

TEESDALE U3A SHORTER WALKS' GROUP
Auckland Castle Park 28th November 2022

It was a cold, very misty and classic November day when fifteen stalwart souls, including a few welcome new faces, set off from Bishop Auckland Castle (The Bishops' Palace) for a 3.8 mile walk that would take in parts of both the Northern Saints' Trails - Way of Life Walk and the Auckland Walk.

Glimpsing new excavations on our left and the developing walled gardens to our right we soon entered the deer park and made downhill towards the Gaunless, failing to see the old hilltop Deer Shelter through the gloom.

The river was our lowest point but the uphill stretch that followed was not too onerous and after encountering a flock of sheep crossing our path we passed from parkland into open countryside along the Saints' Trail.

We can wonder if those monks carrying St Cuthbert in the 12th Century went exactly this way but if they did would they have found the ground quite so clarty as we did before we stepped down onto the easier going trackbed of the old railway? Here the route south, part of the Auckland Walk continued along the NER line linking Ferryhill with Bishop Auckland which opened in 1885 and which finally closed in 1966. 56-years on the stone bridges remain in remarkably good condition and we could admire the craftsmanship of those neatly sculpted and dressed blocks.

Without the murkiness we might have been able to see something of the town to our right, but we were hard-pressed to even see the golf course, its manicured links free from anyone today. After passing through a new tunnel under Durham Road our path left the old railway and became more urban in nature, skirting modern housing and newer roads which have hidden all traces of the old route to South Church.

Following our customary 'mint stop' (thank you Sue) and with dusk now fast approaching our path came to an end and we joined the busy Durham Road again and walked uphill to our starting point at the east end of the market place.

