

# The Way of the Sea

## Warkworth to Jarrow

### Introduction

The Way of the Sea has been set up as one of the new Northern Saints Trails to provide a link between Warkworth on St Oswald's Way and another new Northern Saints Trail, The Way of Learning. Linking these three routes together provides a continuous 124 mile pilgrimage route between Lindisfarne and Durham. This route can of course be walked in either direction.

When we think of the Northern Saints like Aidan and Cuthbert, we rightly think of them as great walkers and it's likely that they will sometimes have walked along this coast, but actually it's probably more likely that they will have taken the actual way of the sea! Aidan was closely linked with monastic settlements in South Shields and Hartlepool, so he probably sailed from Lindisfarne to those places which would have been quicker and, before the Vikings started their raids, safer too.



The Way of the Sea itself is 62 kilometres or 38.5 miles in length. You may occasionally find Northern Saints Trails signs, but this route is the same as the England Coast Path all the way from Warkworth to North Shields so follow the ECP signs which are frequent. Sometimes you may see an acorn symbol as the ECP is one of the National Trails. You will also find Northumberland Coast Path signs between Warkworth and Cresswell. The coastal path itself generally stays on the higher ground, but in some places such as Druridge or Whitley bays you may prefer to walk on the sand.

## Section 1

Warkworth to Druridge Bay Visitor Centre 10k - 6 miles

### Warkworth

Warkworth has been a fortified place for a very long time and this is indicated by its Anglo-Saxon name 'Wercewode' which means 'earthwork enclosure'. Ceolwulf, King of Northumbria, had a wooden fortification on the castle site in the 8th century. In the 12th century the first stone castle was built, but only a little survives as it was sacked by King William of Scotland in 1173. In 1332, King Edward III gave the castle to Henry, the second Lord Percy of Alnwick and its association with the Percy family continued until the 20th century. The famous warrior, Harry Hotspur Percy, was the person who, in the 1380s, built much of what still stands today including the particularly fine keep. Harry 'Hotspur' appears in William Shakespeare's *Henry IV* and he described the castle as a "worm-eaten hold of ragged stone." That may not have been true in Harry Hotspur's time, but by Shakespeare's time it was indeed a ruin. Maintaining the castle eventually proved too costly for the Percy family who gave it to the nation in 1922. It is taken care of by English Heritage.

Other highlights in Warkworth include St Lawrence Church which stands on the site of a Saxon church built by Ceolwulf in the 730s. The present structure is basically Norman from the 12th century with later additions. There is an impressive fortified bridge, one of only two remaining fortified bridges in Britain. The most curious feature is the 14th century hermitage carved out of the sandstone rock on the north bank of the River Coquet. Access is by boat only and it is also in the care of English Heritage.



Assuming that you are starting from the centre of Warkworth, take the main road south and pass the castle on your right. Turn left as you leave the village and walk down to the River Coquet. Walk along the pavement towards Amble. As you approach Amble and before the road bends to the right, take the England Coast Path on your left. It's worth taking a look back the way you have come for the view of Warkworth Castle and the river.

### Amble

For many centuries, Amble was a tiny hamlet which formed part of the port of Warkworth. The name possibly has Celtic routes with 'Am Béal' meaning a tidal inlet. Another possibility is that it comes from two words meaning Anna's bill, perhaps referring to the promontory on the north side of the harbour. The history of Amble as we know it today began in 1837 when the harbour was constructed to serve as a coal port for the collieries to the south. The population grew from 200 in 1821 to 2,975 by 1891. The first church, dedicated to St Cuthbert was built as late as 1870. the two breakwaters were constructed in 1849 and in that same year a single track railway from Chevington was opened. Initially this was used just for freight, but in 1879 a second track was installed and passenger services began. In the 1920's up to 750,000 tons of coal passed through the port. The railway closed in 1969.

Walk through a boatyard to a green where you pass a beacon. Cross the road to the marina and then skirt round it. At the north end as you approach a brick wall, turn left then right to reach a car park. Go left to walk along the road. You may well be distracted by Spurreli's Boutique Ice Cream and the pod shops of Harbour Village. Walk to the



quayside and turn right walking to the pier and then on towards the lighthouse. Just before you get there, turn south onto the breakwater. Back on shore, fork left and go up steps. Pass by a playground and the main path keeps to the seaward edge of the green on its way out of Amble. You pass a cemetery on your right. Walk on along the edge of a dune system and enjoy the fine views of Coquet Island as you leave the houses of Amble behind you.

### Coquet Island

Coquet Island is first mentioned in 684AD when St Cuthbert and Elfled the Abbess of Whitby met there. Later a series of hermits lived there. After the Norman Conquest, the island was given to the priory at Tynemouth and became a Benedictine cell. Parts of the chapel and domestic buildings are incorporated in the present lighthouse buildings. After the dissolution of the monasteries, the island stone was quarried which was used to build Syon House, the London home of the Duke of Northumberland. During the Civil War the Scots garrisoned the island.

The Lighthouse and other buildings were built around 1841. The first lighthouse keeper was William Darling brother of the famous Grace Darling. Now the island is one of the most important seabird colonies in Britain looked after by the RSPB. About 50% of the UK's rare Roseate Tern population nest there.

