



Alston to Nenthead

Summary

The trail runs by the River Nent from Alston upstream to Nenthead. 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.

Leaving Alston the trail joins the river for a scenic journey beside [waterfalls](#) and flat beds of limestone by the riverside and woodland paths. 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.

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.



As you approach 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.

Distance: 9.1 kms, 5.7 miles; Allow 3 hours

Total From Start: 42 km or 26 miles

Difficulty: Easy

Max height: 475m; **Min height:** 270m; **Total Climb:** 262m

Maps: [Nenthead to /from Alston Map](#)

Description: [The Nent Valley:](#)

Route Instructions

Alston Market Cross (NY719465) to Bainbridge Water Pump Memorial, Nenthead (NY781437)

From Alston Market Cross head north down the cobbled street between buildings with Stokoe House on the right to enter a courtyard area with a sign on the opposite wall for “The Butts”.

The Butts is historically where the men of Alston practised their archery before the houses were built. The small square was the setting for the workhouse yard in a television production of Oliver Twist.

At “The Butts” turn left down a further cobbled lane. After 50 metres where three cobbled lanes meet take the right turn. After 50 metres pass a finger post (public bridleway Blagill 1 mile). Continue on this Bridleway with the River Nent to the left to arrive at Gossipgate Stone Bridge in 500 metres. From the bridge the Seven Sisters waterfall can be seen and heard just upstream. The trail does not actually cross the bridge. Continue on the right bank of the River Nent signposted at the four-way fingerpost to Blagill Bridge. An excellent footpath continues alongside the River Nent for 1.6km to reach a minor road at NY740469.

Turn left at the road, immediately cross a bridge across the River Nent then ascend to the hamlet of Blagill on the road. At Blagill leave the minor road by bearing right on a track between farm buildings.

Then after 50 metres at fingerpost turn right over Blagill Burn bridge with waterfall to the right. Continue as the track bends around to the right until minor road. Turn right along the road and after 1 km reach Foreshield Bridge. Cross Foreshield Bridge.

Immediately after crossing Foreshield Bridge turn left along the riverside path with the River Nent to your left. Pass Lovelady Shield Bridge in 800 metres still keeping the river to your left. The riverside path is narrow in places – take care – notice where willow has been planted to protect the bankside from erosion.

Continue along the riverside path until reaching a road at Nenthall opposite the Nenthall Hotel. Turn left on the road across Nenthall Bridge. Shortly the road bends right at the War Memorial and after 20 metres or so turn left up the 100 plus Nentsberry Steps.

At the top of Nentsberry Steps go through a kissing gate into a rough, wet field. Cross the field diagonally ascending on a faint path in an easterly direction to farm buildings at Nether Nentsberry. Go through a black metal garden gate and work your way around what is the rear of the buildings at Nether Nentsberry farm.

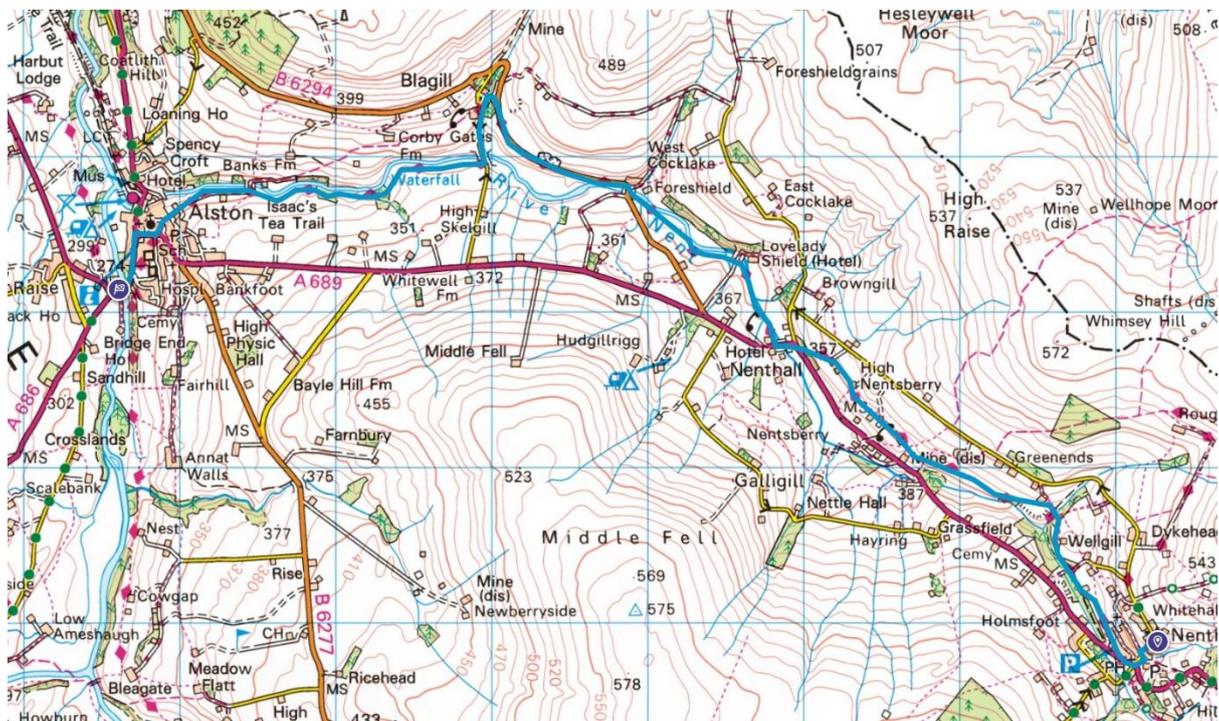
Continue and in 200metres pass below High Nentsberry. Then over stiles, for a further 400 metres pass by further buildings. Onto an access road and descend on the right. As the road bends right there is a three way fingerpost above Higgs Bank Bunkhouse and Campsite. Turn left uphill then right through a kissing gate, across the campsite. Continue contouring the hillside initially with a wall on your right, then over the wall, and continue with wall on your left,

