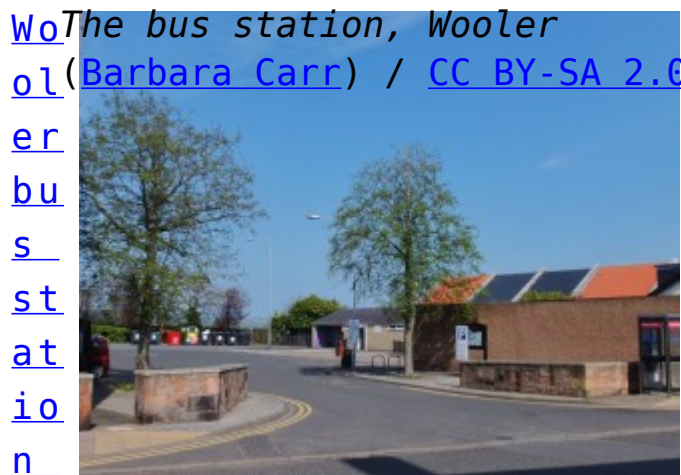


Wooler public transport

Wooler's public transport connections are centred on its bus station, while inter-city trains serve Berwick-upon-Tweed.

Wooler buses

Wooler bus station is located in the heart of town, of the Hi



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Wooler – Berwick-upon-Tweed bus (267 via Etal, Duddo: Monday-Saturday) – [timetable \[PDF\]](#)

Wooler – Berwick-upon-Tweed bus (464 via Lowick: Monday-Saturday) – [timetable \[PDF\]](#)

Wooler – Alnwick bus (470 via Chillingham) – [timetable \[PDF\]](#)

Wooler – Alnwick bus (473 via Whittingham) – [timetable \[PDF\]](#)

Kelso – Wooler – Newcastle bus (710 via Morpeth: Wednesday & Saturday only) – [timetable \[PDF\]](#)

Wooler – Kirknewton circular bus (266 via Flodden: Wednesday only) – [timetable \[PDF\]](#)

Although linked timetables were correct at time of writing, we advise checking before travel using the [Traveline online](#)

[journey planner](#) or direct with operators: [Border Buses \(267, 464\)](#), [PCL Travel \(470, 473\)](#) or [Glen Valley Tours \(266, 710\)](#).

Wooler trains

Sadly the train line to Wooler closed many decades ago. In fact Wooler station last accepted passengers back in 1930!

However Berwick-upon-Tweed is served by the [East Coast mainline](#). These high-speed modern trains link to Edinburgh (45mins), London Kings Cross (3.5hr) and York (2hr). [Cross country trains](#) also run direct to Glasgow (2hr), Birmingham (4.25hr) and Bristol (6hr).

From Berwick you can travel to Wooler on one of the above buses, or get a local taxi (pre-book from the options below and expect to pay about £30 for the half hour trip). [Car rental](#) is another option, or you can [cycle from Berwick to Wooler](#) in about 1.5 hours. East Coast and Cross Country inter-city trains carry bikes for free but you should reserve a space in advance.

Some trains serve Alnmouth instead which is another option, albeit further from Wooler. The closest station to Wooler, Chathill, is small and only served by a very limited commuter service from Newcastle. County town Morpeth is also served by a train service, but Berwick-upon-Tweed station will be the better option for most rail travellers to Wooler. Make sure you plan to “Berwick-upon-Tweed [BWK]” and not the similarly named Berwick in Sussex.

Wooler taxis

Ron’s Taxis are a common sight in Wooler, and can be booked on 01668 281281 or 07778 543907. Another option is [Border Village Taxi](#) – 01668 216360 or 07765 791348. Either will provide station pick-ups from Berwick-upon-Tweed if booked in advance.

Air

Wooler is a fair distance from any air connections – with the closest two major airports being Newcastle (60 mins) and Edinburgh (90 mins)

“Gateway to the Cheviots”

Wooler sits close to the vast, empty expanse of the [Northumberland National Park](#), and is justly known as the “Gateway to the Cheviots”. These hills have been tempting walkers and campers from far and wide to travel to Wooler for more than a hundred years. [Wooler’s history](#) is fascinating and for many it also remains “a refuge from the hurry and scurry of modern life”.

