



JARROW TO DURHAM



Introduction

This guide describes the pilgrimage route between St Paul's Church in Jarrow and Durham Cathedral. All the Northern Saints Trails use the same waymark shown on the left. The route also follows Bede's Way from Jarrow to Monkwearmouth, The Weardale Way from New Lambton to Durham and Cuddy's Corse from Chester-le-Street to Durham, so those way marks will also be helpful. The route is 61 kilometres or 38 miles. It is the most urban of the routes with two thirds of the route on minor roads or paved paths, but it is a route full of interest. I have divided the route into 5 sections of between 10 to 17 kms in length. Points of interest are described in red.

The primary focus for the majority of pilgrims journeying to Durham Cathedral in the Middle Ages was the shrine of St Cuthbert, but the other most notable person, whose tomb is in the the Galilee Chapel in the cathedral, is the Venerable Bede. It is primarily because of him that this route is called The Way of Learning. He was indeed a man of great learning, who is probably best known for writing the first history of England. It was called *An Ecclesiastical History of the English Speaking People*. His other talents included the fact that was that he was an accomplished linguist, an astronomer and he also popularised measuring time from the birth of Christ. During his long life of extraordinary scholarship, he wrote 60 books.

There are other connections with the theme of learning, apart from Bede, along the route. It passes by the University of Sunderland and The National Glass Centre, as this region was where people first learnt many of the skills of glass making, including stained glass. The Penshaw Monument is based on the Greek temple of Hephaestus and is a reminder of what our culture owes to the wisdom of the Greeks. Bernard Gilpin, the great rector of Houghton-le-Spring in the 16th century, established the Royal Kepier Grammar School, which produced a stream of outstanding people including the local historian Robert Surtees. Chester-le-Street was another key place of learning, especially in the 10th century when St Cuthbert's shrine was located there. The first translation of the gospels into English took place in the scriptorium there. Finchale was the place where the hermit Godric lived in the 11th century and people came from far and wide to seek his counsel and wisdom. Finally of course Durham is a great city of learning with its famous university established by Bishop William van Mildert in 1832. To end this introduction with a quote from Bede, perhaps as well as walking this route, your journey will be an opportunity to "*devote yourself to learn the sayings and doings of the men of old.*"

Section 1

Jarrow to South Shields 10 km

Jarrow

Jarrow derives its name from the original inhabitants of the area, a tribe called the Gyre (pronounced Yeer-weh) which means 'fen dwellers'. Much of the area to the east of St Paul's Church around the mouth of the River Don was a marshy estuarine area known as Jarrow Slake. The Port of Tyne now occupies that land. Jarrow was also sometimes called Donaemuth (Don-mouth). This was the place given to Benedict Biscop in 682 by King Ecgrith of Northumbria for the building of his second monastery. Monkwearmouth and Jarrow were often considered as one monastery in two locations. By the beginning of the 8th century, they were established as the foremost centres of learning, scholarship and book production in Britain.

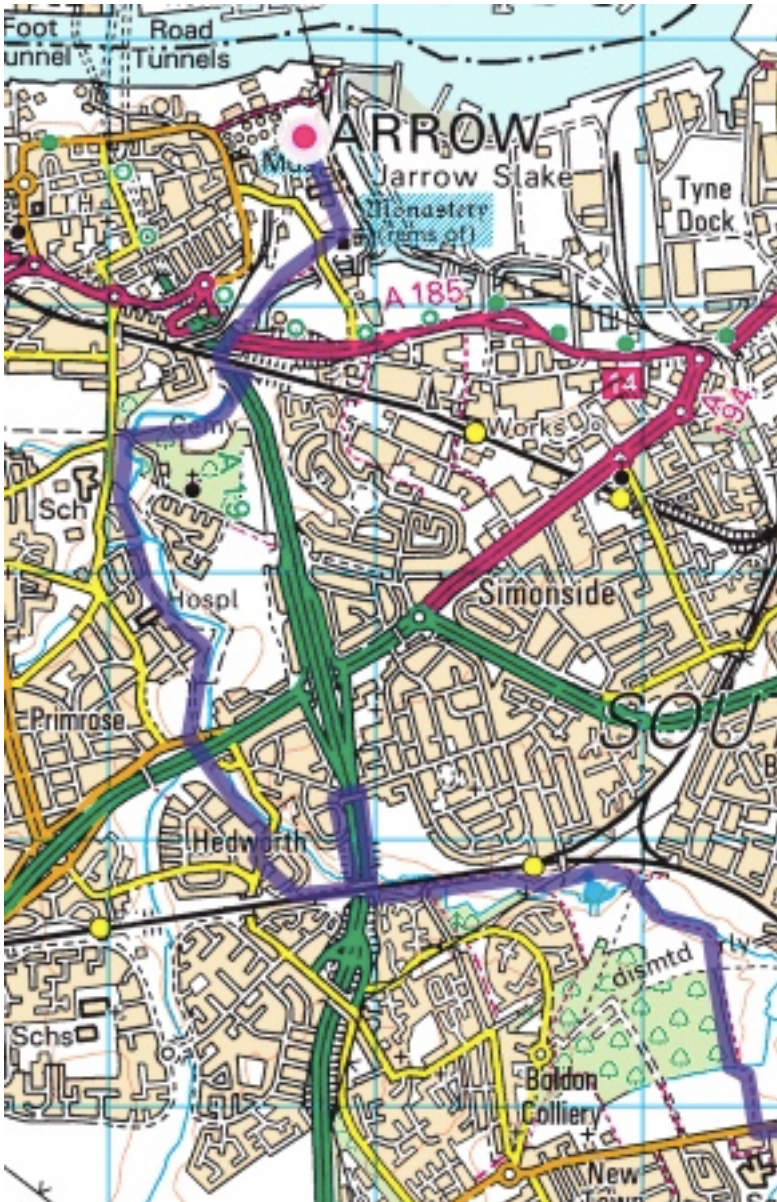
The building of the monastery by masons from France was supervised by Benedict's assistant Ceolfrith. The monastic buildings included St Paul's Church which was built in the style of a Roman basilica. It has the distinction of having the oldest surviving church dedication in Britain, which can be seen in the wall above the Saxon chancel. In Latin it reads: DEDICATIO BASILICAE SCI PAVLI VIII KL MAI ANNO XV ECFRIDI REG CEOLFRIDI ABB EIVSDEM Q ECCLES DO AVCTORE CONDITORIS ANNO IIII This translates as:

