

## Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail

The Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail opened in 2003. The 84 miles (135 km) Trail gives access to the magnificent Hadrian's Wall countryside. This leaflet is one of a series offering short walks exploring the local network of paths around the Trail. For more information contact the National Trail Officer: 0191 269 1600 [www.nationaltrail.co.uk](http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk)

## Hadrian's Wall Country

The Romans found a more wooded landscape than we see today. Red kites flew overhead and the forest was a wild place with wolves, wild boar, red deer and beavers. Some of this woodland was cleared as the Romans used a lot of timber in buildings and settlements along the wall.

After the Romans left, the Wall was not maintained. It was a long time before such a solid structure was attempted again in the area. When the Normans began to build churches, monasteries and manors, they often quarried the Wall for its magnificent square-cornered stone. However, for over 300 years, into the 17th century, the area was wild and lawless, with Border reivers (raiders) threatening all who did not belong to their own extended families.

Only after peace came to this border area did permanent houses become common. Vast quantities of Wall stone can be found built into houses of this period.

Today, farmland and woodland offer a beautiful landscape in which to enjoy the history Hadrian left behind.



### 2 Mumps Hall

In the lawless years of the 16th and 17th centuries, 'Mumps Ha' had a fearsome reputation as a den of thieves and vagabonds.

The romantic novelist, Sir Walter Scott, visiting in 1797, based one of his characters on a particularly unpleasant landlady of the time.



**Map Key**

- National Trail (section of)
- Route
- Gradient moderate very steep
- Road Bus route
- Footpath Bridleway
- Steep drop beside route
- Alternative route

**Gradient Key**

- Location point Telephone
- Access to road Parking
- Toilets Accessible toilet
- Refreshments (cafe/public house)
- Steps Cattle grid
- Bridge Kissing gate
- Signpost Gate (narrow)
- Gap stile Stepping stones
- Perch/seat Path Surface
- View point Grass
- Step stile Firm/even
- Picnic site Soft
- Ladder stile Rough/uneven

**Gilsland Popping Stone**  
(circular)  
3½ miles 5.6 km

### 9 Stepping Stones

The river Irthing can be crossed by large stepping stones, however the water level rises dramatically after rain. If the stones are not visible, return to the road and follow it back to Gilsland (route shown as dotted line).

Chimney sweeper moths thrive on the grass verges. Their caterpillars feed on chervil.

Orchard House

### 5 Gilsland Spa

Attracted by the health-giving properties of the springs, Victorian day trippers made the spa a favourite destination for 'taking the waters'. The smell of bad eggs gives away their source - reserves of sulphur, deep in the earth's crust. The original well was lost in a landslide but you can cross the bridge to visit the well rebuilt in the 1960's.

The Gilsland Spa Hotel is open to non residents for food and drink.



