

Walks around Redesdale Elsdon



- ① Haining & Hillhead / Elsdon Burn
- ② Elsdon North West / Fairneycleugh
- ③ Whiskershiel

Surrounded by a network of footpaths in beautiful countryside, the historic capital of Redesdale with its own pele tower and castle, hides secrets and stories of its once turbulent past.

Elsdon: Ancient Capital of Redesdale

The name 'Elsdon' means 'Elli's (or Aelf's) valley'. Elsdon was the largest and most important village in Redesdale for hundreds of years. The first community here probably lived in timber houses clustered around a green where livestock could be protected, becoming the centre for economic, religious and political activity in the region.

Elsdon is surrounded by the remains of a once extensive medieval ridge and furrow field system, which is still clearly visible on the hillside around Landshot. In medieval times the cultivated strip was not enclosed by fences or walls but separated by a strip of unploughed land called headland, whose remnants are still seen as low ridges in the fields surrounding the village.

The green's circular, stone 'pinfold' for confining stray sheep and cattle dates to the 1700s. Until the 1800s the village lay on one of the main routes between Newcastle and Edinburgh, and Woodburn and Elsdon were the centre of a large network of drove roads which led to a major influx of Scottish drovers and carriers.

Elsdon stone pinfold



Men from Redesdale would follow the routes in the other direction, transporting coal and lime by pack horse and cart to Scotland. In the 1830s, a new road to Scotland by-passed Elsdon. The population and fortunes of the village declined, but in the 1880s, Elsdon Colliery opened and the number of families grew. Many of the stone cottages and public buildings around the Green date from this period. The new mine would employ up to 25 men until it finally closed in 1972.

Todholes

In the 16th century a system called 'gavel kind' was in operation. A farm would be divided between sons when the farmer became too old; making many farms smaller; East and West Todholes on **Walk 3** are evidence of this.

St. Cuthbert's: Cathedral of the Rede

Monks fleeing Viking raids on Lindisfarne in 793 took with them the coffin of St. Cuthbert, who died in 687. Along with churches at Corsenside and Bellingham, the site of Elsdon church may have marked one of the spots where they rested. Walk 1 takes you past this impressive church, dating from the late 1300s, its size reflecting its importance as the primary parish church for Redesdale. Elsdon was at one time the largest parish in England, stretching 33 miles to the Scottish border.

Inside the church are three mysterious horse skulls found in the belfry in 1837. There's also a Roman tombstone from Bremenium Roman Fort at High Rochester. See if you can also spot the pillar where Border Reivers sharpened their swords and knives.

You can also pick up a guidebook in the church for the St. Cuthbert's Three-Church Trail, a footpath linking the medieval churches in Bellingham, Elsdon and Corsenside. The trail is waymarked using the logo of St. Cuthbert's cross on a stone cairn.

A Place to Defend

Elsdon seems peaceful now, but evidence of a more turbulent times can still be seen. On the northern edge of the village **Walk 3** takes you past the impressive earthworks of Elsdon's motte and bailey castle.

Built by the Sir Robert de Umfraville, Lord of Redesdale, around 1080. From here, he helped the Normans control northern England. Being the commercial capital of Redesdale also made Elsdon a target for Border Reivers up until the early 1600s. Uphill from the church is Elsdon Tower, once the fortified residence of the Rectors of Elsdon. Like the smaller bastles dotted around Redesdale, Elsdon Pele Tower was built as a site of refuge from attack.



Elsdon Tower



Ridge and furrow



Lidar image

Wildlife to Look Out For

Flower-rich hay meadows provide a blaze of colour in the summer. Plants include cranesbill, buttercup, clover, pignut and yellow rattle as well as the common blue butterfly and chimney sweeper moth. Swifts, swallows and lapwing are also annual visitors with their acrobatics and screams along with the mew of the buzzards.

Walk 1 : Haining and Hillhead / Elsdon Burn Distance: 3.5 miles / 5.6 km (2 hrs)

Grade: Easy Start: Elsdon Village car park

- 1 From the car park cross the footbridge back into the village and turn left, following the road to Newcastle and Morpeth to the left of the village green.
- 2 Just outside the village, take the right-hand fork signed Newcastle and cross over the bridge with the metal railings. Go through the gate on the right, signed Haining, and follow the path along the edge of the field, keeping the fence and newly planted woodland on your right.
- 3 Cross the sleeper bridge and join the farm track heading up to the right. Go through the wicket gate and continue up and along the road to the Haining.

