

# Shotley Bridge

## HERITAGE TRAIL

A guide to three walks around Shotley Bridge pointing out buildings and places of interest and linking them with the people who shaped its past.





Each walk is circular, starting at the Heritage display board at "The Triangle" in the centre of the village.

Walks A and C cover different parts of the village and will take you about 45 and 30 minutes respectively.

Walk B goes upstream along the River Derwent, is partly rural in character and will take about one hour. The riverside footpath may be muddy in wet weather.

Walk A involves more up-and-downhill walking than B and C.

Shotley Bridge stands by the River Derwent on the border of Durham and Northumberland. First mentioned in 1356, it is suggested that its name comes from the Anglo Saxon "shot" meaning "a place" and the Old English "leah" meaning "a clearing". It owes much of its history to the German swordmakers who settled here in 1687, followed by industries like the paper and flour mills. The opening of the Spa brought rapid expansion, as did the construction of the Low Road to Newcastle in 1843 and the railway station in 1867.

The centre of Shotley Bridge was designated a Conservation Area in May 1975 and contains many listed buildings.

# WALK A

## Snows Green and Benfieldside

Cross from the Heritage board to the Crown and Crossed Swords and on uphill to Snows Green Road.

The Town Hall [1] a tall stone building with Gothic features, was erected in 1860.

The main hall was used for concerts and dances and it became Lloyd's bank in 1872. Notice the carved heads on the four corners at the top of the tower.



Rose Villa [2] was built for the Town Hall's architect John Smith.

Swiss Cottage [3] built in Alpine style, dates from 1840. Its most noticeable resident was John Nicholson, who discovered ironstone near Consett and helped found the Derwent Iron Company in 1840. Opposite is Oakfield, [4] built in Victorian Gothic style and once the home of Dr James Renton. Shotley Cottage [5] was the home of Jonathan Backhouse Richardson, whose father founded Shotley Spa in 18th Century.



Our Lady of the Rosary Roman Catholic Church [6] was built in 1952.

To your left is Oak Lane, formerly known as "Clay Cut", which was once a private access to the Low Road and the Spa Grounds.

Two modern blocks of flats and a small row of houses occupy the site of the Springfield Hotel [7] which was built to accommodate Spa visitors (among them Charles Dickens). All that remains is a high stone wall.



Summerdale, [8] now converted to flats, was built in 1870 and was the home of solicitor John Booth who had offices in the Town Hall. Beyond the play park and field on your left are Snows Green Cottages [9]. Above the door of No.83 a stone plaque is inscribed "Anno Domini 1797". The lower end of the terrace was formerly a school.

The Hemmels [10] facing you on the corner of the road junction, was once the Braes of Derwent hunt stables and the adjoining drive leads to Shotley Lodge and Tinkler Hill. These properties were bought from the Richardsons by Francis Priestman. His son Jonathan was manager of Consett Iron company for many years and owned a coaching service to Newcastle. This was extended to Blanchland by his son Lewis. The Venture Coach was a familiar sight with its four grey horses (six uphill) and red and gold paintwork. Lewis was also master of the Braes of Derwent hunt for fifty years.



Turn right into Benfieldside Road and right again into Summerdale. Continue along Churchill Close and go through an opening in the fence at the end. Turn right down the footpath, known as "The Cut". Through the open doorway at the end turn left into the street. This is The Terrace with large nineteenth century stone built houses on one side.



Shotley House [11] was built in 1860 for Jonathan Priestman. It was later bought by the Peile Family and given by Dr Henry Peile to Durham County Council to run as the E F Peile Convalescent Home, a pioneering venture for mothers, babies and children under five. It is now divided into three separate houses.



Shotley Villas [12], built in 1855, is also three separate houses. There is a classical angel feature set in a niche in the front elevation.



Belle Vue House, [13] built with a private sanatorium in 1854, was once the home of Joshua Lax. The author of much poetry celebrating the area, he was also an ironmonger and bank manager.

At the end of The Terrace the Village Hall [14] is now closed. It was built in 1905 as the Sunday school for the Wesleyan Methodist Trinity church. Dating from 1855, it was designed by John Smith, who designed the Town Hall. The church was demolished in the late 1950's. Return along the Terrace, noting the views over the roofs of the houses below and turn right again into The Cut.

Continue up here to a junction where the church spire is visible to your right and turn into Peile Park follow the road up to Briary Gardens and Benfieldside Road where you turn right along to the top of Church Bank. On the left side of the road is the oldest Quaker Meeting House [15] in the village, built in 1799, now a private house. To the left, in private grounds, is the disused burial ground.

Turn right down Church Bank. Halfway down is St. Cuthbert's Church [16], with its 130ft tall spire. Designed by John Dobson of Newcastle who built the Central Station, it was built in 1850 on land given by Thomas Wilson of Shotley Hall.



