

MILLER'S TRAIL

An eight mile walk linking the three windmills of
Whitburn, Cleadon and Fulwell



INTRODUCTION

Most windmills were used to grind grain to make flour or animal feedstuff, but could be adapted to any purpose where a solid needed to be rendered into a powder. Examples existed in the North East where flint was ground for the pottery industry and sand ground for the glass industry.

There were once over a hundred windmills in North East England, mostly along the coast. Towns and cities like Newcastle, Gateshead and Sunderland had many windmills and many local villages had their own.

This eight mile circular route provides the opportunity to visit the restored windmills at Whitburn and Fulwell and the remains of the windmill on Cleadon Hills, passing through areas rich in cultural and natural heritage within the Great North Forest, one of twelve community forests being created across England.

TYPES OF WINDMILL

Postmills were built around a central post, with the sails not too far off the ground to allow the miller to set the canvas. There was no revolving cap to turn the sails into the wind, so when the wind changed the whole mill had to be turned around by hand. The invention of the fantail (small windmill with vanes set at right angles to the main sails of the mill), which could be mounted on a "fan" carriage to move on a track laid around the mill made life much easier for the miller. The large wind driven fantail turned the whole mill around its central post to bring the sails into the wind. Postmills often had a roundhouse built

around the central post to protect the timbers and provide a storage room beneath the mill. The fan carriage meant the later mills could be taller, often mounted on top of a substantial stone or brick two or three storey roundhouse housing the millstones.

Smock Mills were introduced into this country in the 17th century. They are wooden tower mills with a solid body and a moving cap, often domed or ogee (a dome with a point on top) shaped. They are often six or eight sided and have a walkway around the mill for dressing the sails and can be very tall.

Tower Mills are made of stone or brick with a solid body and moving cap, the taller ones with a walkway, or with a reefing stage, around the tower to allow the miller to dress the sails. Heights varied from three floors to seven or more. The tallest in this country were brick tower mills from 23 meters to over 30 meters high and as much as 12 meters in diameter at the base. Most remaining windmills in the North East are tower mills.

MILLER'S TRAIL



WHITBURN MILL

1ST LEG

From **Whitburn Bents** Pay and Display Car Park cross approach road to signed **coastal footpath and cycle route**. Proceed along path, to point where cycle route deviates left.

If the range is in use, red flags will be flying to warn you and you will not be able to walk the next section. Instead take the cycle route through the housing estate, along **Elm Drive** and **Myrtle Avenue** following the **National Cycle Network Route No 1**. At junction with **Mill Lane**, turn right and continue along road until you reach **Whitburn Mill** on your left.

If the range is not in use, Red flags will not be flying so proceed on beyond the point where the cycle route deviates left. The path becomes narrower now, until a **metal kissing gate** is reached.



WHITBURN MILL

Continue straight on and at the end of the firing range turn left at the **sentry post**. Walk inland now with the range on your left. Emerge **over a stone step stile** on to **Mill Lane**. Turn left and cross this busy road at the crossing opposite the street sign for **Souter View** for **Whitburn Mill**.

The original Whitburn Mill was a wooden post-mill. This blew down during a storm and was replaced by today's magnesian limestone tower mill, built about 1796. Whitburn is the oldest of the local stone tower mills. The Industrial Revolution and the use of steam power saw the mill fall into disuse by the late 1870's. However, the mill did serve another useful purpose – as a landmark for ships at sea and during the Second World War when the observer corps used the site as an observation post to give warning of approaching enemy aircraft.

In 1991/92 South Tyneside Council carried out major restoration work, resulting in a civic award in 1994. The mill was opened to the public for the first time in July 1994 when the Whitburn Local History Group, acting as volunteer wardens for South Tyneside Council, agreed to organise annual open days. For details of opening dates please contact Whitburn Local History Group.

CLEADON MILL

2ND LEG

On leaving Whitburn Mill, proceed along paved pathway to the right of the mill. Follow pathway through housing estate. The path turns right at **Cedar Grove** sign towards **Lizard Lane**. At this junction cross road and continue down marked public footpath next to bus shelter. Very soon the paved path becomes grassland – proceed straight forward. (**Do not turn left and continue on paved pathway**). Emerge into **Wellands Lane** with entrance to Caravan Park on your right. Turn left and after approximately 150 metres follow marked public footpath on your right, towards **Well House Farm**.

Continue straight ahead, through the farmyard, passing two field gates (*via stone step stiles if gates locked*) and along the **farm track**. Eventually the obvious track turns right over a **marked wooden stile**. The path becomes narrower with a fence to your right. Follow this path over three more wooden stiles. Always keep to the footpath over these stiles as these fields are usually under cultivation. The fourth stile brings you into **Cleadon Hills Local Nature Reserve**.

