



Heritage Coast
Sunderland-Durham-Hartlepool



Heritage Coastal Footpath
part of the England Coast Path National Trail

Whenever you visit a stretch of coastland, you should always be mindful of our beach safety code, this tells you how you can be safe, as well as how to look after our coast. Some do's and don'ts about visiting the beach....

Do:

- check the weather before your trip as high winds can bring in the tide very quickly
- wear appropriate clothes – take a waterproof, hat and wear sensible shoes – it is often colder at the coast than inland.
- check tide times so you don't get caught out.
- keep a watch on the water's edge to allow time to get back safely.
- take notice of any warning signs and abide by them.
- keep both hands free when climbing over rocks as seaweed can make them very slippery.
- have fun!

Don't:

- go near cliff edges, or work underneath them or climb on them as they can be unstable.
- throw anything off a cliff or at people or animals.
- go into the sea in rough water as waves can easily sweep you away.
- go into the sea deeper than knee height.
- walk on rocks in bare feet as they can cut you. It is advisable to always wear footwear on the beach because of jellyfish, glass and other sharp objects.
- touch any bottles, drums or unusual containers on the beach in case they contain toxic substances. Report them to your local authority.

Conservation Code

The beach also has its own conservation code:

- Watch the seashore without disturbing it – don't take living things away from the shore, use your senses.
 - Return seashore life to its own place – always put any plants, animals or even rocks found on the shore back where you found them; never take living animals home with you.
 - Keep seaweeds alive – never pull out living or attached seaweed as they are home to lots of small animals, only take loose seaweed in the strandline.
 - Do not disturb any mammals or birds found on the beach – they could lose valuable feeding time or desert their young.
 - Keep the beach clean – take all litter home with you or put it in the appropriate bin.
 - Leave the beach as you found it so others can enjoy it after you.
-



Scan the code
to find out more
about Durham
Heritage Coast.

Public Transport Information

For information on getting to the coast using public transport, please go to www.traveline.info or telephone 0871 200 22 33.

Introduction

Our coastline is unique. Nowhere else in Britain has such a wonderful display of Magnesian limestone grasslands supporting an array of wildflowers and insects. The Northern brown argus butterfly can be found amongst these grasslands in the summer months and flowers such as orchids, Bloody cranesbill, Thrift and Common rock rose are a characteristic sight on the grassy cliff tops. The sound of Skylarks and Lapwings in the summer are a musical treat not to be missed.

Why is it so special?

The magnificent sweeps of Magnesian limestone grassland along the cliffs support a unique mix of plants and insects, from May to September the wonderful meadows are full of vibrant colours from a diverse range of plants. The magical sound of the Skylarks and Lapwings can be heard above the meadows where the rare Northern brown argus butterfly flutters along the exposed yellow rocks of the Magnesian limestone cliffs. At low tide the exposed rocky shores reveal starfish, sea urchins and anemones whilst harbour porpoises and seals are often sighted offshore.

The coastal denes created at the end of the last ice age support some of the most natural woodland in north east England and provide a valuable habitat for deer, foxes, badgers and bats. The woodland floors are seasonally adorned with Dog's mercury, Wild garlic, Bluebells and Snowdrops and birdsong echoes through the majestic trees.

Coal mining in the Durham area was the dominant industry throughout the 20th century and the tipping of colliery waste out to sea was commonplace. This practice ceased after the closure of the collieries in the 1990's, however the scars of environmental damage still remain on the once 'black beaches'. Regeneration projects such as Turning the Tide along with the natural action of the sea have been instrumental in restoring the grasslands and beaches to their former glory. Water quality has also improved greatly. Sunderland was also renowned for its ship building industry going back over 600 years when in 1346 Thomas Menville was recorded as building boats on the river Wear. The shipyards closed in the 1980's to be replaced by University buildings and housing.

The coast is a National Nature Reserve (NNR) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the European Union's Natura 2000 programme. It is looked after by Durham County Council, Sunderland City and Hartlepool Borough Councils, Durham Wildlife Trust and the National Trust.





Coastal Footpath

Welcome to the Heritage Coastal Footpath, a 20 mile walking route following the England Coast Path National Trail. From Hendon to Hartlepool Headland, discover and explore spectacular grasslands, superb coastal denes and uncover the rich heritage that has shaped this coastline into a unique and fascinating place to be.



