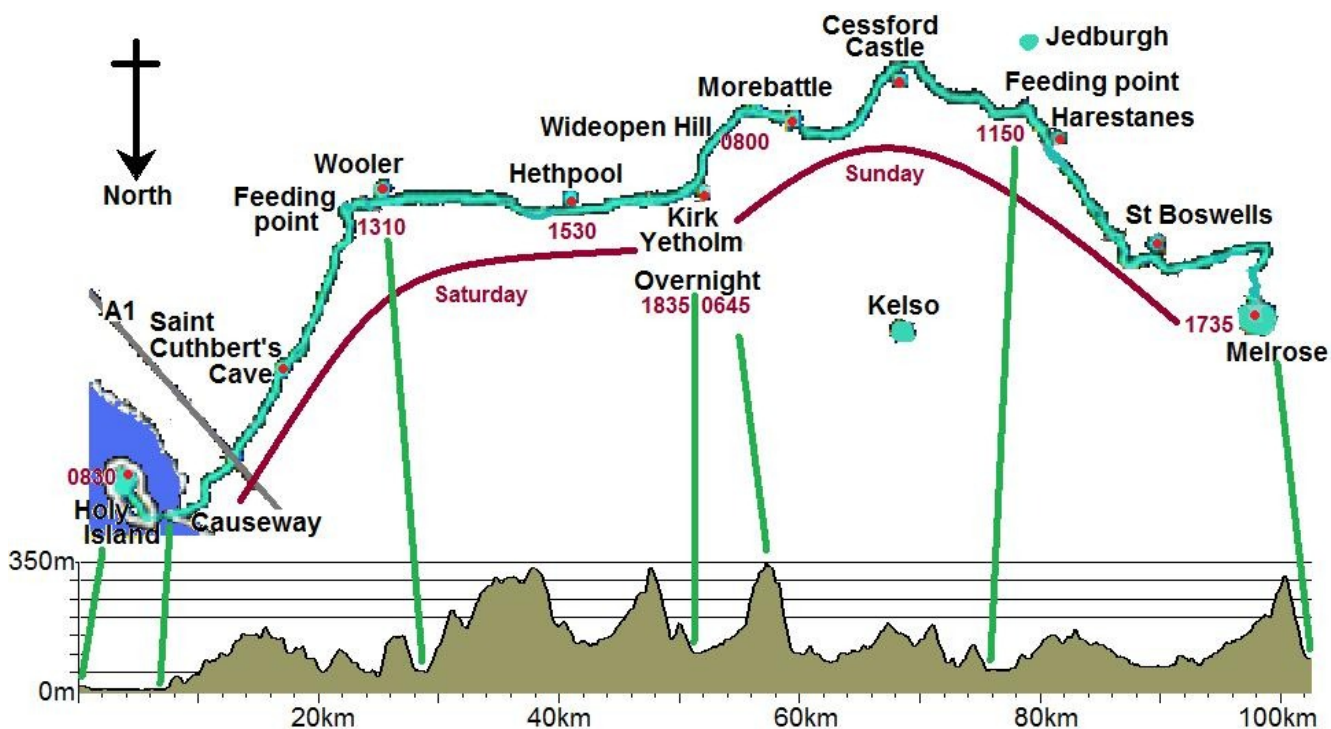


## CLUB LONG WALK, St CUTHBERT'S WAY SCOTTISH BORDERS JUNE 17-20

Two very long walks - Lindisfarne to Yirk Yetholm 30 miles then Yirk Yetholm to Melrose 33 miles. 63 miles or 100k in all.



Attendance:

The President, Peter Chadwick  
 Iain Crowther, Meet Leader  
 Mick Borroff  
 Kevin Brown  
 Patrick Henry (G)  
 Roy Denney  
 Roger Dix  
 Stuart Dix  
 Paul Dover  
 Peter Green  
 David Hick  
 John Jenkin  
 Richard Josephy  
 Tim Josephy  
 Aaron Oakes  
 Michael Smith  
 Derek Smithson  
 Martyn Trasler  
 Nick Walsh



Some of the happy band at the off.

