

David Taylor

111 Places
along Hadrian's Wall
That You
Shouldn't Miss

111

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Foreword

Hadrian's Wall must have been an awesome sight when first built. What emotions it stirred in native Britons is now impossible to know, but fear must surely have been one of them. If the Romans could build something like Hadrian's Wall – dividing the country decisively and very neatly in two – what else were they capable of? Hadrian's Wall is much diminished now, sadly; a victim of natural erosion and much pilfering of its stones over the centuries. However, those stretches that still stand are testament to the ambition, imagination and skill of Emperor Hadrian and the Roman army.

The most complete stretches of Hadrian's Wall are found in Northumberland, starting at the aptly named village of Heddon-on-the-Wall in the east, to Gilsland and Poltross Burn Milecastle in the west. However, even where the wall is now long gone, there are ghostly signs of its former presence. The biggest clue is found in the names of businesses. There is the Centurion Bar in Newcastle's Central Station, just 10-minutes' walk from where the Roman fort of Pons Aelius once stood, for example, as well the Forum Shopping Centre in Wallsend and many others besides. (There are no prizes for guessing what structure Wallsend is named after either!) And where else could Turret Road, Legion Grove and, not forgetting, Hadrian Road, be than in Hadrian's Wall Country?

What was so enjoyable about writing this book was the excuse it gave me to go out and thoroughly explore Hadrian's Wall Country, from the North Sea across to the Solway Firth. There were many places familiar to me that I knew immediately had to be in the book but, for reasons of space, there were also a good few that didn't make the selection. Most of the locations in this book have a direct connection with Hadrian's Wall and the Roman occupation of Britain. Some locations have no connection at all, other than I liked them. I hope you will too.



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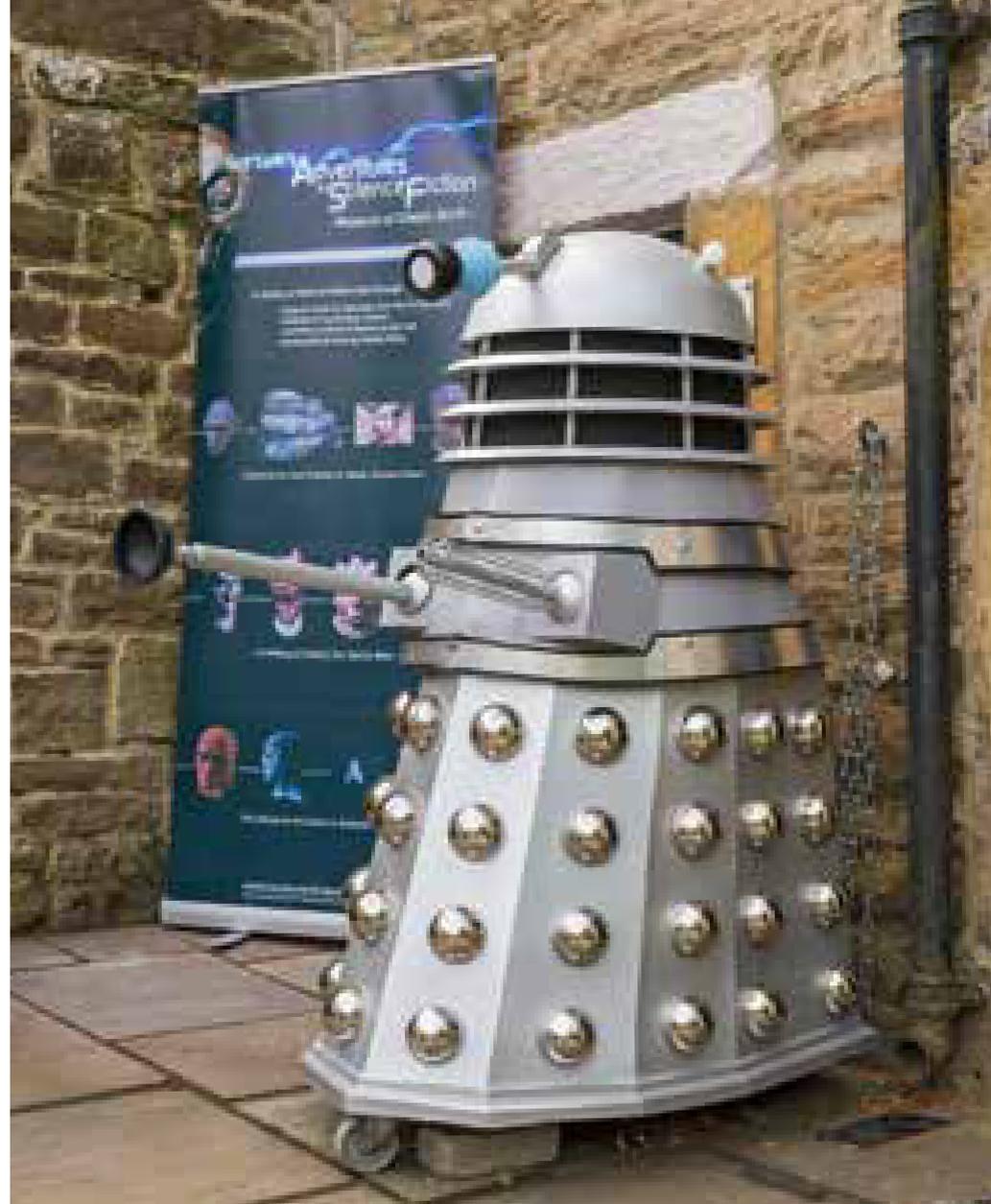
Aliens invade rural Northumberland

