



# The Way of the Sea

Jarrow to Warkworth

## 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 North Shields to Warkworth 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 Cresswell and Warkworth. 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.

The route was originally devised in 5 sections from north to south, so you will be walking the sections in reverse order.

## Section 5

### Jarrow to Whitley Bay – 12km – 7.5 miles

#### 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.

When you begin your journey at St Paul’s Church in Jarrow, you have a choice of two routes to cross over the Tyne to North Shields. The main route is a rather tedious 2.7 mile walk along busy roads to South Shields where there are some interesting things to see before you take the ferry crossing. The second option is longer at just under 4 miles, but more varied and attractive and takes you through the pedestrian and cycle tunnel. We begin with the main route...



From the church walk to the road (Church Bank) and turn left to cross a bridge over the River Don. Turn left onto the A185. 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!

Tyne Dock is on your left during most of your walk to South Shields and soon after passing the main Port of Tyne entrance, you turn left into a road called Temple Town. This leads on into Corstophine Town. Where a road leads off to the left opposite South Tyne Building Supplies, you bear right continuing on the main road which is now Commercial Road. Pass The Trimmer Arms on your left and you will see South Tyneside Magistrates Court on your right. Opposite it, look for some steps on your left which lead down to a car park. Walk across to the riverside and turn right by the Customs House which was built in 1848. It now houses a theatre, cinema, gallery space and restaurant.

## **South Shields**

In 160 AD, 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.

The South Shields ferry landing is just ahead of you but before you cross over to North Shields, you may wish to visit two very interesting places. The striking circular building to your right 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. To the right of it is St Hilda's Church. Most of the church that we see today is the result of an extensive rebuild in the nineteenth century.

### Alternative route

*From the door of St Paul's Church walk ahead across the road onto the path ahead and after 100 metres take a path on your right where you will find an opening with some steps down to the River Don. Turn left along the road and after passing the back entrance to Jarrow Hall fork left onto the path. This leads on, passing a graffitied wall on your left to come out onto Priory Road. Turn right here then fork immediately right. Cross straight over the riverside park and after the car park, you will find some steps leading down to the entrance to the pedestrian and cycle tunnel.*

*The tunnel 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 I expect that you will prefer the lift instead of the escalators! As you leave the tunnel, notice the art work here by Fiona Gray which 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! Near here also 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.*

*Go ahead and turn right onto the main road before forking right. This road soon turn left to cross Northumberland Dock Road. There is a roundabout on your left. Go straight ahead into Howden Road. At the top of the road there is a path which leads up to the A187. Turn right here and go on passing a roundabout. Walk onto the next roundabout and cross over the road and then go right into Coble Dene. The Royal Quays Outlet Centre is on your right. Go over at the pedestrian crossing and into the woods where you will find a pedestrian and cycle path. Turn right onto this pleasant winding path through a recently constructed part called Redburn Dene. The interesting landscaping of the park features rocks and reclaimed timber from staithes – a reminder of the industrial past.*

*Keeping to the main path, you cross over the road and descend towards Royal Quays Marina. Walk along the south side of Albert Edward Dock, which was opened by the Prince of Wales in 1884. At the river end of the dock, turn left, 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. By the river there is an impressive orange tripod steel structure called 'Tyne Anew' by the American sculptor Mark di Suvero. Turn left and then right to cross over bridges and to leave the marina. Turn right and walk up Ballast Hill Road. At the top of the hill, you will join Prince Consort Way which leads down hill past docks on your right and, after passing a bus depot on your right, you have rejoined the main route at the ferry terminal.*

## **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 start from the ferry terminal walking north along the Tyne, notice the large sailors home on your left which was built by the 4th Duke of Northumberland in 1854. Next on your right, you will come to 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 was installed in 1992. You are now coming to a fascinating area called the Fish Quay. On your right you will come to a quayside and you'll want to walk up here to be able to see some of the fishing vessels moored in a place which is called The Gut. The

roadside here is full of fish restaurants and it all feels like a step back in time. Turn right off Union Quay towards a former lighthouse. This is called the New Low Light and was built in 1810 to replace the Old Low Light – it is still a useful navigational aid for ships in the Tyne. Turn left immediately before the lighthouse by The Fisherman’s Mission. On your left is Clifford’s Fort. This gun battery was originally built in the seventeenth century in the context of the Anglo-Dutch wars. The walls with openings for the guns can still be seen. Appropriately as you leave 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.

