

ST. CUTHBERT'S WAY

Notes on multi-use access

Starting at Melrose in the Scottish Borders and finishing at Holy Island, across the English border in Northumberland, St. Cuthbert's Way is one of the most fulfilling of Scotland's Great Trails. The route was originally designed and created for walkers, albeit incorporating some sections with a long tradition of equestrian use. Since then, access legislation has changed in Scotland, and interest from cyclists and horse-riders in using St. Cuthbert's Way and other long distance routes has increased significantly. Many parts of St. Cuthbert's Way are suitable for horse riders, but some sections are impassable with a horse, unsuitable for multi-use in wet weather, or on the English part of the route are legally recognised only as footpaths.

These notes have been produced by British Horse Society (BHS) Scotland to help those interested in using part or all of St. Cuthbert's Way identify location and brief details of features which may restrict multi-use of the waymarked route. Only those which may present an issue for experienced riders are noted below – shallow fords, bridges, cross drains, gates which can only be opened or closed if dismounted, rough ground, sheep and cattle are all part of riding off-road and so are not documented. Inclusion of a particular feature does not necessarily mean that it is impassable with a horse. Photos have been included where appropriate to help you assess for yourself whether a feature such as steps, a narrow footbridge, gate or gap less than 1.5m wide may present an obstruction to you.

These notes are intended to supplement detailed route guides and other information already available from the route website (<http://www.stcuthbertsway.info>) and other sources. Suggestions for parking and alternative routes to avoid obstructions are included where information has been provided, but do not constitute a recommendation. All route users are responsible for deciding for themselves whether this route, or any part thereof, is suitable for their intended use, taking account of their own abilities, skills, fitness and experience, as well as season, weather conditions etc. Event organisers, groups or commercial operators considering using St. Cuthbert's Way are urged to contact the route managers (see route website for details).

Remember that whether on foot, cycle or horseback, rights of access in Scotland depend on access takers and land managers accepting individual responsibility for their actions. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code <http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/> offers guidance on what this means on the ground. Specific guidance for horse riders can be downloaded from <http://www.bhsscotland.org.uk/responsible-riding.html>. Courtesy, consideration of others' needs and good communication are the key to sharing paths. Always pass others you meet along the trail at a walk, and elsewhere limit your pace to ground conditions and visibility. On formally surfaced paths, keep to a walk, and either move your horse off the path to dung, or dismount and clear dung off the path. Please make sure you close all gates to prevent livestock straying. Although the route is waymarked throughout, sometimes the waymarks are difficult to find, so make sure you have a map with you.

The background information for these notes has been provided by volunteers who surveyed the route in 2014 as part of a multi-use long distance route audit funded by Scottish Natural Heritage. These notes will be updated as and when notification of subsequent changes is received, but neither BHS or the relevant access authorities can guarantee accessibility or the accuracy of information provided.

Melrose to Bowden

Although the first section of St. Cuthbert's Way is pedestrian only, there are two easy alternatives for cyclists and horse-riders via Dingleton. The path which climbs the north side of the Eildon Hills is steep in places, can become slippery and is easily damaged when wet so should be avoided by cyclists and horses during or immediately after heavy rain or snow.

There is roadside parking in Melrose near the start of St. Cuthbert's Way but please respect other vehicles wishing to use the same parking.

Location / OS Grid Ref.	Feature/description	Alternative access to avoid restrictions
NT547338	Steps and narrow alleyway beside house	Continue west up B6359. Either take track which branches off at NT545337 which includes bridlegate and some low branches, or continue to entrance to golf club at NT543333, follow track past Dingleton Mains to join SCW at NT550335
NT548337	Long stretch of steep wooden steps with stepover wooden stile at southern end, impassable by horse	
NT550313	Wooden steps with bridlegate mid-way	At track junction at NT554315 turn left (east) along track, after 200m turn right at the junction with the main track, and then continue west to rejoin SCW at foot of steps
NT550312	Step up onto narrow wooden footbridge with side rails and bridlegate across end	Continue west on track, forking left at NT547308. Either turn right through the bridlegate down the old drove road which joins the B6398 at the west end of Bowden, or continue straight ahead on SCW across Bowden Common, observing the signs requesting horse riders to keep to the long grass to avoid damaging short mown grass paths
Bowden Common NT553306	Children's play park, no equestrian right of access	Turn left on beaten earth path through gap in hedge next to steps leading onto minor road and back onto SCW

