

This is a circular route so your starting point can be anywhere on the Trail. A good place to start is the **Town Hall** in the **Market Place [1]**.

The French Gothic style Town Hall (built by public subscription in 1861) has undergone major refurbishment since being saved from demolition in the 1980s by the efforts of the **Bishop Auckland Civic Society**. It is now a cultural hub for the town with a café, library, theatre, and exhibition space.

Situated on high ground between the rivers Wear and Gaunless with a history dating back to the Romans, the town has formed part of the See of the Bishop of Durham since the 11th Century. Until the Industrial Revolution, it was a "clean, quaint-looking old place". It developed as an industrial town to coincide with the rapid expansion of the railways and coal mining in the 19th century.

THE BONDGATES

THE TRAIL

The **Trail** is one of the oldest parts of the town, the original houses were built on long, narrow plots in typical Medieval fashion. The "bondsmen" who first lived here most likely worked for the Bishop of Durham, neighbouring with other trades and crafts people like weavers, cobblers, and smiths.

North Bondgate [2]: Viewing point in the car park overlooking the River Wear Valley to Newton Cap Viaduct, the Kyrren site and the site of Newton Cap Colliery, once next to the village of Toronto, previously Newton Cap village, renamed by the original landowner who was in the Canadian city when he heard coal had been discovered on his land.

Fore Bondgate [3]: Leave the car park and look for the railings with "shops" written on them; take the alley behind the railings (info board available).

Assembly Rooms and The Bay Horse [4]: The Assembly Rooms were upstairs at **The Shepherds Inn** (Zair's Café), being used for a variety of purposes, including the Magistrates' Court, before the Town Hall was built. A pub has been on the site of The Bay Horse since the 16th Century and would have been in the centre of the then village green.

High Bondgate: once the location of the Police station, where infamous serial killer, Mary Ann Cotton, was taken after her arrest in 1872 for the murder of her young stepson. A nearby pub, The Sun Inn, where Cotton took her meals during her committal hearings, was relocated brick by brick to Beamish Museum in the 1970s.

TENTERS STREET AND NEWGATE STREET

From High Bondgate turn onto **Bob Hardisty Drive** which follows the route of one of the seven railway lines converging here. Vinovium House is ahead of you (named after the nearby Roman fort of Vinovia, now Binchester Roman Fort and open to visitors).

Tenters Street [5]: home to the former town Post Office (an imposing red brick building) and distribution yard. Opposite is the site of the Majestic (Odeon) Cinema. In the cinema's heyday the huge length of the queues often meant audiences would be too late for the start of the film and would have to sit through the second ("B", "B") or stretching wet woolen "Tenters" gives a clue to a forgotten industry that used to take place here – "tentering" or stretching wet woolen material over a series of hooks.

Theatre Corner [6]: return to Bob Hardisty Drive towards the roundabout (junction of Bob Hardisty Drive, Princes Street, and Newgate Street). This is Theatre Corner, once home to the Eden Theatre managed for many years by Arthur Jefferson, the father of Stan Laurel – Stan's statue is on the corner. Turn right onto Newgate Street.

Newgate Street: believed to be the original route of Dere Street, the Roman road from York to Corbridge – now the main shopping street in the town. The fine buildings along the street date from the 18th to 20th Centuries, reflecting the commercial and industrial fortunes of the town.

The Four Clocks Centre [7]: formerly a Wesleyan Methodist Church, now a community centre and café and home to a display about the industrial and railway heritage of the town including the 19th Century banner for the Bishop Auckland Branch of the National Union of Railwaysmen.

The main walk takes approximately 1 hour over 2 miles and burns around 200 calories.

With optional detours.

BISHOP AUCKLAND HERITAGE TRAIL

CIRCULAR ROUTE AROUND BISHOP AUCKLAND TOWN CENTRE



The Lightfoot Institute [13]: opened in 1882 as a Young Men's Church Institute and was named after the then Bishop of Durham, Joseph Barber Lightfoot. The building was the town's library until the 1990s, now partially converted into apartments.

