

# Millers Trail

An eight mile walk linking the three windmills of Whitburn, Cleadon and Fulwell



South Tyneside Council

# Miller's Trail

8 miles or 13km

## Introduction

Most windmills were used to grind grain to make flour or animal feedstuff, but could be adapted to any purpose where a solid needed to be rendered into a powder. Examples existed in the North East where flint was ground for the pottery industry and sand ground for the glass industry.

There used to be over a hundred windmills in North East England, mostly along the coast. Towns and cities like Newcastle, Gateshead and Sunderland had many windmills and many local villages had their own.

This eight mile circular route provides the opportunity to visit the restored windmills at Whitburn and Fulwell and the remains of the windmill on Cleadon Hills, passing through areas rich in cultural and natural heritage.

## Types of Windmill

Postmills were built around a central post, with the sails not too far off the ground to allow the miller to set the canvas. There was no revolving cap to turn the sails into the wind, so when the wind changed the whole mill had to be turned around by hand. The invention of the fantail (small windmill with vanes set at right angles to the main sails of the mill), which could be mounted on a "fan" carriage to move on a track laid around the mill made life much easier for the miller. The large wind driven fantail turned the whole mill around its central post to bring the sails into the wind.

Postmills often had a roundhouse built around the central post to protect the timbers and provide a storage room beneath the mill. The fan carriage meant the later mills could be taller, often mounted on top of a substantial stone or brick two or three storey roundhouse housing the millstones.

Smock Mills were introduced into this country in the 17th century. They are wooden tower mills with a solid body and a moving cap, often domed or ogee (a dome with a point on top) shaped. They are often six or eight sided and have a walkway around the mill for dressing the sails and can be very tall.

Tower Mills are made of stone or brick with a solid body and moving cap, the taller ones with a walkway, or with a reefing stage, around the tower to allow the miller to dress the sails. Heights varied from three floors to seven or more. The tallest in this country were brick tower mills from 23 metres to over 30 metres high and as much as 12 metres in diameter at the base. Most remaining windmills in the North East are tower mills.

From Whitburn Bents "Pay and Display" Car Park cross the approach road to the signed coastal footpath and cycle route. Proceed along the coastal footpath, to the point where the cycle route deviates left.

If the range is in use, red flags will be flying to warn you and you will not be able to walk the next section. Instead take the cycle route

through the housing estate, along Elm Drive and Myrtle Avenue following the National Cycle Network Route No 1. At junction with Mill Lane, turn right and continue along Elm Drive road until you reach Whitburn Mill on your left.

If the range is not in use, Red flags will not be flying so proceed on beyond the point where the cycle route deviates left. The path becomes narrower now, until a metal kissing gate is reached.



Continue straight on and at the end of the firing range turn left at the sentry post. Walk inland now with the range on your left. Emerge over

a stone step stile on to Mill Lane. Turn left and cross this busy road at the crossing opposite the street sign for Souter View for Whitburn Mill.

The original Whitburn Mill was a wooden postmill. This blew down during a storm and was replaced by today's magnesian limestone tower mill, built about 1796. Whitburn is the oldest of the local stone tower mills. The Industrial Revolution and the use of steam power saw the mill fall into disuse by the late 1870's. However, the mill did serve as another useful purpose – as a landmark for ships at sea and during the Second World War when the observer corps used the site as an observation post to give warning of approaching enemy aircraft.

In 1991/92 South Tyneside Council carried out major restoration work, resulting in a civic award in 1994. The mill was opened to the public for the first time in July 1994 when the Whitburn Local History Group, acting as volunteer wardens for South Tyneside Council, agreed to organise annual open days. For details of opening dates please contact Whitburn Local History Group.

