

Saturday 20 May 2023

ARCHAEOLOGY WALK: ROMANS AND BRITONS ON THE BORDER

Trip leader: John Dent (mobile number 07735 353119)

Meet at The Plough Hotel, Town Yetholm (NT 820281) (///doses.hardens.scout)

Time: 10-30 am for coffee and introductory talk

The Cheviot Hills offers one of the best-preserved prehistoric landscapes in Europe due to sheep grazing and a lack of plough damage. Here runrig field systems and slots for timber house walls and palisades can be traced on the ground – something normally removed in a single ploughing. Numerous hillforts hint at insecure times and it was at just this point in the Southern Uplands that the Roman Imperial Legate Gnaeus Julius Agricola chose to bring his army into what are now the Scottish Lowlands, marking his route with the strategic road known as Dere Street, beside which temporary camps mark staging points in various Roman campaigns over three centuries.

The visit will begin at the Plough Hotel in Town Yetholm where John Dent will give depth to this historical summary and members can enjoy coffee before the party decamps to Towford (NT 760133) (///sapping.eating.texts) in the Kale Water valley.

From Towford we shall walk along Dere Street, here a tarmac road, and visit the Roman camps on Pennymuir with their well-preserved ramparts and ditches. Retracing our steps we shall follow the Roman road up into the hills, visiting the hillfort of Woden Law (422m OD), seeing prehistoric fields around a small palisaded homestead and reaching two Bronze Age burial mounds on Blackhall Hill (479m OD), just short of the Anglo-Scottish Border fence. We shall return the same way, over Iron Age boundary dykes, seeing Roman quarries for road stone and enjoying stunning views across Roxburghshire and beyond.

Directions

The only practical way to participate in this trip is by car or car share. It should be possible to car share between the Plough Hotel and Towford. There is plenty of parking available in Town Yetholm.

From Berwick (23miles) take to B6354 to the A697, turn left for 3/4 mile then right onto the B6352 to Town Yetholm; from Kelso (9 miles) take the B6352; both roads arrive at the bottom of the Green and the Plough Inn is just up the main street on the left (east) side of the Green.

The walk will climb more than 200m following farm tracks and through moorland grazing, so robust footwear will be essential, as well as suitable clothing, given the exposed location of some of the sites. A reasonable level of fitness is necessary. The walk itself should take about two hours.

The size of the party is limited to 25 and places are bookable through Eventbrite:

https://bnc_romans_britons.eventbrite.com/