

# HERITAGE TRAILS GUIDE

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## Middlesbrough

Explore the natural  
and built heritage  
of the Tees Valley

River Tees  
Rediscovered →

# THE TRAILS



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Historic Trail

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*#heritagetrails*

# WELCOME

In the early 19th Century the area we now know as Middlesbrough was a vast salt marsh and home to less than 40 people. The extension of the Stockton and Darlington Railway in 1827 meant a new branch line was built towards the newly formed Port Darlington (in the vicinity of the current Transporter Bridge) and Middlesbrough was born.

Initially a port to ship coal, the discovery of iron ore in the nearby Eston Hills led to the establishment of an iron and steel industry on the south bank of the Tees with the town becoming a world leader in iron production towards the end of the 19th Century. The demands of industry led to the reclamation of large areas of marshland on the south side of the river where the ground level was increased by at least four metres through the tipping of millions of tons of slag and waste from the iron and steelworks.

Around this time chemical industries were also developing on the north side of the river with the exploitation of brine and with chlorine, soda and salt works at the newly formed Port Clarence. This increasing industrial activity led to a massive house-building programme and Middlesbrough trebled in size as surrounding towns joined together. This growing population needed schools, churches and shops, whilst the growth of the railways the road network led to improved communications and the building of key bridges across the River Tees. The most significant of these being the Victoria Bridge in Stockton along with the Transporter and Newport Bridges in Middlesbrough.

# THE NATURAL HERITAGE OF THE TEES VALLEY

The River Tees is barely wider than a jump from one bank to the other at its source. Yet in less than 30 miles it widens, maturing and meandering, through the lowlands between Darlington and the North Sea. The river and its surrounding landscape provide a varied natural habitat for a wide variety of animals and plant life.

## Rural farmland and woodland

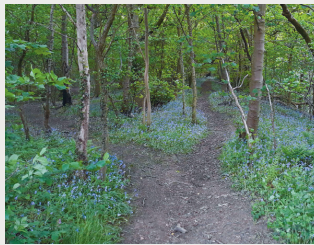
The open countryside around Darlington and to the west of Stockton-on-Tees has rich alluvial soils and so is largely farmed, mainly for crops, but some pastures too. Wildlife benefits from a good network of hedgerows between fields and alongside country lanes. Broad and mixed leaf woodland is found in places on the steep-sided banks of the River Tees.

Hedges, small woodlands and rough pastures are important for a number of bird species which are declining across the UK. These include yellow-hammer, cuckoo, green woodpecker and bullfinch.

Ancient and semi-natural woodland survives along the banks of the River Tees and its tributaries, especially the steep Leven valley. Woodland is generally restricted to the steeper slopes which have no value for agriculture. Ancient woodland is a precious habitat. It is scarce, irreplaceable and supports

a vast diversity of wildlife including many rare and declining species.

To be classified as ancient, woodland must have been present since 1600. Before that, planting was uncommon so these woodlands can be assumed to date back to the ice age.



## Urban wildlife

The major towns of the Tees Valley are inevitably the sites where most changes have taken place that affect the natural landscape.

Remnant habitats, such as small meadows and woodlands, survived agricultural improvement only to be surrounded by the spread of housing. There are ponds which were created as

a result of human activity; old brick pits, gravel quarries and even fire-ponds for a small airfield support toads, frogs and sometimes the nationally protected great crested newt.

Other abandoned industrial sites support an open mosaic of grassland where wildflowers persist. Elsewhere, dense scrub proliferates with deep thickets of hawthorn, blackthorn and dog rose.

## The river

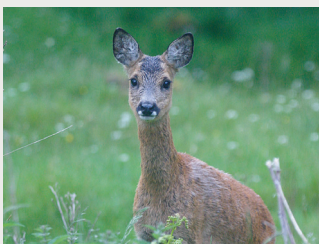
The waters of the Tees are rich in wildlife. Salmon is distributed throughout the river, while the numbers of brown trout have declined, as a result of the degraded and fragmented habitat. Brook lamprey can be found in the Rivers Leven and Tees.





Otters are spotted with remarkable regularity along the Tees throughout Stockton and around the North Tees marshes.

Roe deer are not often thought of as a urban mammals yet are regular visitors to woodlands and pastures on the edge of towns in the Tees Valley.



### **Bowesfield and Preston Farm**

Three large reed-filled pools create a sizeable undisturbed wetland that supports a number of ducks and wading birds such as teal, curlew, gadwall, ruff and golden plover. This is also an excellent place to spot dragonflies and damselflies.

### **Coatham Marsh**

A series of pools and reed swamps, this is the last remaining wildlife habitat to have survived the almost entire urban reclamation of the south Tees. Bordered by Redcar's blast furnace, the site is sanctuary for more than 200 species of wild birds and

wildflowers as well as mammals such as fox and stoats. Smaller mammals must also be present as the site is regularly visited by birds of prey including barn owls.

