



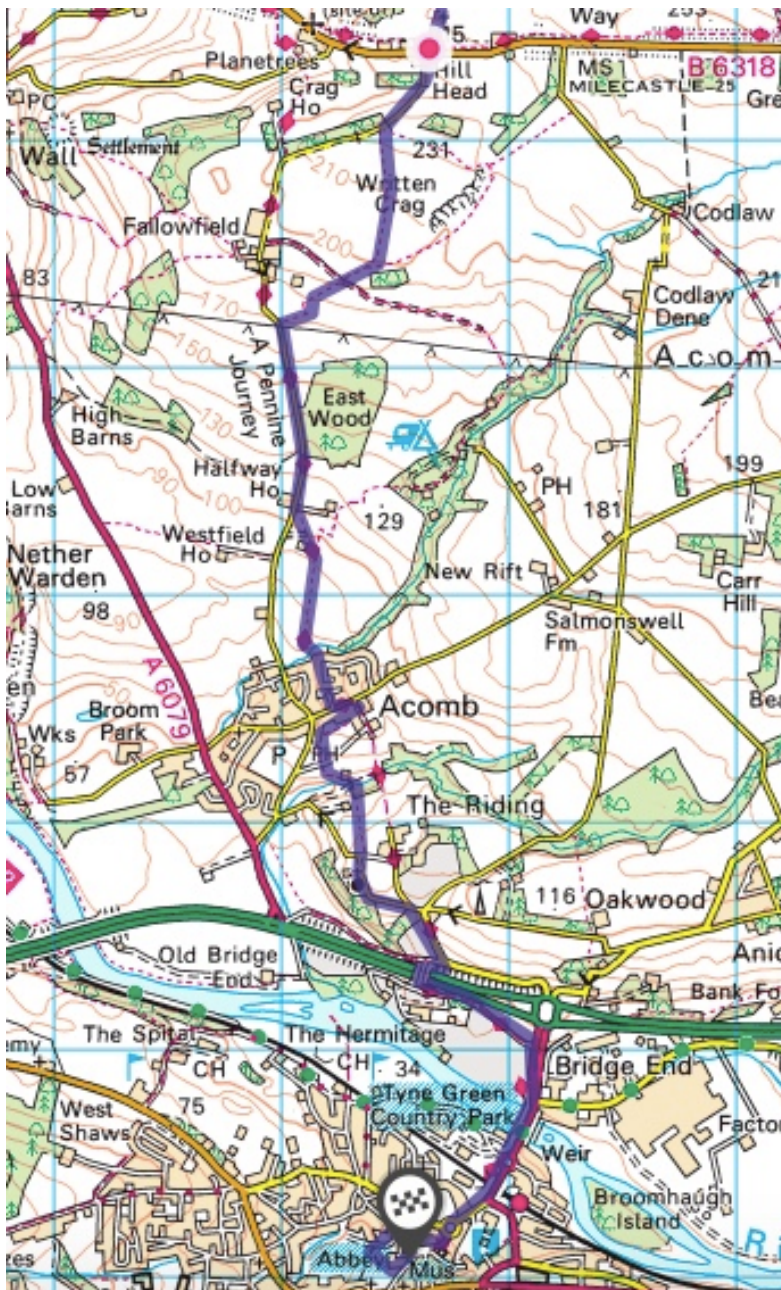
## Introduction

This route of 72 kilometres or 45 miles describes the pilgrimage route between Heavenfield and Durham. I have divided it into 5 sections between 8 to 18 kilometres in distance. There is no public transport close to the route between Hexham and Blanchland. Points of interest in red will be added later, but I have included two here.

## Section 1

Heavenfield to Hexham - 8km

### Heavenfield



After you have visited the church, make sure you walk round to the northern side to enjoy the excellent views before you begin your southward journey down the grassy path to the gate by the tall wooden cross. Cross over and go down the road by St Oswald's Cottage. The road soon bends to the right and when you reach the gate at the top of the hill, you will find a gate on your left. Two footpaths are indicated and you take the right hand one, walking over some slabs of rock and heading across the field towards the right of the conifer plantation ahead. There are wonderful views of the Tyne valley during your gradual descent.

After passing the plantation the path bears to the right down to a gate. Cross a farm track and go straight on to the gate ahead and then cross a field to the gate which leads out onto a road. Turn left here continuing down hill. After passing East Wood on your left and barns on your right, turn left and you will find the footpath on your right. Go into the field and walk to the attractive house with the tall chimney. Walk round to the east of it and diagonally down to near the field corner where you will find steps over to the next field. Turn right along the field edge. As you reach the bottom of the field where it gets a little steeper fork left down



to cross a bridge over a burn. Go up the steps and then along a lane. You are now in Acomb. The lane leads to a track where you turn right and soon reach a road.

Cross over the road and turn left passing The Miners Arms Inn and then turn right. Turn right again just before a row of cottages and walk down a wooded lane with houses on your right. Take the next footpath on your left across steps and through a gate into a field. Go through two kissing gates to cross a driveway. The path goes to the left of the tree and hedge and leads down to a bridge across a burn. Go up and through a gate into the field and keep ahead with the hedge on your right. At the top of the hill go through a gate and straight ahead on a narrow road where you soon arrive at St John Lee Church on your right.

