

Letah Wood (Hexham) - This 7 mile walk will visit Letah Wood near Hexham where wild daffodils bloom. The walk begins at Dipton Mill Inn, Dipton Mill Road, about 2 miles south of Hexham from where it is best approached by car. Post code NE46 1YA, Grid Ref NY929610. Toilets can be found in the Wentworth Leisure Centre in Hexham or public toilets at the top of the Wentworth carpark. Meet at 10:00 to allow time to complete the walk before the Inn closes at 3pm. Members are reminder that April is lambing time and dogs should be kept on a lead near livestock. There is room to park opposite the Inn but park carefully. This is a 7 mile (11k) figure 8 walk but can be shortened to 5 miles at the crossing point. The route commences anti clockwise. The high point is 182m, ascent is 175m and terrain is fields, woodland and lanes. Points of interest: Dotland Park is passed early in the walk. It belonged to the Priors of Hexham Abbey in years gone by when it was used as a hunting lodge. Architecture dating from 15 & 16C can be seen from the monastic past. Inside the house are more remains from the monastic period. It is believed that the hunting lodge was built by Thomas Smithson, Prior between 1491 to 1524, although earlier medieval fabric may be incorporated. In 1654 it was used as a Baptist meeting house, one of the earliest in the North of England. In April the lane approaching Dotland Park should be lined with cultivated daffodils. Mollerstead is said to be named after the mallow plant which grew here in years gone by. These were collected and used as dyes in the tanning industry in Hexham. The Mallow was processed in the nearby hamlet of Dye House to extract the dye. Links to the tanning industry can still be seen in Hexham. An old stone bridge is crossed which had it's name inscription removed. Locals believe this dates from the war. The highlight is Letah Wood managed by the Woodland Trust. In Spring the woods are carpeted with wild daffodils and is thought to be one of the most northerly habitats. Towards the end of the walk Blackthorn blossoms in Spring. The Route: Leave the car park along the lane which can be muddy. After a short distance a track right is taken uphill, crossing a lane, to reach Dotland Park. The walk passes to the right of farm buildings. In a short distance a field is entered, go diagonally uphill, down slightly to cross a water course then diagonally upwards to a stile. From the stile turn left and look for a path to the right. The path crosses a field and continues in the next field, following the fence line to a wood. Through the wood the route continues down the left fence line to a stile. This is the crossing point in the figure 8, the short route takes the stile/gate left before the road. Our route crosses the stile ahead, turns right along a lane past a farm, continuing in the same direction through fields. Eventually bare left down-hill to cross a bridge over a river. Turn left and follow the river to a mill where a road is joined. The return leg starts here, turn left on the road uphill looking for a path on the left. The path follows a hedge line before taking a path down-hill to Devils Water which is followed down-stream to a road. Turn left over the bridge following the road left then uphill through Juniper. As the road turns right take the path on the left which continue uphill to the road at the crossing point of fig 8. Climb the stile crossed earlier and turn right through a gate/stile and follow the fence line along the slope. After a few fields a road is reached, a lane is followed to an equestrian centre. The path follows a fence down-hill past a farm to a road. Turn left down road to a lane on left over a bridge. Enter Letah Wood, at a fork in path cross the river and take path up-hill before descending to cross river again then up a lane to a road. Cross the road and take path down-hill to a bridge over river which is crossed. Over bridge turn left and follow path through fields near the river to a road. Turn left, Dipton Mill and the start point is soon reached.