### **Maze Park**

Visitors can climb one of its landscaped mounds to enjoy panoramic views of the conurbation. Glades and open grassland attract scarce butterfly species such as grayling and speckled wood. The steep banks provide nesting for sand martins and give excellent views of common and grey seals preying on salmon negotiating the Tees Barrage.

### **Portrack Marsh**

This wetland nature reserve attracts hundreds of birds each year and is home to a wide variety of mammals, amphibians and insects.

Winter sees redshank and lapwing, shoveler, pochard, tufted duck and teal frequenting the pools. While kingfisher and grey wagtail are easy to spot.

Spring is the time for wheatear, whinchat and warblers. And Summer little grebe, moorhen, swans and Canada goose. By late summer, the exposed mud flats are home to waders such as dunlin, black tailed godwit, greenshank and ruff.



### **Saltholme**

A flagship site for the RSPB, Saltholme's wetlands are home to large numbers of wildfowl and wading birds. In the spring and summer many birds breed here including shoveler and gadwall and common terns. The reed beds are home to water rails, reed bunting and reed warblers.



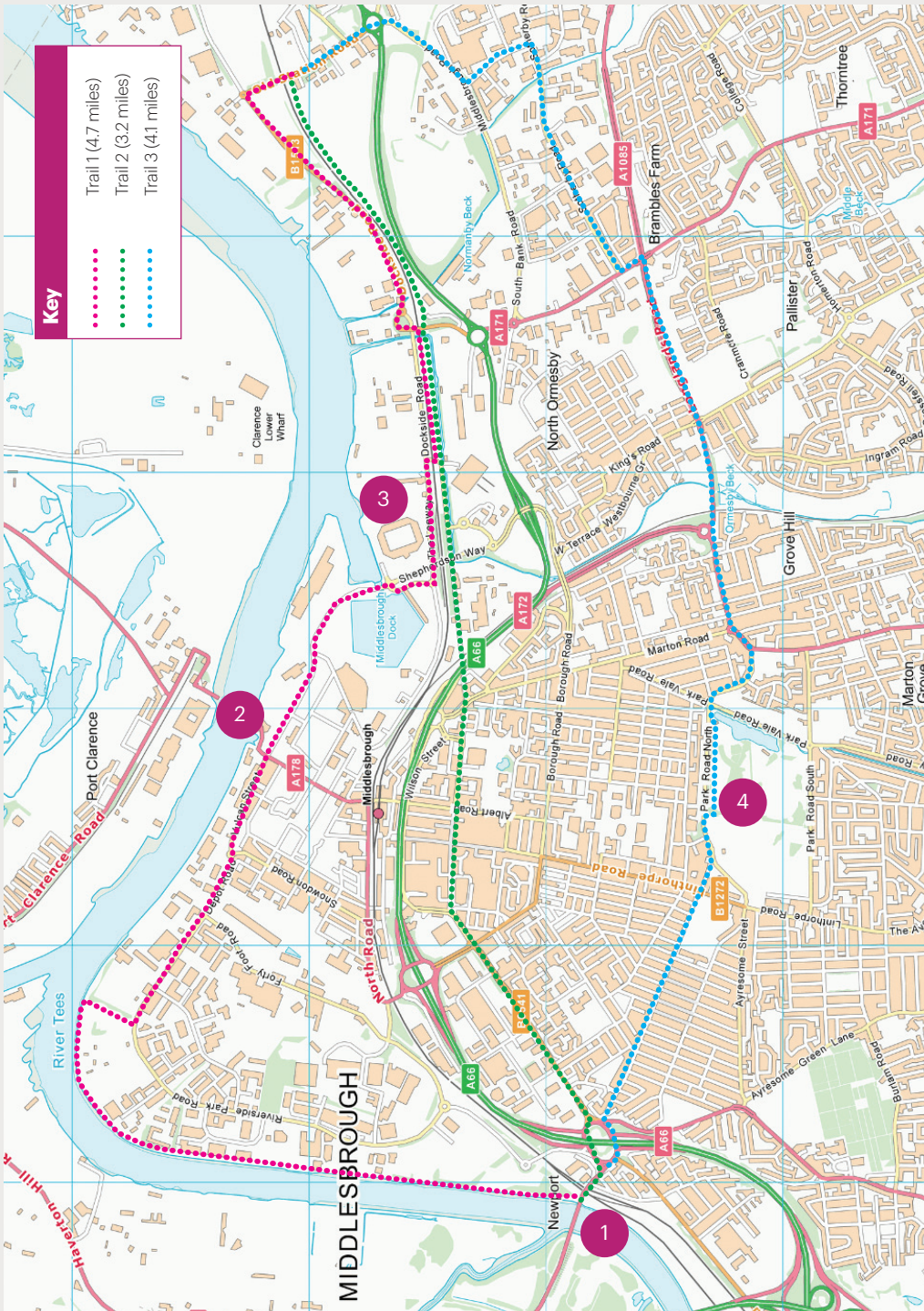
### **Seaton Common, Seaton Sands and North Gare**

Among the relics of a once thriving salt industry lies a network of ditches and wet grassland that attracts vast numbers of over-wintering migrating birds.



