

*Walks around Redesdale*  
**Whitelee Moor**  
*National Nature Reserve*



- ① Carter Pike and Sculpture
- ② Catcleugh Sheep Stell
- ③ Catcleugh Dam & Black House

**E**xplore the fells around Whitelee Moor, on the border of England and Scotland to find the source of the Rede, wild goats and a bird's-eye view across Redesdale from Carter Pike.

## Whitelee Moor National Nature Reserve

Owned by Northumberland Wildlife Trust, Whitelee Moor National Nature Reserve is one of Britain's most important upland reserves. Its sensitive heather moorlands contain peat bogs that soak up carbon and water, helping to combat climate change and reducing flood risk lower down the valley.

Conservation of Whitelee's peat bogs also allows rare plants to thrive. These include the insect-catching sundew, delicate sphagnum moss and bright orange cloudberry. On the lower slopes of the Reserve you may spot merlin or buzzard circling for prey, or red grouse lurking in the undergrowth. Skylarks and meadow pipits are common too. Every spring, migrant birds arrive to breed including the dunlin and golden plover. Also keep an eye out for the small heath butterfly and the northern egg moth.

Common buzzard



carnivorous, (insect eating) round-leaved sundew



## Revealing Hidden Redesdale

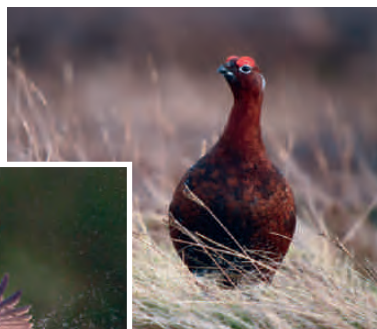
How do we know who lived here in the past? The landscape itself holds many clues if you know how and where to look. **Walk 2** takes you above the site of an enclosed settlement dating to Romano-British times. It occupies a key location overlooking the natural route through the valley, now the A68. The enclosure is surrounded by large earth-covered stone ramparts. The people living there would have farmed the land and kept livestock. Aerial and lidar imagery - a type of laser imagery - has also revealed field systems and traces of hut circles.

Credit: © Environment Agency



On the lidar you can see the second round sheep stell you pass on the walk

Red grouse



Nature Photos: Natural England



Osprey

## Farming and Sheep Stells

The lower slopes of Whitelee are used for raising sheep and beef cattle. Across Redesdale, you can see the remains of circular dry stone sheep stells. **Walk 2** takes you past two of these enclosures. They provide shelter during winter weather as well as allowing the shepherd to pen and treat sheep on the hill without the need to return to the farmstead. They were also used for storing winter hay.

Photo: James Innerdale



Second Sheep Stell which overlooks Catcleugh Reservoir

## Catcleugh Reservoir and the Black House

Catcleugh Reservoir was constructed between 1884 and 1905 for the Newcastle and Gateshead Water Company. It holds 10.5 billion litres of water and still supplies drinking water to Newcastle, Gateshead and surrounding areas.

Most of the 600 men and their families employed to construct the Reservoir were housed in two 'villages' of tin-roofed shacks known as Newcastle and Gateshead. After Catcleugh Reservoir was completed, these Black Houses were demolished, except one, which has now been restored to its original condition. Tours of the Black House take place several times a year; details can be found on the Northumberland National Park website.

**Walk 1** takes you across the dam wall of the reservoir to visit the Black House passing some remarkable Victorian engineering on the way.



## Walk 1: Carter Pike and Sculpture

**Distance:** 4 miles / 6.5 km (1½ hrs)

**Grade:** Moderate

**Start & Parking:** Park at the layby at Carter Bar

- 1 From the south end of the northbound layby go through the gate opposite the large Scottish stone boundary marker, to follow the track across a boardwalk to a gate in the fence.
- 2 Follow the track across boardwalk and footpath until you meet a sculpture celebrating Redesdale and the feral goats of Whitelee Moor.
- 3 Return to the path which then bears left as it rises gently across the hill. Look out for the summit cairn that can be seen on the skyline. Please keep to the paths to avoid damaging these fragile habitats. After wet weather the path can be boggy in places.

- 4 Follow the path over the undulating ground, crossing another section of boardwalk before dropping briefly to cross a stream. The path then bears right around the shoulder of the hill. Shortly after this, look out for a waymarker directing you to the right and a faint path up to the summit. If you get to the gate and fence on the main path you have gone too far.
- 5 The path rises steeply to reach rocks at the base of the final rise to the summit cairn to the left.
- 6 Once you reach the summit cairn, enjoy the view across Redesdale, before retracing your steps back down to the car park.



Photos: James Innerdale

Carter Pike summit cairn



Photo: Phil Cullen

Goat Sculpture

## Walk 2: Catcleugh Sheep Stel

**Distance:** 1 mile / 1.5 km (½ hr)

**Grade:** Easy

**Start & Parking:** Shortly after the end of the reservoir turn left off the A68, through a gate, marked Whitelee Moor National Nature Reserve and over the bridge. Park at the layby next to the circular dry stone wall pen, known as a sheep stel.