It is 21 December, 1963. On TV is the fifth episode of *Doctor Who*, a new BBC science fiction series. In their first adventure, the Doctor and his companions – Susan, Barbara and Ian – had narrowly escaped from the clutches of a Stone Age tribe on prehistoric Earth. Now the TARDIS – a space/time machine – has taken them to an alien world. They start to explore what appears to be an abandoned city. Somehow, Barbara is separated from the group. Frightened, she is menaced by a thin metal arm. She screams and the episode ends on a nail-biting cliffhanger.

The arm belongs to a Dalek, a hideously mutated creature that moves around in an armoured metal shell. Collectively the Daleks are a malevolent force, dedicated to conquest and destruction; their battle-cry: Exterminate. Although ultimately defeated by the Doctor in this encounter, the Daleks have returned many times since.

The Daleks were the invention of Terry Nation, who had previously written for the likes of Tony Hancock. In later interviews, Nation said that the Daleks were inspired by the female dancers of the Georgian State Ballet, who appeared to glide across a stage in their traditional floor-length skirts. However, the real credit for the design of the Daleks goes to Raymond Cusick, who was a BBC designer assigned to the serial. Cusick's timeless creation still terrifies children nearly 60 years on.

The Allendalek – a cunning amalgam of Allendale and Dalek – stands outside the Museum of Classic Sci-Fi and was built by owner, Neil Cole, with help from family and friends. The museum is a treasure trove of props, costumes and memorabilia from science fiction TV shows and movies. Many of the exhibits have been lovingly restored by Cole, and are displayed in atmospheric display cases. So fascinating are the exhibits that you may suffer a strange space/time event yourself, with your visit over far too quickly.



Address The Museum of Classic Sci-Fi, Osbourne House, Allendale, Northumberland, NE47 9BJ, www.museumofclassicsci-fi.com | **Getting there** Bus 688 Tynedale Links to Market Place; free parking in the market place | **Hours** Mon, Wed & Fri 10.30am–3pm, Sat & Sun 10.30am–4pm | **Tip** The nearby Allendale Forge is a gallery representing local artists and makers, and which also has a café serving home-cooked breakfast and lunches, tea and coffee (www.allendaleforgestudios.co.uk).