### St John Lee

After visiting the church, continue on the road which turns to the left and soon reaches a crossroads by the charming Peaslaw Gates Cottage. Turn tight here downhill and at the bottom turn right to reach the footbridge over the A69. The road turns left beside the A69 along a tree lined avenue. When you arrive at the main road into Hexham, turn right crossing the bridges over the Tyne and the railway with your destination at the abbey now in view. Where the main road bears left, continue ahead. After passing Waitrose, go across at the pedestrian lights and then go

steeply up Hallstile Bank. At the top of the hill, the route does not go straight to the abbey but goes along the cobbled street past Wetherspoons. This joins a road which you cross and then take the first road on your left to walk under St Wilfred's Arch. Near here was the accommodation for pilgrims. Turn right before the car park and enter the park and circulate round. Turn left when you leave the park and you will arrive at the entrance to the abbey.

### Hexham and the abbey

#### Section 2

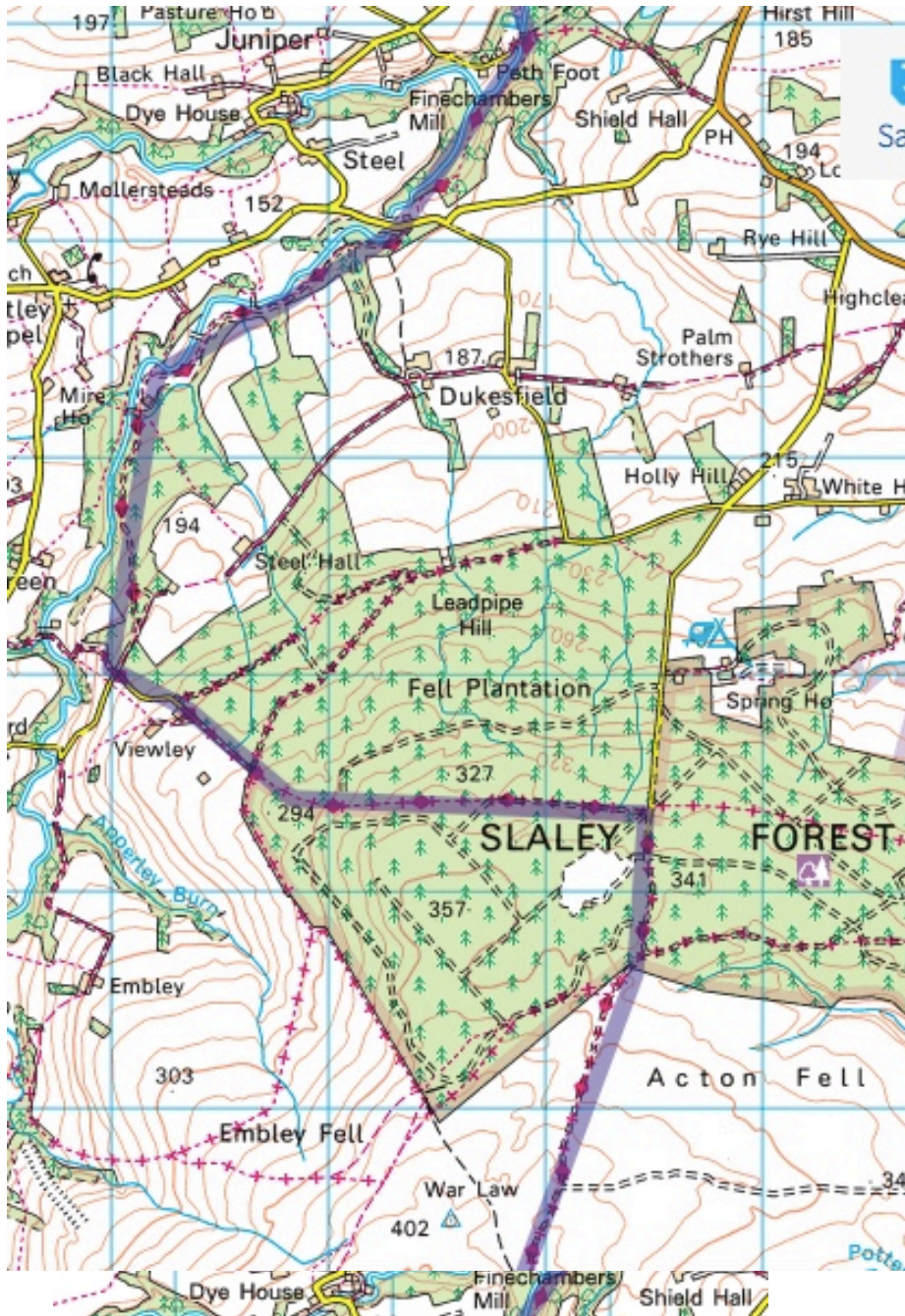
##### Hexham to Blanchland 18 kms

From the abbey entrance cross over to the market area and on your right you will see a narrow passage which you take beside an antique clocks specialists. This is called St Mary's Chare because there was a church called St Mary's here. You can see all that remains of the church if you look to your left and behind you just after going through into the alley. When you arrive at the main road, cross over at the lights and turn left and then first right into Eastgate. You now begin a long steady haul out of Hexham. After 300 metres where the main road bears left, take the right fork up Dipton Mill Road. After 450 metres you pass the last house on your left and then take the footpath on your left.

