

# The Outer West

Newburn Lemington Sugley Bell's Close



## A Heritage Trail

St James' Heritage & Environment Group  
West End Heritage Guides

# OUTER WEST CIRCULAR WALK

## This walk:

This is a circular walk route, highlighting sites of historical interest. It is an easy walk, mainly on good paths and without any steep climbs.

The route has been designed as one continuous walk, but it is divided into several sections to allow you to choose a different starting point for the full circular walk or to walk just part of the route. The map on the opposite page shows the starting point and approximate distance for each section.

## Starting point:

Newburn Activity Centre at the Tyne Riverside Country Park, Newburn.

**Length of walk :** Five miles: **Time:** About two hours including short break

## How to get there:

By car: suggestions for car parking are given at the beginning of each section.  
By public transport: there are frequent bus services along the A6085 riverside road to Newburn from which this walk can be accessed.

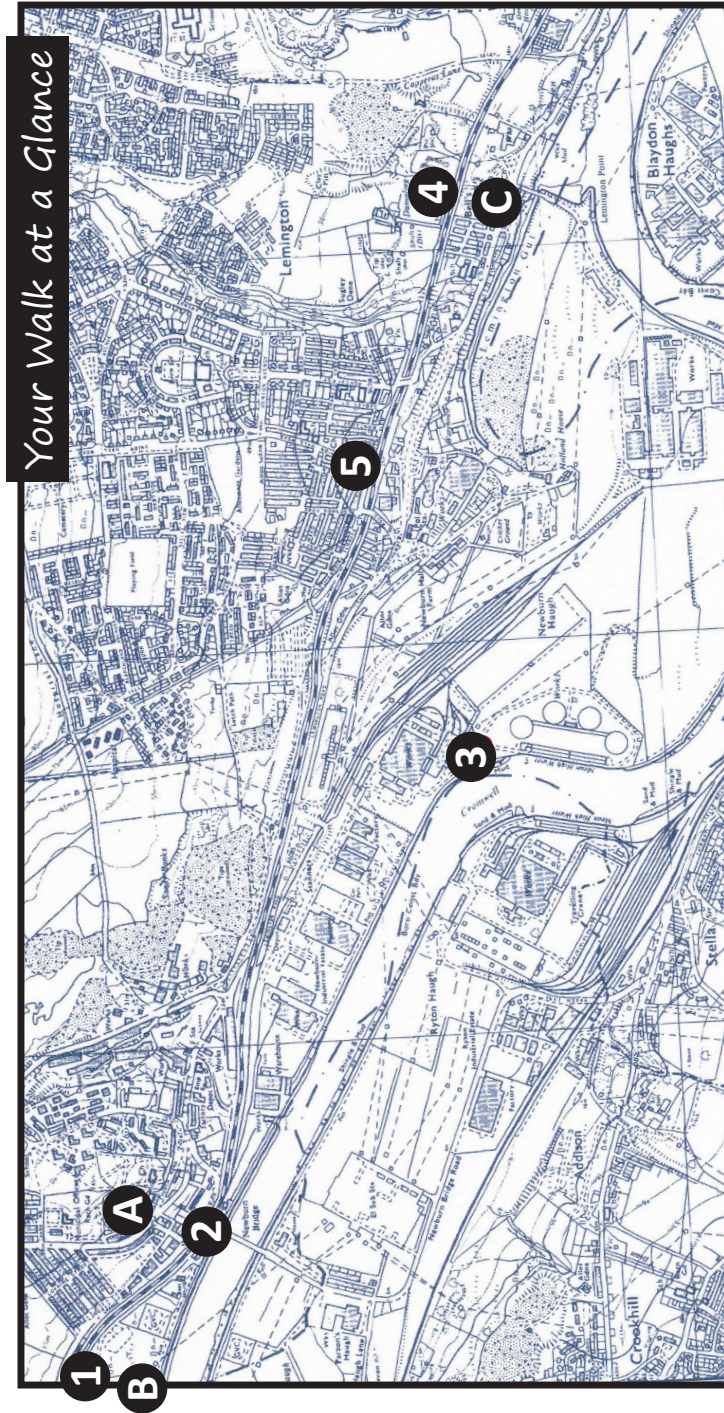
## Extend your walk:

