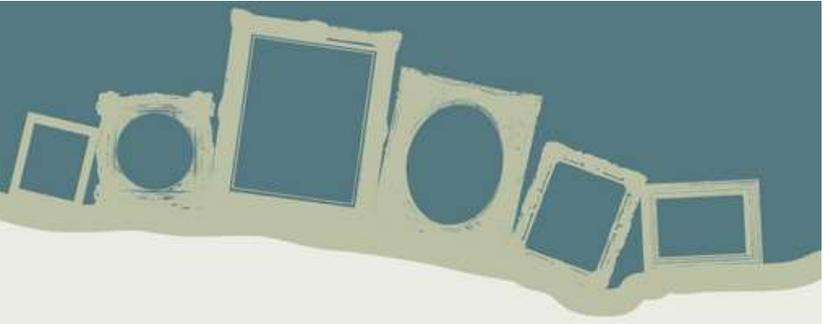


Wall Face



Antiquarian Image Card #3: William Hutton by James Basire

Line engraving, 1804, NPG D8391

Linked to Housesteads Roman Fort (Northumberland)

William Hutton (30 September 1723 – 20 September 1815) was a bookseller, historian, poet and author. Aged 78, he decided to walk from his home in Birmingham, along the Roman Wall and home again. The trip took 35 days, covering 601 miles, which he strode in the same pair of shoes, dressed all in black and with only a satchel for his maps. He surveyed and measured the Wall wherever possible, and on his return he wrote a book the '*Ancient state [of the Wall] and its appearance...*' In this he claimed "*I have given a short sketch of my approach to this famous Bulwark; have described it as it appears in the present day, and stated my return. Perhaps, I am the first man that ever traveled the whole length of this Wall, and probably the last that will ever attempt it ...*"

Key achievements

- 601 mile walk along Hadrian's Wall, to and from Birmingham, at the age of 78
- His account captured the social condition of the time, being full of anecdotes: the daily search for food and a place to spend the night. His dark clothing led to many of the people he came across to believe he was either a clergyman, tax collector or a spy

Links to Hadrian's Wall

- Hutton visited all of the then visible sites recording what he found
- Despite Housesteads being a jumble of fallen stones whose lines made visible both the outline of the fort perimeter and some of its internal buildings, Hutton was impressed, both in the topographical location and the breathtaking all round views. He declared Housesteads to be '*the grandest Station in the whole line. In some Stations the Antiquary feeds upon shells, but here upon kernels. Here lie the remains of ancient splendour in bold characters*'.
- Local tradition says the survival of a large section of upstanding Wall at Planetrees is because Hutton asked workmen to stop demolition – they were going to reuse the stone in building a farmhouse nearby

Character insights

'I envied the people in the neighbourhood of the Wall; though I knew they valued it no more than the soil on which it stood. I wished to converse with an intelligent resident, but never saw one.'



William Hutton by Jame Basire, © National Portrait Gallery, London

visithadrianswall.co.uk/learning



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

**National
Portrait
Gallery**

