



The Way of Love

Durham to Hartlepool

Introduction



This guide describes the pilgrimage route between Durham Cathedral and St Hilda's Church in Hartlepool. All the Northern Saints Trails use the same waymark shown on the left. The total distance is 45.5 kilometres or 28 miles. The route is divided into four sections of between 9 and 15 kilometres. The sections are in reverse order from 4 to 1 as they were originally allocated from east to west. Points of interest are described in red.

One of the reasons that this route is called The Way of Love is that pilgrimage, particularly in the Middle Ages, was viewed as an act of devotion. One of the most famous pilgrimages to Durham was that of King Canute about a thousand years ago. He is recorded as walking barefoot from near the Trimdons to Durham. The church in Kelloe is dedicated to St Helen who was one of the initiators of pilgrimages to the Holy Land. Two other churches at Hart and Trimdon are dedicated to St Mary Magdalene who was known for her great devotion to Christ. St Hilda of Hartlepool was also known for her great devotion to God. Adding the fact that the cathedral is dedicated not just to St Cuthbert, but also to the Blessed Virgin Mary, we can say that this route has a distinctly feminine flavour!

If you had been walking this route in the Middle Ages, and you encountered someone carrying a cross walking to Hartlepool, he would most likely be a fugitive. If someone had accidentally killed someone in a brawl, he could flee to Durham Cathedral and knock on the famous sanctuary knocker and call out, "Sanctuary! Sanctuary!" If he was later judged to be guilty, he had 37 days to leave and to walk to Hartlepool and take the next boat to the continent, never to return on pain of death. He also had to report to the constable in all the villages on the way. Hartlepool was the official port for the County Palatine of Durham, so it is likely that any devotees of St Cuthbert from the continent would have taken this route.

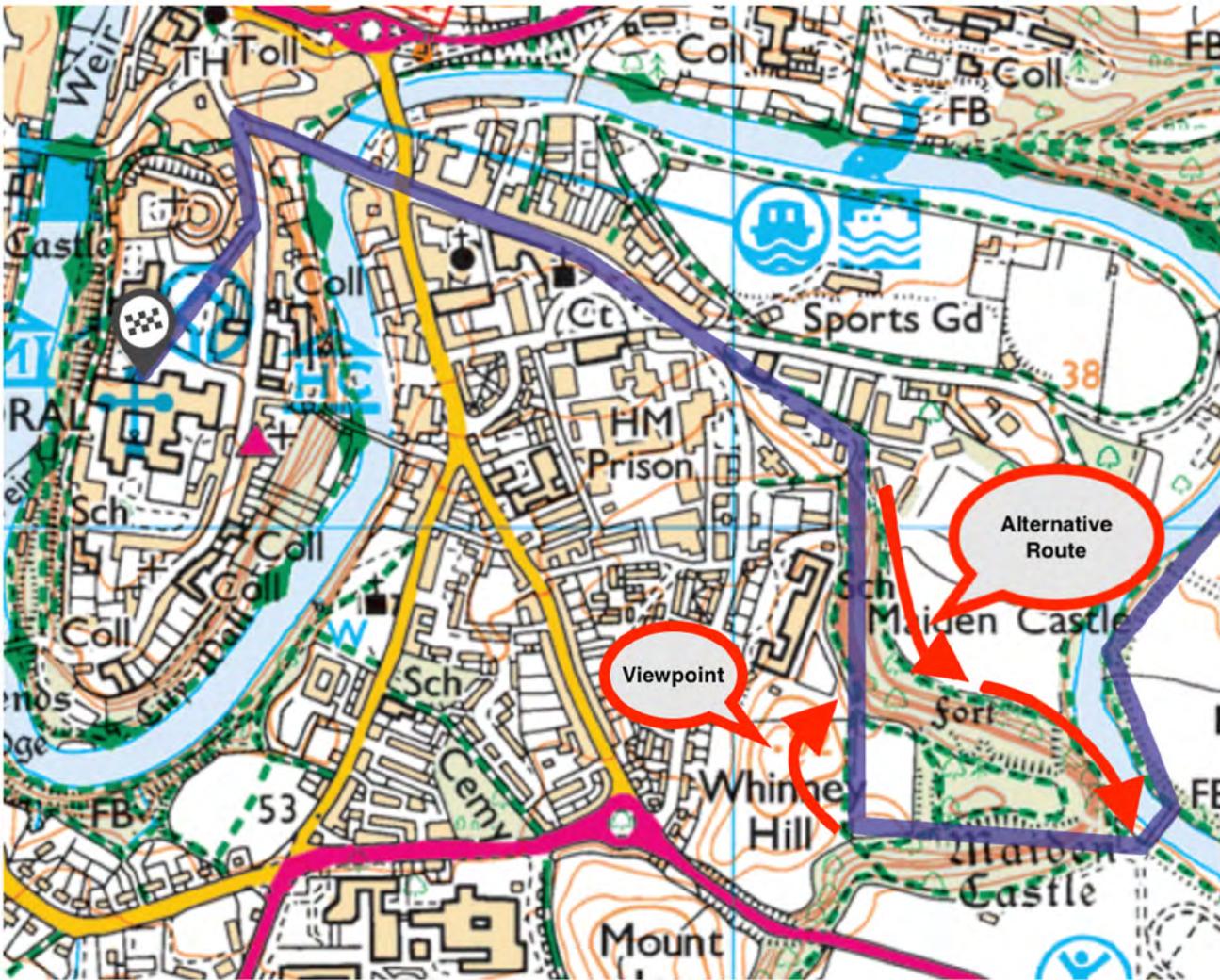
This route links with another pilgrimage route, the 48 mile Way of St Hild between Hartlepool and Whitby. For more information see <https://www.enjoyteesvalley.com/things-to-do/the-way-of-st-hild-p1051601>

Section 4

Durham to Cassop – 10km

You start from the cathedral by crossing over or going around Palace Green and then descending along the cobbled Owengate and continuing down Saddler Street before turning sharp right down steps to cross Elvet Bridge. This bridge was built in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries from the proceeds of indulgences. Pilgrims coming the other way in the Middle Ages would have been confronted by an impressive gate and towers and there were chapels at either end.

Cross over the main road into Old Elvet. The name Elvet comes from the old English *Aelfet* meaning 'swan island.' It is very ancient with a record in the *Anglo Saxon Chronicles* of the consecration of Peotwine as Bishop of Whithorn in 762 which is 230 years before the foundation of Durham itself on Dun Holm which was thickly wooded until the monks arrived with St Cuthbert's coffin in 995. You will soon pass Elvet Methodist Church and St Cuthbert's Catholic Church on your right.