The Mechanics' Institute and Masonic Hall [14]: on the junction of Kingsway and Victoria Avenue is the Bishop Auckland Mechanics' Institute, established in the early 19th Century. It occupied a few locations in the town before this building was constructed in the 1880s. The aim of the Mechanics' Institute movement was to educate the "working classes" by covering a broad range of topics. The Institute provided a lending library, reading rooms, lectures, exhibitions, trips, and social gatherings. Matthew Richley, the noted 19th Century historian of Bishop Auckland ("History and Characteristics of Bishop Auckland", published 1872), was a stalwart of the Mechanics' Institute.

Kingsway [12]: Continue past the cricket ground, turn right onto Kingsway. The Bishop's Sports Bar was once the entrance to the football ground. On your left are the rear of buildings on Newgate Street, this area is currently (2022) earmarked for further development.

Lodge Of King James I Academy [10]: at the end of Railway Street turn left onto South Church Road. Opposite you will see the Lodge now providing storage for the collection of the Durham Amateur Football Trust. Cross the road using the pedestrian crossing.

King James I Academy was founded in the 17th Century, the first school building on the current site was built in 1864. The girls' school on the site was built in the early 20th Century - there was an invisible, never-to-be-crossed "line" between the boys' and girls' schools until the 1960s when the two were amalgamated. Several Grade II listed buildings are on the site. Stan Laurel was a pupil at the school.

Bishop Auckland Cricket Club [11]: also the home of Bishop Auckland Football Club (until 2002), known as "Two Blues". Bishop Auckland FC has an illustrious history starting in the 1880s when theological students studying at Auckland Castle formed a team. Many of these players were from Oxford and Cambridge universities. It is the Universities' colours that still make up the team's strip. The new home of the "Two Blues" is Heritage Park at Tindale Crescent. Perhaps the most famous player to emerge from the club was Bob Hardisty (of "Bob Hardisty Drive" fame).

Bob's career began with Bishop Auckland FC in the 1930s and ended as coach for Manchester United with Matt Busby in the 1950s via time at Darlington FC in the 1940s. During his career, Bob helped Bishop Auckland win the Northern League seven times, the Amateur FA Cup three times and represented his country at three Olympics in 1948, 1952 and 1956.

Bishop Auckland Cricket Club, founded in 1853, started by teams playing on fields along South Church Road. The club has been in Kingsway since the early 20th Century, sharing the ground with the football club until 2002.

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South Church Road and Kingsway Forge (operating from the 1840s to 1990s) was world famous for the manufacture of steel, iron, and brass products. The numerous local collieries and the railways. Lingford, Gardner & Co was taken over by Wilson's Forge in 1930. Wilson's owned by Lingford, Gardner & Co was founded in the 1860s as "builders, hirsers and repairers of locomotives" for the Railway Street was the hub of activity supporting the needs of the railways. It was the home of Auckland Engine Works building obtained Grade II listed status in 2012.

Hippodrome Theatre [9]: home to **Bishop Auckland People's Museum**. The first-floor museum above the bingo hall exhibits items focusing on the social history and heritage of the town (small entry charge for 18+, limited access). The Hippodrome Theatre was built in 1909 as a music hall and variety theatre. The theatre boasted the largest auditorium in the town seating 1800 people. From 1914 to the mid-60s it was a cinema, since then, a bingo hall. The building obtained Grade II listed status in 2012.

Chester Street [8]: view the graffiti on walls donated by neighbouring businesses and created by a local art collective, including a portrait of Stan Laurel. Walk through the alley between Chester Street and Railway Street.

INDUSTRIAL QUARTER site of the forge is now a supermarket.

DURHAM CHARE AND MARKET PLACE **Durham Chare [15]:** once one of the main routes into the town before a new road layout through the Market Place was built in the 1920s. Walk to the bottom of the hill.

