

Brackwalks



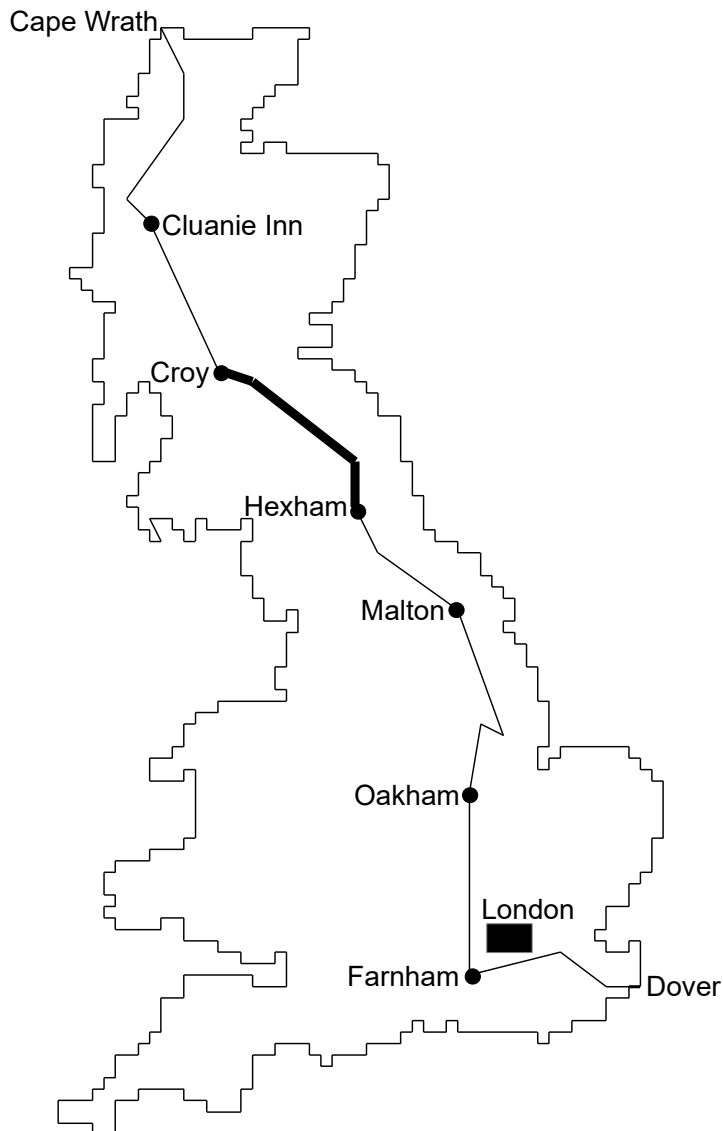
From FORELAND to CAPE

- an end to end walk across Britain from
South Foreland (Dover) to Cape Wrath

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Disclaimer: All details are given in good faith. However no activity can be completely hazard-free so undertaking any part of this route is done entirely at your own risk and I accept no responsibility for errors, loss or injury however caused.

Part 5 Hexham to Croy Station (167.5miles)



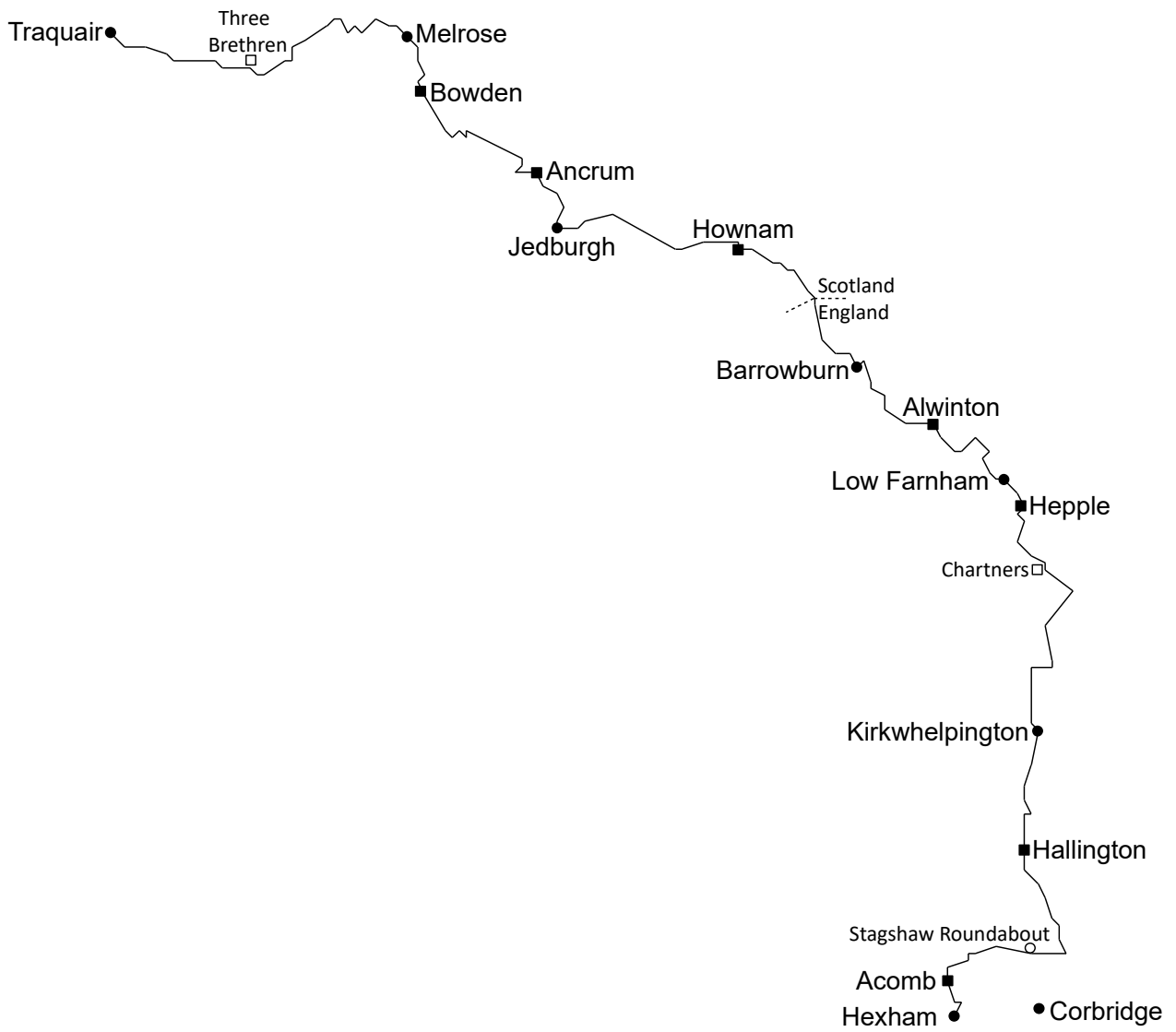
This section starts by proceeding north-northwestwards across the large emptiness of rural Northumberland to the Cheviot Hills. It is a sparse area of small villages and scattered settlements with the land mainly used for agriculture or forestry. Compared with Lincolnshire, the higher altitude, harsher climate with its longer winters, poorer soil and shorter growing season means that farming land is mainly used for hardy cattle and sheep.

In determining a route across this part of Northumberland, a decision has to be taken as to whether to pass the very large army training area to its east or west; this area occupies much of the southern Cheviot Hills. Passing to the west almost certainly lands you on or near the Pennine Way and being fairly familiar with this, an eastern route was selected in order to cross less well-known territory. Here, the newly created St Oswald's Way (SOW) was used for part of the route beyond Hadrian's Wall. The SOW runs from Heavenfield (north of Hexham) on the Hadrian's Wall national trail to Lindisfarne Priory on Holy Island. The SOW is joined east of Heavenfield and followed into the Harwood Forest where it is left for a descent of the Simonside Hills to the River Coquet.