Old Elvet Churches

John Wesley made 21 visits to Durham in his lifetime and the first Methodist Meeting House was built in 1770 on the corner of New Elvet and Court Lane. When John Wesley preached there in 1788 he recorded in his diary 'I preached at Durham at about eleven, to more than the house could contain. Even in this polite and elegant city we now want a large chapel'. That larger chapel was built in 1807 behind the Royal County Hotel on land bought from the Catholic Salvin family. By the end of the century it was clear that that building was inadequate and it was sold to make way for the expansion of the hotel and to pay for the present church which was opened in 1903.

Following the Reformation, Catholics maintained a secret presence in Durham particularly in the Old Elvet area. In the 1650s a priest is known to have lived on the site of St Cuthbert's Church and later in the same century, Jesuits lived at 44-45 Old Elvet and other Catholics bought property in the area. As toleration increased two chapels were permitted. These were replaced by the present church in 1827. The church contains a large brightly coloured stained glass window of the Northern Saints and two sculptures by Fenwick Lawson.

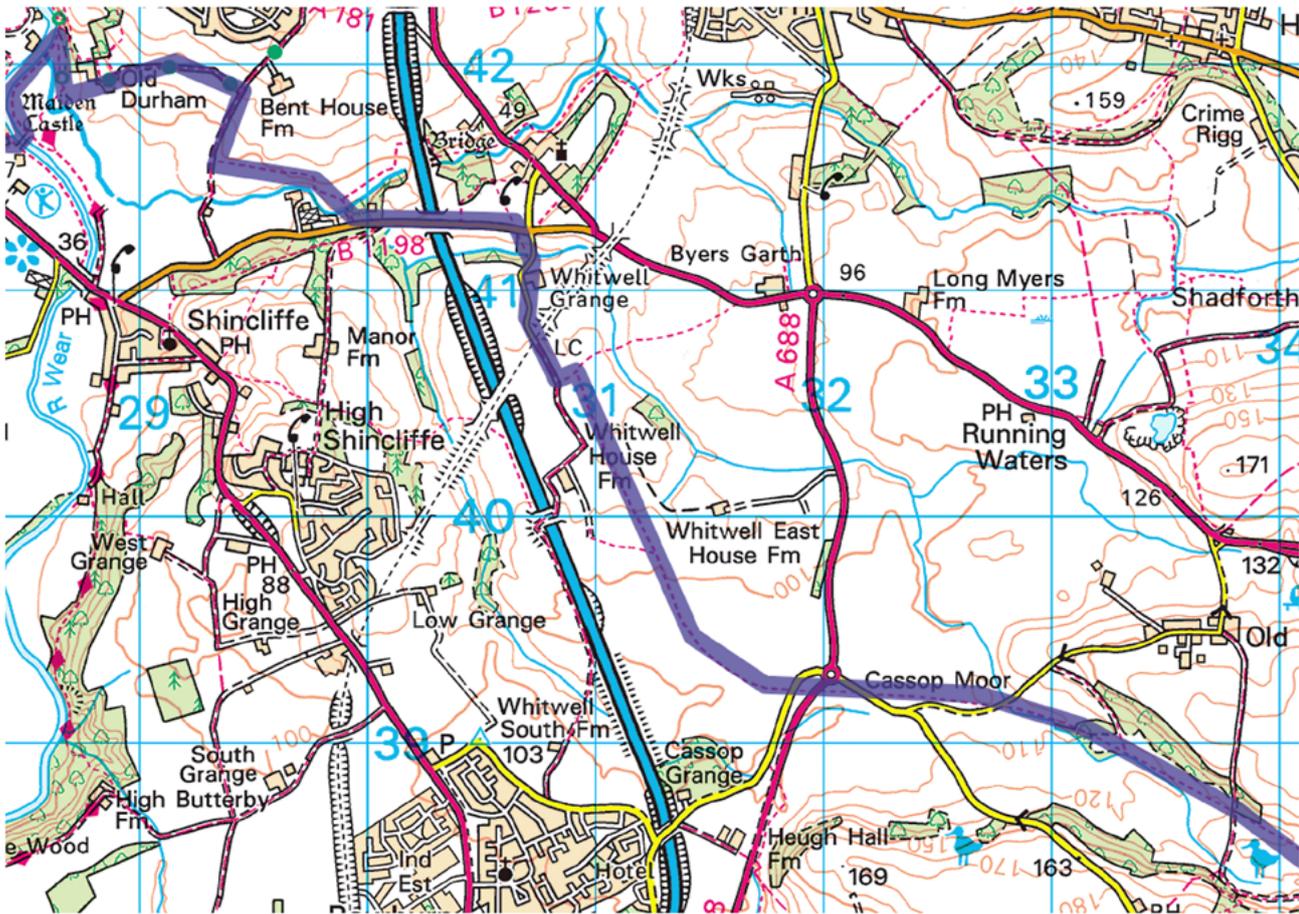
When you come to the end of Old Elvet, the main road (Whinney Hill) swings round to the right but just to its left, you will see a private road and you should also see the footpath post and a 15 mph sign. Go down that road, passing Brooks House student accommodation on your right. At the end of Brooks House take the pavement by the railings and turn right and ahead of you, you'll see the footpath going steeply uphill. As you come towards the top take a sharp left and follow the crest of the hill with the wood falling away on your left and new buildings on your right. Go over a stile. At this point the right of way goes ahead alongside the hedge but you may choose to divert right up to the sycamore trees at the top of Whinney Hill where you will catch a glimpse of the cathedral. By the last tree in the road turn left and take the path straight down to rejoin the main route by a stile into the wood. Go down steeply and when you come to the path at the bottom turn left. Playing fields are on your right. When you reach the River Wear cross over the bridge and turn left. The hill on the opposite side of the river is Maiden Castle.

Maiden Castle

For the last century or so, a prehistoric giant has been hidden by tree growth at the edges of the city of Durham. This Iron Age hill fort is built on a natural promontory by the River Wear, which once encircled its steep earthen banks before the river course changed. The fort, orientated east to west, was protected on its western side by ramparts with an outer ditch affording protection where natural defences were less formidable. The original entrance is believed to be at the northern end of the west side where the defensive ditch is broken.

A small-scale excavation in 1956 provided exciting insights into the fort's construction and post-prehistoric afterlife. It was revealed the western banks were made of clay, pebbles and topped with a wooden fence. However, later, an interior stone wall was constructed against the western bank, the remains of which contain a medieval mason's mark suggesting a later period of re-use. Wooden stakes were also added on top of the bank and were burnt when the fort was abandoned.

