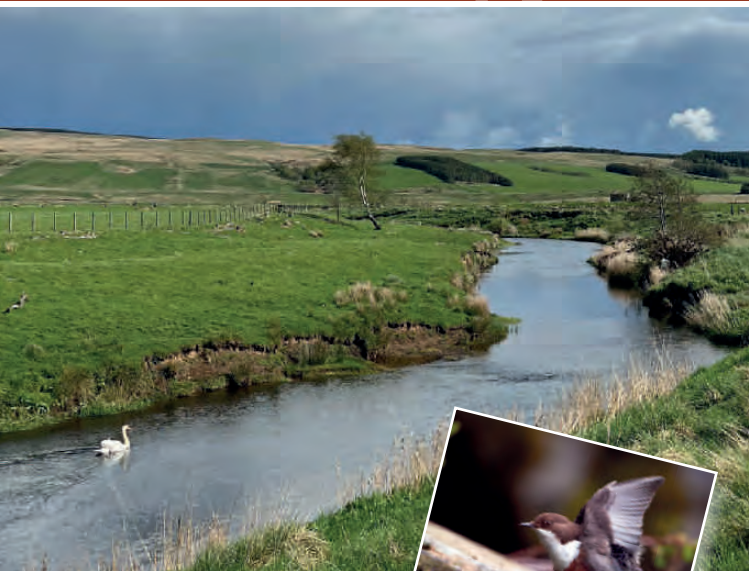


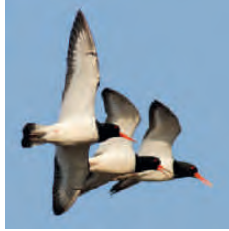
# Walks around Redesdale Otterburn



- ① Around Blakeman's Law
- ② The Rede and Dargues Burn
- ③ Old Town Farm or the Stepping Stones

**D**iscover the reality behind the ballad of the legendary battle between the English and the Scots. Explore how the countryside around an important crossing point on the Rede influenced the textile industry and supports the recovery of fresh water mussels.

Oystercatchers



### The River Rede

The source of the Rede and its tributaries begin in the valley's surrounding moors, with the peat bogs playing an important role in regulating water flow. Peatland restoration and a programme of work to re-naturalise the river to reduce sediment in the water and address diffuse pollution is directly benefitting the valley's wildlife including salmon, trout and one of the UK's rarest species, the fresh water mussel. These mussels are very long lived (up to 140 years) but they have not successfully reproduced in the River Rede since the Second World War due to issues of water and habitat quality, which the Revitalising Redesdale project sought to address.

### Smoutel Ford and Helping the Fresh Water Mussel (Walk 3)

Smoutel Ford dates back to Roman times and was once a key crossing point of the River

Fresh water mussel



Rede The crossing was lost because so much stone and gravel was removed during the early 20th century. This effectively prevented the use of the bridleway across the valley. Revitalising Redesdale reintroduced cobble-sized stone to the riverbed, to recreate the ford and re-connect the bridleway. The new stepping stones were part of a wider project including bank regrading, tree planting and creation of rocky riffle features to recreate a more natural river environment improving the habitat for a wide range of wildlife, including fresh water mussels.

### Other Wildlife to Look Out For

On **Walk 3**, in spring and summer, the permanent pastures and rushy meadows along the river may grant you a sighting of ground-nesting birds such as lapwing, curlew and oystercatchers that fly from the coast to nest here. The river itself is home to ducks, swans, dippers and kingfishers; with geese foraging in local fields in autumn and winter.

Wildlife Photos: Natural England



Cottongrass



Lapwing

### Dere Street

On **Walk 2**, you'll cross Dere Street (the A68). Roman surveyors and legionaries built this road route through the hills here to link Corbridge with Edinburgh. The word 'street' derives from 'strata' – the layers of stone used for road construction. Much of the Roman route is under the present A68; the modern route departs from the ancient route south of Rochester.

### Percy's Cross and the Battlefield of Otterburn

This is the start point of **Walk 2**. Close to this monument in August 1388, two armies met and fought a battle in fading summer light. One English about 8,000 strong and a smaller Scottish force. It all began with a Scottish invasion. The main force, under the Earl of Fife, moved towards Carlisle while a brigade under George Dunbar and James Douglas headed east. Dunbar and Douglas rampaged as far as Durham before moving on to Newcastle where the garrison was commanded by Sir Henry "Hotspur" Percy, eldest son of the Earl of Northumberland.