St. Cuthbert's Hall [17] was built in 1881 and was recently extended. A series of steps near the bottom of Church Bank on the right lead up to the former Wesleyan Manse, [18] built in 1894, which adjoined the church on the Terrace.



*Continue down to the village.*

## WALK B

### Riverside to Shotley Grove and Cutlers Hall

From the Heritage Board walk past the King's Head [19]. Dated roughly at 1688 it was originally called the Bridge End. Follow the riverside road known locally as "The Slonks". This Saxon word meant "a marshy place" and prior to road widening there was a sports field here.

As the road starts to rise the large stone building on the left was once the Police House [20], home of the magistrate who often conducted business from his window if it could not wait till the next day.

Go along Shotley Grove Road to turn right down to a footbridge over the river. **(Take care on this steep, uneven section).**



Once across look back towards the opposite bank where stood Shotley Grove Low Mill, [21] a paper mill established in 1799. No building remains but the tail race of the mill race discharged from the culvert here.

Other remnants of the industry are visible on the riverbank for some distance.

The path descends under the branches of a large oak tree to an area known locally as "The Flat Rocks" [22] where generations of families have played, paddled and picnicked by the river. Carry on along the riverside footpath, crossing a bridge over a small stream.



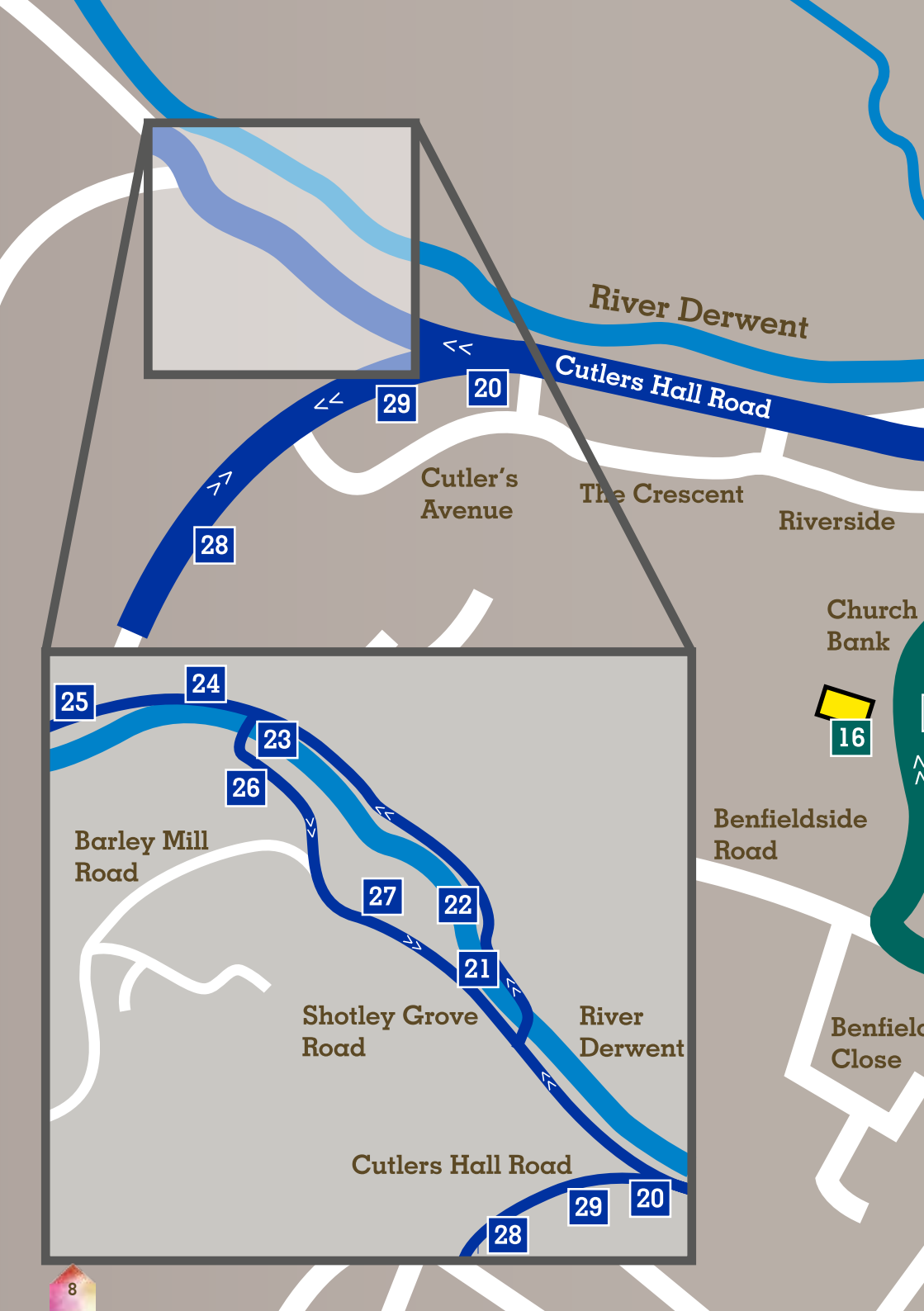
Further on, the new footbridge [23] over the river was built in 2011, replacing a bridge swept away by floods in September 2008. This was a listed structure, built in the late 19th Century and remains of the bridge supports can still be seen. Just upstream from these remains is Forge Cottage [24], the site of the Bertram family sword making forge, rebuilt as estate cottages in the mid-nineteenth century.