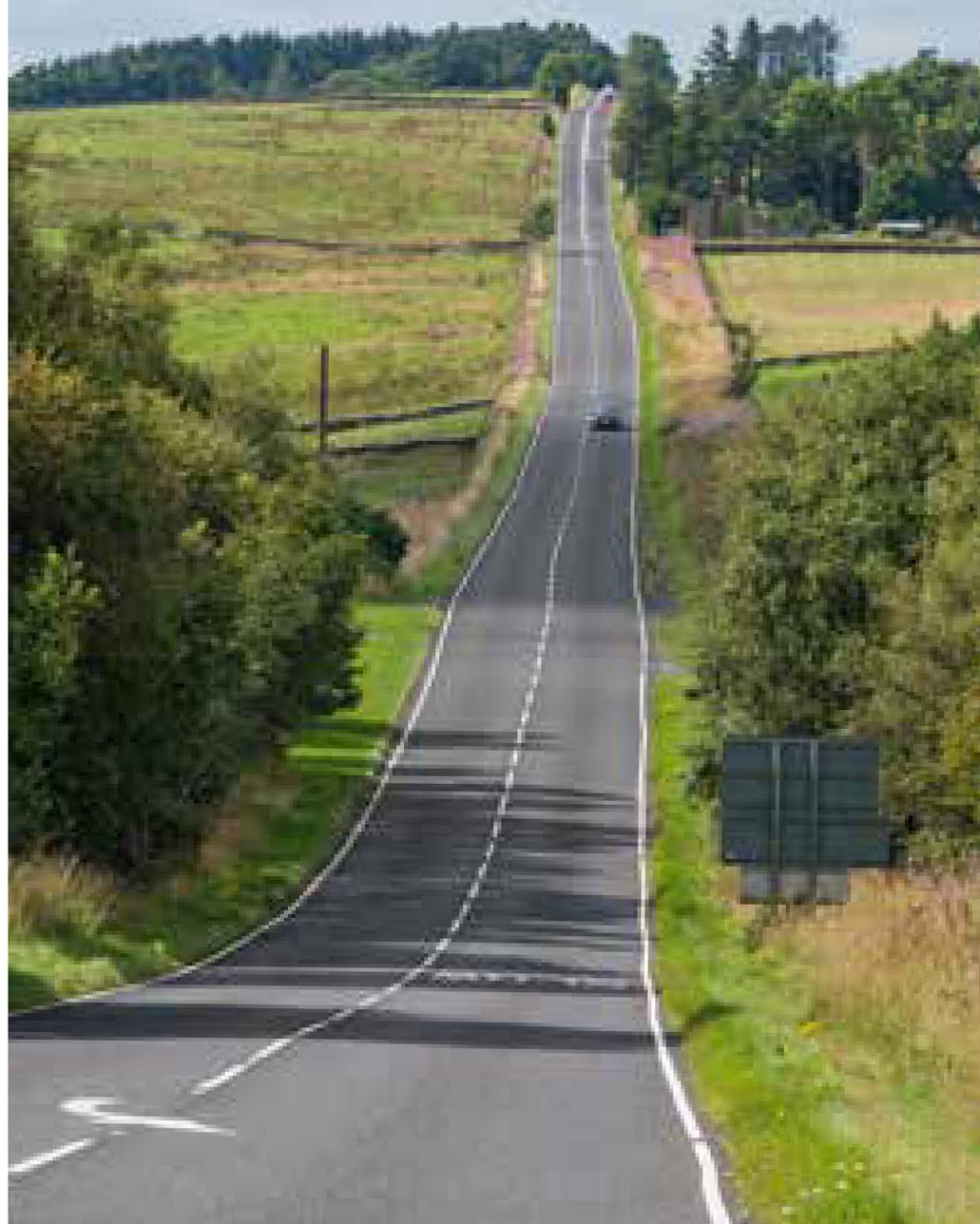
6 B6318

Recycling gone wrong

The Jacobite rebellion of 1745 threw northern England into turmoil. Scottish forces, under the leadership of Charles 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' Stuart, had captured Carlisle in November of that year. Moving troops across the country was difficult as roads were poor, but this affected British forces as much as it did the Jacobites. It took General Wade, leader of the Hanoverian army, almost a week to move his men from Newcastle to Carlisle. What was needed was a new road to link the two towns. In 1751, with the rebellion quashed, work began on what quickly came to be known as Wade's Road (a name now rarely used, though the B6318 is still known as the Military Road).

