

Haltwhistle's Rich History

Set at very heart of more than 2000 years of history, Haltwhistle is a market town at the geographical the Centre of Britain. It nestles beside the River South Tyne and is the closest town to the stunning central section of the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage site.

The earliest part of the town is the eastern half with the 13th century Church of the Holy Cross standing at the back of the Market Square. This is the oldest building in Haltwhistle and one of only a few early 13th century churches still functioning as a working church in England. The oldest part of the Church is the chancel erected in the 12th century. Various features of interest include a 6th century old Water Stoup and a tomb of the crusader Thomas de Blenkinsopp who died in 1388. Much of the Church was decorated by the Pre-Raphaelites, including excellent stained-glass windows by William Morris and Burne-Jones and the Chancel ceiling which was decorated by Burne-Jones.

The development of the town was based on its position on the main Newcastle to Carlisle road and on the Newcastle and Carlisle Railway line. It was a market town for the exchange of local goods. In the 18th century two Quakers set up a baize manufactory and there was a weaving establishment. There is much railway history to be found at the railway station including the original signal box, waiting room buildings, booking hall, water tower and station house as well as the Alston Arches bridge over the South Tyne river.

Along the Haltwhistle Burn, which provides a gentle walk up to the World Heritage Site, can be found much of this industrial heritage as there were fulling mills, dyeing and spinning mills in addition to quarries, coal mining and lime-burning kilns. The Directory of 1822 (Pigot) gives a whole range of craftsmen, shopkeepers and traders ~ 60 in number, including makers of clogs. The weekly market was held on Thursdays and there were fairs on 14 May and 22 November for cattle and sheep.

The expansion of Haltwhistle in the 18th and 19th centuries was due to coal mining in the area and to a lesser extent the use of Haltwhistle as a loading point for metal ores coming from the mines on Alston Moor. During the 20th Century, paint manufacture became a major commercial force in the town but has now stopped major production. Current local employers include factories making plastic bottles and de-icing products.

In present times, tourism dominates the economy, with Hadrian's Wall and the beautiful Northumberland countryside counting among the many attractions, with walking and cycling being extremely popular.

Follow the Reiver Trail around the town and you will see five Bastle Houses (defensible houses) all of which date back to the town's reiving past, and the Centre of Britain Hotel with its Pele Tower incorporated into the building.

Historical information panels are located around the town and leaflets with further details and walks can be freely downloaded from <https://haltwhistle.org/index.php/publications>

The walk along the Haltwhistle Burn to Hadrian's Wall can be downloaded from [https://cdn.tvcrp.org.uk/OpenInWinter/Haltwhistle Burn to Cawfields-2.pdf](https://cdn.tvcrp.org.uk/OpenInWinter/Haltwhistle_Burn_to_Cawfields-2.pdf). There are many footpaths that start at the railway station and national cycle routes 68 and 72 can both be accessed from the station.

Shopping

Haltwhistle has over 40 local businesses with friendly shops, eateries and cosy pubs. Nearly all retailers are independent, many are run by their owners.

There is a leisure centre with 3 outdoor heated swimming pools (seasonal) - more details at <http://www.haltwhistleleisure.co.uk/>

Visitor information can be found at <https://visithaltwhistle.com/>