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Hendon

Ryhope

Seaham

Dawdon

Hawthorn

Easington Colliery

Castle Eden Dene

Blackhall

Crimdon

Hartlepool
Headland

HARTLEPOOL



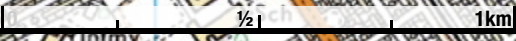
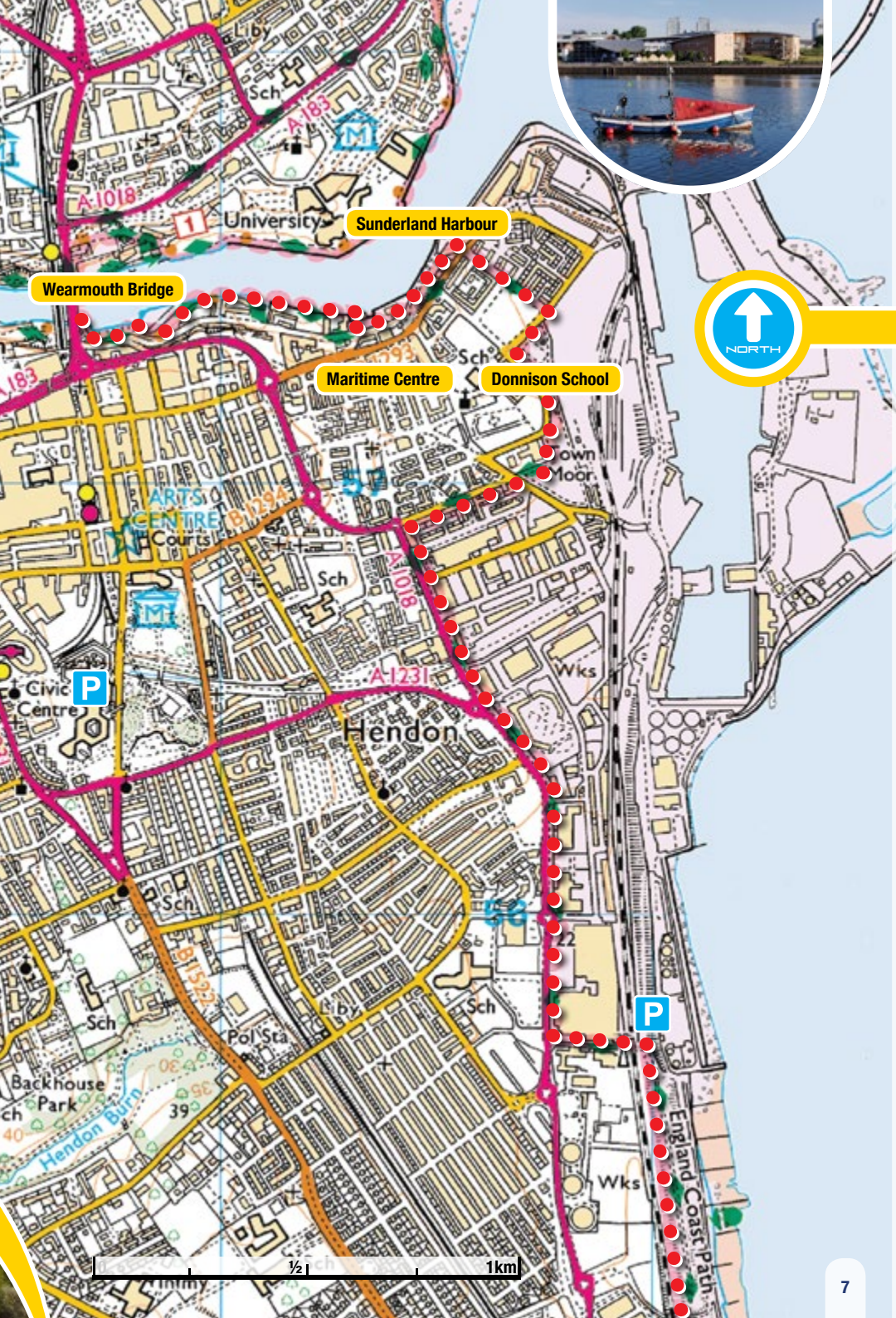
Hendon

This section of the England Coast path starts in the city of Sunderland at the south side of the Wearmouth Bridge. The bridge spans the river Wear and is the final bridge over the river before its mouth with the North sea. The first bridge opened in 1796 and was then reconstructed in the 19th century.

The coastal footpath winds its way through Hendon in the east end of Sunderland the location of once heavy industry, Victorian terraces and high-rise residential tower blocks. Shipbuilding in Sunderland began in Hendon with the opening of a shipyard by Thomas Menville in 1346. Now the ship building industry has long since gone to be replaced by university buildings and housing.

Sunderland has a wide variety of hotels, theatres, museums, galleries, cafés and high street shops.







