

A reflective walk around Berwick Town

An opportunity for pause during a busy day as we guide you past some of the highlights in Berwick-upon-Tweed's town.



Berwick-upon-Tweed is steeped in history. If you stop and look, you can feel and see influences of the past on the town today.

We have created an easy route through some of the town with points of interest linked to a particular Gospel theme.

Although this walk can be achieved in around an hour and a half, it is up to you if you wish to extend your time by perhaps going into a building, if it is open, stopping for a coffee or maybe taking a detour.

The suggested starting point is our church (see photo on back), St Andrew's Wallace Green (number 1 on the map in the centre-fold) but wherever suits you is just as good. Before you set off, take a few moments of quiet to prepare and slow down. Take some calming breaths and enjoy your short pilgrimage.

We regret that there are a few steps between points 1 & 2 and also leading up to point 8, which means some of the walk will not be suitable for wheelchairs.

We hope that you enjoy your journey and are encouraged to repeat the exercise, a walk of reflection and peace, elsewhere in the town or across the river in Tweedmouth and Spittal.

It is your pilgrimage: this leaflet is simply a suggested guide.

If you would like to join us for one of our services, we meet every Sunday at 11.00am. You would be made very welcome.

For all the other churches please see the Churches Together website <http://together.ourchurchweb.org.uk/berwick/>

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① St Andrew's Wallace Green

On 19 June 1859, the first service was held in the newly built Wallace Green Church, and ever since that day not only has the building stood as a visible reminder to the population of Berwick-upon-Tweed that there is much more to life than the material, but people have gathered in it to worship God and be strengthened by him, so that they might serve him better both in the Church and the community.

The contractor was Mr Matthew Reed of Newcastle and it is remarkable that it took only 12 months from the laying of the foundation stone by Dr John Cairns on 2 June 1858 to the opening on 19 June 1859. Dr Cairns was one of the great figures in the Presbyterian Church with a world-wide reputation as a scholar, and the people were proud to have someone of his calibre as their minister.

Some of the stained glass was the work of Ballantynes of Jedburgh.

REFLECT: This is the start of your walk and might suggest the very beginnings of Christianity, over 2000 years ago, when Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem. How such a simple singular event could have such an impact across the world is astonishing.

The story can be found in the New Testament of the Bible in both Matthew Chapter 1 and Luke Chapter 2.

Now face left (North) and walk to the end of the road, through the gate and take the right hand path until you reach the next point on your walk.

2 Brass Bastion

This is one of five bastions (a projecting part of a fortification built at an angle to the line of a wall, to allow defensive fire in several directions) located on Berwick's Elizabethan Walls. This bastion can defend from the south-east to the north-west. Carefully looking directly below, there are remnants of the original Medieval walls, which saw plenty of action over the centuries. The Elizabethan defences were fortunately never put to the test, critics of the time believing that they would not offer the same level of protection and bemoaning the destruction of the old towers.

You may have heard that this was one of the most disputed territories in the UK. The importance of the town was the incentive for the Scots, being its closest port to Europe, and for the English, it was a foothold in Scotland. Once north of the Tweed there was no major natural barrier before Edinburgh.

REFLECT: Sometimes Jesus would be followed by large crowds wanting to hear his message. To be seen and heard, he would need to find a suitable vantage point. If he had been in Berwick, this might have been ideal with space below for many hundreds of people. If near water, he might commandeer a boat and speak from there.

Throughout the Gospels are instances of great crowds, including the famous 'feeding of the five thousand', which is mentioned in Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:31-44; Luke 9:12-17; John 6:1-14

Continue your journey until you reach a down slope to come off the walls. Pass through the gate and immediately turn left through the arch.

3 Cow Gate

A walled town needs to have some access points to allow citizens to come and go, but they must be easily secured. Livestock would be taken out to pasture to the north during the day, and then brought back into the town overnight to keep them safe from opportunist thieves or rievors. The gates would then be closed and guarded.

Many of the streets around Berwick have names which tell of their earlier purposes and this arch is known as Cow Gate or Cow Port. It is the only entry which retains its original gates.

As you turn towards the sea, on your left is a grassy area below the walls known as 'The Stanks' (a Scottish word meaning swampy place). This is used by local football teams playing in the long-established Charities Cup matches, raising large amounts of money for local charities.