Walk up hill on a path which keeps to the left of the old field boundary with hedges and some trees. As you come to the last steep slope before the top of the hill, the path kindly zig zags up to some trees where you get a very fine view back to Hexham and across the Tyne Valley. Go over the steps to cross the







road and go over into a field as new vistas come into view. Walk down till you reach a copse with a ruin in it. This is called Queen's Letch after Queen Margaret and her son. They were set upon here by a band of robbers here when she was fleeing after the last battle in the War of the Roses in 1464. She pleaded for mercy from the robbers who hid them in a cave by the West Dipton Burn before they could be moved.

Turn right and left here, now following the field boundary on your left. After three fields, you enter woodland and walk down to cross a burn at Hole House which you go round into a paddock. Go through the gate then cross over the West Dipton Burn before going left through the gate. There is a pleasant stretch along the side of the burn until, after 350 metres, you see houses up on your right. The path zig zags up here to a road where you turn left to walk down to Newbiggin. Letah Wood nature reserve is on your right. It is thought to be Northumberland's last wild daffodil wood.

When you reach Newbiggin, turn right. Walk for just over a kilometre before coming to houses at Ordley. You will find the footpath on your left which

goes through the houses to a track that leads down to woods. After crossing a cattle

grid, look out for the footpath on the right which doubles back down through the woods to reach a field which you cross to reach a bridge over Devil's Water. Cross the bridge then turn right. You soon cross another stream coming into Devil's Water. When you reach a road, turn right and then left to continue walking beside the river.

### The Defeat of Cadwallon

The so-called 'Golden Age of Northumbria' was established by the defeat of the Mercian leader Cadwallon by King Oswald in 634 AD. The site of this battle has long been thought to be Heavenfield on Hadrian's Wall, but new research by Max Adams (see *The King in the North* 2013 Head Zeus) suggests otherwise. Although Heavenfield was the site of Oswald's famous vision of Saint Columba (see Bede) and of the rallying of his small band of warriors, almost certainly the actual battle took place to the south.

Cadwallon had already been in the area over a year, plundering, looting and killing Eanfrith, King of the northern kingdom of Bernicia. He would want to camp in the most easily defended site available - Corstopium, the abandoned Roman village at Corbridge was ideal. A surprise dawn raid by Oswald's inferior force scattered Cadwallon's men, causing them to flee south over the



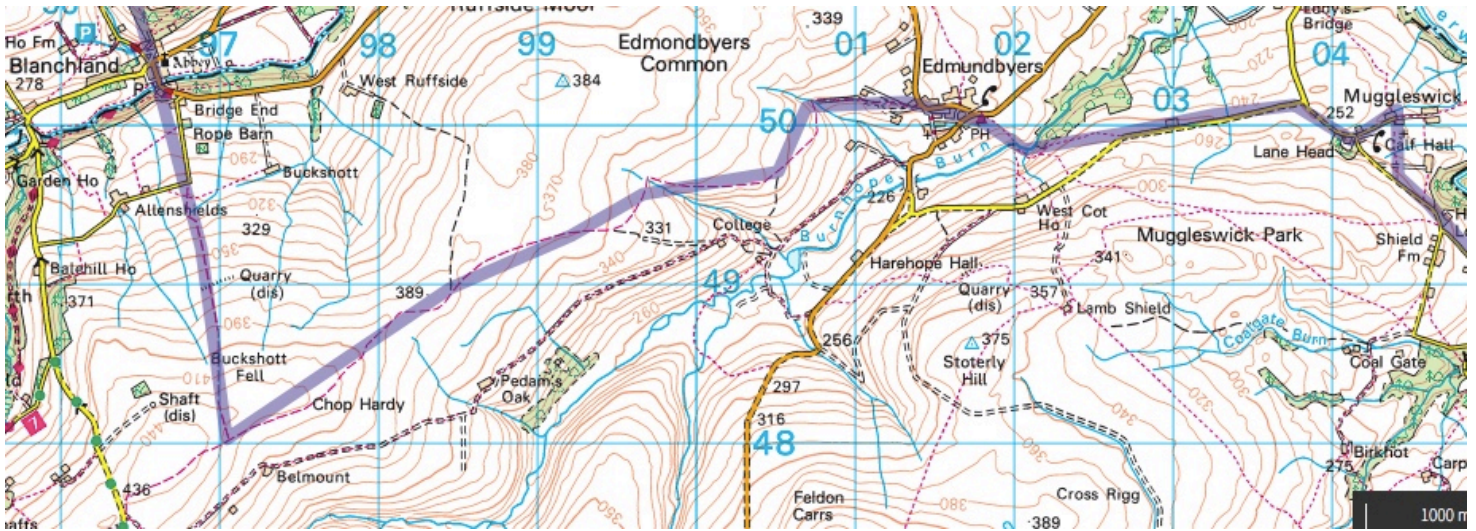


Tyne and up the Devil's Water valley. Research has shown that the battle, at least the final rout, took place at Deniseburn. This name is lost but other evidence allows us to identify it as Rowley Burn and the site of the rout as the present day hamlet of Steel.

