

7-9 Mile Walking Group

February walk report by Nicky Grace

On February 18th 14 of us gathered outside Bishop Auckland town hall for a 7.5 mile walk gleaned from the Ordnance Survey Durham, North Pennines and Tyne & Wear book of outstanding circular walks. The recce had already confirmed that what would be outstanding would be the mud although we were lucky with a dry day which had slightly improved conditions. The walk was a figure of eight starting off with a circuit of the outside of Auckland Park . We soon discovered quite how hilly Bishop Auckland is as we headed uphill but we were rewarded by fine rural views on the edge of town. Many of the advertised stiles were no longer functioning which made for easier walking as we by passed them or used adjacent gates. We rendezvoused with the missing member of the group appropriately on the former railway line between Bishop Auckland and Spennymoor and the photograph shows us reaching that point.



Photo © Ian Royston

As ever having gained height, we lost it again as we reached our coffee spot near Jock's bridge and the junction of the River Gaunless and the River Wear . We then had a pleasant stroll by the Wear admiring views of Auckland Castle, Newton Cap Viaduct and bridge. We walked down the road past the Rugby club and then faced the muddy prospect of the suitably named Broken bank. Despite being on the Weardale way and Camino trail this is poor terrain with a short scramble through brambles to avoid the path going into the river. Having achieved that we splodged straight to Escomb for our lunch stop in the churchyard there. Several took the opportunity to look in the church, one of Britain's finest Saxon churches, although whether to admire the history or to offer a prayer that the route would improve is not known.



Photo © Ian Royston

We walked up a track, over the railway and along a tarmac footpath beside houses, before a short descent through muddy Broken bank to reach the Rugby club road. Turning right up the hill we were soon back into town for a welcome cup of tea. Sadly even in dry conditions the loop to Escomb is not well maintained so not to be recommended and several walkers are looking forward to a nice fell for the next walk!

Our next walk will be led by Lynda on March 18th and our April walk led by Judith on April 15th. Please contact nickygrace729@gmail.com if you would like to come along