REFLECT: Jesus would often use parables (simple stories) to illustrate a point. Luke 14: 15-24 tells of a great feast organised by a king, to which he invited all the great and good, the wealthy and the famous. All found flimsy excuses not to go, including one who said, 'I have bought five pairs of oxen and am on my way to try them out; please accept my apologies.' Instead, the king invited the poor and needy, people who appreciated what he was offering. We should never be too busy to accept God's invitation.

Continue on the road and then footpath running below the walls until it turns left towards the main town car park. Passing some properties on the right, stop when you reach the road.

4 Hazel Marsden House

On the corner opposite you is a single story building with a full width bay window overlooking the car park. This is currently Berwick's branch of the North Northumberland Hospice (the other being in Alnwick).

This property was originally built in the nineteenth century as a Fishermen's Mission, constructed to support the busy fishing harbour based around the area beyond known as 'The Greenses'. During the Great War (WWI), it spent some time as a school and at other times has served as a builder's yard and furniture warehouse.

The Hospice moved from their previous West Street location to this spot in 2002, originally providing day care a couple of times a week, along with outreach services. As you will probably notice, the space now incorporates a thriving charity shop, which is open six days a week and has a community space at the rear of the building.

REFLECT: Christians are often reminded to be a 'good neighbour' or to 'love your neighbour as yourself' but may wonder what that means. Jesus used the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) to answer this question. It means stopping to help someone, even if you don't know them and even if they are different from you.

Walk a little further, past a row of terraced houses (Violet Terrace) on your right with the car park on your left.



North

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5 Berwick Infirmary



Berwick Infirmary (and Dispensary) was purpose built, opening in 1874 it is a small community hospital serving the surrounding area. Redevelopment work is scheduled to start in July 2017 and it is expected to take three years until completion. Opposite the main hospital entrance this classical statue of the Greek goddess of health, Hygieia, paid for by public subscription, was erected in 1892 in memory of Dr Philip Whiteside Maclagan.

Originally located on Marygate, it was relocated to the Infirmary grounds in 1922 and then to its present position in 1994.

Born in 1818 Dr Maclagan trained and served as an army surgeon before marrying the daughter of Dr George Johnston. They married in 1847 and returned to Canada where he was based. They then moved to Berwick in 1853, when he left the army, to join the family medical practice. After his father-in-law's death he remained in Berwick, continuing to build up the practice. He was also an elder at Wallace Green Church in the time of Dr John Cairns.

REFLECT: A moment to remember all those who give their lives to healing and caring.

Continue along this road until you reach a T junction (Castlegate) and turn left towards the town hall. At the first road junction turn left along Walkergate until you almost reach your start point then turn right down Church Street.

⑥ Salvation Army Hall

William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, felt that other Christian churches were ignoring the needs of the poor and started the East London Christian Mission in 1865 which, in 1878, became the Salvation Army. Six years later, in 1884, the Army moved into Berwick. Originally located on the Quay Walls, their headquarters, or Citadel, moved to its current location in Church Street in 1956. Since then, this building has had a few refurbishments to ensure that it is able to meet the needs of the current times.

From its original beginnings in London, the Army has spread throughout the world and their distinctive uniforms can be seen on the streets and even in war zones, offering a helping hand wherever it is needed. A few years ago they expanded their work locally and now run a large and successful out-of-town furniture recycling project and charity shop.

REFLECT: Army officers will offer help to anyone in need and at the heart of their mission is faith in Jesus Christ. In the Gospel of John 8: 12, Jesus said "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will have the light of life and will never walk in darkness." It is this desire to shine Christ's transforming light into the darkest of places that motivates The Salvation Army.

Continue down Church Street and at the junction prepare to turn left but spend a moment looking at the impressive Town Hall building on your right.

7 Berwick Gaol

Begun in 1750 and replacing an earlier 16th century building, the Town Hall stands majestically at the south end of Marygate. It combined a guildhall, an election chamber for the mayor and (at the time) two MPs, a court room, an assembly room, gaol and debtors' prison. Underneath and at street level, was the covered Buttermarket.

The spire, along with that of St Andrew's Wallace Green, stands visible above the town's skyline from many miles away.

The bell tower still houses bells which were recast from the originals, recovered from the earlier building. From time to time they can be heard ringing out across the town.