Bowden to St. Boswells, Maxton and Jedfoot Bridge

Most of St. Cuthbert's Way is rideable between Bowden and Newtown St. Boswells, with a small deviation to avoid an eroded section of path and narrow bridge (see below), but the waymarked long distance route is inaccessible with a horse or bike between Newton St. Boswells and Maxton, and much of the way between Maxton and Jedfoot Bridge, just north of Jedburgh, because of stiles, steps, and a long, narrow, wobbly pedestrian suspension bridge at Monteviot with steps and access controls either end. Horse riders wishing to follow

their own version of St. Cuthbert's Way may prefer to continue south from Bowden to the junction with the A699 at Woodlea, and then follow the old drove road south to Birselees, linking east to Nisbet via other tracks and minor roads. In some places the old drove road is narrow and muddy, with some low over-hanging branches and a shallow ford at NT560293 to avoid the footbridge which is insufficiently robust for horses, but otherwise this historic path is passable with a horse.

Horse and rider accommodation is available between Ancrum and Lilliesleaf at New Belses, west of Ancrum tel. 01835 870472.

Location / OS Grid Ref.	Feature/description	Alternative access to avoid restrictions
NT561306	<p>Narrow wooden bridge and eroded section of narrow muddy path</p> 	<p>Follow mapped alternative which runs parallel: fork right (west) at NT557305, then left (east) at track junction, following path south of burn to rejoin SCW at NT562306</p>
Newtown St. Boswells to St. Boswells	<p>A succession of steep narrow steps and eroded paths, non-weight bearing narrow wooden boardwalks/bridges, low branches and trees and lack of any passing places</p>	<p>See text above – consider alternatives using minor roads and tracks between Bowden and Nisbet</p>
St. Boswells to Maxton	<p>Numerous narrow steps, staircases, boardwalks, kissing gates, very narrow plank bridges and boardwalks make this section entirely unsuitable for multi-use</p>	
Maxton to Monteviot House	<p>In theory Dere Street should be passable with a horse but numerous stiles and kissing gates obstruct multi-use.</p>	
Monteviot House to Jedfoot Bridge	<p>Pedestrian only suspension bridge over River Teviot at NT650244.</p> 	

	 <p data-bbox="395 696 1062 763">Wooden steps lead up to A698, metal crash barrier with no gap at roadside, all impassable by horse</p> 		
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Nisbet to Morebattle

East of Jedfoot Bridge, St. Cuthbert's Way is passable with a horse, with a few minor variations. Most of the off-road sections from Nisbet Bridge to Morebattle are on unsurfaced tracks. To avoid causing damage and ensure route users remains within their rights of responsible access, cyclists and horse riders should avoid using softer sections of track during winter or when the ground is very wet.

Location / OS Grid Ref.	Feature/description	Alternative access to avoid restrictions
Nisbet Bridge over River Teviot NT675254	Stile at junction with B6400 south of bridge over River Teviot	Use gate on east side of road, which is chained but not locked. Follow the river bank west, under the bridge
NT673252	Stile in fenceline across path	Slip hurdle (flake gate) adjacent
NT665248 to NT663243	BEWARE RABBIT HOLES ALONG DISUSED RAILWAY	
NT675236 and	Narrow path through wood with overhanging branches in places, horse riders may prefer to	See below

<p>NT681238</p>	<p>dismount. Two short sections of boardwalk without side rails over deep ditch with soft sides</p> 	
<p>NT686235 Oxnam Water</p>	<p>Narrow footbridge impassable by horses. River very flashy, do not attempt to ford in flood.</p>	<p>Continue south on Dere Street from NT671232 to NT690218. Turn left (east) on minor road, then left (north) at cross-roads, past Crailinghall, rejoining SCW at Brownrigg</p>
<p>NT702240 Brownrigg</p>	<p>Kissing gate in fence where SCW branches off road, followed by narrow footbridge with steps at lower end with barbed trip wire</p>  	<p>Use track 20m north of stile between cottage and house, turning left (north) across grass between new barn conversion and steading, through gateway, then right following the fenceline down along the edge of field, around the bottom of the garden, to rejoin SCW via culvert across Wooden Burn 10m north of footbridge. NB. Take great care over culvert, particularly where the edge is concealed by vegetation. Neither the soundness or bearing capacity is guaranteed</p>  <p>Alternatively it may be</p>