### **South Gare and Coatham Sands**

Fresh water marshes, lagoons, dunes and golden sandy beaches are designated as internationally important for wild birds. Species such as bar-tailed godwit, curlew, redshank and grey plover make their winter homes here. While the dune slacks support large stands of northern marsh and fragrant orchids.



**Key**

- Trail 1 (4.7 miles) ⋯
- Trail 2 (3.2 miles) ⋯
- Trail 3 (4.1 miles) ⋯

# SAILOR'S TRODS HISTORIC TRAIL

1

In the early 19th Century, before Middlesbrough developed into the town we see today, the ports of Cargo Fleet and Newport were linked by footpaths known as Sailor's Trods.



▲ Transporter Bridge

These short-cuts were used by working seamen who needed to get to Teesmouth and the coast. These trails follow the routes of the historic 'Trods'.

## Highlights

**1. Newport Bridge** is a vertical-lift bridge spanning the river linking Middlesbrough with the borough of Stockton-on-Tees. Completed in 1934, the bridge was built by local company Dorman Long. It was the first large vertical-lift bridge in Britain and although it no longer lifts, it still acts as a road bridge in its permanently down position.

**2. The Transporter Bridge** (currently closed Autumn 2020) was opened 1911 and carries a suspended 'gondola', traversing across the river in 90 seconds. The gondola can carry 200 people, nine cars, or six cars



▲ Riverside Stadium

and one minibus. The bridge joins the A178 in Middlesbrough to Hartlepool Road.

**3. Riverside Stadium** is home of Middlesbrough Football Club and attracts a large and passionate crowd for every home game. Opening in 1995 its current capacity is 34,742.

**4. Albert Park** was completed in 1868 as a conscious need to provide a "green lung" to ease the plight of the burgeoning industrial population of the town. Officially opened by Prince Arthur of Connaught, the park was named after his father Prince Albert and was home to the original Middlesbrough Football Club. Facilities include a visitor centre, roller skating rink, café, boat hire, tennis courts, bowling greens, play areas and a bandstand.