THE DEDICATION OF THE CHURCH OF ST PAUL ON THE NINTH OF THE KALENDS OF MAY IN THE FIFTEENTH YEAR OF KING ECGFRITH AND THE FOURTH YEAR OF CEOLFRITH, ABBOT AND WITH GOD'S HELP THE FOUNDER OF THIS CHURCH.

Only the chancel remains from the 7th century, but that contains a very special treasure - the oldest stained glass window in the world. The church also contains St Bede's Chair, a Saxon stone cross called 'The Jarrow Cross' and three sculptures by Fenwick Lawson.

The golden age of Northumbria came to an end with Viking raids, the first of which took place in 794. Other raids followed and it was finally abandoned after being sacked in 865. In 1074 a monk called Aldwin from Winchcombe in Gloucestershire, who had been inspired by reading Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, came with other monks from Evesham to rebuild the site as a Benedictine monastery. He later rebuilt the monastery at Monkwearmouth and both places became cells linked to the priory at Durham Cathedral. The monasteries were closed by Henry VIII in the 1530s but the churches survived.

North of the church is Jarrow Hall which dates from 1785. Beside it is the Bede Museum which is an excellent place to learn more about him and also contains the largest collection of 7th and 8th century coloured glass in Europe. In the grounds, you can walk through a reconstruction of an Anglo-Saxon village and farm which includes farm animals similar to those Bede would have known.



Leaving St Paul's Church, cross the road at Church Bank and walk along the wide tarmac path opposite (River Don footpath) until you reach a mosaic incorporated into tarmac. Do not cross the bridge here, but take the left fork adjacent to the river, under Straker Street (A185) and across to a point where the metro line crosses the A19. Turn left, under the metro line bridge and left again, then first right following River Don footpath, under the A19 - WATCH YOUR HEAD! Continue on the paved path to Jarrow Cemetery. Cross Cemetery Road and continue walking along the River Don footpath, soon crossing from the west to the east side of the river then back again to the west side at the next bridge. Stay on this side of the river until you reach Roman Road.

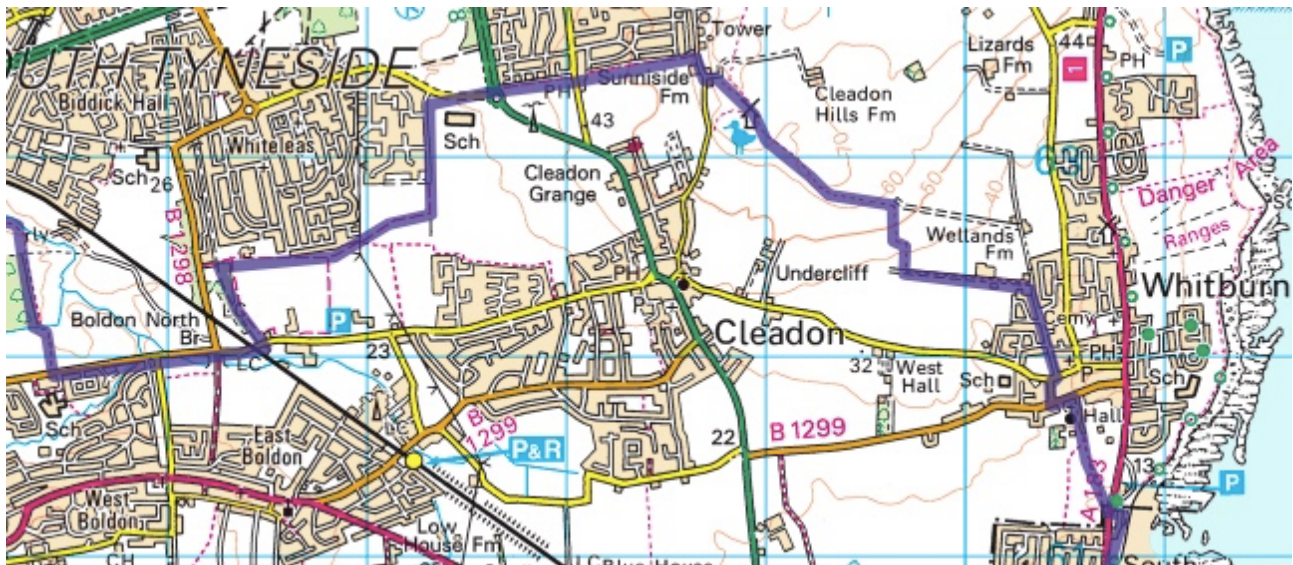
The Robin Hood Pub is a few metres further on to your left,

but you cross over Roman Road to pass under Leam Lane bridge (the A194). Hedworth Lane bends to the left, but you take the tarmac path which continues by the river, until it comes out again at Hedworth Lane. Turn right and when you reach the top of the hill, cross the road and bear left to Thorntree Walk with the Greyhound Inn nearby to your right. Cross a road, continue along the path which runs parallel to a railway track, until you reach the A19. Turn left and follow the path to the footbridge.

