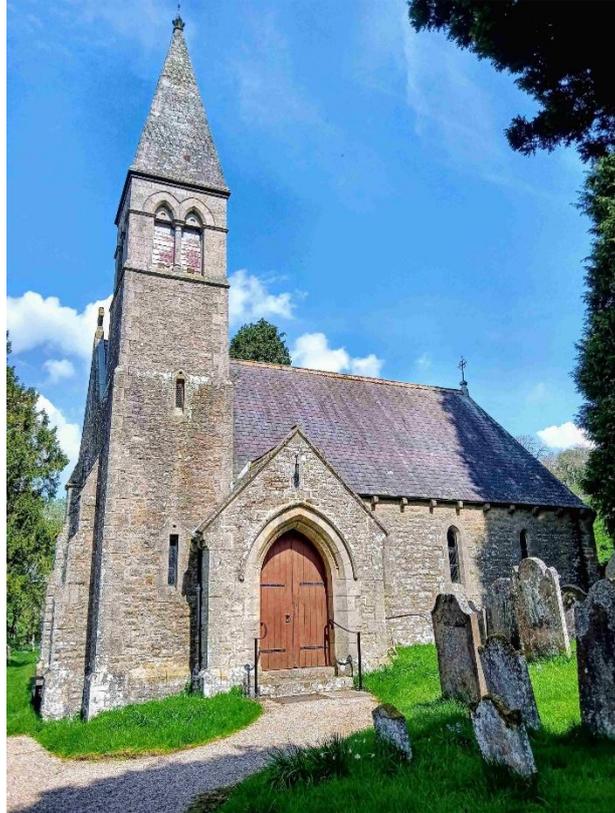




# Ninebanks (St Mark's Church) to Alston

## Summary



St Mark's Church

The reminders of Isaac Holden life are much in evidence. Over the last two hundred years what is remarkable is that so much has survived. The small holding at Redheugh was Isaac's birthplace in Mohope. While only a short distance before is the profile of the workings of the Keirsleywell Mine. This was where Isaac worked as an 8 year old sorting lead ore and then a few short years later he joined his brother and father as a lead miner in a family partnership at this mine.

It was a hard life but the same livelihood was shared by hundreds throughout the valley. Until out of adversity, when his earnings slumped below subsistence level he had a welcome change of fortune, when he tried his hand at selling tea from door to door.

From St Mark's Church and the Hearse House the trail drops down to then cross Mohope's meadow lands and the enchanting West Allen Valley. Ninebanks Youth Hostel, once a lead miners' lodging and blacksmith shop, is passed. The trail then heads up to the moors over Ouston Fell with good panoramic views as far as The Cheviots. The historic Clarghyll Hall originally owned by the Whitfield family is passed on the way to the delightful hamlet of Ayle. Then down to Randalholm and along the South Tyne Valley to Kirkhaugh. The trail then crosses the South Tyne using the new Kirkhaugh footbridge, which opened in October 2020

to replace the one destroyed by floods in 2018. Across the South Tynedale Railway to join the Pennine Way.

Isaac's Tea Trail keeps company with the Pennine Way as far as the edge of Alston, passing [Roman Fort of Epiacum](#) (Whitley Castle) on the way. At Castle Nook farm Ann Tailford worked as a domestic servant before she married Isaac Holden at nearby Kirkhaugh Church in December 1834. They later opened a grocer's shop in Allendale from where Isaac made his deliveries of tea around and about.

In the Market Town of Alston toilets, shops, cafe's, accommodation, information centre and walking tours are all available.

Accommodation and refreshments are available in Alston and at the Nook, the cafe at Epiacum. Accommodation is also available at [Ninebanks Youth Hostel and Chalets](#) and at [Alston Youth Hostel](#).