On leaving, proceed along the paved pathway to the right of the mill and through the housing estate. The path turns right at the Cedar Grove sign towards Lizard Lane. At this junction cross the road and continue down the marked public footpath next to the bus shelter. Very soon the paved path becomes grassland – proceed straight forward. (Do not turn left and continue





SUNNYSIDE COTTAGE

CLEADON HILLS NATURE RESERVE

SENTRY POST

NORTH

WELL HOUSE FARM

CARAVAN PARK

CLEADON

WHITBURN

CORNTHWAITE PARK

START/FINISH

WHITBURN BENTS CAR PARK

WEST MOOR FARM

SPUGGIES ARCH

CUT THROAT DENE

MORRISON'S SUPERMARKET

CEMETERY

SEABURN CENTRE

SEABURN

FULWELL QUARRY NATURE RESERVE

MILL GARAGE

FULWELL

ACOUSTICAL MIRROR

of paved pathway!) Emerge into Wellands Lane with the entrance to the Caravan Park on your right. Turn left and after approximately 150 metres follow the marked public footpath on your right, towards Well House Farm.

Continue straight ahead, through the farmyard, passing two field gates (via stone step stiles if gates locked) and along the farm track. Eventually the obvious track turns right over a marked wooden stile. The path becomes narrower with a fence to your right. Follow this path over three more wooden stiles. Always keep to the footpath over these stiles as these fields are usually under cultivation. The fourth stile brings you into Cleadon hills local nature reserve.

As well as offering splendid views Cleadon Hills Local Nature Reserve is a nationally important example of Magnesian limestone grassland. The thin soils are ideal for many beautiful plants such as cowslips, wild thyme, quaking grass and autumn gentian. Also look out in summer for large numbers of butterflies and the pretty, day-flying burnet and chimney sweeper moths.

The pathway over grass now bears generally right towards Cleadon Mill.

Cleadon Mill is a stone tower mill built in the 1820's. There was a much older mill at Cleadon belonging to the Bishop of Durham, who insisted that his tenants use the mill and no other. In the 16th century, Mr Chambers of Cleadon Tower chose to grind corn in his own mill, ignoring the Bishop's threats. The story is told that the whole family were excommunicated, and when they died could not be buried in the churchyard, so were interred



in the stack yard of the farm. In 1927 the truth of this story was proved when five bodies were discovered there, and finally given Christian Burials in Whitburn Cemetery. The mill would have once looked like the refurbished mill at Whitburn but was badly damaged when used for target practice by an artillery unit in World War One! Groundwork South Tyneside carried out a partial restoration in 1992 and it is now a listed building.

On leaving, continue straight on and generally downhill to a side stile at a field gate, through this onto a tarmac roadway, continue left towards Sunnyside Cottage. At the cottage, turn left onto Sunnyside Lane and continue straight on towards Cleadon Village, passing Oakleigh Gardens School on the right. Entering the

residential area of Cleadon Village, continue straight ahead and emerge at a road junction opposite the Village Pond. Turn right onto Cleadon Lane. With the pond to your left on the opposite side of the street, proceed past the small terrace of stone houses on your right towards the main road. At the main road use the road crossing towards the Britannia Inn and onto Front Street, crossing the road near the Post Office and continue down Nursery Lane. This will bring you into Windermere.

Cross this street and go down the street opposite – Thirlmere, bearing second right into Grasmere. Continue along a narrow tarmac pathway, between number 6 and 7. Emerge onto Whitburn Road opposite West Meadows Road. Turn right and after 100 metres cross the road and continue along the marked public footpath to Woodlands Road. Cross this road into Woodlands Drive and continue straight on along the public footpath at the junction with Old Course Road to MOOR LANE.

The path continues along the right hand side of West Moor Farm, a white painted stone house with a low red tiled roof. The path is narrow to start with, continue along the path, keeping to the eastern edge of the field, crossing three stiles and under an old stone-built Railway Bridge, Spuggies Arch to emerge at Newcastle Road. Cross this busy road with care,

and continue directly opposite on an upward gradient. Turn right at the T-junction along a good, wide gravel path. Next a multi junction appears. Turn left and uphill on a narrow track marked to Carley Hill and into Fulwell Quarry Local Nature Reserve.