After 800 km the path joins the road. Where the main road goes right, continue ahead through the village of Low Hauxley, passing a small church which is often open on your right and later a caravan park. Next you pass Hauxley Nature Reserve, the first of a series of nature reserves you will pass as you begin to walk the 11 kilometre curve of Druridge Bay. After 2 kilometres, you will come to the Druridge Bay Country Park Visitor Centre which has excellent facilities. This is the end of section 1 and the only section point where there are no bus services close by. If you need them, it is a 3 kilometre walk into Hadston where you can find the X18 and X20 bus services.



## Section 2

Druridge Bay Visitor Centre to Newbiggin-by-the-Sea 14k - 8.5 miles



Near the car park at the southern end of the visitor centre, you will find the England Coast Path sign directing you due south where you will pass East Chevington Nature Reserve on your right. After a kilometre you fork right to cross over a burn before going on through the wooden gate by the metal gate. Where the road bears right you go by the dunes, soon passing Druridge Pool on your right. As you approach some cottages, you turn left off the road and walk into the dunes following the posts before crossing the Blakemoor Burn near Cresswell Pond. Go back into the dunes and cross a field with cattle before reaching the car park and the Drift Café. After another short stretch in the dunes, you arrive in Cresswell.

Walk through the village and, after passing a caravan park and Snab Point, look for the coast path on your left. The power station looms ahead of you. You turn inland to cross the bridge at Lynemouth. The village was only built in 1927 when the colliery opened. In 1983, it combined with nearby Ellington Colliery and, under new management, it became the biggest undersea coal mine in the world. After the bridge, go immediately left to make your way around the power station. You will cross a bridge over an orange stream which is seepage from the former coal tip. The power station is currently undergoing major conversion from being coal-fired to full biomass electricity conversion which will supply 450,000 homes. After walking above a bay, you go past Beacon Point and the golf course is on your right as you reach Newbiggin-by-the-Sea. You walk through an untidy yard and pass the golf club house on your right before turning left to reach St Bartholomew's Church and the end of this section.



### Section 3

Newbiggin-by-the-Sea to Blyth 16k - 9.5 miles

#### Newbiggin-by-the-Sea

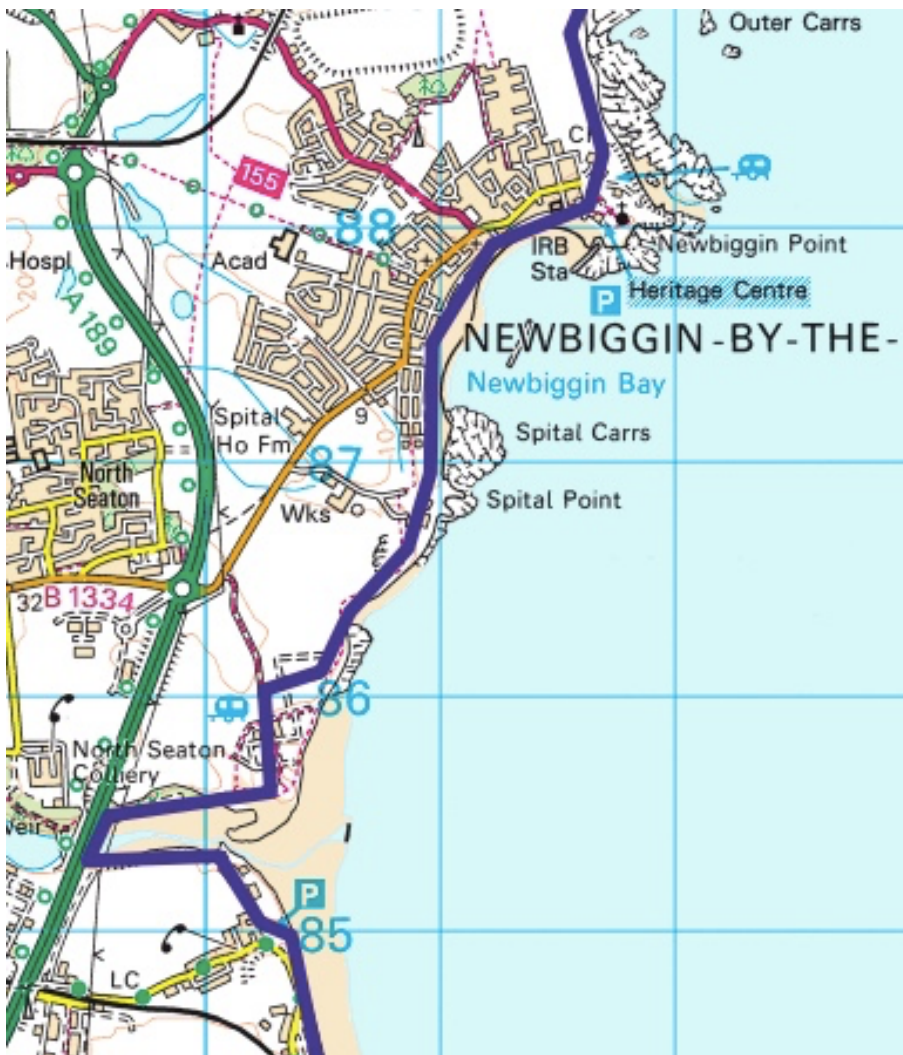
Newbiggin means 'new building' but we do not know what building this refers to or when it was built. It has an ancient history as the main port between the River Wansbeck and the River Lyne. St Bartholomew's Church was built in the 13th century and a spire was added to the tower in the 14th century, which acted as a beacon for passing ships. In the early 14th century King Edward II stayed here on his way to and from fighting the Scots. Fishing was an important industry and by the 19th century most of the fish caught by local fishermen was sold in Newcastle markets. It was also in this century that Newbiggin became a popular bathing resort with its fine beach between Newbiggin Point in the north and Spital Carrs in the south.