Our companion booklet *The Outer West: A Heritage Guide* contains three short circular walks which connect with this circular walk. You can add these to your walk if you want to visit particular places of interest adjacent to the main route:

- *Newburn Village Heritage Trail* takes you round the historic heart of the village of Newburn, starting at the War Memorial in the main street
- *Tyne Riverside Country Park and beyond* goes west from the Country Park to visit sites associated with the area's coalmining legacy
- *Bell's Close, Sugley and Lemington Trail* takes a closer look at these villages and the former industrial area of Low Lemington to the south, starting at Bell's Close

The Heritage Guide also has introductions to the history of the four villages. Copies can be obtained from St James' Heritage & Environment Group – contact details on the back cover.

The map on the next page shows the starting points for these short walks.



Your Walk at a Glance

KEY

### Starting points for circular walk sections

1. Tyne Riverside Country Park to Newburn Bridge (approx. 0.7 miles)
2. Newburn Bridge to Newburn Haugh (approx. 0.7 miles)
3. Newburn Haugh to Bell's Close (approx. 1.8 miles)
4. Bell's Close to Lemington Village (approx. 0.4 miles)
5. Lemington Village to Tyne Riverside Country Park (approx. 1.3 miles)

### Starting points for short heritage walks

- A. Newburn Village Heritage Trail
- B. Tyne Riverside Country Park and Beyond
- C. Bell's Close, Sugley and Lemington Trail

NOTE: This plan is based on the 1974-78 Ordnance Survey map and is not intended to be used as a route guide. Comparison with the 1899 OS map extract in the centre pages shows how the area changed over 80 years. © Ordnance Survey and www.old-maps.co.uk

## 1: Tyne Riverside Country Park to Newburn Bridge

### Travelling by car:

Follow the signs out of Newburn to the Country Park and Activity Centre. As the road curves around you will see the centre on your left. On your right, directly opposite the centre, is a convenient car park. Alternative parking is available elsewhere in the Park. Your walk starts on the eastern edge of the Park.

### Start your walk

Leaving the Activity Centre, walk in the direction of the visitors centre, passing the Big Lamp Brewery on your right. Instead of heading straight for the visitors centre, turn left where a road leads to the riverside. You will see a small area containing a stone memorial and several interpretation boards. These commemorate the Battle of Newburn. You can sit on one of the benches looking towards Ryton Willows on the opposite banks of the Tyne and imagine the English and Scottish armies gathering for one of the most decisive battles of the Civil War.

Leaving this site, walk eastwards towards Newcastle along a path signposted by one of the brown Hadrian's Way signs. Cross a wooden bridge across a stream and continue to follow Hadrian's Way.

This stretch of the river is the lowest fording point on the River Tyne. It was used as a ford from Roman times.

Walk past the slipway and buildings of the Tyne Rowing Club, and then on to Water Row, site of a pit of the same name. A plaque on the Boathouse pub at the end Water Row tells you that George Stephenson worked as an engineer at this pit early in his career.

Beyond the Boathouse you come to Newburn Bridge. The village of Newburn lies to the north, but this walk route does not go there. If you want to explore some of Newburn's interesting historical features, including the 12<sup>th</sup> century St Michael and All Angels Church, try our *Newburn Village Heritage Trail*.

**Turn the page to continue your walk**

## Battle of Newburn

The Battle of Newburn took place on 28<sup>th</sup> August 1640. Here a 20,000-strong Scottish army defeated an English army of 5,000. England was at that time ruled by Charles 1<sup>st</sup>, and the battle was a significant event in the process that led to the Civil War and ultimately to Charles' execution.

The Scottish forces planned to cross the river at Newburn on the way to attacking Newcastle from its more vulnerable southern side. They camped on the north side of the river and watched as the English army approached. As well as heavily outnumbering the English, the Scots had a much better position on the higher ground. They set up cannons further up the slopes, including in the steeple of the Church of St Michael and All Angels. The English army set up camp on the meadows of Ryton Willows, hastily putting up earth defences in full view of the opposing army.