## Distance

Trail 1: 4.7 miles

Trail 2: 3.2 miles

Trail 3: 4.1 miles

## Estimated walk time

Trail 1: 2 hours

Trail 2: 1 hour 20 minutes

Trail 3: 1 hour 50 minutes

## Suggested start/finish

Start: Newport Bridge

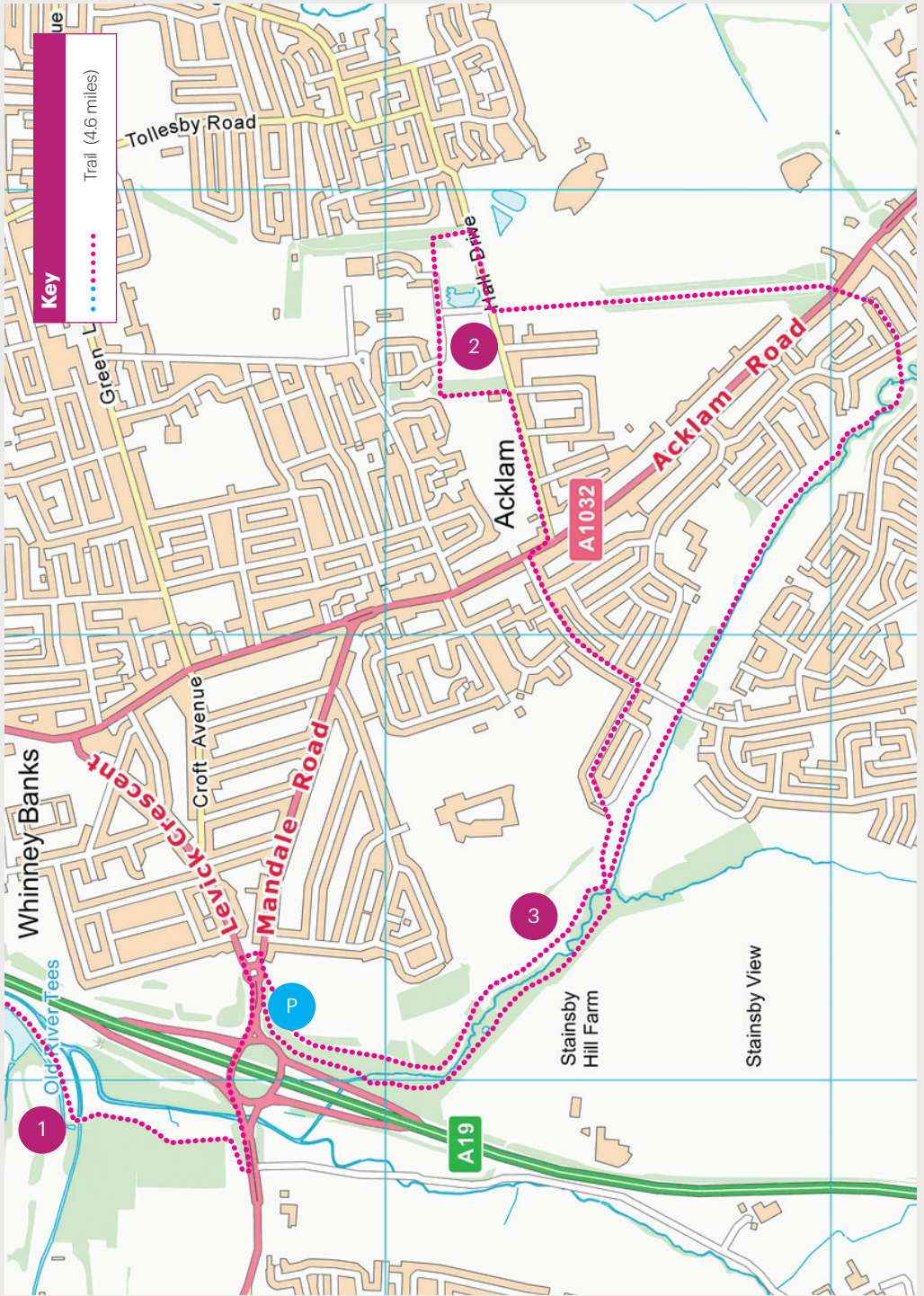
Finish: Imperial Park

## Route

**Trail 1** – Follow the bend of the river north from Newport Bridge and then travel east towards the Transporter Bridge and past the Riverside Stadium onto South Bank.

**Trail 2** – Follow Newport Road north and then travel through the centre of Middlesbrough joining Trail 1 and the river south of Riverside Stadium.

**Trail 3** – From Newport head towards Linthorpe along what is now Parliament Road, cross Linthorpe Road and head along Park Road North. Then travel along Longlands Road to the junction with Cargo Fleet Lane onto Sotherby Road turning north on Brunel Road towards the River Tees. Turn right on to Middlesbrough Road and progress on to Old Station Road to finish.





# ACKLAM HALL OLD RIVER TEES

2

In the first half of the 19th Century, the River Tees was straightened to enable ships to save time and money navigating between Stockton-on-Tees and Middlesbrough.



▲ Acklam Hall

The river previously meandered first south and then north of its current channel before two 'cuts', known as the Mandale Cut and the Portrack Cut, were made to straighten its course in 1810 and 1831 respectively. Before this, the journey by sailing barge from Thornaby to the mouth of the Tees could take as long as seven days. The current Tees Barrage is close to the site of the Mandale Cut.

## Highlights

1. The course of the **Old River Tees** is still well defined as it meanders around what is now Teesside Retail Park.
2. The name **Acklam** or "Aclun" is believed to be Anglo-Saxon Old English for "the place of oaks". Once a small village, it is home to Acklam Hall which was, until 1928, the residence of the



▲ Old River Tees

Hustler family. Built by William Hustler, an English draper and Whig MP (1680–83) the house is Middlesbrough's only Grade I listed building and was also formerly a grammar school and a Middlesbrough College campus. Now in private ownership, it is an exclusive wedding venue with a spa, gym, conference rooms and a high quality restaurant.

3. **Bluebell Beck** winds through meadows and woodland west of Acklam. Enthusiastic local volunteer group 'The Friends of Bluebell Beck' help to maintain the area and part of the site is now designated as a 'Local Wildlife Site' for its meadow flora. A neutral grassland, its diverse species include herbs, yellow rattle, the common spotted orchid, birdsfoot trefoil and common knapweed.

