

Where to find the South Shields urban health walks



Key to map symbols

-  Access Barrier
-  Bus stop
-  Car parking
-  Cross slope
-  Hazard
-  Information
-  Metro station
-  Public house
-  Public telephone
-  Seat
-  Shops
-  Slope up/down
-  Steps up/down
-  Stile
-  Toilets

Walk your way to better health

Half an hour of brisk walking on most days can:

Improve - weight control, stamina, confidence, community spirit, life expectancy, posture, energy and self-esteem.

Reduce - heart disease, stroke, diabetes, high blood pressure, bowel cancer, arthritis, anxiety and osteoporosis.

Furthermore, almost everyone can do it, you don't need any special equipment, it's easy and it's free! So why not take the first steps along the urban history walks, but remember not to overdo it.

Start slowly and build up gradually. Aim to walk for half an hour on most days, at a pace that makes you breathe a little faster, feel a little warmer and have a slightly faster heart beat. Walking doesn't have to be 'hard' - you should be able to carry out a conversation quite easily as you go, so why not go with a friend or your family?

The potential benefits of walking are far greater than any risks but if you haven't been active for some time, or are concerned about your health, check with your doctor before you begin.

Getting to the Health Walks

The Urban History Walks all start at Metro Stations where frequent bus services connect, making access to the walks easy. Contact North East Travel Line on 0870 608 2608 for more information or obtain a bus timetable from Nexus Travel Shops.

Getting around the Health Walks

The walks have been designed with everyone in mind, including people with pushchairs and wheelchair users. Each route has been fully surveyed to identify surface types, slopes and location of steps - all of which are indicated on the maps to help you decide if you can negotiate a particular walk before ever leaving home. Finding your way round is easy, as the Urban Walks use street names as a guide. At certain points, you will find markers fitted to lampposts and signposts to keep you on track.

Walking Works Wonders in South Tyneside

These Urban History Walks - in South Shields and in Jarrow and Hebburn - build on the success of the Monkton, Temple Park and Coastal Health Walks. As even more health walks are created around the Borough, each will be waymarked to a very high standard and have a self-guided booklet. The walks are being developed in partnership with the community - so why not take the first step towards a healthier lifestyle and walk your way to better health?

The project is also developing a network of volunteer walk leaders, to lead health walks throughout the year along the newly-established routes. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer walk leader, contact Ruth Nolan on (0191) 456 6903.

The project is a partnership between South Tyneside Council, South of Tyne and Wearside Mental Health Trust, South Tyneside Primary Care Trust, Age Concern, Health Action Zone and Groundwork South Tyneside.

Walk 1 - South Shields 'Roman' along the River

Distance: 4km (2.5 miles)



Introduction

The important position of South Shields at the mouth of the Tyne has been the major influence in its development. The Romans created a major port to supply Hadrian's Wall and the river has long since been the focus of many industries – the main one being shipbuilding. The works have all gone now, but some remnants of the past can still be seen.



SOUTH SHIELDS IN 1862
© Ordnance Survey Licence LA076341. 2003.

ROUTE

The walk starts and finishes at South Shields Metro Station. Proceed along King Street, passing under the Metro Bridge heading towards the **Old Town Hall** and **Market Place**.

In 1786 the Dean and Chapter of Durham bought the land and built the Market Place and Town Hall, moving the market away from the crowded riverside streets. The arches under the Town Hall provided shelter for the market folk, while the room above was used for vestry, and later council, meetings. It ceased to function as a Town Hall in 1910 but the market still thrives. Many of the buildings in the Market Place, including St. Hilda's Church, were damaged in the bombing raid of 2 October 1941.

As the pedestrian area comes to an end, take a left turn and cross Church Way at the crossing area next to **St. Hilda's Church**.

The first St. Hilda's Church was founded in 647 AD by St. Aiden and placed in the charge of the Northumbrian Princess Hilda. Abbess Hilda's early church was probably destroyed during the Danish invasions, although a church has remained on the site

ever since. The church we see today is the result of much renovation and rebuilding work, mostly done in the 19th Century.

Enter the park, keeping St. Hilda's Church to your left, towards the memorial. Keeping to the right hand path, walk through the park and cross the road in the vicinity of the roundabout on Station Road / Ferry Street. Continue along Brewery Lane towards the **Mill Dam** area and the Customs House.



MILL DAM (ESTABLISHED 1862) AND THE CUSTOMS HOUSE
© South Shields Libraries and Museums

In early times an old branch of the river Tyne ran along the Mill Dam, Coronation street, Ocean road, then out to sea. Gradually this silted up and much of the remainder was filled in after the Napoleonic Wars. The last section went in 1930. One of the industries of this area was Isaac Cookson's glassworks. South Shields was once one of the largest glassmaking centres in the country, with a total of eight large glassworks in the town.

Continue towards the river along Mill Dam, passing in front of the **Customs House Theatre, Cinema and Art Gallery**, until reaching the Merchant Navy Memorial Monument.

Opened in 1864 the Customs House was, as its name suggests, built for the transaction of customs duties to be paid on goods passing through South Shields.

Turn right and follow the river along the paved area towards the **passenger ferry landing** to North Shields.