When the Scots headed home, Hotspur pursued the raiders to Otterburn where Douglas and Dunbar were encamped. By early evening Hotspur was close by and decided to strike immediately at dusk. In the ensuing battle Douglas lost his life. Hotspur and his brother Ralph were captured and the English forces driven off the battlefield. The Scots had won. Casualties for medieval battles are hard to determine. Perhaps 500 died on either side and numerous English knights were taken prisoner. Some of the dead may be buried nearby at St Cuthbert's Church in Elsdon. The Percy Cross was said to mark the place where Douglas fell but was moved from its original site in the 18th century.

Otterburn Battle

Graphic: Tom Woolley





## Walk 1 : Around Blakeman's Law

**Distance:** Short walk – 2 miles / 4km (1 hr): long walk – 6.2 miles/10 km (2¾ hrs)

THE LONGER WALK BEYOND POINT 4 IS NOT AVAILABLE WHILST FIRING IS IN OPERATION.  
For firing times check [www.gov.uk/government/publications/otterburn-firing-times](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/otterburn-firing-times)

**Grade:** Strenuous

**Start & Parking:** Otterburn Mill car park

**1** Locate the Village Trail sign and take the path that leads away from the Mill along a channel; this leads upstream across a small footbridge over the old leat (the name for an engineered channel) which carried water from the mill pond to the water wheel at Otterburn Mill – the Mill contains a fantastic array of original machinery and is well worth a visit.

**2** The path runs very close to the Otter Burn, follow it to the road and then cross the road and turn left to cross the bridge over the Otter Burn. Immediately over the bridge, turn right at the public footpath signed for 'Otterburn Hall 1 mile'. Head up this path and go through a series of small gates. At the gate by an 'S' shaped tree trunk bear left across the field with the fence on your left to reach a kissing gate at the roadside.

**3** For the longer walk, turn right along the road past the entrance to Otterburn Hall, cross the river bridge (over the Otter Burn) and walk up the road for about 500m to pass two small groups of houses. \* At this point for the short walk you can either turn left to follow the road back to Otterburn or turn right along the road for 100m to the fingerpost signed 'Otterburn Village Trail'. Follow the trail across the field over a sleeper bridge and up to the left, keeping the fence and then wall on your right. At the corner of the wall turn right, and carry on through the field gate ahead. Continue on to the next gate in the wall straight ahead. Go through the wooden gates at Girsonfield Farm and turn left onto farm track and follow this down to the village.

**4** If the red flag is flying, this longer walk is unavailable due to local byelaws governing safety. If the red flag is not flying, it is legal to pass. Go through the wicket gate on the left just beyond the barrier (the barrier is to Otterburn Range). Turn left in 20m along the public bridleway.

**5** Cross the area of felled woodland and out the other side, to cross the Otter Burn. Head up the field towards the farmhouse of Hopefoot. At the track, turn left and then right at the road.

**6** Just beyond the cattle grid, leave the road and turn left along a bridleway for about 150m. Do not follow the quad bike track as it heads uphill. Instead, you need to keep the far off hilltop (this is Blakeman's Law which is the highest point in view) to your left as you go in a 2 o'clock direction and you'll see a signpost to lead you to a crossing point where two small streams join. The next section of the walk up to step 7 is over very rough ground. Cross here and then climb up the spur of land between the two burns, continuing on a rough path for 1.5km. Lookout for the Ministry of Defence sign that can be seen in the distance.

**7** The path climbs steadily to eventually reach a wicket gate. Go through this, past the Ministry of Defence warning sign and head straight down to the road and turn left.

