



# Kirkby Stephen town trail

'A walk around this historical market town'  
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## Kirkby Stephen East Heritage Centre

Designed by Thomas Bouch, Kirkby Stephen East Station was opened in 1861 and became a busy junction on the route from Darlington and Barnard Castle via Stainmore Summit to Tebay. The Eden Valley Railway linked at the junction for trains to Appleby and Penrith. The railway was closed for through traffic in 1962 although the last tracks from Warcop Army Camp to Appleby are still laid. After seeing service as a Bobbin Mill, the station lay derelict for a number of years.

In 1997, it was acquired to form the eastern terminus of a proposed Heritage Railway to Appleby East. In 2000, Stainmore Railway Company was formed with a view to restoring the building as a Heritage Centre and commencing railway operations. Since that time, a great deal of work has been carried out by mainly volunteers with many of the rooms restored, locomotives and rolling stock acquired and restored, track laid, and a picnic area has been constructed. At Easter 2009, the Heritage Centre was formally opened to the general public with a small Museum, Shop and Buffet Car serving refreshments and the ongoing progress can be viewed every weekend with an added Events Programme.

## Jubilee Park

When the common land was enclosed in 1856, this area including the Toaves allotments on the other side of the lane was left for recreational purposes. In 1887, to commemorate Queen Victoria's Jubilee it was decided to enclose the current park with an iron fence as a pleasure ground. Braithwaite's guide to Kirkby Stephen 1888 tells us that the park was being laid out on the hillside near the lower station. As funds allowed, gardens were planted with a bandstand and boating lake. We have Andrew MacKereth to thank for laying out the planting and his 'labour of love' so many years ago. Today, there is a tranquil wood and meadow with the pond, once loved by children, is an important wildlife habitat.

The award winning Summerhouse designed by Elaine Rigby Architects and built by G Middleton Ltd. of stone and oak replaced the ruined octagonal bandstand. A masterpiece of design and

a beautiful place to sit and view the spectacular panoramic scenery of Wild Boar and Mallerstang Edge. Once all the deciduous leaves fall you will also have a view of Kirkby Stephen far below.

## Stenkrith Park

This is a mysterious and wondrous place where the infant River Eden cascades through the wood. The Millennium Bridge designed by Blackett-Ord Consulting Engineers was built by P. Mawdsley of Appleby and opened in 2002. You will not be disappointed with the view from the bridge looking into the chasm that is known as Coup-Kernan, a Danish cup-shaped cavern where Druids are said to have held purification ceremonies. The Victorians named this spectacular scene Kirkby Stephen Water Falls, drawing early visitors.

There is a partly collapsed cave system with two small caves frequented by pot-holers called 'The Angel's Drainpipe' and 'The Devil's Grinding Mill', it is said you can hear the grinding of mustard for the devil far below. Then there is the legend of Deville and his lover, in revenge he threw her in the gorge and then jumped in himself. The two lovers were engulfed by the water.

Another interesting tale is that of William Kitching, A Stonemason said to have died in 1834 aged 84. There was a narrow channel known as 'The Span Dub' where the gap between the rocks was narrow enough to be spanned by a human hand. William said he would be the last man to span the Eden and having stretched his hand across the gap, took out his walling hammer and broke off some of the rock increasing the gap.

'It was varra bad on him; he sudn't hev dun it.  
It was a girt euer 'osity,t' span t'Eden'

In Stenkrith Park you will also see two sets of stones carved with poems by Meg Peacocke which are part of the Poetry Path and the second sculpture in the Eden Benchmark series Passing by Laura White.

If you continue your journey over the Millennium Bridge you can enjoy the Northern Viaduct Trust's wheelchair friendly footpath along the old Stainmore Railway over Podgill and Merrygill viaducts to Hartley.



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We start our trail in the heart of the old town, the **Market Square** ①. The most prominent feature of the square is the old cloisters which form the entrance to the Church. This it can be seen was provided by John Waller, purser in his Majesty's Navy, in 1810. It was used as the butter market by local farmers' wives who would ring the 'butter bell' which hangs above.

The majority of buildings surrounding the square were at one time or another coaching inns providing weary travellers on what was an important East/West route. One, in what is now the newsagents, was owned by one Abraham Dent who in the late 18th century also brewed ale in the Old Brewery down by the river. This was rolled up an underground passage, undeclared (and untaxed) into the Inn above, whilst the revenue man kept vigil outside the brewery counting the barrels out through the main door. The enterprising Mr Dent also provided wool to local knitters (the main evening entertainment in those days), who produced stockings, which he then collected and sold to the British Army. Across the road from the North West corner of the square can be seen the Old Shambles with a spinning gallery above. Before leaving, note the circle of cobbles around the square itself which originally marked out the 'bull ring' for the blood thirsty sport of bull baiting which once took place here.

