



# The Way of Love

Hartlepool to Durham

## Introduction



This guide describes the pilgrimage route between St Hilda's Church in Hartlepool and Durham Cathedral. 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. Points of interest are described in red.

This pilgrimage route, along with the Ways of Life, Light and Learning, all lead to the shrine of St Cuthbert in Durham. 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 along the latter part of this route. 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!

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. If they had met anyone carrying a cross walking in the opposite direction, 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.

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 1

### Hartlepool to Hart – 9km

#### 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, who lived separately but worshipped together. 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 the 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,

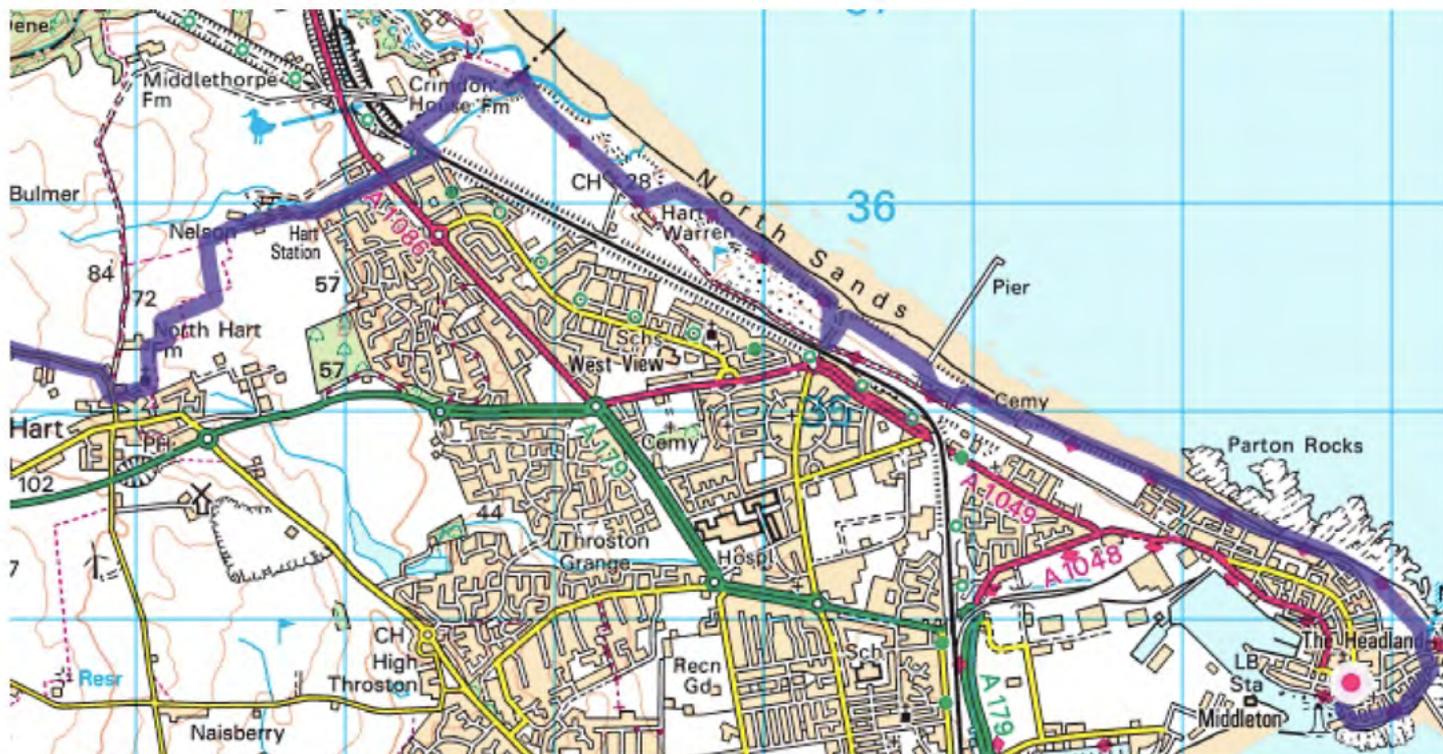
and was most likely founded by the Bruce family who later ruled Scotland. The surviving building is a mix of architectural styles chronicling the devotions of those who have prayed within its walls. However, 1,200 years after its destruction, the evidence of the earlier Anglo-Saxon monastery still abounds with a headstone inscribed with Old English runes, belonging to the nun Hildthryth, on display inside the church.

This pilgrimage begins at the historic church of St Hilda. After your visit, leave the church at the south west end by the church car park, cross the road and walk down the lane to the sea. There are good views of Fish Quay in the foreground, Hartlepool and Teesside across the bay and the North Yorkshire Moors in the distance. Turn left to walk round the headland. You will soon pass the statue of Andy Capp on your left. 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.

You will probably want to walk across to the sea side as you continue round the headland. On your right you will see 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. After passing the breakwater on your right you will pass a triangular park with a war memorial before coming to the easternmost point of the headland and 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.



