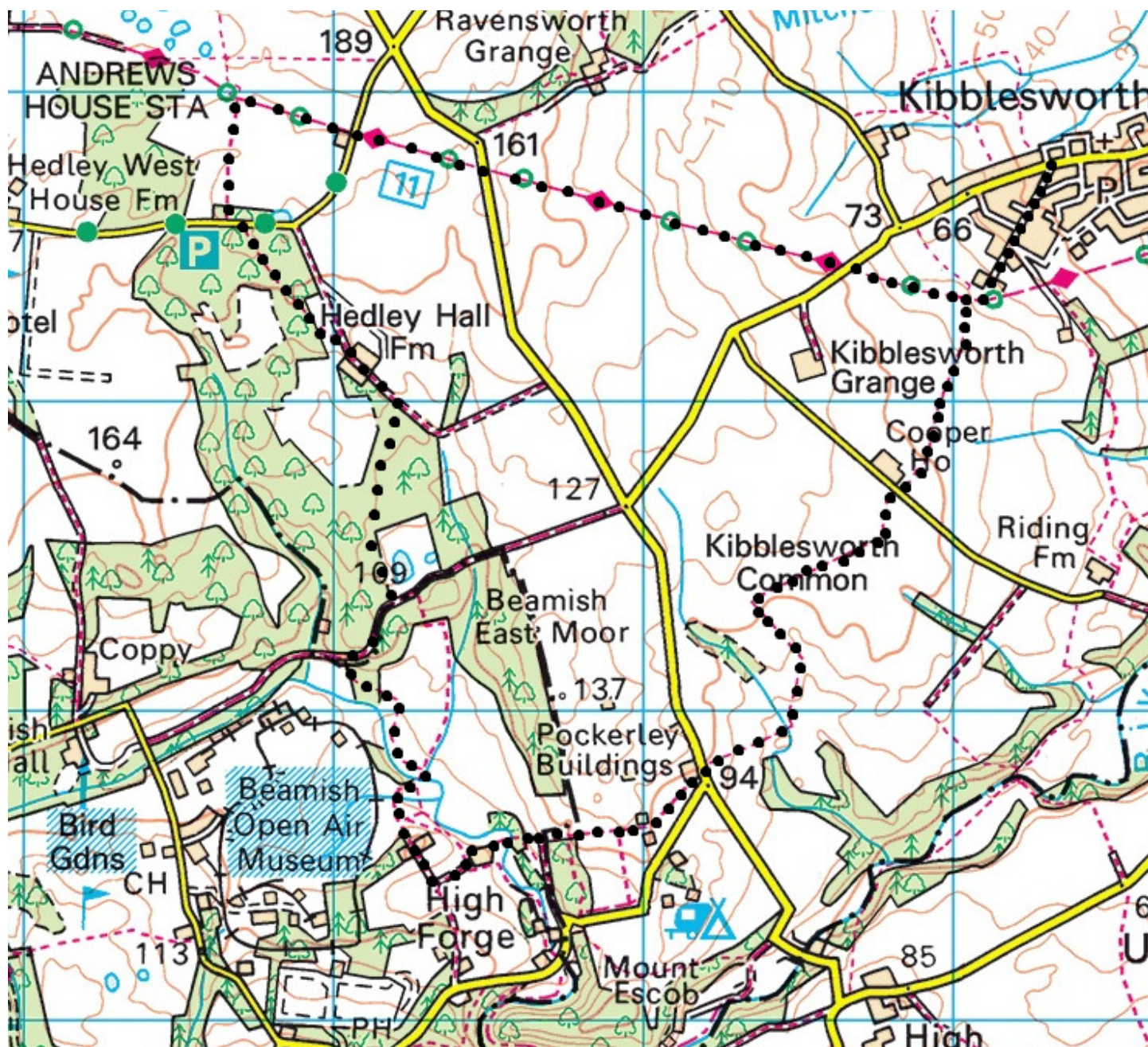


**Kibblesworth Evening Walk [18:30 Monday 6th June]** - OS Explorer sheet 308 grid ref 244567

Meet at Kibblesworth bus terminus which can be reached via GoAhead Bus 28A Waggonway (return via 1ACoaster) from Gateshead Interchange. This will be a 5.5 mile walk through arable and pasture farmland, woodland and maybe a section of the Bowes railway path.