The venue for this year's Long Walk was St Cuthbert's Way in the border country. St Cuthbert (635-687 AD) was a cleric at Melrose Abbey who traversed the route in order to take up the Priorship of Lindisfarne, where his body was returned to rest after a life as a travelling bishop and a hermit on the Farne Islands

The 63-mile walk was spread over two days with accommodation at the Kirk Yetholm Youth Hostel, conveniently situated near the half-way point. Ian studied his tide tables and decided that the only way was to do it in reverse (uphill), i.e. starting at Lindisfarne and finishing at Melrose; otherwise the causeway would be covered.

The weather forecast was dire. This did not discourage the starters gathered at the feet of St Cuthbert's statue for a group photograph. At 7:30 on Saturday morning we set off.

The causeway was dry apart from shallow puddles and the rain was holding off.

Soon we were at the railway crossing where a call was dutifully made on the telephone provided and we were told a train was due any minute. Impatience prevailed however and most took their chances running across the rails! It must be said that the time between our very first awareness of the actual train to when it was speeding past the crossing was less than 10 seconds!



Photo - John Whalley

The way remained quite pastoral as we gradually ascended the high ground between the coast and the valley of Wooler Water. A short break was enjoyed at St Cuthbert's Cave. One can imagine this large rock shelter beneath a gritstone crag providing an excellent bivouac for St Cuthbert and his retinue.



Early enthusiasm



The supported feeding point was by a bridge over the River Till some 15 miles into the walk.

Photos - Kevin Brown

From the bridge a climb up rough moor led to a forest before the descent to Wooler.

Beyond the town was a bigger ascent as we crossed the Cheviots. It was then that the skies opened and gave us rain for the rest of the walk. The last couple of miles to Kirk Yetholm were shared with the Pennine Way.

It was a considerable relief arrive, wet and bedraggled, at the Border Inn and order a pint of real ale. Soon the president entered, losing no time chatting with the ladies and looking like the cat that got the cream!



Photo - John Whalley

The Saturday finishers were Mick, Kevin, Patrick, Roy, Paul, David, Richard, Tim, Aaron, Michael, Martyn, John W and Nick.

At 15 miles Paul, The Dix's and Peter Green joined the support party of Ian, Derek and John Jenkin.

Sunday was a better day weather-wise, but more complicated to report! Aaron and David retired due to bad blisters. Mick, made it as far as the feeding point and then dropped out. Martyn and the Dix's headed home.

Richard and Nick decided to ascend Hedgehope Hill and Comb Fell (South of the Cheviot) returning by the Hartshope Valley. On the way home on Monday, they did Cushat Law.

Roy and Peter G walked locally before joining the support team. Paul elected to get a lift and then walk the last 20 miles to Melrose Abbey.

The main party set off early. I missed joining them due to faffing about with gear upstairs. I felt stiff and slow as I set off through the wild flowers of the riverbank so it was perhaps as well. Two hours later I was on the top of Wide Open Hill, reading a plaque that proclaimed to be the half way point of St Cuthberts Way and the highest point on the walk. Doing the Maths my best hope would be to finish at the Jedburgh feeding point.

After Cessford there was a major deviation to the route. Making a detour due to the attentions of a large bull, I got hopelessly embroiled in a tangle of vegetation in a wooded gorge and could only make progress by walking up the riverbed, using my poles to balance against the current. It was Oxnam Water, and as soon as I was clear I phoned a worried Ian to arrange a pick up at Crailing. This was just as the finishers were passing between the Eildon Hills for the final leg.

In all four completed the whole walk:

Patrick and Peter C who then visited our member David Stembridge, who lives locally and who later brought them back to the hostel and Kevin and Michael, who were recovered by the support party.



A wet and weary Kevin Brown in front of Melrose Abbey at the finish of the walk

As for the others: Tim, had retired at the feeding point due to a painful hip. Paul completed his 20 miles and was also recovered by the supporters.

Thanks go to the SYHA staff and to our support team. Ian especially appreciated assistance from Peter Green in providing pre-cooked meals for both Friday and Saturday evenings, and from John Jenkin who ably managed the much appreciated culinary arrangements.

JCW