As well as offering splendid views Cleadon Hills Local Nature Reserve is a nationally important example of Magnesian Limestone grassland. The thin soils are ideal for many beautiful plants such as cowslips, wild thyme, quaking grass and autumn gentian. Also look out in summer for large numbers of butterflies and the pretty, day-flying burnet and chimney sweeper moths.

The pathway over grass now bears generally right towards **Cleadon Mill**.



CLEADON MILL

Cleadon Mill is a stone tower mill built in the 1820's. There was a much older mill at Cleadon belonging to the Bishop of Durham, who insisted that his tenants use the mill and no other. In the 16th century, Mr Chambers of Cleadon Tower chose to grind corn in his own mill, ignoring the Bishop's threats. The story is told that the whole family were ex-communicated, and when they died could not be buried in the churchyard, so were interred in the stack yard of the farm. In 1927 the truth of this story was proved when five bodies were discovered there, and finally given Christian Burials in Whitburn Cemetery. The mill would have once looked like the refurbished mill at Whitburn but was badly damaged when used for target practice by an artillery unit in World War One! Groundwork South Tyneside carried out a partial restoration in 1992 and it is now a listed building.

On leaving, continue straight on and generally downhill to a side stile at a field gate, through this onto a tarmac roadway, continue left towards **Sunniside Cottage**. At the cottage, turn left onto **Sunniside Lane** and continue straight on towards **Cleadon Village**, passing **Oakleigh Gardens School** on right. Entering the residential area of Cleadon Village, continue straight ahead and emerge at road junction opposite the **Village Pond**. Turn right onto **Cleadon Lane**, with the pond to your left on the opposite side of the street, proceed past the small terrace of stone houses on your right towards the main road. At the main road use the road crossing towards the **Britannia Inn** and onto **Front Street**, crossing the road near the Post Office and continue down **Nursery Lane**. This will bring you into **Windermere**.

Cross this street and go down the street opposite – **Thirlmere**, bearing second right into **Grasmere**, continue along a narrow tarmac pathway, between number 6 and 7, with fencing on both sides and signed Horse Riding Prohibited. Emerge onto **Whitburn Road** opposite **West Meadows Road**. Turn right and after 100 metres cross the road and continue along marked Public Footpath to **Woodlands Road**. Cross this road into **Woodlands Drive** and continue straight on along public footpath at junction with **Old Course Road** to **Moor Lane**.

The path continues along the right hand side of **West Moor Farm**, a white painted stone house with a low red tiled roof. The path is narrow to start with, continue along the path, keeping to the eastern edge of the field, crossing three stiles and under an old stone built Railway Bridge, **Spuggies Arch** to emerge at **Newcastle Road**. Cross this busy road with care, and continue directly opposite on an upward gradient. Turn

right at T-junction along a good, wide gravel path. Next a multi junction appears. Turn left and uphill on a narrow track marked to **Carley Hill** and into **Fulwell Quarry Local Nature Reserve**. *Fulwell Quarry Local Nature Reserve is of national importance showing the greatest variety of and most spectacular development of Magnesian Limestone geology. Semi – natural Magnesian Limestone Grassland is the major vegetation type in the area and the habitat of a rich variety of grasses, plants and butterflies.*

Continue along the boundary of the Nature Reserve, ignoring some minor pathways to both sides and emerge on the edge of housing. A path now comes in to join this one from right, bear left through two barriers, eventually passing the remains of a **Concrete Acoustical Mirror** and allotment gardens on your right to **Newcastle Road**.

The concrete acoustical mirror during the period 1917 to 1936 had its part to play in Northern Frontier Defences just as much as a Roman Fort or Norman Castle. It was designed to keep at bay a more recent enemy though, namely the Germans in their Zeppelin airships.

At **Newcastle Road**, turn right with **Mill Garage** to your right. Proceed straight on to **Fulwell Mill**.

Mr Bursleson, working with local mason Mr Allison, built the mill in 1807/8 for Joseph Swan. Joseph Swan also had the large house, West House, built beside the mill, which may also have been used as licensed premises of a short while. Unlike the other tower mills in the area, Fulwell is built above a Reefing Stage, used by the miller when setting the sails. The stage added height, an additional floor and two alcoves within the magnesian limestone walls. One of these alcoves was used by the miller as his office, and contains a tiny fireplace.