Building a road requires a lot of stone, and the builders of Wade's Road had an ample supply. Unfortunately for future archaeologists this just happened to be Hadrian's Wall, which the road largely ran parallel to. It's thought that most of the damage done to the wall was due to the building of the road, with the road built over demolished stretches of the wall in places, and the stone used for hardcore. The best preserved sections of the wall are in areas where the road is relatively distant.

The B6318 is the modern version of Wade's Road. It's a quieter road than it once was thanks to the A69 a few miles south. Now it's the route taken by visitors to sites along Hadrian's Wall, or who aren't in a particular hurry. At just over 61 miles in length, the B6318 has the distinction of being the longest B-road in Britain, running across three counties and over the border into Scotland. (There seems to be something magical about the numbers 6, 3, 1 and 8, as the B6138 in Yorkshire is thought to be the road with the longest continuous gradient in England.) Coincidentally or not, the road becomes more unruly once it leaves the shadow of Hadrian's Wall, meandering northwards to Langholm, its terminus point.



Address Heddon-on-the-Wall, Northumberland to Langholm, Dumfries and Galloway | **Getting there** The Hadrian's Wall stretch of the B6318 is served by the AD122 bus service in the summer months. | **Tip** The Three Tuns pub in Heddon-on-the-Wall is a friendly and atmospheric country pub that serves drinks and hearty traditional pub food (1 Military Road, Heddon-on-the-Wall, NE15 0BQ, +44 (0)1661 852172).

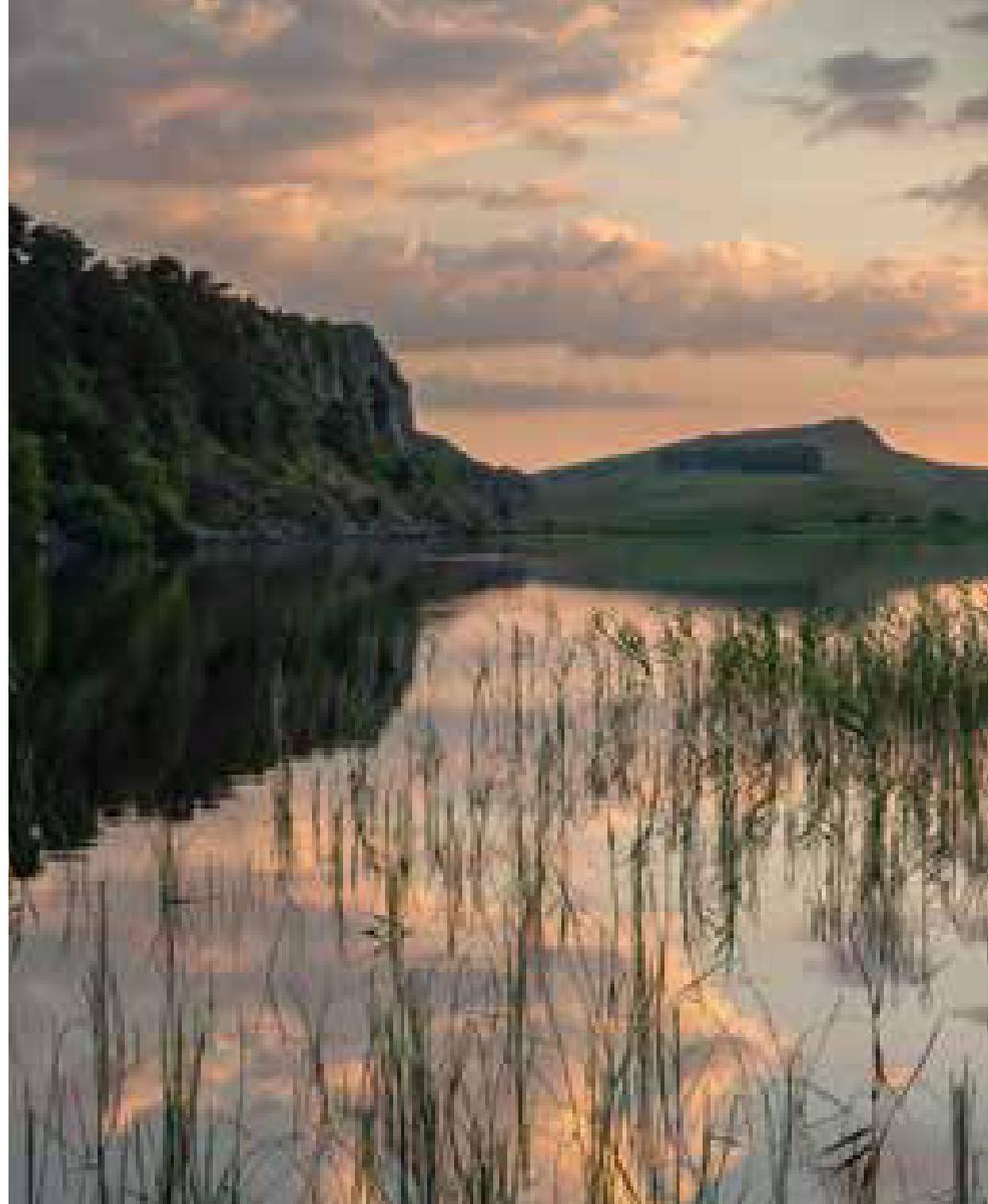
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Neither lake nor loch