You will pass go under what remains of the North East Railway bridge over the Wear. This branch of the NER from Sunderland opened in 1893 and closed in 1931. You then cross a bridge over Old Durham Beck and soon after, opposite the Rowing Club, turn sharp right on a cycle and walk way. You will pass the delightful Old Durham Gardens on your left. These gardens were established 350 years ago and are well worth a visit. Admission is free with the lower garden open at all times and the upper garden open on Sunday and Thursday afternoons from March 31st.



From the eastern entrance to Old Durham Gardens, take the road away up the hill. As you get higher, take a look back at a very good view of the city. When you come to a T-junction, turn right past the barrier. After 250 metres, take the path on your left. You will pass old quarries on your left. The main path goes left but you go straight ahead with woodland on your right. The path then turns right to go down to cross a bridge over Old Durham Beck. You come out onto Shincliffe Lane where you turn left. About 300 metres after crossing the A1(M), look out for the footpath sign on your right. Go down here through a small patch of woodland and you are actually on the course of a very old wagon way. In fact you will be either walking on what remains of it or close to it till near the end of this section. You cross a high embankment across the Chapman Beck before coming to a road where you turn right.

Walk up the hill passing Whitwell Grange on your left and then crossing over the former Sunderland to Durham railway line again. Soon after that, you will come to a gate and stile on your left. Cross over here. This field was the site of Whitwell Colliery. The right-of-way is rather indistinct at this point but goes about 80 metres straight ahead and then turns right. This is where it rejoins the line of the old wagon way and if you aim for the dip between two embankments you will find it leads to a double stile and a pleasant stretch between hawthorn trees.

You cross over the field with White House farm on your right and then there is another stretch between ivy clad trees and hedges before crossing a field. The right of way follows the line, but if the farmer has not made a way, you may need to go round on the field edge to resume the wagon way. After a few metres, you go down steps to a sunken path between hedges which can be very muddy after wet weather. You emerge from there and cross to a gate and stile which leads to a broad farm track which gradually turns to the east as you start to leave the noise of the motorway. * You come out onto a minor road which you cross and soon after you come to the A688 which you also cross over, before a third crossing over another minor road. Walk across this field for about 350 metres before the path comes out on to the minor road again. Cross straight over to reach a delightful stretch of the route through Cassop Vale.

** From this point for the next 600 metres, the right of way strictly follows the course of the wagon way and if it is wet, you may prefer to use the minor roads at this point.*

Continue straight ahead along the valley floor. The origin of the word Cassop is two Saxon words which mean 'valley of the wild cat' but you won't see any as you walk through the vale! Eventually you will enter a nature reserve and you will pass an attractive small lake on your left. Keep to the right of sewage works and then go up on the road to the top of the hill to reach the village of Cassop. Make sure you take a look back here at the excellent view of the vale and to Durham beyond.

Section 3

Cassop to Trimdon – 11km

Cross over the road to the post office. This is your last opportunity to purchase any refreshments until you reach the Trimdons at the end of the section. Turn left and first right into Luke Avenue. At the end of it go over to the cinder track, Walk down it for 320 metres and then turn right to enter the Woodland Trust reserve of Harvey Wood which was planted on reclaimed land from East Hetton and Kelloe Colliery in 2013. Local school children helped to plant the trees and name the wood. Walk straight ahead in a south westerly direction with a fence on your right for 400 metres. At the junction of three paths, turn left and walk on this wide track for a further 500 metres downhill. Shortly before the main path turns to the left and near a post, look for a footpath on your right where you turn sharp right to descend to the road.

Cross over the road to the start of The Kelloe Way. You will see here a plaque in memory of ten miners who died when the mine was flooded in 1897. There is also an interpretation panel here about East Hetton Colliery which opened in 1836. It produced coal of a very high quality. The mine closed in 1983. As you walk on, you will pass the gates of an enclosed cemetery on your left. Shortly after this a spacious graveyard is accessible via a gap in a low brick wall, so walk into it and pass by a monument to those who died in the Trimdon Grange mining disaster in 1882. You can find out more about this in the information about the Trimdons on page 6. Just across the road is St Helen's Church.

Kelloe and St Helen's Church

Between Kelloe and the Trimdons there is a hill whose original name was 'Kelf Law' which means 'Calf Hill' and that is the origin of the name Kelloe. There were two small settlements in medieval times on the north west side of the hill called Town Kelloe and Church Kelloe. They continue to exist today, but the main village to the south of Church Kelloe was originally built to house miners in the mid nineteenth century.

