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Front cover: Grassholme Reservoir (Walk 25)

CONTENTS

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Map key | 6 |
|-------------------|---|

| | |
|---|----|
| INTRODUCTION | 11 |
| Getting to County Durham | 12 |
| Getting around County Durham | 13 |
| Geology | 15 |
| Flowers and animals | 18 |
| Scenery | 20 |
| Mining | 21 |
| Railways | 23 |
| Access to the countryside | 24 |
| Maps | 26 |
| What's the walking like? | 26 |
| Walking and the weather | 26 |
| Tourist information and visitor centres | 28 |
| Emergencies | 29 |
| How to use this guidebook | 30 |

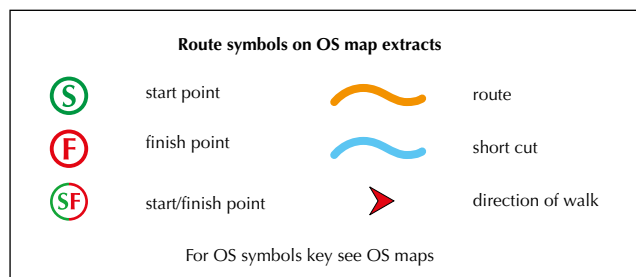
ROUTES

| | |
|--|----|
| 1 Durham City and the River Wear | 32 |
| 2 Bearpark, Broompark and Brandon | 36 |
| 3 Dipton and Hamsterley Mill | 41 |
| 4 Beamish and Causey | 44 |
| 5 Ouston and Urpeth | 49 |
| 6 Lumley Castle and Great Lumley | 51 |
| 7 Durham Coast Path | 55 |
| 8 Castle Eden Dene | 62 |
| 9 Wingate and Station Town | 67 |
| 10 Cassop and Quarrington | 70 |
| 11 Sedgfield and Hardwick Hall | 74 |
| 12 Middleton One Row and Girsby | 78 |
| 13 Low and High Coniscliffe | 81 |
| 14 Gainford and Piercebridge | 84 |
| 15 Cockfield Fell and Butterknowle | 88 |
| 16 Woodland and Copley | 92 |
| 17 Staindrop and Cleatlam | 95 |
| 18 Greta Bridge and Brignall Banks | 99 |

| | | |
|----|------------------------------------|-----|
| 19 | Tan Hill and Sleightholme Moor | 102 |
| 20 | Bowes and Bowes Moor | 105 |
| 21 | Barnard Castle and the Tees | 110 |
| 22 | Cotherstone and Romaldkirk | 114 |
| 23 | Tees Railway Walk | 118 |
| 24 | Middleton and Monk's Moor | 122 |
| 25 | Middleton and Grassholme | 128 |
| 26 | Low Force and High Force | 132 |
| 27 | Holwick and Hagworm Hill | 137 |
| 28 | Mickle Fell via the Boundary Route | 142 |
| 29 | Cronkley Fell | 145 |
| 30 | Cow Green and Widdybank Fell | 148 |
| 31 | Cow Green and Herdship Fell | 153 |
| 32 | Bishop Auckland and Binchester | 156 |
| 33 | Circuit of Crook | 160 |
| 34 | Wolsingham and Frosterley | 164 |
| 35 | Wolsingham and Tunstall Reservoir | 169 |
| 36 | Stanhope and Stanhope Dene | 173 |
| 37 | Westgate, Middlehope and Rookhope | 178 |
| 38 | Chapelfell Top and Noon Hill | 182 |
| 39 | Cowhill, Killhope and Allenheads | 186 |
| 40 | Edmundbyers and Edmundbyers Common | 191 |

| | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|-----|
| Appendix A | Route summary table | 194 |
|-------------------|---------------------|-----|

| | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----|
| Appendix B | Useful contacts | 196 |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----|



*A blaze of gorse bushes on the cliff coast between
Hawthorn Dene and Easington Colliery (Walk 7)*





Looking across the River Wear to Durham Cathedral (Walk 1)

INTRODUCTION

County Durham stretches from the high Pennines in the west to a low cliff-coast in the east. Its richly wooded, ancient landscape covered a treasure trove of coal and lead. Wave after wave of invaders fought each other, conquered each other and settled beside each other to breed a race of hardy people who will always have the strength to face change – for County Durham is essentially a land of change.

