

Penrith Heritage Trail

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This route is taken from the Penrith Heritage Trail leaflet which we produced in partnership and with funding from Historic England.

All the places mentioned here are open to the public, and most are easy to access by car, public transport or on foot. Some sites are free to visit; whilst others have an admission fee.

The map indicates the locations of all the key sites. The wording next to each entry indicates the facilities available. If an asterisk* is shown after a symbol it means that the facilities could have restrictions, eg limited wheelchair accessibility, parking nearby or dogs only allowed in certain areas. There is no suggested start point or trail to follow; rather the aim is for you to explore Eden's historic attractions at your leisure.

Explore Penrith's Heritage

Penrith stands at a crossroads of ancient trade routes that date back at least 5000 years. The impressive Neolithic monuments at Mayburgh Henge and Long Meg and her Daughters testify to the importance of these prehistoric ways. The Romans also identified Penrith as of strategic importance, building forts at Brougham (Brocavum) and Old Penrith (Voreda).



Open squares connected by narrow lanes and 'yards' are distinctive features of Penrith's town centre. Pick up a self-guided walk leaflet from the Penrith Tourist Information Centre or follow the interpretation panels to discover more about this ancient market town.

By the 11th century, the Normans were building imposing castles and tower houses to control the local area and, from the 14th century, extra fortifications were added to defend against Scottish attacks. Over the following years, some castles entertained royalty (Brougham Hall and Brougham Castle), others were dismantled (Penrith Castle, Lowther Castle) and many were incorporated into other buildings (Dalemain Mansion, Hutton-in-the-Forest).



In the centre of Penrith stands a distinctive clock tower, erected in 1861 as a memorial to Philip Musgrave who died tragically young; whilst overlooking Penrith is another tower: Beacon Pike. This marks the spot where bonfires were lit during times of conflict to communicate swiftly with nearby beacons at Kirkoswald, Orton Scar and Carlisle.

As well as castles and towers, here you will find ancient churches that dot the landscape and the gaunt ruins of Shap Abbey to explore.

Today, Penrith and its surrounding area boasts an astonishing number of fortified and ecclesiastical buildings, many of which invite you to discover their hidden secrets and intriguing stories.

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1. Penrith Castle: Commanding a high position overlooking Penrith, the castle was built in the 14th century and enlarged by Ralph Neville, Lord of the Manor of Penrith. It holds an important place as one of the castles belonging to Richard, Duke of Gloucester, who became King Richard III. Later it became a place of refuge for the townsfolk seeking protection within its sturdy walls from Scottish attacks. Today, you can wander among the red sandstone ruins and imagine life in its medieval heyday. Free Entry.
(Refreshments, WC nearby, dogs on a lead welcome, family friendly)



Ralph's grandson was **Richard Neville**, otherwise known as 'Warwick the Kingmaker' who played a pivotal role in the War of the Roses. On his death in 1471, his Penrith estates were given to Richard, Duke of Gloucester (later Richard III), who transformed the castle into a more comfortable residence.

A. Dockray Hall was the residence of Richard, Duke of Gloucester, whilst alterations were being made to Penrith Castle in the 1470s. Richard's coat of arms with the two rampant white boars can be seen above the main door. It is said that a secret tunnel links the hall to the castle above but it has never been found.

B. Find out more about Penrith's remarkable history at the **Penrith and Eden Museum**, housed in the old Robinson's School of 1670. Free entry.



2. St Andrew's Church: Several churches have stood on this ancient site, with the medieval tower all that remains of the previous building. Inside this handsome Georgian church are stained-glass images of the Neville family and a pair of magnificent chandeliers given in recognition of the efforts made by the townsfolk to rid Penrith of Bonnie Prince Charlie's Jacobite rebels in 1745. Free Entry. (Accessible, family friendly)

C. The Giant's Grave is an intriguing collection of Viking crosses and hogback tombstones, traditionally regarded as the final resting place of Owen Caesarius, king of Cumbria between 920 and 937 AD.



3. Long Meg and Her Daughters Stone Circle: A huge circle of some 69 standing stones with a single upright stone a short distance away. Local legend says the circle is formed of the petrified bodies of a coven of witches who were turned to stone by a wizard. If you can count the same number of stones

twice, the stones will apparently come back to life. Free entry. (Parking, accessible*, dogs on a lead welcome, family friendly)

D. Little Salkeld Watermill was built in the 18th century and it is one of the few remaining independant working watermills. All produce is organic and available to order through the online store. There is a selection of flours, grains/museli and oats to order online.

4. Brougham Castle: Overlooking the River Eamont and lying on top of a Roman fort (Brocavum) is this magnificent Norman castle, once the home of the Clifford family. Explore its maze of passageways and stairways to find the tiny chapel on its upper floor. The castle was restored by Lady Anne Clifford in 1653 after she described it 'verie ruinous', only to be dismantled by her grandson about 20 years later. (Parking, accessible*, refreshments, WC, dogs on a lead welcome, family friendly)





E. The Countess Pillar (adjacent to A66 near Brougham Castle) is an ornate monument erected by Lady Anne Clifford in 1656 to commemorate her last parting from her beloved mother on this spot in 1616. She also made provision for the poor people of the parish to receive alms here every year - a ceremony that still takes place every April.