Walk south from the church and descend steps to begin a delightful walk along the promenade with blue railings. On your right you pass the Newbiggin Maritime Centre. Next you pass by the Newbiggin Lifeboat House which is the oldest lifeboat station in continual use in the UK. Attached to it is the Rocket House built in 1886 which held equipment which could be used when it was too dangerous to use a lifeboat. This included a rocket with a line attached which could be fired out to stranded sailors. The mariners could then be hauled to safety in a breeches life buoy ring.

The main highlight is the remarkable three times life-size statue of The Couple located on a plinth 250 metres offshore. This installation by Sean Henry was erected in 2007. The very ordinary couple, who are locally known as Ebb and Flo, are looking out to sea, but

there is nothing ordinary about the impact and the way the changing moods of the sea subtly change your perception of the statue. You will pass by a smaller version called Land Couple where there is detailed explanation.

Just before the promenade ends, fork right to go up to Beach Terrace. Look towards the headland and notice a sea arch which is called Needles Eye. Turn right by a lamp post and then left. You cross over two roads to houses on your left before passing by a patch of heathland with bracken and gorse. The cliffs here are extremely





friable and you may see a former footpath post on a large clump that has fallen away, so stay well clear. You will reach a caravan park and after walking a short distance by the fence, turn right through a kissing gate and walk up through the caravan park. The route is well signed and partway uphill, you turn left down Mariners Rise. You will pass by the reception and shops. At the south side of the park, the path descends to the River Wansbeck where you walk upstream. You will notice that this river is definitely not a beck as the name may suggest, but in fact the name comes from the Anglo-Saxon 'Waeganspick' which means a wagon bridge. It is likely this was a lot further upstream than the footbridge you cross just after passing under the A189. You have now entered what was once called Bedlingtonshire, an area of land between the River Wansbeck and the River Blyth which was a special territory of the Prince Bishops of Durham. It was an isolated part of Co Durham until 1844.

Turn back towards the sea, soon going uphill and then forking left to walk on, passing Cambois Boat Club before reaching a road where you turn right. Walk down to a car park by Charlton's Bar, which was established by John, son of the football legend Jackie Charlton. Turn towards the beach before forking right to gain a good path where views of industrial Blyth dominate the way ahead. When the main path leads to the beach, continue ahead through the dunes for half a kilometre. You will pass St Andrew's Church on your right and also the Cambois Miners' Welfare Institute built in 1829 and with Platform Entrance and Hall Entrance on either side. The unusual name of Cambois is pronounced 'Cammus' and comes from a Celtic word meaning bay. In medieval times the area around here was noted for its production of salt. It was exported to London, Hull and Yarmouth. As you come to a car park, look at the sea because you will not see it now for 11 kilometres as you loop a long way inland to cross the River Blyth.

Walk under the railway bridge and go across at the roundabout to begin a rather uninteresting stretch with heavy industry on your left. After a roundabout, fork left as you walk under pylons and you will find yourself on a disused road which leads by a barrier





into East Sleakburn. Pass the General Havelock Inn and then bear left downhill. After crossing the bridge over the Sleek Burn, turn left on a narrow path beside Water Vale House. After a brief look at the river you go up to cross a field then across a small burn and across another field to reach a track going right towards Mount Pleasant Farm. Just before the farm, take the path on your right through a kissing gate then left, passing the farm on your left. Go down to the River Blyth and through the gate before turning right towards the bridge over the A189. Walk under the bridge then head round up the hill to a road where you turn right again to go under the bridge once again. Turn right to ascend and cross the bridge, which will certainly be the noisiest few minutes on your journey! Descend by the steps to walk down river towards Blyth. The river Blyth is a very substantial one considering its source is only about 27 miles away at Kirkheaton. The name of the river is indeed from the adjective, so may your walk to the town be a merry one!

At one point, you briefly leave the river and walk 200 metres on Coniston Road to cross a bridge and then turn immediately left to go back to the river. After 600 metres, you come to Blyth Port and at this point you turn sharp right down Chain Ferry Road - do not go on the bridle path. Walk down until you come towards the A193. Turn left past bollards into Crawford Street, keeping the fuel station on your right. You walk on through a new housing estate and then the road bears right with the restricted areas of Blyth Port on your left. At the end of Crawford Street, turn left onto the B1329. You will soon pass the entrance to Port Blyth. At the junction ahead, you will see Morrisons supermarket on your right. The Way of the Sea turns left at this point, but because the centre of Blyth and bus services are straight ahead on Regent Street, this marks the end of Section 3.

## **Blyth**

Blyth began its existence as a small village called Blyth Snook. The snook part of that name referred to the peninsula which once existed and was formed by a creek called Blyth Gut, which was located where Union Street is today. This was filled in the late 19th century at a time that Blyth was experiencing rapid expansion as a very significant port, but it had already started to develop west of the gut in the 17th and 18th centuries. A coal mine opened at Plessey as early as 1663, and the building of a wagon way between the pit and Blyth was the start of its importance as a port for coal. In the 18th century, a family called the White Ridleys of Blagdon expanded the port with staithes, quays and a fine lighthouse called Blyth High Light. The salt industry was re-established and other industries like rope making and ship building followed. Iron works were established in Bedlington.