## Distance

4.6 miles

## Estimated walk time

1 hour 50 minutes

## Suggested start/finish

Start: Old River Tees

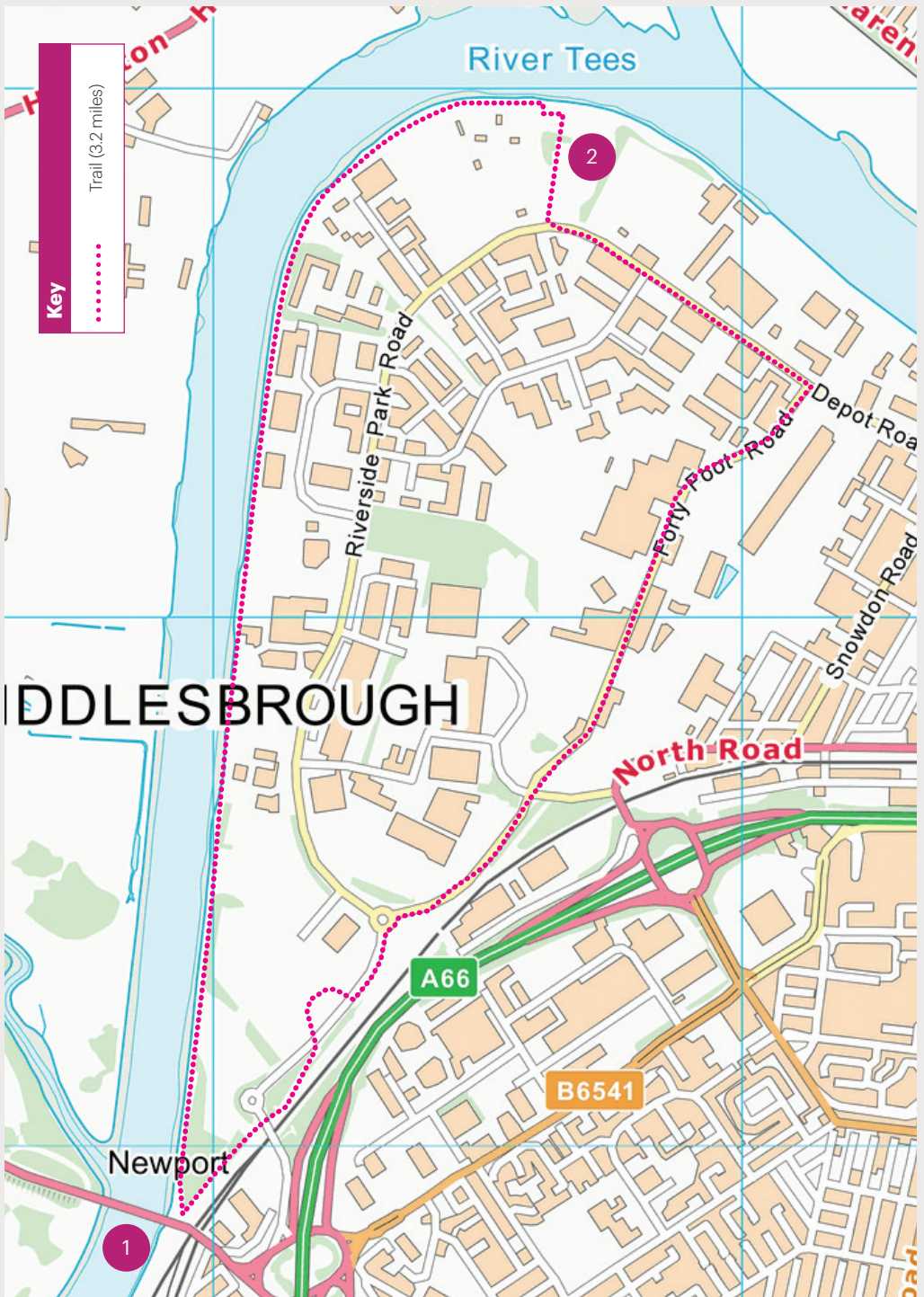
Finish: Mandale Interchange

## Route

Begin in the district of Stockton-on-Tees moving along the course of the Old River Tees. Then travel south along the course of The Fleet and enter Middlesbrough west of the A19 Mandale Interchange. Move south-east and looping around the suburb of Acklam. Follow the route of Bluebell Beck back northwards and end at the Mandale Interchange.

## ▼ Yellow rattle





# IRON MASTERS TRAIL

3

Before industrialisation, this area was known as West Marsh – a salt marsh, whose surface was some 20 feet lower than at present. The area was tidal and would partially flood at high tide.



▲ Newport Bridge

In around 1850 iron ore or 'ironstone' was discovered in the Eston Hills to the South East of Middlesbrough. Easy access to this sought-after raw material led to the rapid growth of ironworks along the banks of the River Tees.

At the height of the boom in 1872, there were 95 blast furnaces along the river and the resulting growth in employment meant the population of Middlesbrough increased from 5,500 to 39,500. Many people lived in the crowded criss-crossing streets of the Cannon Street area across the railway bridge.

The area would become a world-leader in iron production and the air would have been continuously thick with dense smoke from the blast furnaces.



▲ Teessaurus Park

## Highlights

1. **Newport Bridge** was built in 1934 by local firm Dorman Long. The first vertical lift bridge in the world, its platform once could be raised by 37m to allow larger vessels to pass under.

2. Built on the site of a former slag heap, **Teessaurus Park** opened in 1979 as the result of an 'Art to Landscape' competition where Middlesbrough Council commissioned a life-size steel sculpture of a Triceratops by artist Genevieve Glat and fabricated by Harts of Stockton. Two infant Triceratops, as well as a life-size Brachiosaurus, Brontosaurus, Mammoth, Stegosaurus and Tyrannosaurus sculptures, were added later. These were built by trainees at Amarc Training and Safety.