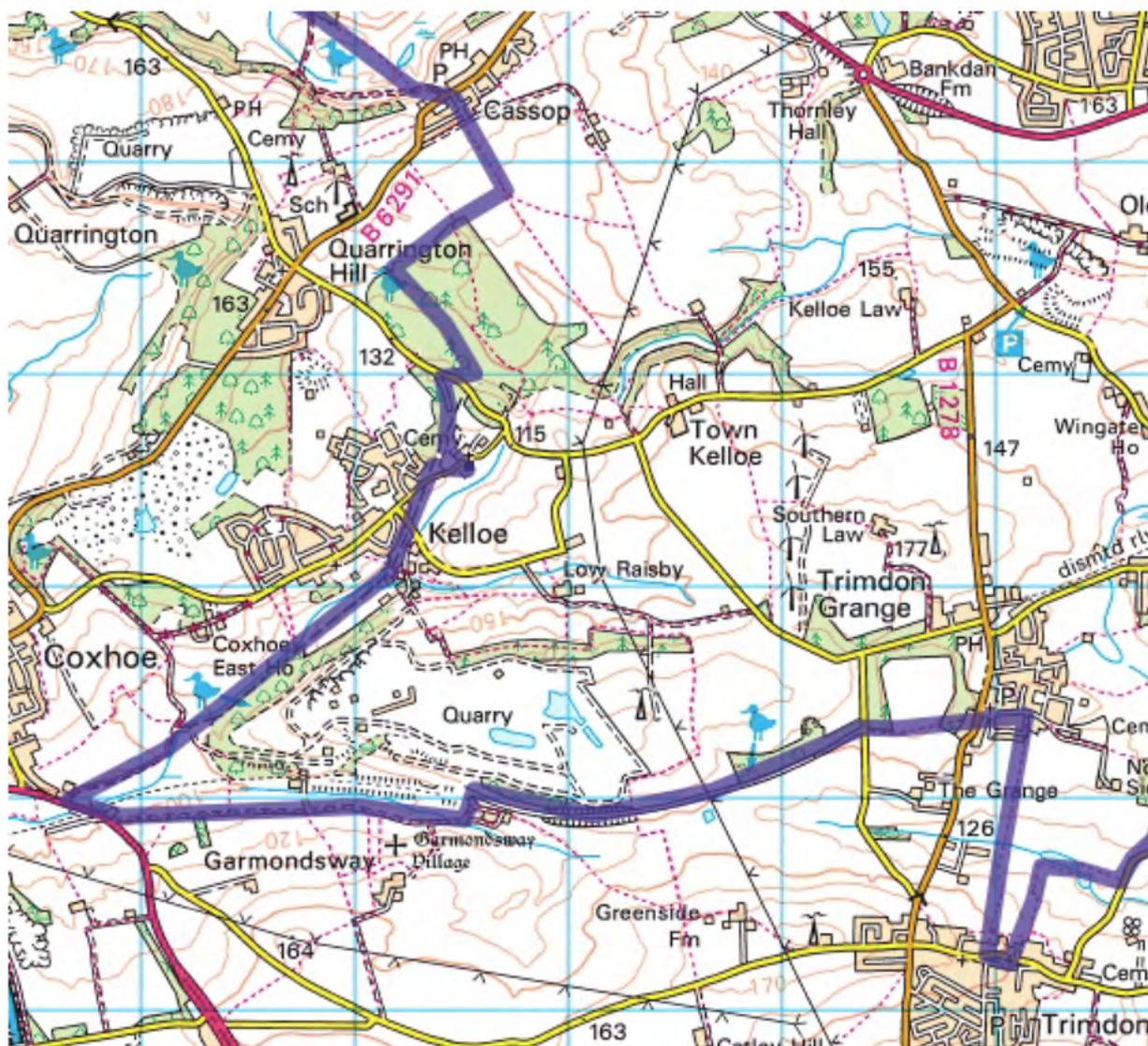
The church is dedicated to St Helen, who was the mother of Constantine the Great, the first Christian Emperor of Rome. She played a critical part in initiating Christian pilgrimage. In 326 she went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in search of the True Cross and on that journey she is said to have established the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. The church itself contains some possible hints of an initial Saxon church, but most of what we see today was probably built in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It contains a unique treasure

– St Helen’s Cross which is regarded as one of the finest Romanesque sculptures in the country. It was carved in the twelfth century, but at some point, possibly when some rebuilding work took place after the Reformation, it was broken into six pieces and used as walling stone in the chancel. It was only discovered in 1854. It was re-assembled, but not properly restored until the 1990s.

The top of the cross shaft shows a splayed cross which would once have been joined by a wheel. The cross tells the story of the Legend of the True Cross and it seems that three episodes of the story are missing which has led to speculation that this might have been one of a pair of crosses which were part of a reliquary which would have contained a piece of the ‘true cross.’ It is possible that the second cross may still be in the fabric of the church. The main story is condensed into the lower panel. There we see Helen on the left with a drawn sword ordering Judas, who is traditionally shown as a Jew with a long beard and cap, to dig and search for the true cross. The digging took place in a cemetery and Judas unearthed corpses and three crosses. The true cross was revealed when one of the corpses touching it came to life – this is the nude figure by Judas. The cross in the centre is flanked by the sun and the moon.

The middle panel shows St Helen again on the left and most probably her son Constantine. The top panel illustrates the dream of Constantine in which an angel points to the cross and says *“In this sign you will conquer”*. There is a shortened version of this – IN HOC VINCES on the horizontal arms of the cross.

Richard de Kellawe who was Prince Bishop of Durham from 1311-1316 was probably born at Town Kelloe, but perhaps the most famous person associated with Kelloe was Elizabeth Barrett Browning who was baptised in the church in 1808. There is a memorial plaque to her.



From the church, go back across to the monument and turn left, passing a leaning tombstone and go straight on to find a little path to the right of the only tombstone in that part of the graveyard. Turn left back onto Kelloe

Way. You will find some interesting sculpture on your left with a line of magnesian limestone slabs referencing the history of the mines and includes gold nuggets (coal) and Davy lamps. Cross over the road and just before you cross a second road, you will see another sculpture on your right which alerts walkers coming from the other direction that they have reached Kelloe. As you continue on The Kelloe Way, you will pass kennels on your left and sewage works on your right. Soon after this you will pass an entrance to Raisby Hill Grassland Reserve, an important site for orchids. In fact this whole area is rich in flowers because of the magnesian limestone which has been and, in places, is still quarried here. It is worth temporarily diverting left onto a parallel path for 300 metres to get a better view of the reserve.

After passing a barrier, the former railway path is not open to the public, so there is a detour to the west before we return to rejoin it. Fork right to cross a green bridge over Coxhoe Beck, then turn left alongside the beck and then join a cycle path. After 400 metres you come to a gate. If it is closed you will need to step over the barrier. Turn left along the A177 and walk for 200 metres before turning left onto a road which leads to Garmondsway. After about a kilometre and before you reach the few houses of Garmondsway, you will see a field on your right with earthen banks and enclosures indicating the presence of the former medieval village of Garmondsway.

The Lost Village of Garmondsway

The passing centuries of this lost village are chronicled in earthen banks and foundations telling a story that can only be read by the careful onlooker. The village itself is identifiable as banks up to 0.6 metres high forming rectangular enclosures that have been sub-divided into yards and gardens whilst most surviving plots contain the buried remains of long-houses occupied by the majority of village residents.

The long-term existence of this bustling locality can be seen in evidence of changing property boundaries as residents divided plots further or joined land holdings together over time. Looking over to the western side of the site, scarce fragments of a medieval ridge and furrow system can be seen, many centuries having passed since the land was ploughed.

Two hollow ways can be made out at the eastern and western parts of the site and it is down one of these pathways that King Canute (r. 1016-35) made his bare-foot pilgrimage along what was called the *Via Garmundi*, the Way of Gormundus the Dane, who is said to have given his name to the village. King Canute's pilgrimage provides the first mention of the village in late 11th century.

The road bears left with Paddocks and a few houses on your right. Ahead of you you will see a bridge. Go under it and turn right. You are now back on the former railway on what is now called Raisby Way. Walk along here for 1.5km. In season, you are likely to see a good variety of flowers along the edges of the path. Over twenty species of butterflies have also been recorded along this stretch, including the Durham Argus butterfly. Shortly before you reach a road, on your left you will see a sign for Trimdon Grange Quarry Nature Reserve which is well worth visiting especially in spring and summer.