Castle Chare and Drinking Fountain [16]: the restored fountain was built in 1873 by the Temperance Society, (info board available). To the right is the 19th Century Gaunless Bridge. Beyond the bridge was the site of Ferens Mill producing flour and animal feed; there was a mill on this site from the 16th Century (now houses). Walk up the steps taking you back to Kingsway (**a steep climb of approximately 60 steps**). Cross the road onto Castle Chare into the Market Place.

Market Place [17]: the origins of the Market Place date back to the 13th Century, once being the genteel centre of the town with fine residences dating from the 17th Century onwards. Houses built on the south side had extensive gardens heading downhill to the River Gaunless. Some buildings have recently been redeveloped by The Auckland Project including the Mining Art Gallery and Spanish Gallery. The latter comprises the former Barclays Bank (19th Century and then the Backhouse Bank) and the adjacent building, once the home of the Barrington School and site of Pollards Hall. It's worth taking a circuit around the Market Place to take in the buildings and short detours around Silver Street and Wear Chare.

A famous resident of the Market Place was William George Armstrong, the innovative engineer, industrialist, and philanthropist. He lodged with the headmaster in what is now "Fifteas Team Room" (No. 9, Market Place) when he attended King James I Grammar School. Armstrong met his future wife, Margaret Ramshaw, in Bishop Auckland who also lived on the Market Place with her family. The two became sweethearts, marrying in 1835.

The War Memorial near The Mining Art Gallery was dedicated in 1922 commemorating the fallen from WWI up to recent conflicts.

TRAIL ENDS

● **Purple Detour:** High Bondgate > Newton Cap Bank > Skirlaw Bridge

High Bondgate: 19th Century water fountain or "pant" (info board available) near the Etherley Lane Junction.

Skirlaw Bridge: at the bottom of Newton Cap Bank has one rounded arch and one pointed arch, originally built by Bishop Skirlaw in the 14th Century and was one of the main routes in and out of the town until the Newton Cap Viaduct was saved from demolition by public effort and converted to road use (opening in 1995). The bridge is also the site of "Palfreys Leap" – in 1744 local prize fighter, Edward "Neddy" Palfreys allegedly leapt twice from the bridge (about 14 meters). The first "leap" was accidental, the second "leap" was to entertain the crowds!

● **Yellow Detour:** Princes Street > Waldron Street > Etherley Lane

Princes Street, St Peter's Church: here Stan Laurel was baptised and Sir Edward Elgar's "The Music Makers" had its world premiere.

Waldron Street, number 22: home of Arthur Jefferson, manager of the Eden Theatre and father of Stan Laurel.

Etherley Lane, number 5 (West House): has links to Edward Elgar - the owner at the time of Elgar's visits was a member of the Kilburn family, iron masters, who had their works in the town making huge castings for ships, bridges etc.

● **Green detour:** Market Place > Auckland Park

The Bishop's Palace, or Auckland Castle: residence of the Bishops of Durham for 800 years. Attractions include St. Peter's Chapel (open to the public), the Castle, walks in the park and woods, Georgian deer house, 18th century icehouse and a restored walled garden, and the Faith Museum due to open Autumn 2023.

This walk has been produced with kind support and contributions from: Bishop Auckland Civic Society, Bishop Auckland People's Museum, Durham Amateur Football Trust, Mrs Barbara Laurie

The map is reproduced by kind permission of Gillian Arnold. It was co-created by textile artist Gillian with schools and the local community.

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If you are interested in Bishop Auckland history and heritage, please scan the QR code.

Durham County Council

Historic England

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NORTHERN HEARTLANDS



river wear

dial stab hill

Bridge Rd
Norton car park
Fridge Street

North Bondgate
Fore Bondgate

Market Place

durham Rd
The dell
The Willows

Etherley Lane
Clarence street
Surtees street
Waldron street
Edward street

tenbers

Nengate street

Kingsway

Etherley Lane
Clarence street
Durham street
Princes street

East parade

Southchurch Road

Etherley Lane
Clarence street

Bob havistly drive

8
9
Chester st
Railway street

10
Queens Ra

Escaribe Road

Cockton Hill Rd

holdforth drive