- 4 Pass in front of the house and continue on for a short distance. Turn left through the gap in the wall and continue up the grassy path through the young woodland plantation. On reaching the fence cross the stile and then turn left and continue up to the gate.
- 5 Cross the road. Keeping the wall on your left walk over Gallow Hill. Continue to follow the wall to the gate in the corner of the field. Go through the gate. With the wall now on your right; carry on along the path, heading for Hillhead Cottage.
- 6 Turn left at the cottage, then cross the stile and continue downhill. On reaching the road turn right and then left over the ladder stile just after the barn. Go straight down the field and cross over the two stiles at the bottom. Turn left along the main road back to Elsdon.
- 7 Follow the road back to the village.

Elsdon church



Crossing Elsdon Burn at Haining

Haining farmhouse

Walk 3 : Whiskershiel

Distance: 5.13 miles / 8.26 km (2¼ hrs)

Grade: Strenuous

Start: Elsdon Village car park

- 1 Head up to Elsdon Village Hall, waymarked by a finger post as a bridleway, go through the gate at the far end following the road uphill. At the top detour left through the gate to the left to view the Mote Hills, the remains of Elsdon's Mote and Bailey Castle.
- 2 Continue up through the yard of the farmhouse to the gate on the other side with another bridleway marker, avoiding the smaller gate immediately opposite. Bear right across and up the field. There is not an obvious path, but head for a couple of gates with trees behind on the horizon. Go through the waymarked gate and follow the wall and ditch around to the right to reach a junction of three tracks.



Mote Hills

- 3 Take the left-hand track going northeast. As you walk along take a moment to enjoy the beautiful views across the landscape in all directions. Go through the gate and follow the farm track up across the cattle grid to the left to Hudspeth farm.

- 4 Continue along the track passing through a metal gate and two further gates with accompanying cattle grids to reach the farm.

- 5 Continue past the first group of farm buildings through some trees before turning right in the yard between a barn and wall with a woodland behind.

- 6 Cross the ford over Landshot Burn before going through a gate to follow a grass track across the field to a small waymarked gate in a fence and wall. Cross the field looking out for a waymarker post on the old fence line, to reach a gate and waymarked stile at the far wall corner. Don't cross over the stile, but continue along line of the wall to reach a ladder stile that crosses the wall.

- 7 Go over this stile and head southeast across the field to a waymarked stone stile. Skirt the edge of the forest looking out for a waymarked fingerpost midway, until you reach a further stone stile.

- 8 Go over this stile to cross an area of moorland pasture, again looking out for a post midway, until you reach a waymarked post and stone stile. Go over the stile and head down to the track to Eastnook.

- 9 Turn right and follow the track away from the farm. As it enters the forest you cross Whiskershiel Burn. The track continues through the forest before entering a clearing and passing Whiteles farmhouse.

- 10 As the track turns north away from the forest, look out for a finger post to West Todholes on the left-hand side. Turn left and cross an area of clear fell, which can be very boggy in places. Follow the grass and earth path diagonally left, then right over a footbridge, signed NWT Millburn Nature Reserve.

- 11 Continue, crossing two small footbridges before going through a gate in a wall onto a wider gravel track at East Todholes Farm. Follow this track past West Todholes Farm where it becomes a single-track road and onto the junction with the main road.

- 12 Turn right at a finger post over a stile in the fence heading back towards Elsdon. Bear left across the field to the fence and down to the next stile. Cross over this stile and continue down to the bottom of the field. During the summer months this field is a hay meadow full of wildflowers and pollinating insects.

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Walk 2 : Elsdon NW walk / Fairneyleugh

Distance: 3.7 miles / 6 km (1½ hrs) Grade: Moderate Start: Elsdon Village car park

- 1 Cross the footbridge back into the village and follow the road in front of the church, turning right at the phone box. As you head up towards the tearoom look out for a gate and ladder stile in the wall to your left.
- 2 Signed 'the Folly ¾', go over the stile and head across the field following the finger post direction to a further stile over the fence in the dip between the fields. Following a similar line cross the next field to reach a stile in a fence at the junction with the remains of a wall.
- 3 Cross this stile to head northwest across rising ground until you reach a timber post and gap in the bank of the field edge. Ahead you can see a fenced mound with masts on.
- 4 Continue to head uphill to the right of the mound. A small sleeper bridge crosses over a ditch as the path continues up the field until it reaches a stile and gate in the northwest corner of the field. Here a finger post signed Elsdon ¾ points back towards the village.
- 5 Turn right out onto the road and through the gate adjacent to the cattle grid. Continue along the road past the Folly farmhouse on the left. In due course you will reach a gravel track that leads down to the left with a grass track opposite.
- 6 Turn left down the gravel track that leads to Fairneyleugh crossing a cattle grid. Pass with the house on your right and go through the metal gate on the far side.