When the battle began, the hastily prepared English defences collapsed quickly, and the troops retreated. When the Scottish army then moved on Newcastle, they found it undefended. Charles was forced to make peace.



## Newburn Bridge

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, major dredging operations were carried out by the Tyne Improvement Commission to make the river more easily navigable. This meant that the ford could no longer be used as a crossing point. The bridge was opened in 1893, connecting Newburn to the south. It operated as a toll bridge until 1947, the last bridge on the Tyne to charge. This 1903 photograph shows a young girl carrying milk pails across the bridge.



## 2: Newburn Bridge to Newburn Haugh

### Travelling by car:

There is limited parking on Water Row. If you are starting your walk here, your best option is to walk down from Newburn Village to the bridge.

### Start your walk

Leaving Water Row and the Boathouse pub, cross the road in front of Newburn Bridge and take the path marked Hadrian's Way Path. There is a blue signpost telling you that you are five miles from Newcastle. Continue along a pleasant path with trees on either side, until you reach a point where two paths diverge. Leaving Hadrian's Way here, take the narrower path branching off to the right. This path used to be signposted to "Newcastle Quayside" but the sign has been removed, leaving only the white metal stump here.

Follow this path until you reach a road, then turn left and walk along the pavement. You are now in Newburn Industrial Estate, the former site of the steelworks. There are about 30 businesses on this site now including a large Warburton's Bakery, as well as areas of derelict land. This is not the most attractive part of the walk, but you soon leave the industrial estate to join a pleasant riverside path that follows the shores of Newburn Haugh.

This area has historical significance. It used to be occupied by a huge steelworks. This was originally established in 1811 in an old water mill north of Newburn, but by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century its site extended all the way down to the riverside, covering an area of some 60 acres, serviced by its own railway system. The steelworks was a victim of the recession in the 1920s, closing for a period. It was later revived on a smaller scale, but closed for good in the 1960s. Derelict buildings lingered on here for more than 20 years.

This was also the site of one of the oldest buildings in this area: Newburn Hall.

Continue to walk through the industrial estate until you reach a point at the end of the road (just past a small snack bar on your left and the Route 72 Café on the right) where you meet the Tyne again. You are at Newburn Haugh.

Turn two pages to continue your walk

## Spencer's Steelworks

Spencer's Steelworks, pictured here in 1910, expanded rapidly during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Originally making products from steel, it soon moved into manufacturing steel with its own steel furnaces. Steel was in great demand for the expansion of the railways as well as the burgeoning shipbuilding and other industries in the north east. Business boomed for Spencer's, and the steelworks became probably the most important of its kind in the North East. Newburn acquired the name of "New Sheffield". In 1904 Spencer's produced the plate for the world's largest ship, the ocean liner *Mauretania*.

