

Discovering Bishop Middleham & The Skerne

Distance: 4.5 km / 3 Miles
Postcode: DL17 9AR (nearest)
Grid Ref: NZ 3314 3147

What to expect from the walk:

A walk along grassy paths and surfaced tracks through farmland with gazing sheep and cattle. Some steep inclines and muddy conditions in wet weather. Barriers include gates, stiles, steps and some narrow bridges.

Important information

- Park alongside the green area in the centre of the village.
- Don't forget to take drinks and snacks as there are no places to buy refreshments on the route.
- Allow up to 2.5 hours for this walk.
- This route follows public rights of way. Please keep dogs under close control at all times.



This is one in a series of walks to help you Discover Brightwater.



If you enjoyed this walk, visit our website to see all the other walks, find out where you can pick up a printed copy, or download a copy to print at home.

Be Social

Tell us all about your walk on our social media channels. Share your photos so everyone can see what a wonderful area it is and they can Discover Brightwater just like you.



@discoverbwlp



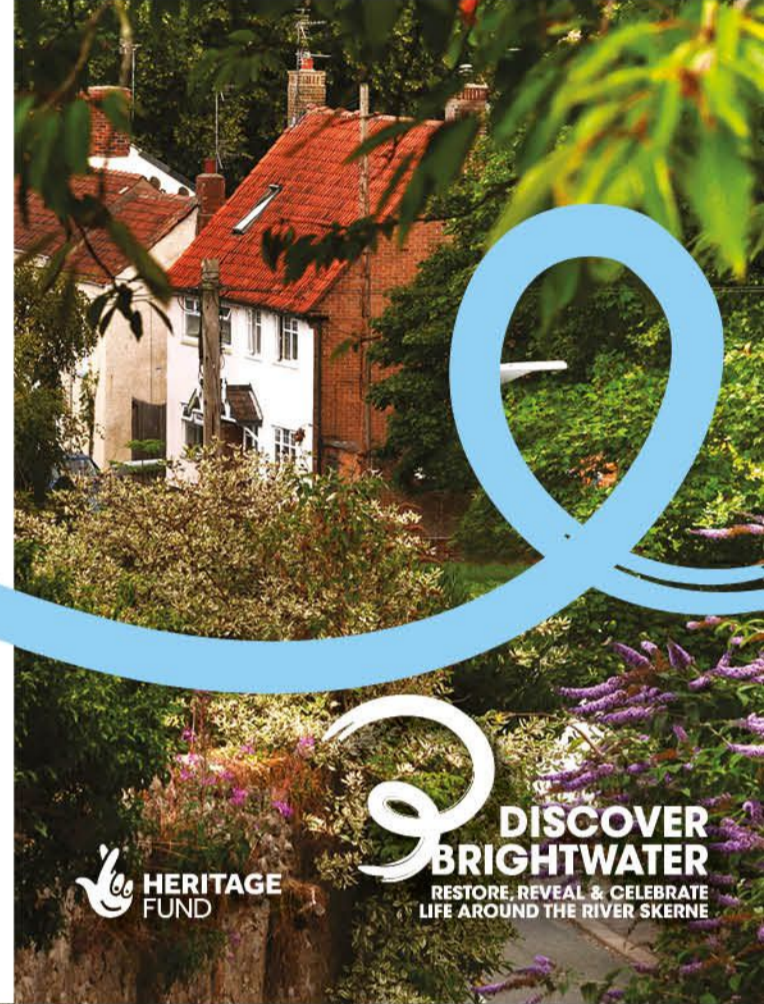
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BISHOP MIDDLEHAM & THE SKERNE

YOUR FREE ADVENTURE GUIDE & MAP

Step into the Land of the Prince Bishops



Discover Brightwater is the new name for the area around the River Skerne in canny county Durham. It stretches from the Trimdons in the north to South Park in Darlington; and from Sedgfield in the east to the Locomotion, National Railway Museum, in Shildon in the west.

