

MORTH PENNINES AOUB PARTNERSHIP

Working together for the North Pennines

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Credits This leaflet was produced in association with Elaine Edgar at Whitley Castle, Alastair Robertson of the Alston Moor Historical Society, English Heritage, and the South Tynedale Railway Preservation Society.

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The North Pennines AONB Partnership holds a Gold GTBS Award for its corporate office and tourism activities.

We can provide the information contained in this leaflet in large print, different formats and other languages on request. Please call 01388 528801.

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To find out more, contact:

This is one of a series of walks leaflets to help you discover the Morth Pennines AONB. Why not try one of the others?



How to get there

when signs specify this).

Please follow the Countryside Code: leave gates as you find them and keep your dog under close control (on a lead when signs specify this).

Facilities: Alston has public toilets, a Post Office, a transport museum (The Hub) and shops, several hotels and tea rooms.

Traveline on 0871 200 2233

Public transport: For journey and timetable information call

Start/finish: South Tynedale Railway car park, Alston Grid Reference NY717 468 **NB Car park closes at 5pm**

Useful maps:OS Landranger Sheet 86 Haltwhistle and Brampton
OS Explorer Sheet 31 North Pennines. Teesdale and Weardale

Walk grade: Moderate – Typically a country walk with some hills, stiles and muddy paths. Boots advisable.

if catching the train back to Alston.

Walk length: Allow 4 hours if walking whole route or 2 hours

returning by the railway.

Walk distance: Approx 12km (7½ miles) or 6km (3¾ miles) if

This historic walk takes you from Alston along the Pennine Way up to the Roman Fort at Whitley Castle. If you are keen to walk and discover more, the route continues past Kirkhaugh church to Alston. After the church you can: A Carry on the full route to Alston; B Go back to Kirkhaugh station and walk back along the railway; C Have a cup of tea on board and ride the train to Alston. See below for further information.

Mhitley Castle

Whitley Castle

LIVING NORTH PENNINES

At 330m (1050ft) above sea level, Epiacum (Whitley Castle) is the highest stone-built Roman fort in Britain. It housed a garrison of about 500 men, and was probably built to control mining for lead and silver. Although we have yet to discover evidence for Roman mining in the North Pennines, archaeologists agree that it must have taken place here. The Roman road known as the Maiden Way (between the forts at Kirkby Thore, in the Eden Valley, and Carvoran, on Hadrian's Wall) passes close by the fort. Free guided walks for groups of 6+ can be arranged by contacting Elaine Edgar: elaine.edgar@btinternet.com telephone 01434 381773









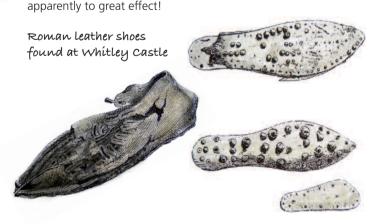
Roman altars found at the fort



Aerial view of Whitley Castle Roman Fort

Epiacum's unique rhomboidal form (most Roman forts were more rectangular in plan) is due to the shape of the gently sloping knoll on which it is built. The fort defences consisted of a stone wall surrounded by earthen banks and ditches which survive today as some of the best-preserved fort ramparts in the entire Roman Empire. Large stone towers stood at the corners of the fort. Access to the interior was typically through four massive stone gateways, one in each side. Turf-covered foundations of buildings, including the headquarters building and barrack blocks, can still be seen on the ground within the fort.

Historically, little archaeological research has taken place at Epiacum, but many artefacts including altars, inscribed stones, coins, pottery and objects of glass and jet have been found here over the centuries. An excavation of the bath house, at the north-east corner of the fort, took place in 1810, and in 1825 a Roman rubbish tip was discovered from which several leather shoes were recovered along with a wooden comb, pottery and other objects. Some of this Roman rubbish was spread on local fields as manure,



Pottery from a small excavation in the 1950s suggests that the fort was built at about the same time as Hadrian's Wall, in the year 122. It was rebuilt on at least two occasions before apparently being abandoned in the later fourth century.

The archaeological survey in 2009 has revealed the fort in great detail, along with the remains of a civilian settlement ('vicus') north and west of the fort ramparts. Further research, conservation and interpretation work is planned over the next few years and results will be posted on the AONB website.



Alston

South

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The earrings and other finds are

Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne.

on display at the Great North

Tynedale

Railway

Station

The walk

Start at the South Tynedale railway car park. Walk back over the level crossing, turn right and walk up the road, turning right at the top. Continue along the street, pass the turning to the left towards the town centre.

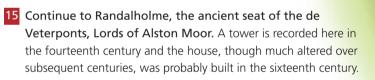
Alston is reputedly the highest market town in England. Recorded in twelfth-century documents, it stands at the crossroads of the North Pennines, with roads following ancient routes north into Tynedale, east to Weardale, south-east to Teesdale and south-west to the Eden Valley. The ancient medieval church was demolished and a new one built in 1769, to be replaced in turn by the present church in 1869. Its medieval and post-medieval history is closely linked to the local lead industry and many of the town's buildings date from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when this industry was at its height.



