

# HADRIAN'S WALL MARCH

**June 2006**

## **DAY 1: 12/13 MILES (June 20<sup>th</sup>.)**

Segedunum Fort (passport station number 1) to Heddon on the Wall

For nine miles today the route is within the city of Newcastle upon Tyne, along a sealed surface footpath/cycleway, using in part a landscaped former railway. The start of Hadrian's Wall is left behind at Segedunum, it now lies buried beneath the city streets, but you will meet up with it tomorrow. You are never very far from the River Tyne and for five miles the Trail skirts the Newcastle quayside. Highlights are the Tyne bridges including Robert Stephenson's High Level bridge (1849), the Gateshead Millennium Bridge (2001) and the iconic Tyne bridge itself (193x). On the outskirts of the city at Newburn you reach the beginning of the rural part of the Trail, joining briefly the historically important Wylam Waggonway ( as explained on the interpretation panel) the final mile or so is a long uphill into the village of Heddon-on-the Wall.

Overnight at Houghton North Farm (Hostel)

## **DAY 2: 10 MILES (June 21<sup>st</sup>.)**

Heddon to the Errington Arms (or Portgate)

(The Errington Arms pub is at the junction of Hadrian's Wall and the Roman road known as Dere Street, hence the name of the Portgate – note the explanation on the interpretation panel).

About a mile outside of Heddon you will step off the road into a field and, although it might not yet be very obvious, you will be standing next to the historic line of Hadrian's Wall. The masonry Wall lies beneath the adjacent road; blame General Wade who, following the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 ordered the construction of a road to swiftly transport troops across the country, hence the reason why it is know today as the Military Road. Today's walk traces the Wall next to the road; to the north side train your eye to spot the Roman ditch, while to the south the Vallum, an earthwork bank and ditch will become easier to identify as you go along. The exciting masonry will appear later on but all the way across to the west coast the equally important archaeological earthworks can be followed.

Upon arrival at the Portgate travel to Corbridge Roman site in Corbridge.

The terrain today is mostly flat. There is a good café at Vallum farm, opposite the Robin Hood Inn (where you will find passport station number 2), about halfway along the walk, also at the Portgate.

Overnight possibly back at Houghton.

### **DAY 3: 11 MILES (June 22<sup>nd</sup>.)**

Errington Arms to Old Repeater Station via Chesters Roman Fort (passport station number 3)

Following the earthworks again today but there is an easy uphill climb before descending to the River Tyne at Chollerford and Chesters Roman Fort, followed by a long uphill drag before levelling out at Limestone Corner (a section of unfinished ditch cut by the Romans out of solid Whinstone). Other highlights include the site of the battle of Heavenfield, a place of pilgrimage since the seventh century in honour of St Oswald (next to St Oswald's farm café). The Old Repeater Station is called thus.....because it is a converted old telecommunications repeater station.

Overnight at Old Repeater Station.

### **DAY 4: 7.5 MILES (June 23<sup>rd</sup>.)**

Old Repeater Station to Housesteads (4 miles)

Today starts off level before you meet the Whin Sill switchback at Sewingshields farm; your patience will have been rewarded because the occasional glimpse up until now of masonry Roman wall becomes a regular feature for the next few days. The scenery is dramatic and the visible remains of several milecastles and turrets beckon.

Housesteads to Steel Rigg (3 miles) then drive to Vindolanda Roman Fort

After visiting Housesteads Roman Fort continue along this hilly section passing "Robin Hood's tree", made famous by Kevin Costner in the film "Robin Hood Prince of Thieves) and soak up the famous views of Crag Lough (similar to the Scottish Loch, pronounced loff) to Steel Rigg car park. Transport to Vindolanda Roman Fort for a chance to see the famous for the Vindolanda" tablets" – letters written home by the Romans soldiers garrisoned at the site.

Overnight at Once Brewed YHA or Twice Brewed Pub or Holmhead or Old Repeater Station.

### **DAY 5: 10 MILES (June 24<sup>th</sup>.)**

Steel Rigg to Birdoswald Fort. At 7 mile mark visit Carvoran Roman Army Museum.

Another hilly day and the last of the Whin Sill, so enjoy it; there is lots more masonry Wall and some spectacular views of the Vallum. The best vantage point to photograph the Vallum is from the raised viewpoint that stands just to the west of Milecastle 42 at Cawfields. The recreation sites at Cawfields and Walltown actually began life as quarries, have a look at the interpretation panel at Cawfields. As you descend the hill

towards Greenhead note the Norman constructed Thirlwall castle, built entirely out of Roman stone, an early case of recycling (although, of course, the Wall and its associated earthworks are today legally protected and it is an offence to remove any part of it). A highlight today is the new National Trail footbridge over the River Irthing at Willowford. The brief to the architect was to design a bridge that was modern but that managed to respect its historic setting. It has won several architectural and engineering prizes – do you agree with the use of the Corten “weathering” steel? It gives the appearance of being rusty but it never requires painting. Note the interpretation panel on the east side of the bridge.

There is a refreshment point at Walltown.

Overnight at Banks Head. Evening at Gilsland

### **DAY 6: 7- 8 MILES (June 25<sup>th</sup>.)**

Birdoswald (passport station number 4) to Sandysike farm

By comparison with the last few days, today will feel much easier with mostly level terrain with a couple of small hills to negotiate before you leave the uplands behind for good. There is a small self-service refreshment point with an honesty box at Haytongate, roughly half-way along today’s walk). You will see your first views of Scotland across the Solway Firth, also views of the Lake District. As you leave the masonry Wall behind, remember to tune your eyes once again into earthwork spotting, there is mile-upon-mile of ditch and Vallum ahead of you although not so obvious as before.

Overnight at new camping barn/hostel.

### **DAY 7: 10 MILES (June 26<sup>th</sup>.)**

Sandysike farm to Carlisle, finishing beside the River Eden at the Sands Sports Centre (passport station number 5, also café)

With the uplands behind you, enjoy the gentler landscape of Cumbria. The grass grows faster on this generally warmer and wetter side of the country – the National Trail staff have to cut it more often! You might also notice that the locals’ accent has subtly changed from Geordie, via Northumbrian, into Cumbrian. There will hopefully be time to visit Carlisle Castle, another historic monument in a very good state of repair, also built out of recycled Roman stone.

Overnight: Possibly Uni of Northumbria Halls of Residence.

**DAY 8 (June 27<sup>th</sup>.)**

A day of Rest and Recreation at the historic city of Carlisle

**DAY 9: 15 MILES (June 28<sup>th</sup>.)**

Sands Sports Centre to Bowness-on-Solway, finishing at The Banks (passport station number 6), a restored Edwardian promenade.

A long day but it is at nearly all at sea level and the expansive views across the Solway marshes towards Scotland are intoxicating. In the winter months the firth is one of the most important estuaries in the UK for over-wintering geese and wild-fowl. Notice the remains of the canal basin at Port Carlisle, at one time an important embarkation point for emigrants to the new world. The only amenity in Bowness (or Maia, as it is affectionately known) is the King's Arms pub - do pay a visit and sign the visitors' book to say that you have completed the Trail! Well done.

Overnight at Bowness Village Hall.

(N.B. Alternatively, it will be possible to split into 2 x 7.5 miles each on day 8 and day 9.

**DAY 10: (June 29<sup>th</sup>.)**

Return by motor transportation to the Roman fort at South Shields.

Overnight at South Shields..

**DAY 11: (June 30<sup>th</sup>.)**

Report to your next duty station as you return home, or continue on your personal journey elsewhere.