For a gentle and very informative introduction to this section, listen to the Countrystride podcast with Roger & Anne Leuchars: [Countrystride #83: ALSTON & Isaac's Tea Trail](#)

**Distance:** 19.21 kms, 11.94 miles; Allow 5 hours

**Difficulty:** Medium

**Max height:** 483m; **Min height:** 229m; **Total Climb:** 528m;

**Diversion:** See the [Latest News](#) page for details of a diversion on this section of the trail. The diversion is needed because the stretch of bridleway between Clarghyll Colliery and Clargillhead will be closed for about 3 months, starting in mid-November 2025.

Maps: [Ninebanks \(St Mark's Church\) to Alston - Maps](#)

## Route Instructions

**St Mark's Church, Ninebanks ( NY783524) to Clarghyll ( NY729495)**

**Distance 8.2 km or 5 miles**

A small distance after the farm track/road takes a sharp right bend, where the Hearse House ( 150 yards) fingerpost is, leave the track/road on grassy path to the left, descending a short distance to a green metal wicket gate.

Through this green metal wicket then turn left onto the Ninebanks-Carrshield road. Turn left up the road and after 20 metres there is a gap in the fence on the right.

If you have been to the Hearse House and have returned walking down the Ninebanks-Carrshield road, this is the point at which you rejoin the trail.

Through the gap in the fence on the right descend steps through some trees to a further road. Turn left onto the road and follow as it crosses the Blackpool Bridge across the West Allen river.

After Blackpool Bridge turn left along the road signposted to Middle 1.5 miles Farney Shield 2.5 miles.

Along the road past the watersmeet of the West Allen and the Mohope Burn. Note the sandbank on the left which hosts a sand martin colony. Come off the road at a fingerpost on the right, which has a disc explaining the name of the Malakoff Bridge, which is the bridge to your left which the trail does not cross.

Just off the trail. If you cross Malakoff Bridge, ascend to bend in the road, where there is a bench with a tea pot. Good place to sit and take in the views back across [Mohope](#).

So right through the field gate onto an obvious grassy path going half left. Pass through a further field gate and continue on grassy path with the Mohope burn on your left. A tributary enters the Mohope burn from the right and you continue on path to the right of this tributary, the Blind Burn. Over a flattened dry stone wall to continue on the right hand side of the tributary. Then cross over the tributary under a small copse of trees. Now follow the faint grassy path with the Blind Burn to your right hand side. Ascend on grassy path viewing the mine spoil embankment on the right the other side of the Blind Burn. Keep the Blind Burn to your right reaching a ladder stile over a wall but, to the right of this, is an often muddy and open gateway in the drystone wall. Follow directional markers keeping the Blind Burn to your right. Pass through a further field gate. Straight ahead on a rough grassy path, leaving the side of the Blind Burn. Notice a weathered former stone gate post to your left. The Mohope Burn is now down on your left. Then to another, often open, field gate with a muddy opening through a drystone wall which has a ladder stile to it's left. You can now see the building Redheugh in front of you. Go to the left of Redheugh to a kissing gate. Through this kissing gate and continue on enclosed path around the rather lovely garden of Redheugh. Which brings you out to the drive of Redheugh, through the property gate to a road. Straight on along the road.

Follow the road as it ascends uphill to the right just after Park House Farm on the left. Keep on, ignoring a turn off to reach [Ninebanks Youth Hostel](#) on your left.

The trail continues on past Ninebanks Youth Hostel. There is a bench on the right before reaching a point where the road goes right but you take a left turn along a rough enclosed stony track. [Fingerpost directing to Long Cross 2.5 miles along public byway](#). This is Kiersleywell bank. The track gradually ascends. The track itself is [stony](#) and awkward. There is a grassy path which you may prefer using on the bank to the right. Eventually reaching a field gate with a stile close by, "Welcome to the Moor". Go through and straight on.

Just beyond the moor gate there is a marker post. A public right of way goes straight on, but this is not Isaac's Tea Trail. The trail goes along the track half right.

Continue on moorland track through Sandy Ford to Long Cross. Long Cross is on the Northumberland/Cumberland border, the site of one of the medieval crosses on Alston Moor.

