

available on much of the route between Alston and Haltwhistle (see map).

ROUTE DESCRIPTION is in blue beside

## **G**ETTING TO

From Alston take the road through Garrigill Continue south for another two miles until the tarmac finishes at a cattle-grid soon after Hill House Farm. Motorists must leave their cars here.

#### Please park with care so as not to obstruct farm traffic.

The higher track is a bridleway. You may follow it on foot, cycle or horse. Another two miles bring you to The Source (see panel 1)

source of the Tyne

are protected in a

The Source to Alston 9½ miles 15.5 km approx.

On the hill above The Source is a rocky limestone plain. Here the rain percolates down into limestone caverns before trickling to its birthplace. Until 2002, The Source was marked only by an old fence post and was easily missed. The massive sculpture by Gilbert Ward should remedy that. Look tall through the slot in the stone and you can see the birth of the South Tyne as it flows from the labyrinths. Raise your eyes with respect – the Celts believed that the eye of a river was the eye of God.

Far from the Tyne's scaffold of bridges, this is a wild and lonely landscape. In spring, the haunting

Falls at Ashgil

call of curlew and golden plover echoes round this stony street. Many other birds own these moors - merlin, peregrine, black grouse and dunlin are but some of the notable species that are conserved here in the Moorhouse Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The area also has international designations for geological and botanical importance as well as for birds.

The Source by Gilbert Ward

At Dorthgill Falls, the moorland stream drops suddenly into the South Tyne Valley. This is an idyllic spot, with the waterfall framed by a cluster of pines.

In spring and summer the wildflowers are stunning: purple lousewort and orchids abound, yellow splashes of pimpernel and tormentil, then, lower down, jewels of mountain pansy and bird's-eye primrose. The insect-eating butterwort lurks in the damp spots. If you are walking in winter – come back again!

The heavy metals that contaminate this area naturally, as well as in the spoil-heaps, have an unexpected benefit - they cause a sparse grass sward that allows less aggressive species of metal-tolerant flowers to come in. The heavy metal areas and the alternating bands of limestone create conditions that make the

> The cluster of derelict buildings and earthworks in the valley bottom is Sir John's Mine. This mine was worked until 1941, bringing out iron

upper South Tyne Valley outstanding for its

sheer numbers and diversity of wildflowers.

sulphide, marcasite and other minerals from The Great Sulphur Vein.

Following the river, it is easy to see the alternating bands of limestone, sandstone and shale, formed over the millennia, that typify the area. These bands, laid down when the whole area was covered by a tropical ocean, helped shape the landscape. Their erosion caused captivating waterfalls and scarp-sloped hills. Can you imagine how it looked when the whole area was covered by a tropical ocean? Keep a sharp eye and you may see the fossils of tropical crinoids (sea lilies) or giant cockles in the limestone bands.

Tynehead meadows are a

kingcups and buttercups

riot of yellow in the spring:

then the rare globe

flowers can be seen.

Later come the purple

early on come the

meadow cranesbill

and many other

meadow flowers

Near Waterfall Cottage the London Lead Company had a tree nursery (the mining companies produced their own wood). You can see typical species which were planted for timber

production: Norway spruce, Scots pine and European larch.

Just look at the road bridge! The engineer had a sense of soul

and vision. Unfortunately, he had less luck in the practical

department, as the bridge collapsed in the final stages of

construction and had to be

rebuilt around 1920.

At Ash Gill, turn up the valley to see Ashgill Force - a stunning waterfall. In autumn or winter you may see this fall in its full glory, hurling millions of tonnes of peat-brown water over its crest. In summer, you can more easily walk behind the sheet of water and be mesmerised by the dancing faeries.

> 'Force' is a common word for waterfall in the North Pennines: it comes from the Norse 'fors'.

Like many other places, Ash Gill had mines. Close to Ashgill Force you can see a mine entrance, or 'level', remains of storage bays and a water race but these are disappearing rapidly due to thoughtless dismantling.

In the river bed, close to the footbridge, cockle fossils may be seen like white horse shoes trotting over the dark limestone.

At the foot of Ash Gill, the South Tyne is running in a deep, rocky gorge. Take a careful look over: this is a magical, shady world of ferns, channels and rock pools. Most of the river's journey from here to Garrigill is in this netherworld. Occasionally it comes up for air, then drops back down again

Take care, especially with children, close to the edge where the ground may be slippery.

