

Area covered: Cheviot Hills, Border Forests

# Introduction

Roughly our area covers the most northern upland area of England. However, like the Northumbrian Border Reivers of over 400 years ago, for convenience we have broken the area into three parts.

### A: The wild moorland uplands of Cheviot and its surrounding hills

The high ground contains wildly impressive “secret places” such as the rugged Hen Hole (GR 885203) and neighbouring Bizzle Crags, and is penetrated by splendid softer valleys such as those of the College, Harthope, Breamish and

Alwin streams.

### B: The Kielder forest area to the west of the A68

This area mainly lies within the Forestry Commission’s Border Forest Park, the largest man- made forest in Europe. In the northern part high moorland protrudes through the woodland and it is probably this area that

gives the best type of expedition terrain.

It also contains a lake with a shoreline of 27 miles.

### C: The Roman Wall area

The most impressive part of the wall is the stretch from Haltwhistle Common to Housesteads Fort. The land to the north of the wall tends to be boggy but it is possible to find suitable paths into area B.

It is possible to contain a Gold expedition within the first two areas and include the Roman Wall area as either the start or finish of an expedition. Although the Kielder Forest is tracked and possibly easier to navigate than the Cheviot area the one disadvantage is the midge which likes to feast on camping DofE groups. You can move from one area to another by swinging north of the army range, which intrudes into our area. The area around the Roman Wall is more suitable to silver groups and those who wish to do an exploration based on the Roman activity in our area.

The area can be extremely remote especially for Supervisors who wish to check their groups by car. Although rights of way are marked this does not guarantee an obvious path on the ground. It is splendid country for foot and cycling expeditions, there are possibilities for canoe expeditions up to at least Silver level on certain rivers, and for carefully planned riding ventures

– but these require outstanding competence and logistical preparation.

The army range to the east of Newcastle to Edinburgh road is a no-go area as it is a live firing range.

The weather can change dramatically from day to day, and indeed from hour to hour, and this, coupled with the wild terrain and remote access, increases the challenge to DofE participants. However the eastern side of the area is one of the driest parts of Britain.

The diversity of the area offers opportunities for scientific and historical exploration projects.

# Maps

Although the choice of maps is your own you may find the 1:25 000 series most helpful with your navigation. Outdoor Leisure 16 covers most of the Cheviot Hill area (A) and the remainder is covered by the Kielder & Simonside sheet. The latter bleeds into the Hexham and Hadrian Wall sheet.

# Access

The very qualities of wild remoteness, which make this area perfect for DofE expeditions, tend to make it sensible for groups to arrive in their own transport. However, public transport access to the key ‘jumping-off’ locations is good, and there are rather sparse local buses which do range over the network of valleys leading into and through the expedition territory. The northern valleys are interlinked with roads and access to them will involve considerable driving. (Where the group can cover a few miles walking from one valley to another on either side of the Border this can involve a drive for the supervisor of 40 miles.)

* **Rail:** mainline stations are at Newcastle, Morpeth, Berwick, Hexham and Carlise.
* **Air:** Newcastle International Airport is rapid linked into the centre of Newcastle upon Tyne.
* Road: Newcastle is linked with most major cities by long-distance coaches, which in turn link to local bus networks.
* **A1:** ‘spines’ the county with major bus route from Newcastle to Morpeth, Alnwick and Berwick
* **A69:** links Newcastle with Carlisle through Hexham and Haltwhistle with frequent buses.
* **A689 and A68:** links Newcastle with Otterburn and the Scottish Border at Carter Bar, with regular but infrequent services
* **A697:** Morpeth to the Scottish Border at Coldstream via Wooler with infrequent local services.

# Accommodation

## Camping

It is not our policy to publish possible wild country camp sites. Due to present situations some farmers are

now starting to charge groups who camp. Although this is rare it is on the increase and groups could looks to costs of up to £2 per person.

The Forestry Commission has established a number of bothies providing simple, unlocked shelter accommodation which is maintained by the Mountain Bothies Association and which may be suitable for Supervisors and groups before the expedition. These are located at:

* Roughside GR745833 Chirdonhead GR719812
* Green GR740786 Kielderhead GR666981
* Haughton Green GR788712 Spithope GR765037
* Kershope Head GR544863 Broadside GR549799

Roughside and Green may have reduced water at very dry periods. Roughside is isolated among trees whereas the others have access tracks. For Kielderhead vehicles must park at the picnic area at GR653959. Please observe the Bothy Code.

