



# NORTH PENNINES

## Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



## Welcome to Blanchland!

This leaflet is one of a series designed to help you discover the treasures of Blanchland - both natural and man-made.

This attractive walk takes you from Blanchland, along the River Derwent, up on to open moorland. The moorland is exposed and can experience harsh weather.

The wild landscape surrounding Blanchland bustles with evidence of people, from Mesolithic hunters to lead miners and modern land managers. Everywhere you look you see the imprint of our ancestors. Many landscape scars have been hidden by nature and it is hard to believe that in the not-so-distant past this quiet landscape was once home to major industry.

Look out for the **START** on the directions overleaf and follow our trail through time...

### Walk information:

**Distance:** Approx 14km (9 miles)

**Length:** Allow at least 4½ hours

**Grade:** Hard – hill walks with steep, strenuous climbs. Rough Moorland. Boots essential

### Useful maps:

OS Landranger Map 87 *Hexham and Haltwhistle*  
OS Explorer Map 307 *Consett and Derwent Reservoir*

**Start/Finish:** Blanchland car park (donations welcome)  
*Grid Reference NY 964505*

**Public Transport:** For journey and timetable information: freephone 0871 200 2233

**Facilities:** Blanchland has public toilets, a Post Office and shops, a hotel and a tea room

Please follow the Countryside Code: Leave gates as you find them and keep your dog under close control (on a lead when signs specify this).

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This is one of a series of walks leaflets to help you discover the North Pennines AONB. Why not try one of the others?

**To find out more, contact:**

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We can provide the information contained in this leaflet in large print, different formats and other languages on request. Please call 01388 528801.

The North Pennines AONB Partnership holds a Gold GTBS Award for its corporate office and tourism activities.

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Moorlands managed for both sport and conservation

**Victorians**  
Lead mining heyday

**Georgians**  
Lord Crewe dies and trustees took over management of Blanchland and surrounding land

**Stuarts**  
Nathaniel, Lord Crewe, Bishop of Durham bought Blanchland and surrounding area

**Tudors**  
Blanchland Abbey dissolved

**Late Medieval**  
Black Death

**The Middle Ages**  
Scots army burn Blanchland Abbey, later rebuilt by Edward III

**Anglo Normans**  
The Domesday Book  
'White Canons' settle in Blanchland

**Anglosaxons**  
Vikings invade England

**Romano British**  
Roman conquest. Hadrian's Wall built

**Iron Age**  
Farmers inhabit valley near Burntsfield Haugh

**Bronze Age**  
Settlers build huts in the nearby valley and lay the cremated remains of their dead to rest in a ring cairn

**Mesolithic and Neolithic Periods**  
Hunter-gatherers and early farmers with their livestock regularly travel between Cumbria and Birkside Fell

AD1901 -  
PRESENT DAY

AD1714 - 1837

AD1603 - 1714

AD1216 - 1348

AD410 - 1066

750BC - AD43

8000 - 2000BC



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### The famous grouse

Even today the moors which seem wild, feel the influence of people. Much of the heather moorland used to be woodland with a mix of birch, oak and rowan. Clearance of this woodland started in Neolithic times. Fire and grazing by sheep kept the trees from sprouting again. Today trustees for the Lord Crewe's Charity manage the moorland for red grouse. On walking the moors, you may hear the sound of grumpy old men telling you "go-back-go-back-go-back!" This is the sound of red grouse which live in the heather. They feed on the young shoots and breed in older taller plants. The moorland is managed through sheep grazing and burning to create this mosaic of different ages of heather. The shooting rights are let, to provide income for the estate.

### Hay time

Like the grouse moors the hay meadows you can see along the route (between Pennypie and Shildon) are managed by people. The rich mixture of flowers is the result of traditional management involving cutting of the crop in July once the flowers have set seed. No artificial fertilisers are used in the management.

## Long Long Ago...

### An Ice Age and water flows uphill!

The glacial meltwater that formed the channel at Riddlehamhope flowed towards you – in other words uphill! The only way this can have happened is if the water was under pressure beneath the ice.

### Mesolithic travellers

The people of the Mesolithic period were hunter-gatherers. Archaeologists believe that flint tools found in the area indicate that hunter-gatherers stopped here to at temporary camps before moving on.

### Bronze Age ring-cairn

Archaeologists excavating the cairn in 1997 found a large urn buried in a pit. Inside the pit was cremated bone from an adult man and some fragments of a second adult skull, as well as a flint knife.



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### The Carriers' Way – In the footsteps of pack ponies

During the 18th century carriers made their income using pack ponies to carry smelted lead to the River Tyne. The Carriers' Way as we know it today was formed by the constant traffic of these pony trains. It is possible, however, that this route has been used since prehistoric times.



# Newbiggin and the Carriers' Way

Follow the footsteps of our ancestors through the ages...



8 Once again the path is elusive, but keep straight on with the hill sloping up on your right and the Carriers' Way will soon become clear and easy to follow. At this stage of the walk, take time to admire the wonderful pastoral panorama to your left as you look across into Hexhamshire. You are looking into the valley of the Devil's Water where Cadwallon of Gwynedd was killed by King Oswald's army after the Battle of Heavenfield in 634, thus setting the scene for the Northumbrian Golden Age. Pass a shooting hut.

7 Continue past Riddlehamhope and around to the right through a gate and on to a stony track. Shortly after take a stile on the right.

There isn't a definitive path. Set a course across the moor towards the edge of the plantation you can see ahead and you will come to an unexpected natural feature, a winding glacial meltwater channel. Follow the path down and look at the beautifully crafted sheepfold. Go across the board walk and around the edge of the marsh to climb back up onto the fell.



