



An elopement, Newcastle Gateshead's most famous landmark, a Roman fort and an "unpromising" poet.

Starting point:

Castle Keep steps, off Collingwood Street

Length of walk: 1.5 - 2 hours

What better way to start a walk of Newcastle Gateshead than to begin at the spot which gave Newcastle its name. In 1080, Robert Curthose, son of William the Conqueror, was ordered to build a

1. "new castle" on the high ground overlooking a crossing point on the River Tyne. This new castle was a royal castle and was often home to the early Norman kings - somewhere they could hold court, sit in judgement and entertain. The Keep was the principal stronghold of what would have been a much larger castle complex than survives today. If you climb to the top of the battlements you will be rewarded by a bird's eye view of the city. Turning left from the bottom of the Keep stairs you will see **2. Moot Hall** (1812). "Moot" is an old English term meaning a meeting place. Usually a meeting place of judges or magistrates and where sentences or punishments could be announced. This Moot Hall was designed

Blackgate



by architect John Stokoe who was influenced by the classical style of ancient Greece. Walk around the outside of the



Gateshead Millennium Bridge

3. Castle Keep until you see cobble stones set into the pavement. These mark the position of the Roman Fort, Pons Aelius. Walk beneath the railway arches and on your right you'll see another significant part of the castle complex which is Blackgate. This massive gateway originally strengthened the defences of the castle on its vulnerable west side. After exploring this area face the cathedral and take the steep hill (known as The Side) down past Agora bar. Notice the bust above the door of **4. Milburn House**. This is Admiral Lord Collingwood who was born in 1748 in a house on this site. During the Battle of Trafalgar, it was Collingwood who took over command of the fleet after Lord Nelson was killed. The Side joins Dean Street. Follow it round the bend and you'll see **5. The Crown Posada**, one of the oldest pubs in the quayside area and a real step

back in time with its high, ornate ceilings, embossed wallpaper and stained glass windows. You're more likely to have a dog for company in here than a bloke wielding a karaoke machine. Continue past the pub until you reach the pedestrian crossing.

Cross over, turn around and take a look at the imposing black and white framed buildings opposite. This is part of the Medieval Sandhill area. In the bottom left hand corner of one of the buildings is a plaque beneath a window. In the 18th century, this was the home of

6. Bessie Surtees, the eldest daughter of a Newcastle banker. She eloped with John Scott (he was from a poor family and her family considered him not up to scratch) and this is the actual window she climbed out to elope with him. Their fate? Bessie's parents eventually accepted the marriage and John went on to become Lord Chancellor of England. Talk about a window of opportunity...

Next to the traffic lights is **7. The Guildhall**. Once the centre of the commercial life of the area, it has recently been transformed into a Tourist Information Centre. Behind it you'll see the River Tyne and five of its bridges: The High Level (1849); The Queen Elizabeth II Bridge (1981); The Swing Bridge (1876), Gateshead Millennium Bridge (2001) and, of course, The Tyne Bridge (1928), Newcastle Gateshead's most famous landmark.

Retrace your steps back across the road and you'll see the **8. Akenside pub**. Mark Akenside (Newcastle poet and physician) was born on this site in 1721 and there's some information about him on a panel near the door (including an unflattering quote about his appearance being "unpromising, if not grotesque..."). When facing the pub, turn right and up Akenside Hill. At the top you'll see **9. All Saints Church** (1786).

Continue over the hill, passing the modern housing on your left, down Dog Bank, and into Broad Chare. Turn right to find **10. Trinity House**, founded in 1492 and from the mid-1500s onwards responsible for collecting tolls and taxes from ships using the Tyne. Continue along Broad Chare, passing the excellent **11. Live Theatre** on your right, to reach the river once again. There's a lot of public art dotted around this area, but



Bessie Surtees' House

it's the magnificent **12. Gateshead Millennium Bridge** which draws the eye. Opened to the public in 2001, it has already won a host of accolades including the Royal Institute of British Architects Stirling Prize. Cross over to the equally stunning **13. BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art** which houses an ever changing art programme. After exploring inside this free art gallery (make sure you visit the viewing platform giving stunning views over the river), head up the stairs from BALTIC Square, and towards the huge steel and glass structure, **14. The Sage Gateshead**, the internationally acclaimed music venue and home to Northern Sinfonia. Walk through the concourse and exit via the west door. Across the road you will notice **15. Gateshead Visitor Centre** in St Mary's Church lies ahead. Fantastic views and postcard opportunities ahoy! Back down the hill and over the **16. Swing Bridge** will lead you back to Bessie Surtees' house. Head left and take the Castle Stairs back up to the Castle Keep. Halfway up, pause (for breath!) and admire the ancient Postern Gate - a doorway through the castle's curtain wall - which is one of the best preserved in England. After that climb we can heartily recommend popping into The Bridge Hotel public house (opposite The Keep and just before the High Level Bridge), for a pint of a local brew. Cheers!