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DURHAM RIVERSIDE AMBLE AUGUST 2023

AT our starting point, the Market Tavern, which ironically faces out to the statue of the coal owning Marquess of Londonderry, was the birthplace of the Durham Miners' Union which was founded at a miners' meeting held here on November 20, 1869.



Starting off from the Market Place in Durham, the principal buildings are the Town Hall/Guild Hall and St Nicholas Church. Despite looking very medieval, the Town Hall is a product of the mid nineteenth century as is the church! The market place itself is a confluence of four main streets: Silver Street, Saddler Street, Claypath are of medieval origin, joined by the more modern High Street which is between Boots and Next shops.



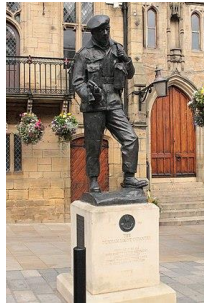
The three statues in the market place are of different times and concepts. The earliest (1729) is of Neptune and followed a grandiose plan in 1720 to change the course of the River Wear so it joined the River Tyne via the River Teams, or, in 1759 making the Wear navigable making Durham an inland port. The statue was relegated to Wharton Park, near the railway station, and was somewhat neglected. It was restored and placed back into the market place in 1986.



The second statue is of the Third Marquess of Londonderry who as well as being a major land owner in the City of Durham, also owned several collieries. He is principally famous as the builder of the Durham coal port of Seaham Harbour which was founded as a rival to Sunderland. Urban myth has it that the sculptor, Raphael Monti, believed it was the most perfect statue he'd ever made and defied anyone to find fault. Allegedly a blind man climbed up on to the statue and found the horse didn't have a tongue. As a result, the sculptor committed suicide. This, however, is a complete myth! (He didn't commit suicide, dying in 1861, 20 years after, and the horse DOES have a tongue!)



The third statue is of a Durham Light Infantry bugler of the Korean War period, and commemorates all who served in the regiment.



Taking advantage of a passageway between the Town Hall and St. Nicholas church, the walk continues down towards the river side, passing a sculpture of a heron that was originally part of the Lumiere event in 2017.



The path follows the river bank, passing the Passport office, NS & I offices and Durham University Business School. These offices were built on the former site of the old Durham Ice Rink which was a great favourite of locals and Canadian armed forces personnel during the Second World War. The ice rink, which was the home of the Durham Wasps, was demolished in 2013, and was on the route to Durham Sands which is a venue for open air events and visiting circuses.

Crossing the pedestrian Pennyferry Bridge (yes, there used to be a ferry here!) the walk continues on the opposite bank along Framwellgate Waterside, underneath the New Framwellgate Bridge (or Millburngate Bridge as it is referred to in some publications) before reaching its original 15th century Grade 1 listed namesake.



There used to be a water supply from the Fram Well to the statue of Neptune in the Market Square which stood on a large stone pant. Continuing on to the Old Corn Mill, there is the iconic view of the Cathedral above the Old Fulling Mill. On access road leading across Prebends Bridge is the sculpture "Reveal" by Richard Cole (not the Rev. of TV and radio!). It was originally part of the Cathedral and was removed and repurposed during renovations.



St Oswald's Church, a Grade II listed building, dates back to the 12th century, but has seen significant updates, additions and rebuilds over the years. Although it is an Anglican Church, it is also used by the Eastern Orthodox congregation. Crossing the river at the Ove Arup designed Kingsgate Footbridge, the chosen path backtracked along the river, passing boat houses belonging to various colleges of the university. Separating from the riverside at the "Count's House":



The Count's House was originally constructed in the 1820s by the Dean and Chapter of Durham Cathedral. It was designed to resemble a Greek temple by the Durham architect, Ignatius Bonomi. It's actually a folly and was purposely designed to simply look nice on the riverbank. It also occasionally acted as a summerhouse. It was named the Count's House in error after Count Joseph Boruwlaski, an entertainer and dancer who spent much of his life in Durham. There is no truth in the rumour that he actually ever lived there, although it is alleged that there were families occupying the buildings, and at one time a tea house was located there.

Walking along the South Bailey and North Bailey there are numerous reminders of Durham University being a colligate university from the number of buildings passed. Branching off the North Bailey is Dun Cow Lane (used to a pub called the Dun Cow on the corner: the building is still there, but no longer a pub!), leading up to the Cathedral. The visit to the cathedral was for two reasons: firstly, to have a look at the Gaia exhibit: a giant rotating Earth globe, and secondly to assuage the thirst and hunger pangs at the very busy Undercroft Restaurant.



From the Cathedral, the descent on to the Saddler Street is via Owengate, which was the site of the original fortified North Gate, demolished in the 1820's. Part of the gatehouse was used as a prison.



Saddler Street itself was probably named after Sir Ralph Saddler, who was the Commissioner in Durham for King Henry VIII. Although the whole street is now called Saddler Street, the stretch from the Market Place to the Magdalen Steps was originally "Fleshergate", a street of butchers. Excavations in the area have, however, uncovered offcuts of leather so who's right? Branching off from Saddler Street to the left of the Magdalen Steps (named after a local hospice), Elvet Bridge Road crosses the river over Elvet Bridge. In pre-Norman conquest days Elvet was "Aelfet ee", or Swan Island (a clue as to why the pub on the other side of the bridge is The Swan and Three cygnets?). The original name for this street was "Souter Peth", otherwise Cobblers Street. Tanning of the hides was performed on the other side of the river. Past the Market place to the left is Silver Street, named so because it was one of the two sites in Durham that minted coins for the Prince Bishops. At the right of the market place is Claypath, originally "Cluerport" and was the only access route into Durham that didn't cross the River Wear.



The group outside Durham Cathedral, almost at the end of the day's amble.

