



# Nenthead to Alston

## Summary

The trail runs by the River Nent down as far as Alston. Directly below ground for almost 5 miles runs the Nentforce Level, a wonder of the North Pennines' lead mining heritage. Look out for a ventilation shaft by the riverside path at Lovelady Shield with a conical wire cover and peer down to a secret world.

Nenthead is a place with strong Holden family connections. Records can be traced as far back as the late 1600s to Alston Moor. Isaac's own branch to his grandparents, Benjamin and Sarah at Greenends, on the top road to Nentsberry.

John Wesley and Methodism had a profound influence on this community, in a place largely cut off from the wider world. The Holden's were converted by Wesley in 1774. Methodism gave vitality, purpose and skills to meet life's challenges and opportunities to those who otherwise felt neglected. Isaac Holden was one such individual and was motivated to make his mark for the public good in his own way.

As you leave Nenthead the remains of the spoil heaps, mostly from re-worked zinc workings are now landscaped and stabilised. Everywhere you can see the evidence of centuries of lead mining and quarrying, where nature has begun to restore this heavily plundered land.

Walking along the fellsides and crossing the tumbling burns, you'll see the remains of old lime kilns and the stone arched entrances to the mines and a labyrinth of old levels and shafts. The farms continue as before, while the old miners' cottages are mostly holiday homes surrounded by [rich hay meadows](#) and drystone walls.

Spring-time is a [particular delight](#) to be about, with upland bird song, mountain pansies and purple orchids brightening the trail. This is not a section to be hurried as the many ladder stiles ensure the pace is no more than leisurely.

Tucked away is the cluster of buildings at [Blagill](#) which looks much as it did in Isaac's time but no longer has a chapel. The trail then drops down the road to the river for a scenic descent into Alston beside [waterfalls](#) and flat beds of limestone by the riverside and woodland paths.

**Distance:** 9.14kms, 5.68 miles; Allow 3 hours

**Total From Start:** 20.99 km or 17.18 miles

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Max height:** 475m; **Min height:** 270m; **Total Climb:** 161m;

**Route Changes / Points to Note:** There is a short section after Lovelady Shield leading to Foreshield Bridge where erosion control work on the river bank has not been completed. Should the river be in flood, you are advised to take the farm track on the other side of the fence away from the river.

**Maps:** [Nenthead to Alston Maps](#)

**Description:** [The Nent Valley:](#)

## Route Instructions

### **Bainbridge Water Pump Memorial GR NY 781437 to Alston Market Cross GR NY 717464**

Turn right on the A 689 from the Bainbridge Water Pump next to the Community Shop and Nenthead Arts and Information Centre. The Tea trail is signposted off the road and to the right on to Hillersdon Terrace to the far end where there is an eye-catching model village in the garden.

Proceed onto the track and follow the river to curve right over a footbridge and past the mine entrance at Gudham Gill. A footpath sign points to a short climb up the bank. With a turn left to follow the fence line. Beware: rabbit holes on the path in the soft sand of the re-worked spoil heaps need to be avoided to prevent twisted ankles or falls before entering a small conifer plantation.

Following the valley side over a series of stiles leads to an access road above Hagg's Bank Bunk House and Campsite. This private road and a Right of Way passes a couple of properties and continues through further fields and uphill to High Nentsberry before the front door of Nether Nentsberry Farm.