At the road turn left and immediately right on a footpath which takes you over the shoulder of a hill and through a small pine wood to reach Trimdon Grange. Cross over the road and turn left and then first right passing St Alban's Church on your left. After 200 metres, take the tarmac path on your right which leads you out of the village. You will see Trimdon on the horizon and the path takes you straight over the valley between. When you come out onto the road turn left to reach St Mary Magdalene Church and the end of this section.

Trimdon

About 1,000 years ago, King Canute made a bare foot pilgrimage from this place to Durham. Some have conjectured that the origin of the name Trimdon has to do with the king trimming his beard and taking off his royal robes and then donning simple pilgrimage gear before setting off! The actual origin is no less interesting as *treo meal dun* means wooden cross on a hill.

A church has stood here ever since and the current building is constructed of local sandstone and limestone rubble on a mound in the centre of the green. It dates from c. 1145 with significant sections of 12th century stonework remaining. The church has grown and evolved over the past 850 years, but by the nineteenth century it had fallen into disrepair. leading it to be described as 'a ruinous, neglected looking edifice' in Fordyce's 1855 History of Durham. It was extensively refurbished in the 1870s, when a flat roof was replaced with the current open vaulted one, and the north aisle, vestry and porch were added. During repairs to the

chancel floor in the 1989, a staircase leading to a brick lined vault was discovered. On further investigation it transpired to be the last resting place of members of the Beckwith family, historic owners of the Manor of Trimdon.

Highlights of the church include a rare Norman horseshoe arch and the small medieval 'leper' window on the south side of the chancel, through which communion is thought to have been served to the sick. Of particular interest to pilgrims on this trail is the beautiful mosaic reredos dating from 1913. It depicts the Virgin Mary and Christ Child in the centre, flanked by St Cuthbert holding the head of St Oswald on the right and St Aidan as Bishop of Lindisfarne on the left. Also worth a closer look are two stunning modern stained glass windows by renowned artist Bridget Jones entitled '*Love Thy Neighbour*' (2000) and '*The Magnificat*' (2013).

Like Hart, Trimdon parish once belonged to the Augustinian Priory at Guisborough and for many centuries Trimdon remained a small farming village, but when coal mining began north east of the village in the mid nineteenth century, she spawned offspring. First of all there was New Trimdon which soon became Trimdon Colliery. Secondly, when a new pit was sunk west of Trimdon Colliery, it was named Trimdon Grange after an old farmhouse called The Grange. Finally there was Trimdon Station which is also known as Deaf Hill.

Families from across the country arrived in search of work, including that of the miners' leader, Peter Lee (after whom the new town of Peterlee was named in 1948), who was born in Trimdon Grange in 1864. Over the next century the hardships of mining life shaped this close-knit community – no day more so than 16th February 1882 when there was a terrible explosion in the pit and 74 men and boys lost their lives. It became the subject of a song by the Pitman's Poet Tommy Armstrong which has been recorded multiple times by various folk groups, including Trimdon's own Skerne. There is a monument to those who died in the East End Cemetery in Trimdon Village and a matching monument in Kelloe as Trimdon Grange and East Hetton Collieries were connected underground meaning the disaster led to fatalities in both communities.

The most famous person in modern times associated with the Trimdons is the former Prime Minister Tony Blair. When he became MP for Sedgefield in 1983, he and his wife Cherie bought Myrobella House, a former pit manager's house in Trimdon Colliery. It continued as the constituency house after he became Prime Minister in 1997. The most famous guest to visit the Blairs there was US President George Bush in 2003. In the pavement outside St Mary Magdalene Church is a plaque indicating the spot where Tony Blair announced the death of Princess Diana in August 1997.

