



**WALK 16**  
**HEXHAM TOWN WALK**  
**(EASY ROUTE)**

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**Distance:** 2 ½ miles

**Walking time:** Approximately 2 hours

**Start and Finish point:** Tyne Green Country Park car park. This is situated just off the A6079. If you are approaching Hexham on A69 turn towards the town centre on the A6079. You will cross over the bridge then turn right at the first roundabout, signposted, Tyne Green Country Park.

**Children:** This walk is suitable for children of all ages. The route involves crossing the railway, which may be a problem if pushing a pram. There is however an alternative crossing via a tunnel a little further up line. See route guide and map for details.

### **Summary**

This is a walk which explores the historic side of Hexham. It starts off with a wonderful stretch following the river Tyne in the splendid setting of the Tyne Green Country Park.

Then you cross the railway and climb up into the town centre to visit Hexham Abbey, which overlooks the market place. Inside you can still see the 7<sup>th</sup> century bishops throne of St Wilfrid, the crypt he had built from Roman stones and the carved cross set up by St Acca's grave in 740.

The walk visits the market place, which has witnessed much of the towns turbulent past before passing the Moot House and then the Old

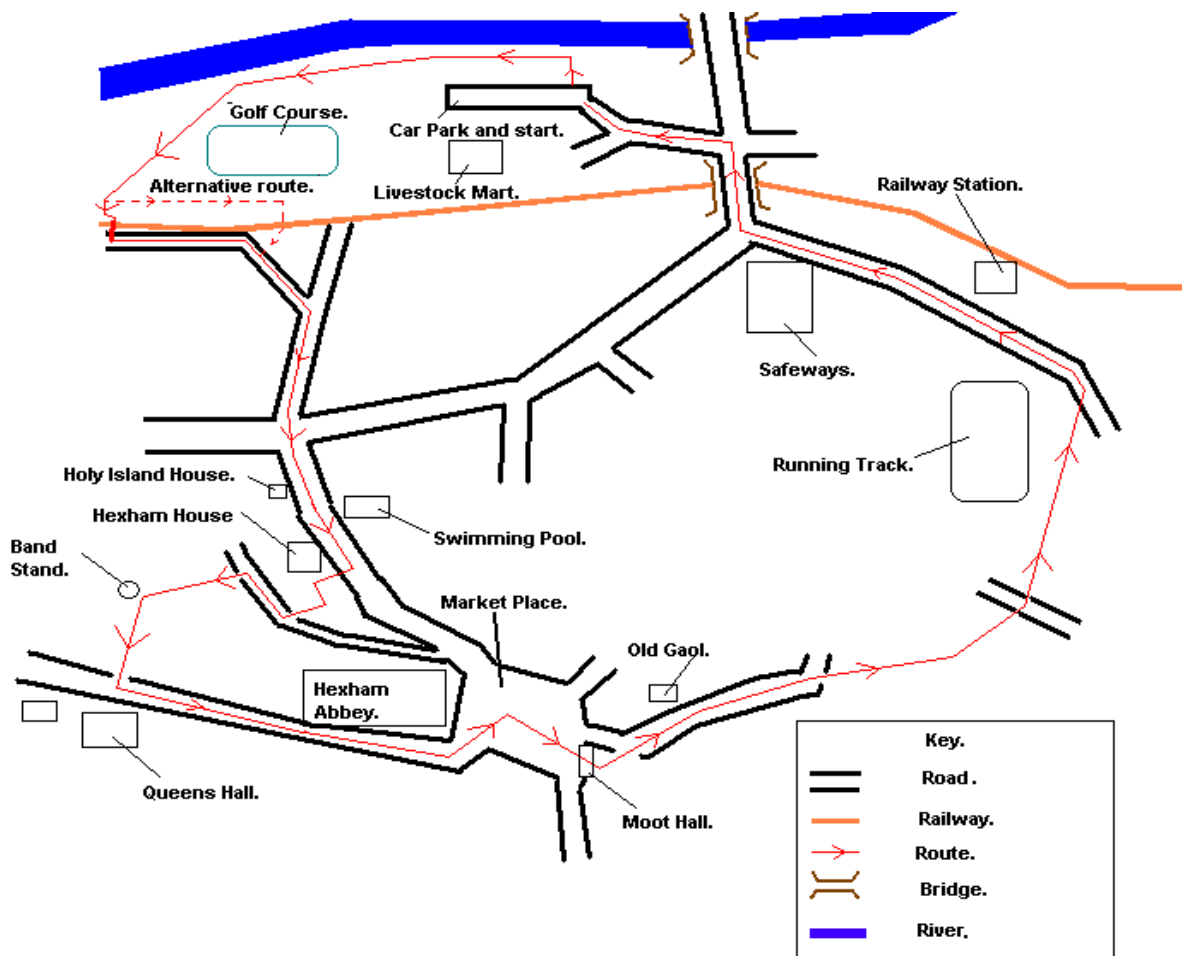
Gaol, which was built by order of the Archbishop in 1930. Below ground are two dungeons with the other prisoners being held in chains upstairs.