## Distance

3.2 miles

## Estimated walk time

1 hour 20 minutes

## Suggested start/finish

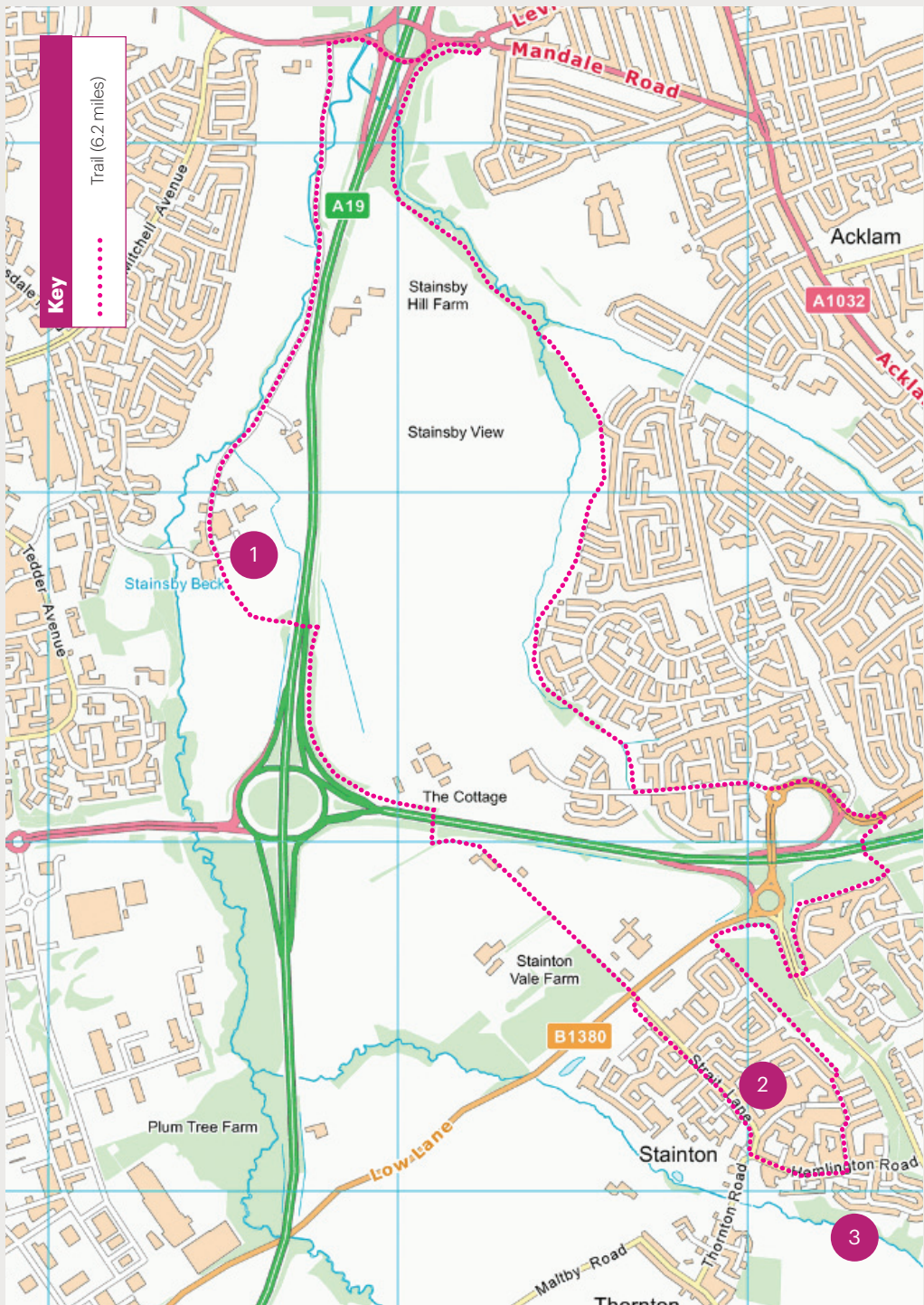
Newport Bridge

## Route

Follow the river path northwards from Newport Bridge towards Teessaurus Park. When you reach Teessaurus Park join Riverside Park Road and head east until its junction with Forty Foot Road. Then head south on Forty Foot Road parallel with the railway line towards the A66 Newport Interchange and Cannon Street.

## WILDLIFE WATCH ROE DEER





# STAINSBY HALL & STAINTON

4

Stainsby is a medieval village that was deserted by 1757. Its remains can still be seen today as a series of humps and bumps in pasture fields close to Acklam and Thornaby Town Centre.



▲ Stainsby Medieval Village



▲ Stainton Beck Footbridge

The majority of local medieval settlements are still inhabited today. However, some were abandoned and their remains are often visible as mounds and ditches in pasture fields.

## Highlights

1. The village of **Stainsby** was first recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086. The name literally means 'Steinn's Hamlet' or 'Farm'. Steinn is a Scandinavian name and the ending 'by' suggests a Scandinavian settlement.

It is not known exactly when or why Stainsby became deserted. Like many other villages, it probably fell on hard times following the Black Death and the wars with Scotland. As population levels fell the remaining inhabitants will have moved to more prosperous

settlements such as Stainton and therefore Stainsby fell out of use. Stainton village has a population of approximately 3,000 and has been a settlement since before Saxon times.