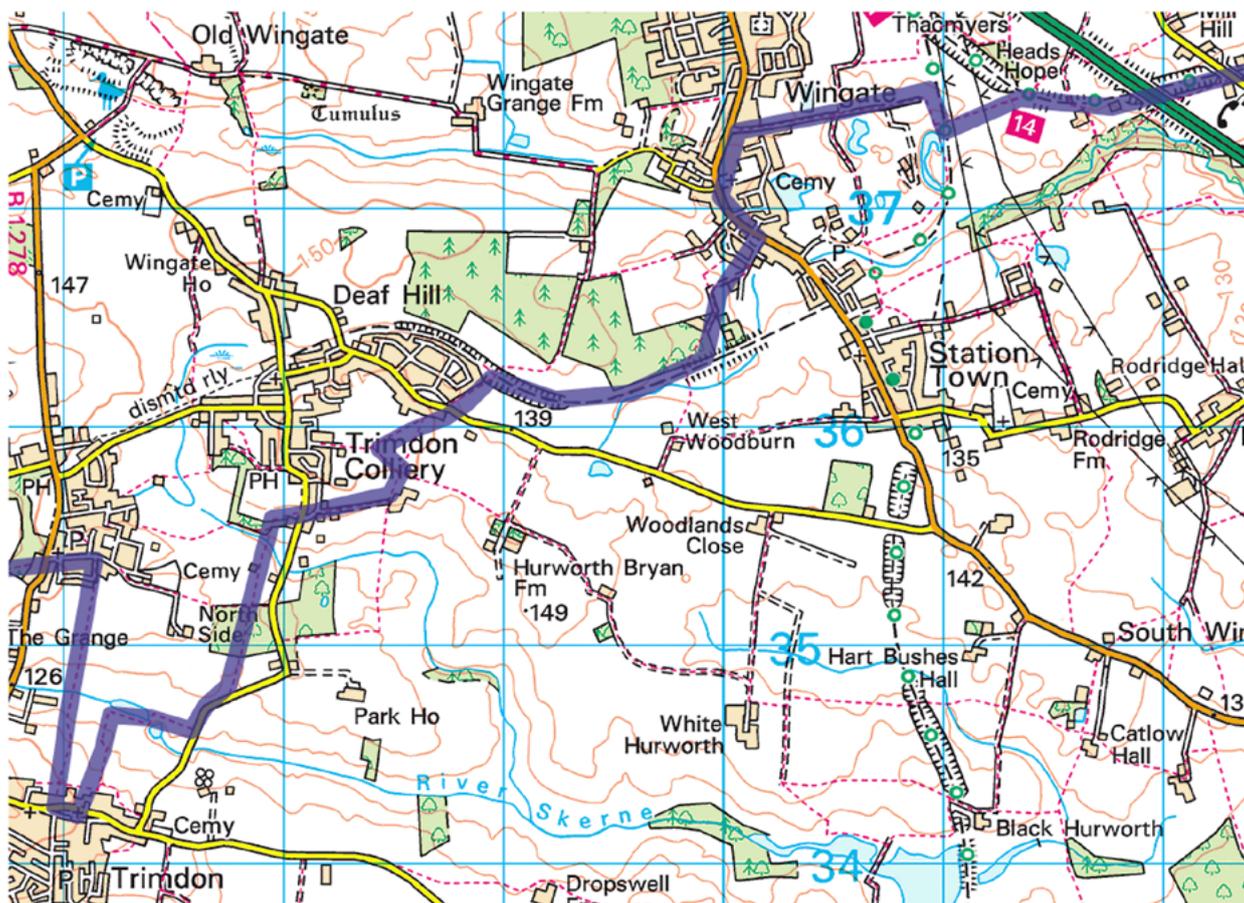
Section 2

Trimdon to Hart – 15km

From the east end of the church cross the road diagonally north east to find the footpath out of the village. This leads along the left field boundary down to Trimdon fishing lake which you go round to the right and left and then turn right. You come out onto a road where you turn left and after 100 metres, take the footpath on your left along a lane and through a small wood. Walk on down passing paddocks on your right and cross over a green footbridge before you come to a road. Before you cross diagonally left here, take a look on your right at a large sandstone sign for Trimdon Colliery. It depicts the distinctive 'coffee pot' steam engine of early colliery locomotives after which this area of Trimdon is known.

The road you walk into is called Low Hogg Street, but turn immediately right into Low Dyke Street. This turns left at the house which you may notice has a pair of dragons guarding the entrance! Go ahead to a fenced path with a paddock on your left. You come out to a field and take the path diagonally left over to a line of trees where you turn right. When you arrive at the east end of Trimdon Colliery, cross the road and turn right and first left on a tarmac path with a housing estate on your left. Where the tarmac path ceases bear left for a few metres before turning right down a bank to reach the railway path where you turn right.

Walk along the path for 600 metres and look out on your left for a tarmac path down into Wingate Welfare Park, which is a delightful community woodland. Walk straight through, passing an outdoor classroom area with attractive wood sculptures on your right and a pond on your left. You will pass St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School on your right and allotments on your left before reaching the main road through Wingate where you turn left. As you continue on your way, you will see the Railway Crossings Pub on your left and Holy Trinity Church on your right.



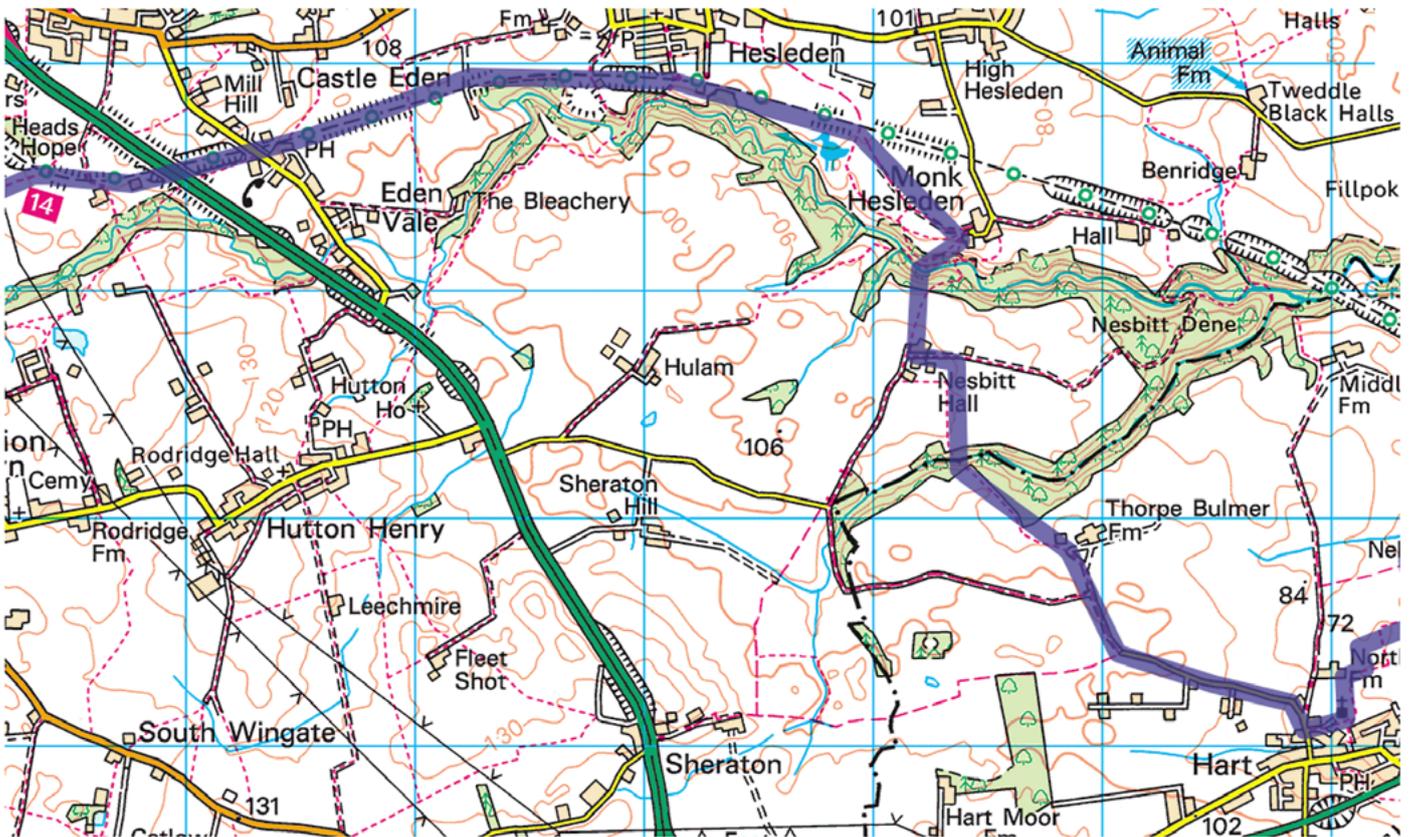
Wingate

The name Wingate derives from two Anglo-Saxon words, 'windig' meaning windy and 'geat' meaning road. It was a quiet agricultural hamlet until coal mining began in 1839. The population expanded rapidly and included many miners from Cornwall and Ireland. In 1906 there was an explosion which killed 26 miners. The mine closed in 1962.