Cross the A19 and turn right, following the path adjacent to the A19, before passing under a railway bridge, then turning left up steps and along the path to Station Road. Cross over and enter Station Road Nature Reserve and follow the River Don footpath along the river. At the second bridge, cross the river, turn immediately right and you are now no longer on a paved path. Follow the path towards a disused viaduct over a boardwalk. Cross back over the river and turn immediately left, along the path under the viaduct, and then follow the river for about 350 metres before turning right, away from the river. You walk under the bridge of an old mineral line before reaching Colliery Wood which you pass on your right. Cross a bridge near some playing fields,

to arrive at New Road opposite Boldon school. Boldon gave its name to the *Boldon Book* which was a survey of Durham and Northumberland arranged by the Bishop of Durham in 1183. The *Domesday Book* in 1086 had not included Durham and Northumberland, so this is often considered to be Durham's 'Domesday'.

At New Road, turn left and after 500 metres you cross over by a roundabout into Tile Shed Lane. Cross over a level crossing and then turn left onto the former West Harton mineral line. As you approach a housing estate at a cross paths, turn right at a steel waymarker onto a wide path, passing a primary school on your left and Tilesheds Local Nature Reserve on your right. Go straight over at the bus turning circle, passing the houses of Whiteleas on your left. Cross a field and at a stone sculpture bear left between planting blocks. At the end of these, turn left along a track which leads to Holder House Way. Continue up the road past playing fields, then turn right along a path before crossing Nevinson Avenue and taking the path diagonally across at Temple Park to King George Road. This is the end of the section at a place where you can access local transport



Section 2

South Shields to Monkwearmouth 10km

Cross King George Road just north of a roundabout and follow the path opposite, known as Occupation Road. Go over Sunderland Road and along the attractive lane toward Cleadon Water Tower. Turn right at Sunnyside Lane, passing Sunnyside Farm on your right. Turn left uphill with Sunnyside Farm Cottage to your right. At the field entrance on your right, use the gate to enter and follow the grass path towards the sail-less windmill which dates from around 1820. There are fine views all around. Pass on the eastern side of the windmill and follow the path down to the south east corner of the field, where you cross the stile and follow the public footpath alongside the field boundaries. This path turns south and then east over three stiles to reach Well House Farm and Whitburn. Turn right into Welland Lane and into Whitburn.

Whitburn

The name Whitburn probably derives from 'white barn' and may refer to a tithe barn that once existed here. The parish church was originally built in the 13th century and includes a 24 metre tower which was useful for mariners in the past. There was a major restoration in 1867. There are some unusual features. If you look at the east window from the west window, you will see that it is slightly tilted to the north to recall the drooping head of Christ on the cross - hence is called a "Weeping Chancel." There is also an peculiar window in the west wall of the south aisle. With its oval shape, it is called a "Vesica Piscis" or "Fish Window. " It is cut out of four rough pieces of stone in the shape of a fish, the ancient symbol of the Christian Church with its curious play on the letters of the Greek word for fish - *ichthus*.

At the end of Welland Lane turn right into North Guards and immediately left into Sandy Chare. Turn left into the attractive Front Street and after 70 metres turn right into Church Lane, soon passing the parish church on your right. Take the footpath ahead which runs adjacent to Cornthwaite Park park to come out at the A183 Coast Road.

Cross the road and you now have three options as you turn right. You can either walk on the pavement or the cliff top path or the beach unless it is high tide. It is better to walk up on the cliff



top as you come towards the white lighthouse at Roker Cliff Park. This lighthouse was built in 1856 in cast iron and was located at the end of the old South Pier. It was removed in 1983 to this location when harbour improvements were made. Walk on up to the road and cross over opposite a bus station into Rock Lodge Road to reach the very unusual church of St Andrew's.

St Andrew's Church, Roker

At the start of the 20th century, the seaside resort of Roker was growing and a new church was needed. A local shipyard owner, John Priestman, was the main benefactor and he commissioned Edward Prior, who was a leading light in the arts and crafts movement, to design the church. This impressive building was built mostly of magnesium limestone quarried three miles up the coast at Marsden and it was completed in 1907. Prior engaged other members of the Arts and Crafts movement in contributing to the project which is why the church became known as 'the cathedral of the Arts and Crafts movement'. A prominent feature behind the main altar is a tapestry based on a design by Edward Burne-Jones, of the 'Adoration of the Magi'. This, as well as the chancel carpet was made by William Morris and the painting in the dome showing the days of creation was by McDonald Gill.

Leave the church by walking a few metres south down Roker Park Road, then left along Side Cliff Road passing Roker Park as you return to the coast. Here you will see the very fine Bede Memorial Cross built in 1904 in the Saxon style. From here continue walking south.

You will pass Roker Pier with its lighthouse at the end on your left. It is unusual in that it is a curving pier and at 610 metres, it is the fifth longest in England. The Way of Learning is following the England Coast Path which will lead you round to the Wear estuary and a marina around which there is a lot of interesting public art. After you have walked down the west side of the marina, walk ahead up Sand Point Road. At the top, cross over to the left of a filling station to keep on the coastal path which leads down to the National Glass Centre and the University of Sunderland Campus. It is often a good place to watch ships unloading on the opposite side. When you see the university car park up on your right, turn right between the university buildings and the car park and cross over St Peter's Way to reach St Peter's Church.