Leaving the square by the opposite corner we pass the Kings Arms Hotel, one of the few survivors from the great days of coaching. On the left, just past the bank, is a narrow alley - Little Wiend - which together with the main road and the narrow 3" gap between the two buildings opposite, divide the town into four for the purposes of the Manor Courts. Turning up Little Wiend for a short way, we come to a low archway into a former coaching inn courtyard. Before passing through take a look at the continuing Little Wiend with its high walls and narrow passage. This was one of many similar ways into the town so designed to be easily defended against marauders. Passing through the archway enter **Arcade Royal** ② with its ancient cobbles. Go diagonally across Arcade Royal to the former Sandemanian Chapel, now called Faraday House, where the parents of Michael Faraday worshipped over 200 years ago. Faraday was an eminent scientist, best remembered for his research into electricity, and for his discoveries of induction demonstrated in 1831. His father was a blacksmith in Mallerstang just outside Kirkby Stephen.

Passing from the courtyard, we return onto the road and bear left along the main street once more. Set in the pavement a little way on is the **Charter Stone** ③ a circular flagstone from which the Luke Fair Charter is proclaimed each year in October. The Luke Fair is an ancient market dating back to 1352-3. As recently as the early part of the last century, animal pens and stalls lined the streets, and people brought virtually any produce they wished to sell in the town.



In addition to having more than its fair share of inns and ale houses, Kirkby Stephen had a wealth of Churches and chapels - two of which can be seen as we cross the road at this point. The Congregational, later Catholic Church, on the right is now the Post Office and on the left is the former Primitive Methodist Chapel which now houses the Youth Hostel. The town has a strong tie with the Youth Hostel Association: one of the founder members in the country - Francis William Parrot - lived here for many years (until death).

For the sharp-sighted, the road junction at the southern end of the town centre is still marked by the original signpost in **Miles and Furlongs** ④. The road was originally much narrower here until shops and cottages were removed to facilitate the increase in traffic. The narrows beyond however still present something of a problem, with the cottage on the left being demolished by a juggernaut as recently as 1994. Beyond this cottage, crossing back over the road is **Sour Pow (Pig Pool)** ⑤. The main street at this point had a stream which ran down its centre and was

crossed by a number of small bridges. This is now beneath the road in fact passes beneath the old Post Office on **Victoria Square** ⑥ - the tops of two arches can still be seen at ground level in the outer walls.

Until the coming of the railway in the nineteenth century, this area and the few houses lining the road to the south, which can be seen from this point, was just about the southern limit of the old town. Returning northwards past Victoria Square we cross into the back lane known as Mellbecks. The tan yard and tannery were here and the houses on the left were built where the old farm buildings stood. On the right just beyond Victoria Buildings - which was the former wool house - is the old **Manor House** ⑦ where the Lord of the Manor used to reside.

At the bottom end of Mellbecks is **Franks Bridge** ⑧ dating back to the 17th Century and part of the old corpse route from the neighbouring villages of Hartley and Winton. On the far side of the bridge can be seen large stones where

the bearers would rest the coffin before negotiating the climb to the Church. Retracing our route a little we ascend some stone steps leading from the river, and turn right into **Stoneshot** ⑨ heading back towards the Market Square. We are now walking directly above the legendary brewery tunnel mentioned earlier. Turning right at the car park down Vicarage Lane we pass the **Old Grammar School** ⑩ on the right founded by Thomas Lord Wharton in 1566. Following the road through the narrows and round to the left we rejoin the main street at this point, beside the Olde Forge restaurant - formerly, and not surprisingly, the old blacksmith's shop. Opposite here is the Harrison Thompson memorial fountain and water trough for horses. Turn left and ascend the old stone steps into Church Walk and finish off in the cool and quiet of Kirkby Stephen's historic **Parish Church** ⑪. Look out for the ancient Loki Stone and many other interesting features.

## Town Map Legend

### Land Mark

Auction Mart	12
Charter Stone	3
Franks Bridge	8
Furlong Sign Post	4
Manor House	7
Market Square	1
Memorial Fountain	14
Old Grammar School & New Local Links Centre	10
Arcade Royal	2
Sour Pow (Pig Pool)	5
Stone Shot	9
Victoria Square	6

### Community

Chemist	15
Library, Community and Council Centre	14
Medical Centre	17
Places of Worship	11
Police Station	16
Tourist Information Centre	13

### Leisure

Cricket Ground	20
Camping and caravan sites	24
Jubilee Park	25
Stenkrith Park	26
Nothern Viaduct Trust Walk	27
Kirkby Stephen East Heritage Centre	28
The Poetry Path	29

### Services and Miscellaneous

Banks and Cash Machines	23
Post Office	22
Youth Hostel	21
Free Car Parks	P
Public Toilets	WC
Public Telephones	T