Durham city is dominated by symbols of a powerful trinity. The cathedral is a symbol of religious power; the castle a symbol of civic power; the university a symbol of the power of thought and learning. This trinity of powers and disciplines was personified in a succession of ‘prince-bishops’, who dominated and controlled the region throughout centuries of change. The religio-political scene was summed up in the words of Sir Walter Scott:

*‘Grey towers of Durham!
Yet well I love thy mixed
and massive piles
Half church of God, half castle
‘gainst the Scot.’*

Those who walk through County Durham can best observe the signs of change. Here you will find a Roman fort, and over there a Saxon church or a Norman castle. Here is a coalmine,

there is a lead mine, and over there is an old stone quarry. You can find remnants of ancient woodland, marvel at communities of arctic/alpine plants, or observe the slow and steady reclamation of a former industrial site by the forces of nature. Ancient market towns, old pit villages and new industrial sites all share the same countryside.

As industry changes, its remains are consigned to museums and visitor centres, so a generation is growing up who will never experience the depths of a coalmine, and are breathing cleaner air. As former industrial sites are redeveloped for recreational uses, there are more opportunities to explore new areas of countryside, where interpretative facilities are first class.

County Durham is changing fast. Historically, it was a land hemmed in between two mighty rivers – the Tyne to the north and the Tees to the south. It lost portions of its original territory in the local government reorganisation of 1974, although it gained a generous slice of Yorkshire in the process. In 1997 the Borough of Darlington ‘seceded’ from County Durham, so the county boundary keeps shifting. The power of the prince-bishops has waned, and more and more people are turning to the countryside to find a renewal of spirit. There are broad and bleak moorlands to explore, wide-ranging views to enjoy, powerful



waterfalls to admire, woodlands and fields to wander through, heritage sites to visit, with plenty of interest and enjoyment on the way.

The network of rights of way is constantly being overhauled by an active Countryside Group at County Hall, with the aim of ensuring that paths are walkable and clearly marked. New routes are being developed, most notably a splendid, signposted network of traffic-free cycleways along old railway trackbeds, linking with cycleways along quiet country roads. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 ensures that a high degree of access is available to walkers on the bleak and remote moorlands of the North Pennines. Tourism is an important new industry for County Durham.

This guidebook contains detailed descriptions of 40 one-day walks spread all over County Durham, to illustrate the region's history, heritage, countryside and natural wonders. The

terrain covered ranges from field paths to open moorlands, from the North Sea to the high Pennines. You will be able to discover the region's geology, natural history and heritage by following informative trails, or taking in specific sites of interest along the way. A network of tourist information centres can help you discover the best places to stay, how to get around and what to see. Welcome to 'Walking in County Durham – the Land of the Prince-Bishops'.

GETTING TO COUNTY DURHAM

By air

The two airports most convenient for getting to County Durham are Newcastle (www.newcastleairport.com) and Teesside International Airport (www.teessideinternational.com). There are more flights to and from the former than the latter.

GETTING AROUND COUNTY DURHAM

By bus

National Express coaches has direct services from London Victoria coach station to Durham, and also from Newcastle, Doncaster and Portsmouth (www.nationalexpress.com). Arriva (www.arrivabus.co.uk) and Go North East (www.gonortheast.co.uk) buses cover the region and Durham is a hub in their networks.

GETTING AROUND COUNTY DURHAM

Public transport around County Durham is generally excellent, with most places enjoying regular daily bus services.

If relying on buses, be sure to check the relevant timetables in

By sea

Ferries reach Newcastle from Amsterdam, bringing the region within reach the Low Countries. Check ferries with DFDS Seaways (www.dfds.com).

By rail

County Durham prides itself on being the 'cradle of the railways', and so arriving by rail ties in well with the heritage of the region. LNER provides direct rail services to Durham from London Kings Cross and also from Edinburgh (www.lner.co.uk). CrossCountry also runs direct services to Durham from points as far afield as Birmingham, Edinburgh and Glasgow (www.crosscountrytrains.co.uk).



A rough-surfaced road crosses Bowes Moor and links with the course of the Pennine Way (Walk 19)

Castle Eden Dene is managed as a national nature reserve and contains ancient woodland (Walk 8)



advance, and ensure that the level of service allows time to complete a walk. All the bus operators have websites showing timetables, and Google Maps 'directions' can be used to check timetable details.

Few places are accessible by rail, but a handful of important destinations are served. Public transport around County Durham is excellent in most places and quite good in others. In fact, it is good enough to be relied upon by walkers who wish to travel without a car. This guidebook was researched using public transport from one end of County Durham to the other, without any problems. However, some services have been drastically reduced recently.