You will soon come to Dukesfield Arches on your left where there are excellent information boards about the site and lead mining in the area. Go through a gate into a field and continue on the track to reach Red Lead Mill where you may see peacocks. Go through another gate and proceed on a narrower track which is wet in places and soon climbs away from the river. Shortly after passing a field on your left, the path comes out onto a road where you turn left up hill. The road passes by Viewley Farm before ascending a rough track and then entering Slaley Forest. Walk east for 2 kilometres before reaching a road where you turn right. On your right you will pass Lady Cross Stone nature reserve in a quarry. Walk on until you leave the wood and where the main track turns left, go through a

gate and out into the very different environment of Acton Fell and Blanchland Moor. It is a very gradual ascent and in the spring and summer you will be accompanied by the call of curlews.

You begin your descent and go through a gate by a stone wall with green fields to the left. As you descend you come to some woodland on your left. Bear left here passing Pennypie which is so named because the lead miners did get their pies for a penny here! Walk on down with Shildon Burn in the valley on your right until you come to Shildon itself with its impressive lead mine engine house. At this point you turn left up to the cottages. When the mines were flourishing, 170 people lived here and it had a bigger population than Blanchland. Turn right and left around Keeper's Cottage and across a field to enter a wood. You will have to negotiate a fallen tree. Go through a gate and then down a bank and left onto a wider track for a few metres before taking the path on your right down to Blanchland.



### Section 3

#### Blanchland to Castleside 16 kms

Leave Blanchland by crossing the River Derwent and walking up the hill. Soon after it bears left, turn right up a minor road. You will pass a house on your left called Rope Barn with a very long barn which makes you wonder if rope making took place there. Methodists met here in the eighteenth century before they built their own churches. Where the road turns right go through the gate and walk near the wall to start with then straight on up to reach another gate and a track that leads up across Buckshot Fell. You will pass grouse butts on either side of the track. Go over the top of the hill and soon after you start to go down, the path turns left through a gate and you have a long and gradual descent in a north easterly direction. After a kilometre, you move from the north to the south side of the fence. After a further 350 metres look out for a pile of stones called Cuthbert's Currick on the other side of the fence at the point where another fence goes down to the north. Cuthbert pops up in unlikely places!

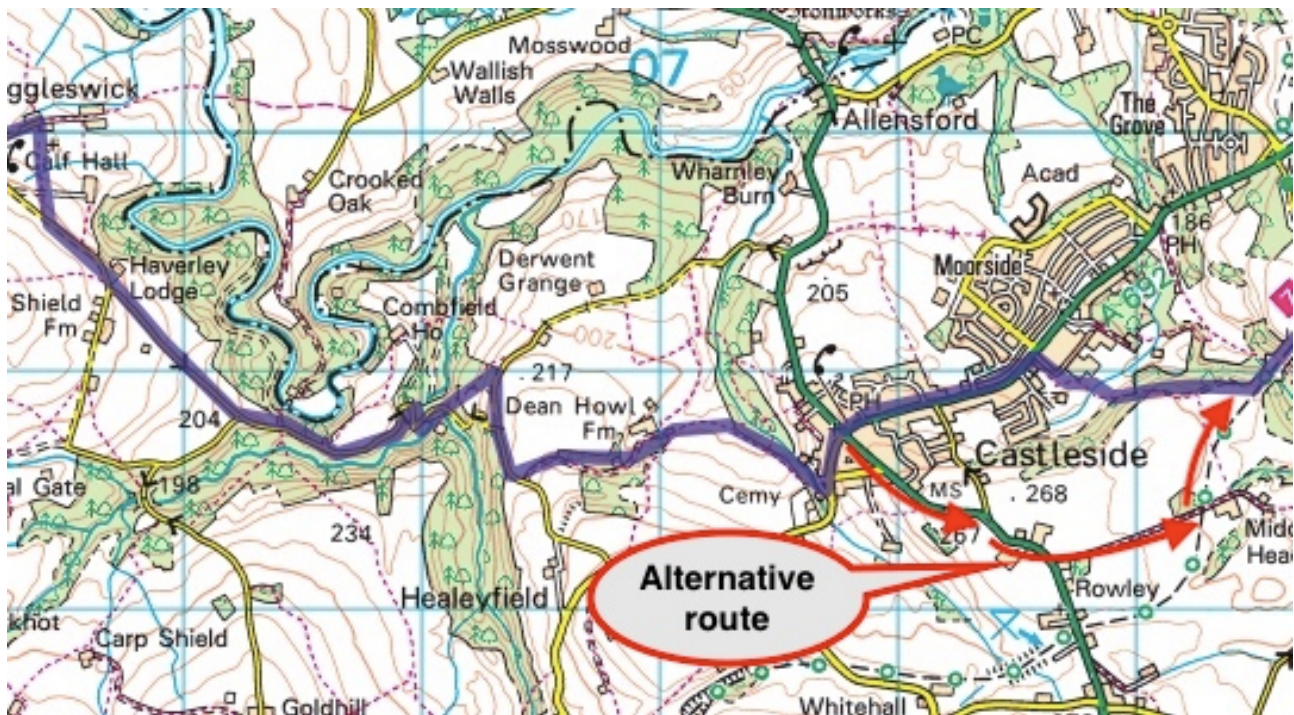
The farm in the valley below is called Pedam's Oak. [Sentence here to tell the story.] Soon after passing Cuthbert's Currick, fork right towards a stone wall and go through a metal gate and continue on your way towards Edmundbyers skirting round the top of Swan Dale and then Black Burn. When you reach Edmundbyers, turn right and right again down Church Lane. St Edmund's Church is on your right after 250 metres.