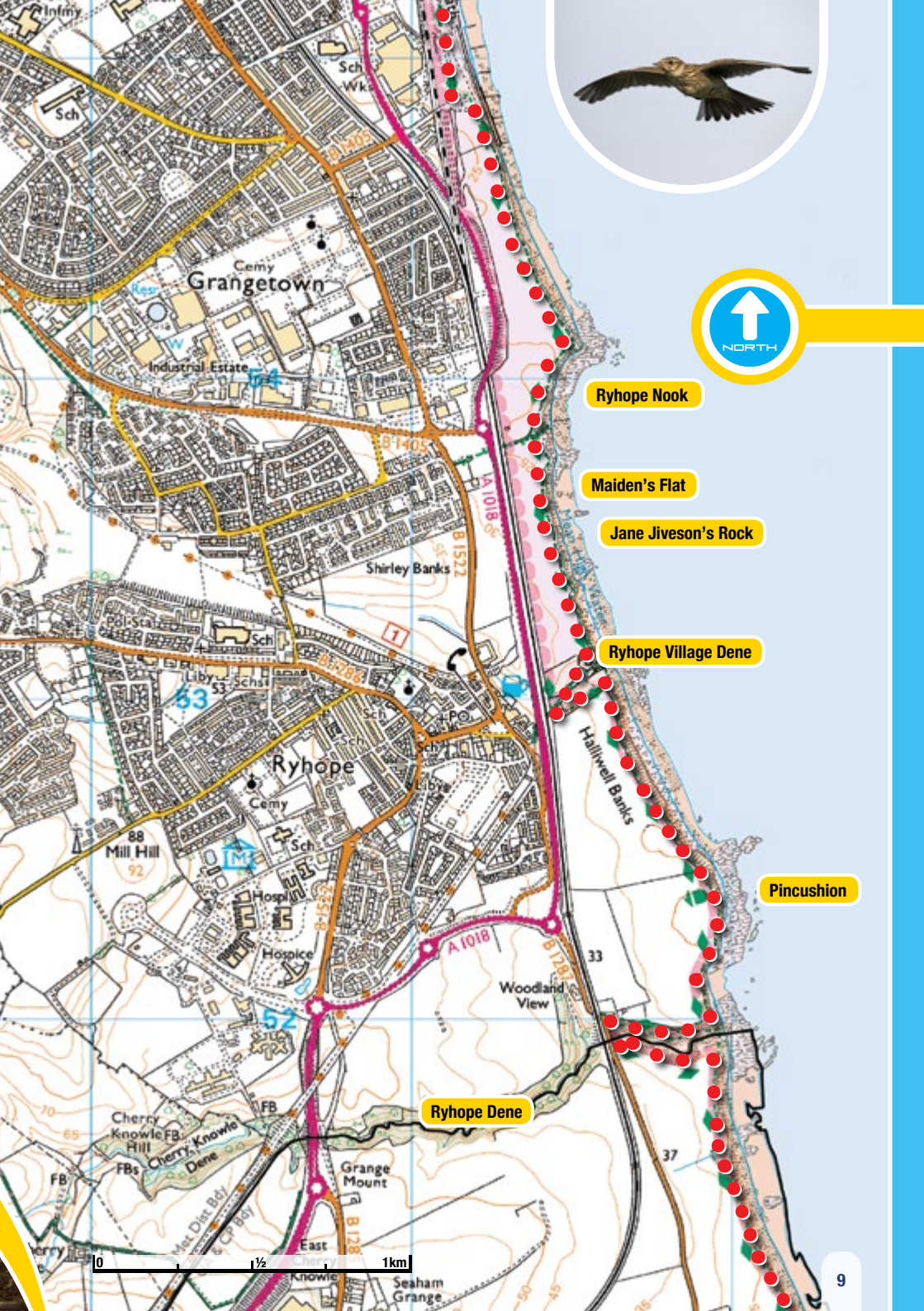
Ryhope

The Village of Ryhope is located at the southern boundary of Sunderland before the route enters County Durham. Ryhope was once part of the Durham Coalfield and followed the path of many other villages in the area, by abandoning agriculture as the main employee in favour of coal. In 1859 a colliery was opened and railway lines were introduced to the area, linking Ryhope to Sunderland, Seaham and other Durham Coalfield mining villages. Now only a single railway line runs through the village, although there is no longer a station. The colliery was closed in 1966.

The older village section is centred on a triangular 'green', which contains a war monument.

Ryhope Dene marks the border between Sunderland and County Durham.





Ryhope Nook

Maiden's Flat

Jane Jiveson's Rock

Ryhope Village Dene

Pincushion

Ryhope Dene



Old Seaham can be traced back to Saxon times, but the port of Seaham was founded in the 19th Century by the mine-owning Londonderry family – principally to transport coal.



Seaham

Leaving Sunderland's Heritage Coast the route enters the lively town of Seaham. At Seaham Hall Beach car park there is a welcoming café and public toilets. Further south in Seaham there are a good assortment of shops on Church Street and in Byron Place Shopping Centre. Cafes and ice cream parlours can be found along North Terrace opposite the poignant metal sculpture entitled '1101' or 'Tommy' as he is known locally.

Seaham Marina is also a good place for refreshments and a visit to the George Elmy Lifeboat House where the tragic story of this lifeboat disaster is retold.

Other places of interest in Seaham include St Mary the Virgin Anglo Saxon Church, described by historians as one of the earliest Anglo Saxon churches in existence. The parish also has links with Lord Byron and the coal owning Londonderry family.

There are a few bed and breakfasts in Seaham as well as the renowned Seaham Hall Hotel, a five star hotel and spa.





Seaham Hall car park (café)



PC

Lord Byrons Walk

Hall

St Mary the Virgin Anglo Saxon Church



PC

Bessy's Hole

Featherbed Rocks

1101/Tommy



Train Station

Londonderry Building


Seaham Marina

Church Street

Byron Place

Dalden Tower
(rems of)





The Coastal Footpath passes close by the site of Dawdon Colliery which ceased production in 1991 after which the site was reclaimed.