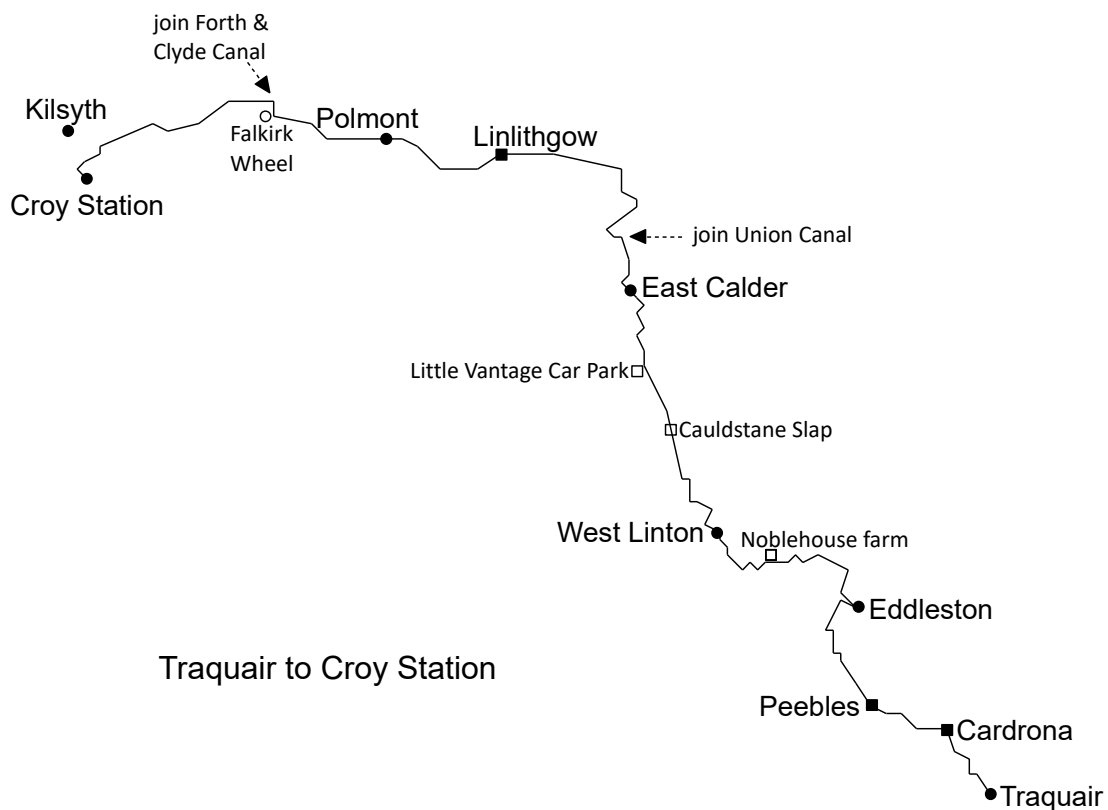
The line of the River Coquet is largely followed to the foot of the Cheviot Hills with the Northumberland National Park being entered, for the rest of the way in England, at the quiet village of Alwinton. There are many historic cross-border crossings of the Cheviot Hills but the medieval drove track named The Street fits in best with the eastern route choice, with the entry into Scotland appropriately occurring on the ridge; the walk over the Cheviots is very fine, probably the highlight of this section. Jedburgh is the natural destination beyond and there is a sharp contrast between the upland moorland territory of Northumberland and the fertile farmland of the Scottish Borders.

From Jedburgh the route proceeds via Ancrum to and through the Eildon Hills to lovely Melrose. The Southern Uplands Way national trail is subsequently mainly used to reach Traquair and it's then relatively easy using a newly created track, a disused railway line and riverside path to reach classy Peebles. Many of the towns passed through in the Scottish Borders (Jedburgh, Melrose, Peebles) are characterised by the annual ceremony of the Common Ridings. These date back to the 13th century when the local lord appointed a party to ride the bounds of his land to prevent encroachment from neighbouring lords and their people. West Linton, at the foot of the Pentland Hills is another such town and is reached via Eddleston using drove tracks from Peebles.

The route now heads for the Pentland Hills drove crossing of Cauldstane Slap; 'Slap' means a pass and 'Cauldstane' is thought to refer to the wind at the pass. After descending from the Pentlands, it's a relatively short distance to join the Union Canal and this is followed to its end at the Falkirk Wheel. The Falkirk Wheel is a rotating boat lift that replaced the locks connecting the Union Canal to the Forth & Clyde Canal. The latter canal is used to near the section end and the two canal provide a relatively quiet and seemingly rural means of passing through Scotland's most highly populated and busy central-belt region. From the canal, it's a short distance to the section end at the railway station in Croy with its regular commuter services to Glasgow and Edinburgh.



Hexham to Traquair



Stage 51: Hexham to Stagshaw Roundabout 7.5miles, ascent 338metres (1100ft), descent 185metres (600ft). Explorer OL43 (Hadrian's Wall); Landranger 87 (Hexham).

There are good train services from most parts of the country to Carlisle or Newcastle Upon Tyne and the regular train service between Carlisle and Newcastle stops at Hexham. Assuming a lunchtime arrival, this stage can be completed in the afternoon. Alternatively, it can be combined with the Juniper to Hexham stage. From Hexham, this stage makes for Hadrian's Wall (built by the Romans in the 2nd century) which is then followed to Stagshaw Roundabout. It's a pleasant walk to pretty Acomb village which lies to the north of the River Tyne and the A69 trunk road. The route then heads north-eastwards over paths and tracks to reach the Hadrian's Wall Path national trail which follows the remains or course of the Roman Wall as closely as possible. In this stage and the next, the Hadrian's Wall Path used also runs close to a B-road known as the Military Road. This is not a Roman road but was built following the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 so that English troops could be more speedily moved around the area. In this stage, the national trail is followed eastwards to the stage end. Stagshaw Roundabout, a couple of miles north of Corbridge, lies on the junction of the Military Road and an A-road. There's accommodation in Corbridge but it's a taxi ride away; fortunately there are a number of local firms happy to come to the roundabout.

Route: From Hexham's Abbey keep right in the Market Place and go opposite right (down the left of the Edinburgh Woollen shop) following the sign to Tourist Information. After

passing through an ancient archway join a road which curves right then left descending to Wentworth Car Park. Pass to the right of the car park on a tarmac track which continues across a road to meet a major road. Turn left passing Hexham's railway station (which is soon on the right) and on meeting a mini-roundabout turn right. Cross over the railway line, go straight on at the next roundabout and then cross the River Tyne. As the next roundabout is neared, turn off left on a lane (footpath sign) just after the roundabout sign. When it meets a lane turn right on a bridge over the A69 trunk road and over turn right. When a lane is met shortly, turn left and follow the lane up to a lane junction. Turn off left (signed St John Lees) and almost immediately fork right down a 'No Through Road'. On reaching a junction, go straight on (as signed) along an enclosed path with a foundation and continue into Acomb village to meet it's Main Street (2.3miles).

Turn left along Main Street and immediately before the cross-road sign, turn right on a signed track. When the track shortly curves right, go straight on along a path which drops via steps to a footbridge crossing of Red Burn. In the field entered, turn right along the right field edge as directed and curve right at the top of the slope to follow the left fence (sign) up a long field. At the top of the field, curve right to a gate on the left and through, follow the directional sign along the left fence towards a house. When level with the house, the trodden path veers right at a sign, away from the house. Follow the trodden path which curves left then right to reach a farm gate with a caravan storage facility beyond.

Through the gate, turn right as directed along a track to shortly meet a lane. Turn left (following the 'One Way' sign) and at a branch follow the 'Way Out' sign. On reaching a barrier, pass it (footpath sign), pass to the left of the caravan park reception and shortly exit the Fallowfield Dene caravan park onto an access lane. Cross to take the (unsigned) footpath opposite right (do not cross the bridge over Red Burn). Follow the path beside the burn and through an old quarry. The trodden path continues and eventually ascends quite steeply away from the burn. Go straight on (right) when a path is met and the path again comes back to the burn but high above it. Continue on and eventually reach a metal footbridge over the burn. Over, the path continues on to reach a small wooden footbridge over another burn and carries on to pass left of a house and emerge on a lane (NY 946 681).

