

Broomhaugh and Riding Mill History Trail

Throughout this peaceful village, there is a wealth of history just waiting to be discovered



This trail will take you along a Roman road, to a pub once reputed to be the haunt of local witches, and past a former bastle house redolent of the area's turbulent past.

It explores the old mill which names our village, includes churches past and present and an ancient packhorse bridge.

The trail also explains the importance of the River Tyne and the railway in creating and shaping the place we enjoy today.

This leaflet has been supplied by Broomhaugh & Riding Parish Council.
With special thanks to Anne Dale, County Councillor.
For more information see www.ridingmill.org





ST. JAMES' CHURCH, RIDING MILL-ON-TYNE

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1. Parish Hall. Built in 1926, in the orchard of the Mill House. Note the course of the old mill leat.

2. The Wellington. Built in 1660 by Thomas Errington, Postmaster general of Newcastle, after his wife, Anne Carnaby, inherited the Mill. The building was originally known as Riding

House. Infamous as one of the locations in which Anne Armstrong of Birches Nooke, Stocksfield accused a coven of witches of meeting in 1673. It changed hands many times before becoming an inn around 1843. Look inside to read about Anne Armstrong's appearances before the justices at the Morpeth Quarter Sessions. Anne's ghost is said to haunt the scullery in which she was found hanged after her accusations were dismissed.



3. The Mill. There has been a corn mill here since the Middle Ages, owned at one stage by the White Canons of Blanchland. The area in which the mill is set was originally known as the Riding, the old Northumbrian term for an area 'ridded' of trees, hence the name given to the village built up around it. The current building is 19th century. Note the iron frame of the water wheel built into the house wall.

4. Pack Horse Bridge. Built about 1603 so that tenants in the surrounding area could bring their corn to the mill for grinding when the March Burn was in flood. There are traces of earlier fabric at its southern abutment. It is also known as the Roman Bridge as the old Roman Dere Street crossed here to converge with the ford over the Tyne. The witches' coven which gathered at the Wellington was said to have danced before the Devil and changed into various animals on the flat ground at the northern bridge end.

5. Church of St James. This Anglican Church was built for £900 in 1858 as a Chapel of Ease to the parish of Bywell St Andrew. Parishioners in Riding Mill, which was some way from the parish church in Bywell, could then more easily attend services. It is a beautiful example of Victorian gothic revival village church architecture. It became the parish church of Riding Mill in 1975. Notice the carved head of a king and a bishop at the door, symbols of the power of the church and state.

6. Drinking Fountain. At the head of the playground, given in 1873 for the children from Thomas Wilson, a corn merchant, and his wife Mary. The water for the school came through a pipe to the fountain from a spring, and also supplied water to the cottages beside the school property. In 1896 the water supply to the school was declared unfit for use.



7. The Old School. The impressive stone-built public elementary school (now a private residence) was built in 1871. It was an extension of the local school which had operated as Bridge Hill School in what is now The Church Cottage since 1825. The building was again extended in 1878 and later converted to a dwelling. The playground (now a car park) is opposite.



8. Old Tavern House. Formerly the Beaufront Arms, it was renamed The Locomotive Inn but was also known locally as The Railway. An Early Victorian tavern, it was in use until 1934 and is now a private residence. Another pub has also long since closed, leaving the Wellington as the village's only local.

9. Stable End. The South end incorporates the remains of an early 17th century bastle house. Local lawlessness and family feuds meant that many of the residences built around the junction of the March Burn and the Tyne were thick-walled defensible farmhouses in which the owner lived on the first floor leaving the ground floor free for accommodating their livestock.



10. Methodist Chapel (and Yew Tree Cottage). The date of 1699 is on the doorhead of the cottage with the initials of Mary and Thomas Usher underneath it. They were Baptists who, when one of their babies died in 1708 and was refused burial at the parish church of St Andrew at Bywell, responded by opening a burial ground on a property owned by a Baptist neighbour, opposite their house. The Baptist chapel eventually built in front of the graveyard in 1843 was transferred to the Methodist congregation in 1966.

11. Farmhouse. 17th century bastle farmhouse. Note the whale jaw bones at the side.



12. The Ford. This was the crossing point of the Tyne which only disappeared in the 1980's when the pumping station was built downriver.

13. The Station. The Newcastle to Carlisle line, the first coast-to-coast connection in the world, came through in the 1830s. The cast iron pedestrian bridge was built in the late Victorian era. Riding Mill Station opened in 1835 on one of first mass-passenger routes in the world. It is one of the country's oldest passenger stations. The station master lived behind the public rooms, the original building still stands.

14. Horse Trough. 18th century trough on old toll road.



15. The Old Smithy. Early 19th century smithy. Note the iron disc outside the smith's house, the remains of the turning wheel to manufacture the rims of cart wheels.



16. The Manor House. Its late 17th century core has been added to in the 18th and 19th centuries. Parts of the house are built of stone and parts in brick, partly rendered. A complex and picturesque house, its structural history is difficult to interpret.

17. The Weir. Originally part of the connection which led water via the leat (parts of which are still visible) to the former mill pond. Erosion and scouring over the years made it an impassible obstacle to salmon and sea trout migrating upstream to their spawning grounds. The rock ramp seen today was constructed in 2012 to overcome this problem.

