The wall starts at the Birdoswald Car Park, a few hundred yards from where the wall crosses the River Irthing. Originally the wall from this crossing was built of turf (sometimes anything they could find) with a wooden palisade in 120s AD. We can get a feel of what it looks like from the reconstruction at Vindolanda.

As you can see turf walls did not last very long. This was built about 30 years ago. Within about 10 year the wall from Milecastle 49 just before Birdoswald to Milecastle 54 were rebuilt in stone. The rest of the turf wall was replaced in 160’sAD. It always followed the line of the turf wall except between Milecastles 49 and 51 as illustrated above. This is probably because of the risk of erosion by the Irthing.

The Turf wall was method generally used in the Empire along frontiers, where there was no river to define the frontier. The reason why the stone wall was not continued after the Irthing is obscure. There has been a lot of discussion as to why the change was made such as lack of limestone, but a turf wall had to be quicker to build, cheaper and would have used less man power.

The turf wall was 20ft wide and thought to be12ft high with the palisade on top.
The walk passes Birdoswald Roman Fort and initially follows the route of the stone wall.

**Turret 49b**

The turret is only a few hundred yards from the fort. The floor was resurfaced four times, the first and third layers were clay and the second and fourth layers were flags. Surprisingly considering how near the fort was it was occupied into the fourth century.

After about 200yds the path turns south away from the line of the stone wall and follows the line of the turf wall until Milecastle 51, which is just visible as a slight mound.

**Turrets 51a & 51b**

The turrets on turf wall were built of stone, and therefore date from the 120’s. Turret 51a had to be repaired before the stone wall was built 10 years later.
There is no trace of Milecastle 52, located under Bankshead House.

**Pike Hill Tower**

Pike Hill Tower is located just over half mile after Turret 51b. It probably built about 20 years before the wall as signal post for the Stanegate forts. It has largely been destroyed by the road. It has strong foundations and probably taller than the wall turrets and the stones are better dressed. It stands at 45% angle to the wall.

**Turret 52a Banks East**

This turret is 100 yards east of Pike Hill, which appears badly built, probably because the walls were hidden when it was part of the turf wall.

**Hare Hill**

There is no visible sign of Milecastle 53, but shortly after is the highest part of the wall still standing. Hare Hill section of Hadrian's Wall stands to a height of about 8.8 ft. The core of the wall is original but part of the face has been reconstructed.
Milecastle 54 is hardly visible. After about a mile we turn south across the fields to Lanercost.

Lanercost Priory was founded in about 1169 to house Augustinian cannons. Robert de Vaux provided the land. The bulk of church buildings dates from the late 13th century. It was the target of Scottish attaches and Scottish army en camped here in 1296 after burning Hexham Abbey. Edward 1 made various visits. The last visit in 1306 when he was mortally ill. He stayed 6 months and nearly bankrupted the Cannons. He died shortly after he left. An inscription recording the presence of Sixth Legion is built into the wall. The buildings have significant quantities of Roman stone.