Local produce



LOCAL DAIRY

Doddington Dairy

Producers of excellent and award-winning cheese, ice-cream, yogurt, biscuits and more! A good range of their produced in stocked in the Good Life shop in Wooler, and they also run Wooler Milk Bar for excellent ice creams, milk shakes and cooked food.

www.doddingtondairy.co.uk

LOCAL BREAD

Trotters

Trotters have been family bakers since 1969, producing award winning baked goods for wholesale and retail with a local shop on Wooler High Street.

trottersfamilybakers.co.uk

The Great Northumberland Bread Co

Baked in a wood-fired oven, which is fuelled using residual slabwood from the Ford and Etal Estate, this bread contains no artificial additives, flavours, flour improvers or preservatives. They also make popular spiced teacakes and other goodies.

www.greatnorthumberlandbread.co.uk

Available from Farm to Freeze on South Road (A697) in Wooler

LOCAL JAMS AND CHUTNIES

Willow Cottage Preserves

Handmade, seasonal jams, marmalade and chutnies using home grown or sourced locally ingredients whenever possible, with nothing artificial. Available locally, including from Good Life Shop, Wooler.

www.willowcottagepreserves.co.uk

Valley Cottage Preserves

Homemade preserves and cakes from the Breamish Valley. Available from Valley Cottage Café

www.breamishvalley.com/directory/valley-cottage

LOCAL PUDDINGS

The Proof of the Pudding

Available many outlets including the Good Life Shop

www.theprooffofthepudding.co.uk

LOCAL BEER

Hadrian Border Brewery

A selection of regular, locally inspired beers, including Secret Kingdom and Farne Island, plus a monthly special. Often features in local pubs while bottles can be ordered for delivery via northumbriangifts.co.uk or bought from Cornhill Village Shop (20 min drive away).

www.hadrian-border-brewery.co.uk

Wylam Brewery

One of the early wave of the revival of “real” beer, Wylam have been brewing “proper beer for proper people” since 2000.

www.wylambrewery.co.uk

LOCAL SPIRITS

Alnwick Rum

This blend was first created in the early 1900s to appeal to seafaring Northumbrians, and the company remains based in Alnwick blending rums from Guyana and Jamaica.

www.alnwickrum.com

Hepple Gin

Just about still local, if a little to the south, is this gin utilising three different processes for juniper and as recommended in The Daily Telegraph. Available from Fortnum and Mason.

www.hepple-gin.com

LOCALLY SOURCED MEAT

TR Johnson

Alan and Derrick take pride in their locally sourced produce, with home cured bacon, rare breed sausages and Dexter beef from just 10 miles away.

www.trjohnson.co.uk

Farm to Freeze

Glendale Lamb, sourced primarily from Bill Moor at Nesbit Farm,

Wooler, and pheasants, rabbits and deer fresh from the local Lilburn Estates.

www.farmtofreeze.co.uk

These are just some of the highlights of the food being produced and grown in Glendale and beyond in north Northumberland. We'd welcome comments and suggestions on others to add to the list or – more importantly perhaps – sink our teeth into!

Glendale Festival

Glendale Festival will once again take over Wooler High Street this Sunday (19 July) with its blend of entertainment, music, crafts, stalls and food.

Events will be getting going from 10am and then running through the day as the High Street is filled with stalls, dancing, street entertainment and music. A main stage in the bus station will host a varied line up with the final band finishing up at 9pm.

To get the day off to a gentle start, one of the early highlights must be the celebration of wool and its crafts at The Glendale Hall. More wool crafts combined with a flower festival and harp and recorder music can be seen at St Mary's Church.

It's not too late to enter the fun run, departing the High Street at 11am. The course is completely on the road, being 10km for adults and 2km for children. A little less

challenging than the [Chevy Chase](#), then, but a fun and healthy way to start the day. Registration on the day is at the bus station from 9.30am.

A buskers spot at one end of the street should provide off the cuff musical entertainment. But the official line up is launched at midday with a parade by the Coldstream Pipe Band. Later the bus station's main stage will feature [Sam Gibson](#) (2.30pm), Point Blank (4pm), [King Size Voodoo Traveller](#) (5.30pm) before Before the Mast (7.30pm) round off proceedings.

The sun's come back out, my dancing shoes are ready – see you there!

