

North Shields Town Trail

The North Shields Town Trail is a two and half mile circular walk around the town which includes the town centre, Linskill Centre, Northumberland Park and the Fish Quay. The walk takes in many places of interest and buildings of historical note.

There is a section of the route (to the Fish Quay via Tanners Bank and back via Union Quay Stairs) which has limited access. An accessible route is available from exiting Northumberland Park and rejoins the route at Tyne Street. The majority of the route is level and on designated footpaths however some surfaces are uneven in places and the terrain in Northumberland Park is undulating.

The large print version is designed to be used in conjunction with the published trail, or a version downloaded from www.northshieldstowntrail.org, which includes a detailed route map.

North Shields has a vibrant town centre; a green haven in the lovingly restored Victorian era Northumberland Park and a historic working fish quay. Three distinct characteristics of the town are brought together in a circular walk. Step out and discover more about the town's past, the natural life that thrives in urban North Shields and the fascinating story of the Fish Quay.

The original settlement dates to the early 1200s when a series of "shielings" or "shiels" – fisherman's huts – were established on the Fish Quay. It is from these dwellings that the town gets its name, the shielings being on the North

bank of the river. As the town developed, it spread away from the Fish Quay in the 18th Century to its current location with the building of elegant town houses that were home to the wealthy.

Famous people associated with North Shields include an artist, a musician and an African President! Hilton Valentine, The Animals guitarist, was born in the town. One of the most popular groups in the 1960s, their biggest hit was “The House of the Rising Sun”. The distinguished artist and stained glass designer Victor Noble Rainbird lived at 71 West Percy Street where a blue plaque is located. The former President of Malawi, Hastings Banda was a doctor in the town between 1942-45.

Starting inside The Beacon Centre, head to the exit on to Northumberland Square and enter it via the gate at the top of Howard Street. The square predates Newcastle’s Grainger Town by a quarter of a century. Two heritage panels tell the story of what was the flagship development of North Shields “new town”. Look out for the first one before you enter the square. Take time to read about it and enjoy the calm. Overlooking the south of the square is St Columba’s Church. Built in the 1850s by the North East’s most famous architect, John Dobson, the church is a fine example of his “Renaissance Classicism”.

From the North West corner of the square, walk up Upper Camden Street and cross Albion Road at the lights. Walk into the grounds of the Grade II Listed 17th Century Post Medieval Christ Church. The sundial inscription records the consecration of the church in 1668. Having walked around the churchyard, **head left along Albion Road to the junction with Linskill Terrace opposite the Magistrates’ Court.**

If time permits, **take a short detour down Tynemouth Road and turn right down King Street to the junction with George Street.** This was the site of Wilkinson's Lemonade Factory which was the scene of the worst single bomb disaster outside London during World War II. On 3rd May 1941, a German raid made a direct hit on the factory causing machinery to fall into the shelter below. Of the 192 people in the shelter that night; 107 men, women and children lost their lives.

Walk down the attractive Linskill Terrace to the junction with Trevor Terrace. On your way down Linskill Terrace look out for a blue remembrance plaque on number 81 on the left. You will see more on the walk and they mark the residences of some of the 1,850 men from the old Borough of Tynemouth who died serving their country during World War I.

Cross Linskill Terrace using the traffic island just before the junction with Trevor Terrace and across at the next island to the former Linskill Secondary School. Now the Linskill Centre, it is a thriving community centre popular with local groups for meetings and events. You may want to pause for refreshments in the café here or in the World War I Memorial Garden, opened in 2014. Inside and facing the reception turn left, then right and left again to get to the garden. The garden is used to remember those who died serving their country during World War I on four large boards in the garden displaying their names by street and communities.

Leaving the centre, continue left on Linskill Terrace and cross over at the junction with Washington Terrace, continue along and take the first right on Park Avenue. At the junction with Kitchener Terrace turn left into

Northumberland Park. The park dates back to 1885 after the land was donated by the 6th Duke of Northumberland, Algernon George Percy and paths were cut, trees planted and a lake constructed.

The park was recently rejuvenated with many original features brought back to life including the bandstand and new visitor facilities, including the Glasshouse Tea Rooms and a community room. Look out for one of the wardens, they will be happy to answer any questions.

The park is loved not only by people, it is a haven for wildlife. Badger, fox, hedgehog, rabbit and grey squirrel are amongst the mammal friends of the park. If you visit after dark you may see or hear bats. Over 100 species of birds have been recorded in the park making it a bird watchers paradise with the different seasons bringing summer and winter visitors. Look out for heron, kingfisher and great spotted woodpeckers.

The park's beauty is enhanced by the canopy of trees and its horticultural design. Some 65 species of tree can be identified including sycamore, ash and beech as well as some unusual trees like a sweet chestnut. Bulbs, ferns and rockery planting are amongst the species of flora and fauna in the park. It is an idyllic place to learn about the natural world that lives around us as well as somewhere to relax and play.

Walk past the bowling green and enjoy the panoramic view across the park before turning left and at the main path, turn right and a sharp left towards the medieval style garden and follow the path right with the herb garden on the left and at the bottom of the path turn right.

