

The farm, now known as 'Castle Nook' is unique in the local area as it has evidence of at least 3,000 years of continuous habitation, including Iron Age, Roman, possible Viking and medieval settlements, continuing to the present day. People have made this land their home and won a living from the resources here – mining for lead, silver and other minerals, farming and growing crops.

Once a busy and vibrant landscape, marked by conflict and industry, it is now largely inhabited by sheep, but the scars of times gone by can still be seen today. As you walk our 'Ancient Routes' trail, you will follow in the footsteps of historic land users and learn about different layers of history which have shaped the landscape as you see it today.



Top: Life in a Romano-British settlement

Above: Farming at Castle Nook continues today

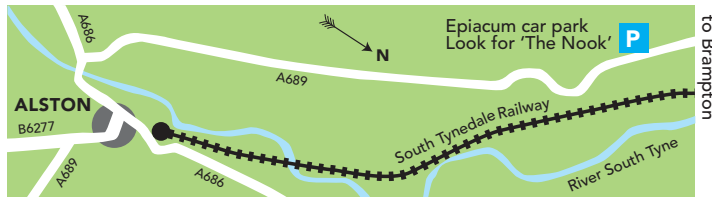
How to find us

We're easy to find on the A689, 2 miles north of Alston. We have a large car park – look for the banner flags next to the entrance.

The Nook, Alston CA9 3BG

Tel: 07415 029398

to Penrith & M6



to Nenthead

to Hexham

Please help us look after Epiacum:

- This is part of a working farm – please keep your dog on a lead at all times
- Take your litter home
- There is permissive access around the fort:
 - Only cross walls using stiles and gates
 - Please leave gates as you find them
- Take care when exploring the fort as the ramparts can be muddy and slippery

The fort is legally protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument and it is against the law to damage it, remove anything from it, or disturb the ground within it in any way.



Follow us on social media!



Epiacum



@epiacum

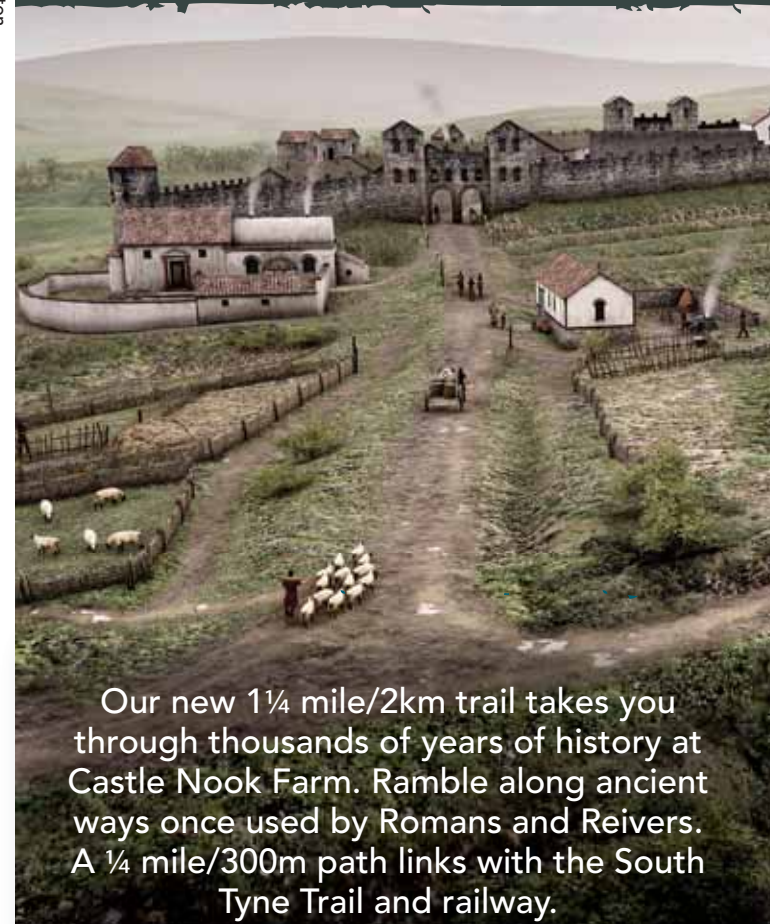
NORTH PENNINES
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Funding through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.

Cover image © Epiacum Heritage/Dextra Visual

THE ANCIENT ROUTES TRAIL



Our new 1¼ mile/2km trail takes you through thousands of years of history at Castle Nook Farm. Ramble along ancient ways once used by Romans and Reivers. A ¼ mile/300m path links with the South Tyne Trail and railway.