Turn left and follow the lane as it turns sharp right then sharp left. Continue to a T-junction with a sign off left to Chollerford (947 687). Turn right here on a good track (which immediately passes to the right of a farm). Follow the track as it ascends and just after the top (and 0.4miles from the start of the track), turn left at a footpath sign to the Military Road (951 682). Follow the obvious grass track through gates as met to a ladder stile. Beyond the track heads for a clump of trees and passes up their left edge to a field gate with a stile. Go ahead briefly to a further gate with a stile then follow the left wall until there's a gate on the left when go a quarter-right to pass in front of a ruined building and continue in this direction to a stile. Cross and go forward to a further stile on the left then go half-right on a faint trodden path to a ladder stile onto a lane in the field corner (964 691) (6miles).

Turn left briefly then turn right over a ladder stile at a Hadrian's Wall national trail sign (denoted by an acorn). Follow the path between the road and wood edge, cross a track opposite right to follow the path through woodland (still close to the road). The path enters a field and here follow the grass track parallel to the Military Road to emerge on a lane. Cross opposite right and follow the right fence in the field to a ladder stile. Beyond follow the ditch to a ladder stile into the Errington Arms car park which makes a good pick-up point.

Stage 52 : Stagshaw Roundabout to Kirkwhelpington 13.5miles, ascent 406metres (1320ft), descent 443metres (1440ft). Explorer OL43 (Hadrian's Wall), small section of 316 (Newcastle upon Tyne), OL42 (Kielder Water); Landranger 87 (Hexham), 81 (Alnwick).

This stage follows the Hadrian's Wall Path, parallel to the B-road, for a couple of miles until signed off left by a St Oswald's Way sign. The well waymarked St Oswald's Way (SOW) can be followed all the way to the stage end at the small village of Kirkwhelpington. However, the route described here diverges from the SOW to use other paths and bridleways which provide a more direct passage; note that the path taken after West Harle farm is fairly unloved so keeping to the SOW might be preferable here. The route of the SOW on this stage is pleasant but undramatic. It mainly passes through farmland although the land seems to get progressively harsher the further north one proceeds.

Route: Cross the A68 road and follow the grass path left to the roundabout with the B-road and turn right as directed on the national trail path parallel to the B-road. Take the ladder stile on the right into a field. Follow the left wall with the B-road beyond until directed to veer right to go round a copse edge. The path then resumes along the left wall separating the B-road from the path. Continue until directed half-right to follow the edge wall of another copse before rejoining the wall by the B-road which is then followed until a stone stile onto the B-road. Cross the road to take the verge opposite as directed. Pass a layby and Carr Hill Farm. Then turn off left at a footpath sign to Great Whittington; there is a St Oswald's Way (SOW) sign here.

In the field entered follow the right hedge in a long field until near the bottom go half-left as directed into a short strip with a ladder stile at the end. Over, ignore the SOW sign off right and instead go straight ahead along the right fence to a stile onto a footbridge over a stream. Over, turn right to follow the right edge of the field and soon turn left to resume a northwards direction. Keep on in the same direction along right field boundaries to meet a farm drive. The path continues opposite right along an enclosed path to a ladder stile. After, follow the right fence to a walkers' gate onto a between-buildings path which meets a lane. Turn right, follow the lane to meet the main lane through Great Whittington and turn left through the village passing the Queens Head Inn.

Take the first lane right but when it almost immediately curves left, go straight on into and through a yard to find a green metal walkers' gate in the far left corner. Through, turn right to a walkers' gate. Beyond follow the right fence and go forward on a track by the right fence then wall which crosses a stream by a wonky wooden plank. Over, go half-left across a field to a bridle gate (without crossing the stream). Through the bridle gate follow the trodden path along the left field edge to a farm gate on the left at a (small) field turn. Through, follow the right field edge to a field gate on a trodden path. Through turn right along the right field edge to a bridle gate and beyond follow a trodden path, which starts half-left, to a stile onto a lane at Shellbraes Farm (4.2miles).

Turn right briefly and immediately after the farm drive, turn left through a bridle gate. Follow the left boundary to a further bridle gate into a large open field. Go a quarter-right (just west-of-north) over the highest point to a signed bridle gate in the far corner of the field. Through, follow the right hedge line to a bridle gate (re-joining St Oswald's Way) and continue up the right hedge to half-way up the field before veering half-left to a signed field gate. Beyond, go ahead keeping parallel to the right wall to find a signed bridle gate. Now follow the left wall on an improving descending path to a bridle gate. Through follow the left boundary which soon turns right and follow the descending path through farm gates as met to meet a lane. Turn right and the lane soon bends left and descends to a cross-road with a war memorial on the left. Go straight across and follow the rising lane into the pretty

hamlet of Hallington. Continue northwards on the very quiet lane to meet a B-road.

Turn right into tiny Little Bavington (9miles) and shortly after a left curve, turn off left on a signed footpath. Over the ladder stile, follow the old hedge line down to a bridle gate onto a footbridge. In the field entered go straight ahead towards a house above and pass the far left point of a copse and then turn right briefly then left to a bridle gate. Follow the crumbling right wall up the field until it curves right when go straight ahead to pass up the right fence to the left of the house, pass through a farm gate and go straight ahead through the yard onto the farm's drive. Follow the drive until it curves right when go straight ahead along the left fence and through a farm gate onto an enclosed path which becomes a track through the houses and meets the lane through Great Bavington village.

Take the lane opposite left, signed to Bellingham but immediately after crossing a cattle grid, turn off right on a farm track going north-northeast. When the track finishes, continue along the right fence (marker). After a ladder stile, the fence finishes and go just left of straight ahead to descend to the bottom by curving right round the base of a slope enabling a ladder stile to be spotted. Over, ascend on a grass track and continue along a right fence. Through a farm gate, turn right as directed on a track by the right wall towards West Harle Farm. Over a ladder stile, turn left as directed on a track up the left side of the farm which continues to become a lane. Cross a cattle grid and continue to where the lane turns sharp right.

The easier option here is to continue on the SOW along the lane, turn off left on a track to reach another lane and then turn right to the A696 main road. There is however a fairly unlovely, unwalked and rough path which cuts 0.2miles off the route. If you wish to take the path, leave the lane to follow the footpath sign off left to Kirkwhelpington. Go half-right (no path) towards a clump of gorse then head (north-northeastish) towards the house ahead perched on the top of the hill. When a fence is met, turn right along it to a walkers' gate on the left. Through, go a quarter-left ascending to a marker post near the hill top and turn left on a track following the SOW sign. Shortly on the descent look for a footpath waymark off half-right and take this. It emerges on the lane at a corner (sign). Immediately turn right off the lane through a field gate (sign). Go a quarter-left to a stile in the old field corner and over continue in the same direction descending past a marker post and continuing the descent to a stile onto the A696 road. Take the lane opposite (or opposite left) and ascend into Kirkwhelpington village. The only facility is a Post Office which operates from the village hall; there's accommodation a couple of miles away at Cornhills Farm. Alternatively by continuing on the route for another 1.2miles, there's accommodation nearby at Knowesgate.

Stage 53: Kirkwhelpington to Low Farnham 16miles, ascent 606metres (1970ft), descent 628metres (2040ft). Explorer OL42 (Kielder Water), OL16 (Cheviot Hills); Landranger 81 (Alnwick).

This is a really good walk. St Oswald's Way (SOW) is followed northwards into the Harwood Forest with a splendid piece of moorland walking preceding the forest entry. The route through the forest is straightforward with the SOW left at Fallowlees to go north-westwards along the Border County Ride. On leaving the forest, there's a wonderful hill track which descends to cross the River Coquet and on into Hepple village. From here, a track over the hill leads to accommodation available at the time of the walk in Low Farnham. Alas, this accommodation which included a restaurant has now permanently closed and so it might be necessary to walk on to Alwinton's inn, although it would be worth looking to see if there was anything on offer at Hepple. Note that on this stage, the

SOW is not always well marked.

Route: Continue past Kirkwhelpington's church and follow the road as it curves left at the village hall. Soon at a T-junction turn left and when the lane curves left turn off right (sign) along a grass track. Ascend ahead on an embankment to a walkers' gate onto the A696. Go a few metres to the right then take a walkers' gate off right into a field. Converge on the right wall and when it ends, go ahead on a wide grass track which curves right to a field gate with Whitehills Farm ahead. Through, follow the right wall to a farm gate onto a short track. At its end, turn left on the farm access drive and follow it to meet a road.