The Town Hall is owned by the Berwick-upon-Tweed Corporation (Freemen) Trustees.

REFLECT: We are often told in the scriptures that the day will come when we will stand before God and be judged. It is sometimes tricky to understand how that judgement can be measured.

In Matthew 25: 31-46, part of a much longer series of explanations Jesus offered this to his disciples, 'I tell you, whenever you refused to help one of these least important ones, you refused to help me', and that included prisoners.

Proceed along Woolmarket passing the purpose built Post Office on the left where the pavement widens. Continue to the end of the road and cross to pick up some steps and through a gate leading back onto the walls. Stop and look over the wall on your right before you reach the main walls path.

8 The Allotments

Berwick's Lions House Allotments are a treasured site for growers. Depending on the time of year you are visiting will dictate how much soil you can see, but it is a wonderful dark rich colour of exceptional quality. Once a midden, or giant rubbish dump, and regularly worked, it is hardly surprising.

Tucked into the bottom right hand corner you may spot a window under a raised grassed area. This is one of the entrances to cavernous underground ice-houses. No longer used for that purpose, they were once needed to keep fish fresh in the days before refrigeration.

REFLECT: There are a few stories in the Bible which talk about management of crops. In Matthew 13 and Mark 4 is the 'Parable of the Sower', which tells of seeds falling on different types of ground. Christians can be like seeds, if they fall on poorly maintained soil, their faith may wither and die. If they fall on good soil which is covered in thorns, they will easily be swamped. If they fall on stone paths they will never germinate. We need to look after our faith like the allotment holders look after the soil and produce here.

Continue along this footpath as it bears right past the Lions House (noting the two lions couchant on the gate piers). As you reach the main footpath along the walls turn left (north) passing above the 18th Century Berwick Barracks. As the footpath drops to your left stop for a moment..

9 Gymnasium Gallery

Originally part of the Berwick Barracks, but sitting outside of its walls, on your left you will see the Gymnasium Art Gallery. This is a later addition to the Barracks and was used as a gymnasium until 1964 by soldiers under training. Inside there is still evidence of its previous use but since the early 1990s it has become an important addition to Berwick's exhibition spaces.

When it is open, entry into the gallery is free. To find out about future exhibitions, visit Berwick Visual Arts project website or ask in the Tourist Office or The Maltings Theatre.

REFLECT: Being healthy is one part of being a good witness. In Acts 1:8 (just after the four Gospels), Jesus reminds us that Christians are his witnesses. Amongst other things this means keeping ourselves as well as possible in both mind and body.

Keeping fit can help towards maintaining a healthy body. Opening ourselves up to art in its many forms, whether painting, music, dance, crafts or many other activities, can help us keep a fit mind. It really doesn't matter too much if we aren't one of tomorrow's great masters of their craft, or if we just like to watch and listen to others, if we can be mindful, present in the moment, it will contribute towards a healthy mind and being Christ's witness.

Go through the gates at the bottom of the path and make your way across the road towards the Parish Church behind the long wall .

10 Berwick Parish Church

There has been a church on this site since 1558 or maybe before. The foundation stone for the building you now see was laid in April 1650 and it was first used in June 1652. Much of the original stonework and timbers were taken from the redundant Berwick castle. Originally a Presbyterian church, it was required to conform to the Church of England prayer book and was consecrated by the Bishop of Durham in 1662.

There have been many alterations to the church over the centuries, some major and some small. Originally a very plain building it had no bells or chancel, no stained glass or font and no organ. It didn't have either a tower or a spire. Quite different from the building you can see today.

REFLECT: Jesus was crucified on the cross. Killed because the Jewish leaders of the time didn't believe he was the promised Messiah and so charged him with heresy. (Matthew 27; Mark 15; Luke 22 & 23; John 19). His body was laid to rest in a tomb, which was sealed up and Roman guards posted outside. Three days later the tomb was found empty and the promise that Jesus would rise from the dead was fulfilled. For forty days after his death Jesus appeared to his disciples many times in ways that proved beyond doubt he was alive, before being taken up to heaven.

We see churches knocked down and sometimes rebuilt (like this one), converted to a different function or maybe even left derelict, eventually to crumble. Jesus Christ was also knocked down, but was resurrected and promised all his followers of yesterday, today and tomorrow that, at some point, they will meet him in person. Halleluiah!



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