The Blyth Port Commissioners was set up in the 1880s and after the building of a pier and extensive dredging, Blyth's shipping trade increased enormously. Blyth Port had the distinction of being the place where the world's first aircraft carrier *Ark Royal* was built in 1914. The amount of coal shipped from the port exceeded 200,000 tons annually. By the 1960s that amount grew to 6 million tons each year. But by the late 1960s, hard times for the town began as coal mines started to close. Following the Beeching Report, the railway closed in 1965, followed by the last shipyard in 1966. The port has had to adapt and diversify and it now handles the majority of the paper and pulp from Scandinavia used for newspapers in the UK. It also serves as a base for the offshore oil and gas industries.

## Section 4

Blyth to Whitley Bay 11k - 7 miles



You begin this section with the impressive Catapult building ahead of you. Pass it on your left and about 100 metres afterwards, take the path down to the quayside and turn right. You pass an attractive blue gateway with silhouettes about Blyth old and new. Next you will come to a 15 metre high sculpture which looks like writhing snakes called 'Spirit of the Staithes'. It has plates on top which form the outline of a train if you look at it from the road. Just before you reach the lifeboat station, you will see a tall ship on your left called *Williams II* - assuming it's not at sea! This is a community led restoration of a 100 year old Baltic Trader which is very similar in size, shape and build as the original *Williams*. That ship was built in Blyth and captained by William Smith and in 1819, when seeking to avoid a storm round Cape Horn, sighted Antarctica. No one had ever seen the continent before. The charity Blyth Tall Ship, which restored and sails the *Williams II*, delivers engineering and offshore skills training for the unemployed to support their entry in to the emerging renewable offshore energy sector and you can also visit their workshops next door during the working week.

Pass the lifeboat station on your left and as the road bears right you will find Ridley Park on your left. Walk through the park following cycle path signs to leave the park at the south west corner and rejoin the B1329 to continue on your way with the southern part of Blyth Port on your left. Soon after passing the port entrance, turn left to return at last to views of the open sea! Walk along the promenade, passing beach huts before you see some gun emplacements with replica guns on your right. Turn left opposite the second

gun, where The Way of the Sea uses an excellent 3 kilometre tarmac path through the dunes called the Eva Black Walkway to Seaton Sluice.

Eva Black was a popular Labour Councillor who was Mayor of South Blyth in 1980-81. During her time in office, Vietnamese boat people were welcomed to Blyth following the humanitarian crisis there. She was an enthusiastic campaigner for the walkway which began construction in 2000 and after her death in 2006, the route, which opened in 2007, was named after her.

On your way to Seaton Sluice you will pass interesting wooden sculptures on the theme of cycling. As you approach Seaton Sluice, you pass a playground and a car park before emerging onto the coastal road. Walk on up to the bridge where you have a good view of the harbour.

### Seaton Sluice

Seaton Sluice owes its unusual name to the efforts of Sir Ralph Delavel. The port here was difficult for ships to use, so in 1660 he organised the construction of a pier to create a safe haven. However the harbour was dry at low water and often blocked with silt, so his ingenious solution was to build sluice gates, so that at high tide the sea water was trapped and then later released to flush the silt and mud out to sea twice a day.

A century later, it was clear that the harbour was still not deep enough as the demands of the coal trade and the new bottle making works increased, so the owner of Seaton Sluice at that time, John Hussey Delavel, constructed a new 275 metre long cut through the sandstone rocks. It was opened in 1764 and was 9 metres wide and 16 metres deep. It created the 'Rocky Island', which along with the cut is an intriguing feature of the town. This certainly brought its rewards and in the years that followed, the value of its shipping and exports was greater than its neighbour Blyth.

NB The home of the Delavels, Seaton Delavel Hall, is a mile inland and is on the Angel's Way pilgrimage route which begins at Seaton Sluice. It is described in that route guide.

Turn left into Collywell Bay Road. The Kings Arms is over to your left and on your right you pass the Waterford Arms and Tower House Gallery. The octagonal tower was originally built as a customs house. As you walk round to Collywell Bay, you will see a sandstone pinnacle. This is called Charlie's Island, because it was once joined to the mainland and a local resident called Charles Dockwray made a small garden on top of it. Continue along the road until you see the footpath sign to lead you to Crag Point. There are excellent views to the north of the way you have come.





As you turn south again, St Mary's Island and lighthouse come into view as well as your first views of Newcastle. Go past a caravan park and Hartley car park, keeping near the coast til you come down some steps to the causeway for St Mary's Island. If the tide is right, you may want to visit the island.

### **St Mary's Island**

This picture postcard island has been described as a miniature Lindisfarne because it can be accessed only at low to mid tide and also it has a monastic history. The Normans built a chapel here which was associated with Tynemouth Priory and was dedicated to St Helen. Within the chapel a candle was kept burning which was called 'The Lady Light' and this may be how the island came to be associated with St Mary. It is possible that the Lady Light was useful for passing ships. Nothing of that chapel remains. The monks had a burial ground here which was later used by local people until about 1800.