Turn left for 180metres then turn off right (sign) on a track (but for the Knowesgate accommodation continue on the road to meet the A696 road). Very shortly at a track T-junction turn right through a metal gate and soon turn left through a walkers' gate. Go a quarter-right (north) to a wall gap and continue quarter-right to a marker post and then go ahead as directed across moorland to a ladder stile. Beyond go three-quarters left along the edge of rushes to the next ladder stile. Over go half-right aiming for the (left) wood to find a footbridge (over Cowford Sike) and some duck boarding over the worst of the bog. Continue in the same half-right direction to a gateway at the left end of the wood (sign). Follow the track entered to a field gate and through go half-left towards the houses (unsigned path) to a field gate; the SOW follows the field boundary round two sides to a field gate and this is signed. Through the field gate go forward a few metres then turn right and follow the access drive of Catcherside Cottage as it curves left onto a lane.

Turn left on the lane but almost immediately leave the lane by turning right on a track signed to Harwood Forest. Follow the long straight track until a fence is met. Here turn right (sign) and very shortly turn left (at a bench and there's a path sign) to a field gate. Through, go right along the edge of a thin strip of woodland (signed); this is an extensive area of scrubland and some duck boarding is provided to assist walkers. At the end of the wood, go through a field gate onto an enclosed track and then along the right fence. The way along the fence becomes a short farm track leading to a field gate on the right (signed) and in the field entered follow the right boundary round two sides to a signed path junction. Here, follow the SOW sign which curves half-left away from the farm on a farm track. Follow the track through a farm gate and descend to cross a stream on a farm bridge. Beyond follow the track as it curves left ascending to a farm gate. Through, go three-quarters left to a stile by a farm gate onto a road (4.7miles).

Turn left for ¼mile and then turn off right on a surfaced track signed to Harwood. Ignore turn offs to reach Harwood Village (more like a hamlet) and here bear left at the sign to Redpath. The lane soon becomes a good track and plunges into Harwood Forest. Ignore turn offs until a sign off right to Redpath and Fallowlees which is taken (SOW sign). Soon the track enters a clearing with Redpath farm visible ahead. Follow the track to Redpath which now appears deserted. Continue on the track past the old farmhouse and soon head back into the trees. Keep on the main track north-eastish to Fallowlees. Curve left on the track by the side of the house (SOW sign) (NZ 019 943) then ignore the SOW sign off right and continue straight on (north-west) along the good track which is signed as a bridleway. Shortly at a cross-track, go straight on (sign) and continue along this to meet a forest road; this section of the Harwood Forest is pleasanter underfoot and more open than the SOW route through the wood.

Turn left and when it very shortly meets a track turn right to pass Chartners (house). Continue on the track and a good mile after Chartners at a track junction where the main track turns left (NY 995 969), continue straight on (bridleway sign in reeds on the left!) to a field gate with a bridle gate (11.1miles). Through, the forest is left behind and the clear

gently descending track is followed down the fell side of the Simonside Hills. Eventually pass through a field gate into a short enclosed track and at its end go half-right (sign) past a small marker post to a field turn. Follow an excellent descending farm track along the right fence and then through woodland. The track passes left of a house and then bears left onto a lane. Shortly turn off right (bridleway sign) through a bridle gate and cross the field entered quarter-right to a stile onto a farm drive ahead which is followed to meet a lane.

Cross and go half-left to the lower road and turn left descending. At the bottom take a signed footpath off half-right to a stile onto a road (some distance left of a stone bridge). Turn right, cross the River Coquet and ascend into Hepple. Take the second lane off left, which has an East Hepple sign. Pass through the gateway ahead with a High Grow Law sign. The rough lane is marked as an off-road cycle track and becomes a good clear track which ascends by the right hedge. Keep following the obvious track until the track approaches a bungalow. Here turn left over a cattle grid (faded sign) and continue along the track. Cross another cattle grid by farm buildings and follow the farm access drive out to the left. It descends to meet a lane on a corner. Turn left and follow the (public) lane through a farm gate into Low Farnham which is the stage end.

Stage 54: Low Farnham to Barrowburn 10.5miles, ascent 674metres (2190ft), descent 560metres (1820ft). Explorer OL16 (Cheviot Hills); Landranger 81 (Alnwick), 80 (Cheviot Hills).

This is another good walk with the first objective being Alwinton village at the foot of the Cheviot Hills. Unfortunately, on the way to Alwinton, when the route gets to Sharperton the obvious (and direct) bridleway can't be used because there is no footbridge across the River Coquet and fording the river is not recommended. As a result, it's necessary to take to lanes for more than 2miles albeit quiet ones. Alwinton (which has an inn) is the last village in Upper Coquetdale and is just inside Northumberland's National Park. Beyond, the route continues towards the Cheviot Hills which straddle the English-Scottish border; it's an upland area with hardy sheep and few dwellings. The route taken follows the Pass Peth track along Upper Coquetdale to Shillmoor farm. A track north-northwest from here up and over Shillhope Law leads to the stage end at Barrowburn which offers self-catering accommodation for the night (and camping). For those not fancying the climb up Shillhope Law the alternative from Shillmoor is to take its access drive and rejoin the valley lane, which is then followed to just after it crosses the Coquet when a track right can be taken to Barrowburn; this is over $\frac{1}{3}$ mile longer but avoids around 185metres (600ft) of ascent and descent.

Route: Continue through Low Farnham. Immediately after the last building on the left and on a right bend, turn off left on a signed path. Cross a cattle grid then go half-right, aiming for the bottom of the near wood, and find a stile near the field corner. Cross and just through the trees, cross a stream on the left by a footbridge then cross another stile and turn right on a bridleway which goes parallel to the right fence. Eventually pass through a bridle gate. A bridge across the Coquet is a short distance ahead but ignore this to take an ascending track starting half-right which then follows the left fence with the River Coquet below on the left. On reaching a signed walkers' gate on the left, take this and descend on an embankment beside a right fence until a footbridge leads to a walkers' gate onto a lane.

Turn left through Sharperton. Take the first lane off right, signed to Sharperton Edge. Continue to where the lane bends right and turn off left along a more minor lane signed to Well House. At a T-junction turn left and follow the lane past Wellcome House Farm and

through the hamlet of The Peels to its end. The lane continues as a track signed to Low Alwinton with the river to the left of the track. Follow the obvious track through farm gates as met to Low Alwinton Farm where the bridleway becomes a lane. Follow the lane to just after a cattle grid and then branch off right round the base of a slope to a gate into the churchyard. Follow the left wall of the church grounds, exit and then take its tarmac access drive to a road. Turn right and ignoring turn offs, cross the River Alwin and enter Alwinton village. In the village turn left, signed for Windyhaugh (5.3miles).

Pass the Rose & Thistle (B&B and food) and follow the lane for a mile out of Alwinton then turn off right at a bridleway sign to Shillmoor. Go three-quarters left on a trodden grassway to a bridle gate and continue on the ascending track which goes alongside a right fence to the next bridle gate. Beyond meet and cross a farm track. After passing a marker post the path curves right to the next marker post and then go ahead as directed on a clear path which descends; the buildings of Shillmoor can be seen ahead. Pass through a field gate and shortly after turn off left through a signed bridle gate, ford a small burn and continue through a small newly planted plantation to a bridle gate onto the open hillside. The path now follows above the line of the Coquet. Cross a farm track (sign) and continue to a footbridge with a bridle gate beyond. Through, the path follows the left wall to Shillmoor Farm buildings. Here, cross a stream, pass through a field gate then pass to the left of the farmhouse and just beyond turn right through a wide wall gap. Almost immediately turn right again on a track with a 'Bridges Ahead Weight Restriction' sign (7.9miles).

Follow the ascending track which curves left and almost immediately after crossing a cattle grid, branch off left on a track which ascends by the left wall then by the left fence; there's a track all the way although the track temporarily leaves the left fence to cut a corner. The track just keeps ascending and after ascending particularly steeply reaches a field gate. Through, keep with the left fence still ascending all the time. On the final ascent to the summit of Shillhope Law at 501metres (1628ft), the path diverges from the left fence. Look for a more minor track off left and take this to shortly reach a field gate. Through, the summit of Shillhope Law with its trig point is shortly ahead but the route turns right after the field gate to follow a descending track by the right fence, with the buildings of Barrowburn soon visible in the valley below. After passing through a field gate continue on the grass track across open hillside but when this track turns right heading away from the valley, look for a grass track off half-left. This descends steeply at first before dropping more gently to a good track in the valley. Turn left and follow the bridleway signs to Barrowburn farm.

