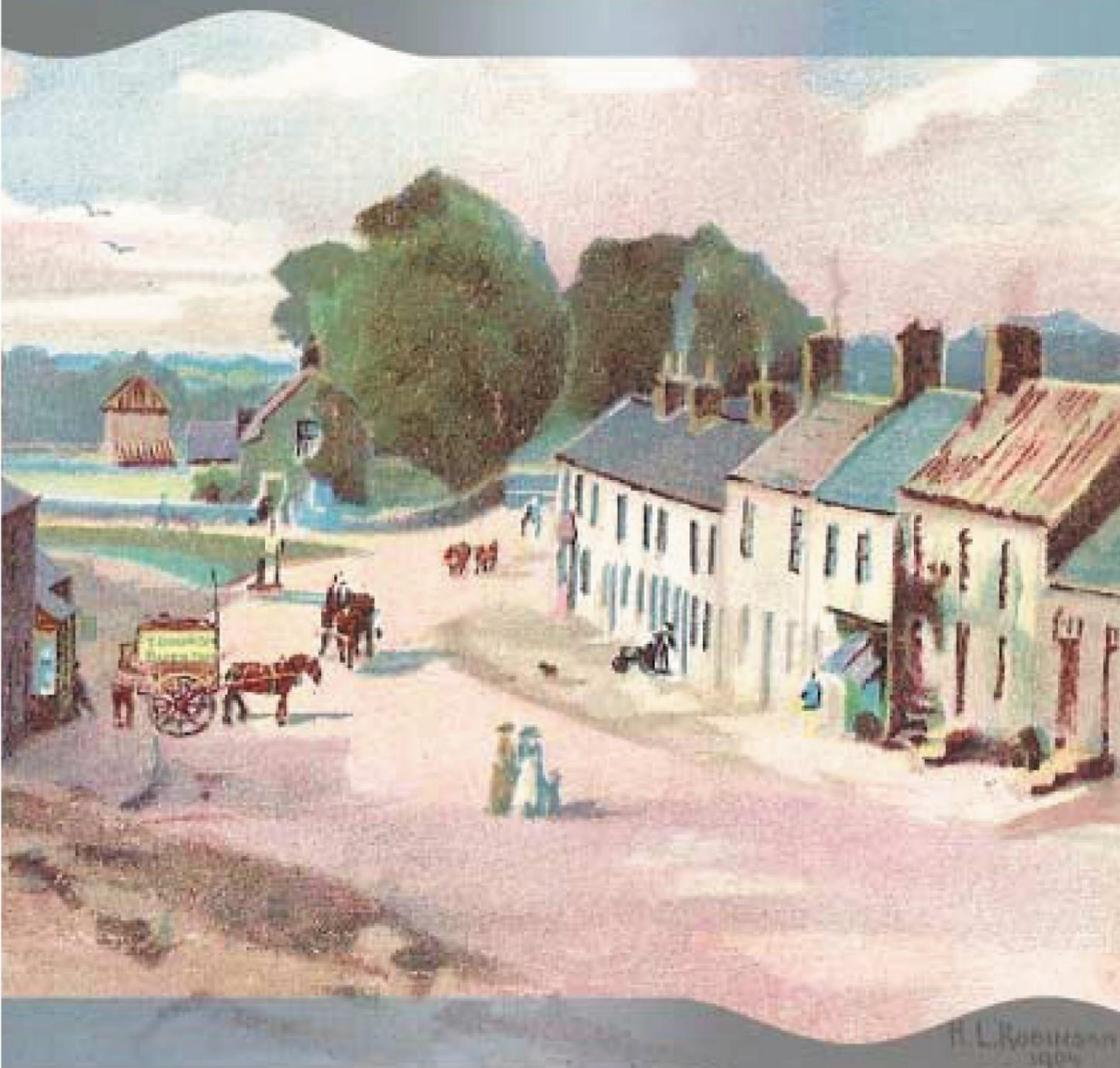


Embleton Parish Heritage Trails



Explore the history of this
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Countryside Code

Be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs.

Leave gates and property as you find them.

Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home.

Keep dogs under close control.

Consider other people.

Although the walks included are simple, the weather in North Northumberland can be changeable so suitable clothing should be worn.

The text mentions several buildings which are now private homes. Please respect the privacy of the owners of these properties.