5. Brougham Hall: Once dubbed the 'Windsor of the North' because George V and Edward VII both stayed here. The house, sold by the 4th Lord Brougham to pay off gambling debts (famed as the man who broke the bank at Monte Carlo), was partially demolished in the 1930s and is now undergoing restoration work with several artisan craft shops established in the courtyard. Free entry.

(Parking, accessible*, refreshments, WC, dogs on a lead welcome, family friendly)



6. Mayburgh Henge and King Arthur's Round Table: Two prehistoric henge monuments once joined by a third. The henges occupy a strategic location in a loop of land surrounded by the rivers Eamont and Lowther, and probably formed part of a processional way. Stand in the centre of Mayburgh Henge on the equinoxes (21 March and 21 September) and you might just witness the magical sight of the sun setting directly into the 'cradle' of Blencathra (locally known as the 'mystical mountain'). Free entry.

(Parking*, dogs on a lead welcome, family friendly)

7. Clifton Tower: Towers such as this were built to defend families against Border raids. Constructed with thick walls, they were usually 3 to 4 storeys high with a battlemented roof. The family would take refuge in the upper floors (accessed by ladder through a window), whilst their livestock were herded into the basement below through an iron-clad door that could resist attack by fire. Free entry.

(Parking*, dogs on a lead welcome, family friendly)

The **Battle of Clifton Moor** in 1745 was the last time English and Scottish soldiers fought on English soil. The slain Scots lie buried underneath the 'Rebel Tree'; the English in the local churchyard. The battle was part of the second Jacobite Rebellion led by Bonnie Prince Charlie – an uprising that ultimately ended at the Battle of Culloden a year later.

8. Lowther Castle: A fairytale castle standing in a wooded setting and a monument to architectural extravagance. Abandoned for many years, the castle is enjoying a new lease of life as part of a £8.9 million redevelopment project. Its forgotten gardens are slowly being revealed after years of neglect. Younger visitors can seek out the lost castle in the woods - an exciting adventure playground, complete with turrets, walkways, tunnels, zip wires and a slide to keep them entertained all day.

(Parking, accessible*, refreshments, WC, dogs on a lead welcome, family friendly)



Hugh Lowther, 5th Earl of Lonsdale (otherwise known as the **Yellow Earl**) was a colourful character in more ways than one. His love of yellow was replicated in the fleet of cars he owned, yellow uniforms for his servants and in the yellow Automobile Association logo. His extravagant lifestyle ultimately bankrupted the estate and led to the closure of Lowther Castle in 1936.

9. Dalemain Mansion: Home of the world-famous Marmalade Festival (held in early Spring). Behind Dalemain's striking pink façade can be found a medieval pele tower and Elizabethan manor house, joined into one impressive building that has been the home of the Hasell family for centuries. Quirkiness abounds here; see if you can spot Dalemain's 'mouse house', a green-leaved dragon and a slumbering giant. (Parking, accessible*, refreshments, WC, family friendly)



10. Hutton-in-the-Forest: Historic home of Lord and Lady Inglewood that has its roots in a moated 14th century pele tower hidden in the medieval Forest of Inglewood. Different architectural styles reflect its chequered history over time. Outside, herbaceous borders, espaliered fruit trees and elegant yew topiary are contained within an 18th century walled garden fringed by parkland and mature woodlands.

(Parking, accessible*, refreshments, WC, family friendly, dogs on a lead welcome)

In **Arthurian legend**, Sir Gawain rides 'into a deep forest that was wonderfully wild' and, after meeting the Greene Knight, continues to the knight's 'Castle of Hutton'. Could these be tantalising references to the Forest of Inglewood and Hutton-in-the-Forest?

11. Shap Abbey: The gaunt ruins of Shap Abbey lie in splendid isolation in a remote valley near Shap. Founded by Premonstratensian canons in the late 12th century, the abbey functioned until its dissolution in 1540. Much of the stonework was carted off to build Lowther Castle in the early 19th century, and only the impressive west tower remains intact today. Free entry. (Parking, family friendly, dogs on a lead welcome)

F: Nearby **Keld Chapel** was probably used as a chantry (where prayers were chanted for the souls of the dead) by the monks of Shap Abbey. Although it looks more like a barn from the outside, its internal bare walls, uneven stone floor and rustic furnishings suggest it is one of the few pre-Reformation chapels in the country (dating from late 15th century).



Further information

Penrith Tourist Information Centre, Middlegate, Penrith

Telephone: 01768 867466

Email: Pen.TIC@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk

A copy of the Penrith Heritage Trail and Heritage Trails for Appleby, Alston and Kirkby Stephen are available from Eden's Tourist Information Centres.



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