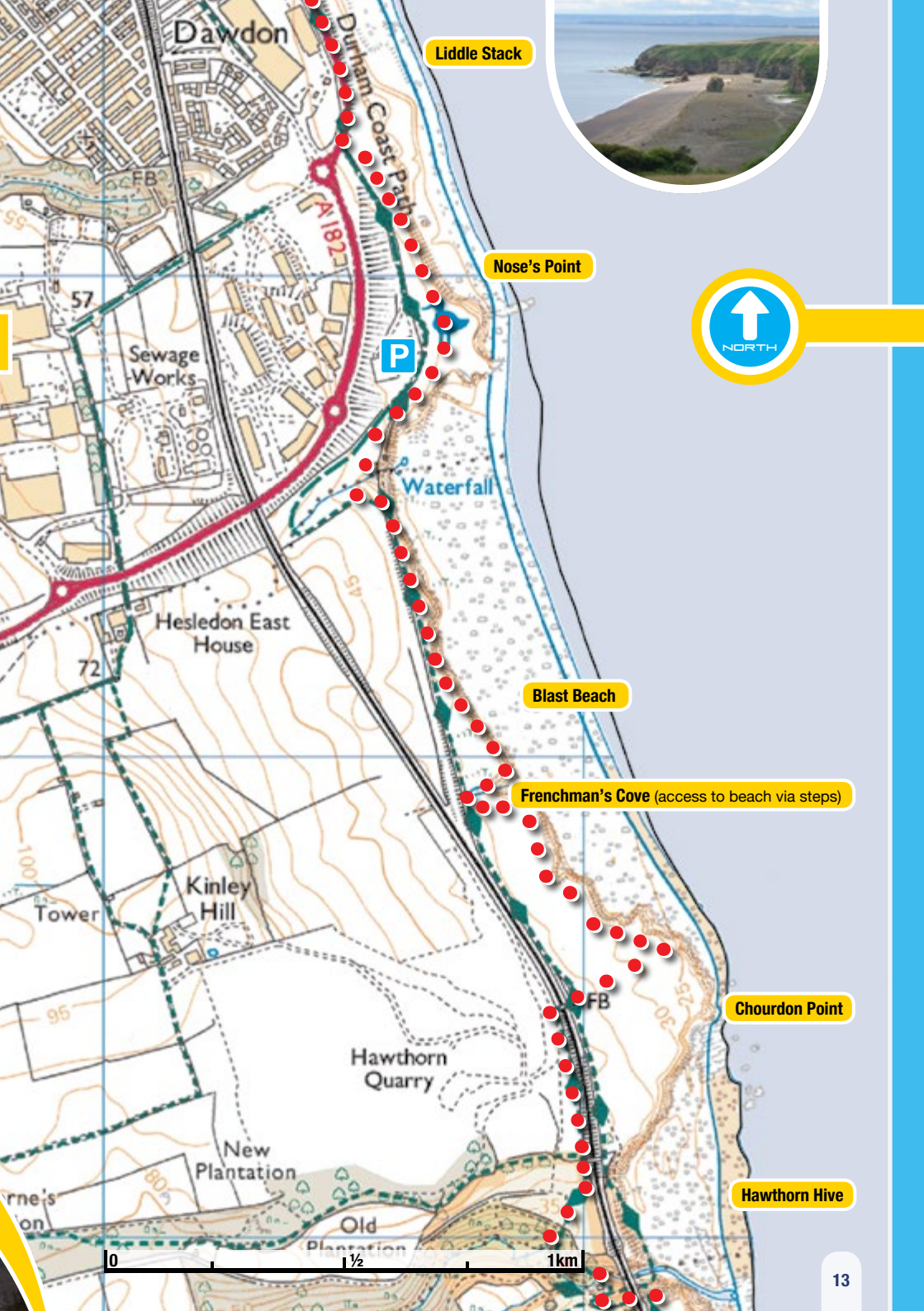
Dawdon **Nose's Point**

Once the site of Dawdon Colliery, Nose's Point is now a popular destination for a whole host of visitors from walkers to sightseers. The Blast Beach is worth a visit via the steps at Frenchman's Cove, where evidence of coal mining still remains. The beach is popular with fossil hunters, where vestiges from the ice age can be found.

A fossil tree stands on the cliff top next to the car park and there is some interesting interpretation explaining the area in more detail.

The stone wall structure was built in 2008 and is in the shape of Nose's Point coastline.








The Coastal Footpath here follows alongside the coastal railway. Constructed in 1905 by the North Eastern Railway Company it linked Seaham with Hart junction.




Hawthorn

Continuing south the footpath leads to Hawthorn Dene a fine example of one of the coastal denes found in the area. Ash, Sycamore, Oak and Yew dominate the woodland with shrubs including hazel, hawthorn and gooseberry. At ground level hart's tongue ferns and fragrant orchids are found in abundance.