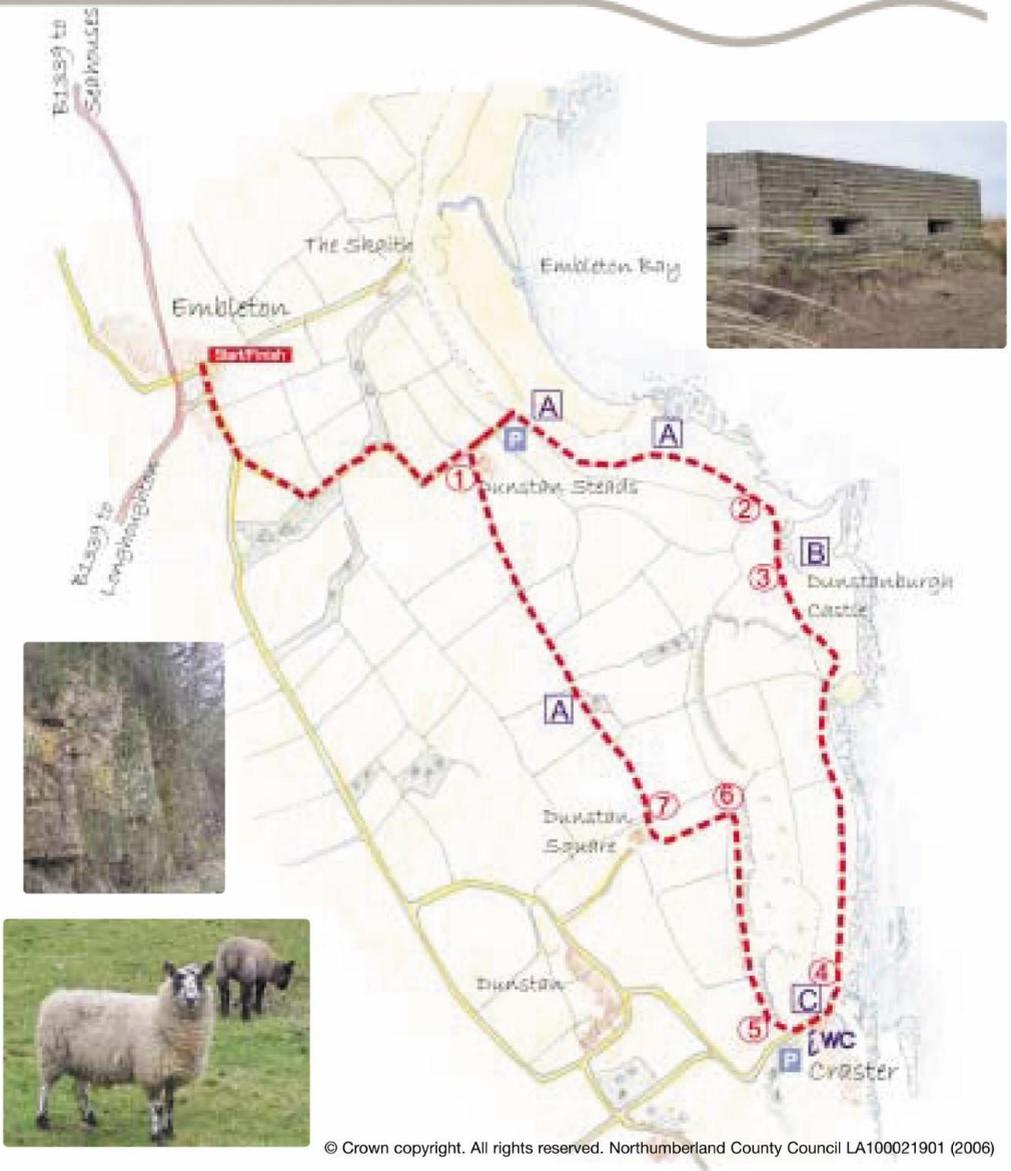
All the walks are suitable for taking your dog along but please ensure it is kept under control and on a leash when necessary, especially during lambing time.

The information in this book is included in good faith and is believed to be correct at the time of publication. No responsibility is accepted by the author of the Parish Council for errors or any loss or injury however caused.

Walk No. 6

Embleton – Dunstan Steads – Dunstanburgh Castle – Craster – Dunstan Square – Embleton

This 6 mile, 9.5km route takes the road from Embleton to Dunstan Steads and then follows the coast to Craster passing Dunstanburgh Castle on the way. From Craster it returns along the foot of the whinstone ridge to Dunstan Square and then through the fields back to Dunstan Steads and Embleton.



- ① Leave the village green next to the Dunstanburgh Castle Hotel, walk up the hill and turn right. Continue to the junction with W.T. Stead Road. Cross over and follow the footpath past the cottages (Sunny Brae) on the raised footpath. At the end of the path cross to the road, signposted 'Dunstanburgh Castle'. Follow the road over the bridge crossing Embleton Burn (this used to be a ford), up the hill, round to the left past the houses and on to the converted farm buildings at Dunstan Steads.
- ② Continue to the golf course, cross the course and immediately before entering the gap in the dunes turn right and walk up onto the dunes path. Walk past the pillboxes **A** along the path that is bordered by the sea on one side and the golf course on the other. Near the 13th tee the path drops steeply and then rises up again to a gate.
- ③ Follow the path around the base of the castle mound and you can then either go straight on, following the path through a cutting in the rock, thereby cutting off the castle corner before rejoining the coastal path to Craster or, by continuing to bear left, you will arrive at the entrance to the castle. **B**
- ④ When you leave the castle walk straight on to join the coastal path to Craster. The path follows the shore until you arrive at a gate which allows access to the village via a surfaced road. Walking down this road you will pass the privately owned harbour dedicated by the family to John Craster, who was killed on active service in Tibet. **C**
- ⑤ At the harbour swing right and walk as far as the car park with the Tourist Information Centre.
- ⑥ Cross the road and follow the public footpath. The path leads under overhanging trees and after about 100 yds it is necessary to take the right fork which leads through a gate marked with a National Trust waymarker. The path, which leads below the whinstone ridge, is indistinct in places but the direction is clear. On this sector you will pass a derelict brick cistern and looking up you will see a terraced area used as a garden by Italian POW's during WW II.
- ⑦ At the gate turn left and through a five bar gate. Head up the field towards Dunstan Square farm, keeping to the left of the field.
- ⑧ At the farm go through the gate and turn right, then straight ahead through another gate onto a concrete road. The road passes a pillbox on the left and a derelict lime kiln on the right. After about 1 mile the road reaches Dunstan Steads farm and once through the farmyard turn left back to Embleton