You now begin a pleasant walk along the promenade to Tynemouth with good views of the two protecting piers. As you near Tynemouth, the treacherous Black Middens Rocks which have seen many a ship wreck are on your right. Just before the end of the promenade the way of the sea leads off uphill to the left. There are fine views now of Tynemouth Castle and Priory ahead. At this point you may want to turn left to visit the prominent statue of Lord Collingwood and The Watch House Museum, but The Way of the Sea goes on passing Prior’s Haven which is home to the local rowing and sailing clubs. Continue uphill to pass the entrance to the castle on your right.



## 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 about whether the Romans occupied the site. An Anglo-Saxon monastery was built sometime in the 7th century. It was sacked by the Vikings in 800 AD 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 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.

About 400 metres after the castle, you may want to divert to Sharpness Point, a good place to enjoy the views towards St Mary's Isle and back to the castle and priory. Walk on along the Grand Parade, passing Tynemouth Long Sands, a beach that is popular with surfers. North Tyneside also have excellent and frequent interpretation panels telling the stories of an area which is rich in history. The next 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. You have now reached Cullercoats.

## **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'.

Walk on past the Victorian built Beverley Terrace with sheltered Cullercoats Bay below you. There are two particularly attractive buildings on your right, the Watch House and the Cliff House which is the oldest house in Cullercoats built in 1768. Go past the Queen's Head and when you see the Cullercoats Methodist Mission ahead of you turn right into Norma Crescent. Go round to the left and left again along the one sided terrace of Southcliff before turning right again onto the main road.

The next headland is at Browns Bay and there is a natural swimming pool at Table Rocks. As we reach Whitley Bay, the promenade widens and passes the unusual sandcastle seats which give good protection from the wind.

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 fun fair was added. In the 1990s 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 4

### Whitley Bay to Blyth – 11km – 7 miles

Continue on the coastal path with the expanse of Whitley Bay ahead of you. The path keeps along the top of the cliff, but you may choose to walk on the beach or the lower promenade. Keeping to the main path though enables you to enjoy the better views. Half way along the bay, you will pass the Rendezvous Café and the Links Gallery and Café is 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!



### 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.

As you walk on, you'll cross a bridge over Briar Dene and then walk across the car park, all the while heading towards Saint Mary's Island with its lighthouse. When you come to the road cross over and you will pass carparks on your left. As you walk down the causeway look out for steps on the left to continue on the coastal path. New views soon open up to the north including industrial Blyth and the power station at Lynemouth in the distance. After passing Crag Point, the path comes to a road where you turn right to walk into Seaton Sluice. 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.

## 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.

You will pass the Tower House Gallery and the Waterford Arms on your left before coming to the main coastal road where you turn right. Walk down to the bridge where you have a good view of the harbour. Soon after crossing the bridge, you will see the England Coast Path sign which leads you to an excellent 3km tarmac path through the dunes all the way to Blyth. This is called the Eva Black Walkway. 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 Blyth you will pass interesting wooden sculptures on the theme of cycling. When you reach the end of the Eva Black Walkway, you will see some gun emplacements ahead with replica guns. Turn right here to the sea, then left along the promenade passing beach huts on your left. Walk on for another 400 metres and by a car park turn left. At this point you are leaving the sea for 11 kilometres to cross over the River Blyth.



## 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 Riddleys 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.

Turn right onto the B1329, passing the southern part of the Blyth Port on your right. You will come to Ridley Park on your right, which you walk through following cycle path signs to the northern end. Here turn right soon passing the lifeboat station. Walk onto the quayside and you will see a tall ship 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 *Williams*, which was built in Blyth and captained by William Smith also from Blyth, which 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.

Ahead of you, you will see 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. Soon after passing an attractive blue gateway with silhouettes about Blyth old and new and the Blyth Town Council offices on your left, take the footpath on your left back up to the B1329 and turn right. Pass the impressive Catapult building on your right and this section ends at the traffic lights where you see Morrisons on the other side. This is the closest place to centre of the town.