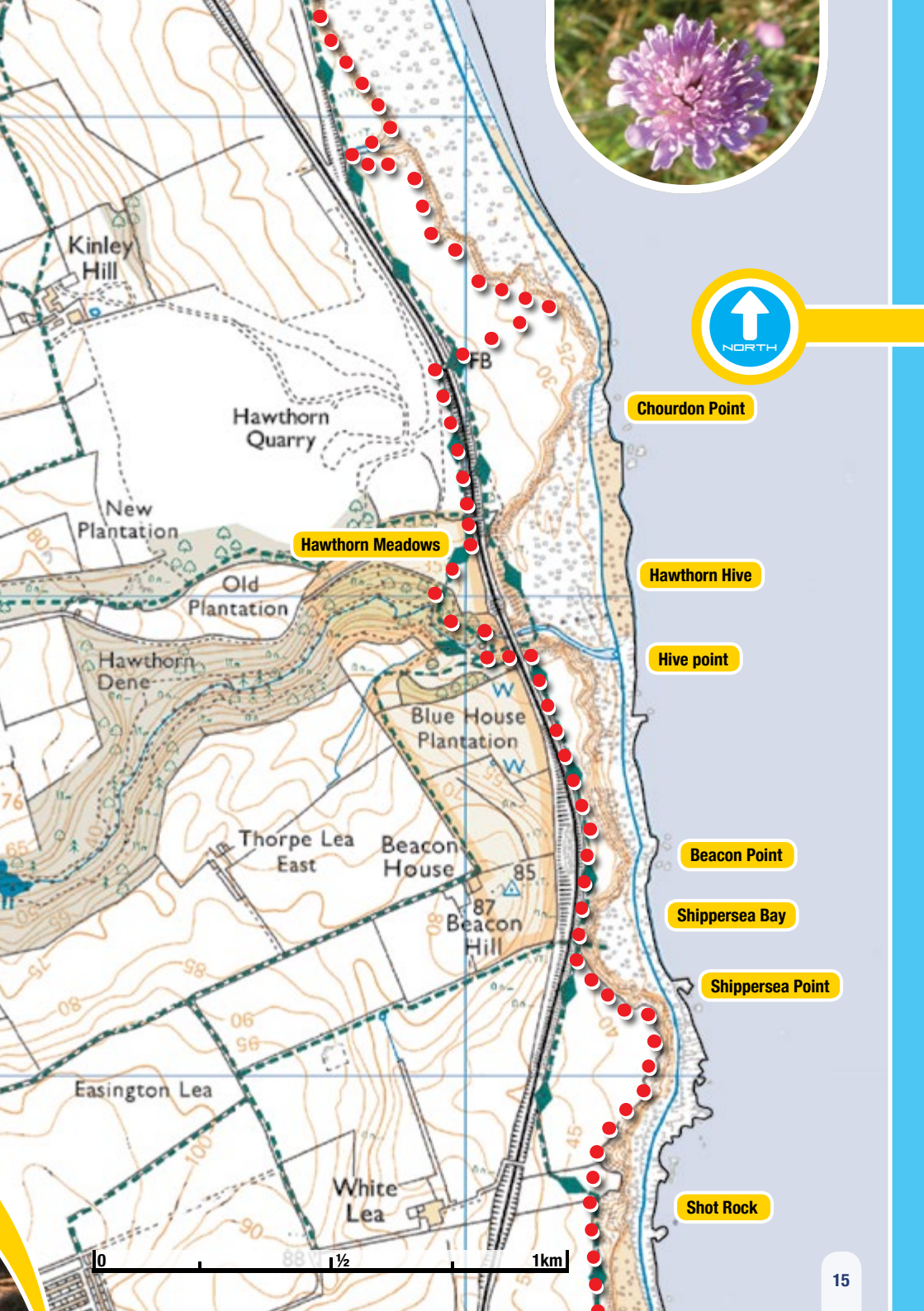


Hawthorn meadows is well worth a visit during the summer months for the stunning grassland meadows where wildflowers and an array of orchids can be seen.

The footpath continues over a footbridge over a magical Limestone Gorge where an impressive viaduct greets the walker with tantalising views of the sea. The footpath continues around until it reaches a kissing gate back on to the east side of the railway line heading towards Easington Colliery.



Hawthorn Village can be reached from this point (approximately 1 mile). The Stapylton Arms pub in the village is a welcome break for those seeking a breather.





Once at the heart of the East Durham coalfield, this is now an exceptionally attractive part of the Durham Coastal Footpath



Easington Colliery

From Hawthorn Dene along the Coastal Footpath the route passes Beacon Hill to the west which is the highest point on the Durham Heritage Coast. Beacon Hill is formed from an outcrop of what was originally a barrier reef laid down in a tropical sea hundreds of millions of years ago.