Brightwater isn't a new name, but a rediscovery of an old Viking word. 'Skirr' is the Norse word meaning 'bright' so translating our Viking ancestors' name for the river gives us Brightwater.

Discover Brightwater is a landscape partnership project which has been funded by all those lovely people who play the lottery.



Keep an eye out for...

- 1** Approximately 20 years ago, to the south of Bishop Middleham village, a lake began to develop as a result of groundwater flooding. It is now known locally as Castle Lake.
- 2** The Lapwing, a familiar bird of farmlands and wetlands with distinctive rounded wings. Listen out for their piercing 'peewit' call, which gives them their other, common name: Peewit. Image © Adam Jones
- 3** Deer Park Wall and St Michael's Church. This ancient wall is full of nooks and crannies, offering habitat for invertebrates, small mammals and birds. The Church stands upon the hill south of the village and dates back to around 1230.

Wow, what will you discover?

Tick the boxes along the way to keep a record of all of the things you have seen in Bishop Middleham & the Skerne.

Birds

- Chiffchaff
- Sparrow
- Chaffinch
- Buzzard

Insects

- Butterfly
- Moth
- Ladybird
- Honeybee

Animals

- Shrew
- Fox
- Stoat
- Deer

Flowers

- Poppy
- Trefoil
- Daisy
- Knapweed

Did you spot anything hiding in the nooks and crannies of the Deer Park Wall?



The colourful and delightful Chaffinch.



The male Whitethroat does, indeed, have a white throat!

Can you tick these off your list?



The Green Sandpiper.

So, how many did you spot? Tell us on social media.



@discoverbwlp



DISCOVER BRIGHTWATER

RESTORE, REVEAL & CELEBRATE LIFE AROUND THE RIVER SKERNE

1 START Park beside the village green on High Street. For more than 300 years this was the site of a brewery. Walk west past the Old School.



- 2** The interesting sign above the doorway of the house on the corner of Church Street tells you this was originally the Dun Cow Inn.
- 3** A steep hill takes you left up past the Hall and 13th century Church then down to Fougarts Lane, an unrecorded footpath. (Alternatively, continue along Front St then turn down Broadoaks and arrive at Fougarts without the climb).
- 4** "Fougarts" refers to the 'foul martens', a type of polecat (or ferret) that lived in the walls surrounding the Bishop's Deer Park. Much of this walk follows the course of those medieval walls.
- 5** The mound to your left was the site of a 'castle' or fortified manor of the Prince Bishops. Built in the middle of the 12th century, it was abandoned sometime in the 14th century in favour of Bishop Auckland.
- 6** Follow the track down along the walls. As you turn left along Mainsforth St you pass the remains of an old packhorse bridge.

- 7** The fields beyond, together with nearby Castle Lake, now form an important overwintering area for wading birds in the North East.
- 8** Steps and a bridge over the Skerne lead you onto a disused railway line.
- 9** The CARRS to your right are to be restored to become part of Brightwater's Bishop's Fen along with the existing pond near point 10.
- 10** Cross the Skerne over the Bailey bridge and follow the track, looking for a stile through the hedge on your right into a field. Walk through the field staying alongside the fence on your right and then cross another stile onto a farm track.
- 11** Cross the farm track and walk down the other side over another stile into a field, walking ahead towards a track between two hedgerows.
- 12** Cross a stile, walk through a small woodland and up some steps back to High Street. Turn left and walk back towards The Cross Keys pub.

That's great, you've completed the walk.

Bishop Middleham & The Skerne

KEY

- Walking Route
- Other footpaths to explore
- Road
- Bridleway
- Deer Park Wall
- Disused Railway

There used to be a castle on that mound near Point 5 but it was abandoned in the 14th Century.

There are some interesting creatures hiding in the Deer Park Wall.

During Summer and Autumn, it is quite possible to see over 60 species of birds at Castle Lake.

Remember to **take snacks and water** as there are no places to buy refreshments on the route.

Please always follow the Countryside Code