More info on wooler.org.uk and for the latest, see the [Glendale Festival FaceBook page](#).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CCqSXGmNuAA>

[Nearby Wooler: history](#)

Wooler is a pleasant little country town of some local importance, nestling at the foot of the Cheviot Hills... It consists of one straggling street, with some minor offshoots, and serves as a market centre for the district ... But still Wooler, now as formerly, is a refuge from the hurry and scurry of modern life

A History of Northumberland, KH Victors, 1922

What was true in 1922 remains largely true today: Wooler feels a refuge from the hurry and scurry of modern life. This market town serves the wider area of Glendale – some 250 square miles of Northumberland countryside with a mere 6,000 inhabitants.

Passing traffic is carried on the A697, bypassing the heart of the town., but the High Street is very much alive though with its range of traditional shops. Aside from the Co-op supermarket, there is an absence of chain shops with the street remaining occupied by the likes of Glendale Pharmacy, TR Johnson butchers, Glendale Paints and Trotters bakery. The newsagents retains its sign reading “Brand” after William Brand who opened the shop in 1842 at the start of a 133 year family connection to the shop.

The market place with bus station to one side has long been a focus of the town. One mark of this is the clustering of some of the town’s traditional pubs and hotels around this point. Historically, Wooler’s inns were bolstered by its role as a coaching post on the route between England and Scotland as well as Wooler’s capacity as a market town. In 1855, *Whellan’s Directory of Northumberland* lists no fewer than **13 inns in Wooler**. Although several of these were destroyed in the disastrous fire of February 1863, many remain such as the Black Bull, the Angel and the former coaching inn The Tankerville Arms.

The Cheviot Hills have been a draw for walkers and campers for more than a hundred years. In 1887 Wooler gained a rail connection that allowed easier access, earning it the title of **“Gateway to the Cheviots”**. This North Eastern Railway branch line from Alnwick to Cornhill encouraged day trippers as well as those lingering a little longer, and charabanc tours added to numbers further. Passenger traffic was stopped in the 1930s and after the track was badly flooded in 1948 the route declined further – divided into two and parts were closed. The Wooler to Cornhill section remained open until sadly the remainder of the railway line was axed in 1965, like so many

others that are sorely missed today.

Wooler origins

There is much evidence of settlements in the area dating back to the Bronze Age, and one of these may well have existed on the current site. Stones etched with the mysterious cup and ring marks are found in the local hills – perhaps a form of prehistoric art?

Certainly an interesting archaeological find lies just up the road, near Yeavinger Bell. Here is the site of Ad Gefrin, the palace of the **Anglo-Saxon kings in Northumbria**, as recorded by 6th century scholar the Venerable Bede. The palace was formed of large timber halls with their foundations in turn cutting through the remains of religious monuments and the cemetery of Neolithic and Early Bronze Age people living here some 3000 years earlier, and may have drawn on this as a traditional place of local assembly.

Wooler is not mentioned in the Domesday book of 1086, no doubt because the Normans took some time to consolidate their hold on northern England after the Conquest.

In spite of the apparent ovine connection, **the name Wooler derives** in fact most likely from “wella ofa”, Old English for “stream bank”, in reference to Wooler Water. As so often with Old English, a number of spellings are recorded including Wulloure in 1187 and Welloure in 1196.

Norman attention eventually turned to Northumberland which was carved up into 21 feudal baronies. In 1107, the first baron of Wooler was appointed by Henry I, a Robert de Muschamp. He is thought to be responsible for creating a defensive castle mound, on the east side of Church Street overlooking Wooler Water. Green Castle, just to the west of Wooler, is another mound topped with a defensive ringwork. According to the excellent “Northumberland Extensive Urban Survey Project: Wooler” report, “the chronological and political relationship

between these two sites is not known”.

A licence for a market to be held every Thursday was granted in 1199. This laid the basis for a market for the next several hundred years that made Wooler a key commercial hub to the surrounding agricultural hinterland.

Border wars and Reiver raids



Wooler Tower Hill (by wfmillar [CC BY-SA 2.0], via Wikimedia Commons)

From the thirteen to sixteenth century, Scotland and England were frequently at war, seeing the devastation of the livelihood of local people by the contending armies. The battles at **Homildon Hill** (now Humbleton Hill) in 1402 and **Flodden** in 1513 were historically significant. The derelict Surrey House (on the A697) gained its name from the stay of the Earl of Surrey on the night before the Battle of Flodden. It is supposedly from here that he wrote to James IV reproaching him for not yet giving battle. Perhaps even more important locally were the Scottish raids of 1340 and 1409 as these caused great destruction.