At Long Cross go through the metal field gate or use the stile to the left. Continue on the track then access road to Clargyllhead to reach the main road ( A686 ). Cross the main road with care, then descend the stony track for 600 metres. Turn left onto minor road. At road junction continue straight ahead.

**Clargyll Road Junction ( NY729495) to Kirkhaugh Bridge ( NY698497)**

**Distance 4.4 km or 2.7 miles**

Pass Clargyll Hall then turn right off the road and descend down a farm track signposted Ayle (1/2mile). Then through metal field gate into field, then using marker post for direction descend to an excellent stone step stile next to a field gate. Then half left on grassy path down to the Burn. Cross Laura's bridge across the Ayle Burn to come back into Northumberland.

Use directional arrows on marker posts to zig-zig up bank, first right and then left. Over wooden ladder stile over stone wall. Then half right ascending field aiming in direction of farm buildings. Over large stone step stile then straight ahead to go over a wooden ladder stile to reach the minor road. Turn left and follow the minor road through Ayle hamlet. Reach red post box on the left and fingerpost on the right (Randalholme  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile).

Turn left here off the road towards Randalholme on farm track. Almost immediately go through metal field gate on the left. Then through a further metal field gate. Ahead in field for about 40 metres with walls on either side. Then through field gate on right. Turn left and continue through field with large stone wall on your left. Go over large wooden stile into next field. Straight on across field to go over further stile. Continue on obvious grassy track across field aiming to the left hand side of pine wood in front. Through metal field gate to continue ahead and descend field to go through another metal field gate to reach minor road at Randalholm Bridge and Hall (NY708485).

Turn right along the minor road for nearly a mile. At NY699497 where the road continues half right, follow the track that continues straight on ( fingerpost – public byway, Kirkhaugh  $\frac{1}{2}$ , no ford crossing).

Before the above junction is reached [Kirkhaugh church](#) is seen off to the left. This church is well worth a visit.

Follow the byway as it turns around to the left, the Kirkhaugh bridge in view in front. The byway becomes a public footpath which is followed over the Kirkhaugh Bridge.

### **Kirkhaugh Bridge ( NY698497) to Alston Market Cross (NY7194565)**

#### **Distance 6.1 km or 3.8 miles**

Just after crossing the Kirkhaugh bridge, continue on ascending some steps ( not taking the footpath marked to the right), straight on across the grassy path to go through a field gate, to then go over the stone bridge across the South Tyne railway (finger post Whitley Castle  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile). Once across the stone bridge, through field gate, half left across field following directional disc for Epiacum ( Whitley Castle Roman Fort) to go through a further field gate (At this point we have joined the Pennine Way and accompany this national trail to Alston). Then across another small field to a further field gate. Through further field gate. Keeping to the left of the farmhouse. Past the farmhouse to reach a kissing gate ( redundant due to large gap in fence to the right of it) and a Pennine Way double fingerpost. Across small field to then go through metal field gate, then across next field to go through further metal gate to take us to the road (A698).

Cross the main road. On the left is Castle Nook Farm, where Ann Tailford worked as a servant lass before she married Isaac Holden. Just off the trail, a few hundred metres left down the road towards Alston is the [Nook Café and Farm Shop](#).

Staying on the trail, climb over a low stone stile into a small area of woodland. Directed by the Pennine Way, Alston 3 miles fingerpost continue through the woodland, cross a burn using a single railed wooden bridge, up some steps, bear right and through a kissing gate into an open field.

Half left ascending through a pathless field to a complex arrangement of gates and fingerpost. There is a kissing gate to the left of a large metal Bristol gate (The Bristol 2-in-1 Gate incorporates a self-closing step gate into a standard field gate). There is also a 3-way fingerpost, Alston, Kirkhaugh, Epiacum Roman Fort Nook Farmshop WC.

Continue on the Pennine Way towards Alston. After 200m or so, the initially stony then grassy path divides. Take the left lower path which contours keeping a dry stone wall on the left ( not the right path which gradually ascends). Reach the viewpoint for [Epiacum Roman Fort](#) with information boards and a broken up log bench.

