Auchope refuge hut, Border Ridge, Pennine Way

Many a life has been saved by the mountain refuge huts of the Cheviots, from hillwalkers caught out by wintry conditions to a group of endurance runners completing The Spine race along the Pennine Way.

The insulated mountain refuge huts are a lifeline in the wild Cheviot hills, where weather can change in a moment, and the forecast is never to be trusted absolutely.



View back into College Valley from Red Cribs

There are two shelters on the Border Ridge, one at Auchope Rigg near the Cheviot and the Yearning Saddle refuge hut at Lamb Hill, further south. The shelters were built and maintained by Northumberland National Park Authority rangers and volunteers and the Mountain Rescue Team, with materials flown out by the Royal Air Force. This airlift by the Boulmer rescue helicopter was back in 1988 and the hut is dedicated to the memory of Stuart Lancaster. There is also a plaque for this walker who perished in a snowstorm beside the summit of the Schil.

Auchope Rigg hut can be reached easily from the College Valley (particularly if you buy a car pass and park down near

Mounthooley bunk house). A 45 minute walk takes you from Mounthooley, ascends up Red Cribs at the far end of the College Valley, and brings you up onto the Border Ridge by the Hen Hole.

Inside the hut you will find a notebook filled with notes from visitors to the hut – some are just passing by as they near the end of their Pennine Way walk, and some are less fortunate, stuck in the hut overnight while they wait out bad weather. For many years the hut also notoriously hosted a roadworks sign, with an accompanying note claiming a group of hikers had carried it from Crowden – down in Derbyshire on the first leg of the Pennine Way!

Emerging from the hut, you are greeted by a view of the nearby Hen Hole, a deep chasm on the north-west side of the Cheviot. The College Burn descends from the hills in a series of dramatic waterfalls in the Hen Hole. Perhaps it is no surprise that such an atmospheric setting has engendered many tales. Perhaps the most well known is the ballad of Black Adam of Cheviot, an infamous outlaw. The tale goes that Adam raided a wedding party in Wooperton, robbing the guests and killing the bride. Pursued by the groom through a stormy night, he made his escape to the Hen Hole, making a 20 foot leap across the ravine to Black Adams cave. But the groom persisted, causing the two men to fight so ferociously that both fell to their deaths in the College Burn below.



On a clear day, the Border Ridge affords a panoramic view over the Cheviots and Borders (as you can see in the video below). From here, it is a short walk to Auchope Cairn, which has been described as the finest view in Northumberland. A bold claim, given the local scenery!

The fence that runs nearby the hut marks the border between England and Scotland. This spot is unusual in that you can look south from England for several miles into Scotland!

You do not have to be walking the Way – you can even visit Yearning Saddle or Auchope Rigg from the comfort of your armchair with Google Street View!

The College Valley is 15 minutes' drive from Homildon Cottage. Read more about car passes, walking the valley and its history in our separate post on the College Valley.