St Peter's Monkwearmouth

Monkwearmouth is unquestionably the most historic part of Sunderland. In 674 Ecgrith, the king of Northumbria, granted these lands to a remarkable learned man called Benedict Biscop in order to build a monastery. Benedict made several visits to the continent and especially to Rome to find masons and glaziers to build the monastery in the Pre-Romanesque style. The monastery was the first ecclesiastical building to be built in stone in Britain and glass too was an original feature. The other main purpose of Benedict's journeys was to equip a library which eventually contained 700 volumes. It was in this library that Bede wrote many of his works. The most famous work to come out of Monkwearmouth was the beautifully illuminated 'Codex Amiatinus' which is the oldest surviving copy of the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible.

It was given as a gift to the Pope in the early 8th century and is preserved in the Laurentian Library in Florence, but there is a fine facsimile in the church.

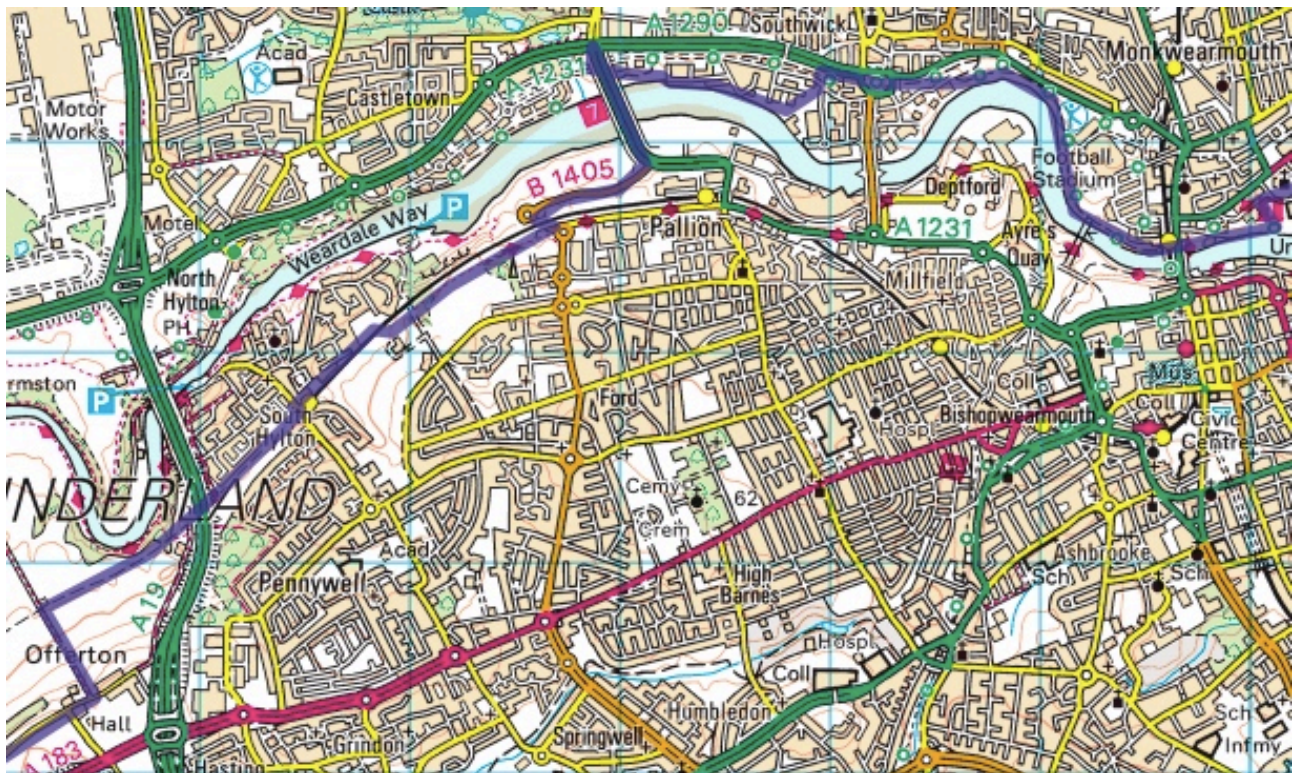
St Peter's Church is all that remains now of the original monastery, but excavations have revealed the layout. The monastery was ransacked, along with monastery at Jarrow by the Vikings in 865, but the Normans rebuilt them and they became monastic cells linked to Durham Cathedral. The monastery was closed by King Henry VIII in the Dissolution of the Monasteries and suffered from much neglect over the centuries until it was restored in the 1870s. Further restoration has continued in more recent years, including the installation in St Peter's Café of superb modern stained glass windows based on Bede's observations in his *Reckoning of Time*.

In 685, King Egfrith granted Benedict land on the south side of the River Wear. This was described as 'sundered land' from the monastery and this is how the present city gained its name. Bede himself was most probably born in Sunderland.

Section 3

Monkwearmouth to Houghton-le-Spring 17km

Leave the church by the western gate and cross over into Charles Street and then take the first left just before Sunderland College and walk back down to the riverside and turn right. The striking sculpture *Shadows in Another Light* is ahead of you. It resembles a steel tree and the plinth was the base of a former crane. Around the plinth are plaques about the history of Sunderland, created by blind and partially sighted people. Just after you have walked under Monkwearmouth bridge, look out for another sculpture called *Second Sun* by Andrew Small. His inspiration came from the Venerable Bede who calculated the motion of the sun and the moon.