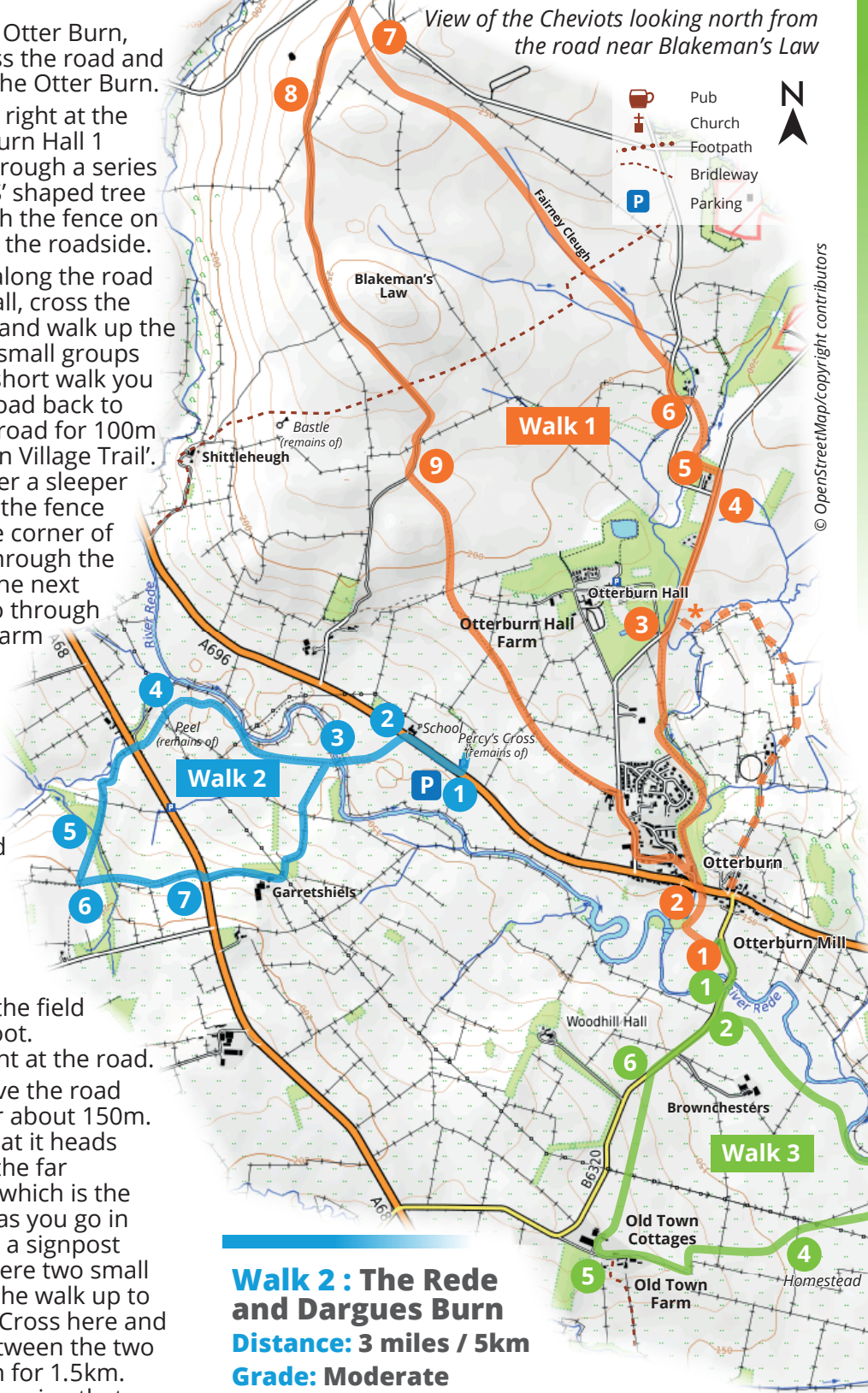
**8** Walk along this road for about 2km, passing a bridleway sign and cattle grid before taking the path on your left, marked with a fingerpost.

**9** Follow the bridleway diagonally left in the direction of the fingerpost back towards Otterburn village. The path heads over rough ground for 1.5km, through 3 gates and then between farm buildings to emerge onto the road. Turn right after the bridge near Le Petit Chateau. Head back along the Otter Burn footpath to Otterburn Mill and your start point.

*Smoutel Ford stepping stones*



View of the Cheviots looking north from the road near Blakeman's Law



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## Walk 2 : The Rede and Dargues Burn

**Distance:** 3 miles / 5km

**Grade:** Moderate

**Start & Parking:** Percy's Cross car park

**1** Turn right out of the Percy's Cross car park and walk away from Otterburn towards the white school building. At the school cross the A696.

**2** Go through the wooden gate and walk in the direction of the finger post towards the footbridge.

**3** Cross the footbridge and turn right to head upstream. The path cuts across the floodplain towards the left hand side of the row of trees, before returning to the river bank. The path then sweeps around to the left on a raised track which keeps 50m away from the fenceline and the river, to pass through a metal gate left of a row of conifers trees near a house (this is Dargues).

**4** Once through the gate, go up the field to the wicket gate and finger post, take care crossing the road here (A68). Turn right for 30m. Cross the barrier and go over a tall ladder stile. The path follows a fence overlooking the valley of the Dargues Burn with a series of small waterfalls. Keep to the fenceline as it turns left and then go over the stile into a plantation. Follow the occasionally boggy path up the side of the wall to reach a waymarker post and footbridge.

**5** Cross the footbridge and turn left up through a clearing to a step stile. Follow the directional arrow up a slight hill towards an old larch tree and rushy pasture. Go over another stile and turn immediately left.