The mound that may have held a 12th century defence for Baron Muschamp was certainly the site for building defences in the 16th century. Wooler Tower was built sometime in the early 1500s in response to the threat of Scottish raids.

Lord Dacre described Wooler as a place of particular danger and as “the outermost town of the realm”.

*Keep a watch for
raids day and
night...*

At this time, Wooler was considered of greater strategic importance than the castle at Chillingham and the men of the town were expected to assist in the defence of the township. In 1534, 10 men had to keep a watch day and night, while a survey of the Borders in 1541 described the Wooler Tower as a “mervelous convenyent place for the defence of the country thereabout” and as still “standing strongly”.

Uncertainty and tension meant that some communities sought security through their own strength and cunning rather than through loyalty to the law of a distant monarch. Because of its position in The Borders, Wooler and the surrounding area saw raids by the **Reivers** from the late 13th century, continuing for some 400 years. These raiders could be from Scottish or English families, and they raided the entire border country without regard to their victims’ nationality. Notable features in this region, such as peel towers, originated as a result of border “reiving” as inhabitants of the Borders had to live in a state of constant alert and built fortified houses for self-protection. A unique set of “Border Laws” grew up to manage this restive area. The Union of the Crowns in 1603 saw the beginning of the end for the Reivers, as James I (James VI of Scotland) cracked down on their activities.

Prosperous Wooler

Agriculture saw Wooler prosper as a market town, with the population reaching nearly two thousand by 1851 – much the same size as today. An annual fair and market took place

around the first week of May, with farm-workers and their families looking to be hired by farmers and estate managers for the coming year. As part of the deal, a farm labourer (or hind) were expected to provide a woman (bondager) to work on the farm too. Until the mid 19th century this bondager was paid by the hind though later they were hired directly by the farmer on a day labour basis.

This event, **“The Hirings”**, was centred on the now demolished fountain in Wooler market square. It was followed a week later by “The Flitting” when farm-workers’ families moved their household possessions to their new farm. In his 1909 book, “A Corner in the North”, HA Neville described this Flitting: “to see our roads from morning to evening thronged with carts piled with the bedding of a large portion of our population, is a strange sight even if you have seen it year after year for a long time. This practice continued into the twentieth century, until the Second World War.

From the late 19th century, this “Gateway to the Cheviots” drew walkers, hikers and day trippers. Many also visited for the supposed health benefits of the clean air and pure waters. Visitors included:

- local hero Grace Darling – an English lighthouse keeper’s daughter famed for participating in the rescue of shipwrecked survivors
- writer Daniel Defoe who climbed the Cheviot in 1726, declaring “The Day happen’d to be very clear, and to our great Satisfaction very Calm”
- Author Sir Walter Scott who stayed nearby in 1791 occupying a farmhouse in the Cheviot Hills

The railway stopped carrying passengers in 1930, apart from a brief respite during World War Two to serve RAF Milfield. However the waiting room was put to good use, serving as a Youth Hostel from 1936 – with separate accommodation for men and women on opposite sides of the tracks.

Wooler today

The town today maintains many of its historic strengths with a variety of shops along the High Street and elsewhere. Read more about [Wooler's shops and restaurants](#).

There is an tourist information centre and shop at the Cheviot Centre which also hosts the local library. The annual Glendale Show draws thousands of visitors with its races, fair and many stalls of food and crafts. The Chevy Chase is annual 20 mile race which takes place early in July while the Wooler Wheel hold a series of cycling events through North Northumberland.

Nearby Wooler

Being a cottage near Wooler puts all this on our doorstep. The most direct walk to Wooler from Homildon Cottage takes around 15 minutes. An alternative, more circular route along part of St Cuthbert's Way can be walked in an hour.

Find out more about [places of interest in and around Wooler](#).

More

This is the briefest of outlines as an introduction to Wooler's rich history. Being comparatively new to the area, there's no doubt lots to learn: let us know what we've left out. Or read more in some of the excellent books that cover this topic in much more depth. Brands on Wooler High Street has a good selection of local histories and more. Some good starting points are:

Excellent photos and recollections in *Views of Wooler & Glendale District, 1850–1950*, Derek Fairnington & Roger Miket

The Northumberland Extensive Urban Survey Project was carried out between 1995 and 2008 by Northumberland County Council with the support of English Heritage. An online PDF of the fascinating report on Wooler is available to download: [Northumberland Extensive Urban Survey Project: Wooler](#) [PDF]

A short introduction to a turbulent history of raiding: *Tales of the Border Reivers*, by Beryl Homes

Out of print but still available second-hand is the short but interesting *Wooler, Ford, Chillingham & The Cheviots*, by Frank Graham (1976)

Read more about Ad Gefrin and the archaeology of the northern Cheviots and the Northumberland National Park area online at www.gefrin.com

Nearby Wooler: shops and restaurants

A short drive (or modest [walk](#)) from our holiday cottage Wooler provides a wide range of shops with two bakers, two butchers, a Co-op and deli as well as pubs and restaurants.