#### **Edmundbyers**

After visiting the church, the official route is to turn right and left and walk uphill along the main road to soon reach the Punch Bowl Inn on your left. You may however prefer to retrace your steps and turn first right into a quiet road called The Closes. There are public toilets on the corner near the Punch Bowl Inn. Continue ahead past the former Youth Hostel on your right which is now independently run and called Low House Haven. Immediately afterwards take a path on your right by a caravan park. Go through the gate and down the path to cross the bridge over Burnhope Burn. Turn left here alongside a pretty stretch of the burn and cross a feeder burn before turning right. When you come to a farm track go left uphill. After a few metres you will see a narrow path on your right which leads up to a stile which you cross over and turn left.

Follow the path alongside the fence and then across the field to the top end of the wood. Keep climbing steadily, passing an oak tree on your left and then go through the gap in the stone wall boundary ahead near a telegraph pole. The path soon joins a deeply rutted farm track. Go through the gate and turn left onto the road. The common lands of Bashaw Bank and Muggleswick Park are on your right and there are good views of Derwent Reservoir to your left. After a kilometre at





the road junction bear right and soon after there is a road with a gate on your left. Go through here down to Muggleswick. Before you take the path up to the church, walk a few metres further on to see all that remains of the priory.

### Muggleswick

From the church go to the attractive lych gate and then straight on uphill passing Calf Hall to your left. When you reach a road turn left. Heather moorland is now on your right. There are fine views down to the meandering River Derwent and Hownsgill Viaduct can be seen above Castleside. Take a left fork down hill at Haverley Lodge. You will pass a road coming in from the right and go on for a further 1.5 kilometres before crossing a bridge over Hisehope Burn. Shortly afterwards, you will find a path on your left which goes steeply up to a stile. Cross over and go over the field. Cross another stile into woodland. There is a point where the path is a little indistinct and you may wonder if it is ahead or up to your right. The latter will be your path to take you up to the road. When you reach it enjoy the view to the north east before turning right.

Walk along the road with fields on your left and the woodland is on your right. Rejoin the other road and as you leave the woodland, look for a road on your left which you take. This leads downhill along a sub-glacial spillway, a valley carved by meltwater flowing under pressure beneath the ice sheets that once covered Britain. You will pass Dene Howl Farm on your left. Continue ahead into a field. Carry on as you reach Birks Wood and for a short while you follow a stream, then cross it before heading up to the road at Castleside where you turn left. After passing St John's Church on your left you reach the A68. Cross over with care.

### Castleside

The parish church, dedicated to St John, was designed by the distinguished architect Ewan Christian, who designed The National Portrait Gallery in London and became president of the Royal Institute of British Architects. He was very productive and designed more than 2,000 buildings including 30 churches. His inspiration for St John's came from seeing a church while he was on holiday in Switzerland. He reproduced several features from that church in his design, including the attractive apse at the east end. The church was consecrated on 7 March 1867.

### Section 4

Castleside to Lanchester 12 kms

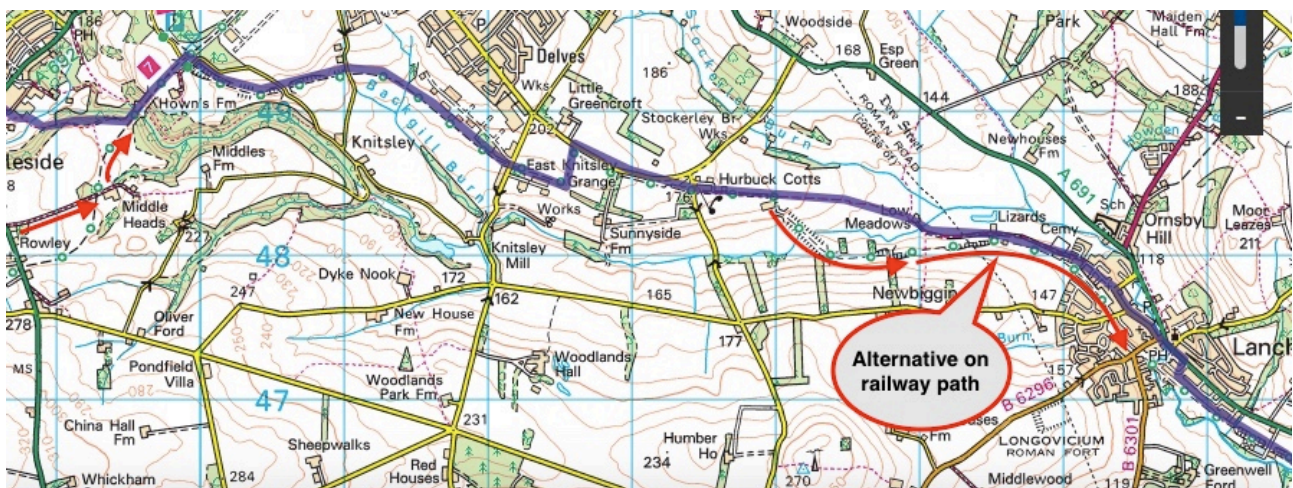
[Crag Bank ahead can be slippery after rain and you may prefer the drier but longer alternative below here.]