A Pillboxes

There are approximately 450 known sites in Northumberland but not all the individual structures still exist. The pillboxes that do remain today may seem random and scattered but the majority are related to the defensive plan of the area. The pillbox, built of up to 18 inch (50cm) thick reinforced concrete and equipped with machine guns, created an extremely effective defensive position. They were intended to defend likely landing beaches, to hamper and delay movement, if not prevent landing, and to form defensive stop lines. These were hurriedly constructed and only 18 months later moves began to abandon them as a viable means of defence.

Around Embleton there were 11 pillboxes on the coast between Newton and Craster. The second line consisted of three in High Newton, four in Embleton, one on Kelso Hill, one at Dunstan Stead, two near Dunstan Square and one above Craster. Though it is doubtful whether they could have done more than slow down an invading force, that at least was better than nothing.



B Dunstanburgh Castle

Building of Dunstanburgh Castle began in 1313 after the English lost Berwick to the Scots. Thomas, Earl of Lancaster and Lord of Embleton, decided to build a fortified port as a Lancastrian stronghold and chose Dunstanburgh as the site. Thomas was a very wealthy man (income some £11,000 per annum which today must be in excess of £50 million) and his castle had to be a symbol of his high standing.

He could afford to employ the best of contemporary castle architects and engineers. Edward I had built some great castles in Wales and master Elias, who was the master mason employed by Thomas, based his design on those, particularly Harlech. If we compare Dunstanburgh with other castles such as Alnwick or Warkworth we see that the traditional designs include a heavily fortified keep within the walls as a last line of defence.

At Dunstanburgh there is no keep and, in line with the Welsh precedent, the gatehouse provides the major fortification. The twin towers we see today on the south side of the site are the remains of the original gatehouse. In 1315 a licence to crenellate was granted and the building was completed and in use by 1319. Dunstanburgh is a very large castle of about 11 acres for utilitarian reasons - to accommodate the Earl's retinue and possessions, his tenants, their families and animals at times of raids by the marauding Scots.



Later in the century, about 1383, John of Gaunt, brother of Edward II realised the limitations of having the gatehouse as the first and last line of defence. He set about improving the defences by building a new, more easily defended gatehouse and additions to the perimeter wall. Unfortunately, the new work was not up to the standard of Master Elias and by 1430 the new gatehouse was falling down.

Today it has almost disappeared, only the foundations complete with portcullis grooves remain. After this there were no further developments and the buildings went into steady decline with only occasional maintenance. In 1503 £27 was spent; in 1520 it was used as a source of lead to repair Wark Castle, and in 1538 it was described as 'a very ruinous place'. In 1543 a few repairs were carried out but Henry VIII saw no prospect of restoration. In 1562 it was described as being in a 'wondrous state of decay' and in 1584 it was estimated that £1,000 was needed to restore it to original condition or £400 to provide for a garrison of 100 men. The castle was effectively abandoned to the elements and predations of the local people. In 1604 James I/VI sold it via Sir Thomas Windebank to Sir Ralph Grey of Chillingham for £1,492.14s and later it passed to the Earls of Tankerville, and then in 1869 to the trustees of the late Mr Samuel Eyers of Leeds. In the 1930s it passed into the hands of HM Office of Works. The Scots are never recorded as actually attacking the castle, although it is recorded on several occasions that they attacked Embleton and Stamford.

It was besieged in December 1462 by Yorkist troops and it was starvation, not bombardment, which caused the surrender by Sir Ralph Percy to Edward IV. Nobody of importance ever lived in the castle and indeed it is not certain that its two main benefactors ever visited it. In 1323 the castle was said to hold thirty heavily armed and one hundred lightly armed horsemen, but generally it was much less and in 1400 a force of only ten men-at-arms and twenty mounted archers garrisoned the castle.



C Craster

Craster was once the kipper capital of England smoking over 25,000 fish a day in the early part of this century. The fish were gutted by crews of Scottish herring girls and barrels of salt herring were exported to Germany and Russia. The smokehouse worked through the night and kippers were sent by rail throughout the country and eventually became world famous as Craster Kippers. The privately owned harbour was dedicated by the family to John Craster, who was killed on active service in Tibet. On the road out of Craster on the left, there is an old whinstone quarry which used to send stone to the harbour via an overhead tramway. The quarry closed in the 1930s, reopened briefly during WW II and then closed again. Recently the village has been used for filming the television series Distant Shores.