The Reserve is of national importance showing great variety and spectacular development of Magnesian Limestone geology. Semi – natural Magnesian Limestone Grassland is the major vegetation type in the area and the habitat has a rich variety of grasses, plants and butterflies.

Continue along the boundary of the Nature Reserve, Ignoring some minor pathways to both sides and emerge on the edge of housing. A path now comes in to join this one from right, bear left through two barriers, eventually passing the remains of a Concrete Acoustical Mirror and allotment gardens on the right to reach Newcastle Road.

The concrete acoustical mirror during the period 1917 to 1936 had its part to play in Northern Frontier Defences just as much as a Roman Fort or Norman Castle. It was designed to keep at bay a more recent enemy although, namely the Germans in their Zeppelin airships.

At “Newcastle Road”, turn right with “Mill Garage” to your right. Proceed straight on to “Fulwell Mill”

James Turner, for Matthew Swan, built Fulwell Mill in 1821 the shipowner who lived in West House beside the mill. Unlike the other tower mills in the area, Fulwell is built above a reefing stage, used by the miller when setting the sails. The stage added height, an additional floor and two alcoves within the magnesian limestone walls. One of these alcoves was used by the miller as his office, and contains a tiny fireplace. The mill is a grade II listed building. William Moody was the miller from about 1885, and his son was still working the mill in the 1940’s (using a gas powered engine, installed in the

early 20th century). Milling ceased in 1949, with all the working machinery preserved within the mill. Restoration work undertaken in the 80's and again in the late 90's has seen the sails turn once more and the corn ground. The mill is open to the public; please contact the miller for details of special events and opening times.

On leaving the Mill, turn right to the controlled crossings at the traffic lights. Once across both carriageways turn left and continue with bungalows to your right. Only divert from the pavement at the top of Shields Bank and turn right downhill on the A1018 towards South Shields. Remain on the pavement with the New Church on the right and allotment gardens to the left. At the end of the housing proceed over the wooden stile on your right into grassland. The path narrows into the left-hand corner of this area behind school buildings. Do not cross the first wooden bridge you encounter.

Follow the path next to Cut Throat Dene, through a metal barrier and into a grassed open area with some old gravestones and mature trees.

Continue along the path and take a wooden bridge across the Dene (often dry) towards some red brick houses. Turn right with the path, go through another steel barrier and into an open grassed area. This leads you onto a roadway.

Turn left at the junction with the Pullman Lodge visible ahead and turn left and again at a children's play feature past the rear of Seaburn Hall.

Now you must take care as you cross through a very busy car park. At Morrisons garage turn left then right. In a very sheltered corner of the top

car park, and left of "Goods Only Signs", behind trees and bushes see an opening in the hedge with a single storey, brick built pavilion behind. Proceed with this pavilion to your left on a tarmac path into Cleveland View, cross the street and walk up Huntcliff Avenue and Rosedale Avenue.

Enter the pathway in the corner of Weardale Avenue and Rosedale Avenue. This turns across cultivated fields and eventually to a wooden kissing gate in the corner of a rougher grassed area. The now very narrow path brings you to the entrance to Cornthwaite Park on your right. The path through the park, in a generally diagonal direction will exit you on to the coast road. Cross with care to see the Whitburn Bents Car Park and the finish of an interesting and challenging walk



Fulwell Mill



# Countryside Code

## Respect other people

- Consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors
- Leave gates and property as you find them and follow paths unless wider access is available

## Protect the natural environment

- Leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under effective control

## Enjoy the outdoors

- Plan ahead and be prepared
- Follow advice and local signs





## **Countryside Officer/ Public Rights of Way Officer**

South Tyneside Council  
Town Hall and Civic Offices  
Westoe Road,  
South Shields  
NE33 2RL  
Telephone (0191) 427 7000

## **Additional countryside information**

For further information and leaflets please see  
**[www.southtyneside.info](http://www.southtyneside.info)**

## **Visitor Information Centre South Shields**

Telephone (0191) 424 7788

## **Public transport information – Travel Line**

Telephone 0871 200 2233 for all local public transport enquiries.