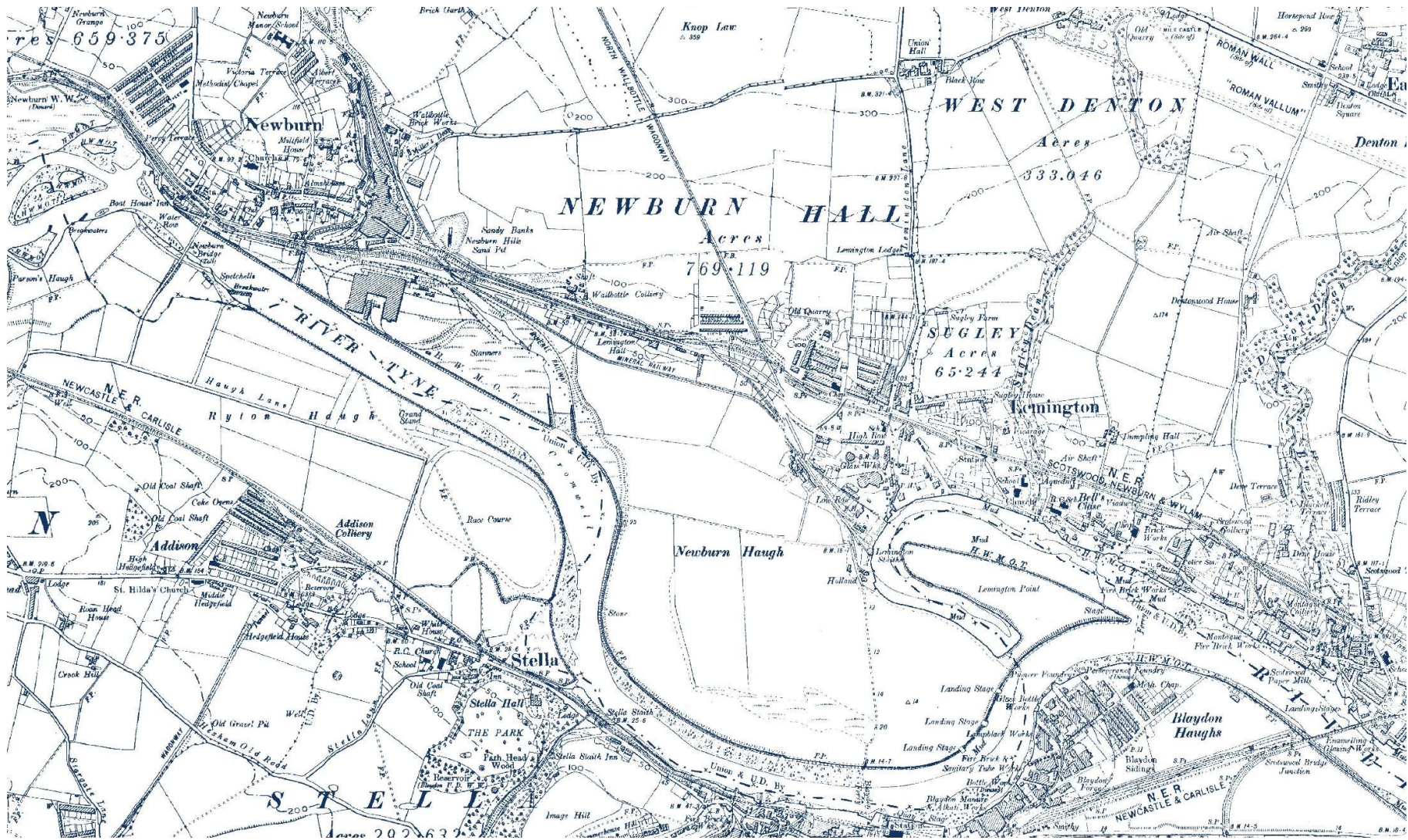
By this time the firm employed some 1,800 people. It had transformed the character of the rural village of Newburn and contributed to the growth of the adjacent riverside communities.



## Newburn Hall

Newburn Hall predated the steelworks on this site. It had begun in the 15<sup>th</sup> century as a pele tower, and was later extended to create a grand hall. It features on the 1864 Ordnance Survey map, but had soon been swallowed up by the growing steelworks. By the 1980s all remains of the hall had disappeared without trace.





**The Outer West in 1899:** This map gives an overview of the area at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The huge steelworks have extended down the east side of Newburn as far as the riverside while, on the other side of the village, rows of terraced housing have recently appeared. Newburn Bridge has been open for six years. Lemington is still a small village, but the map shows evidence of the significant housing development to come. The Scotswood- Newburn-Wylam railway line can be seen running across the area. To the north of the line there are signs of coalmining, with Percy Pit between Newburn and Lemington (marked as Walbottle Colliery) and Scotswood Colliery between Bell's Close and Scotswood. South of the railway line at Lemington and Bell's Close a variety of industries, intermixed with housing, cluster around Lemington Gut, which has now been cut off from the main river. Newburn Haugh is undeveloped.