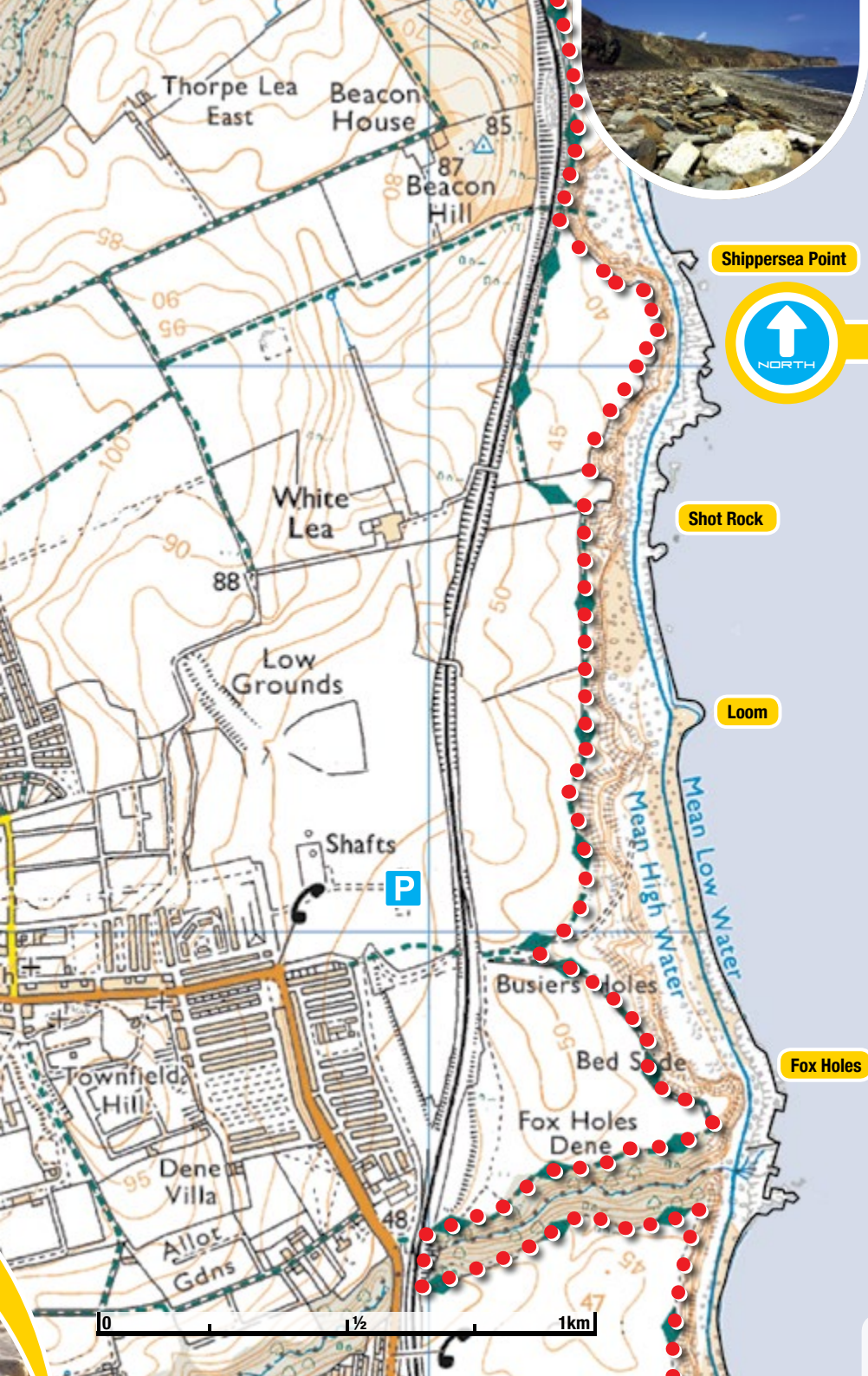


Easington Colliery was one of the last of the Durham Colliery's to be sunk and also one of the last to close. A timeline can be followed from the car park towards the pit cage, a landmark and lasting reminders to an industry that once shaped the whole of the landscape on this coast.



The footpath leads to Foxhole Dene, one of the steepest denes along the coast. The name is thought to refer to 'the fox', a hermit who reputedly lived in the caves.





Shippersea Point



Shot Rock

Loom

Fox Holes



Popular once for seaside days out, the coast at Horden was very badly scarred by the tipping of colliery spoil. It is now returning to its natural beauty.