In 1879 William Moody moved his family from the windmill at High Southwick to Fulwell, where he and his descendants milled for the next 70 years, using a gas powered engine installed in the early 20th century. Full time milling ceased in 1949 but some work was still done on a part time basis until 1956. The Tyne and Wear Industrial Monuments Trust carried out some restoration work in the 1970's, and Sunderland City Council undertook the major restoration project at the end of the century. 2001 saw the reopening of the operational mill to the public on the completion of the project which had been assisted by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the European Regional Development Fund. The mill is a grade II listed building and open to the public; please contact the miller for details of special events and opening times.



On leaving the Mill, turn right to the controlled crossings at the traffic lights. Once across both carriageways, and on the other side of the road turn left, continue with bungalows to your right. Only divert from pavement at the top of **Shields Bank** and turn right downhill on A1018 towards **South Shields**. Remain on pavement with the

New Church on right and **allotment gardens** on left. At the end of housing proceed over **wooden stile** on your right into grassland, the path narrows into the left-hand corner of this area behind school buildings. Do not cross the first wooden bridge you encounter. Follow the path next to **Cut Throat Dene**, through a metal barrier and into a grassed open area with some **old gravestones** and **mature trees**. Continue along the path and take a **wooden bridge** across the **Dene** (often dry) towards some **red brick houses**, turn right with the path, through another **steel barrier** and into an open grassed area. This leads you onto a roadway. Turn left at the junction with the **Pullman Lodge** visible ahead, turn left again at a children's play feature past rear of **Seaburn Centre**.

Now you must cross through a very busy car park and extreme care must be taken. At Morrisons garage turn left then right. In a very sheltered corner of the top car park, and left of Goods Only Signs, behind trees and bushes see an opening in the hedge with a single storey, brick built pavilion behind the hedge. Proceed with this pavilion to your left on a tarmac path into **Cleveland View**, cross the street and walk up **Huntcliff Avenue** and **Rosedale Avenue**.

Enter the pathway in the corner of Weardale Avenue and Rosedale Avenue. This turns across cultivated fields and eventually to a wooden kissing gate in the corner of a rougher grassed area. The now very narrow path brings you to the entrance to **Cornthwaite Park** on your right. The path through the park, in a generally diagonal direction will exit you on to the coast road. Cross with care to see the **Whitburn Bents Car Park** and the finish of an interesting and challenging walk.

**To/From Fulwell Mill, Sunderland
Bus Services 7, 18/19, 35/35A, 310,
319, E2**

**7 Sunderland – Witherwack
via Fulwell Grange**

Monday – Sunday, every 30 minutes all day.

18/19 Grindon – Seaburn Circles

Monday – Saturday, every 30 minutes daytime only.

35/35A South Hetton – Sunderland – South Shields

Monday – Sunday, every 15 minutes daytime & every 30 minutes evening.

310 Sunderland – Blyth via Boldon & Jarrow

Monday – Sunday, every 60 minutes daytime (every 30 minutes Sunderland – Jarrow).

319 Sunderland – Jarrow – Cramlington

Monday – Sunday, every 60 minutes (evening and Sunday to Killingworth only).

**E2 Sunderland – South Shields via Whitburn
& Marsden**

Monday – Saturday, every 20 minutes daytime and every 30 minutes evening. Sunday every 30 minutes all day.

**To/From Whitburn Bents, South Shields
Bus Services E1, E2, E6, 558**

**E1 Sunderland – South Shields
via Whitburn and Marsden**

Monday – Saturday every 20 minutes daytime and every 30 minutes evening. Sunday every 30 minutes all day.

**E2 Sunderland – South Shields via Fulwell,
Whitburn and Marsden.**

Monday – Saturday every 20 minutes daytime and every 30 minutes evening. Sunday every 30 minutes all day.

**E6 Sunderland – South Shields via Fulwell,
Whitburn and Marsden**

Monday – Saturday every 20 minutes daytime and every 30 minutes evening. Sunday every 30 minutes all day.

558 Seaburn – Boldon

Monday – Sunday every 60 minutes all day.

South Tyneside Council

T. 0191 427 1717
www.southtyneside.gov.uk

Sunderland City Council

T. 0191 553 1000
www.sunderland.gov.uk

The Great North Forest

T. 0191 460 6200
www.greatnorthforest.co.uk

Fulwell Mill

T. 0191 516 9790
www.fulwell-windmill.com

Whitburn Mill

c/o Whitburn Local History Group
T. 0191 529 3657

Cleaddon Hills Local Nature Reserve

Contact South Tyneside Council and ask for the Countryside Team

Fulwell Quarry Local Nature Reserve

Contact Sunderland City Council and ask for the Countryside Team

North East Mill Group

c/o North East Civic Trust
T. 0191 232 9279



South Tyneside Council



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mmlcom 0870 241 2216