*Extract from the 1899 Ordnance Survey map: courtesy of Ordnance Survey and [www.old-maps.co.uk](http://www.old-maps.co.uk)*

### 3: Newburn Haugh to Bell's Close

#### Travelling by car

You can park at the east end of the Newburn Industrial Estate. This is signposted south off the A6085. Turn into the estate and continue along Keats Road to a junction with a red postbox on the corner. Turn left onto Shelley Road. Park near the end of Shelley Road and walk a short distance east to where the road ends.

#### Start your walk

You are about to join the cycle and walk path around the southern perimeter of Newburn Haugh. The local word "haugh" refers to an area of flat land next to a river, and this path offers a pleasant, easy walk along the riverside.

Beware: the area where the road out of the industrial estate meets the river is often flooded, and the signage is confusing. At the end of the road is a row of short metal posts and a sign telling you that the path is liable to flooding. Ignore the signs offering you a choice of turning left or right. Instead take the narrow mud path on the right, its entrance marked by a row of wooden posts.

This narrow path will bring you onto the wide cycle and walk path around the edge of Newburn Haugh. Turn right here. After a short distance through a wooded area, you come out onto the riverside. It can be disorientating at this point. To get your bearings, remember that the new houses on the other side of the water are on the south bank of the Tyne west of Blaydon. Soon you will be able to see upriver to your right, with Newburn Bridge in the distance to the west of you. At first the path follows the river closely. Follow the blue railings and you come to a large metal sign with the words "Newburn Riverside" carved into it. Here the path veers away from the river, passing through an area of grass and trees, but you will soon meet the river again

Continue along the path until you meet a dual carriageway and a large sign saying "Newburn Riverside". This is the access route to the Newburn Haugh industrial area. Cross the dual carriageway, then turn right and walk along the pavement in the opposite direction from the Haugh, passing Lemington Gut on your left. Turn left at the roundabout. Cross the road at a pedestrian crossing a little way along, and walk north up Neptune Road. Look out for the sign on the left pointing to Hadrian's Way. This leads you into Ottringham Close.

**Turn the page to continue your walk**

#### *Blaydon Races*

As you walk around the edge of Newburn Haugh, you might like to recall that for several years the real Blaydon Races took place on the opposite side of the river from here. The song by the former miner Geordie Ridley is set in 1862 when the races were actually on an island in the Tyne. Later they moved to Stella Haugh.



#### *Montagu Pit*

As you near the end of the path around Newburn Haugh, you will see the Scotswood Road B&Q store ahead of you across the water. This store is on the site of the Low Montagu Pit where a major disaster happened in 1925 when the mine flooded. Most of the 38 men and boys who died had lived in Scotswood or Bell's Close.

#### *Lemington Gut*

As you leave Newburn Haugh along the dual carriageway, you will see a narrow stretch of water on your left. This is the Lemington Gut, part of the course of the Tyne until the 1870s when it was bypassed by the creation of a new channel in the river. The aim of this major dredging operation by the Tyne Improvement Commission was to reduce the distance between Scotswood and Newburn and allow passage for bigger boats. The cone of the Lemington glassworks is visible in the distance from the dual carriageway.



## 4: Bell's Close to Lemington Village

### Travelling by car:

From the A6085 take the turning signposted to Dumpling Hall. Travelling west, this is the second turning on the right after the Newburn Haugh roundabout. Drive a short distance up Neptune Road, then take a left turn into Ottringham Close where you can park.

### Start your walk

Entering Ottringham Close, you will see an interpretation board and a sign pointing you to the Hadrian's Way path. The sign is slightly misleading. Don't go down the slope on the left! Take the tarmac path straight ahead of you.

From here you cannot go wrong as long as you keep to the Hadrian's Way path. This is marked by frequent blue signs for the cycleway and brown signs for the walk route. This is the official Hadrian's Wall National Path – although, of course, it does not follow the route of the Roman Wall which ran further north along the line of what is now the main A69 road.

The path follows the track-bed of a railway line which connected this area with the Newcastle-Carlisle railway via a loop from Scotswood Bridge to Wylam.