At Windshaw Bridge, there is a good view of the gorge downstream as the river drops into one of its surprise pools. In no time at all the river-bed can disappear from the gentle shallows into potholes 3m deep. The awesome power of the winter river can be guessed by the height of the flotsam on the branches.



Garrigill is a good watering hole. Close to the bridge, the lean and thirsty can find the only cast iron street spout that the water company forgot to cut off. Toilets are opposite the spout and there is a children's play ground to the rear. The village shop is a small general store cum post office which serves tea and coffee to take out. In summer the George and Dragon (tel: 01434 381293) serves food and drink most lunch times and evenings (closed Tuesday lunchtime). Children and dogs are welcome.

Pick up the Trail again at the north end of the village. Out of sight from the Trail, close to the footbridge at river-bed level, is Tyne Bottom Mine. This is a subterranean SSSI, noted for a range of mineral deposits, particularly 'erythrite'.

**ALSTON** is excellent for cafes, pubs, shops and includes a youth hostel

To the south of Bleagate is Cross Fell, the highest point in the Pennines at 893m (2,930ft). Across the fellside to the west is the Hartside Road - one of MacAdam's great achievements creating a steady, winding gradient for about seven miles from the foot to Hartside summit. Its sweeping bends, engineered to ease the climb for horse-drawn wagons, now draw motorcyclists and touring motorists from afar. The name Hartside, hints at its deer-hunting past. Until the 13th century, this was the royal playground of Scottish monarchs who held title to the Manor of Alston Moor.

Low Nest, the long house close to the Trail, is built on the remains of an old fortified farmhouse, or 'bastle', built for defence against raiders in the years of warfare and unrest between England and Scotland. The original walls are 4ft thick.

Between Natrass Gill and Alston the South Tyne levels out, starts to meander a little and dumps an odd few million tonnes of boulders and gravel en route. Look through the trees towards the river. Here is yet another SSSI, Tyne Shingle Banks, where shingle movements are being studied using lichen growth as an indicator.



eccp@carlisle-city.gov.uk Carlisle, CA4 8RR tel: 01228 561601 Warwick Mill, Warwick Bridge, East Cumbria Countryside Project





Val Corbett, Simon Danby and ECCP

Hexham Ramblers Association

SUBJISHS Railway Preservation Society South Tynedale the late Peter Buchanan Maureen Sayer Mr and Mrs Carrick, the support given by: We would like to acknowledge

Northumberland County Council East Cumbria Countryside Project in partnership with this leaflet has been produced by:

- Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone Take care around mine workings
  - where there are sheep
- Keep your dogs under close control especially Take your litter home
  - ◆ Fasten all gates that you open

 Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls landscape and the Pennine weather.

To enjoy your visit please respect this working spiritually refreshed!

your journey leaves you pleasantly tired but exploring the Pennine hills and dales. We hope A warm welcome to all walkers and cyclists

Area of Outstanding Natural Beaut

## NORTH PENNINES

Walking

Just before Alston you reach Firs Wood. Like others in the valley, this wood was devastated by Dutch elm disease in the 1980s and is now growing up once more with a young generation of replacements.

Alston is something of a North Pennines metropolis. It is an attractive small town, with cobbled streets and is said to be the Highest Market Town in England. It is many years since it had a market but the Market Cross remains, despite determined efforts at demolition by runaway vehicles.

This is a good place to break your journey. The South Tyne Trail continues from Alston Railway Station where there is a car park and picnic area close to the river. The Trail then runs adjacent to the heritage railway line and follows the track nearly to Haltwhistle. The route from the station northwards is easy walking and delightful valley scenery, wild flowers, railway heritage and two attractive pubs make it an enjoyable walk. The contrast with the high moors of The Source is striking. This is the gentle part of the uplands, although winter temperatures and fearsome spates are part of the Jekyll and Hyde nature of the valley.

journey of great contrasts.

**THE ROUTE** flows with the river, from The Source downstream to Haltwhistle where transport links are good. Walkers or cyclists may choose to reverse this direction.