By rail

Considering County Durham's railway heritage, and the fact that the region was comprehensively criss-crossed by railways in the 19th century, the 21st century network is a mere skeleton service. The mainline railway links Newcastle, Durham and Darlington. The coastal railway links the mainline railway with Stockton-on-Tees, Hartlepool, Seaham and Sunderland and one day the branch line from Darlington to Bishop Auckland may carry passengers into Weardale. For now, most local rail services in County Durham are provided by Northern (www.northernrailway.co.uk). The heritage Weardale Railway (www.weardale-railway.org.uk) operates only between Wolsingham, Frosterley and

Stanhope, but has plans to extend its services in the future.

By bus

Arriva traces its origins to an enterprise run by the Cowie family of Sunderland in 1938, and now provides the bulk of bus services in County Durham, www.arrivabus.co.uk. Go-North East buses generally operates in the northern parts of County Durham, linking with Newcastle, www.gonortheast.co.uk. There are half-a-dozen minor bus operators, of which the most important is Weardale Travel, which operates across the whole of Weardale, www.weardale-travel.co.uk.

Some bus operators sell 'explorer' tickets, offering exceptional value when a long journey or a change of bus is involved. Explorer North East tickets allow buses from several operators to be used. See www.networkonetickets.co.uk for full details.

Bus services around County Durham can be checked on the County Council website at www.durham.gov.uk/busmap.

Traveline

Timetable information can be checked for any form of public transport in County Durham and beyond by contacting Traveline, tel 0871 2002233, www.traveline.info.

GEOLOGY

The geology of County Durham is complex, but its salient points can be

WALK 1

Durham City and the River Wear

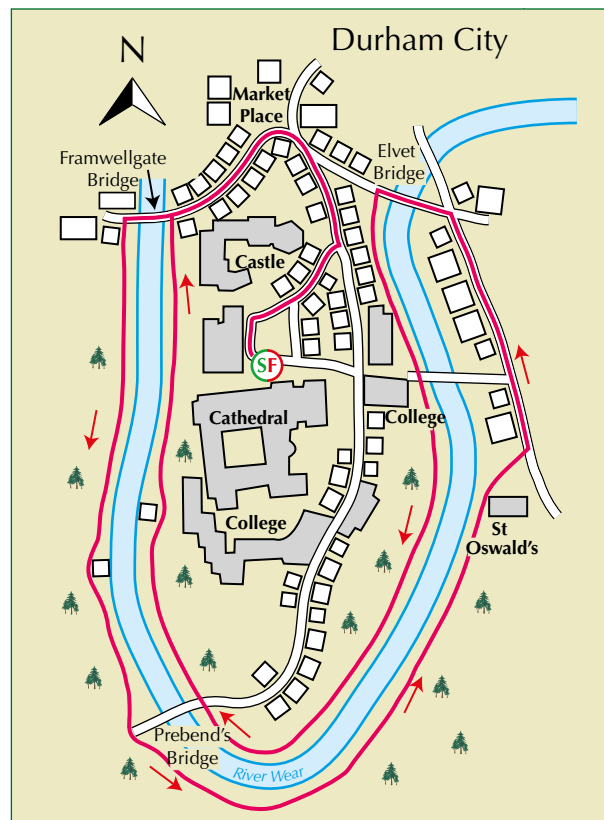
| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Start/Finish | Durham Cathedral – GR 273 422 |
| Distance | 5km (3 miles) |
| Terrain | Easy, low-level urban paths, tracks and roads |
| Maps | OS Landranger 88; Explorer 308 |
| Refreshments | Plenty of pubs, cafés and restaurants around the city |
| Transport | Durham is a major transport hub, with plenty of bus and rail services. The Cathedral Bus serves the city centre regularly from the railway station and coach park, except Sundays. |

Situated on a wooded promontory rising above a deeply entrenched meander of the River Wear, Durham city is redolent with history and stirs the spirit. The Dunholme – the hill crowned with the cathedral, castle and college – is a designated world heritage site. Before exploring the county of Durham, it is well worth exploring the city. Wander through the poky alleyways around Market Place before striding along both banks of the River Wear – no one leaves Durham city disappointed. This simple stroll could be accomplished in as little as an hour, but with 1000 years of accumulated history to see, it could take as much as a week!

A viewing platform was added to the tower in 2019.

Starting at **Durham Cathedral**, the best climb in the city is up the 325 steps of the central tower – weather and opening times permitting. ◀ You can look down on this short day's walk, as well as across country to distant hills and the moors of the North Pennines.