It's a pub quiz favourite: how many lakes are there in the Lake District? Unless you know the answer, fewer than you'd think. There is in fact only one: Bassenthwaite Lake. The rest are either meres (such as Windermere) or waters (Derwentwater, for example). It may be a niggly semantic point, but these things really do matter to some people. The Northumberland stretch of Hadrian's Wall Country also has a number of large bodies of water and none of those are strictly speaking lakes either. They are loughs – pronounced 'loff' – a word linked closely in origin to the Scottish word loch, but without the back-of-the-throat 'ch' sound at the end. Crag Lough isn't the largest of the Hadrian's Wall loughs, but the eponymous crags that rise vertically along its southern edge add a grandeur arguably lacking in the others.

Lough is just one of a number of Northumbrian words that can trip up outsiders. A burn, for example, is a small stream, of which there are many in the area. When a burn comes to a sudden drop it briefly becomes a linn, or waterfall. The most spectacular linn in Northumberland – though not the biggest – is Hareshaw Linn, near Bellingham, which thunders down through its own natural amphitheatre of rock.

On a hot day it's tempting to take off shoes and socks and dip weary feet into the cool waters of a lough or burn. Stride out into the water and you would then be having a plodge, and very refreshing it would be too. Another fun thing to do would be to hoy – or throw – a stone into the water, being careful not to fall doon into the clarts as you divvent want to get hacky – down, mud, don't and dirty, respectively. Or perhaps you might if it gives your marra – or mate – a good laugh, though not if that risks them choking on their bait, which is their lunch. Or is it dinner? But that's just another point to argue about in the pub afterwards.



Address High Shield, Northumberland, NE47 7AJ | **Getting there** Crag Lough is on the route of the Hadrian's Wall Path; bus AD122 in the summer months to The Sill and then a 40-minute walk; paid parking at Steel Rigg and then a 30-minute walk | **Tip** The Word: The National Centre for the Written Word is a state-of-the-art cultural centre celebrating the written word in all its forms, from print to digital (45 Market Place, South Shields, NE33 1JF, +44 (0)191 4271818, www.theworduk.org).