Continue upstream to visit the weir and dam [25]. Built of local millstone grit, they retained water and guided the river flow to the mill race for use in the paper mills.

Go back and cross the new bridge to the site of Shotley Grove High Mill [26]. All that remains are some of the mill workers and managers houses. At one time it employed 300 workers and produced 95 tonnes of paper every week.



*Continues on page 10 >>*



River Derwent

Cutlers Hall Road

Cutler's Avenue

The Crescent

Riverside

Church Bank

Benfieldside Road

Benfield Close

Shotley Grove Road

Barley Mill Road

Cutlers Hall Road

River Derwent

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16





Follow the road to bear left round the high wall surrounding Grove House [27].

Built in 1826 by John Annandale, the paper mill owner, it was home to his family of nine children.

Return to the Police House and turn right up Cutlers Hall Road or go through the gap in the wall on the right and over the stile to Cutlers Hall Road.



Continue up to No.'s 22-24, built in 1787 as Cutlers Hall [28] by sword maker William Oley and his wife Ann. This was both a home and a meeting place for the village sword makers.

Go back down the road to No.4 which once housed Shotley Grove School [29], built in 1841 for Mrs Annandale to teach the children of the paper mill workers. Before its enlargement in 1893 it housed 150 fee paying students.

Back in the village, the Crown and Crossed Swords [30] was once two inns which merged to become the Commercial and Swords, owned by sword maker Christopher Oley.

Legend has it that the present name came about following a competition in London to find the best craftsman. Robert Oley's sword was so fine it was in his hat, coiled around the brim and so won the competition and the crown.



In faded letters on the old gatepost can be read **HOTEL, LIVERY, STABLES**.

## WALK C

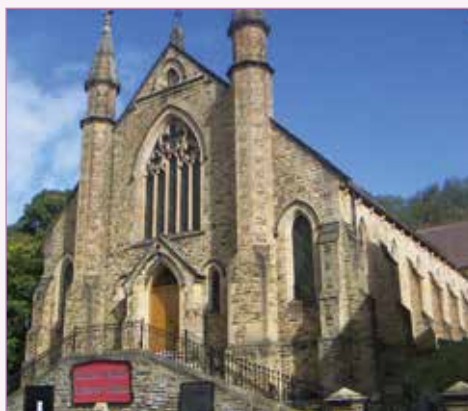
### The Village Centre and Shotley Hall

From the Heritage board turn left along Front Street. Some of the shops still retain their Victorian feel and on the Front Street / Snows Green corner was Achey (Oakey) Banks [31] which was the scene of a market place. Hirings were held here and farmers congregated to buy and sell their produce.



There were covered sheds, a pound for animals, a village pump, stocks and a drinking fountain (now at Beamish Museum). The building after Messenger Bank [32] was owned by Shotley Bridge Co-operative Society, and has now been converted into three shops with two flats on the first floor. Further along is Mawingo [33] which was once the Derwent Inn.

Shotley Bridge Methodist church [34] was built in 1894 and formally opened by the English wife of John Valdemar Faber, a prominent Danish Businessman and Vice Consul in Newcastle who lived across the river in Derwent Dene. The church closed in 2014, amalgamating with other churches in Blackhill. No.37 Front St. is the old post office [35]. On its roof is an ironwork crown and crossed swords identical to the one on the pub of that name.



You come next to the Assembly Rooms [36]. Built in 1876 as a temperance hall it was once the centre of social life holding church bazaars, teas and suppers, dances and meetings of various societies. The Temperance Movement thrived in the village, no doubt due to the existence of so many inns!



Co-operative Terrace [37] was built between 1875 and 1888 for the workers of the Derwent Flour Mill Company.

The Memorial Cottages [38] were built in 1921 for ex-servicemen and their families. Sadly they were allowed to fall into disrepair, but were restored in 1992 and are now managed by a charitable trust.