Continue on the sea side of the battery until you see the tarmac path ahead which leads up to a green open space. There are ECP (England Coastal Path) signs here and you will find others to guide you towards Crimdon. You pass a beacon on your left and continue along the sea front to reach Sea View Terrace and then Marine Drive. You leave the road behind and start on the coastal path. You will cross over some land, where development has started to take place and then walk up to the red brick wall of a cemetery on your left which is also Spion Kop Nature Reserve. There is an opening by an ECP sign and in summer you may wish to look for Pyramidal Orchid and Bloody Cranesbill here. At the northern end of the cemetery, turn left. You may at this point want to visit the very interesting Jewish section of the cemetery here by following round to the entrance on Old Cemetery Road, but The Way of Love turns right here into Butterstone Avenue.

Walk along Butterstone Avenue to a signed footpath on your right, just before the first seaward house. Follow this path around the seaward perimeter of the housing estate, passing Steetley Pier on your right and continuing down a slope and on till you see the railway embankment ahead. Turn to your right and cross over to a sandy path up a slope with some concrete posts on your left, where once stood the settling tanks for the old Magnesian Cement Works of Steetley/Britmag.

The views become more attractive as you walk on into the Hart Warren Dunes Nature Reserve, continuing along the England Coast Path. This is an area rich in orchids including Fragrant, Pyramidal and Burnt Tip. You can see the golf course to your left and the path bears left towards it and descends to a cross path for the beach. Turn left towards and across the fairway. On the other side of the fairway, turn right and walk towards the Club House. Walk past the Club House, crossing another fairway and walking by the side of another on your left with intermittent hedging on your right. Follow the signs for the England Coast Path (as well as the Northern Saints waymarks) to the top of a slope. here are good views across Crimdon Dene Beach and towards the cliffs at Blackhall Rocks. You descend to cross a burn and fork left up steps with a field now on your left. At the point where the coastal path turns right to cross a bridge over Crimdon Dene, turn left up a track between fields which leads up to the railway. Cross over the footbridge.

From the footbridge, turn left and walk for a few metres, then turn right into Hartville Road which leads to the A1086. Cross straight over and walk up the track opposite with houses on your left and a rather shabby valley on your right. After leaving the houses behind, continue uphill, passing buildings on your left and on your right until you come to a gate with a smaller gate to one side. Go through the side gate and go across a field where you may find highland cattle. Go through the next gate and turn left, following the left field boundary. Cross over a bridge into the next field, where you turn right and left following field boundaries on your right. You then come to a farm track on your right where you walk west to North Hart Farm. Go through the side gate and turn immediately left into paddocks. In the second paddock turn right and leave by a gate which leads briefly to a path behind the farm, before turning left towards Hart village. There are good views here with the sea to your left, an old windmill on a hill ahead and St Mary Magdalene Church and a beautiful stone walled field on your right. Enter the church yard and turn right.

## Hart

The church of St Mary Magdalene has been a site of worship here 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 some 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.

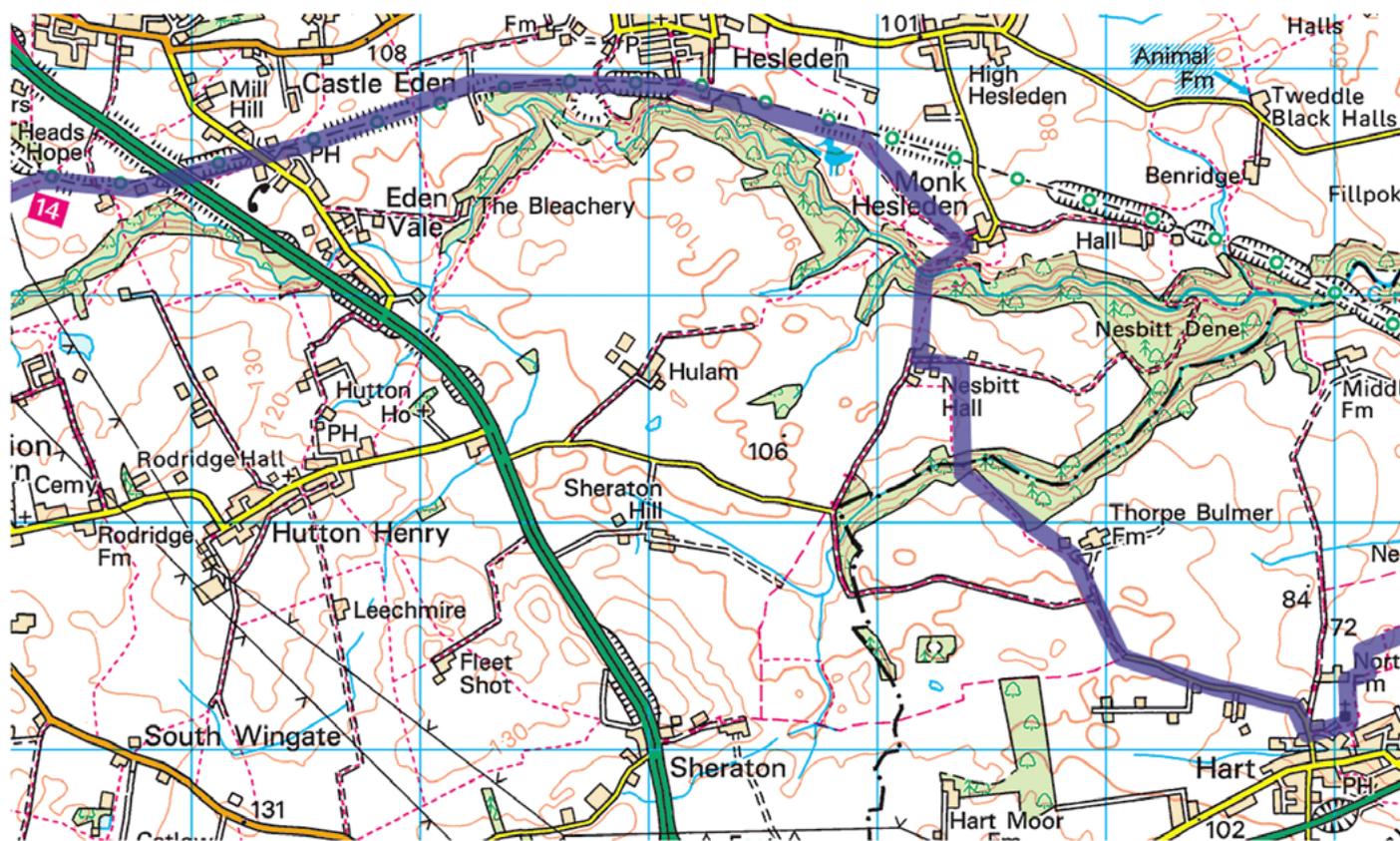
Inside, the northern end of the north aisle has the remains of a window whilst the original chancel arch can be seen above the much lower Norman opening. Of further interest is an early sundial accompanied by Anglo-Saxon grave fragments and carved stone which can be located in the north-west corner of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