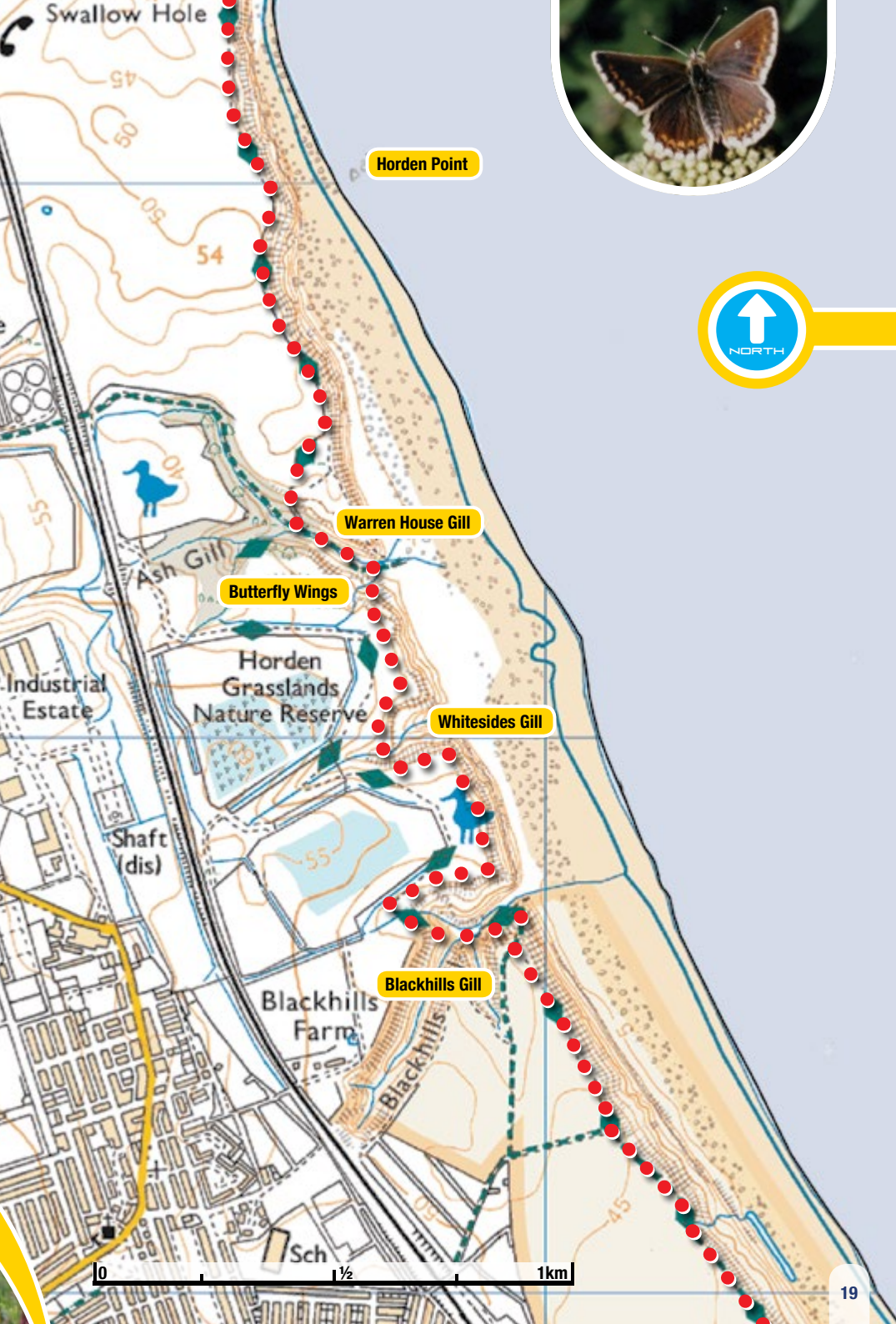
Horden

Once the site of Horden Colliery, which was sunk in 1900 and closed in 1987. An enormous heap of black spoil from the colliery slumped down over the cliffs onto the beach below, its removal involved the relocation of 500,000 tons of material which was used to reclaim the 23 hectare colliery site and create the rolling grassland we see today. Reed beds are now used to clean the polluted minewater.



The route cuts through Warren House Gill, a SSSI because of its geological importance, before skirting around Whiteside Gill and through Blackhills Gill. Look out for the butterfly wings on the cliff top above Warren House Gill, the stone seating area makes an excellent picnic stop with fantastic views. Further along the coastal footpath is the Little Tern sculpture which represents Britain's rarest seabird which visits the coast in the summer.







The dene, with its strange rocks and mysterious atmosphere, has fascinated people for thousands of years.