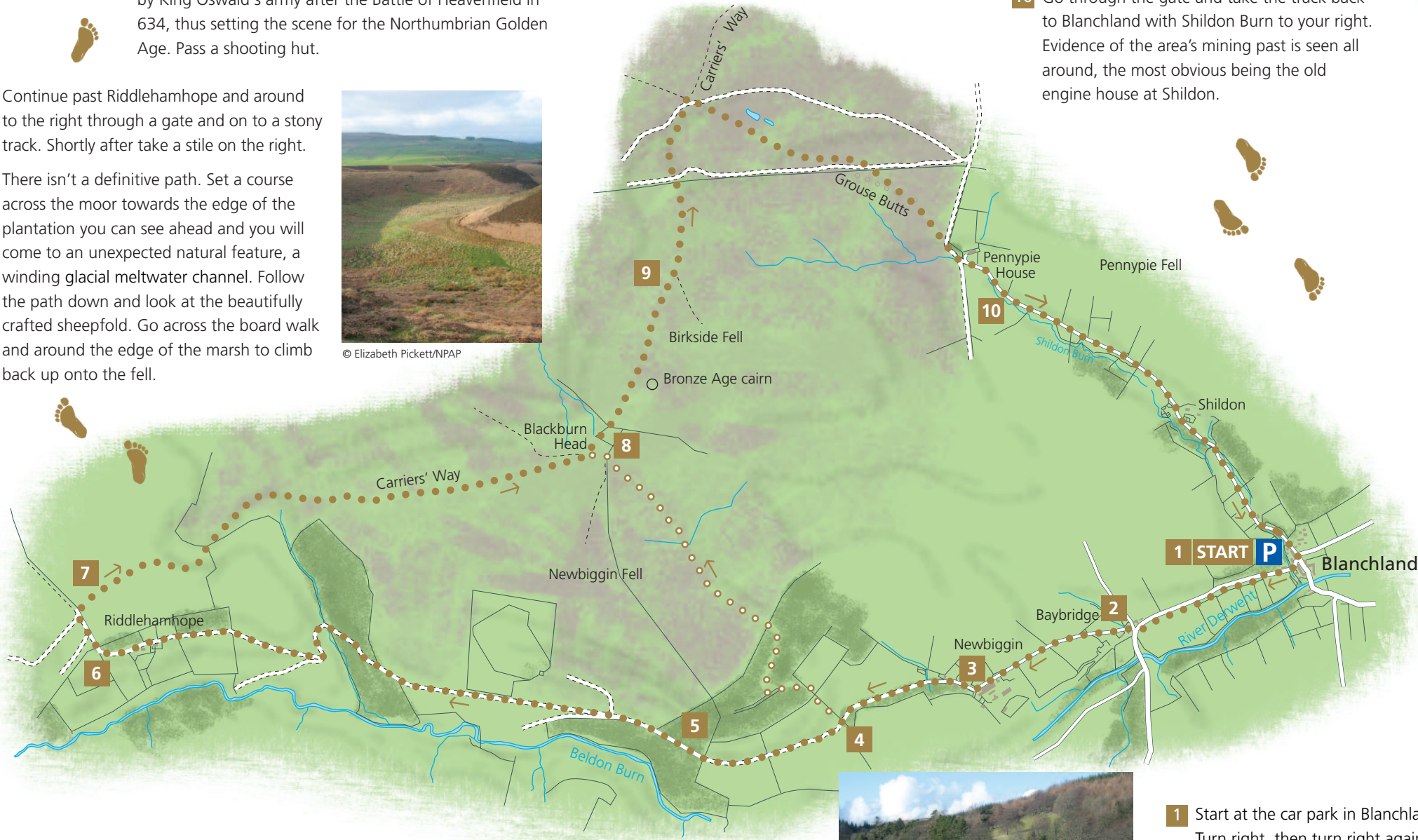
© Elizabeth Pickett/NPAP

9 Hexham racecourse can be seen on the far hillside to your left. Ignore the first marker (indicating a path to the right) and take the next, which will bring you across the fell to a ladder stile and then diagonally on a rough and boggy path to Pennypie House. As an alternative (avoiding the boggy section), go along behind the wall across the moor until it meets the track which leads down to Pennypie.



Lapwing

10 Go through the gate and take the track back to Blanchland with Shildon Burn to your right. Evidence of the area's mining past is seen all around, the most obvious being the old engine house at Shildon.



6 After several gateways and a stile you will eventually come to Riddlehamhope (the "R" of the milestones). This Victorian building was probably used as a shooting lodge in the 1920s to 1930s. The remains of a late 16th or early 17th century bastle house can still be seen next to the house.

5 Across the valley to the left is the village of Hunstanworth. In the middle distance you can also see the derelict farm of Gibraltar, possibly named because of its position on a rocky crag. Keep on the track as it runs parallel to Beldon Burn in the deep river valley to the south. Look out for the mile stones R2M, R1M to the right and a striking circular stone enclosure of Scots pines on the left.

3 Newbiggin Hall on the left is a shooting lodge for hunters using the famous grouse moors. Where the metalled drive finishes, take the gate ahead and follow the track around to the right and eventually through another gate. Then follow the track along the edge of a wood to another gate.

4 At this point those choosing a shorter walk turn right and climb the hill to follow a track through the wood and across the fell to a shooting hut.

At the shooting hut rejoin the main walk and continue on to the gate, noting the Carriers' Way marker stone to the right.

If you are not taking the short cut keep straight on.

1 Start at the car park in Blanchland. Turn right, then turn right again at the corner opposite archway and walk along the road until you reach the playing field and follow the track along the top side of the playing field to the tiny hamlet of Baybridge. ⚠️

2 At Baybridge carry straight on and cross the road. Go through a gateway and along a metalled drive. Please take care. ⚠️



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