Wooler is a pleasant 20 minute walk from Homildon Cottage, or the drive takes a few minutes and there is plenty of free parking spaces along the high street or in the bus station.

Food shops in Wooler

You will be able to find almost everything you need in Wooler. For day to day essentials, the [Co-op](#) (open 7am until 11pm every day) is the obvious choice. For fresh ingredients and local produce, you will want to visit some of the many independent shops.

There are two **butchers** in Wooler: [T R Johnson](#) (61 High Street,

opposite the Post Office) does a great selection of home-made sausages, scotch eggs and delicious ready-to-heat steak pies, as well as the usual wide range of fresh meat and cooked ham. [Farm to Freeze](#), again selling a wide range of fresh meat and pies, has a smaller shop on the high street and larger store on the A697 (South Road) just at the bottom of the hill from the main town .

For fresh **vegetables**, the convenience store attached to [Farm to Freeze](#) on the A697 has a storage area to the left with a great selection of fruit and veg. The convenience store also sells locally produced Chainbridge Honey, Doddington Ice Cream and Ford's Bread.

The best place to buy **eggs** is [Glendale Garden Centre](#), again just off the A697 (South Road) at the bottom of the hill from the centre of town. Beautiful mixed colour eggs from a local farm are always tasty and only £1.60 a half dozen. The garden centre also sells fresh fruit and veg.

For fresh **bread** you have three options. [Trotters Family Bakers](#) on Market Place sells fresh bread, a wide range of cakes, filled hot and cold rolls to take away, pies and pasties (both hot and cold) and more. [Cheviot Farm Bakery](#) sells the usual fresh bread and rolls and does a range of sandwiches and cakes. You can also occasionally find fresh bread at the [Good Life Shop](#) deli.

The [Good Life Shop delicatessen](#) sells a good range of more speciality produce. Their cheese counter has an excellent selection, including local cheeses from [Doddington Dairy](#) just up the road. They usually stock meat and vegetarian fresh pâtés, puddings from [Proof of the Pudding](#) in Alnwick, Doddington Dairy ice creams, salamis, and other fresh and dry deli goods. You can buy dry goods by weight including a wide range of herbs and spices, and also freshly ground coffee.

Other shops in Wooler

There is a **pharmacy** (Glendale Pharmacy) on the high street, which as well as providing the usual range of goods and prescription services, has a fantastic original set of wooden apothecary drawers behind its glass topped counter.

There are now two **antiques** shops in Wooler: Hamish Dunn and [Glendale Antiques Centre](#), both near the Market Place end of the High Street. [Florins](#), near Hamish Dunn, sells some antique items as well as an interesting range of gifts and trinkets. The [Hedgeley Antiques Centre](#), not far from Wooler in Powburn (about 15 minutes' drive), has a number of traders under one roof, and a traditional tea shop next door.

Clothes shops are a little limited, but there is a women's outdoor gear shop, [Gear for Girls](#), on the high street and a charity shop, the RSPCA. Better for clothes is Berwick, on the outskirts of which is a discount outlet outdoor clothes and equipment store, [Marshalls](#) and many more high street stores in the centre of town.

For a traditional **sweet shop**, its shelves lined with rows of large jars, try [The Chocolate Box](#) near Market Place. This place makes even the most serious "grown up" feel like a kid in, well ... a sweet shop!

The town has a **newsagent**, Brands, near the Post Office. This shop sells not only newspapers and touristy gifts, but also sells a range of fascinating books about local history and, unexpectedly, speciality liquorice (including Belgian and Finnish varieties!)

For **handmade crafts and gifts** you would not do better than [The Crafty Collective](#), selling work by a range of local crafters and artists.

Restaurants in Wooler

For a town of its size, Wooler has a wealth of decent local places to enjoy a meal out.