Opposite is the Spa Lodge [39] which was the entrance to Shotley Spa. Opened in 1837 by Jonathan Richardson senior it consisted of the Spa Well, enclosed trellis with a thatched roof, refreshment rooms, a bath house, saloons, a reading room and a fountain. The Spa Pleasure Grounds were immensely popular and the new road and railway brought visitors by the thousand. The village grew rapidly around this time. The Spa Grounds are now in private ownership.

Return to Oley Meadows [40].

Oley Meadows was built on the site of the Shotley Bridge Gas Company which was formed in 1856 by eminent village businessmen. The company had offices, a boardroom, a showroom and a manager's house on Front Street as well as a smithy (now a garage) on Green Street. At the bottom of Green Street was Wood Street, demolished in the 1950's. It was here that the German Swordmakers lived and the area bustled with life as people worked in the sword mills, forges and workshops. Thirty-seven kinds of blades were made including rapiers, scimitars and cutlasses.



A swordmaker could produce three blades a day for which he got four shillings to cover materials and the wages of forge hands and labourers. Twenty German families settled here, the most well known being the Oley (Ohlig), Mole (Mohll) and Bertram families. The industry thrived from 1687 to the mid-nineteenth century.

At the end of Wood Street, opposite Messenger Bank, were the remains of a Methodist church built in 1814 in a garden given by Christopher Oley, one of the swordmakers. It was enlarged in 1837 to accommodate a growing congregation. When the new church was built at the end of The Terrace it became deserted and the remains have now been replaced by new houses.



*Wood Street decorations after the 1914-1918 war.*

The Maltings [41], opposite, was built as a malting house in the early seventeenth century and is thought to be the oldest house in the village.

Messenger House [42] was built in 1837 for the Reverend John Messenger who was incumbent at Shotleyfield (Grey Mare's Hill) where his grave can be found. He lived and died in one of the cottages alongside the church.



The Flour Mill, which occupied much of the land downstream from the bridge, reverted from swordmaking to flour milling from the 1840's. It was owned by the paper making Annandale family and sold in 1872 to the Derwent Co-operative Flour Milling Society Limited. Previously on this site were fulling mills, corn grinding mills and metal forging mills. All that remains of the mill now is the manager's house [43] on the riverside, facing the bridge.

Cross the bridge into Northumberland. The first building on the left is Derwent Dene Lodge [44], all that remains of Derwent Dene which dated from around 1700, once occupied by the physician to the Duke of Cumberland (the "Butcher of Culloden").

Orchard House [45] on the right has been a farmhouse and coaching inn. On the wall a fire insurance plaque bears the policy number 1710. The setting of the house below road level indicates the raising of the road at some stage. Occupants have included a family of renowned physicians, Dr. John Renton and his sons.



Opposite is the Bothy [46] which housed many of the Shotley Hall servants including the housekeeper and gardener.

The Barn [47] on the right was built in 1860 by Thomas Wilson of Shotley Hall. Note the date and owners initials picked out in brick on the wall.

Shotley Hall Gate Lodge [48] was built in 1856 and housed more servants. Other buildings within the grounds were occupied by the coachman, groom, joiner, gamekeeper, forester and more gardeners while five servants, including the butler, lived in the Hall itself.



On the gate piers stood three figures by John Lough of Greenhead. Only Perseus holding the Gorgons head remains partially intact. Shotley Hall was built in Gothic style in 1863 by Thomas Wilson. It took seven years to build and is set well back from the road with private grounds consisting of wooded dells, rocks and winding paths by a stream. Thomas Wilson was one of three landowners who, between them owned all the land in Shotley Low Quarter at one time.

Return to the bridge [49], built in the late eighteenth century and widened by Jonathan Marshall of Shotley Field in 1820. Its elliptical arch is best seen from the road in front of the Kings Social Club. The area round the waterfall is known as 'Jenny's Pool' and here can be found the remains of the Mill Race [50] which served the flour mill.

***Return to the village.***



The Village Trust is a registered charity which aims to improve the environment in the village and promote a high standard of development, whether in new buildings or the renovation and alteration of existing property.

We aim to secure the protection and improvement of features of historic interest and encourage an interest in the history of the village and surrounding areas.

The committee meets regularly and every four months holds an Open Meeting in the village for members, guests and residents to raise and discuss issues arising in the village.

We circulate a newsletter to members before each meeting.

For more information about the Trust and our Open Meetings, or if you wish to use the village notice board near the King's bus shelter, please contact the chairman John Worters on telephone **506248**, or secretary Jeff Singleton on telephone **507665**. There is more heritage information, with photos, on our website - [sbvt.wordpress.com](http://sbvt.wordpress.com)  
E-mail: [sbvt@singleton14.eclipse.co.uk](mailto:sbvt@singleton14.eclipse.co.uk)





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**NORTHUMBRIAN**  
**WATER** *living water*