- 1 From the sheep stel walk up the track to a mesh covered sleeper bridge over a beck on the right of the track. Walk over the bridge and follow the waymarked grass track. The path continues up through a mix of heather and low growing trees. Further low-level marker posts point the way. Continue to follow the path as it rises and bears to the right, winding its way up before turning back on itself as it levels out.
- 2 Follow the signed path as it roughly follows the contour. Fine views are provided over the Romano-British settlement and reservoir. The path then gently drops down towards a second sheep stel.
- 3 At a path junction turn left towards the sheep stel. Follow the path around to the right of the stel, heading downhill until you reach the main track.
- 4 Turn left heading back along the forest track to the beginning of the walk.



Sheep stel at the start of Walk 2



## Walk 3: Catcleugh Dam & Black House

**Distance:** 2 miles / 3.2 km (¾ hr)

**Grade:** Easy

**Start & Parking:** Park in the layby on the left-hand side of the A68 between Byrness village and Catcleugh Reservoir.

- 1 From the layby head west, keeping to the surfaced path along the road edge. Pass by a number of gate entrances and the gates to 'Reservoir Cottages' before reaching the gate pillars to the dam wall on the left.
- 2 Turn left through the gate piers along the single-track road across the dam wall. Ahead of you to the right is the dam tower.
- 3 On the left, just after the tower, but before the track crosses the spillway, there are two gates. Take the right-hand gate, and down some steps to follow a path through the woodland with the River Rede on your right-hand side. Follow the path through the woodland down a number of short flights of stone steps. The path then follows a longer flight of steps to give a view of the opening of the spillway tunnel, where the Rede discharges out of the Compensation Tunnel at the bottom.



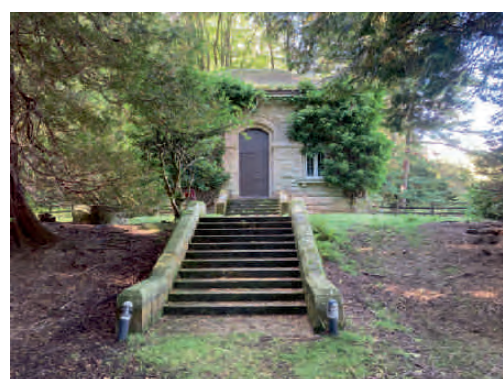
The remaining restored 'Black House'

- 4 At the bottom of the steps turn left away from the river to follow the path through the woodland, passing stone steps up to a small Victorian building on the left. Turn right as the path continues down through slightly more open woodland to a further set of stone steps at the far end with a handrail on both sides and a wooden gate at the top.
- 5 Go through the gate and turn right to follow a rough path through the trees to reach the Black House in a small clearing on the left. Although the site is privately owned the Northumberland National Park Authority organise guided tours in the summer months.
- 6 Retrace your steps back up through the wood and over the dam wall, to reach the layby.



Catcleugh dam and tower

Victorian dam building



Photos: James Innerdale



Whitelee Moor is the source of the River Rede that flows into Catcleugh Reservoir and onward for 32 miles down the valley to join the North Tyne at Redesmouth. Ospreys return to Kielder each spring from warmer southern climes and can also be seen occasionally around Catcleugh Reservoir until they leave again in the autumn.

## Feral Goats

Wild goats are perhaps a rather surprising resident of Whitelee Moor. First brought to Britain about 4,500 years ago, these long-haired animals roam in herds led by a matriarch.



*Feral Cheviot goat*

Near the start of **Walk 1** to Carter Pike is a sculpture of a goat.

Designed by Stephen Lunn it stands 4 metres high and was installed as part of the Revitalising Redesdale Landscape Partnership Programme 2018 - 22.

## Other Places to Visit in Redesdale

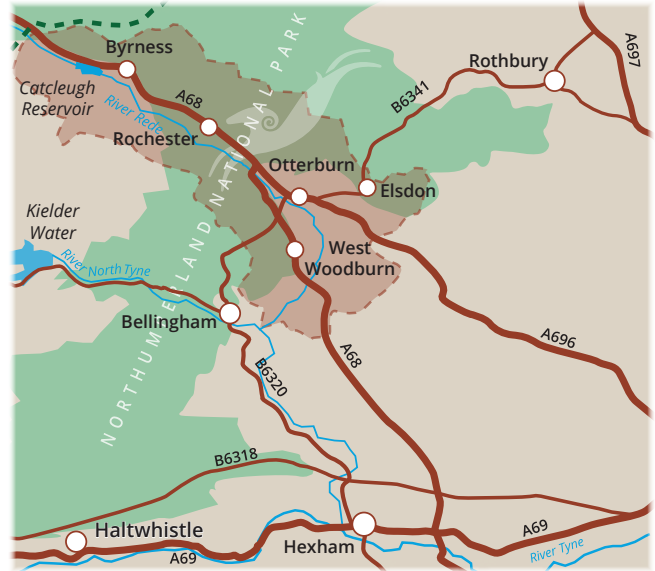
This is one of 6 walk leaflets created by the Revitalising Redesdale Landscape Partnership Programme that ran from 2018 to 2022. There are many wonderful sites to explore in Redesdale.

For more information on these sites, please visit [www.revitalisingredesdale.org.uk](http://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](http://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 OL16 (The Cheviot Hills) 1:25,000 / Land Ranger 80 (The 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:



Northumberland  
Wildlife Trust



Northumberland  
National Park

NORTHUMBRIAN  
WATER living water