If you are after a casual meal or a lunchtime bite, the town centre has several good **pubs** serving food.



Sunday Lunch at the Black Bull

The [Black Bull](#) is usually reasonably busy and does pub grub all week with steak night on Friday evening and a generous roast lunch on Sunday. Highlights include giant yorkshire pudding filled with sausages and veg, and golden battered cod and chips. There are usually one or two ales on handpump, both changing regularly. You will often find beers from the local Hadrian and Border brewery.

The [Angel Inn](#), right next door to the Black Bull, also does decent pub grub, which on sunny days you can enjoy in its small lawned beer garden or in the conservatory at the back. All day breakfast, sandwiches and toasties and larger meals such as lamb chops all feature on the wide menu. Usually one ale on handpump.

Just up the road is the [Anchor Inn](#), another choice for pub grub, serving by all accounts a very generous and tasty Sunday lunch. The pub was taken over relatively recently (Jan 14) by

a new landlord and is thriving. Has a weekly quiz night and two ales on handpump (though less interesting choice than the Black Bull nearby).

Slightly outside the centre of town on the A697 is the [Tankerville Arms](#), dating from the 1700's. It has a large beer garden for sunny days and a large bar and dining area inside. The food is again fairly standard pub fare, but the portions are generous and the food is good.

If you are looking for something other than pub food, there are a few **restaurants and take-aways** in Wooler.

[Milan restaurant](#) is round the back of the Black Bull (you will find it by heading down the alley to the left of the pub). The restaurant serves [Italian style food](#) – meat and fish mains, as well as pizza, pasta and risotto. Milan has a [lunch menu](#) and a [kids' menu](#) too. A place to go if you want a nice evening meal with a bottle of wine.

Continuing the European theme is [No 1 Hotel and Wine Lounge](#) opposite the Black Bull, an ex-pub turned wine and tapas bar, also serving cocktails. Not the cheapest meal out – [tapas](#) average around £4-5 per plate – but tasteful decor and cosy atmosphere makes for a good evening.

The town's Indian restaurant is [Spice Village](#). A classic local Indian, the food is pretty good (spicy lamb Jul Jal is recommended, although the mild chicken dishes can be a little over sweet I think) and reasonably priced. They do a fiery chilli paneer if you ask. Tables are available to eat in, or pop in for a take-away and eat back at Homildon Cottage. They have now started offering delivery too.

For fish and chips the only option open all week is [Fry Fry](#) on Market Place. The take away is fish and chips, pies, kebabs and pizza – can be busy on a Friday night. You can also eat in – they have a small restaurant area with tables adjoining the take-away. On Fridays, you may also catch the [Geoff Allen](#)

[mobile fish and chip van](#) (as featured in Antiques Roadshow!) open on South Road near the junction with The Peth.

For fast food you can also try [Cindie & Millie's](#), a small purple-fronted outlet on Market Place, selling burgers, pizzas and kebabs. They proudly proclaim their fresh pizza dough in the front window, and again delivery is offered.

For a Chinese take-away, Oriental Kitchen just off Market Place on Ramsey's Lane offers quick service and reasonable prices in a classic setting. Excellent value for a dish with rice or chips, or try the larger selection on the main menu.

Cafes in Wooler

For a hot drink, cake, or even breakfast or lunch, there are a number of cafes to try in Wooler.

[Wooler Milk Bar](#) is just at the bottom of the hill from town, next to the A697. An excellent breakfast using local ingredients is available. Try their milkshakes, cakes or an ice-cream from the local and award-winning Doddington Dairy!

[Ramblers coffee shop](#) on the high street serves a range of hot food from breakfasts to lunches for a quick bite or a coffee.

[Breeze](#) on the high street also serves as a gift shop. Often busy, it serves a range of hot lunch food as well as real coffee and tempting cakes.

[Terrace Cafe](#), overlooking Market Place, is a cosy caff serving good breakfast, lunches and cakes.

[No 1 Hotel and Wine Lounge](#) serves a full afternoon tea with cakes and finger sandwiches (G&T option available!)

Nearby Wooler

Being a cottage near Wooler means we are lucky enough to have all this almost on our doorstep. The most direct walk from Homildon Cottage to Wooler takes 15-20 minutes. An

alternative, more circular route along part of St Cuthbert's Way can be walked in an hour.

Find out more about Wooler history or [places of interest in and around Wooler](#).