Alston

About the railway The railway from Haltwhistle to Alston was opened in 1852 to serve the local lead industry. It closed in 1976 and the the track bed is now followed by a narrow-gauge railway managed by the South

Tynedale Railway Preservation Society. For more information on the railway visit www.strps.org.uk. For timetable information telephone 01434 382828.

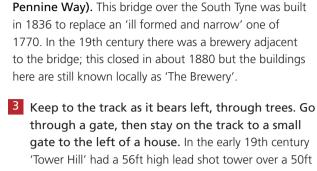


Head up the hill away from Randalholme and continue until you reach a fingerpost to Alston on the right. Follow it! This path takes you down through woods and along fields next to the river. Pass through a gateway on to a track. Follow this, turning right at a crossroads. Carefully cross the railway and join the South Tyne Way, to Alston station car park. Please note the the car park closes at 5pm.



Randalholme, with Whitley Castle in distance

13 Turn right to visit Kirkhaugh church. The cross outside the church here dates from the 10th or 11th century. The church, uniquely dedicated to 'The Holy Paraclete', dates back to the thirteenth century but was largely rebuilt in 1869, its design apparently inspired by churches in the Black Forest. Now return to the railway station or back at the road turn right, passing Underbank Farm.

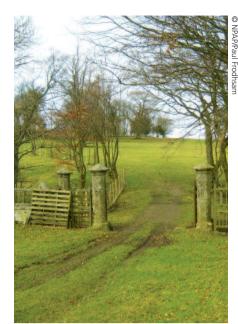


Continue, past a garage, round a bend and over the

immediately right again onto a track (signed

bridge. Turn right on (the road to Brampton), then

shaft, down which molten lead ore was poured, cooling as it dropped, to form round pellets. The tower has now gone, but the factory became a house, and the name survives. Follow the narrow path, between a wall on your left and a fence and hedge on your right.



Old carriageway to Harbut Lodge

4 Go through a stone squeeze stile and continue beside a wall. Looking down towards the river you will see a substantial earthwork, beyond which a hollow way leads to a former ford.

Kirkhaugh

Station

5 You come to a gateway with grand stone pillars. This is the old carriage way to Harbut Lodge, built in 1838. Go through the gate and bear left up the field following Pennine Way waymarkers. Go through a field gate and follow the track past a house on your right. Turn right and walk across the field to a stile. Cross the stile and turn left onto a stony track.

> 6 Follow the track up to the road Turn right and walk along the road for about 50m and (taking care Λ) cross to a kissing gate.

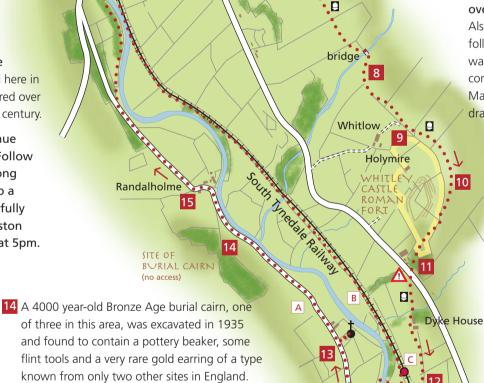
> > 7 Climb the field ahead, following Pennine Way markers, through several kissing gates and over two stone stiles. The Enclosure Act for Alston Moor was passed by Parliament in 1803, following which much previously open moorland was transformed into enclosed fields by the construction of many miles of drystone walls. Many of the fields were then improved through drainage and the application of lime and fertiliser.

> > > 8 Drop down to Gilderdale Burn. Cross the footbridge and keep to the path, climbing then contouring round a hillock and following the track straight on. A Roman bridge carrying the Maiden Way over the burn must have stood close to this footbridge, but no sign of it has yet been found.

9 The farm buildings at Whitlow and Holymire incorporate bastles, defensible farmhouses dating from about 1600, which had byres on the ground floor with living quarters above. Such structures were necessary to protect people and stock during the turbulent era of the border reivers (cattle/sheep thieves who raided across the border from both sides).

10 You have now reached the great Roman fort of Epiacum (Whitley Castle). It must have dominated the landscape during the second, third and fourth centuries. Feel free to explore the fort more closely. Enter the area through the gate in the bottom right corner (as seen from the path). Continue along the Pennine Way through a kissing gate to the left of Castle Nook Farm.

11 Keep following the Pennine Way, down to the left of the farm buildings and through trees to the road. A Taking care, cross over the road and cross fields to Dyke House. The farm buildings here date originally from about 1700. They stand exactly on the line of the Maiden Way, the route of which you can see in the fields to the north. Follow the path through several gates, then diagonally right down to Kirkhaugh railway bridge.



12 After passing through the gateway, either turn right to get to Kirkhaugh station, where you can catch the train or walk along the path beside the railway to Alston; or continue down towards the river, following 'Isaac's Tea Trail' over a footbridge. Turn left and follow the path to meet a public bridleway. Follow this to a road and turn right.

Newcastle upon Tyne



Kirkhaugh Church, Ancient cross outside Kírkhaugh Church

before its rebuilding in 1869