The walk along the north bank of the Wear is also the C2C (Coast to Coast) cycle route and there is plenty to see in terms of industrial heritage, as well as a good variety of flowers in spring and summer. You will pass some impressive limekilns on your way. Exporting lime from here was a major industry in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with the unique combination of limestone quarries and riverside next to each other.

Before the Queen Alexandra Bridge, fork right temporarily leaving the river and keeping on the C2C. Go left at the barrier, then up right and left to gain the main cycle way and then walk through two underpasses. After 150 metres, you will find some steps on your left. Go down to the road and turn left and right to find a barrier leading to a shady path to take you back to the river. Now ahead of you is the new Northern Spire Bridge. As you come closer to the bridge, the path turns away from the river. After a few metres, turn left, passing an industrial bench with cogs on your right. The path continues until you pass under the bridge itself. Turn right here to cross a road

and walk up four flights of steps. Turn right and right again to cross the bridge. Work commenced in 2015 and it was opened in 2018. At 105 metres, the spire is the highest structure in Sunderland. There are good views up river, especially of Claxheugh Rock on the south side.

you have crossed the bridge, go over at the lights to access the pavement on Paul Watson Way and walk up to a roundabout. Cross over the road and turn sharp left under the railway bridge. Turn immediately right onto the cycle path. After about 600 metres you pass through to the other side of the railway and continue straight ahead passing a housing estate on your right. You soon reach South Hylton Metro Station. Cross over the road diagonally left and go ahead on the path which after half a kilometre will lead you under the A19

Leaving the noise of the A19, the path heads out into the countryside. Turn left off the cycle path up to Offerton, where you turn right passing Offerton Hall Farm. Continue on the road ahead with the Penshaw Monument gradually getting larger as you approach it. When the road descends and turns right, cross the stile ahead and walk on to the monument, passing a quarry on your right and then, after crossing another stile, follow the line of a wood which falls away steeply. Fork left to walk up to the monument.

Penshaw Monument

This popular landmark was built in 1842 and dedicated to John George Lambton, first Earl of Durham (1792-1840) who was the first Governor of the Province of Canada and was known as *Radical Jack* because of his progressive views. It particularly commemorates the fact that he produced a document called *The Durham Report* which is significant because it charted a new course for the relationship of Great Britain with the British Empire. He recommended self governance for the more advanced colonies which was certainly a radical proposal at the time. He owned coal mines in the area and took great care of the miners. He was so popular that his workers refused to strike in the miners' strike of 1831. 50,000 people lined the streets on the day of his funeral in Chester-le-Street.

The temple itself was designed by John and Benjamin Green and was based on the Temple of Hephaestus in Athens. Hephaestus was the god of fire and craftsmanship, which is surely appropriate when we consider the creativity and inventiveness of the region. The monument is 30 metres long, 16 metres wide and 20 metres high and each column is 2 metres in diameter. The stone blocks are held together with steel pins and brackets.

Make sure that as you enjoy the views from here, you include looking for Durham Cathedral which is 14 kilometres away to the south west, although with the twists and turns you have more than that to walk! The pilgrimage tradition is to make the sign of the cross and praise the Lord when you first see your final destination!

Walk down the steps at the south east corner of the monument and after halfway, fork right to go to the south side of the roundabout where you cross over the A183. Enter into Herrington Country Park which was constructed on the site of Herrington Colliery

which closed in 1985. Turn left on a wide path which leads to a car park by the largest of the lakes. Turn left here and walk round between the two lakes and then turn right. When you reach the next cross paths, you turn left, but you may want to divert to see the stone circle on the hill to your right. You walk in a semi circular direction round to your right until you reach a road by a barrier where you turn left into West Herrington Village. Follow the road to the left and to the right and pass a mini roundabout before reaching the B1286. Cross over to the bus stop and turn right and the footpath to Newbottle is on your left.

There are fields on your right and woodland on your left. Ignore a private drive and path on your left and continue ahead into a very pleasant stretch of woodland on a wide path. As the path narrows again and you start to climb, look for a footpath on your right. You will see Newbottle church where you are headed for. Follow the right hand field boundary turning left soon and then right, this time following the left hand field boundary. As you approach houses you will see a line of trees up to the church. Take the path on your left immediately after passing the trees and walk up to St Matthews Church which was built in 1886.



Newbottle and world's first railway disaster

The name Newbottle derives from the Saxon 'New Battle' meaning 'new settlement'. It is mentioned in the Bolden Book of 1183 as 'Newbotill'. Newbottle has the unenviable distinction of being the site of the world's first railway disaster. In July 1815, a crowd of curious onlookers had come to see a new locomotive which was being demonstrated at the colliery by the Scottish engineer William Brunton. A new metal boiler had been fixed shortly beforehand, but the whole thing exploded, killing 13 people instantly, including a little boy, while others died later and many suffered horrific injuries.

Keep the church on your left as you turn left and then right into South Street and immediately left into Cathedral View. Walk down this street and at the bottom go between neat hedges to take the straight path over to the quarries opposite. When you reach the quarry fence, turn left and then right to reach a car park by the A690 where you turn right. At the end of the car park fork right onto the footpath up to Houghton Hill. The perimeter fence is on your right, but after 50 metres, take a narrower path on your left. There are a network of paths here, but you should pass a circular clear space and keep straight ahead with the quarry perimeter fence to your right. From the south side of the hill, there is a very good view and already Durham Cathedral looks a lot closer.