Easy going access, suitable for pushchairs and wheelchairs, is

SOURCE

## THE SOURCE

A - B WALKERS AND CYCLISTS

**B** - **G** CYCLISTS

The North Pennines are a designated Area of Outstanding Natural The track leading past Tynehead is the old pre-turnpike road Beauty (AONB) but this landscape is special not just for its natural from Alston to Middleton. Until the early 19th century, most of the roads from Alston were in very poor condition and many features: it has been a hotbed of mining industry for centuries were pack-horse routes only. The pack-horse drivers, or 'jagger indeed the track you stand on was probably a mine road. Up or down the road you will see the greening wrinkles of men', had control over much of the economy of the area and mineral spoil or decaying gantries of timber - silent now, but were regarded by some as extortionists, forcing prices up. symbols of this area's life-blood until the 20th century. Many Because of this and the impracticability of hauling lead out by miners farmed too and sculpted these hills and dales with pack-horse, the lead companies commissioned the eminent endless miles of walls, or 'dykes', using skills perfected on engineer, John MacAdam, to design and build new carriage underground passages. roads. Some of the original routes are now evocative green tracks across the moors, haunted by the jingling bells of the

pack-horses.

**G**ARRIGILL **V**ILLAGE

and public telephone

FORCE

has toilets, village shop with Post

SOUTH TYNE TRAIL footpath ••••• cycle trail OTHER RIGHTS OF WAY public footpaths public bridleways - - -Pennine Way parking P

SCALE 0 kilometres 0 miles

This is a permitted path generously

YOU ARE IN SHEEP COUNTRY.

Dogs must be kept on leads.

Path passes Dorthgill Waterfall

(beware of steep drop).

donated for use by the landowner.

The waymarked track follows the infant South Tyne. You will be surprised how quickly this trickle grows into a rushing, rocky stream. Keep your eyes open for mining remains. At B there is a modern cattle shed and an old B - C WALKERS lead smelt mill – its flue runs underground close to Allen's Cleugh. curve to the left towards the valley.

ollow tarmac road straight on en continue on road through arrigill and Leadgate to Alston



Sir John's Mine Tynehead Waterfall House Cottage Turn right off the track at the Mill \* ASHGILL and follow the waymarkers and

C - D WALKERS D\*WALKERS The route joins the public footpath at Sir John's Mine. Follow Short diversion to the dramati Ash Gill waterfalls. From Ashqill the waymarkers past Tynehead Force the water tumbles over then along valley bottom to Ash Gill. Excellent for wildflowers in several smaller falls en route to the South Tyne Valley. spring and early summer.

D - E WALKERS Follow path close to river, then cross Windshaw Bridge and follow the short stone track to the road.

George and

Dragon

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GARRIGILL

E - F WALKERS hrough Garrigill village. here the road swings left uphill take the signposted Pennine Way.

South Tyne valley in autum

F - G WALKERS Way to Alston. The Trail enters a charming pastoral 'Dales' landscape, deceptive to think that here it is over 300m (1000ft) high.



# **Alston to Haltwhistle**

Alston Station is towards the north end of the town. It closed as a 'proper' railway in 1976 but re-opened as a 'heritage' railway in 1983, extending by stages to its current terminus at Kirkhaugh. The South Tyne Trail runs adjacent to this line and follows the railway track nearly to Haltwhistle (the last half mile has been cut by the Haltwhistle by-pass).

During the heady excitement of the New Railway Age in the early 19th century, the mineral wealth of Alston Moor was seen as an important prize for the railway companies. Several schemes were proposed,

including one to link the South Tyne Valley with Weardale via Nenthead and a 2½ mile tunnel at Killhope. Reality eventually prevailed and the outcome was the Haltwhistle to Alston Railway. This was opened for goods and passenger use in 1852. Even this was an ambitious engineering achievement with numerous bridges, nine viaducts and substantial gradients raising the line 150m (500 ft) in 13 miles. Sadly for the developers, the mineral bubble was deflating by

the time the railway was built and it never realised its full

with colliery closures heralding the final line closure in 1976.

EASY GOING ACCESS AND CAR PARKING

Considerable stretches of the lower part of the route have

been surfaced to a high standard suitable for easy walking,

pushchairs or wheelchairs. Several good access points exist.