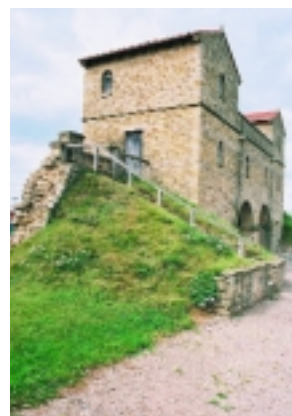
A ferry crossing has existed here since at least the 14th century. At one time passengers would have endured an uncomfortably crowded journey, along with livestock, to cross the river.

Continue east along the riverside, passing the ferry terminal, following the signs for Arbeia Roman Fort and turning right up the 'Coble Landing' onto River Drive. Head left and uphill for a short distance, then turn left at the roundabout on to Long Row which snakes downhill, crossing over the old docking areas to join the riverside.

The riverside was once a series of bustling quays and shipbuilding yards. In the 1820s, there were 12 shipbuilding yards and 13 dry docks which could accommodate 21 large vessels at the same time. In addition, there were many subsidiary industries such as rope and sail making, and forges making anchors and chains. Little evidence of this remains today other than the former graving docks, which have been incorporated into the riverside development to the east of the passenger ferry landing.

Continue along the riverside path, proceeding straight past Comical Corner and the South Shields Sea Cadet building. When the path ends continue along Wapping Street until you reach the large Seamanship and Survival Centre where you can re-join it, following alongside the rail tracks in the road. Where the rail tracks end, cross River Drive where the sign opposite says 'leading to Greens Place'.

Those who are able can use the steps to climb up to Greens Place. Alternatively you can take an easier route up by turning right, heading up River Drive with the wall on your left, turning left into Greens Place and going straight on to meet the area at the top of the steps.



ARBEIA'S RESTORED WEST GATE
© Linda Kay

From here, continue along Green Place, where **Arbeia Roman Fort** will come into view. Turn right into Baring Street, continuing with the fort to your left until you reach the junction with Fort Street.

Arbeia Roman Fort was occupied for almost 300 years, controlling the most northerly port of the Roman Empire in Britain. Built as part of the Roman Wall defences to guard the mouth of the Tyne during the reign of Hadrian, it also acted as a military supply base for the other forts along the Wall.

Entry to Arbeia Roman Fort and Museum is free. For more information, contact the museum on (0191) 456 1369.

For a shorter route, continue straight down Baring Street, turning right at the junction with Ocean Road, for a brief walk back to South Shields Town Centre.

For a slightly longer route, turn left into Fort Street, again following the outskirts of the fort to your left. At the junction with Lawe Road, turning left will take you to Lawe Top, which is worth a visit if not been to before.

Lawe Top offers commanding views of the river mouth and was therefore the natural place for the river pilots to set up their residences. The Lawe beacons, which still stand today, were erected in 1832 - replacing previous 18th century structures - to help guide the pilots.

If you visit Lawe Top, retrace your route back along Lawe Road. At the junction with Fort Street, continue along Lawe Road, with North Marine Park to your left.

The North and South Marine Parks were formally opened on June 25th, 1890. Much of the work of levelling the ballast hills that once occupied the site was done by relief labour who were given work at a time when the town was suffering from a severe depression in trade.



GREATHEAD'S LIFEBOAT THE 'ORIGINAL',
FROM AN ENGRAVING PUBLISHED 1803
© South Shields Libraries and Museums

At the junction with Lawe Road and Ocean Road, turning left into Sea Road will take you to the **Tyne lifeboat**.

The fact that South Shields was the birthplace of the first lifeboat is not in doubt, but who was responsible for its invention in 1789 *has* been ever since then. William Wouldhave and Henry Greathead both claimed to have been

its inventor, but it is more likely that the successful lifeboat was in fact a combination of the two designs. Both men's claims have been recognised on the lifeboat memorial, built for the Jubilee celebrations of Queen Victoria of 1887 and unveiled when the Marine Parks were opened. Beside the memorial stands the 'Tyne' lifeboat, which was the means of saving 1,024 lives.

If you visit the lifeboat, retrace your route along Ocean Road and at the junction with Lawe Road, proceed along Ocean Road towards South Shields town centre.

In the first half of the 19th century **Ocean Road** was no more than a country lane. Over the years it was gradually built up, with quality housing for professional people on the north side, and shops and pubs on the other. The houses originally had long front gardens which were lost due to road widening in the 1930s. Some of these houses became the guesthouses we still see today. The railways brought holiday visitors to South Shields which was promoted for its bracing sea air.



OCEAN ROAD IN 1939
© South Shields Libraries and Museums

Continue along Ocean Road, passing the Community Centre and crossing Anderson Street roundabout, in the vicinity of Asda. Proceed along the pedestrianised area, passing Kirkpatrick's Public House and the Museum and Art Gallery.

Kirkpatrick's was originally South Shields Marine School, opened in 1869, and founded by the benevolence of Dr Winterbottom in a deed of 28 August 1837. Marine training has now been transferred to the Westoe site.

South Shields Museum and Art Gallery is housed in the old Mechanics Institute, which became South Shields Museum and Library in 1873. Admission is free. For more information, contact the museum on (0191) 456 8740.

Continue along the pedestrianised area back to South Shields Metro Station.