## Section 3

### Blyth to Newbiggin-on-Sea – 15km – 9 miles

Walk north along the B1329, soon passing the entrance to Port Blyth. Where the main road turns left, go straight ahead into Crawford Street which soon bears left and then passes through a new housing estate. At the end of the street you will come to some bollards and a fuel station on your left. Turn right here into Chain Ferry Road to walk to the River Blyth where you turn left. The name of the river is indeed from the adjective, so may your walk out of Blyth be a merry one! You now have a 1.5km walk by the river side, interrupted briefly by the need to cross a tributary. You go over a bridge and turn right into Coniston Road and soon come back to the riverside. When you reach the bridge over the A189 ascend the steps to experience the noisiest few minutes of your whole pilgrimage! Go down the steps at the other side and turn left under the bridge and then left again to go down to the riverside where you turn left under the bridge once more.

Follow the path now along the north side of the river for 700 metres before reaching a kissing gate to go left through a field with Mount Pleasant Farm on your right. Just after passing the farm, go through the gate by some trees, then turn left onto the farm road. Where the farm road turns left, go straight ahead on the path along the left-hand field boundary. After passing under the pylons, turn left and go across the field. Cross over a little burn and another field to reach the Sleek Burn. Turn left here and go down a narrow path to reach a road where you turn right, cross the bridge and head uphill. At the top of the hill, go off the main road to the right to walk through East Sleekburn. You'll pass the General Havelock Inn on your left. Next you pass a barrier



to go ahead along a disused road to join a main road. You will soon pass a roundabout and then there is a rather uninteresting stretch with heavy industry on your right. At the next roundabout, cross over and walk under the railway bridge. You will be glad to arrive back at the sea! You are now in what was once called Bedlingtonshire, an area of land between the River Blyth and the River Wansbeck which was a special territory of the Prince Bishops of Durham. It was an isolated part of Co Durham until 1844.

Turn left by the car park and there are a number of parallel paths going north at this point. You will pass the Cambois Miners' Welfare Institute built in 1829 and with Platform Entrance and Hall Entrance on either side and also St Andrew's Church. 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. All the paths lead to a good path close to the sea. You pass car parks and a small wood before the coastal path forks left to another car park and to Charlton's Bar, which was established by John, son of the football legend Jackie Charlton. Turn right up the hill and after 300 metres, you will find the footpath on your left.

You pass the Cambois Boat Club on your right. Quite soon the path descends to the River Wansbeck and you walk under the A189 cross the footbridge and then turn right to follow the northern bank. 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 that this would have been further upstream. After 500 metres the path heads uphill and enters a caravan park – the coast path is well signed through the park. You pass by shops and reception before turning right. You leave by a kissing gate and turn left. 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. After half a kilometre you pass a headland and then reach Newbiggin-by-the-Sea. After passing a bowling club, you'll come to Beach Terrace. Fork right on the paved path down to the promenade which is the longest in Northumberland.