Stage 55: Barrowburn to Jedburgh 18.6miles, 877metres (2850ft), 1058metres (3440ft). Explorer OL16 (Cheviot Hills); Landranger 80 (Cheviot Hills), 74 (Kelso).

This is an excellent walk over the Cheviots with a steady climb on a good track, called The Street, onto the ridge where Scotland is entered; on the ascent, there's a fence to follow all the way. The clear grass track continues but surprisingly stays high, passing many side valleys, before a final descent to the small village of Hownam, which marks the half-way point. There are no facilities in Hownam and if you've had enough at this point, there is a taxi service covering the area (Hownam Taxi tel. 0157 344 0389). Beyond Hownam, tracks/paths are in short supply, so it's a case of lane walking westwards through farmland to meet and then follow the Roman Road of Dere Street. Latterly, Dere Street becomes a good track and is followed until a lane off into the sizeable picturesque Borders town of Jedburgh; Jedburgh has plenty of accommodation, shops, eating places and many historic buildings including its abbey.

Route: Pass Barrowburn farm and continue on its access to the valley lane. Turn right and

follow the lane by the side of the River Coquet. After $\frac{2}{3}$ mile the lane curves left and crosses Rowhope Burn. Immediately after (and before the cattle grid), turn off half-right through a field gate onto a track signed 'The Street'. The track ascends along the left fence and continues to be followed after the fence turns right. The fence side is swapped after a field gate with a three-way bridleway post nearby. Soon after at a branch, fork right as directed to go right of the summit of Bought Law. Again the track stays near the right fence. After a flattish interlude, The Street meets a track and turns right to keep with the right fence. The track keeps to the right of Swineside Law and descends to the first field gate (which is signed). Through the fence side is swapped but the track diverges from the fence only to return to where there's a field gate with a stile (bridleway sign). Through, the fence side is again swapped with the path following close to the right fence as it now contours the hillside to a field gate (signed). Beyond, the track follows the left fence to a four-way signpost marking the meeting with the Pennine Way (4miles).

The Street continues straight on by the Border Fence on the left and passing through the next field gate marks the entrance into Scotland; there's an Information Board about The Street and its connection with smuggling plus a stupendous view. Take the track which passes a 'No Cars Or Bikes from April 1st to May 31st' notice and follow the track which keeps with the left fence. Eventually a field gate is reached and beyond the track curves half-right to another field gate. Through follow the track and eventually get to a field gate where the major track ascends the hillside ahead. However this is not the track required! Instead, go half-left to a field gate a short distance away (NT 815 176) and then follow the ascending track by the right fence (north-westwards). The track continues by or close to the right fence and then eventually descends to a col (799 185). The path continues through the field gate ahead following a left wall. Continue by the wall when it turns left to reach a signpost. Turn left through a bridle gate (signed to Hownam) and follow the track by the right wall. The track becomes a farm track and this is followed down, with the houses of Hownam becoming visible. After the track turns left to a field gate, the track beyond becomes a tarmac lane which meets a lane (9.3miles).

Turn right through Hownam and take the first left signed for Jedburgh. The lane crosses Kale Water immediately and then begins a long ascent to a ridge which the lane then follows. The lane becomes the Roman Road of Dere Street and eventually reaches a T-junction. Cross to take the track opposite and when a lane is met go straight across on the track continuation. On meeting the next lane turn left (15.8miles). The lane does a fairly long ascent before descending to meet a road; Jedburgh can be seen at this point. Turn right and follow the road past the Mainetti factory to a sharp left bend. Here take the track off right which descends steeply and becomes a street. Follow the short street to a road junction; there are a couple of B&Bs up the road to the left but the route continues to the centre of Jedburgh by going opposite left to an old bridge over Jed Water. Beyond use the A68 underpass and continue up the road to the road junction in Jedburgh's main square; there's a market cross in the square and the Abbey is off to the left.

Stage 56: Jedburgh to Melrose 13.9miles, ascent 637metres (2070ft), descent 628metres (2040ft). Explorer OL16 (Cheviot Hills), 338 (Galashiels); Landranger 74 (Kelso), 73 (Galashiels).

It is of course possible to reach Melrose by following the Borders Abbeys Way to Jedfoot and then follow St Cuthbert's Way all the way to Melrose. However, this is not very direct resulting in a mileage near the twenty mile mark. So instead, a very pleasant, more direct, route is used which passes through typical lush Borders farmland countryside to arrive at

the foot of the more dramatic Eildon Hills where St Cuthbert's Way is joined for the entry into charming Melrose.

The first objective is Ancrum, a small town lying 3 miles (as the crow flies) north-west of Jedburgh. Surprisingly there doesn't seem to be a well established route and the one presented here is the best (and shortest) of many tries. Beyond Ancrum, an old bridge crossing Ale Water is used to reach a lane to Long Newton. This in turn leads to tracks and paths which can be used until just before Bowden village where St Cuthbert's Way is joined. The Way rises to the col between the two major Eildon hills. There are spectacular views of the Southern Upland hills from here as well as on the descent into the small town of Melrose. As well as three long distance walks passing through the town (Southern Upland Way, Borders Abbeys Way and St Cuthbert's Way), it has an abbey founded in the 12th century and the town is beautifully situated on the River Tweed. Thus this much visited town is well used to catering for all types of tourists.

Route: From the cross in Jedburgh's square turn right down High Street and turn left into Queen Street when the Capon Tree Town House (on the right) is reached. Take the first left into Pleasance (street) and curve right into Sharplaw Road. Continue down Sharplaw Road, pass the derestriction sign and keep going. Ignore a track off left signed to Timpendean Tower and continue past a distinct right bend with a large house on the left. Just past here, at another right bend, there's an access off left to Monklaw Farm and a good cart track straight on. Take the cart track which is signed for Jedfoot Trails as well as for the Justice Trail and the Lanton Loop. Follow the clear track northwards into a short wood. At the wood end, continue on an enclosed track to a gate into a large field. The track shown on maps goes a quarter-right but if crops prevent this turn left and follow the perimeter clockwise (west, south, west and north) to a field gate with a kissing gate. Beyond, pass through a short piece of woodland. On exiting the wood into a field, the path should continue a quarter-right but again if crops prevent this then turn right along the field boundary and on meeting a gate, cross it and continue by the right fence until the (faint) track turns three-quarters left towards the bottom hedge with a main road on the other side of the hedge. Follow the bottom hedge to the left and leave the field onto the main road via the field gate just before a house.

Take the lane opposite left (signed as a private road with no parking) and follow it to an old stone bridge crossing of the River Teviot; the indents on the bridge have small peep holes to detect unwanted travellers! Beyond the river, follow a stone track along the edge of a recreation ground and continue on a signed path to Ancrum which runs alongside the A68. Turn left at a sign along the farm drive to Copland Farm. The track curves right and almost immediately turn right on a signed track to a footbridge over Ale Water. Beyond turn left along the riverside path signed to Ancrum. Pass through a field gate and go straight ahead along an access track to meet a road. Turn right briefly to the B-road. Turn left and take the first left off it then first right (North Myrescroft) to remeet the B-road in the centre of Ancrum (3.8miles).

Turn left and leave the village. Continue to a green seat on the right and take the good descending path from it which meets the lane to the cemetery. Turn right and follow the lane which becomes a track round the graveyard edge to an old stone bridge over Ale Water. Cross and then turn left on a track to a field gate. Through, go a quarter-right across the field to a field gate. Through, follow the clear ascending track starting along the left fence. When the wood is left beyond a field gate, continue to ascend curving right to go straight up the slope. When near the top of the slope, curve right to find a field gate in the left wall and exit onto a lane (NT 623 255) (5miles).

Turn left and ignoring turn offs continue for 2¾miles to a sharp turn right and here turn off left on a surfaced lane to Longnewton House. Just as a house on the left is reached, turn right on a farm track which passes to the right of farm buildings to reach a lane. Turn left, pass Longnewton's burial ground on the right and almost immediately after turn off right onto a minor lane which after Birseslees becomes a (mainly enclosed) track. Ignore a track off left and carry on along the obvious track to meet a lane.