The island was a very hazardous one for shipping and in June 1891 a ship from Montreal called *The Gothenberg* ran aground in thick fog. Ferry boats from the Tyne were alerted and all 44 crew along with 476 cattle were rescued, but the rest of the cargo and the ship itself could not be saved. This incident strengthened the case for a lighthouse which was finally built in 1898. Lighthouse keepers stayed on the island with their families and one of the first keepers had a family of sixteen children! The lighthouse was the last one to be electrified in 1977.

The Way of the Sea turns right up to the car parks. Cross the road and walk along the top with the expanse of Whitley Bay below you. After going through a car park, you cross the bridge over Briar Dene and soon after you come to the Rendezvous Café with the Links Gallery and Cafe behind it. In the late 18th century, a huge bull grazed in this area and reached the height of 5ft 9 inches and weighed in at 216 stones! It became known as the Whitley Large Ox and the artist Thomas Bewick created a famous copperplate etching and drawings of it. When it was due for slaughter it took seven days to walk the 10 miles into Newcastle and crowds lined the streets to see the spectacle!

North Tyneside have excellent and frequent interpretation panels along the way telling the stories of an area which is rich in history. The end of this section is reached when you arrive at Spanish City with its distinctive dome and two towers topped by dancing girls. It opened as a concert hall and restaurant in 1910 and later a funfair was added. In the 1990's it fell into disrepair, but was reopened as a dining and leisure centre in July 2018.

### **Whitley Bay**

As late as the mid 19th century, Whitley, as it was then called was just a small village located south west of where Spanish City is today. The first church of St Paul's was not built until 1864. The nearby fishing village of Cullercoats was much larger than Whitley at that time. The rapid growth of Whitley started in 1862 when the railway connecting Blyth to Newcastle opened. With its fine beach, developers soon saw its potential as a tourist resort. Guest houses, shops, bathing machines and promenades all followed in the coming years and by the mid 20th century there was continuous housing all the way along the delightful coastline from Whitley Bay to Tynemouth. Whitley Bay was and still is ideal for day trips for people in Tyneside itself, but it was also a particularly well known destination for Glaswegians who, until the 1970s, came in their thousands for the 'Glasgow fortnight.'

## Section 5

Whitley Bay to Jarrow 12k - 7.5 miles



Continue on the wide promenade passing the unusual sandcastle seats which give good protection from the wind. The promenade eventually reaches its highest point shortly before turning right with the natural swimming pool of Table Rocks and Browns Bay below. Take the path to the left along the one sided terrace of Southcliff and then turn right - the spire of St George's Cullercoats is ahead of you.

### Cullercoats

The first half of this unusual place name comes from an Anglo-Saxon word 'culver' meaning a dove, so Cullercoats simply means dovecotes. A family called the Doves were associated with this locality. The village was established in 1539 and fishing has always been important. In the late 17th and early 18th centuries, the port exported both salt and coal, but the coming of the railways meant that coal went to better ports and the last salt

pans moved to Blyth in 1726. Fishing was then restored as the main industry and two piers were built to shelter all the fishing vessels which were called cobs. In 1848, a coble which was taking a pilot out to a ship capsized and all lives were lost. In response to this tragic event, the Duke of Northumberland paid for the building of the RNLI lifeboat station.

The American artist Winslow Homer stayed in Cullercoats between March 1881 and November 1882. He produced many fine paintings, particularly of the sturdy 'fish lasses' who were renowned for their strength and often carried up to 25 kilos of fish the 10 miles into Newcastle to get a good price there. Homer was just one of a group of artists who were attracted to the village and they were called the 'Cullercoats Colony'.

Turn right back towards the coast road, then left soon passing the Queen's Head and several most attractive buildings including Cliff House, the oldest house in Cullercoats built in 1768 and the Watch House, before arriving at the sheltered Cullercoats Bay. The Victorian built Beverley Terrace leads you to the Tynemouth Long Sands, a beach that is popular with surfers. An unmistakable feature is St George's Church which was built in 1884 by the 6th Duke of Northumberland in memory of his father George Algernon Percy. Continue along the Grand Parade, passing Tynemouth Park before reaching Sharpness Point, a good place to divert momentarily and enjoy the views back towards St Mary's Isle and south to the nearby Tynemouth Castle and Priory.

### **Tynemouth**

The headland at Tynemouth with its castle and priory is arguably the most spectacular site on the Way of the Sea. The creamy-yellow rocks of this headland are the northernmost outcrop of the geologically important magnesian limestone formation that reaches south along the coast to Hartlepool. An iron age fort is known to have existed here, but it is uncertain whether the Romans occupied the site. An Anglo-Saxon monastery was built sometime in the 7th century. It was sacked by the Vikings in 800AD and again in 875 and for a while it became a Danish stronghold.