The most well known person born in Wingate was the artist Ted Harrison (1925-2015). His artistic talents were recognised at school and he went on to West Hartlepool Art College before qualifying as an art teacher. He taught in different parts of the world before responding in the 1960's to an advert for a teacher in a remote part of Yukon in Canada. It was here that his highly colourful painting style developed and he became possibly the most popular artist in the country, receiving the Order of Canada in 1987 for his contribution to Canadian culture. He never forgot his background in Wingate and he never lost his accent!

About 200 metres after you have passed the church, turn right into Moor Lane. You pass a school on your left which had a near miss on January 7th 1971. The engine of a Vulcan bomber caught fire and fortunately before he ejected from the plane, the pilot managed to ensure the plane crashed away from the school where many of the pupils were watching. Soon after you may like to pause to look at Wellfield Lake on your right which is colourful with flag iris and water lilies in summer. Moor Lane bears right but you continue ahead. At the T-junction turn right and then take the footpath across the field on your left passing under two sets of pylons. You come to the Hart to Haswell railway path where you turn right. After passing Headshope Farm on your right, you walk under the A19 and come to Castle Eden where you may wish to go off on the path to the right for refreshments at the inn there before resuming your way.

You now have just over 2 kilometres on the railway path during which you will pass some brick works on your right and Hesleden on your left with an attractive pond by the path. Hesleden is named after the hazel trees in the dene below to your right. At this point you start to get enticing glimpses of the sea ahead. About 500 metres after leaving Hesleden, as you come level with a red brick building across the field on your left, look for a narrow path leading off the embankment to the left. If you cross a bridge over a farm track you will know you have gone too far! Once off the railway path, turn right to walk under the horseshoe shaped bridge and walk along on a fenced path across fields to reach Monk Hesleden. Monk is in the name because this area belonged to the monks from the monastery at Durham Cathedral. Where the road bears right by a small green,



you turn right on a fenced path to reach a deconsecrated graveyard for the village. The ruins of an ancient Norman church here, which was built on a Saxon foundation, were regrettably demolished by the council in 1968. A white post indicates where it once stood.

Cross over three stiles as you descend into Nesbitt Dene. If it has been dry and you would like to view the full drama of this dene, look for a path on your left about 30 metres after you cross the bridge. You can get to the bottom of the dene here and if you walk a little way towards the bridge, you will be able to appreciate the fine limestone cliff and a cave. Walk up out of the dene and soon after you come out, you will pass a transmitter on your right and will then arrive at Nesbitt Hall.

Nesbitt Hall

This large property dates from 1697 and is Grade II listed. Its roof is attractively covered with Welsh slate whilst the modernised interior still retains its late 17th or early 18th century staircase. This six-flighted monolith was probably installed by the first owners whose initials, RIB, are hidden behind panelling above the front door.

Turn left after passing the buildings and then right along the field edge by a line of pylons. Now you have another descent and ascent to cross Bellows Burn. When you come out to a field, the footpath goes alongside a wood until you reach Thorpe Bulmer Farm. You are quite likely to take photo of the attractive scene with the pond in the foreground. You now have an easy walk along a road to the village of Hart. As you enter the village take the turn on your left which passes a school on your left before you arrive at the church.

Hart

The church of St Mary Magdalene has been a site of worship since c. 675 AD when it is likely a wooden church was built on the site. This would have been later replaced with a stone church that would have probably borne resemblance to the church at Escomb with high walls and small windows.

The present church, however, mostly has its origins in the Norman period when the parish came under the patronage of the Bruce family who also refounded nearby St Hilda's Abbey. Yet, in the early 12th century, the church was gifted to the newly founded monastery at Guisborough in whose hands it remained until the 16th century when Guisborough and all its lands were seized by Henry VIII in his Dissolution of the Monasteries.

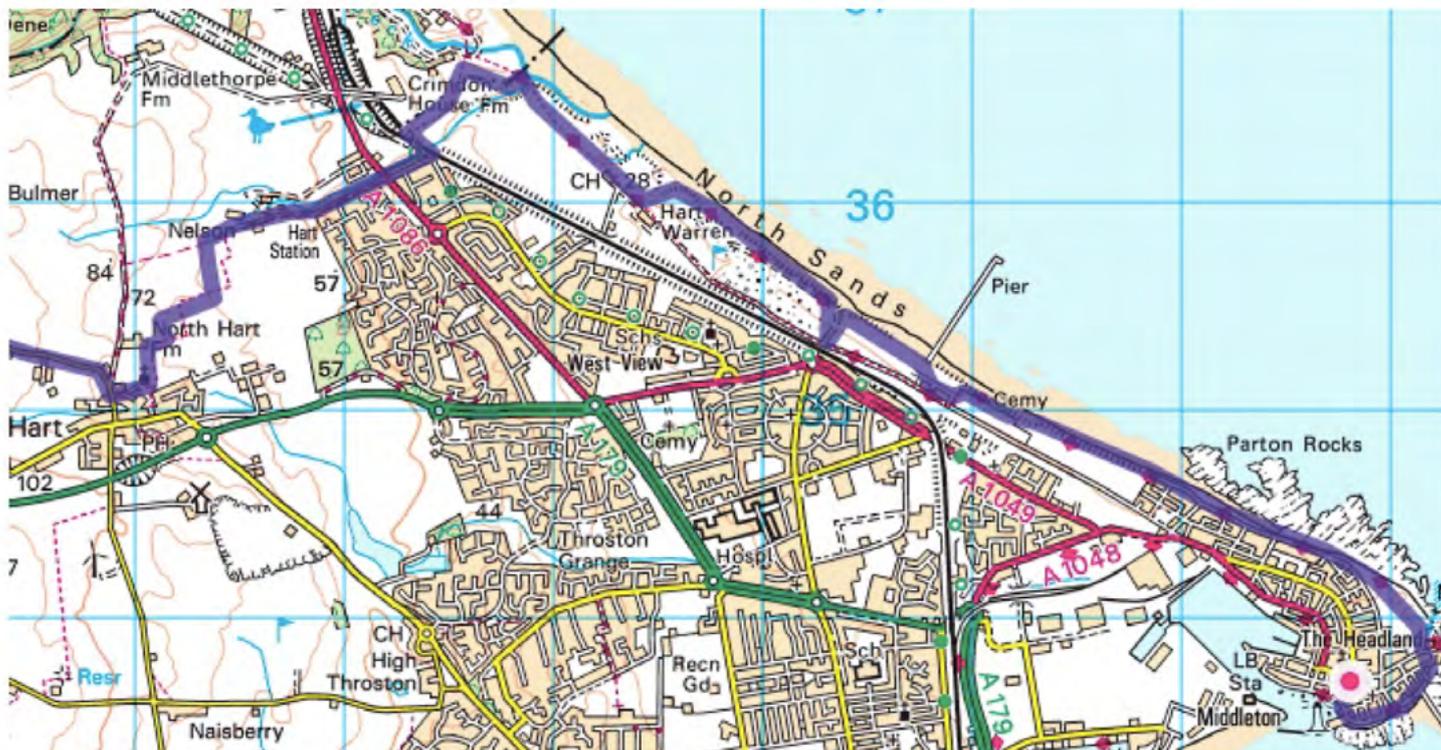
The tower, north aisle and chancel arch date from the Bruce rebuilding whilst, under the ownership of Guisborough, the church acquired a curious George and Dragon motif (c. 1500 AD) that can be found outside