Chillingham Castle and the Chillingham wild cattle

Chillingham Castle

From the outside, Chillingham Castle appears much as you might expect a 12th Century castle to look. Imposing stone walls topped with battlements rise high overlooking the castle grounds (landscaped by Capability Brown in the 18th Century) and the highly manicured Italian Garden (devised in 1828 is by Royal garden designer Sir Jeffrey Wyatville).



By Glen Bowman from
Newcastle, England (My Best
of 2005 29-08-2005 16-11-39)
[CC BY 2.0

(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0>)], via Wikimedia Commons

Inside, things are a little more unusual. The castle is owned and lived in by Sir Humphry Wakefield Bt., his wife The Hon. Lady Wakefield and their family. Sir Humphry has enthusiastically collected and maintained a wide range of interesting historical artefacts within the castle so there is a lot to see.

Not for the squeamish, you can also pay a visit to the castle's Torture Chamber. Torture instruments of times gone by including a spiked chair and stretching rack leave little to the imagination. You can almost hear the screams... in fact, you might well since the castle is said to be haunted and even runs ghost tours!

To find out more about events and visiting the castle, see chillingham-castle.com.

Chillingham wild cattle

A day out with a difference is a visit to the wild cattle of Chillingham. It is a chance not to be missed: these cattle are one of the rarest animals on the planet.

These cattle are completely wild and have been for centuries. They exist in Chillingham Park, in which they were fenced off from the surrounding countryside to provide hunting sport for visiting nobles. Since then, they have been left free to roam, untainted by human contact. They are not vaccinated yet suffer no diseases (bio controls are strict around the Park to ensure no disease is brought in to or carried out of the herd's domain).

The cattle are unusual in colour; a cream/grey for the most part. The large bulls often have a darker speckling/patching around their head and chest, which is not natural colouring but mud and dirt from where the bull has kicked up the ground

and rubbed itself in the mud to appear more threatening.

With no human meddling, the herd has a natural hierarchy with the strongest bulls fighting for the dominant position and for breeding rights with the cows. The bulls fight viciously – their large horns point forward for attack (the cows' horns point upwards). Sometimes they fight to the death. The bulls fight all year round as these cattle do not have a breeding season.

No new animals have joined the herd in 300 years, so these cattle are extremely in-bred. Yet they survive year after year in harsh winters, simply grazing from the same land their ancestors have grazed for centuries.

This herd of cattle is so rare that a few animals have been taken to a secret location in Scotland, just in case the worst happened and the Chillingham herd did not survive. They are the only truly wild cattle in the world.



Warden leading the tour

You can visit the cattle for a [walking tour](#) guided by the warden. The cattle are very dangerous as they are not used to humans and can be fiercely defensive, so you won't get up close. But you can hear the fascinating history of these animals and see these rarest of animals with your own eyes.

Tours take place at [set times](#) and the park is closed during

the winter (opens Easter). If you drive to the park, after ascending a track to the car park, you must walk a short distance (around 5-10 minutes) across a field to get the warden's hut where the tour begins. It is advisable to take cash to pay the warden. Warning: there are no toilet or refreshment facilities at the park so come prepared!

To find out more about the cattle, visit chillinghamwildcattle.com.

Chillingham Castle and the Wild Cattle have even appeared on Robson Green's Tales from Northumberland (ITV).

Chillingham Castle and Chillingham Wild cattle visits

At the time of writing (Jun 2015), the ticket prices are as follows:

- **combined castle and cattle ticket:** Adults £16, Concessions £13, Children 4-16 years old £6, Family ticket for 2 Adults and 2 or 3 Children £35
- **wild cattle tour only** (click for [ticket information/opening and tour times](#)): Adults £8, Concessions £6, Children 4-16 years old £3, Family ticket for 2 Adults and 2 or 3 Children £16
- **castle only** (click for [ticket information/opening times](#)): Adults £9.50, Concessions £8.50, Children £5.50 (5 to 15 yrs), Under 5's free, Family Ticket £23.00 (2 Adults and up to 3 children)

All tickets can be bought either at the gate or, if you wish, book in advance at any of the Tourist Information Centres in Northumberland and receive 10% off.

Chillingham is just under 20 minutes' drive from Homildon cottage so why not visit these fascinating places.



Chillingham Wild Cattle fighting. "Locked horns" by Kristi Herbert – Flickr: Locked horns. Licensed under CC BY 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons
