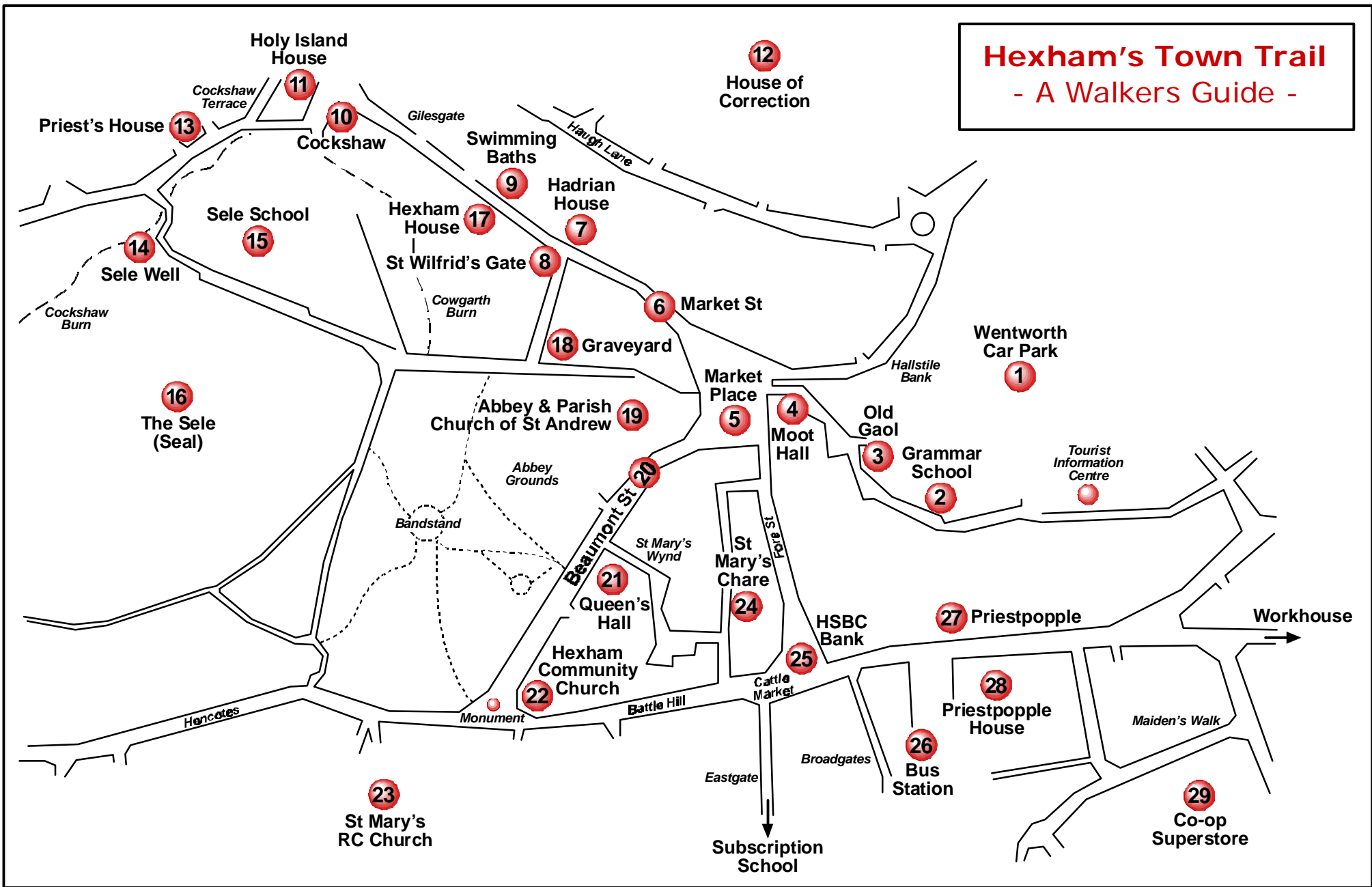


# Hexham's Town Trail

- A Walkers Guide -



**1. Wentworth Car Park** Formerly the horticultural nurseries of William Fell and Co., Royal Warrant holders. The Tourist Information Centre is located near the top of the car park.