ALSTON STATION (G): car park with riverside picnic site - 1/4 mile on a

SLAGGYFORD (J): no formal car park but space near old station - 31/2

miles of well-surfaced trail to Bowden's Banks (pick-up possible)

Viaduct ¾ mile south (Featherstone Park Station 1 mile north)

PARK VILLAGE (P): limited parking on verge. Well-surfaced trail

COANWOOD (N): car park and excellent access point for Lambley

FEATHERSTONE PARK STATION (O): car park and well-surfaced trail

PLENMELLER ROAD (Q): limited parking on verge with steepish ramp

G - J CYCLISTS

Randalholme farm.

and Barhaugh Ha

to Slaggyford.

Take the A686 out of Alston their

turn left on quiet roads past

potential. A hundred years later, the writing was on the wall

The heritage railway developed by the South Tynedale Railway Preservation Society arose from the ashes in 1983. With impressive volunteer effort, they have extended the line to Kirkhaugh. Day walkers can combine walking with a oneway trip on the train. Details are available from the station.

well-surfaced path

up to well-surfaced trail

G - Q WALKERS

G - H WALKERS

DO NOT WALK ON THE LINE

Kirkhaugh station is the current

**ALSTON** is excellent for

accommodation which includes

ALSTON

STATION

cafes, pubs, shops, good

a youth hostel

**ALSTON** 

Just before the level crossing, the old lime loading dock can be seen on the opposite side. Beyond the crossing, lime was brought down from the quarry and lime works on the hillside, via a steep tramway which ran through a tunnel under the road. These features can be still be seen, although the lime quarry is now a reclaimed rubbish tip.

Just over a mile out of Alston, Randalholme Farm can be seen on the opposite side of the river. Randalhome is a medieval peel-tower – part of the legacy of the long and dangerous years of warfare and troubles that blighted the Border country and further afield.

At Gilderdale Viaduct, the metal sculpture tells us that this is also the bridge between Cumberland and Northumberland. This lovely dale is home to red squirrels.

Just north of here, the grassy ramparts of the Roman Whitley Castle can be seen on the hillside to the left. Whitley Castle lies on the route of the Maiden Way. This strategic Roman road ran from Bewcastle in north Cumbria, across hostile terrain of bogs, moors and felltops on to Kirkby Thore, near Appleby. It is believed that the Romans had an interest in the lead mines of Alston Moor but the Maiden Way also cut through the heart of the territory of Briganteum. The Brigantes were a powerful native people who populated this upland area and the

Romans would have been keen to exert control over them.

SCALE

0 kilometres

Before the effects of climate change, winters in the North Pennines could be impressive! In the severe winter of 1947, the snow-plough train had to give up the ghost at Kirkhaugh. The fireman set off on foot back to Alston, but must have had an awful struggle in the storm. The driver had prevailed upon the hospitality of Kirkhaugh resident Mr Renwick and stayed the night. At that time there were no telephones at Kirkhaugh, never mind mobile phones.



At Slaggyford, the Trail passes by the station at the top end of the village. The village itself is a delightful small settlement, scattered around its green. Unfortunately there are no facilities for walkers, but well worth a stop and a rest.

Burnstones -

K - N CYCLISTS

Turn uphill at Bowden's Banks to

Take the minor road through the

join the A689 towards Lambley.

village and rejoin the Trail at

We now share the route with the Pennine Cycleway, developed by Sustrans, the cycle charity. After about one and a half miles, you cross Burnstones Viaduct across the main road. Weary, hungry or thirsty walkers will find solace less than half a mile down the road. The Kirkstyle Inn (tel: 01434 381559), serves food and drink most lunch times and evenings (closed Tuesday lunchtime). Children and dogs are welcome. Access to the road is a short way beyond the viaduct. Double back on yourself down the main road then take first left after the viaduct.

The Trail passes through Whitwham Farm, which is in the Countryside Stewardship Scheme established to encourage farming in a way that supports the environment. On this farm waders e.g. curlew, lapwing and redshank have benefited from habitat protection. Sadly, these species are declining due to land drainage and improvement. The RSPB has been running a waders project to raise awareness with community art schemes. Look out for wooden wader sculptures that were created in collaboration with Coanwood Primary School

SLAGGYFORD \ Knarsdale

North of Whitwham, the magnificent Lambley Viaduct comes into view with its soaring arches framing the tree-lined river. The viaduct suffered a period of planned neglect prior to the railway closure in 1976. After closure, further damage was caused by contractors removing the lines when diggers and bulldozers were operating on the viaduct. Parapet masonry was dislodged at this stage and the bridge became very unsafe. After much lobbying, the viaduct was repaired by British Rail and then transferred to the North Pennines Heritage Trust for safekeeping in 1996.