Take the footpath opposite right signed to Bowden and follow the trodden path which stays close to the right fence. After crossing a concrete bridge, the path continues by the left fence only making a brief deviation to the right to a concrete bridge over a burn before returning to the left fence. On meeting a road junction (556 300) (10.7miles), cross the A699 to take the lane opposite signed to Bowden Kirk. Pass the church and at the bottom of the descent cross Bowden Burn and over turn right on a lane which ascends (turning left) to a B-road in Bowden village; St Cuthbert's Way (SCW) is joined part way up.

Turn right briefly then turn off left (SCW sign). Pass a shelter and almost immediately go a quarter-right at a sign to the Eildon Hills. Pass a playground and beyond follow a grass track towards the largest hill to reach a walkers' gate into woodland. Beyond follow the obvious path which crosses a farm road, ascends a few steps then turns right on a wide path parallel to the farm road. When the path curves left to ascend (sign), the farm road is left. The path meets a track and continues straight across (sign). Continue ascending, curving right at a sign to a right hedge which is then followed. Eventually, the path curves left away from the hedge to meet a forest track. Turn right as directed to meet another forest track and turn left here as signed, still ascending, to a field gate. Beyond, it's open hillside.

Through, ignore a turn off left and then branch right as signed. Continue northwards to a cross-track (sign). Here, go straight ahead and descend on a well walked path (still northwards). Look for a SCW diversion off left and descend to a fence. Turn right along the fence (sign) until there's a sign pointing left down steps to a walkers' gate. Follow a descending stony path to a farm track and the track down continues opposite. After descending wooden steps, turn left, pass boot scrapers and a brush then ascend concrete steps to a road. Turn right to a road junction in the centre of Melrose. Abbey Street is across the road (to the right of the cross) and Buccleuch Street with its Post office is first left off Abbey Street.

Stage 57: Melrose to Traquair 17.6miles, ascent 1111metres (3610ft), descent 1040metres (3380ft). Explorer 338 (Galashiels), 337 (Peebles); Landranger 73 (Galashiels)

This is a splendid walk using much of the Southern Upland Way (SUW) route between Melrose and Traquair. The route starts gently along the south bank of the Tweed using the Borders Abbey Way (BAW) before joining the SUW for the ascent round the shoulder of Gala Hill. After temporarily leaving the SUW to its meander round Galashiels old town, the SUW is followed over gentle hills to Yair Bridge crossing the River Tweed. Beyond, the real climb of the day awaits through forest, which has been cleared so as not to be oppressive, up to the local landmark of the Three Brethren Cairns; these well-built, tall, stone bee-hive cairns at 464metres (1508ft) date from the 16th century and are thought to have been built by the lairds of Yair, Philiphaugh and Selkirk to mark their land boundaries. After, a splendid ridge walk ensues which rises to 523metres (1700ft) before dropping down to tiny Traquair. There's not a lot at Traquair but it does have a B&B; Innerleithan is a small town a couple of miles away where an evening meal can be had.

The Southern Upland Way (SUW) and the Borders Abbey Way (BAW) are so well signed at every junction/turn and trodden that only a brief description of the route is given with any special points mentioned.

Route: Continue to the end of Buccleuch Street and turn right along High Street. After passing the entry to the Melrose Rugby Football Club on the right, take a wide tarmac track off right at the end of the pitch. Cross St Mary's Road to take the tarmac path continuation opposite and follow this to a riverside path along the River Tweed, so meeting the BAW (and the SUW). Turn left to meet a lane and turn right briefly before turning right on a path to the river. Follow the riverside path and when the path next emerges on a road, turn right along the B-road following Borders Abbeys Way (BAW) signs. Shortly, just before the road turns right over the Tweed, go straight ahead (BAW sign) and follow BAW signage off right to again reach the Tweed. The line of the Tweed is now followed until the road bridge carrying the A6091 (high above half-right) is approached. Leave the BAW on a path which ascends to the road. Turn right to cross the Tweed by the road bridge and continue to a roundabout.

Turn left at the roundabout (the A7) and continue to a SUW sign pointing right up some wooden steps; the SUW is rejoined here. The path leads to a lane. Turn right briefly then turn left on a track. The track continues by a right wall (for one field) before turning right up a right wall. The track then contours before it descends gently and becomes a lane. On meeting a lane (5miles), turn left (leaving the SUW temporarily) and follow the lane for ½mile to a prominent SUW sign. Turn right as directed on a short good descending track to a stile. Over, the SUW route is rejoined having done a circular tour of Galashiels.

Follow parallel to the right wall ascending to a marker post by a tree then continue along the hill crest (which curves left) to a stone stile with a nearby field gate (about 80metres to the right of the field gate in the top left field corner). After a small section through woodland, the path contours along a left wall in a west-southwest direction and then goes ahead to a marker post close to a beehive-shaped cairn. The track passes left of the cairn and continues to a walkers' gate and stile. Beyond, follow the track to a marker post and go ahead as directed to join and follow a left wall. Leave the wall to follow a descending farm track all the way to a lane. Take the track opposite and descend to the A707. Turn left and then follow the A-road to the right over Yair Bridge which crosses the River Tweed (8miles).

Immediately over the bridge turn right on an estate road. Continue to follow the lane (keeping left of the house) until there's a prominent SUW sign pointing left into the forest; much of the forest surrounding the SUW path has been felled enabling an appreciation of one's surroundings. After a gentle ascent on a good track, a track junction is reached. The SUW goes straight on ascending more steeply to meet a forest road. The SUW continues on the ascending track opposite to reach a signpost. The route goes straight on here, leaving the wood. Continue with the track curving right to the three beehive-shaped cairns called The Three Brethren (10.5miles); there's also a trig point here.

From here the track turns left and follows the ridge until passing right of Broomy Law. The track then contours before descending and reaching a track fork; much of the route from the trig point is close to a left fence or wall. Branch right as directed and ascend Brown Knowe by the right fence. The track descends passing the signpost for the Minchmoor Road track. Soon the SUW enters bits of trees, crosses a forest road and beyond gently ascends; this is the last hill of this stage. At a track junction go straight on along a track which starts to gently descend (at last!). Pass a board with information about the history of The Minchmoor Road. Pass the sculptures of the cut rings in the vegetation which look

circular but are in fact oval. After, branch left as signed at a path fork. Meet a forest road and take the track opposite to continue the long descent. Similarly when the next forest road is met go straight across to continue downwards travel. Pass a bothy and keep descending. Eventually when the track meets a lane go straight on (right) to a lane junction in Traquair.

Stage 58: Traquair to Eddleston 14.6miles, ascent 582metres (1890ft), descent 538metres (1750ft). Explorer 337 (Peebles); Landranger 73 (Galashiels).

This is a walk of two halves; the route to Peebles is largely an easy low-level walk, while a drove route over the side of Hamilton Hill is used to reach Eddleston. A low level, signed walk into Peebles has been developed to keep walkers off the road. It uses the forest roads through Wallacehill Wood to reach Cardrona village and then takes to the disused railway line until a riverside path into Peebles can be followed. The walk from Peebles is very fine. It uses the usual drove route towards West Linton until the turn for Upper Stewarton is reached when the route continues on to the attractive touristy village of Eddleston; Eddleston has two (upmarket) hotels and also B&B accommodation.

Route: From the road junction in Traquair take the B-road opposite signed to Peebles. After following the valley road for 1¼miles turn left onto a farm track at a large farm (the track is signed to Cardrona). At the next sign turn half-right on an ascending farm track which curves right through a disused stone quarry and continues ascending on a path to a forest road. Turn right on this and continue until another forest road is met. Turn left for a short distance with the river and B-road visible below. After a short distance turn off half-right (sign) onto a grass track to a track fork. Branch right as directed on the major track and continue the descent down to the B-road.

Turn left; the houses of Cardrona village are visible on the right. Take the first road off right (Cardrona Way) and follow the road down to pick up pedestrian/cyclist signs to Peebles which are followed. The road curves left and continues to reach a roundabout. Pass either right or left of the old station building at Cardrona Station, which is now a cafe and general stores, to join the disused railway line to Peebles. Follow the excellent surfaced track which almost immediately crosses the Tweed and then passes through a golf course (with notices to move through quietly!). At a sign announcing Eshiels the track forks. Go straight on here (left branch). Pass sewage works and go through a tunnel. On the far side of the tunnel, the cycleway is close to the A72 road. Continue for a short distance on the cycleway to a layby and cross the A72 to a signed footpath opposite signed as a riverside path to Peebles. Descend steps into a field and turn right to follow the River Tweed. Continue to a footbridge and take the tarmac path half-right and then follow a pedestrian road which ascends to Peebles main shopping street (7.7miles).