Walk down the hill on the right hand side of the road and after passing Wesley Terrace turn right immediately before an industrial estate. Where the road turns left, you will see some steps which you walk up to gain the footpath which passes close to a high fence on your right. The path continues goes diagonally left uphill to a fence where you turn left and then turn right between fences to reach a path which ascends steeply in places through woods. Just before reaching the top you will see the crags which give Crag Bank its name. When you come out at the top turn left and go ahead with fields on your right and the woodland on your left. When you reach a belt of woodland ahead of you, go over the stile and you will arrive at the southern end of Hownsgill Viaduct. The views here have been somewhat impeded by the anti-suicide barriers, but they are still impressive.

### Alternative Route

When you arrive at the A68, turn right and walk uphill on the pavement on the right hand side. After 800 metres, where the road bends to the right, you will see the derestriction sign and the paved footpath is immediately after it. Cross with care and walk ahead a straight 500 metres. Just before you come to a farm, you will find the Consett and Sunderland Railway Path where you turn left. Look out for black swans on the pond to your right. After a further 400 metres, you will rejoin the main route at Hownsgill Viaduct.

About 100 metres after crossing the viaduct, some will want to fork right to access Hownsgill Farm Tearooms and Bunkhouse, but the main route goes ahead until you reach Lydgetts Junction where there is an old red smelt wagon. Here you turn right onto The Lanchester Way. This railway carried iron ore to Consett Steel Works and coal from Langley Park. It was also a passenger line between 1862 and 1965. There follows a pleasant 2 kilometre walk to Knitsley with good views to the south. You cross over two minor roads and pass an industrial estate on your left.



When you reach the road in Knitsley cross straight over and you will come to Knitsley Farm Shop on your right which is open every day except Mondays. Turn left and walk north for 300 metres before the route turns right beside a road for 500 metres then goes on past a barrier. You quickly come to a road which you cross and go on, passing the row of Hurbuck Cottages on your left. At the next house, there is a footpath on the right for the Lanchester Way, which may be preferable after very wet weather, but our route goes straight ahead through a gate and downhill through two fields.

At the bottom of the hill, you will find a gate on your right which you go through and it takes you round to cross a farm track and go over into a field. Go straight ahead to Low Meadows Equestrian Centre. You pass through it and are now on a tarmac road. There is an attractive bridge before you leave the property. Walk on passing a sturdy house called Lizards Farm and a cemetery on your left as you enter Lanchester. You will pass All Saints RC Church and school on your left and then come to a main road, Front Street, where you keep ahead soon passing a good variety of shops. When you reach the green at the centre of town, cross over it to reach All Saints Church.



## **Lanchester**

### **Section 5**

#### **Lanchester to Durham 18 kms**

Turn left out of the church and cross over the road at the bollards. Shortly afterwards turn right into Woodlands and as the road turns to the right you will find a brick laid path leading you up the Lanchester Way where you turn left. On your right is a wood called Dora's Wood named after the poet Dora Greenwell who was born a short distance away at Greenwell Ford.

#### **Dora Greenwell**

Dora Greenwell came from a well known family in the area. She became a celebrated poet and hymn writer and was a close friend of Christina Rossetti. Her best known hymn is "I am not skilled to understand." She frequently visited inmates in Durham Prison and championed the cause of women's suffrage and wrote against the slave trade.

As you go on, you will see a sewage pipe on your right which leads to a sewage farm. Soon after passing under a bridge, look for steps on your right up onto the bank and then go down on the other side to a path to the delightfully named Waters Meeting where the Smallhope Burn meets the River Browney. Walk along the path by the river with the Malton picnic area on your left. When you reach the bridge cross over it and walk uphill.

#### **A Story about St Cuthbert**

The following story is told in an early life of St Cuthbert and this would seem the right place to share it:

St Cuthbert was travelling in winter time near a place called Leunckester (most probably Lanchester), where he crossed a river and with rainy weather coming on, he found refuge in a deserted shelter which was only inhabited in the spring and summer. Both he and his horse were tired and hungry, but there was no one about to speak to or provide them with food. St Cuthbert brought the horse inside with him and tied it up to the wall. St Cuthbert started to engage in prayer while he waited for the weather to clear. Then he saw a miracle occurring - the horse was reaching up towards the roof of the shed and eagerly pulling down some hay along with a generous supply of bread, still warm and wrapped in a linen napkin. Cuthbert realised that the food was for him, sent from God by the hand of an angel, who often came to his help in emergencies! He thanked God, blessed the bread and ate and was refreshed. As the rain ceased, he saddled the horse and set out again loudly praising the Lord!