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On your return route you pass Hexham station and other points of interest.

This walk has a little quiz for all ages to complete on their way round, with all the answers being found en route. Once completed please e-mail the answers to [info@shepherdswalks.co.uk](mailto:info@shepherdswalks.co.uk) with your postal address to receive your mystery shepherds walks gift.

## Map





## Route Details

Walk back up the car park and head for the river passing to the right of the telephone box, then to the left of the warden's building before reaching the river. When you reach the water turn left and follow the path along the riverside.

Downstream to your right is the handsome road bridge built by Robert Mylne, completed in 1793. This was the fourth bridge that was built, crossing the Tyne here, from 1770 onwards. Due to severe floods in 1771 and 1782 two were washed away. The other attempt was abandoned in 1774 on the discovery that, "soil beneath the gravel was a quicksand with no more resistance than chaff".

You soon pass a sign explaining about the different clubs, which use the river.

*Q1: On which afternoon does Hexham Canoe Club meet?*

Continue on with the river on your right.

After a short while you pass a playground on your left and then the golf course, with the railway line beyond it. This is the Newcastle to Carlisle line, which was completed in 1829.

After passing the golf course continue on until you reach the railway and turn left, passing between a beech hedge and a wall. Then turn left, passing through a metal gate and cross the railway line. The trains as they approach this crossing do blow their whistles so there is nothing to worry about as long as you keep your ears open. If you are pushing a pram it may be a problem crossing the line. If you follow the path up the river side of the line you can cross using a bridge a little further up the line (see map).

Cross the stone stile and then bear around to your left.

You are now on a tarmac road that is running parallel to the railway line, which is on your left. Ignore the road going off to your right and continue on with a high wall initially on your right. The road then bears away to the right and you pass a playing field on your left.

At the cross roads turn right (brown national byway sign) and on your right you have Hebbion Terrace.

*Q 2: Which year was the Hebbion terrace built?*

To the left of the road is Cockshaw Burn. Continue on, passing the bus station on your right until you reach and cross the main road (Eilansgate Road). Go up the road opposite (Gilesgate) following the signs for the swimming baths.

Keep your eyes open for a wonderful old building called Holy Island House on your right hand side.

*Q 3: In which year was Holy Island House built?*

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Stick to the main road as it climbs up the hill passing Hexham swimming pool on your left before reaching Hexham House on your right, which is now occupied by Tynedale Council.

Hexham House was originally built for the Rector of Hexham in 1723. Built of stone, with five bays and three storeys the two storey wings are a nineteenth century addition.

Immediately after Hexham House turn right through the black wrought iron gates and then bear left in front of the bowling green heading for the small wrought iron gate in front of the Abbey.

Turn right down the road then first left into Hexham Park heading for the bandstand.

As you reach the bandstand (built in 1912) bear round to your left passing the war memorial on your right exiting the park through the archway which was presented to the town in recognition for the services of the 4<sup>th</sup> Northumberland Fusiliers.

In front of you is Queens Hall with Trinity Methodist Chapel to its right, which was built in 1887.

Queens Hall, the Arts Centre and Library were built in 1866 as the Town Hall and Corn Exchange. Just two years later, this broad street (Beaumont Street) was constructed to create a wide road into the Market Place.

