

Walk the Way in a Day

Walk 15 River South Tyne and Slaggyford

Whilst the Pennine Way follows a farmland steeplechase and a boggy moorland path, the remainder of the route is on a railway trail, providing an opportunity to enjoy the splendid views over the valley. The route takes the form of a 'figure 8', and so could be turned into two short strolls.

Pennine Way

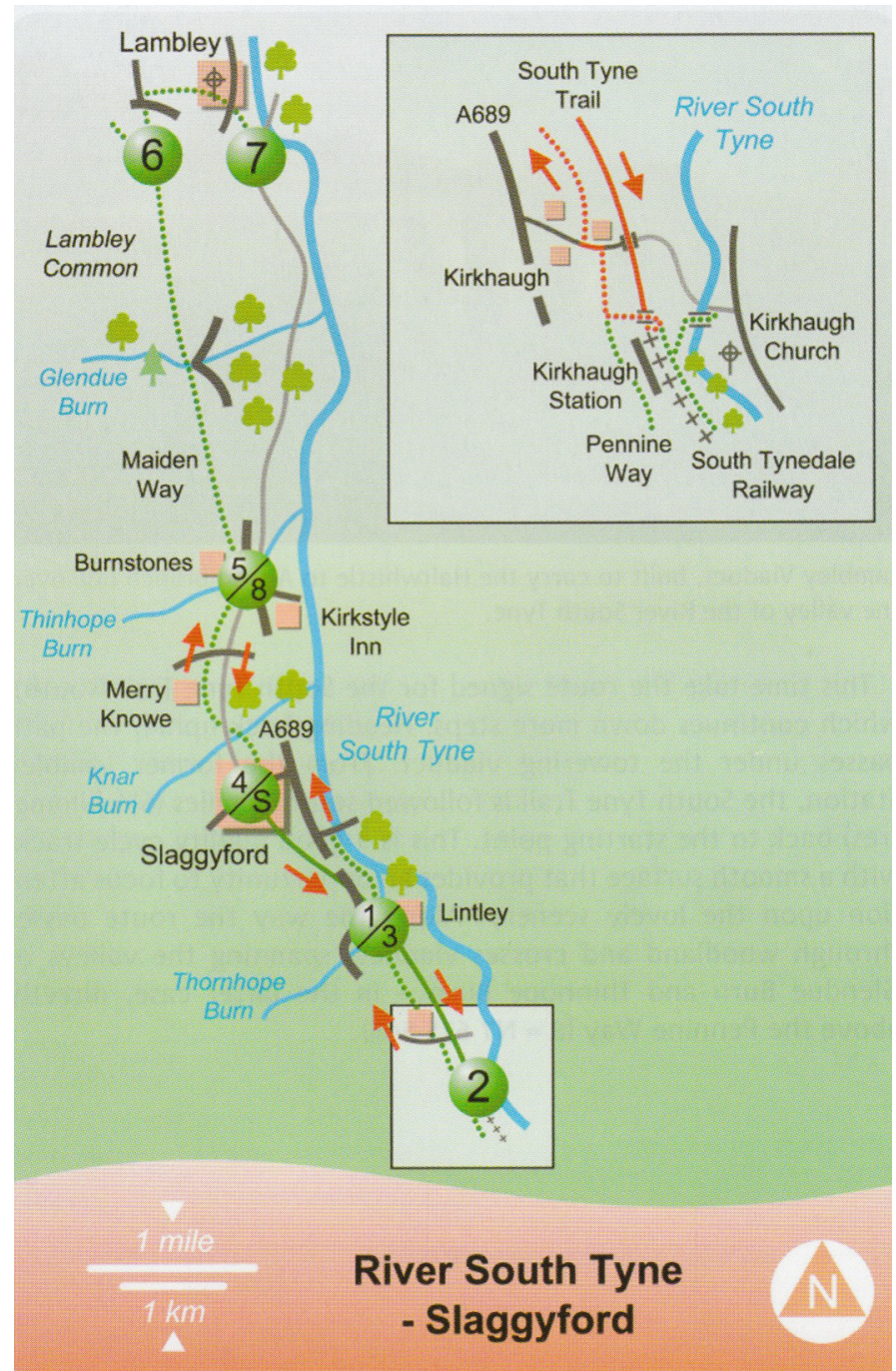
50 YEARS



- Length: 13¾ miles (22¼ kilometres)
- Ascent: 853 feet (260 metres)
- Highest Point: 968 feet (295 metres)
- Map(s): OS Explorer OL Maps 43 ('Hadrian's Wall, Haltwhistle & Hexham') (West Sheet) and 31 ('North Pennines - Teesdale & Weardale') (West Sheet)
- Starting Point: South Tyne Trail parking area, Slaggyford (NY 676 523)
- Facilities: Inn at Knarsdale.
- Website: <http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/pennine-way/route/walk-way-day-walk-15-river-south-tyne-and-slaggyford>

South Tyne Trail

Slaggyford ('muddy ford') is on the A689, 5 miles (8 kilometres) north-west of Alston. The starting point is reached by turning off the main road and heading up through the village to the old railway station. The first part of the walk follows the South Tyne Trail south-east along the former track-bed, 2¼ miles (3¾ kilometres) to Kirkhaugh. The grassy track is lined with hawthorn, birch and larch, and runs through a belt of pasture reaching up from the river towards open moorland. Crossing a viaduct spanning the dene of Thornhope Burn (1 = NY 687 511), as the hamlet of Kirkhaugh is passed the track drops off the bottom of the map for a short way. Passing under a bridge, Kirkhaugh Station is reached (2 = NY 696 496). This is



currently the end of the railway line, and it is here that we turn off the track to join the Pennine Way.