## Section 2

### Hart to Trimdon – 15km

After visiting the church, turn right to go out past a car park with an old wall on your left which is all that remains of a 14th century manor house. Pass the primary school on your right, before turning right into Butts Lane, where you soon fork left. You will pass some houses on your left. The road turns to the right. Continue on the road until you reach Thorpe Bulmer Farm. The footpath forks off to the left and there is a pond on your right and the houses here are most attractive. Continue along a grassy path towards a pine wood. As you reach

the wood, turn left and then right keeping the wood on your right until you reach a stile. Cross over it and descend down steps and go over the bridge across Bellows Burn. Walk up and out of the wood and cross over a track to a field. The path continues with the field edge on your right following the line of pylons. When you reach the end of the field, turn left towards the buildings. When you reach the road turn right and you will pass Nesbitt Hall on your right.



## Nesbitt Hall

This large property dates from 1697 and is Grade II listed. Its roof is covered with attractive 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.

Walk on down passing a transmitter on your left and then enter woodland and go down to the bridge to cross the attractive Nesbitt Dene. If it has been reasonably dry and you would like to appreciate the full drama of this dene, look for a path on your right about 30 metres before 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 crossing three stiles on the way before reaching a deconsecrated graveyard for the village of Monk Hesleden. Hesleden is named after the hazel trees in the dene. Monk is in the name because this area belonged to the monks from the monastery at Durham Cathedral. The ruins of an ancient Norman church here, which were built on a Saxon foundation, were regrettably demolished by the council in 1968. A white post indicates where it once stood.

Walk to the village on a path between fences and turn left. After passing the vicarage on your left and the farm gate on your right, go up to the footpath which leads you once again between fences across the fields to the Hart and Haswell railway path. You access it by going under the bridge and turning left along a narrow path that leads you gradually up to the former railway. After 700 metres, you will reach Hesleden on your right which features an attractive pond by the path. You cross over a road where to the left, there is a business removing ash from a former pit heap to make bricks. After 1.5 kilometres, you come to Castle Eden and you may wish to go off on the path to the left for refreshments at the inn there before resuming your way. You soon pass under the very busy A19.