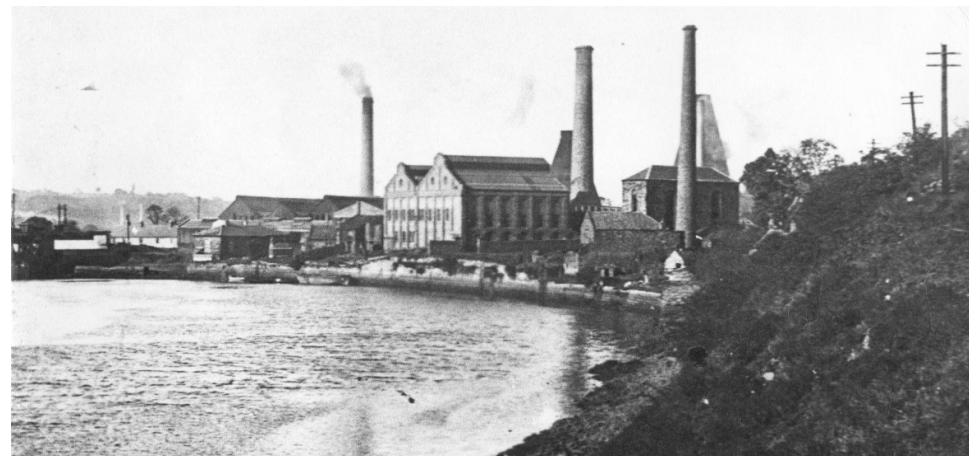
As you walk west, you pass the village of Bell's Close on your left, and then cross over Sugley Dene. Much of the route feels rural as it passes through woodland and grassed areas, but this area has an important industrial history. To the north there were several coalmines, while to the south there was a cluster of important industries in an area known as Low Lemington, along the side of Lemington Gut. The industries have long since closed but remnants remain on the semi-derelict site, including the huge cone of Lemington Glassworks which can be seen from Hadrian's Way path.

This section of the walk is short, so keep your eyes open for Lemington Village on your right. A brown signpost for the Lemington Centre points to the small ornate gateposts leading to Tyne View, the main street of the Victorian village.

If you want to explore these villages and their industries, try our *Bell's Close, Sugley and Lemington Trail* which starts at Ottringham Close.

**Turn the page to continue your walk**

## Coal and Iron



The area to the south here has long been home to a variety of industries. There were several coal staithes around the Gut, the first dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In 1797 an ironworks was set up here on a site later split by the main road. It became the first integrated ironworks on Tyneside, smelting iron ores and converting them into wrought iron. This photograph, taken about 1905, shows the buildings of the ironworks, which had ceased operation by then. The glassworks cones can be seen behind it, and, to the left, the power station.

## Lemington Glassworks

The glassworks opened here in 1787. It was characterised by its large, cone-shaped glasshouses in which glass could be fired to a temperature of about 2,000C. These were demolished when the glassworks closed in 1997, with the exception of one of the original 18<sup>th</sup> century cones which has been refurbished and listed. The glassworks was a major employer, and many of its workers lived in cramped homes adjacent to the factory. This picture dates from 1915.



## 5: Lemington Village to Tyne Riverside Country Park

### Travelling by car:

If you are starting here, you can park on Tyne View, Lemington. Join Hadrian's Way walk and cycle path by passing through the through ornate black gates opposite the Lemington Centre. Turn right to walk west towards Newburn.

### Start your walk

Continue to walk west along Hadrian's Way, ignoring any paths splitting off in other directions.

You will come to an open landscaped area to your right. This is the site of Percy Pit, named after the Duke of Northumberland who used to own the land. The site was cleared and landscaped in the 1970s - the last pitheap to be cleared in Newcastle. The pit was part of Walbottle Colliery, one of several across the area. A branch waggonway used to run north from here, bringing coal down from Walbottle to join the main waggonway.

Continuing along Hadrian's Way, you will reach a point where the path forks. Take the left fork, following the brown sign for Hadrian's Way. This brings you to Newburn Bridge. Do not cross the river. Cross the road to the Boathouse pub on the opposite side, and follow the Hadrian's Way signs to continue along the north bank of the river, passing along Water Row.