2. **Stainton Church** dates back to the 12th Century and The Stainton Inn pub, on Meldyke Lane, was first licensed in 1897. Stainton Memorial Hall was built in 1844 originally as a school and, after WWI, was extended and repurposed into the memorial hall you see today.

3. **Stainton Quarry** straddles Stainton Beck and a footbridge joins it to Kell Gate Green on the other side of the beck, forming three hectares of community-run green space for local people to enjoy.

## Distance

6.2 miles

## Estimated walk time

2 hours 40 minutes

## Suggested start/finish

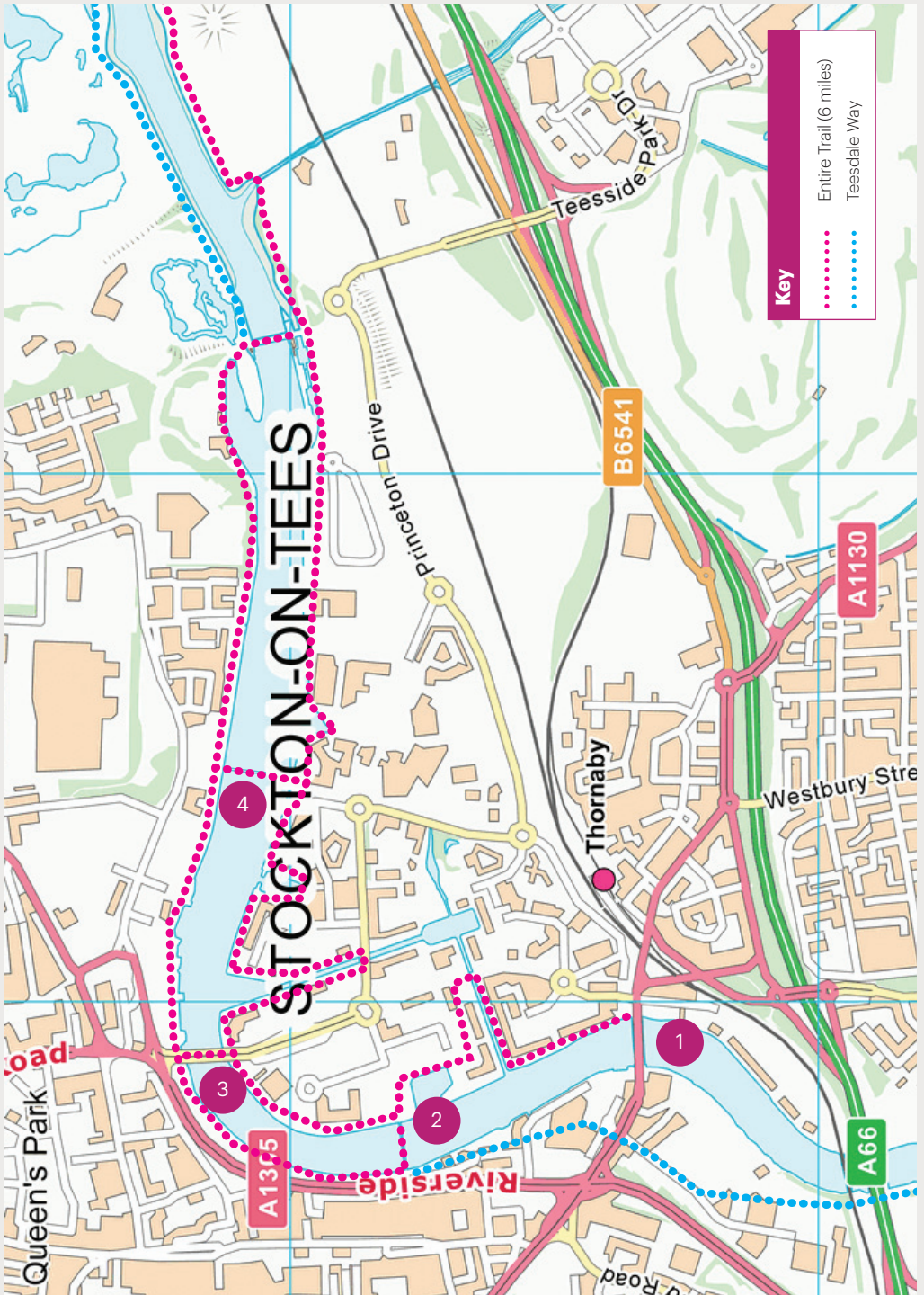
A1130 roundabout at junction of Mandale Road and Levick Crescent

## Route

Begin on the A1130 and head south towards Blue Bell Beck. Follow the course of Blue Bell Beck southwards to where it joins Stainton Beck then follow Stainton Beck towards Stainton Quarry. Crossing the A174 and joining Stainton Way turning left on Hemlington Road past Stainton Church and then right and northwards along Straight Lane and back north towards the A174. Cross the A174 past Stainsby Hall Farm and cross the A19 looping around the site of the medieval village of Stainsby. Cross the A19 again and head north parallel with the A19 until you reach the starting point.