Go steeply down off the hill, going right and left by a bench. In summer, you are likely to see good displays of everlasting pea and sainfoin here. When you come to a park, you cross over a paved path and head diagonally towards the left side of the housing estate ahead of you. Go round with the A690 on your left and the housing estate on your right. Bear right and left to find a green footbridge over the A182. Walk across a car park and take the alley to the right of the Cutting Lounge salon. Turn right again and you will soon arrive at St Michael & All Angels Church.

Houghton-le-Spring

The town's name has an interesting origin. Houghton derives from two words *hoh* meaning a hill spur and *ton* meaning a farm or settlement. The 'le' suffix which is quite common in Co Durham, comes from the time when the Norman Prince Bishops of Durham wanted to distinguish different places for taxation purposes. Spring is not because of a local well but because of a family called the Springs who were associated with the area.

St Michael and All Angels Church is probably built on the site of an ancient place of worship. There are some Norman features, but it was mostly built in the 13th and 14th centuries. The most outstanding person associated with Houghton was Bernard Gilpin who was rector here between 1557 and 1583. There was probably no one who followed more closely the example of the early Northern Saints than Bernard Gilpin and the stories about him are strangely similar. His generosity was legendary and on one occasion he gave his horse away to a poor man whose horse had just died. Every Sunday between Michaelmas and Easter, he provided a hog roast meal for anyone who turned up! He gave away constantly to the poor. With his friends, he set up the Royal Kepier Grammar School in 1574 and he housed several of the students in his home and then later paid the fees for some to study at Oxford University. Every summer, Bernard Gilpin went off into the wilds of Northumbria around Rothbury to preach the gospel in much the same way as St Aidan had done 900 years before. In the church you can find Gilpin's tomb and there is a stained glass window which tells some stories of his life. Also you cannot miss the huge carving by the local sculptor Fenwick Lawson called *Risen Christ*.

On the east side of the church is Kepier Hall which was formerly the grammar school and also some almshouses built in 1668 by George Lilburne, a Sunderland merchant.

Quarrying limestone has an ancient history here, but it was not until the 19th century that it was realised how much valuable coal could be mined under the limestone. Coal mining began here in 1823 and soon Houghton-le-Spring developed as an important central town for the surrounding colliery villages of the East Durham Coalfield.

Section 4

Houghton-le-Spring to Chester-le-Street 11km

After leaving St Michael and All Angels, walk through the arch and across to the park which was formerly the rectory gardens. This is one of the oldest gardens in England and dates back at least to the 12th century. The castle-like rectory, originally built in 1483 and where Bernard Gilpin provided his weekly Sunday meals, is on your right. Pass a fountain on your left and walk ahead where you come to the only tithe barn (now much altered) in the north of England. This was a place where people brought their taxes which were often in the form of animals or food. After passing the barn on your left, bear diagonally right to leave the park in the north west corner. You will then walk across a circular design in the brickwork and there is a playground ahead. Walk out right and left on the paved path into Thornhill Street and then cross over by a general stores into Gilpin Street. Continue ahead on a path with neat blocks of red brick houses on your right and green fencing on your left. At the end of the fencing, turn sharp left between houses to reach Dairy Lane.

Cross over to the bus stop and turn right and then first left into a road called Ninelands. When the road turns left, turn right and go ahead to cross a stile into a field. There are stiles by red gates as you cross Rainton Burn. Continue ahead with a field boundary of hawthorn on your right and a large factory over to your left. When you reach Colliery Row estate, keep following the path by the fence. When you reach a road, turn right crossing over the burn and take the next left into Black Boy Road. It's a controversial sounding name, but most probably so named after the men walking back home after a shift in the mines. You can walk on a grass verge on the left, but will then need to cross over onto the pavement.

When you reach Black Boy Bridge, cross over and on the east side of the bridge, you will find the path which leads via steps down to a disused railway. Walk under the bridge to go on the path to the right of where the tracks once were. You will pass some houses on your right and when you come to a motor bike barrier. Carry straight on until you come to the next barrier, where you turn left to enter Railway Wood which is looked after by The Woodland Trust. Go straight through the wood and you will reach an unmade road opposite the entrance to Morton House. Morton House was built in 1709 and was used as a hospital in World War I. Turn right here and as you approach Woodstone village there is a good view of Penshaw Monument. The road takes you out onto the A1052 where you cross over and turn left. After 200 metres just after the road junction and by a 40mph sign, take the footpath on your right and cross the bridge over the Lumley Park Burn and then fork left and then left again by a lamp post. Go through a gap in the trees and turn left again to regain the burn which

is on your left. When you reach the next road, go over the bridge and cross over so that you will now have the Lumley Park Burn on your right. The Floaters Mill Pub is nearby.



After about 400 metres walking by the burn, there is an option to fork left onto a higher path which may be advisable after wet weather, but the main route continues along the burn, quiet at first but with the noise of the A1 increasing as you approach it. Walk under the A1 on the left hand side to a road where you turn left uphill. You will find the Smiths Arms (where the higher path also comes to) on your left. Continue along Forge Lane and when it reaches the B1284 by a roundabout, turn right between houses to reach a path which leads into a wood and on across a high culverted embankment over the burn. For a moment it is quiet again though the A1 is only 300 metres away. When you come up out of the wood turn left to descend once more to Lumley Park Burn which is now on your left. You may catch some glimpses of Lumley Castle through the trees.