Turn left and at a T-junction turn right and follow the main road as it curves left. Shortly, turn off right on Young Street, signed for Rosetta. Follow the road up and after passing the derestriction sign continue to where the road turns right. Here turn off left on a track signed 'Old Drove Road to West Linton'. Ascend on a good track in the company of a right wall. Through a bridle gate the track keeps nearish the right wall. DON'T go through the next field gate with a walkers' gate. Instead continue on the grass track between a left fence and the right wall descending to a footbridge. Beyond ascend on an enclosed path, pass through a bridle gate and continue by turning right; the path gets quite rough so the path on the other side of the right wall may be preferable but return to the correct side of the wall to take a bridle gate. Through, turn left as signed up the left fence to a bridle gate onto a farm access drive. Turn right to meet a lane.

Turn right here (sign) for 0.3mile then turn left up a signed access track. Follow the twisting unsurfaced track to a cross-track with a signpost. Turn right, signed 'Old Drove Road to West Linton & Eddleston'. Ascend on a good track. Ignore a sign off left to West Linton to continue straight on, signed to Eddleston. Go through a field gate and follow the grass track along the right wall to a field gate and then along the right wall to the next field gate where the wall finishes. Beyond go ahead as directed on a good clear track. Just beyond the next field gate there's a signed track branch. Take the right branch signed for Eddleston via Barony; straight on goes to Shiplaw. Follow the Eddleston track which passes through a field gate before shortly turning right then left round a residence to meet a gravel access track. Turn right briefly then turn off left on a gravel path to Fairydean Mill (B&B). Pass left of the mill to take the bridge over Fairydean Burn and follow the descending surfaced access drive. When the drive passes past Barony Castle (hotel) note the steps off right into its car park. When the drive emerges on a lane, turn left and keep to the major lane to meet the main A703 road in Eddleston village with the Horseshoe Inn (hotel) opposite.

Stage 59: Eddleston to West Linton 8.9miles, ascent 305metres (990ft), descent 271metres (880ft). Explorer 337 (Peebles), 344 (Pentland Hills); Landranger 73 (Galashiels), 72 (Upper Clyde Valley).

This is a relatively short stage and is a very good walk. It starts with an inspection of the Great Polish Map of Scotland. It's a 40metres (130ft) by 50metres (162½ft) three-dimensional to-scale map of Scotland complete with water around the coast and in the lochs. It was a gift to the people of Scotland from a Polish gentleman who was stationed locally during the second world war and afterwards became the owner of Barony Castle. The map was in a neglected state but restoration was completed in December 2017 and it is well worth a look. The route then picks up the track being followed on the previous stage which leads to Shiplaw. From the number of signs to Shiplaw, one might suppose it is a large place but when the track emerges at a lane junction, nothing can be seen! In fact Shiplaw is a single (large) farm, out of sight, to the right.

The route turns westwards through the Cloich Forest to meet the busy and fast A701 road at Noblehouse. From here, the route cuts across to Kaimhouse Lodge and then follows Lyne Water into West Linton. West Linton can also be approached via a climb over Broomlee Hill but it's a lot of effort for very little return (you can't get to its summit) and it leaves walkers with a mile along the mainly unpaved B-road and so is not recommended. West Linton is a small pleasant town just south of the Pentland Hills and has both accommodation plus a general stores.

Route: Return to the steps down into Barony Castle's car park. After descending, cross the car park to a passageway opposite signed to the Ropes Course. Turn left over Dean Bridge (signed to the 'map') which crosses a deep ravine; note the water wheel in the ravine to the right. Over, the Great Polish Map of Scotland is ahead. After viewing what's there, retrace your route across the car park and ascend the steps to the access drive. Take the track opposite right signed to the Ice House. Almost immediately meet a track and turn left. The track passes to the right of the Ice House and continues through two field gates. At a signed track branch, fork right (north) through the woodland and follow it as it curves left to meet a forest track with a four-way signpost. Turn right, signed 'Old Road to Shiplaw'. After going over a cattle grid, the track continues to a lane junction at Shiplaw; there are no houses here!

Turn left signed for the Cloich Forest Loop. When the lane ends go straight on (signed

Scotsways) along a forest road. Ignore a track off right and continue to where the forest road curves left with a track off right which crosses a cattle grid (NT 213 502). Take the track *between* the cattle grid track and the forest road and follow the right fence. After passing through a walkers' gate there's wood on both sides of the track although much has been felled or newly planted so views are more open than the map suggests. The improving track passes to the left of the ruin of Grassfield. Continue on what is now a wide forestry road with views of the Pentland Hills. Ignore an ascending track off left and curve right to continue with a gentle descent. Just follow the track down passing Noblehouse Farm to exit onto the main A701 road (5.4miles).

Turn left for an unpleasant $\frac{3}{4}$ mile on the busy A-road (no pavement) then turn right at a signed farm track. On entering the next field, turn right briefly, pass into the next field and turn left on the good farm track. Keep following the track which passes up the right side of a wood and meet an access lane. Turn left to meet a B-road; Kaimhouse Lodge is opposite right.

Turn right for a few metres and then turn left on a track immediately after the lodge. On shortly meeting a track, turn right over a bridge to cross Lyne Water and then turn immediately right on a track. On reaching a track junction go half-right (north-west) towards Waulkmill. When the gravel track swings right into Waulkmill, go straight on. After the wood ends, turn right and follow the trodden path down to the west bank of Lyne Water. Lyne Water is followed to the left to reach a stone bridge (just beyond a water pipe). Cross and turn left over a footbridge following a well trodden path which shortly leaves Lyne Water to follow a side burn and then re-meets the B-road. Turn left for over half a mile and just after the Toll House cafe take the lane to the left of the church into the park and turn right at the end to meet West Linton's main street.

Stage 60: West Linton to East Calder 13.1miles, ascent 437metres (1420ft), descent 557metres (1810ft). Explorer 344 (Pentland Hills), 350 (Edinburgh); Landranger 65 (Falkirk).

This is a very satisfying walk over the Pentland Hills using the historic crossing point of Cauldstane Slap. This is a walk amidst hills and feels remote. The pass is an old drovers route and has the name Thieves Road indicating its other uses. The nature of the path either side of the pass summit are quite different. It's an excellent hill track on the ascent while the path down is somewhat rougher and boggier. From the car park at Little Vantage, a new path to and through Selm Muir Wood is used to avoid a lot of tarmac walking in getting to East Calder village. The village lies about a mile from the eastern edge of Livingston; it has B&B accommodation and the village pub provides food.

Route: Turn left along West Linton's High Street. Turn left into Upper Green and right onto a tarmac path and ascend steps to the main A702 road. Turn right briefly to a Scottish Rights of Way sign (signed to 'Carlops') and turn left as directed crossing the A702 onto a path called the Catwalk. Follow the clear path which soon ascends through woodland to a position high above Lyne Water. Follow the clear (contouring) path northwards which runs parallel to and far above the water until it emerges on a rough lane; this is the Roman Road to Carlops. Turn right to woodland on the right and go over a gate on the left into a field. In the field go half right to exit via a farm gate onto a farm access track before Stonypath Farm; the alternative to the field path is to continue on the Roman Road then turn left onto Stonypath Farm's access drive (signed 'Little Vantage via Baddingsgill & Cauldstane Slap').

At the farm keep right of the buildings to go straight on (signed Tweed Trails) along a long straight farm track. Continue on the track after it reaches open hillside. After some time, ignore a descending path off left (signed 'Tweed Trails') so as to continue straight on along a track which contours the hillside to reach a surfaced lane. Either turn left to meet the lane from West Linton or (more interesting) turn right. Almost immediately cross a bridge and just after, turn off right towards a house but then turn left to pass left of the house. Go straight ahead along a track which starts along the right boundary of Baddingsgill House and continues to a field gate; ignore any notices diverting walkers from the track as notices tend not to be removed although any blockage has long gone. The grassy track continues along the left fence to a (small height) gate. Through or over, cross the reservoir outflow and continue along the foot of the reservoir dam to reach the south-west end of Baddingsgill Reservoir, where the track meets the lane from West Linton. In both cases, turn right so rejoining the Tweed Trail route to Little Vantage (3.5miles).