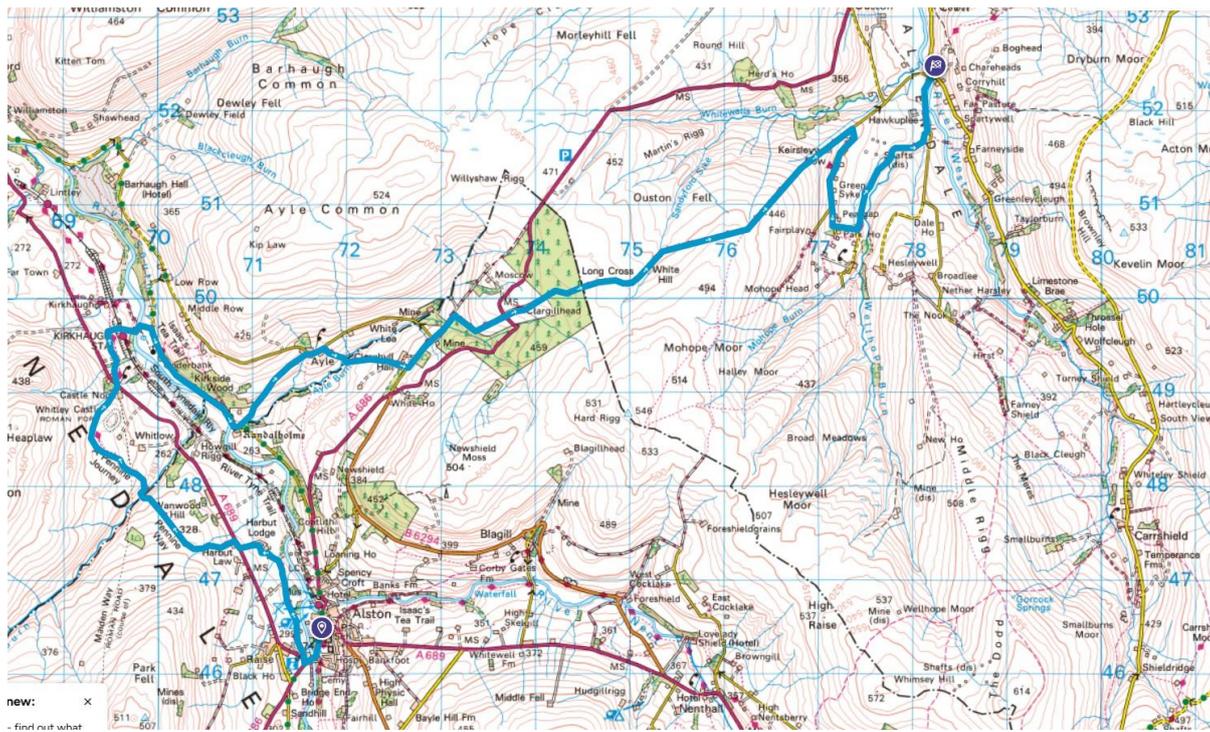
From [Epiacum](#) viewpoint continue on the Pennine Way passing through a metal gate construction, gradually descending to pass through a kissing gate to the left of a metal field gate. Keep right here, keeping the fence to your right ( do not drift left towards farm buildings) descending to a further kissing gate next to a metal field gate. Then descend to cross the [bridge over the Gilderdale Burn](#) (crossing from Northumberland to Westmorland and Furness).

Ascend from the Burn up grassy path going half left, through a hole in dry stone wall, straight on across a field to a kissing gate to the left of a field gate, through and across a further field to another kissing gate to the left of a red metal field gate, through and then about 100m to the next kissing gate left of a field gate. Through and follow the obvious Pennine Way path and start to descend along rough track with dry stone wall ( at times broken) to your right. Reaching the A698 road, follow the direction of the Pennine Way fingerpost to the right along the road.