In 1065 an event occurred which was to transform the fortunes of Tynemouth. Although the monastery had been completely destroyed, a church remained on the site and one night Edmund, the priest there, had a vision of St Oswin, the former King of Northumbria, who announced to him that, "I am King Oswin, I live in this church unknown to all." King Oswin gave further instructions to Edmund to inform the Bishop of Durham and that his bones would be found by digging under the church. The Bishop duly arrived with helpers but after digging they found nothing. Soon afterwards, Edmund received further instructions from St Oswin and in the company of others, he resumed digging and when a body was found, a pleasing aroma filled the air, signifying that this was indeed the saint. A cult developed and Tynemouth became a significant and wealthy pilgrimage destination with miracles reported there. A monastery was built there in 1080 which was closely associated with the monastery at Jarrow. The monastery surprisingly came into the possession of the monastic abbey at St Alban's rather than Durham Cathedral and Tynemouth was counted as its most treasured possession because of the revenues from pilgrims and from the extensive estates given to the monastery by the Earl of Northumberland. Three kings are reputed to be buried in the monastic grounds - Oswin, King of Northumbria (651); Osred II King of Northumbria (792); and Malcolm III, King of Scots (1093). It is for this reason that three crowns feature on the North Tyneside coat of arms.



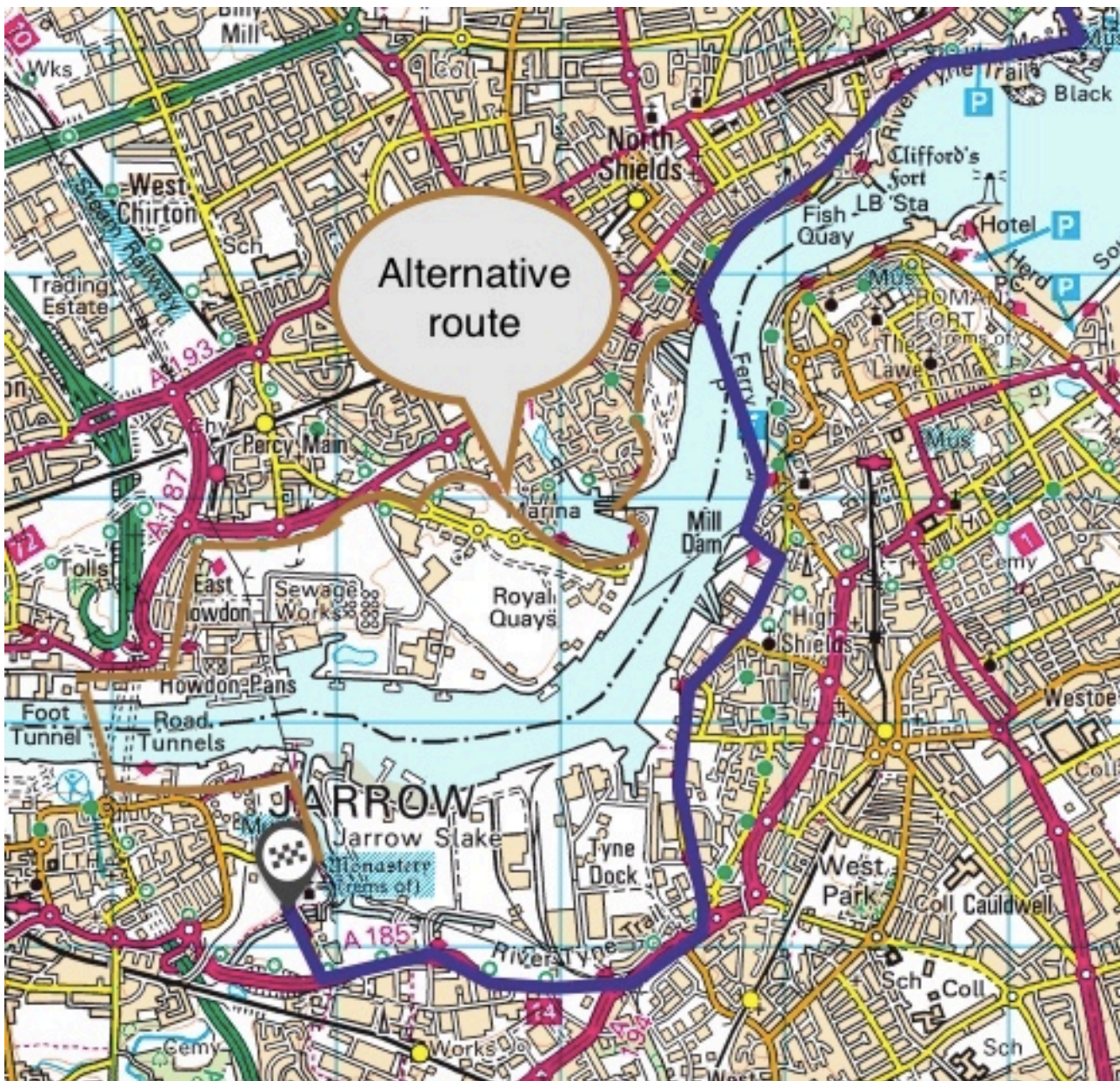
Towards the end of the 13th century, King Edward I granted a licence for the building of a castle to protect the monastery, particularly from Scottish attacks. He and his wife Margaret visited the castle on a number of occasions as did their son Edward II. The castle was successfully defended against attacks by Robert the Bruce in 1314 and the shavaldores (Scottish raiders) in 1318. The priory was closed at the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1539, but the castle was strengthened by Henry VIII as a defence against the French and the Spanish as well as the Scots. During the Civil War, the castle was captured and held by Scottish soldiers who supported the Parliament. After the Scots left in 1647, Henry Lilburn, who was a Parliamentarian, was appointed as the governor but he surprisingly changed his mind and swore allegiance to King Charles. In 1648, the Parliamentarians successfully attacked the castle and Lilburn was executed and his head was displayed outside the castle walls. The castle continued to be garrisoned particularly during the Dutch wars, the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745, the American War of Independence and the Napoleonic Wars. It was also important defensively in the two World Wars.