Lumley Castle

There was a manor house on this site before it was converted into a castle in 1389 by Sir Ralph Lumley when he returned from wars in Scotland. King James VI of Scotland called here as a guest of Lord Lumley in 1603 on his way to be crowned King James I of England. For a while in the 19th century the castle was the home of the Bishop of Durham before becoming a hall of residence for Durham University. It was sold in 1960 and then in 1976 it was transformed into the 73 bedroomed luxury hotel that it is today. It provides an impressive background for Co Durham Cricket Club's Riverside ground and visiting teams often stay at the hotel.

Pass a bridge on your left and soon after, walk through gates on the right hand side of the secluded Garden House. As the path turns to the left, you will come to Hag Bridge which you cross over. Walk across the green on the golf course and then turn right on the track downhill passing the 10th tee on your right. Continue following the path with

the Lumley Burn on your right until you reach the River Wear where you turn left. Just before you come to the road bridge, you will see the foundation of the former bridge. Turn left here and then immediately right on the road which passes the golf club on your left. You reach the main road and cross the bridge over the Wear.

After crossing the bridge, turn right into Riverside Park and double back to the river to follow the tarmac path north along the west bank. Keep on the main path and after 800 metres you will come to the Chester Burn. Turn left here and walk under the bridge which carries the A167. You come out into a park and you can see your destination, St Mary and St Cuthbert's Church with its fine spire on the hill. You can use footpaths (or more probably make some short cuts) to go diagonally up across the park to the road, where you turn left to reach the church.

Chester-le-Street

The town derives its name from the Latin word *castra* meaning a fort and the street refers to the Roman road which still runs north to south in what is now called Front Street. The Romans built their fort called Concangis here around 100AD. In those days the River Wear was navigable up to this point, so it was probably an important supply depot for other Roman garrisons in the area. The Romans left in 410.

During the Anglo-Saxon period this became the most important town between the Tyne and the Tees and this was particularly the case when the monks fled from Lindisfarne with the precious coffin of St Cuthbert and, after many wanderings, finally settled here in 882. They built a wooden shrine and a church most probably using stone from the Roman fort. For 113 years Chester-le-Street was the home of the Bishops of Lindisfarne, the forerunners of the Prince Bishops of Durham, so the church was a cathedral. There was a constant stream of pilgrims to the shrine including England's first king, Athelstan, in 934 and the Viking king of Norway and York with the fearsome name of Eric Bloodaxe in 952. One of the bishops at this time, Aldred, commissioned the first translation of the Bible into English. It was translated in the margins of the Lindisfarne gospels which were in Latin and there is a facsimile copy of it in the church. After the removal of St Cuthbert's shrine to Durham in 995, the town was still a powerful place until it was largely destroyed by the Normans in revenge for the killing of Bishop Walcher in 1080.

The church of St Mary and St Cuthbert has one of the best preserved anchorages in the country called Ankers House. An anchorite was an extreme hermit, walled in to the anchorage with only a slit to see the altar in the church and an opening to receive food. There were six anchorites there between 1383 and 1538.

By the early nineteenth century, Chester-le-Street had become a major staging post on the Great North Road and many inns sprang up to serve travellers and their horses. Also during the nineteenth century the town became an important centre in relation to coal in terms of collection and distribution and serving the needs of surrounding mining villages and towns.

Section 5

Chester-le-Street to Durham 13km

From the church, turn left. After passing Cestria Primary School, take the paved path on your left which leads into Roman Avenue. Keeping to the path on the left hand side, you will reach the bridge over the A167 and enter Riverside Park. Walk towards the playground with a good view of Lumley Castle on the other side of the river, then turn towards the car park. To the left of the car park there is a mini roundabout and the B1284, where you go left to cross over Lumley Bridge. Turn left and then left again into the golf club carpark where you will be able to access the riverside path. Turn left here.

After about 400 metres, the path leaves the riverside and you go over stile and a road and then up through some woodland. You come out to a field and walk along the path, with the woodland on your right. The path turns left and then right following field boundaries as you gradually ascend to Great Lumley. When you reach the village there is a striking wooden carving, incorporating a bench and a rectangle through which many take photos of the view back down to Chester-le-Street.

Walk round on the pavement and opposite a bus stop, turn right into Cambridge Drive. Soon after the road turns to the left, look out for a footpath on your right beside a playing field. Keep straight ahead on this path which will take you over a rise. You come out by a stile to a road where you continue southwards. There are good wide grass verges here. When you reach a T-junction turn left. Cross over to the lay by and at the far end of it, take the footpath on your right which leads by steps down to the river. Cross the wooden bridge to reach Finchale Priory.

Godric and Finchale Priory

Finchale Priory is beautifully situated in a loop of the River Wear and is associated with a remarkable man called Godric or sometimes St Godric although he was never officially canonised. Godric was born C1065 in Norfolk and had a varied career as a peddler and a merchant seaman, before in his 30s, having a visionary encounter with St Cuthbert on Lindisfarne that transformed his life. He then spent a number of years travelling around the Mediterranean and making pilgrimages to Rome, Jerusalem and Santiago before preparing for life as a hermit. He persuaded Ranulf Flambard, the Bishop of Durham, to give him land at Finchale where he settled for the last sixty years of his life living to over 100 before he died in 1170.