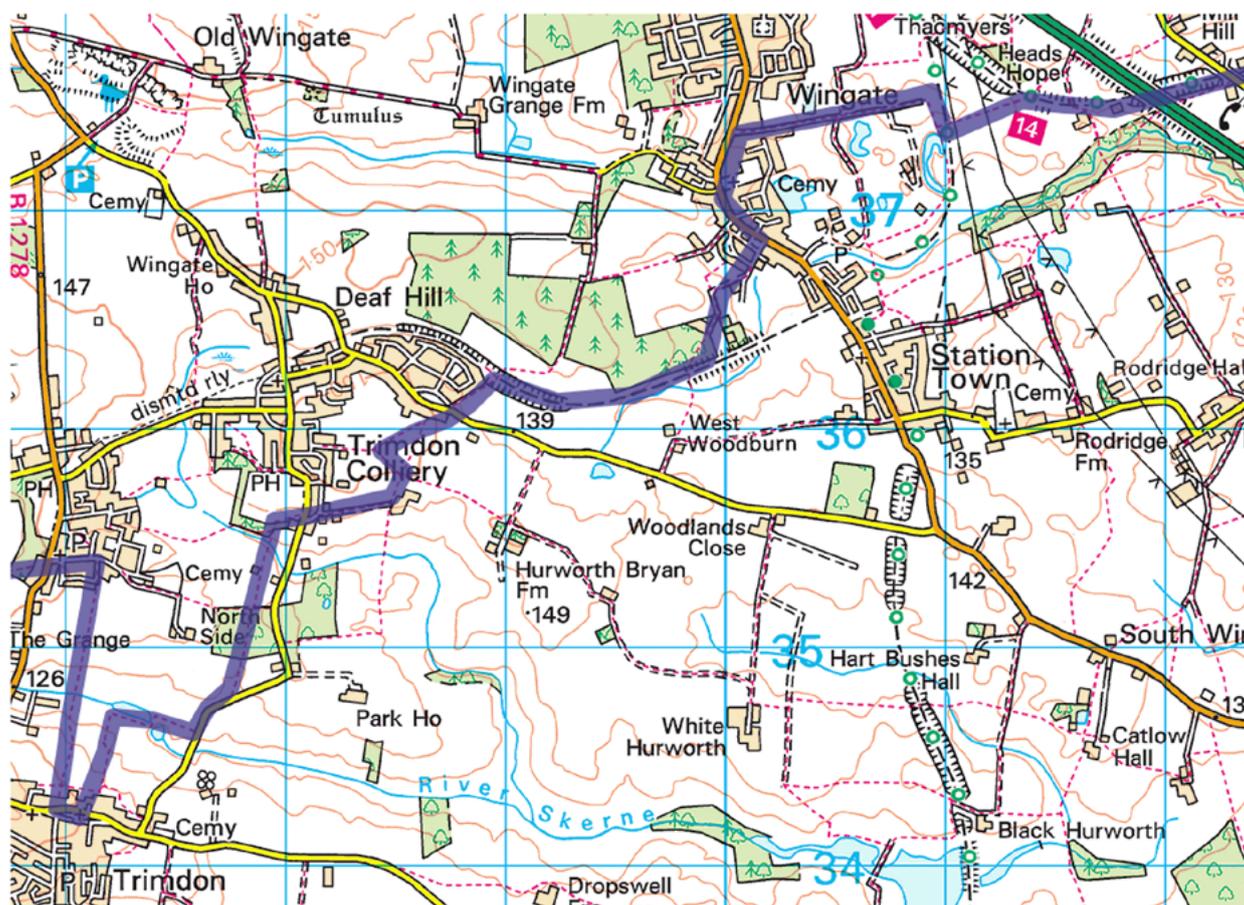
After passing Headshope Farm on your left, go on for 200 metres and just before the barrier, fork left to cross a field towards some trees on the skyline. You will walk under two sets of pylons. Fork right onto a cycle path for a few metres before taking the path on your left. The path becomes Moor Lane as it approaches Wingate. You

may like to pause to look at Wellfield Lake on your left which is colourful with flag iris and water lilies in summer. You pass a school on your right 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. Turn left into the main road through Wingate.

## 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 1960s to an advert for a teacher in a remote part of the 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!



You will pass Holy Trinity Church on your left and The Railway Crossings Pub on your right. After the medical centre, turn right down Johnson's Street. You will pass allotments on your right and St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School on your left before entering Wingate Welfare Park, which is a delightful community woodland. Walk straight through, passing a pond on your right and an outdoor classroom area with attractive wood sculpture on your left, before reaching the railway path where you turn right.

Walk along the path for 600 metres until you come to the houses of Trimdon Colliery on your left. Turn left up the bank here and go to the left and right round the houses to reach a tarmac path. Keep the fence on your left and the houses on your right as you go up the hill. When you come to the road cross over and turn right and immediately left down a lane. Follow the path ahead with a line of mostly beech trees on your right. At the end

of the line of trees where there is a disused quarry on your right, take the path diagonally across to the left corner and there take a fenced path on your right with a paddock on your right. You come out by a house with a pair of dragons guarding the entrance! Turn right here and go along a road to another road where you turn left.

Cross the road and you will see the back of 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. Take the footpath by the sign which soon turns left to cross over a green footbridge. Walk uphill passing paddocks on your left. You enter a wood and go straight through into a lane which leads you out onto a road where you turn right. Go over to the pavement for a few metres, but at the next bend go over to the footpath by a barrier and follow the path round and after 150 metres turn left to reach Trimdon Fishing Lake. Walk round on the east and south side of the lake and then turn left to take the footpath which goes along the right field boundary up to Trimdon. Turn right when you reach the road and you will soon come to St Mary Magdalene Church.