on the south wall of the chancel. Yet, even though the later centuries impressed their mark heavily upon the building, the discerning visitor can identify many pointers to the original Anglo-Saxon building.

Inside, the northern end of the north aisle has the remains of a window whilst the original chancel arch can be seen above the much lower Norman opening. Of further interest is an early sundial accompanied by Anglo-Saxon grave fragments and carved stone which can be located in the north-west corner of the nave under the pulpit.

Section 1

Hart to Hartlepool – 9km



From the entrance to the church turn left and then turn left again, passing a memorial garden with palm trees on your right. The footpath is ahead of you and you can enjoy closer views of the sea as you walk towards North Hart Farm. The path takes you round to the right of the buildings and leads you out to a farm road where you turn right. After 180 metres, turn left and follow the field boundary soon turning right then left to cross a bridge over a stream. Keep along the right field boundary and then go through the gate on your right. Cross the field and then go through the side gate. You are now walking down to the northern outskirts off Hartlepool with houses on your right and a rather shabby valley on your left. Cross over the A1086 with care and go straight over into Hartville Road. You come to the Hart to Haswell railway path again and turn left for a few metres before crossing over the footbridge – this time over a real railway for a change!

A track leads you down to the sea at Crimdon Dene. After crossing the field, you may wish to go for refreshments on the other side of the dene, but otherwise turn right here. You have now joined The England Coast Path. After you have gone down steps to cross a beck, walk up again towards the golf course and make sure you fork right onto the path between low banks. This soon emerges onto the golf course proper, where you turn left, following a straight course towards the club house with intermittent hedging on your left. About 120 metres after passing the club house, where a wide path comes in from a building on your right, turn left to head for the dunes. You will find a short section of path with artificial grass before the path gradually bears right. You are now in Hart Warren Dunes, an important nature reserve which is rich in orchids including Fragrant, Pyramidal and Burnt Tip. As you leave the dunes, you will pass some concrete posts on your right where once stood the settling tanks for the old Magnesian Cement Works of Steetley/Britmag. You cross over a dip and come to a new housing estate. Walk along the seaward perimeter as you pass Steetly Pier and when you come out onto a road you will see ahead of you the wall of Spion Kop cemetery. The Way of Love turns left here to go round the sea side of the cemetery, but if you wish to visit the interesting Jewish section at this end, go round to the entrance on Old Cemetery Road. Part of the cemetery is also a nature reserve and there is an entrance by an ECP sign if you would like to explore it.

You will cross over some land, where development has started to take place before arriving at a road called Marine Drive. You are now properly in the town. Walk on into Sea View Terrace and then on to the easternmost point of the headland where you will come to the Heugh Battery.

Heugh Battery

Heugh Battery was set up after the Napoleonic Wars to defend the port of Hartlepool. In 1859 it was enlarged and two other batteries were built at the lighthouse and Fairy Cove. In 1914, Heugh battery and the lighthouse battery engaged three German warships in combat. It was the only battle fought on British soil in World War 1. There were 130 military and civilian deaths and over 500 wounded. This battle was later used for propaganda to recruit for the war effort. In World War 2, the battery was enlarged again and was in use until the Battle of Britain. The guns were removed in 1956 and the site became overgrown and derelict until taken over by the Heugh Battery Trust in 2000.

After leaving the battery, you will pass a triangular park with a war memorial on your right then the breakwater on your left. There is also some information about the discovery in this area of a Saxon burial ground related to Hartlepool Abbey founded here in 640 AD and destroyed by the Vikings around 800 AD. There are good views of Fish Quay in the foreground, Hartlepool and Teesside across the bay and the North Yorkshire Moors in the distance. Not to be missed is the statue of Andy Capp on your right. Andy Capp was the creation of a local cartoonist Reg Smythe. His wife Jean unveiled the statue by the Shropshire sculptress Jane Robbins in 2007. Where the road bears left to follow the coast, you go straight ahead and then cross over High Street to reach your destination at St Hilda's Church.

St Hilda's Hartlepool

The institutional foundations of the monastic community that lived and worshipped on Hartlepool's headland date back to the early days of Northumbrian Christianity. St Aidan, co-founder of the famous monastery at Lindisfarne, appointed Hieu as abbess in 640 AD of a double monastery of both monks and nuns. The first woman to be given such authority, Hieu led the community until c. 649 AD when Hilda, who would later found the famous house at Whitby, was appointed as abbess.

Hieu and Hilda led monastic communities that lived in wooden buildings enclosed by a simple wooden enclosure that bears little resemblance to the current church marooned on its peninsula by the later growth of Hartlepool. The original monastery was destroyed during a violent Viking raid in c. 800 AD after which the abbey, and the village which had grown up around it, disappears from the echoes of recorded history.

We hear nothing of this village, the origins of Hartlepool, until 12th century when the abbey reappeared on the pages of history. The current building dates from this time, although its Norman doorway is probably earlier, and was most likely founded by the Bruce family who later ruled Scotland. The surviving building is a mix of architectural styles chronicling the devotions of those who have prayed within its walls. However, 1,200 years after its destruction, evidence of the earlier Anglo-Saxon monastery still abounds with a headstone inscribed with Old English runes, belonging to the nun Hildthryth, on display inside the church.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the following for their contributions to the local history sections:

Alex Hibberts – Maiden Castle, Garmondsway, Nesbitt Hall, St Mary Magdalene Hart and St Hilda's Hartlepool.

Adam Luke – the Trimdons.

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