South Tynedale Railway

South Tynedale Railway is England's highest narrow gauge track, and runs along a 2½ mile (4 kilometre) section of the former Haltwhistle to Alston branch line. The stretch heading north out of Alston was opened in 1983, with the link to Gilderdale Halt following in 1986 and the extension to Kirkhaugh in 1999. There are plans to extend the line to Lintley, then Slaggyford - 5 miles (8 kilometres) from Alston (in this event a path will be created alongside the track for the South Tyne Trail). Both steam and diesel trains are run, carrying fair-paying passengers.

Thornhope Burn

Heading up the side of the cutting, double back a short way to cross over the bridge. Joining the Pennine Way at the top of a field, this is followed 2½ miles (4 kilometres) back to Slaggyford. Passing through a gate in a drystone wall, a faint path runs over rough pasture towards the hamlet of Kirkhaugh. Turning onto an access road, a finger sign points through a gate, with the route continuing over fields, parallel to the South Tyne Trail. A finger sign points down into the dene of Thornhope Burn, where the stream is crossed by a footbridge (3 = NY 687 511).

Passing under the viaduct, a faint path runs around the edge of a field before heading down to the riverside. Continuing along the tree-lined riverbank, an unclassified road is eventually met, close to its junction with the A689. From here the Pennine Way follows the main road to Slaggyford (there is no pavement, so take care). Arriving at the village centre, head up the side road used earlier to access the starting point. This time look for a finger sign showing the route turning onto a muddy path beside the former Yew Tree Chapel (4 = NY 677 524).

Maiden Way

Heading north-west along a tree-lined lane, a marker stone shows a path running down into the dene of Knar Burn. Crossing a footbridge beneath a viaduct, turn right and follow the path as it hooks around, passing under the railway embankment by a tunnel. A track runs over fields to Merry Knowe farm, where a finger sign shows the route passing to the right of the farm buildings. Crossing a step stile next to a shed, the route turns north-east. Arriving at an unclassified road, cross straight over and continue across rough pasture. Dropping down to Thinhope Burn, pass under another viaduct to arrive at a road (5 = NY 675 543).

Following the road as it crosses the burn, a finger sign shows the Pennine Way heading up a track towards Burnstones. This is a former coaching inn, and an inscription on the wall refers to 'Nichols Moor, Dealer in Foreign Spirituous Liquors'. From here a hardcore track heads north onto the moors, with fine views opening-up as height is gained. The next part of the walk follows the course of Maiden Way for 3½ miles (5¾ kilometres) to Lambley. Leaving the track as it turns before some old workings, continue straight ahead over rough grazing. Crossing a drystone wall by a ladder stile, a quad track heads north through rushes, with views towards the Great Whin Sill.

Heading down to Glendue Burn, the A689 can be seen converging from the right. Crossing the stream by a footbridge, the pleasant little valley is embellished with birch and fir. Climbing steeply out on a stony path, the way ahead runs beside a drystone wall, with heather moorland to the left. As the path switches to the right-hand side of the boundary, the route tops-out at a fairly modest 968 feet (295 metres). The drystone wall is replaced by a fence as the path runs gently downhill, crossing some boggy ground along the way. The second of two stiles on the left bears an acorn marker, and it is here that we leave the Pennine Way (6 = NY 667 585).

Lambley

For the next part of the walk, linking to the South Tyne Trail via Lambley,

simply retrace the route followed on the previous walk. Ignoring the stile, follow a rough track down to the A689. From Shanders Houses, follow the route over fields towards the village, where a finger sign marks the start of a path to Lambley Viaduct. This runs behind a row of cottages and above the wooded valley side, before heading down steps to arrive back at the crossroads of paths encountered on the previous walk (7 = NY 674 583).

This time take the route signed for the South Tyne Trail (south), which continues down more steps. Heading back uphill, the path passes under the towering viaduct. From the former Lambley Station, the South Tyne Trail is followed south, 4 miles (6½ kilometres) back to the starting point. This is a good quality cycle track, with a smooth surface that provides an opportunity to focus attention upon the lovely scenery. Along the way the route passes through woodland and crosses viaducts spanning the valleys of Glendue Burn and Thinhope Burn - in the latter case, directly above the Pennine Way (8 = NY 675 543).

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