## Walk 3 : Otterburn walk – to Old

**Town Farm and/or the Stepping Stones**

**Distance:** Old Town Farm 2.8 miles / 4.5 km  
Stepping Stones 4 miles / 6.5km

**Grade:** Easy

**Start & Parking:** Otterburn Mill car park

**1** Turn right out of the main entrance of Otterburn Mill. Walk along the road away from the village to cross the bridge over the River Rede. Cross with care as it is narrow. Walk along the road verge for 100m and turn left along the bridleway signed from the road.

**2** As you head through the field, the pattern of humps and bumps are historic river channels within the River Rede's floodplain. The path heads to the left of Brownchesters Farm, which sits on a mound above the floodplain.

Aim towards a shed with a corrugated roof, with two trees to the left. Go through a gate to the right of the shed and keep straight ahead through the field until you come to the River Rede which flows in a series of bends known as meanders. Look out for *swans* and *herons* here. And in summer months you may see *sand martins*. Follow the fence as it bends right.

**3** Follow the fence as it bends right and go through another gate. For an out and back route to Smoutel Ford stepping stones across the Rede follow \* below. It is not recommended to cross the stepping stones at Smoutel Ford if the river is above 0.25 metres. The Environment Agency's flood level warning on-line service can be checked at: <https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/station/8157>.

For the shorter Old Town Farm walk, turn right along the line of the wall on your right-hand side to reach a telegraph pole at the corner. From here bear right to head for the stile in the fence.

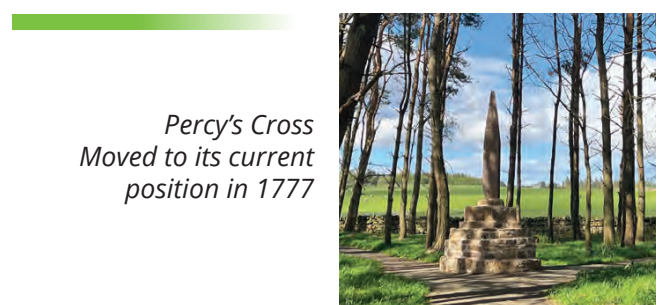
\* To visit the Rede crossing, continue straight on following the river to another gate; you'll notice a small plantation of trees on your right. Head to the left-hand side of the trees towards some ruined buildings. Bear right just before you reach the ruins of what was Meadowhaugh Farm. Cross a footbridge, through a gate and bear left across rough, marshy ground following the waymarkers for about 800m; you'll cross several small streams that have been bridged as part of access improvement works.

Drop down the slope towards the river and through a gate to reach Smoutel Ford stepping stones. The riverbank is a lovely place to rest a while before retracing your steps.

**4** Go over the stile and bear left across the field and through a gate in the stone wall. Head for the small tree plantation. Turn left at the plantation and through a gate onto a track. Turn right along this track up to the houses of Old Town before following the footpath sign (Otterburn Road ½m) to turn right towards and then past a few holiday cottages and a terrace of houses.

**5** Just beyond the terrace house go through the gate on your left to cross the field to a large ladder stile. Go over here and cross the small stream and the next field to a stone step stile in a wall.

**6** Take care crossing the stone stile onto the road. Turn right to walk down this road back to Otterburn Mill.



Percy's Cross  
Moved to its current  
position in 1777

**6** In 100m go through a gate and in another 50m over a stile. Turn half right keeping 100m from the wall, following the route over a small burn to a heavy field gate and the A68.

**7** Cross the road and turn right. After 50m, turn left down the track to Garretshiels. Head past the farm buildings; and follow the track as it winds its way down to the river. Go through a gate at the track end crossing the floodplain to the footbridge to retrace your steps to Percy's Cross.





## Otterburn Training Area

**Walk 1**, a section of this walk crosses the Otterburn Training Area; when the Ranges are closed to public only a shortened version of this route can be followed. **If the red flags are flying, the Ranges are closed.**

The Otterburn Ranges have been used for military training since 1911. The Ranges cover 90 square miles and today provides the UK's principal artillery range for British and NATO soldiers to train. Access is managed through a set of byelaws to ensure people know when it is safe to cross, and to keep to marked routes. All safety signs should be followed. The Range is closed to public access at Firing Times, for information on Firing Times please visit: [www.otterburnranges.co.uk](http://www.otterburnranges.co.uk)

### Otterburn Mill *Tenter frame; Otterburn Mill*

Otterburn Mill has a long and fascinating history. Founded by the Waddell family in the early 1800s, it grew from a cottage industry to



Photo: James Innerdale

a business that supplied Buckingham Palace with rugs and textiles. Tenter frames, originally used to dry cloth, can still be found behind the Mill, which now houses a café and shop. Original machinery and information panels are also on show within the building.

### 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 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.

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Thanks to Groundwork for the use of the leaflet content.