## 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.

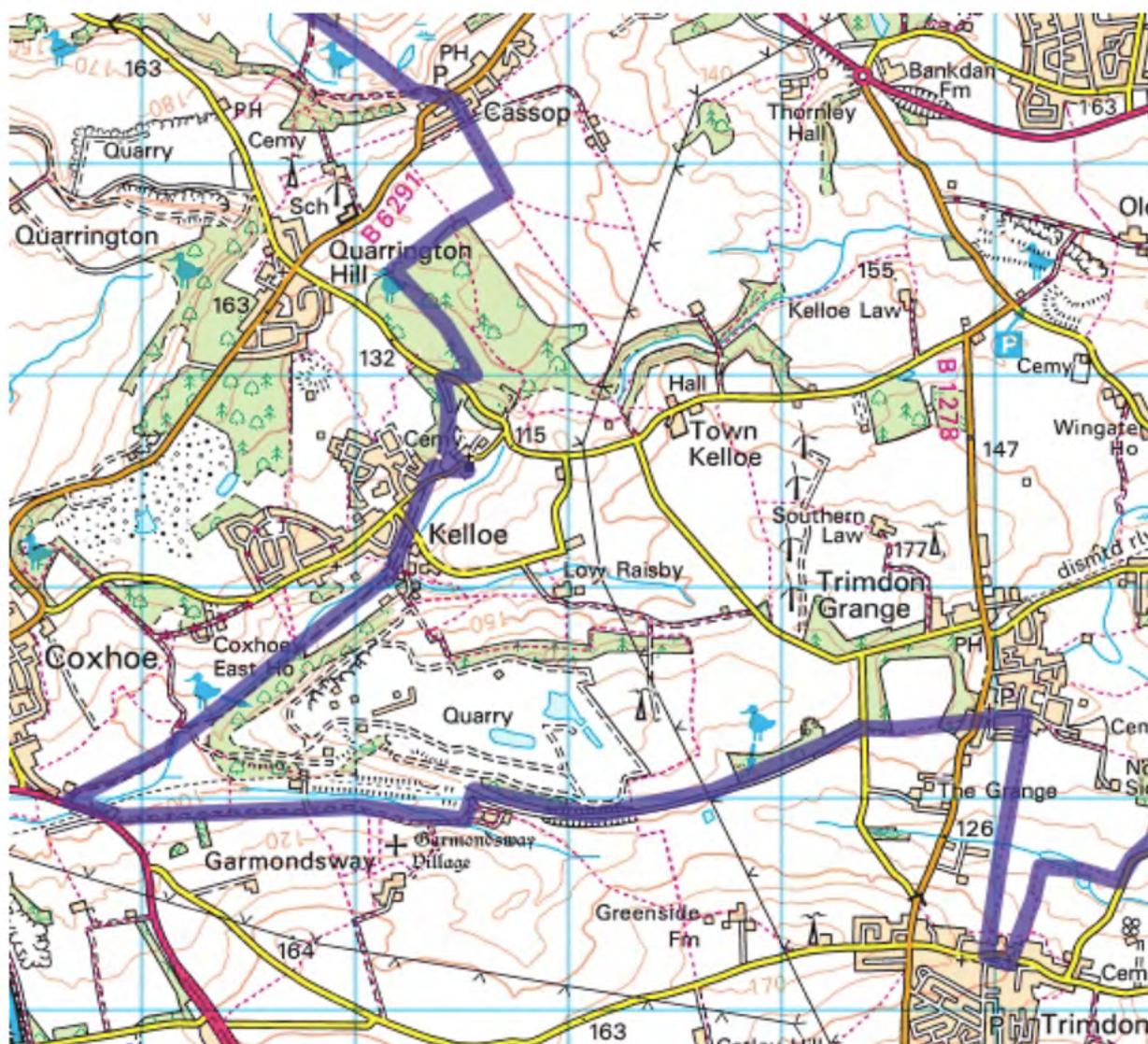
The most famous person in modern times associated with the Trimdons is the former Prime Minister Tony Blair. When he became MP for Sedgefield in 1983, he and his wife Cherie bought Myrobella House, a former pit manager's house in Trimdon Colliery. It continued as the constituency house after he became 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 3

### Trimdon to Cassop – 11km

After visiting the church, turn right and cross over to the north side of the road and a few metres up, you will find the footpath sign leading you between houses and out to fields, where you will see your next village of Trimdon Grange on the skyline. It is more or less a straight path across the valley with a slight left and right around a disused well. When you reach Trimdon Grange, walk between houses to the main road where you turn left. At the T-junction, you will find St Alban's Church on your right. Turn left at the junction and cross the road and take the first turn on your right. You will see an inviting sign for the woodland walk. Take that path past some garages on your right and through a small pine wood. The path ahead goes over the shoulder of a hill and down past another small wood on your right to reach a road where you turn left and immediately right to join the Raisby Way – a disused railway line.

Very soon on your right you will see a sign for Trimdon Grange Quarry Nature Reserve which is well worth visiting especially in spring and summer. This whole area is rich in flowers because of the magnesian limestone which has been and, in places, is still quarried here. As well as in the designated nature reserves, you are, in season, 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. After 1.5km you will see a bridge on your left. Walk under it and you have reached Garmondsway. You pass some paddocks on your left. Follow the road out to the west and soon you will see a field on your left 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.

Continue along the road for 1.5kms to reach the A177. Turn right and walk for 200 metres before turning right where a blue cycle sign indicates Kelloe Way. Go through the gate on the left if it is open or step over the barrier to follow the footpath and cycle way. You will come to Coxhoe Beck on your right. Cross over the beck at the green footbridge and you soon reach the former railway line again, turning left through a barrier onto Kelloe Way. Immediately afterwards, take a path on your right which leads you into a short section of Raisby Hill Grassland Reserve, an important site for orchids. After about 300 metres, you rejoin Kelloe Way. You will pass another entrance to the nature reserve on your right.

