

Heddon-on-the-Wall to Newcastle upon Tyne and Wallsend



Section 8: 15 miles

This morning, we take a city bus to Heddon-on-the-Wall to complete our hike to Wallsend (*Segedunum*). According to the guidebook, it should be an easy walk, starting with open countryside and then ending on hard surfaces through urban areas. From Newcastle upon Tyne to Wallsend we will follow the river, and at times walk through industrial zones.

We are both in a good mood as we step off the bus at the stop near the Three Tuns Traditional Country Pub. It was frustrating yesterday to sit around all day waiting for the FedEx truck to arrive. Today, it feels good to get moving, especially with only light packs. We both look forward to what the day will bring.

Heddon-on-the-Wall is a tiny village. "Heddon" means hill where heather grows, but I don't see any of the low-growing perennial shrub. Across from the pub is the War Memorial Park and its gardens. This is where we pick up The Path.

There are no traces of Milecastle 12, which was originally situated opposite the Town Farm farmhouse. Just east of

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the village there is a short section of the broad wall. After this, there are so few visible remains of the wall that Dennis and I stop looking for them.

The weather is agreeable—high 60s—and I even roll up my sleeves.



Three Tuns Pub in Heddon-on-the-Wall

Soon we pass a golf course, and walk on a paved cycle path,

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similar to the Legacy Trail in Sarasota, Florida, except shadier. It's easy-going, with only a few hills, and we make good time. At times, we glimpse the River Tyne on our right.

Unaccustomed to walking on pavement for such long distances, our feet get hot and our lower backs ache. We both agree that we prefer walking in the countryside. The diverse terrain exercises different parts of our legs and reduces the constant steady pounding that comes from walking on paved paths—and there is more to see.



Wylam to Newcastle Waterway Cycle Route

When we pass picnic tables we decide it's time for lunch. We leave the path to search for food. Almost immediately we find the Lemington Butchers Shop. I buy Coronation

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Chicken (a cold chicken and curry sauce sandwich) and ginger beer—two things I have been wanting to try since we got to England. I don't usually drink soda, but this strong fermented ginger ale is "just the ticket" and the sandwich is "brilliant," as they say in England.



Fentimans Ginger Beer

Urban traffic replaces the tranquil path. After the Northumberland expanse, I feel boxed in by buildings and crowds. I imagine how disoriented the Romans would feel

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if they could time travel forward to our modern roads and architecture. My transport through time to the past was pleasant—the changes were more nostalgic than bewildering.



Waterway Cycle Route Waymarker

In Scotswood, we pass a monument dedicated to the "Men of Steel," the thirty-eight men and boys who died in the Montagu View Pit Disaster in 1925. Some drowned while

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others were suffocated by blackdamp, which occurs when the mine atmosphere is so low in oxygen and high in carbon dioxide as to cause choking. The plaque's words move me:

The pitman, pony, and tank depict our past heritage. The house represents the present regeneration of our community. The children represent our future.



Scotswood's Monument to the Men of Steel

Before long we are walking alongside Newcastle upon Tyne's revitalized waterfront, past jetties, wharves, quays, the Sage Gateshead Concert Hall, and seven bridges spanning the Tyne.



Sage Gateshead Concert Hall



Gateshead Millennium Bridge

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The impressive Gateshead Millennium Bridge is a tilting pedestrian and cycle bridge. Because of its shape and tilting method, it is something referred to as the "Blinking Eye Bridge" or the "Winking Eye Bridge." As unusual as this is, I prefer the Roman stone bridges with their arches. They have withstood the test of time.

From Newcastle to Wallsend, the trip seems unbearably long. I don't know if it's because I am anticipating the end, but that last five miles feel much longer. Finally, at 4:50 P.M., we arrive at Segedunum Fort and Museum, which is closing. We take a quick look around. After all we have seen of The Wall, the museum is disappointingly anticlimactic.



Replica of Roman Wall at Wallsend

Segedunum is the most completely excavated fort on Hadrian's Wall. Perhaps if I had had time to climb the 115-

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foot tower I could have better appreciated the outlines of the various buildings and the reconstructed bath house and wall section. Or perhaps, if I had started here and walked west, I would have been more enthralled with the museum. But perhaps it was more fitting to count the milecastles backwards to Segedunum, where Rome's great frontier began.



Segedunum Museum

The excavation of the Roman Bath at the Segedunum along with other similar findings suggests that the baths on Hadrian's Wall conformed to a rare round "blueprint."ⁱ This is significant because, for the first time, the rooms were arranged in an unusual circular design rather than the standard linear Roman bath layout. Since the baths at Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli are circular, some archaeologist believe that The Wall's unusual design may reflect Hadrian's personal preference.

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Glad to get off our feet, Dennis and I take the train back to Newcastle for a celebratory beer. Afterwards we go to the train station to purchase our tickets for Portsmouth, and from there, to the next phase of our travels.

Endnotes

iMoss, Richard. "WallQuest Volunteer Archaeology Project Makes Two Important Finds on Hadrian's Wall." Web log post. Culture24. N.p., 22 Aug. 2114. Web. 11 Dec. 2014.