Walk up to Tynemouth Priory and go straight ahead down Pier Road passing Prior's Haven which is home to the local rowing and sailing clubs. At this point you may want to turn right to visit the prominent statue of Lord Collingwood and The Watch House Museum, but The Way of the Sea goes up over the rise and then down to the bay of Tynemouth enclosed by its two piers. Walk along the promenade towards Newcastle. On your left are the treacherous Black Middens Rocks which have seen many a shipwreck.

### **North Shields**

The first settlement here was created by Germanus the prior at Tynemouth in the thirteenth century. He provided twenty homes as well as boats and individual quays for the fisherman who were to provide fish for the monastery. The name Shields or Sheels comes from the Anglo-Saxon word for shelter and refers to the fishermen's huts. Soon, as well as the trade in fish, coal and leather were being exported and wool and wine were imported and this drew the attention of the merchants of Newcastle who believed that only they had the right to establish ports on the river. In 1267 the mayor and burgesses of Newcastle came and attacked the village, setting light to the houses, beating the monks who were there and taking a coal laden vessel with them for good measure! The authorities at St Alban's Abbey who owned Tynemouth Priory and the village described the perpetrators as 'Satan's satellites of Newcastle-upon-Tyne' and ordered that the burgesses should pay for the damages. A settlement was eventually reached and the port was re-established, but not for long. About thirty years later, the king, Edward I, realised that he only received revenues from the royal port of Newcastle, but not from Shields, so it was declared that the loading and unloading of ships was illegal and the port closed.

About a hundred years later, trading started to resume again and new staithes were built. It was at this time that it started to be known as North Shields to distinguish it from South Shields on the other side of the Tyne which belonged to Durham Cathedral. Trouble with Newcastle flared up again especially when the monks laid fish nets to catch salmon at the mouth of the estuary which interfered with ships going to Newcastle. The Tyne trade wars continued until 1530 when the law came down in favour of Newcastle and the Shields were permitted to trade only in fish and wine and to manufacture salt. After two difficult centuries, South Shields began to see better times as ship building joined fishing as a major industry. This began with the building of cables (fishing boats), then to the wooden sailing collier brigs that carried coal to London and then larger yards were built for the making of iron ships and for ship repair also.



As you come to the end of the promenade, you will pass a small sandy beach and then you arrive at the fascinating Fish Quay. Appropriately as you enter Fish Quay you will see a striking statue of a seated fisherman by Ray Lonsdale which was erected in 2017. It is called Fiddler's Green and commemorates fishermen who lost their lives at sea.

Close by is Clifford's Fort. This gun battery was originally built in 1672 in the context of the Anglo-Dutch wars. The walls with openings for the guns can still be seen. Walk ahead with the fort on your right and a brick wall on your left. You pass the New Low Light, which was built in 1810 to replace the Old Low Light and it is still a useful navigational aid for ships in the Tyne. You will notice the New High Light on the hill above Fish Quay. Turn right, passing The Fisherman's Mission and then left into a road which is full of fish restaurants and which truly feels like a step back in time. Although the fishing industry is much reduced, here you can still see fishing boats moored in what is called The Gut. You will want to walk onto the quayside to see all this before continuing on your way.

A little further on, you pass the Prince of Wales pub and encounter the well endowed 'Wooden Dolly' on a site which has featured a number of ships' figureheads since 1800.



This one was made by Martyn and Jane Grubb and installed in 1992. As you walk on, you will pass a small dock and will then come on your right to the large sailors home built by the 4th Duke of Northumberland in 1854. At this point, you have choice of two routes. For the main route, you turn left here to take the ferry across to South Shields. There are interesting things to see in North Shields, but then there is a rather tedious 2.7 mile walk along busy roads to Jarrow. The second option is longer at just under 4 miles, but more varied and attractive. It takes you through the pedestrian and cycle tunnel to reach Jarrow. We begin with the main route and hope you have a good crossing enjoying the views on your way to South Shields.

### **South Shields**

In 160AD, the Romans built Arbeia Roman Fort on the site of a former Iron Age round house. It was expanded in 208 and was the main port of supply for the Roman soldiers along Hadrian's Wall. Arbeia means 'Place of the Arabs' and it is fascinating to reflect that in Roman times, the fort and its surrounds were more multi-ethnic than it has ever been since, with soldiers coming from lands that equate today with Iraq, Iran, Syria, France and Spain. The Romans left in the 4th century, but the ruins are well preserved and the archaeological research has enabled an accurate reconstruction of the western gatehouse, the barracks and a commanding officer's house.

In post-Roman times, an important British settlement developed here and included a royal residence for King Osric of Diera whose son Oswin, later to be both king and saint, was born here. Later in 647 King Oswin gave the land to St Aidan, who in turn arranged for St Hilda to establish a monastery where the present church of St Hilda's exists near the National Centre for the Written Word. Like its counterpart at Tynemouth, the monastery suffered from the predations of the Vikings in the 9th century.

