

Take this circuit to get a different perspective on the historic heart of Hexham!

Distance approximately 1½km (1 mile).

Allow 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Find out why the town once smelt of apples, why its bridges kept falling down and when bells rang on Bull Bank.

Start your walk in the Market Place, at the graphic panel in front of the Abbey. You can use the map to find your way.

Don't forget there are also written instructions and more information overleaf.

1 Market Place

Hexham is built on a high point above the Tyne. Markets have been held here since medieval times, selling fresh fruit and vegetables grown on the fertile lower ground between the town and river.

2 The Moothall

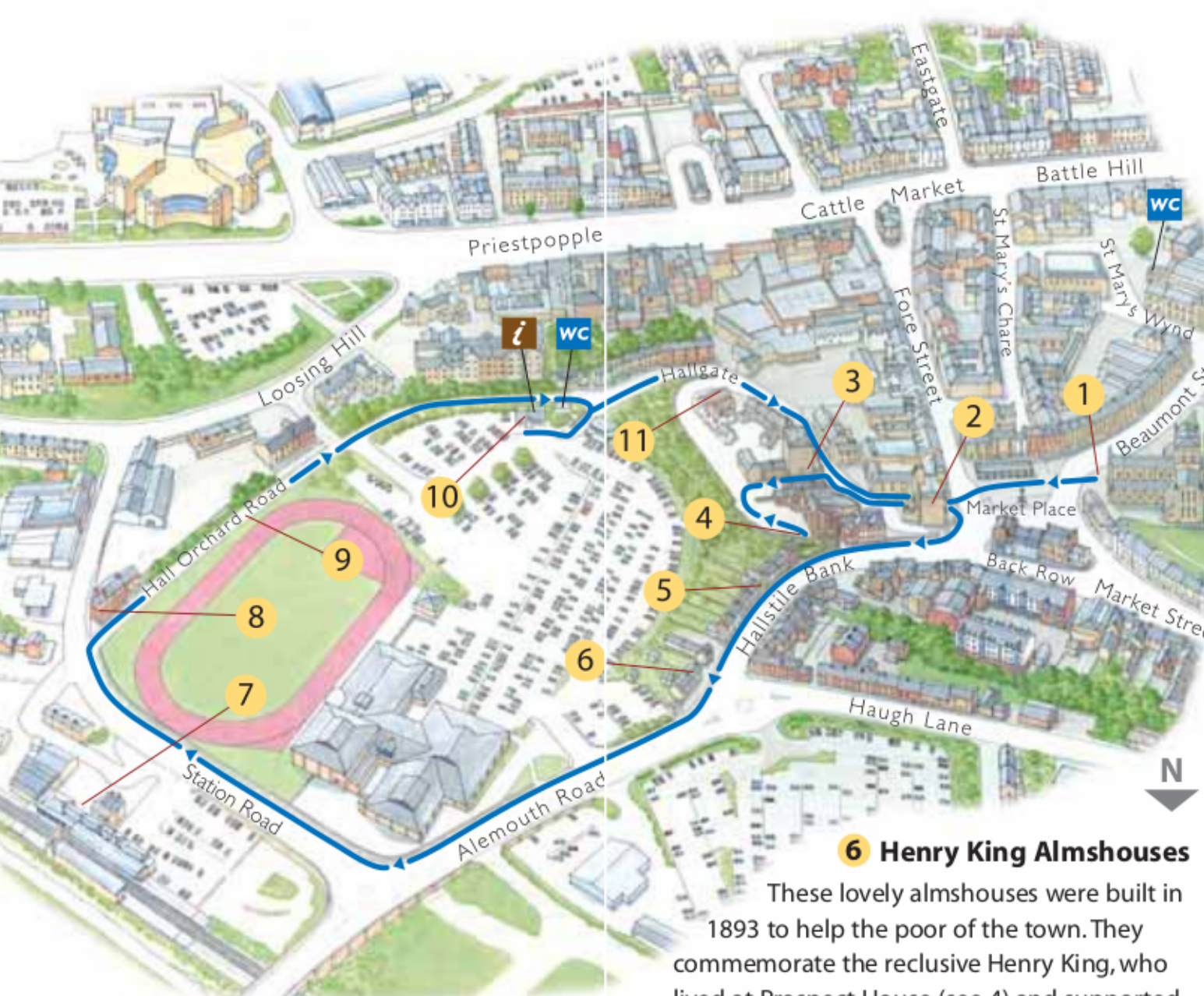
The town's key buildings were located on the high ground for defence. There are good views over the river and valley.

The medieval bailiff could also keep an eye on any troublesome townspeople in the Market Place from this building!



3 The Old Gaol

The gaol has dominated Hexham's skyline since the 1330s, reminding local people of the perils of breaking the law. It was the first purpose-built prison in England.



4 Prospect View

Standing here helps you to appreciate the town's strategic position overlooking the Tyne. The road and railway follow the river along the valley.

5 Former Methodist Church

The steep Hallstile Bank has been the main route into town from the river since medieval times. It is now lined with 18th and 19th century buildings, including Hexham's first Primitive Methodist Chapel. These Methodists were known for their enthusiastic preaching style and were nick-named 'the Ranters'.

6 Henry King Almshouses

These lovely almshouses were built in 1893 to help the poor of the town. They commemorate the reclusive Henry King, who lived at Prospect House (see 4) and supported many local charities.