Turn left and continue along Beaumont Street towards the Abbey.

On the opposite side of the road are the offices of the local newspaper.

*Q 4: What is the title of the paper?*

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Enter the Abbey. There has been a church on this site for over 1300 years since Queen Etheldreda made a grant of lands to Wilfrid, Bishop of York c.674. Of Wilfrid's Benedictine Abbey the Saxon crypt and apse still remain. The church you see today was mainly built about 1170 – 1250. Hexham Abbey has suffered badly at the hands of many Scottish raids, but centuries of rebuilding, have ensured a fine building stands to this day. A guidebook is available from the Abbey shop, but special points of interest are the 7<sup>th</sup> century bishop's throne of St Wilfrid, the crypt he had built from Roman stone and the carved cross set up by St Acca's grave in 740.

After visiting the Abbey cross over the road into the market place which has witnessed much of the town's turbulent past.

The worst of these was the Hexham massacre. The incident happened on the 9<sup>th</sup> March 1761, during a protest against methods of recruiting for military service. The military presence seemed to be justified as around five thousand men attended the meeting. As their anger increased, the riot act was read and they were asked to disperse. The protesters made it clear they would not give in so magistrates ordered soldiers from the North Yorkshire Militia to open fire on the crowd. At least forty people were killed and over three hundred injured in the resulting chaos, consequently for many years the North Yorkshire Militia were labelled the 'Hexham Butchers' (see further reading at end of the walk).

Leave the market place via the archway in the old building opposite the end of the Abbey.

This is known as the Moot Hall. It was constructed in 1400AD and was intended as a gateway, a hall of justice and a dwelling for the bailiff who was assigned by the Archbishop of York. His living quarters were on the top floor with the hall of justice being on the first floor. The stone for the Moot Hall was taken from the bed of the Tyne.

Carry on down the road, crossing it to approach the Old Gaol.

In 1330 Archbishop Melton of York ordered the gaol to be built and nineteen months later John de Cawode, a barber, was appointed the gaoler at a salary of two pence a day. It was built using stones from local Roman remains and its last prisoner was held in 1824.

Carry on down the road and as you start descending down the hill and just before you go down the steps in to the car park bear right along a pedestrian walkway. Cross the road and carry on along the walkway passing the Wentworth Leisure Centre athletic track on your left-hand side.

You pass the Station Inn before reaching the road. Turn left along the road and pass the railway station on your right.

*Q 5: What is the cafe called at the station?*

The railway between Newcastle and Carlisle was started in 1829. The stretch between Blaydon and Hexham was opened in 1835 but the entire line wasn't completed until 1846.

Pass the supermarket on your left and then turn right at the roundabout and cross over the railway bridge. Turn left at the next roundabout (road sign, Auction Mart, Tyne Green Country Park).

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Hexham Auction Mart was opened on August 11<sup>th</sup> 1995. It has three auction rings and has a total of about 500 steel built pens capable of taking 2500 cattle or 15000 sheep. It has twenty-one loading bays for vehicles (see further reading at end of walk for more information).

Bear right at the fork to return to your car.





## **FURTHER READING.**

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*Hexham Massacre* – This story has an even more gruesome ending. On the 17<sup>th</sup> August of the same year (1761), a seventy four-year-old man named Patterson was arrested for his alleged involvement in the Hexham riot. He was sentenced to be hung, cut down alive, to be disembowelled and have his entrails burnt (in front of his eyes) and then be beheaded and quartered. In the event it was decided the old man's sentence was to be reduced to straightforward hanging.

Straightforward it was not. Patterson's rope snapped before he died and in the tradition of a martyr he was able to utter his last words, "innocent blood is hard to spill". It was later discovered that Patterson had not been in Hexham on the day of the riot.

*Hexham Livestock Mart* – I personally was at the opening of this great mart and if you are around on a sale day it is certainly worth a look in. The complex cost nearly 4 million pounds to construct and is one of the finest in the country. Hexham and Northern Marts also have other centres in this part of Northumberland. These are at Rothbury and at Scots Gap. This mart was built to replace the old Hexham Mart, which was situated behind the bus station down near the hospital. This land was bought and developed into a Co-op Superstore when the new mart was built.

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