Descend from the tower, leave the cathedral and walk round Palace Green, passing the college and castle. Follow a narrow road down to **Market Place**. Turn left to continue down narrow, cobbled Silver Street, which is lined with shops, to reach **Framwellgate Bridge**. Cross the bridge and descend a flight of steps on the left, beside a pub. Turn right to walk upstream beside the **River Wear** and enjoy fine views across to the



castle and cathedral. The path passes a weir on its way to **Prebend's Bridge**. Don't cross the bridge, but maybe take photographs from its parapet, and read Sir Walter Scott's words carved in stone.

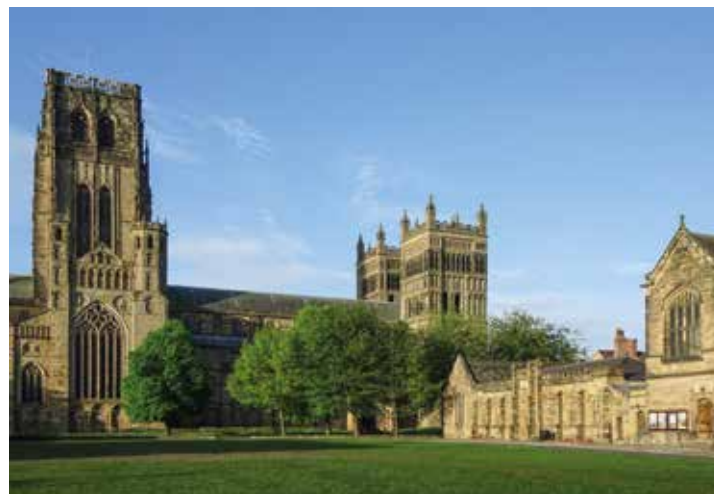
Beyond Prebend's Bridge, the broad path drifts from the river and later climbs up a wooded slope to reach **St Oswald's Church**. Bear left to leave the churchyard, which is managed as a wildflower meadow, and walk

along Church Street and New Elvet, turning left to cross **Elvet Bridge**.

Descend via steps from the bridge to reach the riverside path and head downstream. The path runs below some of the colleges and passes under modern Kingsgate Bridge. Proceed through the entrenched meander of the River Wear and then beneath Prebend's Bridge to reach the Old Fuller's Mill, which stands beside the weir passed in the early stages of the walk. Framwellgate Bridge lies further along the path, where you can climb back up into the city and visit any places that caught your attention earlier.

Durham City celebrated its millennium in 1995, recalling the day in 995 when the congregation of St Cuthbert brought their founder's body onto the Dunholme – the wooded promontory rising above a crook in the River Wear. The rest, as they say, is history. Rather than attempt to distil 1000 years of history onto half a page here, those who want to know more should get hold of the colourful,

The stout stone towers of Durham Cathedral completely dominate the skyline of Durham city



condensed, informative booklet *Durham – 1000 Years of History* by Martin Roberts, published by The History Press. Many of Durham city's main attractions have plenty of their own background material. Visit the Durham Museum www.durham-museum.co.uk.

Durham Cathedral rises above the spacious Palace Green

WALK 2

Bearpark, Broompark and Brandon

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Start/Finish | Deerness Gymnastics Academy, Ushaw Moor – GR 236 423 |
| Distance | 12km (7½ miles) |
| Terrain | Easy, low-level field paths and old railway trackbeds |
| Maps | OS Landranger 88; Explorer 308 |
| Refreshments | Pubs at Bearpark and Brandon, or off-route at Broompark and Ushaw Moor |
| Transport | Regular daily buses serve Ushaw Moor, Bearpark, Broompark and Brandon from Durham city |

Ushaw Moor lies just to the west of Durham city. Dispel any notions of a moorland walk, as the area is well cultivated and well settled. The starting point is a leisure centre and the route visits the villages of Bearpark, Broompark and Brandon. There are short stretches of railway paths, including the junction of the Lanchester Valley Way, Deerness Valley Way and Brandon to Bishop Auckland Way. The route explores the valleys of the River Browney and River Deerness, with the ruins of Beaurepaire seen in the early stages. Views are occasionally wide-ranging, with Durham Cathedral often popping up as a reference point.

Leave the Deerness Gymnastics Academy near Ushaw Moor, following a road behind it by turning left. The road then bends right as it passes through a housing estate. Don't take any roads to left or right, but watch for a bridleway sign on the left before reaching **Broom Hall**. A clear path leaves the estate to run northwards through fields. Cross a gentle rise to reach the village of **Bearpark** facing its parish church.

