



Walltown Quarry



What will I see?

A huge restored old quarry in the Whin Sill. Rugged quarry faces in whinstone are visible, as are the fossiliferous limestone rocks that this igneous intrusion was injected into. Walk beyond the quarry to the Whin Sill ridge and see Hadrian's Wall – and where it was quarried away!

How old is it?

The quarry opened in 1876 and closed in 1976. The Whin Sill was injected into local Carboniferous rocks 295 million years ago. Millions of years of erosion since left the hard dolerite rock standing proud, until it was quarried away.

Did you know?

That the Whin Sill (whinstone or dolerite) is so hard that they had to use explosives to blast it off the rock face. Its hardness meant it was perfect for roadstone chippings used in tarmac and a century ago for setts for cobbling streets.

Why it is here?

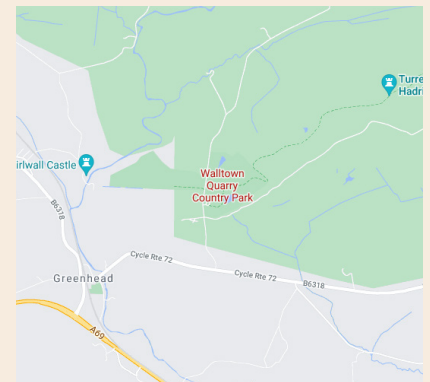
It started as one of many small hard rock quarries along the line of the Whin Sill, but expanded to be one of the largest. The rock is here because billions of tons of molten magma was injected from deep in the Earth in between the layers of Carboniferous limestones, sandstones and shales. Then it cooled and solidified and contracted forming those prominent vertical cracks and fissures.

And wildlife?

Restoration has been a challenge. Slowly, however, nature is returning and in fact there is now a wide variety of plants on the varied soils and rock faces of the quarry. Look out for common rock-rose on thin whin soils. On the quarry floor are common spotted-orchid and northern marsh-orchid (and their vigorous hybrid), with numerous sedge species.

Where is it?

Off the B6318, about a kilometre east of Greenhead [NY670660]. The Hadrian's Wall bus service stops here and there is a large car park too.



Want to know more?

- **Walltown Country Park**
- NNP Geodiversity Audit
- Onshore GeoIndex
- iGeology
- Geological history of Northumbria
- Carboniferous rocks