The Glasshouse Tea Rooms are on your left. Look out on the right for the original oak tree planted by the Duke of Northumberland when the park opened on 11th August 1885 and the Himalayan pine tree planted by the current Duchess when the park re-launched on 11th August 2015.

Continue down the path with the lake and fountain on the left and straight on to the play park by the left or right path. Children can play in a safe environment in the play park, on the climbing frame and the zip wire. There is also a programme of family activities throughout the year including, walks, talks and live music.

Exiting the park, turn left on Tynemouth Road and before you head down Tanners Bank, take a look at the Tynemouth Lodge which has been trading as a public house since 1799 and is an ideal “refreshment break” for those of you not accompanied by children. On the left is the former House of Correction – a prison for minor offenders.

Take care crossing the road (there is a pedestrian crossing 100 yards away) and then head down Tanners Bank. Pow Dene Court, where fish is processed, is on the right and is a reminder that the historic Fish Quay is still a working quay today. **Follow the road and take a sharp left towards the three marine buoys** which act as way markers for the national walking and cycle routes that pass along the quay including the Coast to Coast. Enjoy the view from Fish Quay Sands down to Tynemouth and the piers including the monument to local born Admiral Lord Collingwood, commander of British Naval forces when the Battle of Trafalgar was won, which looks out across the river.

Continue along the footpath to the left of the red buoy and on the right is Clifford's Fort. First built in 1672 as a defence against the invading Dutch, it is another reminder on this walk of the impact of war in North Shields. **Take the footpath to the right and turn right at the Dockmaster's House to the Old Low Light Heritage Centre.** Go inside and spend some time learning about the fascinating story of the Fish Quay which dates back to the 13th Century. As well as interactive galleries and exhibitions – fun for the children - the centre has regular events and activities. You will be made to feel very welcome when you visit.

If you want to read more about the history of the Fish Quay, look for the heritage panels dotted along the quay. Today, it is bustling with cafes and restaurants and there is always something going on both on the quay and on the river.

Exit the Old Low Light and turn left and left again and head to Union Quay and look out for Union Quay Stairs ahead. Take a deep breath and begin the climb.

At the top you are now on Tyne Street and the view both up and down the river is stunning. **Head along Tyne Street, with the river on your left** and stop outside the tall white building.

The New High Light Building was used as a navigational aid by vessels entering the River Tyne in order to avoid the treacherous Black Midden Rocks in the approach. When aligned with the New Low Light Building on the Fish Quay below, mariners would get a safe passage into the harbour. The New High Light was built between 1806-1808 and first lit in 1810.

Continue on Tyne Street and on the right is Dockwray Square. Walk inside and take a look at the statue in the park and you will see the well known face of Stan Laurel in a familiar pose, scratching his head, cheekily peering back at you. Born Arthur Stanley Jefferson in Ulverston, Cumbria, he spent some time living in Dockwray Square when his father was a theatre manager in the town. **Rejoining Tyne Street, continue to the end and to Howard Street.** Head to the railings for one last look up and down the River Tyne.

You are now beginning the homeward stretch of the walk with Northumberland Square in sight at the top of Howard Street. The building on your left as you look up is the Grade II Listed Maritime Chambers “Stagline” Building. Built in 1807, it is the former Tynemouth Literary and Philosophical Society Subscription Library and later became the headquarters of the Stagline Shipping Company. The Stagline emblem is still clearly visible on the gable of the building facing the river.

Walk up Howard Street to the junction with Saville Street. There are some buildings of architectural note on the right before the junction, including a Grade II listed Flemish bond brick building and a former Quaker Bank. **Cross the road using the zebra crossing to the left** and on the right hand corner is the former Tudor style Town Hall. Built in 1844 and designed by John Dobson, it included offices, a court and a police station.

Continue up Howard Street and on the left are John Dobson’s Greek Revival 1811 Classical style Scottish Presbyterian Church which became the Salvation Army Citadel and also a Romanesque Neo-Norman Baptist Church. **At the square turn left** and you are now stood outside North Shields Customer First Centre.

To learn more about things you have seen on the walk go inside and Discover North Tyneside - the library service's local studies section - is a treasure trove of local books, newspapers and photographs. It is a great place to start a new adventure and learn about the town or even your family history.

The Customer First Centre is part of the Beacon Centre in the heart of the town centre where you can shop and eat under one roof. Pop inside and have a look round before heading home.

Accessible information

There is a section of the route which is difficult for people with mobility issues. Tanners Bank is a steep gradient down to the Fish Quay and the route follows steps back up to Tyne Street. An alternative route from exiting Northumberland Park is to turn right along Tynemouth Road and first left down Hudson Street to Tyne Street. There is parking down on the Fish Quay, including outside the Old Low Light if you want to explore the Fish Quay.

Public transport

North Shields Metro Station is a five minute walk away from the start of the walk.

Regular bus services operate to and from the town centre.

Further information

www.northtyneside.gov.uk – Discover North Tyneside (local studies) and heritage blue plaques

www.linskill.org – Linskill Centre and Memorial Garden

www.northumbriaworldwarone.co.uk – World War I Commemoration Project

www.e-voice.org.uk/friends-of-northumberland-park - Northumberland Park

www.oldlowlight.co.uk – Old Low Light Heritage Centre

www.travelinenortheast.info and **www.nexus.org.uk** – public transport