As you walk on, you pass sewage works on your left and kennels on your right. Continue on the Kelloe Way as you cross over two roads and after the second, you will pass an impressive metal sculpture to let you know you are in Kelloe. More unusual sculpture is on offer when you cross over the next road. A line of magnesian limestone slabs references the history of the mines and includes gold nuggets (coal) and Davy lamps. Immediately after passing the sculptures, there is an entrance on your right to a short path giving access to a spacious graveyard. Walk straight ahead to the prominent monument to those who died in the Trimdon Grange mining disaster in 1882. 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 as an initiator 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. St Helen's Church 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 containing 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.

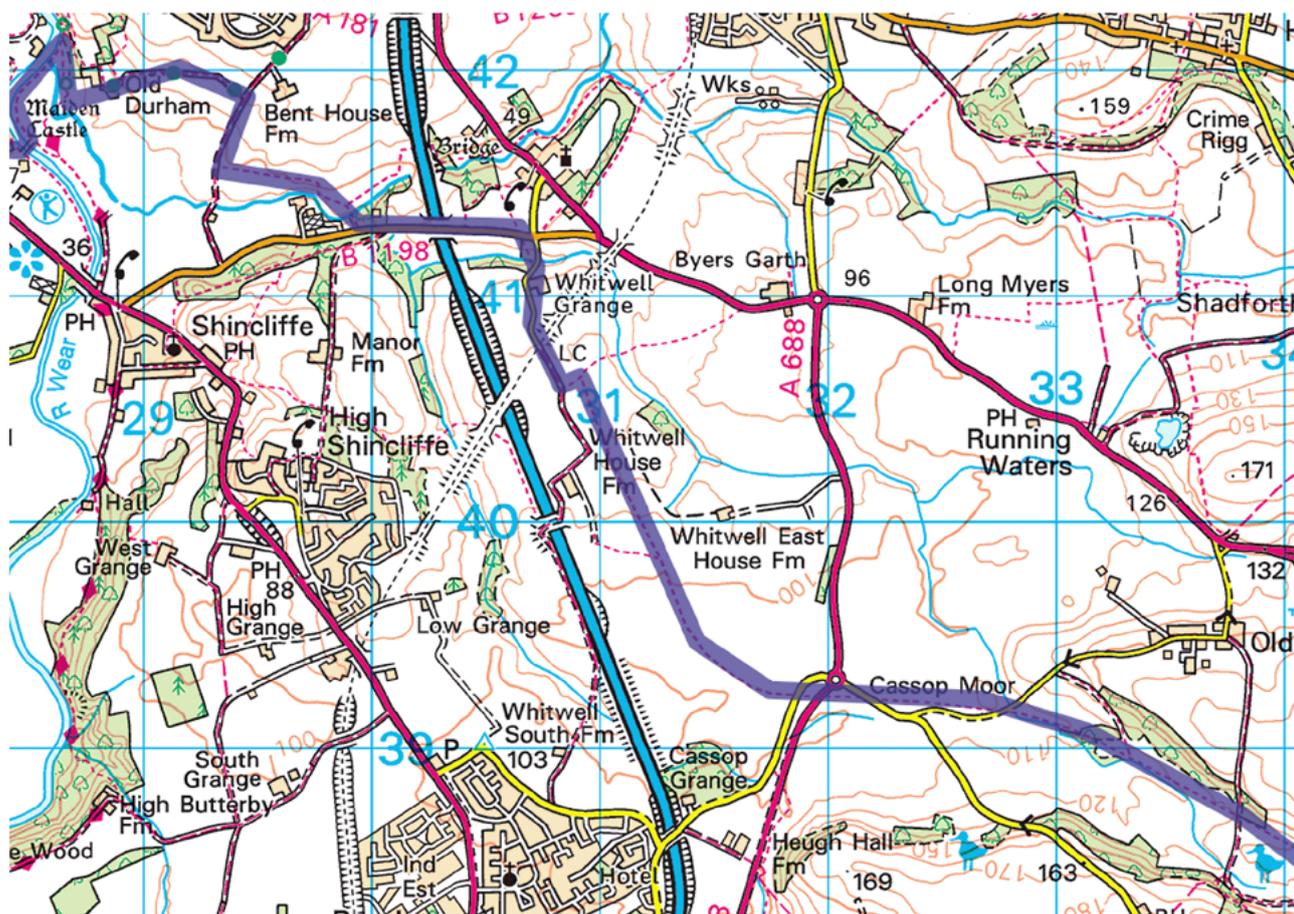
Richard de Kellawe who was Prince Bishop of Durham from 1311-1316 was probably born at Town Kelloe, but perhaps the most famous person associated with Kelloe was Elizabeth Barrett Browning who was baptised in the church in 1808. There is a memorial plaque to her.