Continue along this path, passing the slipway and buildings of the Tyne Rowing Club. You will cross a small wooden bridge over a stream to reach a grassy area overlooking the river. There are benches to sit on here, next to the memorial and interpretation boards commemorating the Battle of Newburn.

Leaving the river behind you, cross the grassy area to reach the Activity Centre.

### You are now back to the starting point of the main circular walk.

***If you started at a different point, go to page 3 to continue your walk.***

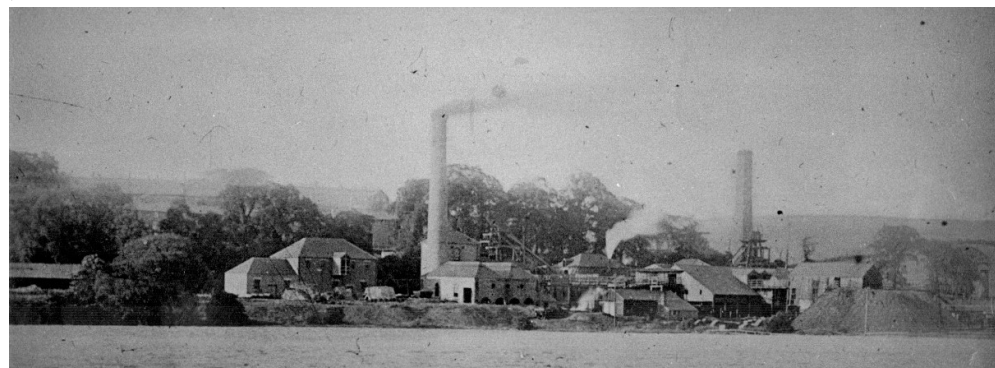
While you are here why not explore this area further with our short circular walk *Tyne Riverside Country Park and Beyond* which includes the remains of the old coke ovens of Isabella Colliery and former miners' houses.

## Scotswood to Wylam Railway

The Newcastle-Carlisle railway, opened in the 1830s, crossed the river at Scotswood to continue along the south bank. In 1871 a new loop line was built to link the outer west villages to the main line. Stations were built at Lemington and Newburn. This photograph, taken in 1956, shows a train passing the Percy Pitheap on its way from Wylam to Lemington.



## Isabella Colliery



The Tyne Riverside Country Park stands on part of the site of the Isabella Colliery. This was opened in the 1860s to the west of Newburn. As well as a coalmine, there were coke and brickworks. The steel manufacturing company of Spencer's in Newburn was joint owner of the colliery, and its steelworks was the main customer for the coke. There was a dedicated railway line to transport it to the works at Newburn riverside.



# A Circular Walk around the Outer West

This heritage trail takes you on a five-mile walk around Newcastle's outer west. Starting at the Tyne Riverside Country Park at Newburn, which was once colliery land, the route follows the riverside through former industrial sites and around Newburn Haugh to join the track-bed of an old railway at Bell's Close, following this path past Sugley Dene and Lemington village to return to the country park at Newburn.

As well as a pleasant walk through a largely rural environment, this is a journey through the fascinating heritage of this area.

Join us to explore your local history.

## St James' Heritage & Environment Group

St James' Heritage & Environment Group is an independent volunteer-run organisation and registered charity providing activities and resources for people of all ages to explore and celebrate the history of the west end of Newcastle.

**Email:** [stjamesbenwell@gmail.com](mailto:stjamesbenwell@gmail.com)

**Website:** <https://stjamesheritage.com>

**Write:** St James' Heritage & Environment Group, c/o Sunnybank Centre, 12/14 Sunnybank Avenue, Newcastle, NE15 6SD



## Acknowledgments

Images courtesy of West Newcastle Picture History Collection, Newcastle Libraries and Information Service, Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne, and Les Turnbull. .  
Permission to use map extracts courtesy of the copyright holders: Ordnance Survey and [www.old-maps.co.uk](http://www.old-maps.co.uk).

Cover photograph: View east along the river from Tyne Riverside Country Park, 2020.

© St James' Heritage & Environment Group, 2021