Follow the good clear (main) track which is clearly signed until the track goes half left ascending the hillside. Here take the path straight on as directed. The path contours the hillside heading inexorably for a gap in the hills. The path suddenly curves left to reach Cauldstone Slap, the summit point of the pass with a view over to the Edinburgh side (5.8miles). Pass the signpost (signed 'Thieves Road') and continue on the descending path which is quite different in character to that on the ascent. The path is quite clear but rough walking and has many wet patches; some planking is provided to help with the boggiest bits. Harperrig Reservoir is clearly visible on the descent which skirts East Cairn Hill before making for the houses at the east end of the reservoir. However, soon after passing through a bridle gate go half-right at a marker post, away from the houses, to find and follow a left fence. Keep with the left fence until a marker post indicates a left turn to a footbridge over the Water of Leith. Over turn left to a bridle gate and then turn right up to a bridle gate. Take this and the one opposite and follow the path up beside a right wall all the way to the car park at Little Vantage on the A70 (8.6miles).

The newly created (mainly trodden) well waymarked path from the car park to Leyden Road is now taken. Cross the A70 to the stile opposite left and go slightly left of straight ahead to a post with a yellow cap. Make for the next post which is now visible and follow the posts across the moorland; the posts loosely follow the right wall/fence line cutting the right field corner and are mostly placed where there's a footbridge over a ditch. At the top of the rise there's a walkers' gate. Through, go forward a few metres then curve right briefly to a post at a field edge. Turn three-quarters left here and head towards the buildings visible below to find a walkers' gate next to a field gate. Follow the track beyond, pass a bungalow and curve left on its access track to meet a more major access track. Turn left on this and follow the drive past the Hilly Cow Wigwams and turn left on a good farm track at the end of the concrete drive (sign). The track continues past a house to a field gate with a stile and continues beyond to a further field gate with a stile. Keep on in the same direction to a field gate with a stile onto a good track. Turn right to shortly reach Leyden Road.

Turn left along Leyden Road and when it meets Station Road, turn left to shortly meet the busy A71 road. Take the road opposite left, signed to East Calder using the pavement short-cut and a short distance after the pavement joins the road, turn right at a cycle route sign to East Calder. Follow the good farm track to meet a rough lane and take the track straight ahead to meet a B-road in East Calder village. Turn right to the second footpath off left, a walkers and cyclists entrance, into the Almondell & Calderwood Country Park which is taken at the start of the following stage.

Stage 61: East Calder to Polmont 17.3miles, ascent 388metres (1260ft), descent 428metres (1390ft). Explorer 350 (Edinburgh), 349 (Falkirk); Landranger 65 (Falkirk).

This stage moves northwards then westwards through Scotland's heavily populated central belt and although this is a larger mileage than usual, it's all easy level walking with the off-road walking all on good surfaces. The route passes through the Almondell & Calderwood Country Park making for the Union Canal. Once on the canal, it is followed to Polmont. It feels surprisingly rural and remote, with any towns passed through largely hidden. There is very little in the way of on-route refreshment points, so The Park Bistro, about 1½miles before Linlithgow is very welcome; there is a small (limited) cafe run by canal enthusiasts at the Linlithgow canal basin. Accommodation is limited around Polmont but there is an inn on the A803 about ¾mile away which offers food and accommodation; this is not included in the mileage.

Route: Enter the Almondell & Calderwood Country Park by passing through the imposing arch (there's also a cyclist sign to Livingston) and follow the tarmac drive to crenellated Naysmith Bridge over the River Almond. Cross and turn right on a path beside the river. Shortly turn left at the far end of wooden fencing to the Visitor Centre (toilets, chocolate and drinks available). From the front of the Visitor's Centre go ahead a few metres to its access drive and turn right ascending to North Lodge. Go straight ahead on the lane signed to the Union Canal. Ignore a turn off left and further on at a cross-road go straight on. The lane passes under a railway bridge and then a motorway. Cross the canal bridge and immediately turn right onto the canal towpath and turn right, westwards. Keep the canal on your left and just keep going! The canal passes through Broxburn, Winchburgh and Philpstoun and is surprisingly rural. The first eating place encountered is the Park Bistro after Philpstoun (10.1miles).

At Linlithgow there's a cafe over the bridge which is run by the Linlithgow Union Canal Society. Continue on the towpath passing over the River Avon on an aqueduct (14.4miles). Over, there's a sign that Polmont is a further 3miles. If finishing at Polmont, continue on the canal to bridge 54, pass under the bridge and ascend up the steps onto the B-road above. Follow the B-road northwards, away from the canal, pass Polmont's railway station and continue on the B-road to meet the A803, with its inn to the left.

Stage 62: Polmont to Croy Station 16miles, ascent 342metres (1110ft), descent 338metres (1100ft). Explorer 349 (Falkirk); Landranger 65 (Falkirk), 64 (Glasgow).

This is another easy day of low level walking, completing the route's traverse of Scotland's central belt. It starts with just less than 6 miles along the Union Canal to the Falkirk Wheel. It's well worth pausing here and having a ride on the wheel connecting the Union Canal to the Forth & Clyde Canal if you have the time; the canals are at different heights and the wheel replaces eight locks previously used for the link. It's a smashing piece of unique engineering skill and it's British designed and manufactured; the first trip on the Wheel is around 11:00 and takes about 50minutes. From the Wheel, the Forth & Clyde Canal is followed. The natural finishing point for this section of the walk is Croy station with its regular services to Glasgow and Edinburgh. The next section sees the walk continuing on to nearby Kilsyth and on to the Campsie Fells rising at the back of Kilsyth.

Route: From Polmont, continue westwards on the Union Canal. There are locks as well as a couple of tunnels to pass through to reach the Falkirk Wheel. The first tunnel is long and dimly lit but has a handrail. It's two miles to the Falkirk Wheel from its exit. After, two locks

are passed then Santa's Grotto, the much smaller Roughcastle Tunnel is reached; its entrance gate is open between dawn and dusk. The tunnel is lit and on emerging from its towpath, the Falkirk Wheel is directly ahead. Out of the tunnel, leave the canal and take the paved descending path half-right (following Sustrans signs) which leads to the Visitor Centre (5.7miles); the Visitor Centre has a good cafe where you can watch the Wheel turning.

From the Wheel, it's around 10.4miles to Croy Station; Kilsyth is a similar distance. To get to the Forth & Clyde canal, continue on the tarmac path to the right of the Visitor Centre. This almost immediately leads to a footbridge which is crossed onto the towpath of the Forth & Clyde canal. Turn left, westwards, signed Bonnybridge. After passing through Bonnybridge, three locks are passed then the towpath passes under a major dual-carriageway and continues past another lock (Lock 20). Further on, there are some picnic tables near Kelvinhead jetty. Beyond, get to a lane at Craigmarloch (NS 737 774) (13.6miles). The next section returns to this point from Croy Station, so if a train is not required, use the directions in the next section to walk directly to Kilsyth (accommodation, food) from Craigmarloch; note that the next railway station easily accessible from the walk is Corrour Station on Rannoch Moor.

To get to Croy station from Craigmarloch, turn left on the lane, cross the canal and almost immediately take the path off ahead right, signed to Croy. Follow the steeply ascending gravel path to meet a track and turn left. Continue to a path signed off right which is taken. Follow John Muir signs which take walkers along the line of the Antonine Wall across Croy Hill; the Romans started to build this wall from the Forth to the Clyde around 142AD. Eventually, the track descends Croy Hill, passes through a walkers gate and out on to a track which meets a rough lane at a bend. Go straight on (right) and after a brief distance bend left with the lane and meet a 'main' road. Follow this left for about ½mile to reach Croy Station on the right (15.8miles). The alternative route (0.2miles longer and easier but not as interesting) to the station is to continue on the canal to Auchinstarry Marina. The canal is then left for the busy B-road above. It's right (northwards) for Kilsyth and 1.3miles left for Croy Station with a further left turn when signed.