Prior to the emergence of the coal industry Kibblesworth was a rural community. Although there had been coal mining in the village since medieval times, like many villages across the Durham coalfield the village expanded when Robert Pit was sunk in 1842 and the opening of a brickworks. There were ups and downs, primarily during the strikes of 1921 and 1926 with booms in the 1950s and 60s until closure in 1974.

The village has seen much change with the construction of homes for miners which were demolished in 1965. The millennium community project was originally the school that opened in 1875 but was replaced by the current school in 1972.

The Bowes railway was started by Robert Stephenson in 1826 and extended to Kibblesworth when Robert Pitt opened in 1842. Coal was transported to the Tyne at Jarrow and the railway used three forms of power, locomotives, stationary steam engines and self-acting inclines. In 1854 the line was completed with the extension to Marley Hill enabling access from Dipton Colliery and is the section we walk this evening. At its

peak 1 million tones of coal was carried annually over the 15 mile route which remained virtually intact until 1968. The track bed is now a cycle path.

Shortly after the start a brick building is passed managed by Seven Trent which is part of a process to prevent pollution from the now redundant North Durham coal mines. Water from mines is pumped to reed beds located west of the east coast mainline at the low point in the Bowes railway line. Information at the reeds, which is a haven for waterfowl, outlines the process and a pipe below the track bed channels the water to the site.

In 1855 a short test tunnel was constructed in Kibblesworth for the London Underground because the geology was similar to London. The tunnel was used for two years then filled in in 1861.

In the 1980s an opencast mine was operational to the south west of the village and our walk will cross this land which was returned to farmland. The hedges are enclosed in double wire fences which allowed rapid growth. A sculpture trail is followed in the early stages of the walk and again towards the end.

Starting from the bus terminus in Kibblesworth the route heads SW up a lane, passing the social club and a relic from the coal mine before crossing the Bowes Railway Path then through fields which were part of the opencast mine. Views of Gateshead and north Durham left and behind can be enjoyed before the route loses sight of the urban sprawl and becomes a rural scene that has no notion of being so close to Tyneside.

After Cooper House which is passed on the left, the route crosses Riding Lane and continues diagonally over a pasture then follows the edge of arable fields, including a stile that was once part of the sculpture trail but now lies in tatters, to reach a road at Pockerley Buildings. The route follows Cranberry Bog Lane a short distance to a home-made footpath sign then passes through Pockerley equestrian centre and a former Gateshead Council refuse tip which has been reclaimed to form a country park and grazing for horses.

After briefly passing through woodland the route crosses the Beamish Burn, which was followed upstream as the Causey Gill during the Causey Arch walk and flows into the Tyne at Dunston as the River Team. The building on the river bank has been used for traditional wood turning and a concrete aqueduct constructed in the 1990s will be visible, the purpose is a mystery.

The route will briefly pass through Beamish Museum along public paths. The museum was established in 1970, opening in 1972 but the farm which now depicts an 1825 farm called Pockerley Manor was developed in the 1990s. Prior to this the farm operated as a 20th century farm. Eston church is a recent addition which opened recently and has a memorial to Frank Atkinson the founder of the museum who died aged 90 on 30 December 2014.

The path returns to the river and after passing a ruined building will join the bridleway that is now posted as a cycle path from Beamish Hall to the top of the road above Kibblesworth.

Pockerley Farm pond is reached which is an SSI. The route turns north into the Great North Forest Heritage Trail which was developed in 1990. Whilst there are rights of way through the wood the country park has added several more paths so it is fun trying to find the right way as none of the paths are actually posted! The path on the OS map is marked as the Tyne & Wear Trail.

After crossing a road the path rises beside a wood to reach the Bowes railway path. This is the high point of the route at about 165 metres and if clear the North York Moors can be seen. The Bowes Railway path will be visited again on the 4th of the club's summer walks and as it descends towards Kibblesworth it is marked as Great Forest Trail on OS map which is a 65.2 mile circular walk that includes 4715ft ascent.

Martin Forster

May 2016