## ▼ Stainton Church





# EIGHT BRIDGES WAY

## VICTORIA BRIDGE TO TEES BARRAGE

5

Following part of the Eight Bridges Way this trail allows great access to the River Tees Corridor and provides differing views of the bridges and surrounding landscape along the way.



▲ Victoria Bridge



▲ Millennium Bridge

### Highlights

1. Designated as Grade II listed, the **Victoria Bridge** was built between 1882 and 1887, replacing an old masonry bridge built in 1769. It has three parabolic arches each consisting of eight ribs of wrought iron. Designed by Harrison Haytor and Charles Neate and built by Whitaker Brothers of Leeds. The bridge was formally opened in 1887 and was named to commemorate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee.

2. The **Millennium Bridge** is a result of a competition that was won by a team from Ove Arup and Birse Construction. The bridge is a cable-stayed design. It has a 40m (131 ft) 'A' frame pylon/mast with fanned cables and has a total span of 153m (502 ft). Fabricated in Spain and constructed on site by Birse

Construction North East, the bridge was completed in December 2000 at a cost of £1.4m.

3. The **Princess of Wales Bridge** was opened on 23 September 1992 to give access to the reclaimed industrial area of Thornaby. Built by Tarmac Construction at a cost of £3m, it has a central span of some 40m.

4. This footbridge was built at a cost of £15m, was opened on 14 May 2009 and named the **Infinity Bridge** because its shape, when reflected in the river, resembles the mathematical symbol for infinity. The design, by Expedition Engineering and architect Spence Associates, was chosen from a RIBA design competition in 2003.

### Distance

6 miles

### Estimated walk time

3.5 hours (one way)

### Suggested start/finish

Tees Barrage or Stockton Town Centre

### Route information

**Parking** – Stockton Town Centre or Tees Barrage.

**Buses** – Bus times can be obtained by calling Traveline 0871 200 2233 or visiting [www.traveline.info](http://www.traveline.info)

**Surfaces** – All surfaced paths. Route suitable for cycling and walking. The various bridges make it easy to modify the route.

### ▼ Infinity Bridge



### WILDLIFE WATCH TUFTED DUCK







# EIGHT BRIDGES WAY

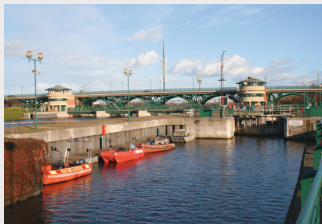
## TEES BARRAGE TO TRANSPORTER BRIDGE

6

This section of the Eight Bridges Way takes in more important crossing points of the River Tees. An urban trail that includes the Tees Barrage, Newport Bridge, and ends at the iconic Tees Transporter Bridge.



▲ Newport Bridge



▲ Tees Barrage

### Highlights

5. Completed in 1995, the **Tees Barrage** was built to control the flow of the river and protect the surrounding areas from flooding. The water above the barrage is permanently held at high tide making the river perfect for canoeing, paddle boarding and rowing. There is plenty of wildlife to spot in and around the river; from mute swans and cormorants to salmon and crowd favourites, the entertaining seals that can often be seen bobbing up and down in the river. It has even been known that dolphins travel down as far as the Tees Barrage from the North Sea!

6. The **A19 Tees Viaduct** is 2.9km long with 68 spans. The nine spans over the river have a clearance of 20.73m and it carries around 115,000 vehicles per day.

7. Built by Dorman Long & Co Ltd, the **Newport Bridge** provided 36.6m headroom and 76.2m clear width of water when raised. The machinery for raising and lowering the bridge was located at the centre of the 2,876 tonnes lifting span. The decline in shipping led to the lifting span being permanently fixed down in 1990.

8. Opened on 17 October 1911, the **Transporter Bridge** was designed by GC Imbault of Cleveland Bridge Engineering Co., Darlington and was built by Sir William Arrol and Co. Vehicles and foot passengers are carried by means of a suspended gondola. It remains the largest of the transporter bridges operating worldwide and represents an elegant solution to providing headroom for the sailing ships that used the river.

### Distance

6 miles (entire trail)

### Estimated walk time

1 hour 50 minutes

### Suggested start/finish

Tees Barrage or Stockton Town Centre

### Route information

**Parking** – Stockton Town Centre or Tees Barrage.

**Buses** – Bus times can be obtained by calling Traveline 0871 200 2233 or visiting [www.traveline.info](http://www.traveline.info)

**Train** to Thornaby Station.

**Surfaces** – All surfaced paths. Route suitable for cycling and walking.

### ▼ Transporter Bridge



### WILDLIFE WATCH GREY SEAL







# River Tees Rediscovered

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This guide has been supported by the  
River Tees Rediscovered Landscape  
Partnership, thanks to money raised  
by National Lottery players and  
awarded through The National  
Lottery Heritage Fund.



TEES VALLEY MAYOR

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