The present town was established in 1245 and, like North Shields, its history over the following centuries involved constant trade disputes with the merchants of Newcastle-on-Tyne. Revenues from trading in South Shields went to Durham Cathedral, while those from Newcastle went to the crown, which is why King Edward III supported the ban imposed by Newcastle of all loading and unloading of ships at South Shields. It was not until 1848 that North and South Shields gained recognition as independent ports from Newcastle.

In 1768, a local minister and the Dean and Chapter of Durham Cathedral obtained, by an Act of Parliament, permission to develop eight acres of church lands. A large market place and streets were built on a grid iron pattern as well as the square shaped town hall which still stands as the Old Town Hall. In the 1850s at a time of rapid economic growth, the South Shields Corporation bought the market place and the town hall from the Durham Dean and Chapter. The population grew from 12,000 in 1801 to 75,000 by the 1860s, with many immigrants coming from Scotland and Ireland to make up the workforce for coal mining, ship building and glass manufacture. In World War II, the Luftwaffe repeatedly bombed the industrial areas, but many civilians were killed also. With the closing of the coal mines and the decline in ship building, South Shields now relies upon other sources of income including offshore industries, ship repairs and tourism.

When you arrive at the ferry terminal you will notice a striking circular building. This is The Word which is the National Centre for the Written Word. It is deliberately designed to look like the flicked through pages of a book. It contains a library with over 70,000 books and is an important cultural centre hosting a varied range of events and activities. The other



place you might like to visit before you walk on to Jarrow is St Hilda's Church which is to the right of The Word.

Return to the riverside and walk out to the Customs House which was built in 1864. It now houses a theatre, cinema, gallery space and restaurant. Turn left after the Customs House and cross a car park. Go to the right of the houses of Riverside Court to find some steps up to Commercial Road where you turn right. You will pass South Tyneside Magistrates Court on your left. After passing The Trimmer Arms, continue ahead to the end of Commercial Road. By South Tyne Building Supplies you walk on into Corstophine Town. All the while Tyne Dock is on your right and soon after reaching a T junction, where you turn right into Jarrow Road, you pass the Port of Tyne entrance.

As you walk the next mile, you will find some information panels about the famous author Catherine Cookson who lived in South Shields and Jarrow. She wrote over 100 novels, sold 123 million copies and was translated into 20 languages! When you see Gregg's Bakery on your left, take the next turn on your right into Church Bank and after crossing a bridge over the River Don, you will find your destination at St Paul's Church on your right.

### Alternative Route

Where the side road goes down to the ferry, you go straight ahead, passing a bus depot on your right. Follow the road uphill and soon after reaching the top, you fork left off Prince Consort Way and go down Ballast Hill Road. At the bottom of the hill turn left to go into Royal Quays Marina. You will find it useful over the next miles to follow the very cheerful River Tyne Trail signs. Walk across bridges to reach Albert Edward Dock which was opened by the Prince of Wales in 1884. Turn left and by the river is an impressive orange tripod steel structure called 'Tyne Anew' by the American sculptor Mark di Suvero. Turn right, passing The Earl of Zetland. This ship was once a ferry in the Shetland Isles. It is now a restaurant which usually opens at midday.

Turn right again to walk along the south side of the dock, then go straight ahead on a path which leads into a recently constructed park called Redburn Dene. Go straight on over when you come to a road. Keep to the main cycle and foot path and follow signs to the pedestrian and cycle tunnel. The interesting landscaping of the park features rocks and reclaimed timber from staithes - a reminder of the industrial past. The path winds its way to emerge opposite The Royal Quays Outlet Centre. Cross over the road and walk up to the roundabout where you turn left. Keep on the main A187 now and go on ahead at the next roundabout. Before you reach the next roundabout you cross a bridge and then take the footpath down to your left to reach a road which goes down towards the river.

At the bottom of this road, keep to the left of the roundabout and cross Northumberland Dock Road. Turn right and shortly afterwards, you will find the signs for the tunnel on your left. Near here was the site of an early steam powered winding engine built in 1802 and the Newcastle Corporation also built a cottage for George Stephenson, who brought his first wife Fanny here. Their son Robert was born a year later. The art work here by Fiona Gray features an elliptical sculpture called 'Echo' representing the two sides of the river and 'The Ones That Got Away' has five fish diving in and out of the ground!

You now enter the tunnel which was built in 1951 as Tyneside's contribution to The Festival of Britain. Walk down the escalators which were the longest in the world at the time they were built. In the early years they were used by thousands of people from Jarrow and Howden looking for work in the docks on either side, but now your walk

through is likely to be a quiet experience. At the far end a sign for Jarrow leads you to the lift which you will be glad to take this time!

Walk round to the left of the circular building ahead and then up steps and turn left passing a car park and going on a road which soon joins Priory Road. Where Priory Road turns right, go ahead on the footpath and keep by the graffiti wall on your right. The path soon leads you to the river Don. Turn right here to join a road. Just before you reach a car park, you will see some steps on your right. This leads into a park where you will find that Jarrow Hall is to your right and St Paul's Church is to your left.

## **Jarrow**

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

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

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

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

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

North of the church is Jarrow Hall which dates from 1785. Beside it is the Bede Museum which is an excellent place to learn more about him and also contains the

largest collection of 7th and 8th century coloured glass in Europe. In the grounds, you can walk through a reconstruction of an Anglo-Saxon village and farm which includes farm animals similar to those Bede would have known.

### Acknowledgements

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

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