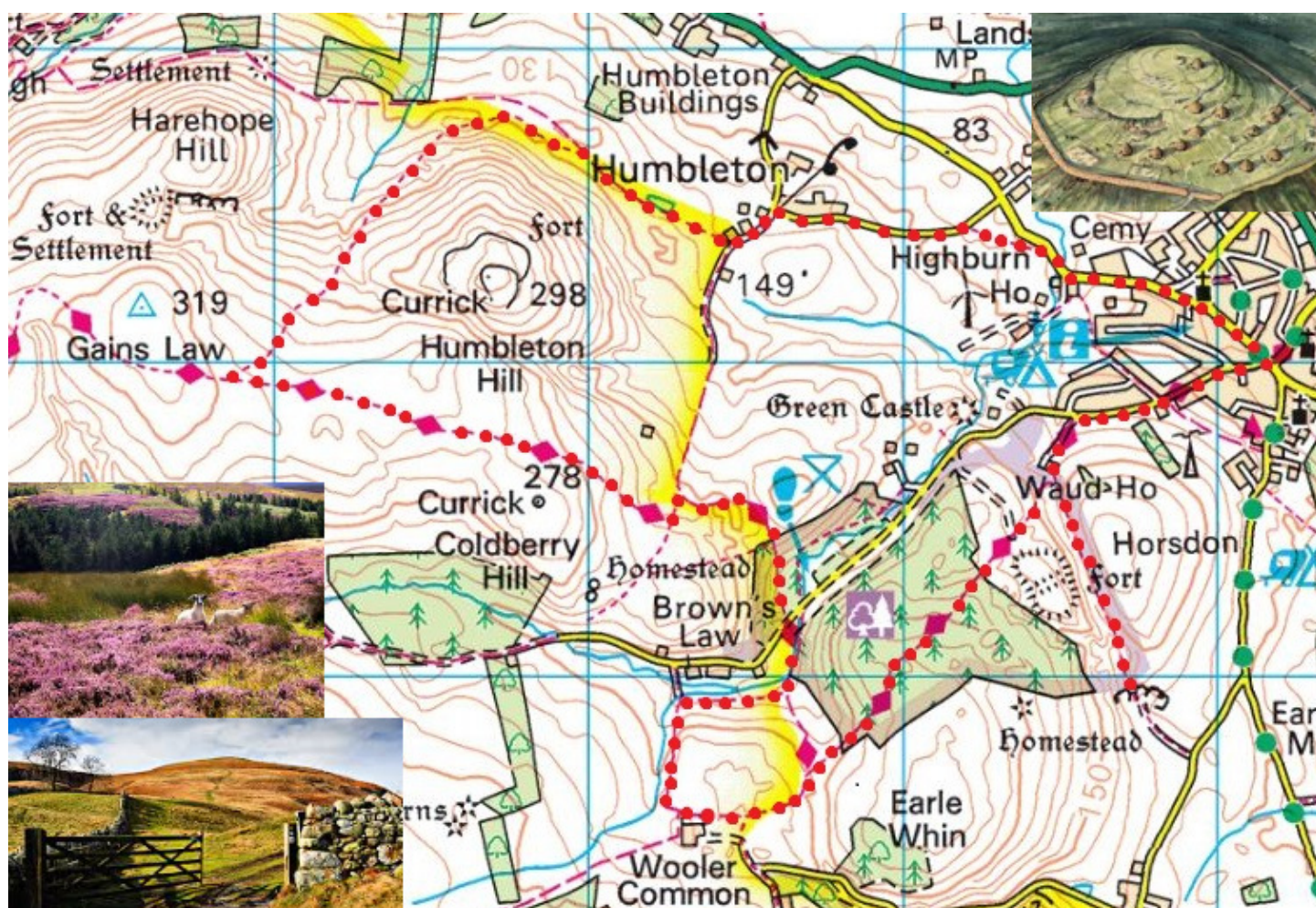


Wooler & Humbleton Hill - 6 miles approx.

Sunday 19th March meet for 11am start near the bus station in Wooler High Street. Parking in the main car park, where there are toilets, is pay & display but it is free in the street. The Cheviots have a reputation amongst some club members as being a pathless inhospitable place with tufty terrain. This route is definitely the exception with good paths and signage. The area around Wooler has evidence of settlements dating from the Bronze Age and most hilltops have some sort of hill fortification. Up to the beginning of 12th century Northumberland was ruled by a succession of earls first, Anglo-Saxon, then Danish and eventually Norman. There is no reference to Wooler in the Domesday Book (1086) due to the area still not being totally under William the Conqueror's control. Wooler was probably no more than a hamlet prior to the creation of the 1st baron Muschamp of Wooler (1107) when it was described as "situated in an ill-cultivated country under the influence of vast mountains, from whence it is subject to impetuous rains". Prosperity and expansion led to the granting in 1199 of a licence to hold a market every Thursday. That licence was used probably without variation until well into the 18th century. On the invasion route of English and Scottish armies and situated so close to the border Wooler viewed many great events of history. The battles at Humbleton Hill (Homildon) in 1402 and Flodden in 1513 although great in historic terms had perhaps less effect than the Scottish raids of 1340 & 1409 which caused great destruction. Wooler was garrisoned at various times by both nations. The 'reivers' or border raider were a fact of life in the border marches for several centuries as evidenced by the numbers of Peel Towers and fortified farm houses throughout the borders. The names of the many of the great reiver families live on in today's Wooler population today. Fire has damaged Wooler on several occasions during its long history. One on 24 Jan 1693 caused damage of £2950 to 54 habitations. Further substantial destruction happened in 1721 (or 22) and in February 1863 a very destructive blaze led to the Wooler we know today. In the 19th and 20th the population of Wooler's population rose fell and then rose again although even today the permanent population at just under 2000 is little more than it was in 1830.



The route leaves Wooler north and ascends Humbleton from the rear following hill fort trail signs. Although small in stature it commands fine views of the Cheviot Hills, east to the coast and north into Scotland. From Humbleton the route heads east to the track followed briefly earlier, turns up hill to the crest where a left fork left is taken down to the Commonburn valley. Here we find a picnic area and car park with information boards. Our route leaves the car park, across a road and follows a path to the right of a forested hill onto Wooler Common and over Kenterdale from where the descent provides fine views over Wooler. This section of the route follows St Curthberts Way. A detour will be followed to Wishing Well Spring before the return to Wooler and refreshments.

Martin Forster 1st March 2017