		possible to ford or jump the burn east of the culvert following the line of the original path marked on OS maps
NT709236	<p>Narrow gap between straining post and wall coinciding with sharp bend on narrow path, very restricted turning space for horse, leading directly onto narrow boardwalk over ditch without siderails</p> 	<p>Either follow line of original path marked on OS maps (as above) through Fox Covert rejoining SCW at OSGR NT715236 (not surveyed but some local riders occasionally use). Alternatively continuing south from Brownrigg on SCW, continue straight ahead at NT709236 through wooden gate, staying on south side of wall, over wide, boggy ditch to gate in fence at NT713236 (beware electric spring wire), continuing east along field boundary to NT715235. Turn left (north) through wooden bridlegate (tied up with barbed wire) to rejoin SCW heading north along field boundary. 20m before stile, half way along wall, turn right through old wooden hunt gate, following field boundary parallel to SCW east to open gateway at NT717236 linking back onto SCW</p>
NT716237	Stile in wall	Use wooden hunt gate 20m south (see above)

A more direct alternative to the above is to continue south from Nisbet along the B6400, turning left (east) on the minor road past Kirkmains to A698. Beware fast traffic on this very busy main road. Turn right (west) and after 50m turn left onto the minor road south. Either follow this road south to link back onto St. Cuthbert's Way at OSGN NT683240, or turn left immediately after turning off A698, onto the section of old carriageway, rejoining the main road on the west side of Crailing, then take first up the minor road to Brownrigg.

Morebattle to Yetholm

Horse and rider accommodation is available with Angela Freeland Cooke at Primsidemill tel. 01573 420241

Location / OS Grid Ref.	Feature/description	Alternative access to avoid restrictions
NT780235 Kale Water	Narrow wooden footbridge with side rails and several steep steps either end, unsuitable for horses 	Vehicular ford with concrete base 20m north of footbridge. Continue through gate following track to right to rejoin SCW. Cattle may be grazing in this field. 
NT786238	Several sections of boardwalk covered with rabbit netting over ditches and boggy ground  	Either go through the newly installed self-closing bridlegate and carefully negotiate ditches alongside boardwalks, or continue north 10m from bridlegate, through next field gate on right in corner of field. Be aware cattle may be grazing in this field. Follow edge of shelterbelt north then east. From north-east tip of shelterbelt, cut diagonally south-east up to gate in field corner to rejoin SCW.

NT787238	Wooden kissing gate, adjacent gate firmly wired shut	
NT795239 East side of Grubbit Law	Wooden ladder stile over wall, no adjacent gate	Use field gate at NT791240. Continue on west side of dyke to wooden wicket gate at approx.. NT801243
NT802243	Wooden ladder stile over wall	Wooden wicket gate 20m east
NT813266	For off-road alternative to B6401, turn right at Primsidemill over bridge, first left along track which runs parallel to Bowmont Water (not yet shown on OS maps) through a series of gates at Hayhope steading. Bear left over the bridge, past Duncanhaugh, to rejoin SCW at the cemetery at NT817272.	

Yetholm to Scotland-England border

Various options for circular routes. Potential parking during dry weather on open ground next to Halter Burn at NT840277.

Location / OS Grid Ref.	Feature/description	Alternative access to avoid restrictions
NT823281 Bowmont Water between Town and Kirk Yetholm	Waymarked route leads down steps immediately after bridge, impassable with horse	Gate 100m east leads into same field to rejoin SCW
NT840277 Halter Burn	Wooden footbridge	Shallow ford adjacent

Scotland-England Border to Holy Island

Access rights in England are different to those in Scotland. Horses have no legal right of access on footpaths, although some landowners do not object provided riders behave responsibly.

Border crossing to Hethpool

The footpath waymarked as St. Cuthbert's Way between the border crossing and Elsdonburn is impassable with a horse due to several stiles and low branches through woodland, but there is an alternative which, although legally only a footpath, is easily accessible with a horse, other than in mist or low cloud when particular care with navigation is required on the initial moorland section. The landowners do not usually object to use by horses but as a matter of courtesy, horse riders should telephone College Valley Estates tel. 01668 216564.

- From the gate at NT853273, follow the wall south on the English (east) side to NT853268 (or continue along the grass track at NT850273 via Stob Stones to a wooden gate in the wall at NT853268).
- Follow the well worn grass track south-east, past Maddie's Well, through the gate in the fence at Wideopen Head, continuing along the grass track which runs east gently down the contour to Trowupburn.