Return to the graveyard and walk ahead, passing the monument and interpretation panel on your left. As the path bears right, look for the path ahead in a gap in a low brick wall ahead to regain the Kelloe Way where you turn right. Just before you reach a road there is a plaque in memory of ten miners who died when the mine here was flooded in 1897. There is also an interpretation panel. All this area was on the site of East Hetton Colliery which opened in 1836. It produced coal of a very high quality. The mine closed in 1983. Cross over the road to go on a path into the Woodland Trust Reserve at Harvey Wood which was planted on reclaimed land from East Hetton in 2013. Local school children helped to plant the trees and name the wood. This path heads south for 100 metres before you come to a wide track where you turn left and walk uphill for 500 metres till you come to a junction where you turn right. Keep along this track going north east with a fence on your left for 400 metres. When you reach a cinder track, turn left to walk up to Cassop. When you reach the village go straight on to the main road where the post office will be on your left and the community centre is on the opposite side.

## Section 4

### Cassop to Durham – 10km

The Post Office at Cassop is your last opportunity to purchase any refreshments until you reach Durham. This last stage begins on the path to the left of the community centre. There is an excellent view here of Cassop Vale and to Durham beyond. If you follow pilgrim traditions, you should kneel down here and give thanks for your first site of the cathedral! 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! Walk down and as you near the bottom of the hill, the road bends round to the right and you take the second of two paths off to the left which leads towards an attractive small lake. There are a number of little paths in the area but if you keep the lake on your right and go close to the hill, you will soon find the stile that leads you over to the path along the former wagon way for the collieries of this area. You will be walking on or close to this wagon way until after Whitwell.



Continue on, passing a place where another footpath crosses and then over to a larger field which you cross straight over. Cross the next stile and a farm track comes in from the left, which then ascends the hill up to Old Cassop on your right, but you continue ahead on a wide grassy path between fences. Cross over a minor road and into a long field which runs parallel to the road you have just crossed.

*(NB At this point, if it has been very wet, you may prefer to stay on the minor road here to reach the A688.)*

Look out for evidence of strip farming here. At the end of this field there is a rather boggy patch but hopefully you can find enough stepping stones to get you safely over. Go over stiles to cross the minor road again and then over a small field to reach the A688 through a gate.

Cross with care and go through the gate to another small field leading to another minor road. Cross the road and go over the stile by a gate into a broad farm track which gradually turns to the north west and there are some good views of Durham Cathedral with the hills beyond. The noise of the A1(M) will now be a prominent feature for the next 3 kilometres. When the track ends at a gate, cross the adjoining stile and ahead you will find a sunken path between hedges which can be very muddy after wet weather. You soon come to some steps back up onto the former wagon way.

When you come to a field, the right of way follows the line, but if the farmer has not made a way, you may need to go on the field edge to resume the wagon way along another attractive stretch between ivy clad trees and hedges, before crossing a field near White House Farm. Continue ahead with farm buildings over to your left and then between hawthorn trees before you cross over two stiles into a larger field. Walk straight ahead on the bank to the left of the cutting. This was the site of Whitwell Colliery. The path is rather unclear but after about 300 metres look out for a gate 80 metres to your left. Cross over the stile by the gate and turn right along the farm track which soon crosses the former North East Railway line between Sunderland and Durham into a tarmac road. Continue on this road passing Whitwell Grange on your right. Follow the road downhill and take the next footpath on your left. Here you briefly regain the wagon way with a high embankment across the Chapman Beck and this leads through a small wood and out onto a B road.

Cross over here and turn left along the footpath towards the A1(M). 300 metres after crossing the motorway, look out for the footpath on your right. This soon crosses a footbridge into a field. Cross over it to climb the hill ahead and skirt round to the left where the cathedral now looms much larger. Join a farm track coming down from Bent House Farm and continue ahead passing two quarries on your right before reaching a wider track where you turn right and walk uphill. When you reach a barrier, turn left along a road which leads gradually downhill towards Old Durham Farm. It is noticeably quiet after the noise of the A1 and there are fine views of the city with the cathedral, castle and railway viaduct prominent.