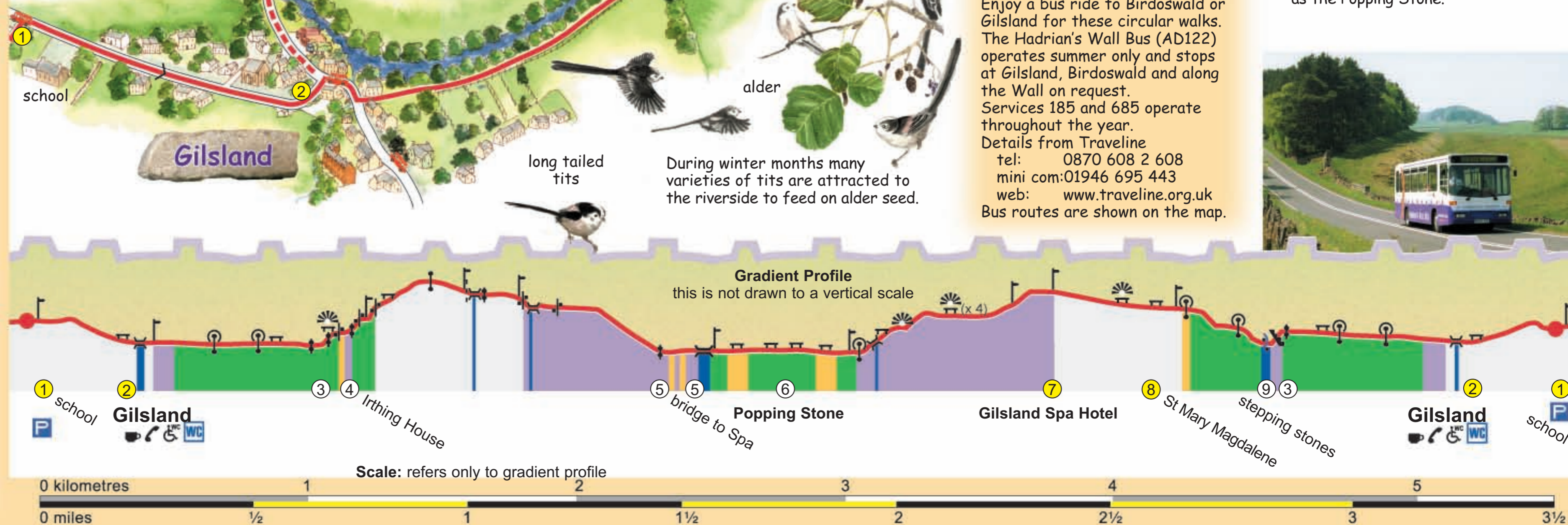
**Popping Stone**

### 6 The Popping Stone

Clearly a romantic at heart, local legend says that Sir Walter Scott proposed to his sweetheart and future wife, at the prominent rock beside the river, known ever since as the Popping Stone.

### Travel by bus

Enjoy a bus ride to Birdoswald or Gilsland for these circular walks. The Hadrian's Wall Bus (AD122) operates summer only and stops at Gilsland, Birdoswald and along the Wall on request. Services 185 and 685 operate throughout the year. Details from Traveline  
tel: 0870 608 2 608  
mini com: 01946 695 443  
web: [www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk)  
Bus routes are shown on the map.



**Gilsland Birdoswald**  
 (circular)  
 3½ miles 5.6 km

orange tip butterfly on cow parsley.

In Roman times the river Irthing followed a slightly different course. Erosion by the fast flowing river has caused the steep banks to collapse. Downstream, shingle beds are deposited, creating a new channel.



**Birdoswald Roman Fort**

**7 Birdoswald Roman Fort**  
 Birdoswald was one of 16 forts along the 85 mile length of Hadrian's Wall.



It was an important strategic site guarding the western flank of the Pennines and the Irthing Gorge. Garrisons of Legionnaires, mostly foreign mercenaries, occupied the barrack blocks. To discover more visit the Fort with its Visitor Centre, tearoom, shop and archaeological excavations.

**Code of Respect Hadrian's Wall**

- \* paths are easily damaged when wet, try one of the promoted circular paths, especially in winter
- \* try to use public transport
- \* respect livestock and land
- \* walking on the Wall may cause it to collapse
- \* keep to signed footpaths
- \* keep dogs on a lead

Along this stretch the Wall was built from sandstone and held together with lime mortar. This is home to many lime-loving plants and lichens.

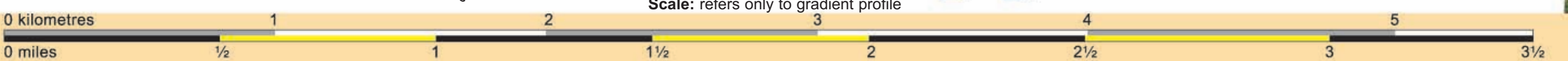
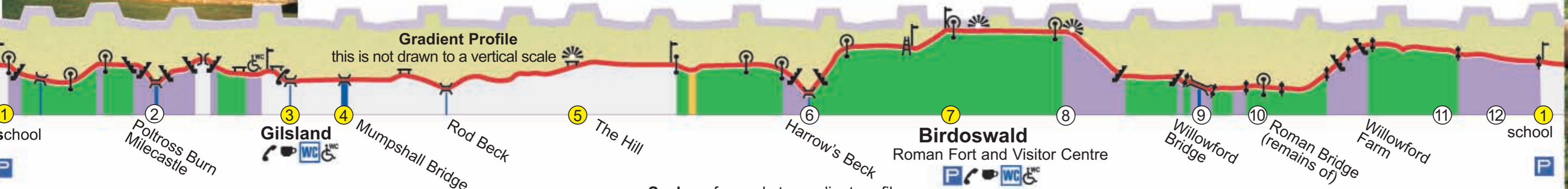


**TAKE CARE** crossing the railway line

**2 Poltross Burn Milecastle**  
 There was a small defensive stronghold every Roman mile. These milecastles held a small number of soldiers who would have provided regular patrols along the battlements, guarding the northern boundary of the vast Roman Empire.



**9 Willowford Bridge**  
 The new steel bridge carrying the Hadrian's Wall National Trail was airlifted into place in 1999. For a period children crossed the river using an aerial ropeway as a shortcut to school. Just upstream the abutments of the Roman bridge emerge from the grassy field. The changing course of the river over two millennia has left them high and dry.



The Romans faced a big problem building the Wall in this area. The local stone was covered in glacial debris and difficult to quarry. So they originally built this part of the Wall with turf. Later, it was rebuilt using stone quarried some distance away. To make the Wall more secure a complex system of ditches, banks, turrets, forts and milecastles was also built.

**Hadrian's Wall**

This series of leaflets takes you on explorations of the landscape which the Romans left behind.

**in Cumbria**

**Walking Hadrian's Wall**



Walking around Hadrian's Wall  
**Gilsland and Birdoswald**  
 up to 7 miles (11.2 kms)



View over the Irthing valley (towards Willowford)