**2. The Grammar School** Founded in 1599 following the grant of a charter by Queen Elizabeth, the school moved into this building around 1684. From 1902 this became a private house. It now houses Council offices.

**3. Old Gaol** This is the earliest recorded purpose-built gaol in England, built in 1330 to house the Archbishop of York's prisoners. It eventually became the office of the Lord of the Manor. Today it houses a museum which explores the history of the building, the prisoners, and the Border Reivers of the 16th Century. In 1538 there was a gaolbreak. Reivers from Tynedale and Liddesdale broke in to release a priest - arrested on suspicion of spying - and members of their families. The report into the gaolbreak found that the locks on the doors were not strong enough.

**4. Moothall** This gatehouse controlled entry to the enclosure of the Archbishop of York, who owned the area known as Hexhamshire. His bailiff and staff lived and worked here. The Moothall included a courtroom and hall which can still be seen. Today it is used for local events and art displays.

**5. Market Place** Until the mid-19th-Century it was much smaller. Beaumont Street did not exist and there were buildings in front of both the Abbey and the Moothall. The Hexham Riot took place here in 1761, resulting in the fatal shooting of about fifty people. The Shambles was built in 1766 as a covered area for market business. Market day is Tuesday.

**6. Market Street** Numbers 20 and 22, on the south side, are typical 17th-Century houses and were originally thatched with heather.

**7. Hadrian House** This grand house was converted into a chapel in 1839 by the Wesleyan Methodists. The main post office was here from 1887 to 1963. It now houses local council offices.

**8. St Wilfrid's Gate** This was originally the main entrance into the Hexham Priory precinct. There was a room above the gate, probably used to house important guests. The Priory was defended from here when Henry VIII's Commissioners arrived in 1536 to take control of the Priory and its lands. The Master of Ovingham stood on the precinct wall here, armed with a bow and arrow,

and sent the Commissioners away. They returned five months later to take control. The canons left, the site was stripped of most items of value and then handed over to the Carnaby family.

**9. Swimming Baths** Built in 1885 as a wool warehouse, it was converted to its present use in 1974.

**10. Cockshaw** The site of the tanning industry. The two burns played a major role in the preparation of hides. A tanners' yard still exists behind the buildings at the bottom of Gilesgate and can be reached through a passage from Gilesgate, or up the burn from Glovers' Place.

**11. Holy Island House** Dated 1657 but Elizabethan in style. The Cowgarth Burn runs in front of the house in a culvert and the Cockshaw Burn at the back - hence the name 'Island'. There is a pant (water source) at the end of the terrace.

**12. House of Correction** The Quarter Sessions records for the 18th Century include many requests from the people of Hexham, asking for a House of Correction for the town. Houses of Correction were first set up under Edward VI. They were originally designed to hold petty criminals and prostitutes, training them in useful trades and keeping them away from the hardened criminals in the town and county gaols. By the 18th Century they had become places to hold petty criminals and vagrants, and training had been replaced with hard labour. The House of Correction in Hexham was set up in a row of 18th Century cottages. The building was extended in 1820, and it is this extension that survives. It has the men's day cells on the ground floor and the night cells above. The original metal doors and fittings still remain. Visits can be booked via the Old Gaol (01434) 652349.

**13. The Priest's House** Dated 1688 and so called because the earliest Roman Catholic chapel in Hexham was behind it.

**14. The Sele Well** A gathering place for local people and a very important source of drinking water for Cockshaw. The well was used until the 20th Century.

**15. The Sele School** This school was built here in 1856 to replace the earlier subscription school on the outskirts of town. It became a Board School in 1874. It was enlarged in 1887 and again in 1915. During the Second World War there was a large air raid shelter in the yard. Children from Cowgate in Newcastle were evacuated to

Hexham. Some went to the Sele School, others to St Mary's School.

**16. The Seal or Sele** A popular picnic and play area that was opened to the public in 1753 by Sir Walter Calverley Blackett who laid out walks and planted trees. It was given to the town by one of his successors as Lord of the Manor. The land once belonged to Hexham Priory, and was probably farmed.

**17. Hexham House** Built in 1723 as a fine private residence. It was enlarged in the early 19th Century. A school in the 1920s, it is now used as local council offices.

**18. The graveyard** The original graveyard for the town. Burying victims of contagious diseases such as cholera in a graveyard at the top of the hill, and close to the market, contributed to the terrible state of health of local people in the 19th Century. The problem was partly addressed by the setting up of a new cemetery outside the town to the west in the 1850s. The remaining gravestones give a glimpse of some of the local names and trades.

**19. Abbey and Parish Church of St Andrew** Originally founded by St Wilfrid in the 7th Century as an abbey, most of the building dominating the town belongs to the Priory church of the 12th Century. The east end was rebuilt in 1860, the nave between 1907 and 1908. St Wilfrid's crypt, dating from the 7th Century, is reached from the current nave. It was here that relics of various saints, including those brought back from the Continent by Wilfrid, would have been displayed. (Link to Abbey website)

**20. Beaumont Street** Built across the garden of Abbey House in 1866 by the owner of the land, W B Beaumont. On the east side is a fine group of Victorian buildings. The land opposite was later sold to the town and laid out as the park now known as the Abbey Grounds.

**21. Queen's Hall** Completed in 1866 as the Town Hall and Corn Exchange, by the 1920s it contained a dance hall and the Queen's Hall cinema. It was saved from demolition in 1975 and re-opened as the Queen's Hall Arts Centre with a library, arts rooms, theatre and gallery.

**22. Hexham Community Church** Originally the Primitive Methodist Church, completed in 1909. Hexham's first auction mart was built on this site in 1870.

**23. St Mary's R C Church** Built in 1830, it has an attractive 'gothic' interior. Outside is a cross that commemorates the re-interment from Dilston Hall of some of the members of the Radcliffes of Derwentwater. The Radcliffes were a local Catholic family who owned Dilston Hall. They were related to the Stuart family. James Radcliffe and his brother Charles lost their heads for their parts in the failed 1715 and 1745 Jacobite Risings.

**24. St Mary's Chare** Often called Back Street, part of an open market place until the space between it and Fore Street was built on. Though the fronts are more recent, most of the buildings are 17th or 18th Century.

**25. HSBC Bank** Built for the Carlisle City and District Banking Co. in 1896. The building makes skilful use of an awkward site. The carvings are worth a special look.

**26. Bus Station** Built with a turntable in 1932, it removed the need for buses to stand in Beaumont St and turn around in the Market Place. The corrugated iron building in the south-west corner was originally the Temperance Hall, erected in 1886.

**27. Priestpopple** Became part of the main through route after the building of turnpike roads during the 18th-Century. There are several coaching inns, the finest being the Royal Hotel. Irish cattle were sold on the south side of Priestpopple. Priestpopple's unusual name comes from

**28. Priestpopple House** A fine early 18th Century house. From 1889 – 1930 it contained local government offices.

**29. Co-op Superstore** From 1875 until 1995 this site and that across the road to the east formed Hexham Mart, where livestock were auctioned. The Mart has now moved to an edge of town location, near Tyne Green.

Other buildings of interest, off the main map **Workhouse** Much of the original (1839) part of the Poor Law Institution for the destitute remains. It eventually expanded onto the land where the hospital is now. It is reached by following the main road past the turning to the Co-op Superstore. It is set back from the road on the left.

**Subscription School** This was the original school for most Hexham children, used until the Sele School was built in 1856. It can be reached by turning up Eastgate, and is located on the right approximately 300 metres up the hill.