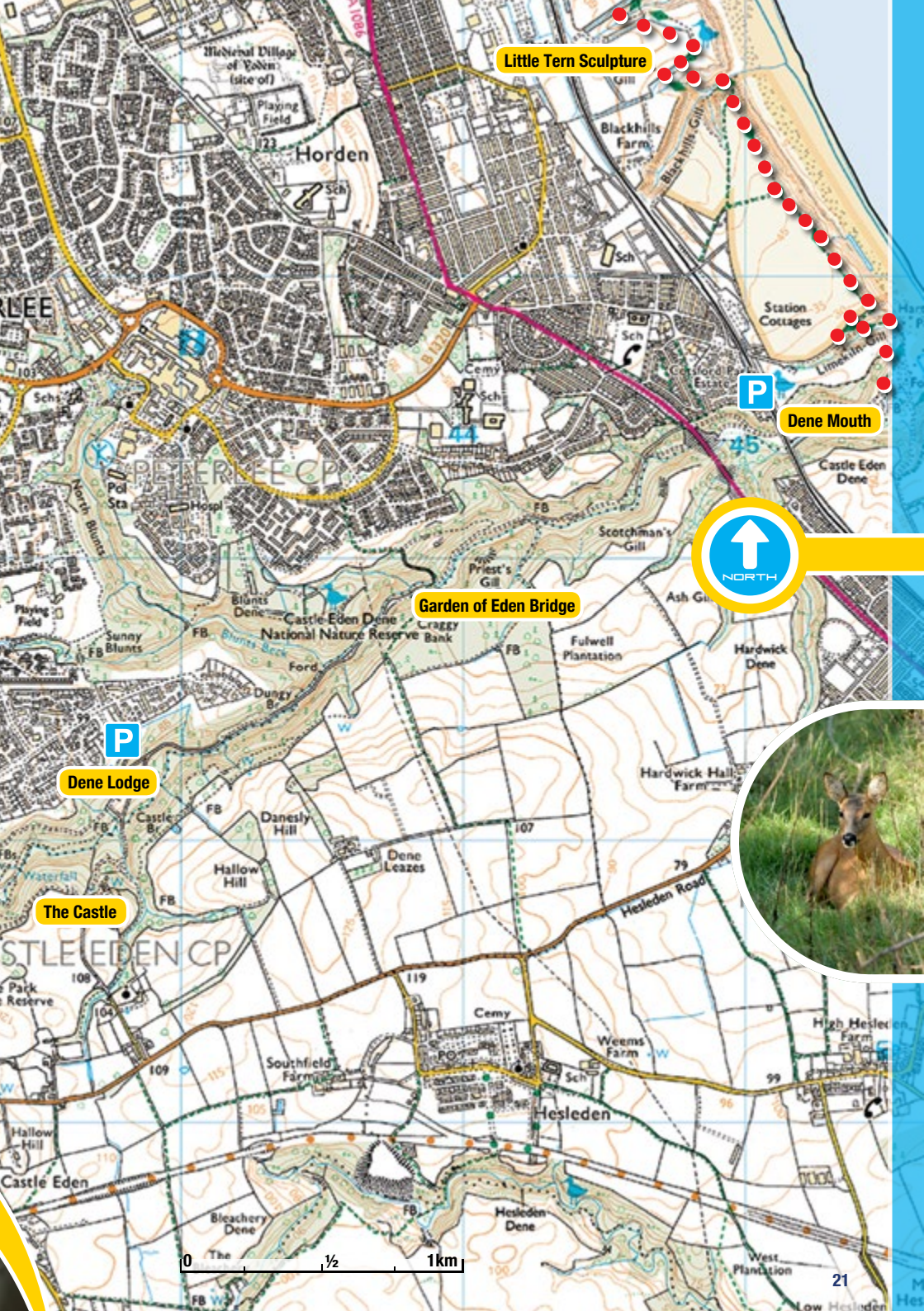


Castle Eden Dene

Castle Eden Dene is one of the most important natural areas in the North East. This is the only place in the world where you find Magnesian limestone grasslands at the sea, they are carefully managed and conserved for their importance and rarity. The dene is a four mile long steep sided valley cut into the Magnesian limestone. It is owned and managed by Natural England and is a National Nature Reserve.

Look out for the Northern brown argus butterfly on the south facing cliffs at Denemouth.







The sinking of Blackhall Colliery began in 1909 and the pit was one of the most modern in the country at the time. Underground emergency shafts connected Blackhall, Horden and Easington.



Blackhall

Blackhall is another former coal mining village. Blackhall Colliery opened in 1909 with coal drawn in 1913. The colliery closed in 1981, and at its peak it employed more than 2,000 people. Like Horden and other neighbouring colliery villages, the rows of terraced houses built for the miners and their families were called First, Second, Third Streets and so on with the officials living in East Street.

Coal waste was dumped along this stretch of coastline by conveyor belt making the beaches unrecognisable. The beach at Blackhall was made famous by Michael Caine in the closing shots of the 1971 film *Get Carter*.

There is evidence of Neolithic Stone Age settlements at Dene Holme to the north, Crimdon to the south and in an area above the caves at Blackhall Rocks.







Crimdon caravan park was established in the 1920's and 1930's to cater for caravans and tents.



Crimdon

The final section on Durham's stretch of the England Coast Path leads to the wide sandy beaches at Crimdon.

Crimdon is a complete contrast to the industrial beaches left behind. Here the beaches are sandy and home to the only sand dunes on the Durham coast. In the past the beach and dune was a thriving holiday destination for miners and their families from surrounding villages.

From May to August one of Britain's rarest sea birds, the Little Tern arrives from West Africa and nests on the sands at the dune mouth where it rests and builds up strength by feeding on small fish that move inshore for the summer. They usually lay 2–3 eggs in a simple scrape in the sand. Volunteer wardens look after the birds during the summer months and are always keen to share their work with the public.

Leaving County Durham the route continues south into Hartlepool.







Hartlepool Headland

The England Coast path continues south where it finally reaches Hartlepool Headland. Walking through this fascinating stretch of the route demonstrates Hartlepool's military defences; in fact there have been gun based defences here from the late 16th century. In December 1914 it became the first place on mainland Britain to be bombed by the Germans with over 100 people losing their lives in the attack.

A prominent feature of the Headland and a short walk from the coastal path is St Hilda's church built in the 12th century. Like most ancient churches, St Hilda's contains architecture of different periods and styles but the nave and tower are the oldest sections. St Aidan founded a monastery on the Headland as early as AD 640. The first abbess was St Bega. In 648 she was succeeded by St Hilda who remained there for ten years.

There are a few shops, cafes and pubs on the Headland.







Heritage Coast

Sunderland - Durham - Hartlepool

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**Visit: www.durhamheritagecoast.org
www.thisisdurham.com**

Sunderland Tourist Information Centre
Hartlepool Tourist Information Centre

email: seeitdoit@sunderland.gov.uk
(01429) 523 408

We have a number of village walks leaflets to download from our website.
They are in PDF format and can be viewed on smart phones and tablets.



Please ask us if you would like this document
summarised in another language or format.

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