow a lane down toward Fenwick Granary. Once past a row of cottages, turn left for an uphill stretch along a leafy lane. The route now follows the edges of arable fields as the coastline draws nearer, this rural splendour spoilt only by the necessity of crossing the east-coast railway line.

At the coast, walk past a long line of concrete blocks to the causeway. The official route now follows the road to Lindisfarne. An alternative route, only possible when the tides are favourable, is to follow the Pilgrim's Causeway across to the island. Whichever route is taken, Lindisfarne Priory is the ultimate destination to complete the St. Cuthbert's Way.





St. Mary's Church
Wooler • Northumberland

War Memorial
Wooler ◆ Northumberland

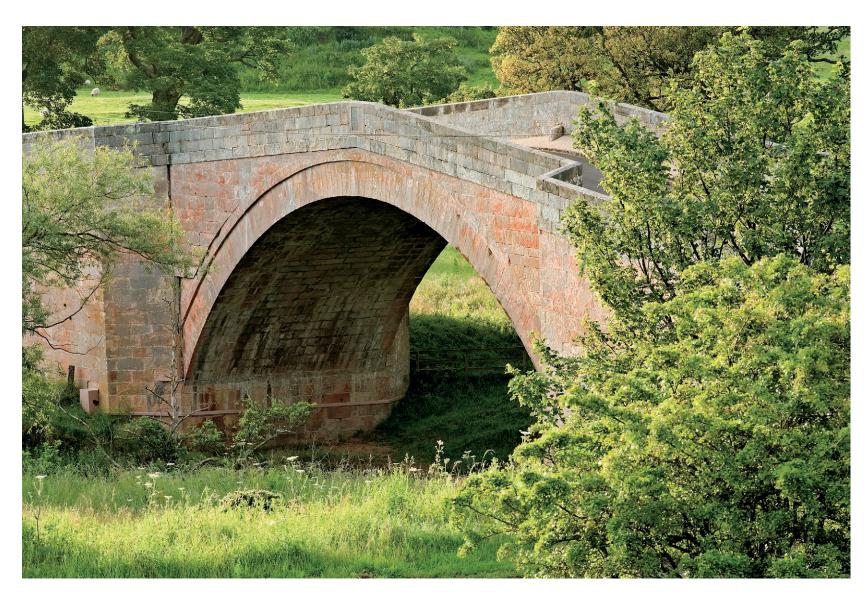




Wooler from Weetwood Moor Weetwood Moor ◆ Northumberland

First Light
Weetwood Moor ◆ Northumberland





Bridge over the Till
Weetwood • Northumberland

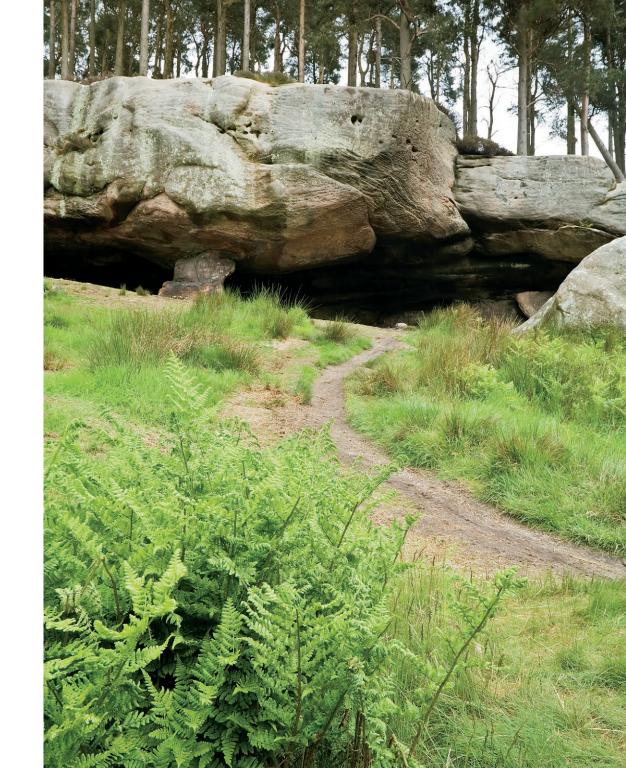
Defensive Position (opposite)
Horton • Northumberland

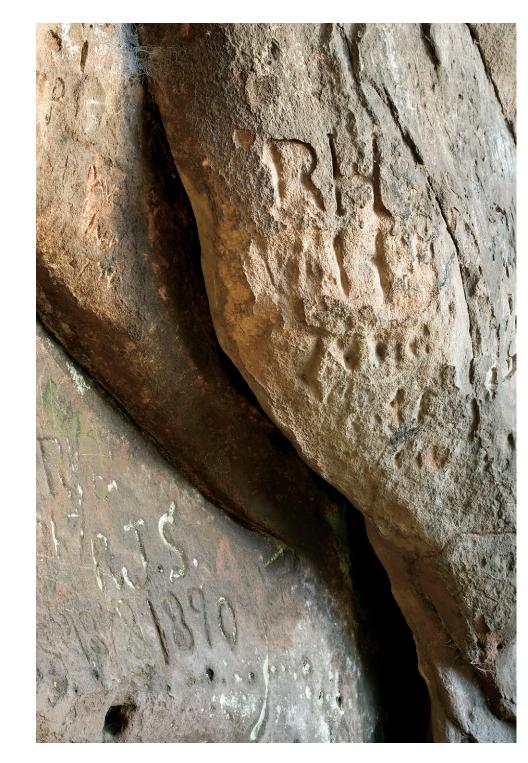




View to the Cheviots
Hazelrigg • Northumberland

St. Cuthbert's Cave
Hazelrigg • Northumberland





Inside the Cave
Hazelrigg ♦ Northumberland

Blue Cairn
Greensheen Hill • Northumberland







St. Aidan
Lindisfarne • Northumberland

St. Mary's Church
Lindisfarne • Northumberland

