

3-4 MILE WALKING GROUP – AUCKLAND DEER PARK

Report and photo by Ian Royston

It was not a promising start; it had rained much of the morning and for good measure the heavens opened just as we were about to start but nevertheless seven of us set off to circumnavigate Auckland Deer Park.

A hasty 'phone call confirmed that with 'AGLOW' due to open at 4.00pm we could still make it through the Deer Park until 3.00pm which wasn't too much of a challenge to our intrepid band and within a couple of hundred metres we were literally walking through one of the installations, the Tunnel of Light, the longest outdoor light tunnel in the region.

AGLOW runs from late November to the end of the year and this year claims to be bigger, brighter, and more magical than ever before. An enchanting 1.5-mile-long trail bursting with Christmas sparkle, incredible illuminations and one of the tallest Christmas trees in the North of England – standing over 30 metres high! [*enough – Ed.*]

After a quick descent and a slower ascent from the Gaunless Valley we were now on a short section of "The Way of Life" one of the Northern Saints Trails, this one leading from Gainford to Durham Cathedral, though we were taking it across not-too-muddy fields only as far as the track of the former Ferryhill – Spennymoor – Bishop Auckland Railway, built by the North Eastern Railway in 1845, closed to passengers in 1952 and which last saw goods in 1966.



The rain was around but didn't hamper us as, safe from being mown down by trains we negotiated a tricky stile then continued on this path, popular with cyclists, runners and dog walkers to the outskirts of Bishop before dicing with the traffic to take us back up the hill to the gates of Auckland Palace from where we'd started ninety minutes previously.