Where the main road turns right go ahead passing a row of houses on your left. This is all that is left of the former Malton Colliery village. Turn left again and enter Malton Nature Reserve which is a former colliery site. If you have time you might like to look around the nature reserve and see if in the ponds you can spot any newts - all three British species are found here. The route goes straight through the reserve and then you turn right on the edge of woodland before emerging into fields. Climb diagonally through them to reach Biggen Farm.

After passing the farm buildings turn right, passing a house on your left and walking over to a minor road called Hamsteels Bank which you cross over. Follow the left hand field boundary through two fields and then across the middle of two more fields to reach Quebec. It is named after the city in Canada. The fields in the area were enclosed in 1759 the same year that General Wolfe won the Battle of Quebec.

When you come out onto the road, turn left. You pass a children's play area and a bus stop and then cross over and go down a farm road passing a house on your left. The road turns to the left and for the next kilometre you are on the Roman Dere Street and there are good views of the Deerness Valley and Esh Winning. Go through the gate into Heugh and then turn left uphill. As you walk up the track, you will see your first glimpse of the cathedral. You will probably want to walk on up to the highest point here to enjoy the very fine view which includes Teesside and the Cleveland Hills on a clear day. Closer at hand are Esh Hall and Ushaw College. The field here was called The Signing Field or Salutation Field because traditionally pilgrims would make the sign of the cross where they first saw the cathedral. The joy of the moment is well expressed in the fact that the road between Quebec and Esh is called Laude ('Praise') Bank.





After your pause for the view and praising the Lord, you come to a path junction where you turn right to go gently down to Esh. On your left across the field is the Roman Catholic Church of St Michael's. As you approach Esh turn left and right round the farm buildings and then turn left towards the village. Through the gateway, you come to a green on your left and here you will find a cross. It is locally called St Cuthbert's Cross although it was not built until 1687. St Cuthbert's coffin is thought to have rested in Esh during its many travels. On the eastern side can be seen just 87 of the 1687 date and on the western side is IHS standing for the Greek letters that start the words for Jesus, Son, Saviour.

