

Walk Around Walbottle Village Starting at the Village Institute on the Green



1. The walk starts at the Village Institute built as a church Mission in 1891. Over the years it has served as a church mission, a school and community centre. Although the building itself is owned by Newcastle City Council It is managed by a Board of Trustees all of whom are volunteers and run on a not for profit basis. Look at the apex of the porch and you will see an inscribed stone with the date of construction. Below the stone is a blue plaque celebrating Walbottle's National Village in Bloom win in 1990.
2. The village green is the heart of the village. There used to be a duck pond on the North end of the green which has now gone. During WW2 an air raid shelter was built under the green but never used due to flooding. Look around the green and notice the white painted houses and bungalows. These were erected in the mid 1960's to replace older stone houses demolished under Newburn Urban district Council's renewal programme. The Duke insisted that stone from the old buildings was used in the construction of the new, hence the stone facings on the gable ends of the houses. Not all the stone buildings were demolished, the Village Farm and Walbottle House to the North of the green remain as does the chapel to the east of the green and of course the Village Institute.
3. Walk down the hill until you arrive at a field gate on the West (right) side of Walbottle road. Notice the slight embankment in the field. This is the remains of an 18th century waggonway used to transport coal from the local coalfields down to the Tyne.
4. Look to the top of the field at the trees to the left of the stone cottage. This is the location of the Walbottle Colliery known as Duke pit, the oldest pit in the area opened in the 1740's. Turn around now and follow the line of the waggonway down the hill. Walbottle road is built over the old waggonway.
5. Walk back up the hill and cross the road, look at the Wesleyan chapel built in 1867.

6. Attached to the chapel at the back on the right is an even older chapel built in 1837. Walk across the grass to the right of the chapel to the back, notice the red brick Victorian building also attached to the chapel. This was the chapel house which later became the caretaker's house. All three buildings are now private houses.
7. Walk up Percy way to Queen's drive and turn right. Walk all the way to the end of the road and you will come to Walbottle Hall. If permission has been obtained enter the grounds through the stone gateway and look at the house. Notice the different architectural styles with a stone tower attached to a rendered building. The house dates from the 18th century while the tower dates from the 19th century. The Spencer family, who owned the steelworks in Newburn, rented the house from the Duke of Northumberland. They asked the Duke if they could extend the house and after agreement was reached, built the tower. The Duke then charged them more rent because the house was larger!
8. Walk back down Queen's drive and you will pass the Percy Arms on your left, one of five pubs that used to be in Walbottle and a survivor of the redevelopment of the 1960's. The pub car park was once a square of small houses known as High Square which were demolished in 1936/7.
9. Now turn right and walk up Walbottle road on the right hand side of the road. Look over the low stone wall and in the trees are the remains of a quarry. Stone from this quarry is believed to have been used in the construction of Syon House or its outbuildings, the London home of the Duke of Northumberland. The quarry is a reminder of the industrial heritage of the village.
10. The pavement ends at the top of the quarry so cross the road to the West side and continue up the hill. Behind the stone wall is Walbottle House. According to local tradition a Roman bath house was found in the garden in the 1930's but reburied without record.
11. The hill at this point is known as Johnny's bank after Johnny McSwain, a local fruitier and market gardener.
12. At the top of Johnny's bank across the Hexham road is the old Co-Op building opened in October 1903. By the early 1970's the Co-Operative Society had sold the building which now contains a number of retail outlets.
13. Cross the Hexham road to the North side and walk West down the hill. There is an old metal mile marker (now sadly broken) against a wall near Braeburn Court.
14. Continue down the hill until you arrive at the Engine Inn, the other pub existing from the five that were originally in Walbottle. This pub replaced an even older one also called the Engine Inn. The pub derives its name from a stationary winding engine that used to haul coal waggons up from the staithes on the Tyne along the Waggonway. Look at the pub sign board it depicts a steam train. One of several names this pub has had over the years was the Locomotive and the sign may be a reference to that older name.
15. Next to the Engine Inn and running North is a narrow road, this is the path of the old 18th century waggonway that passed through the village to the Tyne.
16. Now leave the road and walk behind the hedge on the North side to view Hadrian's wall North ditch. In wet weather the ditch still fills with water as it must have done when the Romans constructed it.
17. Continue to walk west to the last house called Dene house. This is the site of Milecastle 10 and stones of the North gate are sometimes visible in the front garden. Please respect the owner's privacy and do not enter the garden.
18. Now cross Hexham road to the South side and look at the views down into the Tyne valley. The Vallum ran in this field but little remains to be seen although a slight depression can be seen from Grove road.
19. There is an even older milestone on the south side of the road at this point. It was erected when the road was built in the 1750's. It was inscribed with miles to Newcastle on one side and miles to Hexham on the other but is badly eroded. The 5 mile sign can just be seen on the West facing side of the stone.
20. Continue to walk east along Hexham road until you come to Grove road. Look back across the field and you may be able to see the depression of the Vallum. It is easier to see in the winter especially when snow is on the ground. The terraced houses to the South replaced an even older row of houses called New Row when originally built. New Row comprised 21 back to back houses built alongside the waggonway. Each house had just two rooms one down and one up with the upper room accessed by a ladder. These houses were considered unfit for human habitation and demolished in the early 20th century. Turret 9B was located in the corner of the school playing field where Grove road meets Hexham road.
21. Continue along Hexham road and turn down the next road on the right called the Green. Pass the Catholic Primary school and continue walking until you arrive at Walbottle Primary school. Look up at the gable ends of both buildings to see a crescent shaped insignia with a date. The crescent is the crest of the Percy family who are believed to have adopted the symbol after the death of William de Percy during the crusades. He died within sight of Jerusalem and was buried at Antioch but his heart was returned to England and interred in Whitby Abbey where his son, also William de Percy was Abbot. Continue down the hill until you arrive at the starting point of the Village Institute.

We hope you enjoyed the walk. More information can be found at www.walbottlevillagetra.co.uk