- At Trowupburn follow the track north, to rejoin SCW at NT883283. Alternatively, turn right through the handling pen gates immediately before the steading at Trowupburn, across the burn, and follow the track east through the forestry plantation to join the College Valley road at NT888266, then turn left heading north to rejoin SCW at Hethpool. Be aware that cattle are fed on the track through the forest in winter.

Hethpool to Wooler

St. Cuthbert's Way is rideable all the way from Hethpool to Wooler, other than the exceptions noted below, although most of the track from Hethpool Mill via Torleehouse to Gains Law is currently legally recognised only as a footpath until it becomes a bridleway at NT973275. The landowners do not usually object to equestrian use of this historic old road, but horse-riders should ring Ian Hall, factor for Lilburn Estate tel. 01667 217331, to check shooting dates. Other points to note about this section are:

- To get around the kissing gates in the fencelines in the direct line of the waymarked route at NT904284 and NT906286, follow the track uphill to the south to the ford at NT906283, and use the gate in the deer fence across the track east of the burn.
- At Torleehouse make sure you follow the waymarked diversion which runs south of the fence above Torleehouse, parallel to the main track past the farmhouse.
- Slip hurdle (flake gate) in the fence at NT921292.
- Short section of slatted wooden boardwalk across burn at NT937276 (pictured below). Riders need to decide for themselves whether they wish to use this at their own risk.



This can be avoided either by fording or jumping the burn (ground can be boggy either side), by branching off on the bridleway at NT935277 following the track north-east to Gleadscleugh, and then around the north side of Humbleton Hill, to rejoin SCW at NT973275 (or continue east along the minor road from Humbleton into Wooler); or by branching south at NT928282 following the footpath south to join the bridleway which runs east from Commonburn House to link with SCW at NT977272.

Wooler to East Horton

The path over Weetwood Moor is currently legally recognised only as a footpath and is inaccessible with a horse because of ladder stiles and kissing gates either end. Either follow the B6348 north east from Wooler to link back with St Cuthbert's Way at Weetwood Bridge, or from the sharp bend in the road west of Weetwood Moor at NU005278, carry on up the hill below the radio mast and Coldmartin Loughs, turning left (north) on the track which branches off at the southern tip of West Plantation. Cross straight over the junction with the B6348, then take first left on the minor road past Newhall, and right at the T-junction with the B6349 to Hetton House, then left to East Horton.

East Horton to Fenwick

The track from East Horton east towards Old Hazelrigg is legally only recognised as a footpath even though there is a strong argument for broader legal rights of access, and it is wholly accessible with a horse.

St. Cuthbert's Way then follows bridleways to Fawcet Hill, but the track north through Shiellow Wood is only designated as a footpath, with several obstructions to equestrian use. The easiest alternative is to continue east on the bridleway to Greymare Farm and Detchant, then follow the minor road north to Fenwick.

Fenwick to Holy Island

East of the A1 St. Cuthbert's Way follows a footpath with a pedestrian only crossing at the main east coast railway line. Horse riders can either follow the minor road and waymarked cycle route north-west from Fenwick to Mount Hooley, or branch off on the bridleway south of Fenwick at NU064393 past East Kylee to Kylee House, turning left on the B6353 and then turning right immediately before the church on the bridleway which leads north to join the minor road from Fenwick before Mount Hooley.

TAKE GREAT CARE CROSSING A1, which is a very busy trunk road. There is a direct crossing at NT055418 with relatively good visibility in both directions, already clearly signed as part of the National Cycle Network, and the remains of the old carriageway east of the A1 linking through to the turn off to Holy Island.

Level crossing with flashing warning lights before barriers descend between West Mains and Beal at NU062427.



Potential parking at the Barn at Beal, east of the railway, from where a new multi-use/cycle route has been created running parallel to the road. Note that the public car park at NU079427 is not suitable for trailers or lorries.

The causeway across to Holy Island is tidal, and should not be attempted other than during publicised safe crossing times which can be downloaded from <http://orawww.northumberland.gov.uk/www2/holyisland/holyisland.asp>. At low tide there is ample space to step safely off the tarmac causeway to allow traffic to pass. The pilgrims' route across the sand is passable only at low tide, users should stick closely to the route marked by guide posts to avoid risk of sinking sand.

Parking on Holy Island is strictly limited although outside peak visiting times it is possible to get dispensation to unload at the coach/bus car park.