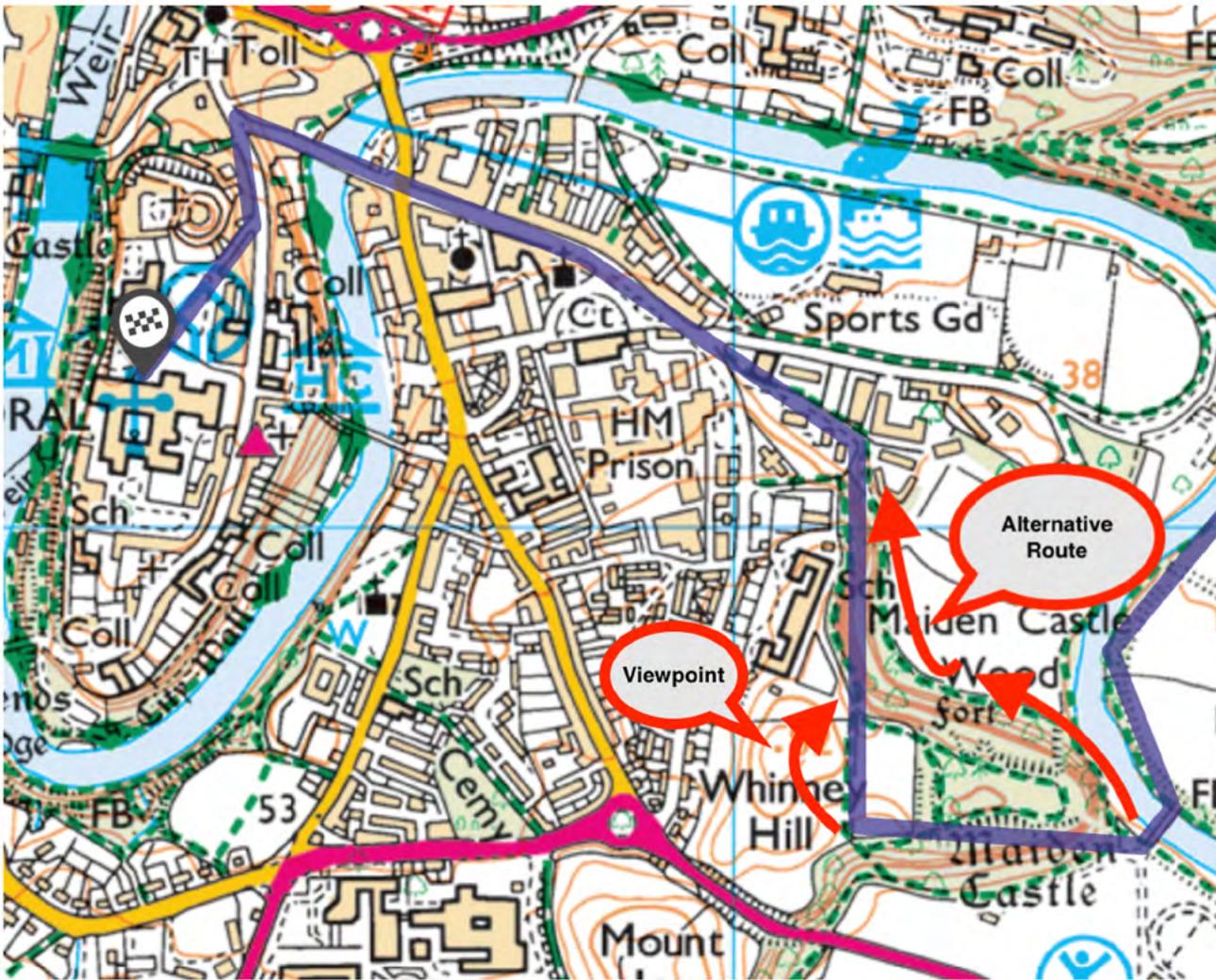
When you reach Old Durham Farm continue ahead on the surfaced track (cycleway) to the left of the entrance to Old Durham Gardens. These gardens were established 350 years ago and are well worth a visit. Admission is free with the lower garden open at all times and the upper garden open on Sunday and Thursday afternoons from March 31st. The cycle path slopes and then bends right where there is a very good view back to the upper gardens. Continue on the cycle path until you reach the river. Turn sharp left along the river bank. You soon cross a bridge over Old Durham Beck and then 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. The prominent Maiden Hill is across the river ahead of you. Turn right across the footbridge over the River Wear.

## **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 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.

*[See alternative route below.]*



Enter the wood here and turn left along the path, keeping the steep and wooded Maiden Castle on your right and Durham University sports fields on your left. Before the path turns left towards the A177, look for a very steep path up through the wood on your right. When you reach the top of the steepest part, cross over the stile into a field. The right of way goes straight ahead along by the hedge, but you may choose to make for the row of sycamore trees ahead at the top of Whinney Hill where you will catch glimpses of the cathedral. Turn right and take the path between the middle trees in the row down to the corner of the field and turn left to regain the main route. Go over a stile which leads along a path with a hedge and new buildings on your left and the steep wooded hill on your right. You soon start descending and before the path leads you out into the town, turn sharp right down to university buildings. At the bottom of the hill turn left with Brooks House student accommodation on your left and a high wall on your right.

*Alternative route*

*If you are weary after your journey, this alternative avoids the steep short climb up Whinney Hill – but you will miss the view! When you go through the gate, turn right along the river path with Maiden Hill on your left. After 200 metres, take the footpath on your left with Maiden Hill still on your left and playing fields on your right. After about 400 metres you will rejoin the main route where it comes down off Maiden Hill at Brooks House.*

When you reach a road, cross straight over into Old Elvet, which is the road to the right of the trees. The name Elvet comes from the old English *Aelfet* meaning 'swan island.' Elvet 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 and uninhabited until the monks arrived with St Cuthbert's coffin in 995. You will soon pass St Cuthbert's Catholic Church and Elvet Methodist Church on your left.

## Old Elvet Churches

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.

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.

Go over the road and cross over Elvet Bridge. This bridge was built in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries from the proceeds of indulgences. Pilgrims in the Middle Ages would have been confronted by an impressive gate and towers and there were chapels at either end. Go up the steps ahead of you and turn left up Saddler Street and then fork right up the cobbled Owengate and across Palace Green to reach the cathedral.

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For more information on the Northern Saints Trails, see [northernsaints.com](http://northernsaints.com)