into and through a dark conifer plantation. Emerge from woodland, turn right and follow fenceline. This reworked mine area is full of rabbit holes and trip hazards so take extra care.

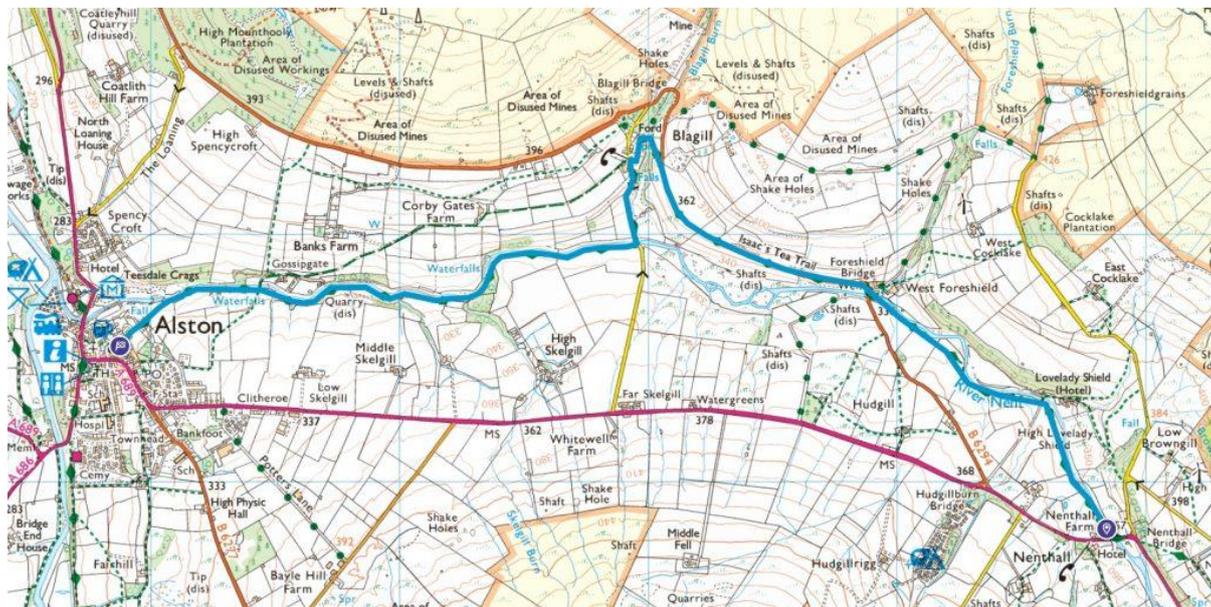
Descend to Gudham Gill and pass an old mine entrance. Follow the path over a wooden footbridge. Continue on footpath which eventually merges onto a very wide track. River Nent on right hand side. Reaching buildings on the right, continue on huge track slightly left and descending. At a further track junction take the less obvious track which continues in the same direction not a more obvious track going slightly right. Continue and eventually meet Hillersdon Terrace and admire the eye-catching model village, where you may be accompanied by the sound of Elvis.

Continue to the main road at Nenthead and continue on to the restored Bainbridge water pump memorial (NY781437)

Alston to Nenthead



Alston to Nenthall Bridge



Nenthall Bridge to Nenthead

