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Barnard Castle to Cotherstone

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Lay-by on the B 6277, just over half a mile NW of Barnard Castle (NZ 037169).
Ordnance Survey map	OL31 North Pennines – Teesdale & Weardale
Date of Walk	29 September 2014
Distance	8.2 miles
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: This walk from Barnard Castle to Cotherstone in the main follows the Teesdale Way. This broadly follows the River Tees although when the trees are in leaf, you do not actually see a great deal of the river. It is a pleasant walk with a few ups and downs but is mostly straightforward and well marked with Teesdale Way arrows and fingerposts. It is a mixture of fields and forest walking.

Cotherstone is an attractive village with a green and the Fox and Hounds pub, which dates back to the 1750s, overlooks this. I can recommend a lunch stop there. The village has been designated as a conservation area to preserve its character.

A castle, marked on the OS map, was built in Cotherstone in the eleventh century but nothing of this remains apart from a vague mound of earth.

The walk starts from either of two lay-byes (opposite each other) on the B 6277, just over half a mile to the north west of Barnard Castle (NZ 037169) and just past the Caravan Club site. Although there is about half a mile of walking along the quite busy B6277, there is a wide verge with a clear path in places. You could also start from Barnard Castle itself, though there would be little difference in the distance walked. There is some parking near the castle but no free, unlimited parking in the town centre. There are also some residential streets to the back of the Castle.

Start: From the lay-by parking on the B 6277, walk back towards Barnard Castle for half a mile. Just before the narrow road bridge over Deepdale Beck, turn left following the fingerpost for Cycle Trail and Barnard Castle and cross what is known locally as the Silver Bridge (or obvious reasons) over the River Tees. There are good views of the castle in Barnard Castle from here, along the river.

Once over the Silver Bridge, turn left following the fingerpost for “Teesdale Way” and “Cotherstone 3½ miles”. There is an information board at this point which tells you something about the history of Flatts Wood.

There is little more to the directions for a while. Just follow the path closest to the river, through the woods. After about half a mile, you come to a split in the path where the right hand branch climbs some steps to the remains of the Tees Viaduct. It is an impressive structure, with some immaculate stonework but with little other

interest. It was built in 1860 to carry the South Durham and Lancashire Union Railway over the Tees. The main bridge was demolished in 1971. Return to the main path afterwards.

When the path opens into a field, follow the right hand boundary wall. Part way along the boundary, go through a walkers' gate into the woods once more and the path climbs quite steeply, through the woods, to another walkers' gate at the top of the slope, into a field. Turn left, following a Teesdale Way arrow.

The route now follows the upper edge of the woods.

You pass a short distance from two, white painted, farmhouses (East and West Holme Houses) and at the second, cross a ladder stile into a field. At the end of the next field, there is a gate with a "private" sign and depending on the light, it is easy to miss the stile in the gloomy corner alongside. Continue to follow the line of the woods.

The path enters a more open field (NZ 025196), after a short section in the woods, crossing a stream by a footbridge. Go through a slit stile and head for the right hand corner of the woods ahead then resume following the edge of the trees.

Turn left through a walkers' gate into the woods again (NZ 017200), following the Teesdale Way arrow. The path drops down and out of the trees to a more level, open area by the river. Follow the obvious track towards a two way fingerpost but just before it, turn left across a footbridge, over the River Tees.

Once over the bridge, turn left, following one of the Teesdale Way fingerposts.

Cross a second footbridge, over the River Balder, then turn right up a tarmac lane to the village of Cotherstone. At the 'T' junction, the Fox and Hounds faces you across the village green and is worth a refreshment stop!

Otherwise, turn left at the 'T' junction (or right after coming out of the pub) and walk along the main road through the village.

Opposite Cotherstone Primary School, turn left down a stony lane (NZ 013196) Stay on this lane ignoring any turns off until, as it turns sharply left over a cattle grid, you bear off right down a narrow footpath.

After crossing a stream, the path curves left, following the left hand boundary of the field.

Through the next gate, follow the right hand boundary of the field. As you near the dwelling, turn right through a kissing gate (the path has been diverted). Just beyond the property, go through another kissing gate.

After the next stile, follow the path as it curves left between two walls. The path goes through a pine forest before opening into a field. The continuation gate is visible.

On reaching a farm (Towler Hill) (NZ 036178) turn right on the drive. As the drive bends slightly right, turn left, over a stile, following the Teesdale Way sign.

After going through woods, come out on to a tarmac lane and turn left (NZ 040174). The lane brings you out on the B 6277, yards from the path where you started. Turn right back to the lay-by.