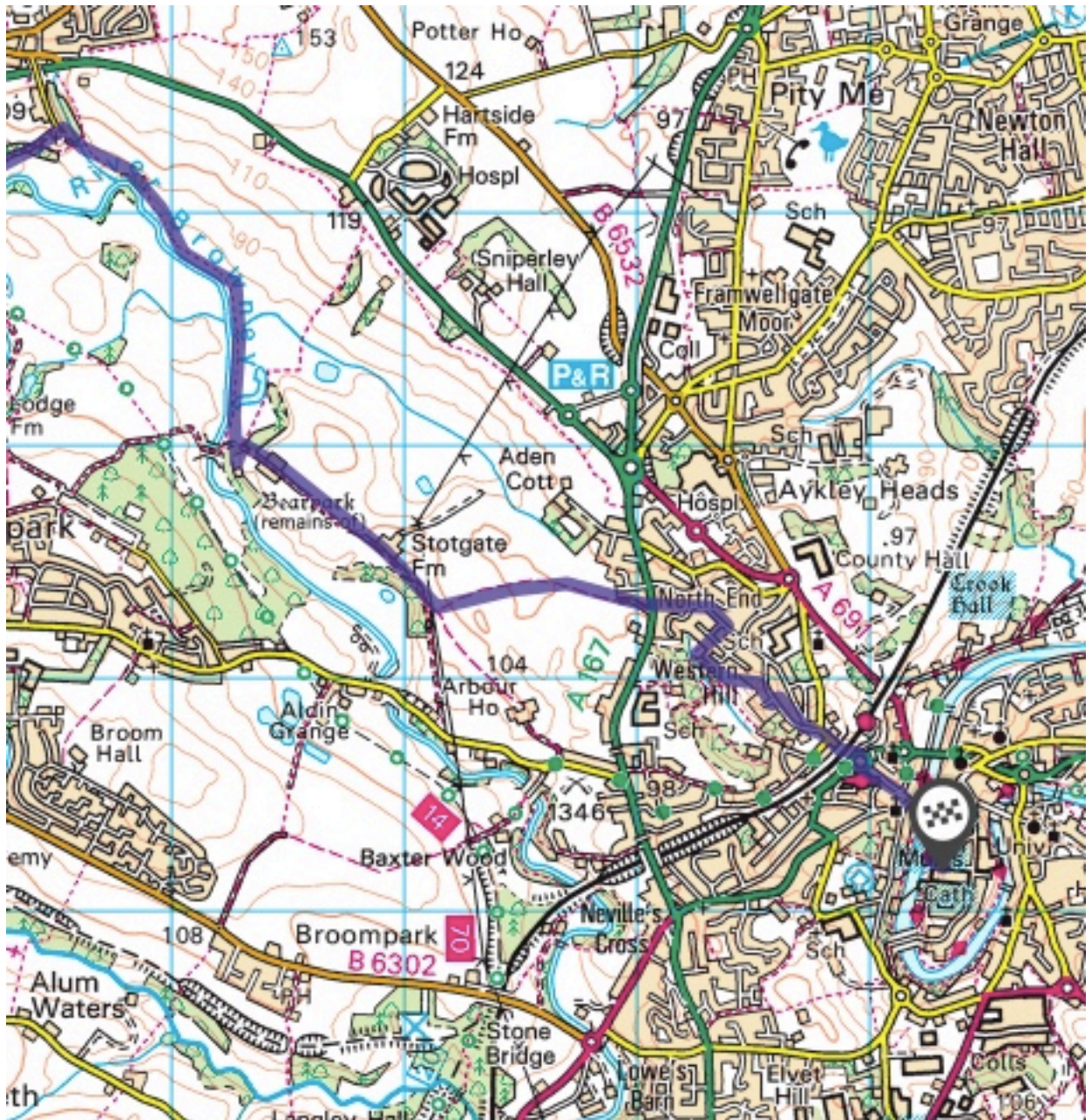
### Esh

Unless you want to visit the village, retrace your steps at this point, noticing some gate piers which are the only visible remains of the original Esh Hall. You cannot go on to where the hall was, so turn left passing cottages on your right and go on the tarmac road down to Low Esh Farm. Go straight through the farmyard and continue on the pleasant wide path which has excellent views to the south across the Deerness Valley. When you reach a road, cross over to the other side and turn right and then left on a road past cottages and a former windmill built in 1817 to ensure that Ushaw College had a good supply of unadulterated flour. It proved to be too windy a spot and it was destroyed in a storm on New Years Day in 1853. Take the next track on your right, then turn left onto the road for a few metres before taking the next road past a barrier into the college grounds and walking to the main entrance.

### Ushaw College

From the front of the college walk on round to the back on the eastern side and through to where you will see woodland ahead. Take the path right and left here and after passing some cottages you come to some fields where willow is grown. Please note that by the time you walk here, it is always possible that the willow might have been harvested! Just after the first field boundary on your right and immediately before another path on your left, look for a path that goes diagonally right through the willows before coming out at a farm track. Cross over to the small gate beside the larger gate. You now continue on a straight track along the left hand field boundary passing through three fields. There are good views ahead including Durham Cathedral.





When you reach another farm track, cross over it and go over the stone stile into a field. Go straight on downhill aiming for a conifer plantation below you to the left of which is a gate which you go through. Cross over the railway path and go ahead in the field before joining a track where you turn left to reach the River Browney. Cross over on the green footbridge. Keep on this road which goes past sewage works on your left, before climbing the hill to the lovely church of St Michael and All Angels at Witton Gilbert, which you are likely to find open and there may even be tea and coffee available.

### Witton Gilbert

Leave the church on its eastern side and go downhill with Dene Burn on your left. There is an information panel about the nature reserve. As you cross Dene Burn, you will see a farm track up to a field ahead of you and the main track to the right goes down to the River Browney. Just a few metres along that track on your left there is a footpath into the woods. This is a permissive path. On maps you may see a footpath closer to the river but at its western end it has eroded, so it is



definitely advisable to take the higher path. Eventually the path descends to the river. You climb a few steps as you leave the wood and then walk on the riverside path for 1.5 km with fields on your left. You will arrive at an unmade road with a bridge across the river which you do not cross. Ahead of you will see a track which goes up a hillside and leads you up to ruins of Beaurepaire.

### **Beaurepaire**

After visiting Beaurepaire, return to the road and turn right to walk uphill and pass the attractive Thistledown Cottage on your left. Continue on past Stotgate Farm and 230 metres afterwards, look for a gate on your left which you go through and walk under the pylons. You will pass ponds on your right and your left. Keep following the left hand field boundary up the hill until you find a stile by a gate on your left. Go over here and you turn immediately right into a shady lane called Club Lane which leads you out to the often busy A167. CROSS WITH GREAT CARE and go down the footpath opposite.

The footpath leads you into Springfield Park where you walk ahead a few metres to turn right by large horse chestnut trees into Fieldhouse Lane. Take the first road on your right which is Flassburn Road and walk down into Flass Vale Nature Reserve. As the main path bears down to the left, look for steps immediately to your left leading up to a narrow path. You will pass houses on the left, followed by allotments. Where steps lead down into the valley, bear left keeping the allotments on your left. The path leads you steeply up more steps and, as you leave the allotments behind you will soon arrive at a fine viewpoint called Gibbet Knowle or Hangman's Hill. This is not a time to dwell on what happened here in the past, but to feast your eyes on the view of the cathedral which is now close at hand. Walk in the direction of the cathedral to find a path between hedges leading into Valeside. Walk down, turning right into Back Western Hill. Cross over North Road at bollards near the toilets and walk across into Station Approach and then take the footbridge on your right across the A690. Go round to the left to re-enter North Road and walk down to cross Framwellgate Bridge. Immediately after crossing the bridge, go down some steps towards the river, but then fork left on a path that gradually ascends towards the cathedral. When you get towards the top, look for a passageway on your left which will lead you to Palace Green and the cathedral is on your right.