

Wood's Wanderings

Welcome to Wood's Wanderings, a run through the countryside where I grew up and on the roads where I learnt to drive. I've also included some little stories I've picked up over the years that might add a bit of interest to the route. If you become lost or want to cut the run short, the finish is Wheelbirks Farm ice cream parlour, about 2 miles from Stocksfield on the B6309 to Whittonstall, postcode NE43 7HY.

0.0	Set trip to zero, turn left onto main road and continue on the B6318 over Stagshaw roundabout.
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The Military Road was built after the 1745 Jacobite Rebellion so that troops could be moved quickly across country in the event of another uprising. For much of its length it sits on top of Hadrian's Wall and its construction has been described as the biggest single act of vandalism against the Wall.

5.2	Left SP Oakwood & Hexham
6.1	Right at x-roads SP Acomb

6.5 *Smell anything? This is where Tynedale's garden waste is brought for composting.*

8.4	Right at T-junction SP Wall
11.0	Left at x-roads SP Chollerford B6318
11.4	Left at roundabout SP Carlisle B6318

On this road just beyond our next turn a distant relative, Stanley Dalton, was murdered in 1926 by a passing stranger who stole his motorbike. The killer was caught and sentenced to death then reprieved and given a life sentence two days before he was due to hang.

13.1	Left SP Haydon Bridge 6
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13.6 *In the woodland on the right is the site of the first official Scout camp in 1908, following an experimental camp held by Baden Powell at Brownsea Island the year before.*

14.2 *Across the field on the left is the home of club stalwart Bruce Beattie, in a bungalow that he converted from three derelict cottages behind the large house. Many years later I discovered my grandparents had lived in one of the cottages at the end of the 19th century.*

14.5 *On the right is the eastern edge of the Fourstones limestone and sandstone quarries. The sandstone was used to construct many fine buildings in Edinburgh and Newcastle, including the Central Station. After the quarries closed in the 1940s the site was used for landfill.*

14.7	Left at T-junction SP Chollerford
15.5	Right SP Warden

17.0 Look out for the ghost of Joe the Quilter, murdered in his cottage on Warden Hill in 1826. It is said to appear before the chosen few to lead them to the hidden treasure his murderer never found. My mother claimed she saw him beckoning her one dark night but my father saw nothing so they didn't follow and consequently remained poor! It seems to be a very inactive ghost – the only other recorded sighting, in the 19th century, turned out to be a black and white cow that had escaped from a nearby field.

17.8	Right at T-junction at Boatside Inn
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18.1 According to the 1871 census, a family of ten lived in one of the small cottages on the left - a widow, her three sons and two daughters who worked at the paper mill, her married daughter, quarryman son-in-law and two grandchildren. The widow was my great-greatgrandmother.

18.3 The paper mill has been here since 1763 when it made paper for the Newcastle book trade. It now produces absorbent paper and wadding. I hope you'll never need its most popular product – it's the country's biggest supplier of incontinence pads!

20.1	Left SP Haydon Bridge B6319
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20.1 As a small boy I used to visit my aunt and uncle at one of the houses on the right facing the junction. In an outhouse at the back was an earth closet lavatory with two seats side by side - I was told it was so you could go with a friend! It was emptied regularly by the 'night soil men' through an opening in the back wall. Unfortunately hens in the field behind could also wander through the opening and peck amongst the contents. We always politely refused my aunt's kind offer of some fresh eggs to take home!

23.5	Left at T-junction over railway
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23.7	Left at T-junction SP Hexham 30 MPH SPEED CAMERA IMMEDIATELY AHEAD
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24.1	Left at T-junction onto A69
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24.6	Right SP Lowgate
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27.8	Right at T-junction SP Allenheads
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29.1	Left on brow of hill SP Caravan Site 1½
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31.8	Right at x-roads SP Whitley Chapel
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32.6 The Dipton Mill Inn dates back to the 17th century and in my day was the ideal place for an under-age pint, being just far enough from Hexham not to be seen by your parents' friends. It is now the home of the renowned Hexhamshire Brewery ales. This area, known as Hexhamshire, now consists of only two parishes but was once a large county until incorporated into Northumberland by Queen Elizabeth I.

33.4	Left SP Whitley Chapel
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35.5 The building on the left was for 200 years the Fox and Hounds pub - known locally as the Click Em Inn – until the owner closed it in 1995 after a series of disputes with the locals.

37.5	Right at T-junction SP Blanchland
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38.4	Left into Slaley Village SP Riding Mill
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39.8	Left at x-roads SP Stocksfield, Scales Cross
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42.8	Straight on at x-roads over A68
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44.5	Left at x-roads SP Stocksfield B6309
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45.0	Straight ahead SP Broomley (main road turns right) then immediate left into Wheelbirks Farm. Proceed to the Ice Cream Parlour and park.
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