Please note: you cannot walk directly on to the viaduct (route details on map see L - M).

The view from the viaduct is definitely worth the climb. It takes nerve to peer over the parapet: the height and drop is awesome. The water glints far below and the valley woodland stretches away in both directions. In autumn, the colours are marvellous; in winter, the river can be raging and the wind up top can be biting. Take special care with children.

The wooded embankment north of the viaduct gives way to attractive cottages and open fields. The remains of massive iron-framed buffers lie at the old Coanwood Station. This station served a cokeworks and a number of collieries until output ended around 1940. Take care crossing the fast curve of the road at Coanwood Bank. Coanwood car park is a good access point for visitors to Lambley Viaduct or for breaking the route.

The Wallace Arms (tel: 01434 321872) is but a stone's throw up the road from Featherstone Park Station. This traditional pub serves food and real ales most lunch times and evenings. Children are welcome but dogs are not allowed inside.



Featherstone Castle was built on to an existing 13th century peeltower. During WW2, a German POW camp was established there. This was used as an assessment and re-education centre and was a community in its own right with streets, gardens, theatre, art gallery and lecture rooms. The prisoners produced their own newsletter, "Die Zeit am Tyne" (The Times on the Tyne) and interacted with the local community.

Permitted path Bowden

Unfortunately you cannot walk directly on to the

viaduct because the adjacent Lambley Station is

now a private residence without through access.

Continue along railway track to

L - M WALKERS

the right off the track. This leads

climbing back up to the viaduct

via steps then a steel staircase

down a stepped slope then under the viaduct before

#### The Trail passes through woodland of self-**BOOKING ACCOMMODATION**

seen if you are lucky. The original road bridge

meet the Park Village by-pass on the level.

Near Haltwhistle, the railway embankment

disappears where the largest earthwork on the

line has given way to the A69 Haltwhistle by-pass.

The railway finally enters Haltwhistle by crossing

As you cross the South Tyne, it is surprising to see how big

the river has grown in just under 23 miles. By the time it gets to

Newcastle, in another 40 miles, it is one of Britain's major rivers.

As you pull into Haltwhistle Station, you have walked 13 miles

and 1834 chains from Alston Station (according to the original

Haltwhistle's claim to fame may seem surprising to some visitors:

this is the geographical centre of Britain - Yorkshire is far away in

railway measurement), or 23 miles from The Source.

the South Tyne on Alston Arches, as the bridge

is called.

The South!

LAMBLEY

M - N WALKERS

This is a good access point for visitors to Lam

Coanwood

spans the line but just beyond, walkers climb to

seeded birches - usually the first to colonise **Tourist Information Centres** (TIC) can provide up-to-date the well-drained ballast of the railway - now information about a range of accommodation in the area: tel: 01434 322002 well established and graceful in their delicate HALTWHISTLE TIC (Haltwhistle Station) web site: www.hadrianswallcountry.org finery. Close to Park Village, veteran oaks and tel: 01434 382244 ALSTON TIC larches stand proud. Rabbits are strenuously (Alston Town Hall) web site: www.eden.gov.uk reclaiming the embankment and roe deer can be

YOUTH HOSTELS (YHA) are located in Alston and close to Haltwhistle at Greenhead and Once Brewed (both approx 3½ miles from Haltwhistle). These have restricted opening out of season but accommodation can be booked in advance: tel: 0870 770 5668

tel: 0870 770 5842 tel: 0870 770 5980 ONCE BREWED tel: 0870 770 6124 **BIRDOSWALD** 

web site: www.yha.org.uk

#### Maps - Ordnance Survey

Explorer OL43 Hadrian's Wall Explorer OL31 North Pennines

#### TRAVEL INFORMATION

TRAVELINE (bus and rail) tel: 0870 608 2608

685 - Newcastle to Carlisle (Haltwhistle Station)

185 (winter) AD 122 (summer) - Hadrian's Wall Bus (Haltwhistle St.) 681 - Haltwhistle to Nenthead via Alston

680 - Halton-Lea-Gate to Nenthead

Local bus services operate from Alston and Haltwhistle.

