Northumberland Wildlife Trust

Haltwhistle Burn

What will I see?

Haltwhistle Burn is a fantastic place to see the Carboniferous rocks that make up most of Northumberland and get a real insight into our industrial heritage. **The coals, sandstones, limestones and shales here have all been mined or quarried.**

How old is it?

The rocks date from between 320 and 330 million years ago. The gorge was largely cut when the the last Ice Age finished 12,000 years ago.

Did you know?

Over 680 men and boys worked in the coal mine (South Tyne Colliery) at the south end of the burn. The shaft there was dug by hand and goes down more than 150m below ground.

Why it is here?

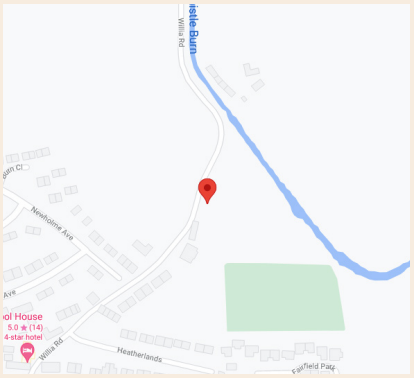
The gorge is here because when the last ice sheet melted it produced an enormous amount of meltwater which cut a channel from the north to the River South Tyne. The rocks in the gorge – the sandstone, shales, limestones and coals – were once sands, muds, coral seas and swampy forests when Britain was a much closer to the Equator. At that time sea level rose and fell every 50,000 years or so, changing the environment from sandy river deltas, to swamps and forests, to muddy coastal lagoons and sub-tropical clear coral seas.

And wildlife?

Some of the woodland is secondary after industry, some is remnant old woodland. There are surviving ancient woodland species like the very attractive oak fern, as well as commoner ones like ramsons (wild garlic) and wood crane's-bill. Limestone outcrops have characteristic plants like fairy flax and mouse-ear hawkweed. You might see roe deer, squirrels, heron and dippers, and perhaps even an otter.

Where is it?

At the north end of Haltwhistle: Willia Road. There is a short walk up and down the burn of 4km [NY708645].



Want to know more?

- **Walking trail**
- **Virtual tour**
- NNP Geodiversity Audit
- Onshore GeoIndex
- iGeology
- Geological history of Northumbria
- Rocks of Haltwhistle Burn
- Carboniferous rocks