## 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.

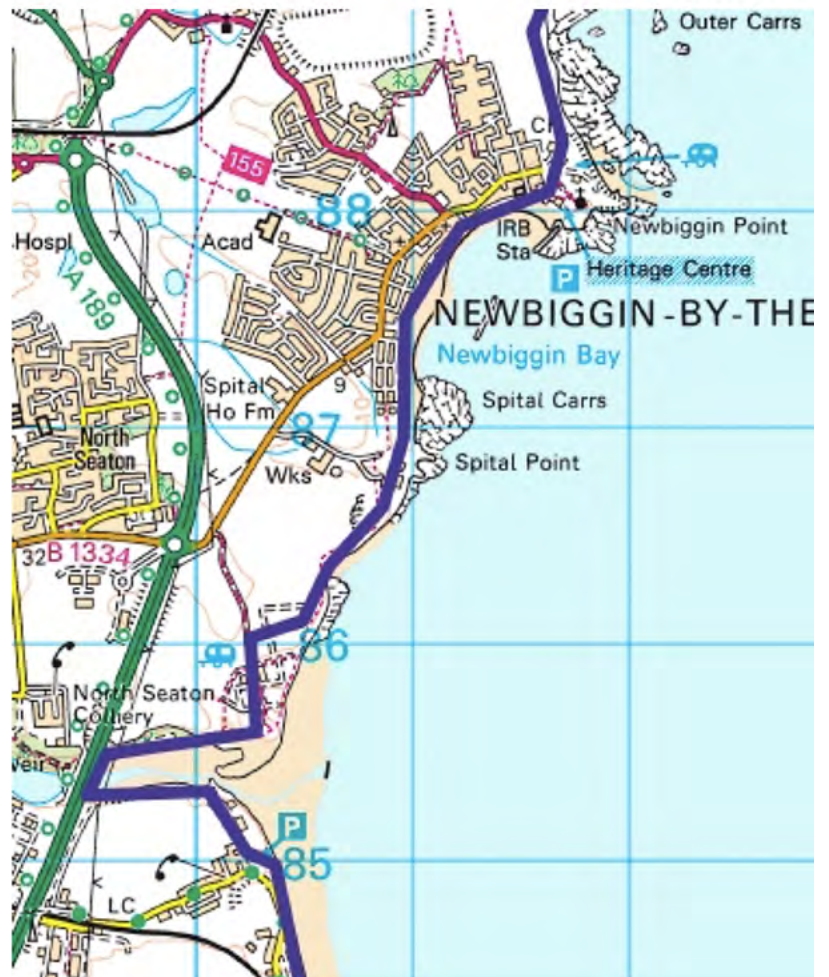
The main highlight along the beach is the remarkable three times life-size statue of *The Couple* located on a plinth 250 metres offshore. This installation by Sean Henry was erected in 2007. The very ordinary couple, who are locally known as Ebb and Flo, are looking out to sea, but there is nothing 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.

At the northern end of the promenade, you come to 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. Next you come to the Newbiggin Maritime Centre and then ascend some steps and you will see St Bartholomew's Church ahead of you which is the end of the section.

## Section 2

### Newbiggin-on-Sea to Druridge Bay Car Park – 14km – 8.5 miles

From the church walk towards the town and at the roundabout, turn right. You'll pass Newbiggin Golf Club on your left and go past a barrier and through a rather untidy yard to reach the golf course. Walk on along the coast path, with the golf course on your left. You



pass by Beacon Point before reaching Lyne Sands Bay. The power station looms ahead of you and you walk round the sea side of it. The power station is currently undergoing major conversion from being coal-fired to full biomass electricity conversion which will supply 450,000 homes. On the northern side, you will cross a bridge over an orange stream which is seepage from the former coal tip. The village of Lynemouth 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. You reach the road, cross over the bridge and the coastal path is on your right. After a kilometre the path leads you back to the road where you turn right to walk into Cresswell, passing Snab Point and a caravan park on your way.