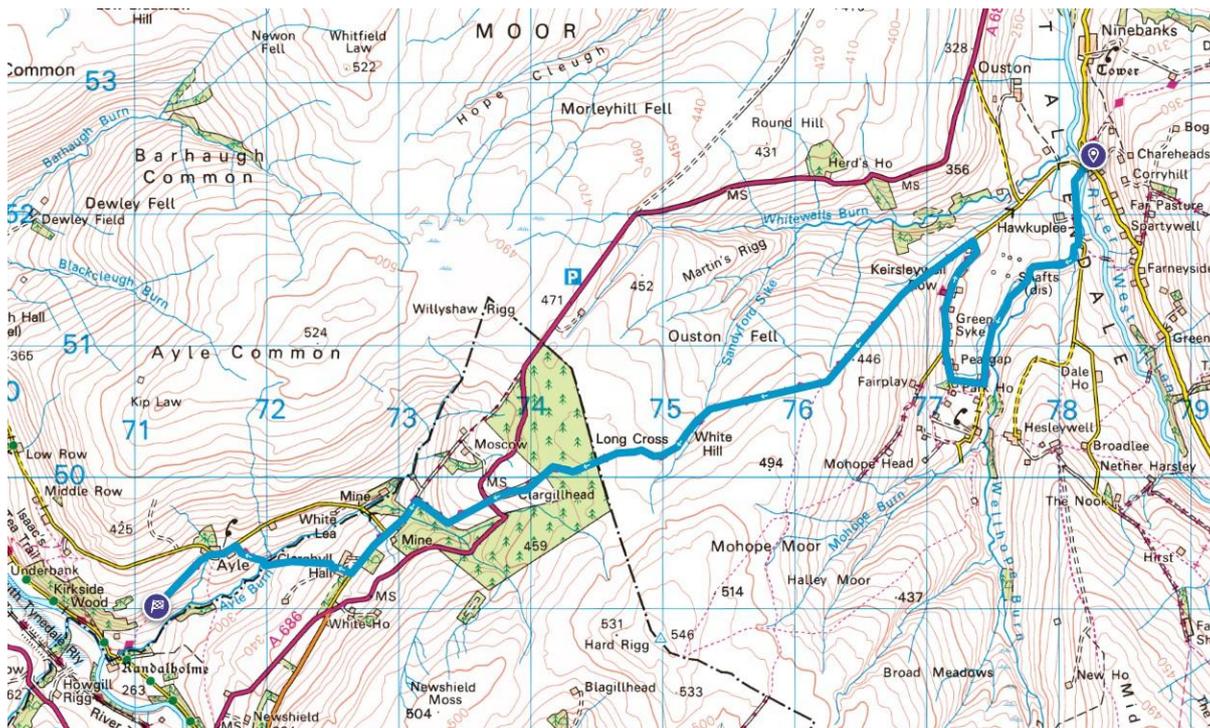
Continue along the A698 Brampton Road for 100m passing Harbut Law B&B on the right before turning left onto vehicle track signposted both Pennine Way and Isaac's Tea Trail. This is the vehicle track to Harbut Lodge. After 200m at a Pennine Way fingerpost on the right, pass through kissing gate into a field. Cross the field keeping the buildings of Harbut Lodge to the left. In the corner of the field go through a gate. Continue with buildings on left and wall on right to a further metal gate. Through the gate then proceed on obvious Pennine Way path which initially bends around to the right. Continue through fields following Pennine Way signage to eventually arrive again at A689 road. Turn left to War Memorial road junction. Turn left ( Alston 1/2mile) along road footway. After 500m having passed over the Bridge over the South Tyne and a Spar garage on the left to reach main road junction. Turn right (Garrigill, Nenthead) and ascend Alston's Cobbled street to the Town's Market Cross.

# Maps

## Ninebanks (St Mark's Church) to Alston



## Ninebanks (St Mark's Church) to Ayle



# Ayle to Alston