- 7 Ignoring the track, follow the line of the waymarker to the left across the field running parallel with the bank wall on the left. Follow the track down hill to the bottom corner of the field. Go through the gate and follow the fence line into the yard of Soppit Farm (Redesdale Equestrian). Beware of electric fences along this section. Bear right alongside the hedge, through the yard and out the far side onto the drive.

- 8 Where the drive joins the access road from the adjacent property turn right down to the main road. Cross the road to enter the field opposite at the finger post marked 'Haining'.

- 9 Follow the path that runs parallel with the fence line and wall, passing the edge of a copse, through a gap in a bank, before heading down to a ladder stile. This leads on to a footbridge across Elsdon Burn and into an area of young woodland.

- 10 This is the Haining Conservation Area. Follow the path through the trees and up the field beyond to the Haining and the square walled sheep stell opposite.

- 11 Turn left and follow the track, past newly planted trees. Where the track crosses a cattle grid, turn off the track through the gate and follow the path over a sleeper footbridge then continue along the right-hand edge of a young woodland.

- 12 At the far end a gate takes you out onto the road. Turn left crossing over a bridge with metal rails, with the older double span stone bridge to your right. Walk back into the village crossing the green to your starting point.

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Walk 3 : Whiskershiel

13 Cross the step stile and turn right down to a sleeper bridge. Cross the bridge and turn left following the path to a smaller bridge. Cross this bridge and head to the footbridge next to the sewage works. Cross the footbridge and turn right through the metal gate to follow the road between the houses down to the pinfold on the village green. Turn right and follow the road back to the car park.

Common blue butterfly

Common Buzzard



Lapwing

Wildflower meadow

Other Places to Visit in Redesdale

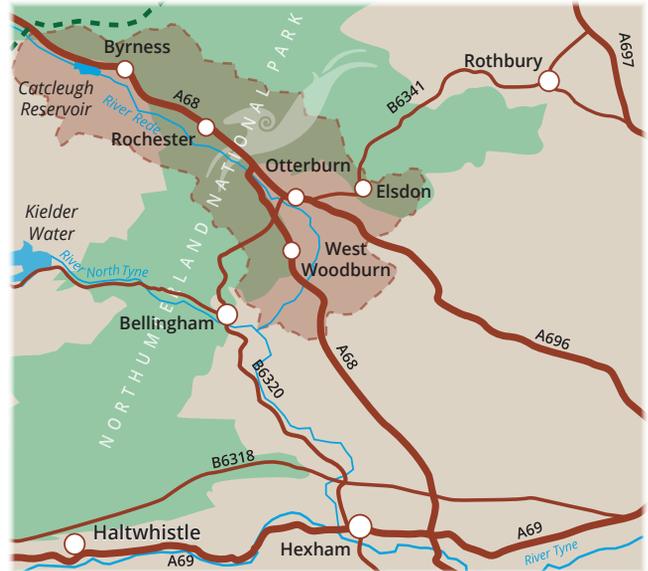
This is one of 6 walk leaflets created by the Revitalising Redesdale Landscape Partnership Programme that ran from 2018 to 2022. There are many wonderful sites to explore in Redesdale.

For more information on these sites, please visit www.revitalisingredesdale.org.uk

Scan Me



Where is Redesdale - how to get here



Travelling to Redesdale

Redesdale is easily reached by road on the A68 or by the A696 from Newcastle. Options for parking are identified as part of each walk description. For public transport options see www.travelinenortheast.info for details.

Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy of the walk descriptions and maps but changes can occur. We recommend using the relevant Ordnance Survey maps which show more of the surrounding area. This leaflet is covered by OL42 (Kielder Water & Forest) 1:25,000 / Land Ranger 80 (Cheviot Hills and Kielder Water) 1:50,000.

Please follow the Countryside Code, check the weather before you set off and wear appropriate outdoor clothing.

Supported by:



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