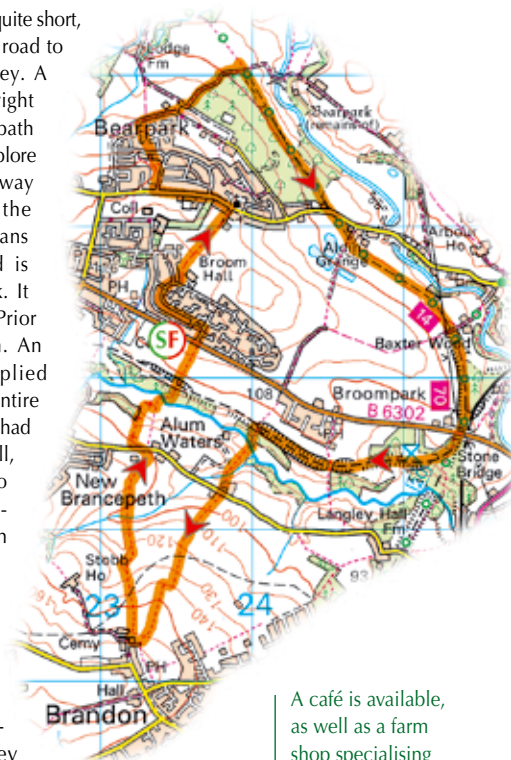
Turn left to walk up the road, passing a couple of shops, take-aways, a pub and bus stops. Watch for a bridleway sign on the right, buried in foliage, opposite a school gate in the upper part of the village. Walk along a

road, then branch left along a tarmac path through a grassy area. Follow this path straight down to a road and cross it.

Continue down through a housing estate, where the path simply cuts between the houses. At the bottom, turn right along a track and follow it to a road. Turn left to walk down the road, which becomes a dirt road that crosses an old railway trackbed, called the Lanchester Valley Way. Either turn right to follow it, or consider a short detour to nearby **Beaurepaire** ('Bearpark remains of') on the map.

For the detour, which is quite short, continue down the dirt road to cross the River Browney. A gate and stile on the right give access to a short path climbing to the ruins. Explore and return to the railway trackbed to resume the walk. **Beaurepaire** means 'beautiful retreat' and is contracted as Bearpark. It was built in 1258 for Prior Bertram de Middleton. An extensive estate supplied food and fuel for the entire household. Beaurepaire had living areas, a large hall, kitchen, chapel, and so on, making it a self-contained unit. Nearby Aldin Grange was attached to the manor as a farm.

Follow the Lanchester Valley Way, which overlooks the valley of the River Browney and crosses a road near Aldin Grange. ►



A café is available, as well as a farm shop specialising in meat, and trout fishing is also offered.



The trackbed features a link with Durham city and runs close to the main line railway at a point where a road bridge crosses it. Two more railway trackbed walks branch apart ahead. Keep straight ahead along the Deerness Valley Railway Path, which runs through the **Broompark** picnic area.

The Broompark picnic area includes the junction of the **Lanchester Valley Way**, **Deerness Valley Way** and the **Brandon to Bishop Auckland Way**. These have been developed from old railway trackbeds. The line through the Lanchester Valley carried ironstone from the Cleveland Hills to steelworks at Consett. The line through the Deerness Valley to Bishop Auckland mainly carried coal, linking nine collieries. It crossed the valley on a huge timber viaduct, now long dismantled. The railways closed in the 1960s and have been converted to multi-use railway paths.

Walk along an embankment and through a cutting. As you leave the cutting, look out for a gate down to the left, where a footpath drops down steps. ► Walk down to the wooded banks of the River Deerness, crossing two footbridges before the path leads up to Primrose Side Farm, passing between buildings, then cross a road.

An obvious path is signposted running straight uphill from the farm, climbing at a gentle gradient. Watch carefully for waymarks, turning right and left round the edge of a field at a higher level. The path leads to the edge of the village of **Brandon**, where a right turn leads to the first few houses. The Pub & Kitchen lies up to the left, but if this isn't being visited, then turn right downhill to continue.

A path leaves the road as signposted between two houses and leads back into fields. The descent is fairly clear, but watch for helpful waymarks on the stiles that need to be used. Cross straight over a track along the way, rather than following it. The route leads down into a small valley to cross a runnel of water. A slight climb over a rise in the fields leads to the roadside near Unthank Farm between New Brancepeth and **Alum Waters**.

An obvious shortcut can be made by following the trackbed onwards, turning right to finish.