Wrights buses may carry cycles in boot if space permits, tel: 01434 381200 Wrights Bros

Tyne Valley Line - Newcastle to Carlisle (Haltwhistle Station) Tyne Valley railway will carry two cycles if space permits South Tynedale Railway - Alston to Kirkhaugh (narrow gauge railway)

Talking Timetables web site: www.strps.org.uk

#### WALKING FESTIVALS

Discover the fells and dales, lush river valleys and wild woodlands during spring and early summer. ROOF OF ENGLAND WALKS (early summer)

Annual walking festival held in different locations each year North Pennine AONB Partnership tel: 01388 528801 HALTWHISTLE WALKING FESTIVALS (late spring and late autumn) Family centred walks for all ages and abilities Haltwhistle Partnership tel: 01434 321242

A large print version of this leaflet can be made available from:

East Cumbria Countryside Project Warwick Mill, Warwick Bridge, Carlisle CA4 8RR tel: 01228 561601

#### N - Q WALKERS AND CYCLISTS

Follow the disused railway for approx. 12.5 km (7½ miles) until the end of the line at Plenmeller Road. Note also, access points at Featherstone Park, Park Village, and the

Wallace Arms pub.

#### **HALTWHISTLE** The station has regular train and bus services towards Carlisle and

Newcastle. The TIC (Tourist nformation Centre) on the platform can give you details. The town centre lies across the roundabout. Here you will find

HALTWHISTLE

shops, cafes, pubs and take-aways.

Featherstone,

Bridge.

Park station

Take care crossing the fast curve of the road at Coanwood Bank.

Wallace Arms

Rowfoot

Featherstone

Featherstone

#### Q - R WALKERS AND CYCLISTS Drop down on to Plenmeller Road and head towards by-pass You are aiming to take the minor road opposite to the right. Visibility is good but traffic speeds are high. Take great care

CROSSING. MAKE SURE THAT YOU

CHOOSE A GOOD GAP. R - S WALKERS AND CYCLISTS This minor road is a dead-end for motor traffic. Take the first bridge crossing the South Tyne to

Haltwhistle Station.

We hope that you have enjoyed your walk, following this infant river as it grows through this special landscape. Have a safe journey home. countryside We welcome your comments

### SOUTH TYNE CYCLE TRAIL

The entire route can be cycled from The Source to Haltwhistle. Mountain bikes are ideal, however most

(cycle shop, cycle hire and repairs) This Trail is one of the many benefiting from the hard

sturdy bikes would be suitable as the only rough part is a 2 miles section near The Source.

The SOUTH TYNE CYCLE TRAIL includes a stoned bridleway, quiet lanes and off-road specially surfaced disused railway tracks. There are two short stretches of 'A' road. Villages and towns along the way are 'geared up' for refreshments and some repairs but you are advised to carry a pump and repair kit. Cycle locks are useful for short stops while you explore the route or enjoy a pub lunch! J - K, M - N and N - Q

These sections of the trail have shared use with walkers. These excellent safe and gentle sections are ideal for family days out with ordinary bikes. LAMBLEY VIADUCT: The stunning views mean it's well worth a detour to the viaduct. Cycle access from N

Useful contacts: ALSTON: Henderson's Garage tel: 01434 381204 (can collect bikes or carry out basic repairs) HALTWHISTLE: Eden's Lawn Garage tel: 01434 320443

work of Sustrans, the sustainable transport charity.

H - J WALKERS J - K WALKERS AND CYCLISTS This section makes use of the This section of the route is shared disused railway track. with the Pennine Cycleway which runs from Derby to Berwick upor Kirkhauah

• • • • • • •

parking

THER RIGHTS OF WAY

public bridleways -

public footpaths

Pennine Wav

footpath cvcle Trail South Tynedale Railway Line

Whitley

Castle

**ALSTON STATION** is at the bottom (north) of Alston town. There is an attractive picnic site set among birch trees at the station car park, close to the river.

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