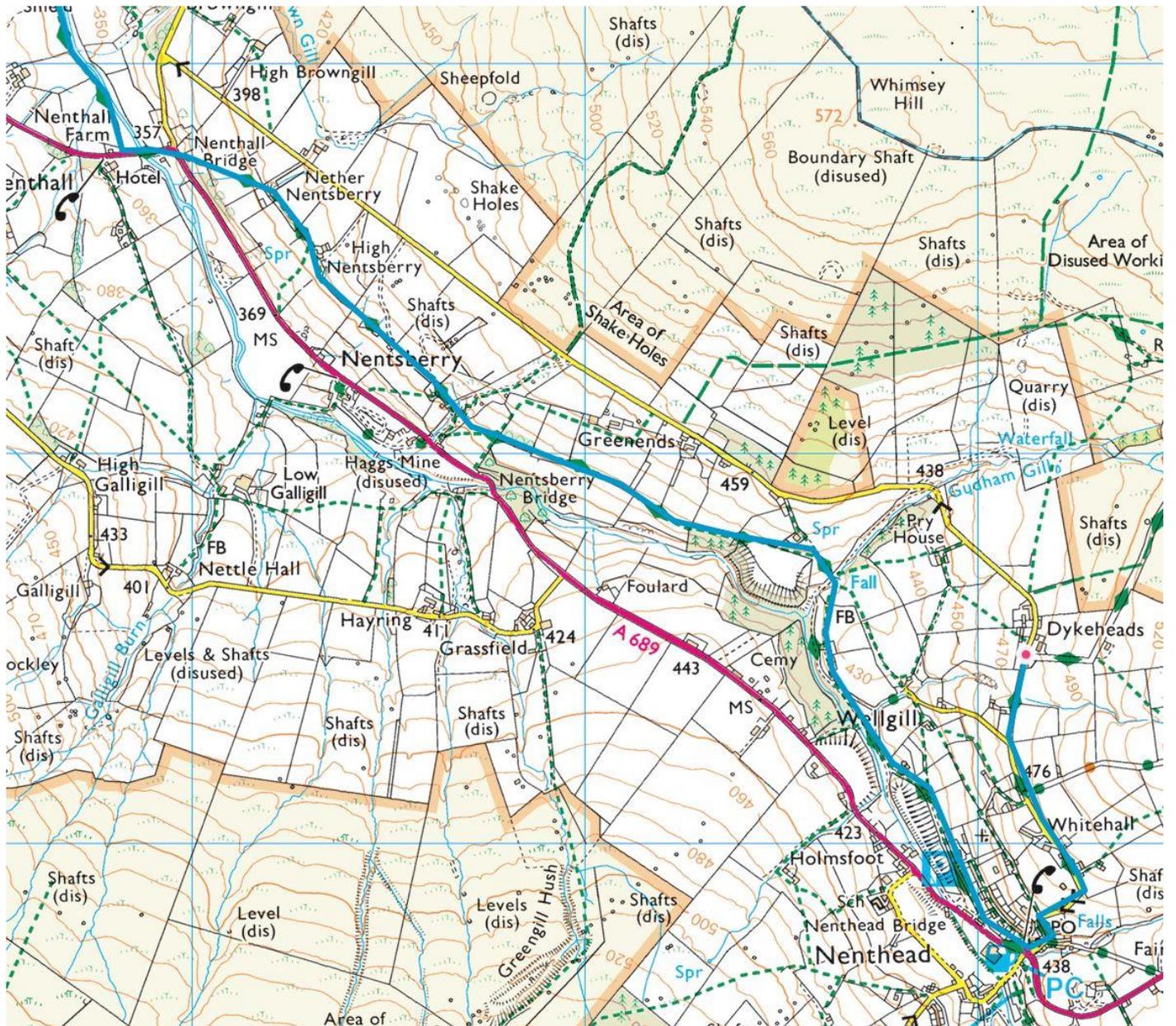
Around the far side is a metal gate and a diagonal drop across a boggy [flower rich](#) ground to a kissing gate in the corner to a steep flight of steps onto the road. Beware of the hazard of road traffic coming out of a sharp bend on the right. Walk with care to by the roadside to cross Nenthall Bridge to the footpath sign down to the riverside.

While much work has been done to restore the riverside footpath from severe erosion, there is still a section after Lovelady Shield towards Foreshield Bridge, where more work is planned to improve water quality from leaching of toxic material from the mines waste. Should the river be in flood you are advised to take the farm track on the other side of the fence above the river level to the bridge.

At the road, turn right and over the bridge and [continue along the road](#). Watch out for the bridleway signpost on your left as you take a right handed bend and follow the track down to the bridge and the waterfall at Blagill. Continue past farm buildings to re-join the road, turn left and head downhill to the road bridge. On the other side follow the sign post all the way to Alston to the Market Cross.

# Maps

## Nenthead to Nenthall Bridge



# Nenthall Bridge to Alston