7 Hexham Station

Hexham Station opened in 1835, and provided an important transport link for the town. Fresh produce and locally made leather goods, as well as lead from the nearby hills, could be carried quickly and easily to Newcastle and beyond.



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8 Station Inn

Hexham was always an important meeting place and overnight stop for traders moving goods between Tynedale and the coast. Hostelries like the Station Inn provided accommodation for those coming to market or visiting the town.

9 Hall Orchard Road

Today this area is used for sports, shopping and industry. It was covered with plant nurseries and orchards just 100 years ago. Hexham's fresh produce was famous and it is said that, when you arrived at the station, the air was filled with the scent of apples.



10 Tourist Information Centre

Call in at the Tourist Information Centre to find out more about what to see and do while you are in Hexham. There's lots more history to discover in the surrounding area too!

11 The Old Grammar School



Hexham's Grammar School was founded in 1599 and moved here nearly 100 years later. In 1856 another new Council school was built behind the Abbey, funded by the sale of land near the river for the new Newcastle to Carlisle Railway.

Walk Two: The Apple Amble (see the map on the previous page for more details).

From the Market Place 1 to The Moothall 2

Cross the Market Place (with care) and go through the archway beneath the Moothall.

What is a Moothall?

A building where the legal and administrative matters of shires, like Hexhamshire, were dealt with. Hexham's Moothall was built in about 1400, originally as a gatehouse to a hall where the town's bailiff lived.

From The Moothall 2 to The Old Gaol 3

Cross over to reach Prospect House, which has a graphic panel outside. To your right you will see the imposing Old Gaol. The panel shows you what the Gaol and the Moothall looked like in medieval times.

The Archbishop of York, Lord of the Manor of Hexham, wrote in 1330: "We order you to build a good strong gaol at Hexham ... and supply it with irons, manacles, and everything necessary for safe custody, and appoint John of Cawood, the barber, as gaoler and pay him twopence a day." Visit the Old Gaol today to find out more about life 'inside'.



Photo: Helen Smith

From The Old Gaol 3 to Prospect View 4

Walk down the narrow street between Prospect House and the Old Gaol. Turn left into the car park, then walk to the far end of the building. You'll find another graphic panel here, which describes the view over the town and the Tyne Valley.

From Prospect View 4 to the Former Methodist Church 5

Retrace your steps to the Moothall, go back through the archway then turn right and descend Hallstile Bank (be careful, it's steep!). Look out for the trail marker at Number 26.

Hallstile used to be known as Bull Bank, after an inn at the top. The Mechanics Institute, beside the inn, also acted as the town's library.

In the 1870s Jimmy Marshall was Hexham's Bellman, ringing his bell and proclaiming the news around town. His uniform was paid for by grocer James Robson, whose business was on Hallstile Bank.



Hallstile Bank was the main access from the river to the town. Until the 1770s, the only way across the Tyne was by ferry. Three different bridges were built, all swept away by floods or swallowed up by the shifting river bed. The bridge you can see today was finally completed in 1793.



Photo: Barry Pickering

From the Former Methodist Church 5 to Henry King Almshouses 6

At the bottom of the hill, stop at the old stone arch on your right. Look through it to see the Almshouses. The distinctive 17th century arch was moved here from a house in Fore Street.

What is an Almshouse?

'Alms' were gifts of money or goods for the needy, and an almshouse provided free accommodation for poor and elderly people.

From the Henry King Almshouses 6 to Hexham Station 7

Bear right at the roundabout to walk along the busy Alemouth Road. Take care crossing the entrance to Wentworth Car Park. Stop at the next roundabout and look back at the town.

This shows the view to the town from the railway bridge a century ago. Hexham is still dominated by the Abbey, Gaol and Moothall buildings today, but what has changed in 100 years? Look at the road surface – and the lack of traffic!



Turn right at this roundabout onto Station Road. Walk past the Leisure Centre and stop opposite the station, which opened in 1835.

Turnpike (toll) roads were built from the 1750s to move goods more easily between Tynedale and the coast. Stagecoaches and wagons stopped at Hexham's inns and stabled their horses nearby. Although the railway soon saw the end of horse-drawn transport, the town's inns now catered for rail passengers instead.



From Hexham Station 7 to the Station Inn 8 and Hall Orchard Road 9

Continue along Station Road. Stop just before the Station Inn and look across the road. The red brick building with small, high windows was the station stables. Turn right in front of the Station Inn and walk along Hall Orchard Road. Look at the view on your right, showing how the Abbey, Moothall and Gaol dominate the skyline. The low land here used to be filled with orchards and plant nurseries.

From Hall Orchard Road 9 to the Tourist Information Centre 10

Keep going along the leafy Hall Orchard Road, crossing the access road to the car park. Stop when you reach Wentworth Place, where steps and a ramp on your right lead down to the car park. The Tourist Information Centre is at the bottom of the steps on the right.

From the Tourist Information Centre 10 to The Old Grammar School 11

From the top of the steps, walk uphill onto Hallgate. Look out for the white-washed Old Grammar School on your right where the road levels out. It was built in 1684.



The price of education?

In 1862 there were 80 boys paying 15 shillings a quarter for arithmetic, reading and writing at the Grammar School. For an extra six shillings (30p) they could learn other subjects, including languages, algebra and land surveying.

From The Old Grammar School 11 back to the Market Place 1

Continue along Hallgate, passing the Old Gaol, to reach the Moothall again. Go through the archway to the Market Place.