

A lockdown interlude

By Cathy Brown

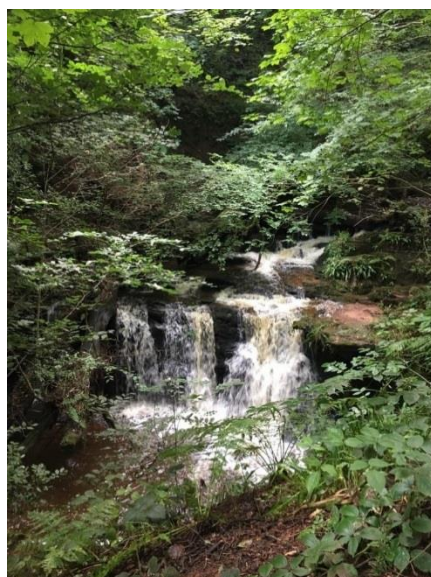
We took advantage of the break between lockdowns to go to Cumbria and combine a couple of quick distanced tea stops at my in-laws in Newcastle. Staying in Brampton we had access to the surrounding countryside and I thought I'd share some images of one of my walks.



We were blessed with good weather, and made the most of a sunny day to walk to Hadrian's Wall (a five hour round trip). The view from Brampton Ridge towards the Solway Firth was wonderful – clear and bright and so much wide open space after months of dodging other walkers!



From here we entered Ridgewood, a Woodland Trust wood. I always feel at peace among the trees. The cool relief from the sun, and the muffled sounds of our footsteps transported us from traffic and the world and added to the mindful escape. We kept an eye out for red squirrels, but I fear they will have been wary of the dog, so escaped our not so eagle eyes.



I think by this stage we had passed about four people in the space of an hour, which felt a real privilege. Stopping and listening to the birds, and looking out for deer and red squirrels – really taking time to soak in the surroundings, is always so calming.

The next stretch of the walk took us along Quarry Beck, very boggy from recent rains, with claggy red mud weighing down our boots. But the Beck was very beautiful, with red rock and occasional waterfalls. Again we passed about two people along the whole Beck, until we reached Lanercost Priory.

We had a flask of coffee at the Priory and continued to Hadrian's Wall, another half an hour up a rather steady hill! It was worth the climb. We sat at the Wall and took in the views to the North Pennines. The route of the Wall is overgrown with rowan and blackberries, adding pockets of colour along the way. We walked along the route for half an hour or so, on who knows how old cobbles, imagining the building of Hadrian's Wall, and life in those days, before heading back to Brampton.

The day had remained largely clear, although we saw some ominous clouds on the horizon, and while hoping we weren't going to be rained on for the two hour walk back, we were well prepared, and much of the walk was under the shelter of trees. As it turned out, the sun re-emerged and we were warm again, even in the shade of the woods.



I've always loved hiking and being outdoors. I think this year in particular has made us all realise how incredibly important it is to spend time in nature, feeling grounded and together with the plants and wildlife around us.