

Visiting Alnham

St Michael and All Angels Church welcomes schools and community groups to use the newly refurbished church as a base to explore Alnham and the surrounding area.

Planning your visit

To plan your visit, consult Ordnance Survey Map OS Explorer OL16 The Cheviot Hills, Jedburgh and Wooler. It is a good idea to take this map with you and make sure you know how to use a compass to navigate your way around the area.

Alnham (pronounced Alum) is in a wonderfully remote area of Northumberland. Up in the hills the weather can change quickly so please make sure that everyone in your party has adequate clothes to keep them warm dry. It is a good idea to take a survival bag in case of some one being injured that can't be moved. Make sure your mobile phone is fully charged.

Walking in the hills gives you an appetite and a thirst so please make sure your party has adequate provisions.

Check out the Northumberland Mountain Rescue webpage for more information:
<http://nnpmrt.org/hill-safety/>

Getting to Alnham

There are two ways to get to Alnham, via Wittingham and via Rothbury.

Via Wittingham

Take the A697 and turn off for Wittingham, go through Wittingham and after about a mile turn left for Little Ryle. There is a series of tight bends before you come in to Alnham from the North. Turn right when you see the sign post for the church. The church is a few minutes' drive down that road. The Church will be on your right.

Via Rothbury

Take the A697 and turn off to Rothbury on the B6344 (in recent years this road has been closed from time to time due to land slips) or the B6341 to Rothbury, drive through the town. A few miles west of Rothbury, turn right before the bridge in Thropton heading towards Snitter. After a few minutes' drive take the first left towards Snitter, drive through Snitter and on towards Netherton. Take the second right in Netherton towards Scrainwood and Alnham. Drive through Scrainwood to Alnham. When you get to Alnham there is a sign pointing left to the Church. The Church is on your right a few minutes' drive along the road.

Parking

You can park on the grass next to the church wall.

National Park

The church is on the border of Northumberland National Park. To find out more about please see their website www.northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk.

There may be sheep and cattle in the fields. Please treat them with respect.

Facilities at the Church

The church is open every day. There is one toilet and a small kitchen area. There are chairs in the nave for you to use and tables. There are heaters in the church too if you need to warm up. The church holds services on the first Sunday of the month so please leave the church tidy with the heaters and lights off.

Notes for teachers and group leaders on using these resources

These resources have been designed to help your group get the most out of a trip to Alnham.

They are aimed at Key Stage 2 children, focusing on Creative Writing and History, Prehistory.

- Poetry Inspiration
- Story Planning
- Castle Hill Hillfort
- Castle Hill Satellite Image
- The Tragedy of the two shepherds

A good time to get the worksheets out would be after you have already explored the sites a little. Both the poetry and storytelling sheets refer to the tragedy of the two shepherds. If you don't have time to get to the Shepherds Cairn, reading the story contained within these notes in the fields near Alnham will give the same atmosphere and inspiration for writing poems and stories.

Things to bring with you: pencils, colouring pencils and a compass.

During your day in Alnham you could:

- Explore the Hillfort on Castle Hill
- Visit the Shepherds Cairn
- Explore the Church
- See the Pele tower and the remains of a castle and medieval village
- Walk through Hazelton Rigg

You probably won't have time to do everything in one day.

Getting to the hillfort.

There is a road to that goes close to the hillfort but it is not in a good state of repair. I would suggest that transport is left at the church and you continue on foot. It will take 30- 40 mins to walk up to the hill fort. It is a steep climb but the view is worth it. Once you have got to the hillfort there are two worksheets to help you explore it.

Stories and Poetry

Alnham is the site of a tragic story where two shepherds were caught in a blizzard and died close to home. Simon Armitage has written a poem inspired by this story.

Activity 1. Read "The Tragedy of the two shepherds"

Activity 2. Poems in the Air (optional)

Activity 3. Write a story or poem using our worksheets as a guide.

Poems in the Air

Simon Armitage and Northumberland National Park have worked together to produce Poems in the Air. These poems are not written down, but are accessed via an app on your mobile phone. As you walk towards a set location the poem will start to play. There are six poems throughout the National Park. Download the App "Poems in the Air" from your app store (there is no charge). Select the Poem 2, Shepherds Cairn, Ewarty Shank.

Logistical information

Driving to the Shepherds Cairn

The app suggests driving passed the church, over a cattle grid, past the Hillfort and continuing for another 15 minutes along the road to access the shepherd's cairn. However, the road is in a state of disrepair and deteriorates further once you have passed the Hillfort. It is not recommended to take wider vehicles such as minibuses along this section of the road as there is a risk of coming off the crumbling edges of the road and getting stuck in a bog or worse, rolling down a steep slope.

Walking to the Shepherds' Cairn.

Direct route. 3 miles duration 1.5 hours

From the church pass the cattle grid and follow the road through the fields. The road is very steep in parts. Keep walking past the hillfort and until you can see the Shepherds cairn, a large stone on your right about 600 m from the road. You can walk back the same way. Keep an eye out for wildlife and wildlife signs on the way. You ay see a buzzard on the fence near the Hillfort.

Circular route. 6 miles duration 3.5 hours

This circular route devised by the National Park also takes you to the Shepherds Cairn. It also takes you along the Salters Road, a track that dates back hundreds, possibly thousands of years. It has been used as a drove road to take cattle from the Scottish borders to market in Morpeth and for smuggling gin and salt from Boulmer to Kirk Yetholm on the Scottish Border. It also takes you through Hazleton Rigg, a beautiful valley where you might see a carpet of bluebells in the spring, kingfishers and otters.

www.northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk/things-to-do/get-active-outdoors/walking/walking-routes/the-shepherds-cairn-walk/

Wilderness Schooling

These resources have been prepared by Wilderness Schooling, part of North East Wellbeing. Wilderness Schooling has been running for five years and aims to increase children's wellbeing and attainment by providing practical but curriculum linked activities in the out of doors. If you would like a guided visit of Alnham please contact us and we would be delighted to offer these activities and more. To find out more about what we do please see our website: www.wilderness-schooling.co.uk