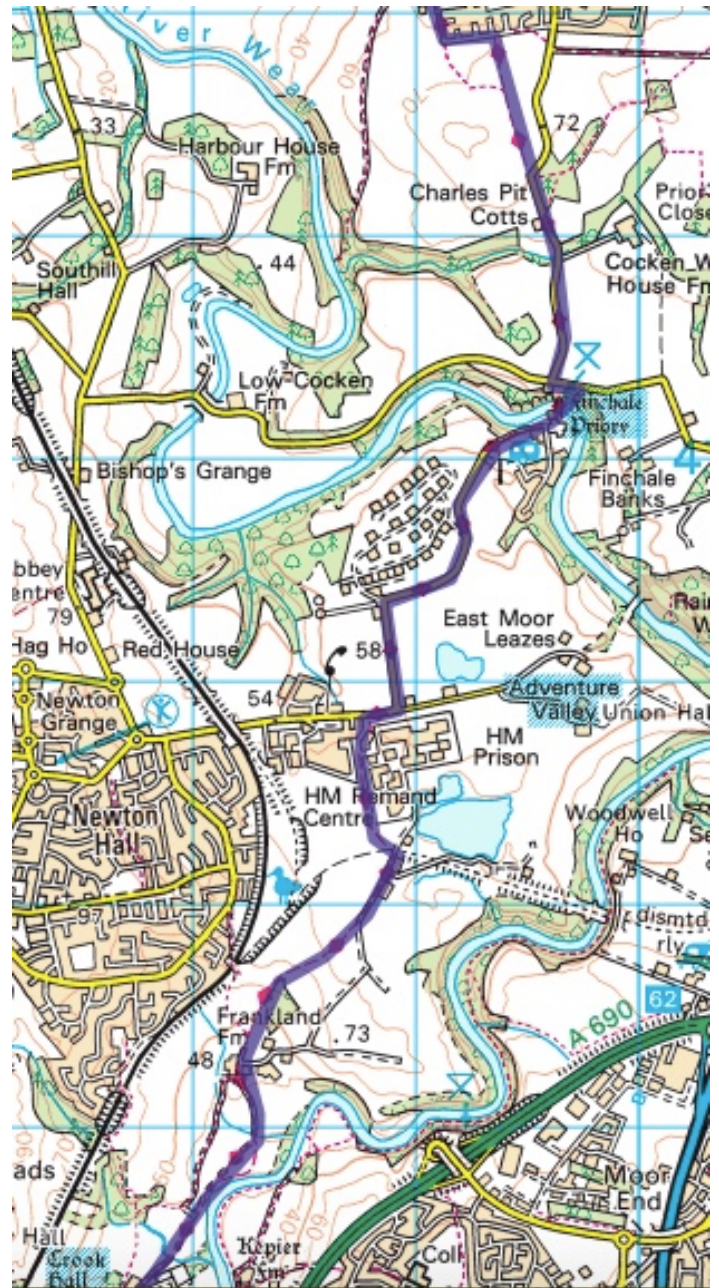
He lived a life of great austerity living on herbs, crab apples, honey and nuts and sleeping on the bare ground. He was much sought after for his sanctity and wisdom and gained a reputation as a miracle worker. He had a great affection for wild creatures and was reputed to allow snakes to warm themselves by his fire. He also has the distinction of composing the oldest songs in the English language for which we also have the original musical scores.

The fact that there is a priory here is entirely because of the fame of St Godric. There are a few remains of a chapel dedicated to St John the Baptist built around the time

Godric died and where he was buried. The Benedictine Priory was established in 1196 and the major building work took place in the 13th century. For most of its history it operated as a rest home for monks from Durham who would come for breaks of three weeks. They still attended the times of prayer but enjoyed more freedoms than in Durham. The priory was closed at the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1536.

You leave the abbey by walking uphill along the road. You will soon pass the bunkers of what was once the Brasside Ammunition Stores. The road bears round to the right and soon afterwards turns left by some houses. In summer the fields here are often bright with poppies. Ahead of you is Frankland Prison and when you reach the car park turn right and then immediately left to walk between HMP Frankland Prison on your left and Low Newton Prison for women and young offenders on your right.

After passing the prisons, continue ahead on the road which bears to the left and then right to cross a dismantled railway by some kennels. To your left, there were once brickworks, but it is now a nature reserve called Brasside Ponds, which you may wish to explore. Continue along the tree lined Frankland Lane, passing houses on your left. Next you will pass a small woodland called 'The Scogs' before arriving at Frankland Farm. Carry on downhill to reach the flood plain and walk along a well surfaced access road into the city.



Crook Hall

Crook Hall was originally built as a medieval hall house most probably in the 13th century, but later in the 17th century it was extended to become a Jacobean manor house. In the 18th century a large brick built Georgian house was added, so the present much restored hall contains an intriguing variety of styles and artefacts. The hall is surrounded by an English country style garden that is regarded as one of the best in the north of England. In 1995 the hall was bought by Keith and Maggie Bell who developed it into a popular tourist attraction and wedding venue.

You will pass sewage works on your left and the historic Crook Hall on your right. Walk on by the riverside, passing Radisson Blu Hotel and walking under Millburngate Bridge. Soon after this, walk under Framwellgate Bridge and then climb the steps to your right to cross over the bridge and go on up to the Market Place. After passing the equestrian statue on your left, turn right to walk up to the cathedral via Saddler Street and Owengate.

Acknowledgements

In my research for inserts on local history, I have used a wide variety of sources, but would particularly like to acknowledge the usefulness of England's North East website, where more detailed information about places on the route can be found - <https://englandsnortheast.co.uk/>