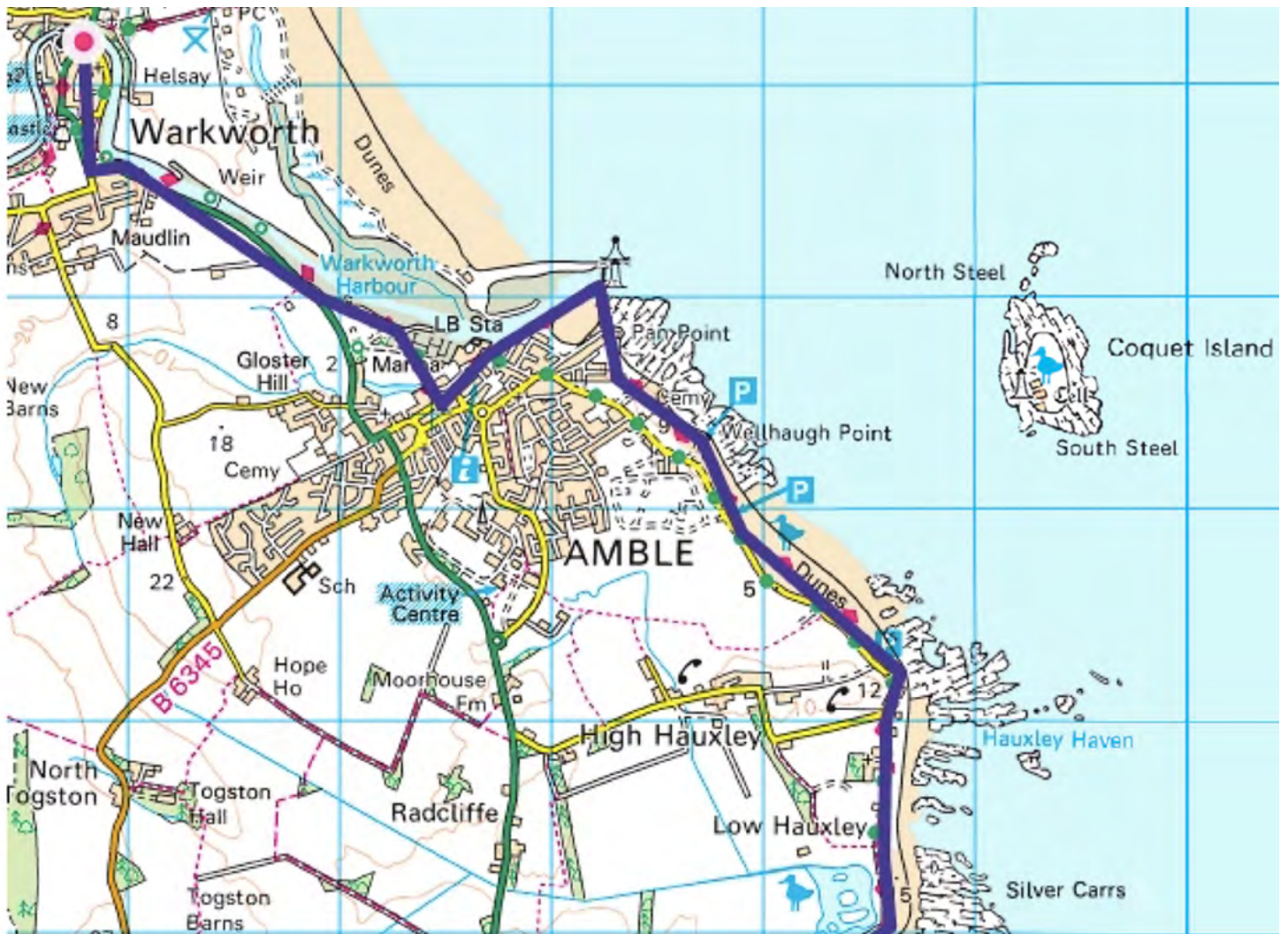
At the north end of the village, you begin to walk the 11 kilometre curve of Druridge Bay. The path goes briefly through the dunes before reaching a car park and the excellent Drift Café. The route then goes through a field with cattle before crossing the Blakemoor Burn near Cresswell Pond and you walk on following the posts through the dunes. Near a small pine plantation the path turns inland to meet a track where you turn right. You go by East Chevington Nature Reserve before reaching a road where the route continues to the north, but you will most probably want to go ahead to Druridge Bay Country Park and 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 1

### Druridge Bay Car Park to Warkworth – 10km – 6 miles

Return to the coast road to resume your journey north. After 2 kilometres you will pass by Hauxley Nature Reserve before arriving in the village of Low Hauxley. In a courtyard on your left, there is a small church which is often open. Walk out of the village passing Hauxley Lane on your left, before leaving the road to walk on the footpath above the bay and dune system. There are good views of Coquet Island as you approach Amble.



## Coquet Island

Coquet Island is first mentioned in 684 AD 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.

You will pass a cemetery and a playground as you go on along the coast. Go down a flight of steps and go straight ahead onto the breakwater towards the lighthouse, then turn left along the jetty into the town.

## Amble

For many centuries, Amble was a tiny hamlet which formed part of the port of Warkworth. The name possibly has Celtic roots 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 1920s up to 750,000 tons of coal passed through the port. The railway closed in 1969.

You come to a quayside where you turn left then right onto the main road. You pass the attractive pod shops at Harbour Village and you may be tempted by Spurelli's Boutique Ice Cream. When you come to a car park on your right, go diagonally across it and you will find the path which skirts round the marina. You cross a green, passing a beacon and go through boatyard and then reach the main coast road where you turn right. There are good views of River Coquet and the castle as you walk the last kilometre. When you come to a T-junction, turn right and pass the castle on your left as you arrive in the centre of Warkworth.

## 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 "wormeaten 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.

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