## Youth hostels

- Wooler GR979283 01668 281447

- Byness GR76402701830 520519

- KirkYetholm GR81728201573 82631

- Bellingham GR84383501434 220313

- Once Brewed GR75386901434 344380

- Acomb GR93566701434 602884

## Caravan and public camp sites

* Bridge End, Wooler GR 995278 01668 81447
* River Breamish, Powburn GR 054185 01665 78320
* Byrness Park(Plus Bunkhouse) GR 780015 01830 20259

- Kielder Castle GR 632934 01434 250209

* Clennel Hall, Alwinton GR 928072 01669 50341(does not accept tents)

- Bellingham GR 84083201434 220258

- Stonehaugh GR 79676201660 30251

* Winshields (Roman Wall) GR 744868 01434 344243
* Leaplish (Kielder Lake) GR 660877 01434 250278

- Hawkhirst GR 658893 01434 250317

* Brownrigg GR 835826

## Cycling expeditions

The Cheviots Expedition Area provides wonderful opportunities for cycle expeditions, right up to Gold level. The area is so extensive that the considerable distances which can be involved in a cycle expedition can be easily accommodated. In addition, the terrain is an exciting mix of quiet, traffic-free minor roads and many off-road tracks. Cyclists are able to mount challenging expeditions, far removed from simple touring. In all cases routes are undulating and strenuous, demanding physical fitness and plenty of riding preparation. It is also essential that riders in such lonely areas should be practically experienced and capable of tackling most mechanical problems from their own skill and stock of spares and tools. There are, of course, very occasional garages/workshops in the area.

It has been noted that complete expeditions can fit into the Cheviot Expedition area, but it should also be mentioned that at the Roman Wall extremity a further large cycle expedition area continues southward through the territory of the neighbouring High Pennines and Durham Dales Expedition Area, and some expeditions may range over the common boundary of these two areas.

Cross-country cycling requires careful adherence to the Mountain Bike Code of Conduct and a useful publication is Cycling Off Road and the Law by Neil Horton, available from C.T.C. Shop, 89 Meadrow, Godalming GUY 3H8

## Canoeing expeditions

Northumberland and the Border country contain a range of waters presenting a challenging environment for canoe expeditions . Naturally, the particular guidance and regulations of the DofE Office and the B.C.U., especially relating to safety, should be carefully observed.

Understandably, water conditions must always determine the quality and challenge of each enterprise, but some acceptable possibilities are suggested:

* **Kielder Water:** the well-developed recreational atmosphere restricts the reservoirs potential to Bronze Level, concentrating on the north shore with its traffic-free remoteness and its choice of isolated campsites in woodland clearings.
* **River Tyne (North):** Silver expedition (including Grade 3 water) from Kielder Dam to Wylam (10 miles west of Newcastle)
* **River Tyne (South):** Bronze expedition from Haydon Bridge to Wylam.
* **River Coquet:** Silver (marginal?) expedition from Rothbury to the estuary.
* **River Tweed:** a selection of Silver expeditions (and possibly Gold, depending on water condition) using the Tweed and its tributaries, the Teviot and the Till, finishing at Norham, or in style through the bridges at Berwick

In all these suggestions, the countryside passed through is splendidly rural, with good riverside camping prospects.

Lists of books on canoeing skills and expedition techniques, including all B.C.U. publications, are available from: Current Trends Mail Order, Adbolton Lane, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 5AS, (Tel. 01602 821100)

# Military training

The army has a large training area covering their Otterburn and Redesdale all-arms range. The boundaries are indicated by notices, red flags, lamps and road barriers. These operational areas present danger from unexploded missiles, even when firing is not taking place. Therefore the range should not be considered as a part of any expedition. However it is sometimes possible for Assessors, Supervisors and perhaps cyclists to drive on some of the range roads.

Detailed information and permission on each occasional MUST be cleared in advance by Otterburn Range Control on 01830 520569.

**DofE resources**

The current DofE expedition kit list can be downloaded from: [**www.DofE.org/go/expeditionkit**](http://www.dofe.org/go/expeditionkit)

A range of expedition downloads, such as spare expedition safety cards, can be downloaded from: [**www.DofE.org/go/downloads**](http://www.dofe.org/go/downloads)

Further information of the Expedition section can be found at: [**www.DofE.org/expedition**](http://www.DofE.org/expedition)