ANCIENT ROUTES TRAIL

If you're starting the trail from the South Tynedale Railway, follow the wall on the right and then left at the top of the field to a kissing gate onto the road (A689). Take care before crossing to the car park.

From the The Nook Farm Shop and Cafe, leave the car park by the small metal gate next to the 'Centurion's Hut' and turn right to follow the track uphill. Pause at the gate and fingerpost at the top of the field.

A Look back across the valley to the white house opposite (once Kirkhaugh School). To the right of the house is a flat grassy platform, which is the earliest known burial site in the North Pennines, dating back to the late Stone Age or early Bronze Age. In 1935, a gold hair tress-ring was found here, and in 2014, a matching tress-ring was discovered by a group of local school children during an excavation led by the North Pennines AONB Partnership. Tools found on the site suggest suggest that this was the burial of a high-status metalworker who may have been prospecting for copper or gold. The site is highly significant as it may represent the origins of mineral exploitation in the North Pennines, and it demonstrates that people were using this landscape as early as the Stone Age. Look closely and you will see the hillside marked with tracks and pathways which have survived until the present day and are still in use by local farmers and walkers.

Facing the fingerpost, turn left and walk to a gate through to the next field. Head to a footbridge and keep going in the same direction to a partly-ruined stone building (Well House Bastle).

B Well House Bastle is part of the old hamlet of 'Whitlow'. Various dwellings here were occupied by up to 36 people as recently as the 1901 Census. For around 300 years until the early 1600s the land here was at the southern edge of

disputed territory, fought over by the Scots and English. Border Reivers attacked rival families, stealing cattle and plundering goods. Their houses, known as bastles, were built for defence, with narrow doors, thick walls and small windows.

Over time, as the threat of attack lessened, they were adapted. It is likely that from the 17th century, the people living here reared cattle and sheep on smallholdings



Well House Bastle from the south Pennines being known as a 'farmer – miner' landscape and evidence of mining can still be found further up the hillside above you.



You can learn more about the story inside the barn that was added to the bastle in the 19th century.

After exploring the bastle head towards Holy Mire and the fingerpost, passing through the gate at the top of the field.

attached to their homes, as well as working in local mines looking for lead and perhaps silver, as their ancestors had before them. This has led to this part of the North

C Ahead of you to the right is the Roman fort of Epiacum. Immediately in front you would have been the parade ground, a flat area used for training.

© Epiacum Heritage/Dextra Visual



Artist's impression of the Roman parade ground

Bear left to continue the trail, heading to the corner of the field and the site of a Romano-British settlement (you should see some large mounds).

D Romans built the fort in the second century AD, people were already living here and working the land. Native people had farmed this landscape for centuries. Imagine the impact of the arrival of the Roman army! Over time there were opportunities for trade and some of the local people might have been conscripted into the Roman army, but it is likely that the Romans also uprooted native people from their homes if they felt they were too close and posed any kind of a threat. The Romans were known for taking over existing settlements. Take a look around this area and see if you can find circular shapes on the ground which depict the footings of roundhouses. The large mounds within them may be evidence of later use by the Romans. The site is being explored by non-invasive technologies such as geophysics and near-infrared photography to help us better understand the settlement and discover more about who may have lived there.

Things to think about: How might you have felt when the Romans arrived and started to build a fort right on your doorstep? Imagine the changes that would have taken place – new noises, smells and lots of new people. The Romans came to take control, so it must have been very frightening and unsettling.

Bear right and continue along the trail round the top of this field. Head on towards the fort ramparts. This is a medieval path which has been formed over time through the fort.

E The south-west turret would have had a circular tower providing a fantastic vantage point to keep watch for people who may have been a threat. Imagine looking out from here towards the Romano-British settlement!

After the Romans left, people moved into the interior of the fort to build their own homes, probably reusing the stone from the Roman buildings. They will have learned about how to make their homes defensive and there is evidence of a number of bastle houses within the fort interior. The track you have just walked up is evidence that this was a well-worn route in and out of the fort. It is still used today by the farmer on his quad bike!

Follow the ramparts and turn left to go through a gate into the fort. The next viewpoint is at top of the main western ramparts.

F Beyond you is the Pennine Way, now a popular National Trail. When the Romans arrived people would probably have been using this road for general travel and for the movement of goods. The Romans built their own road – the Maiden Way – on the eastern side of the fort but would have kept a watchful eye across this area too. After you have crossed the ramparts you will come to the area known as the 'Vicus', where homes and buildings existed (see image below right).

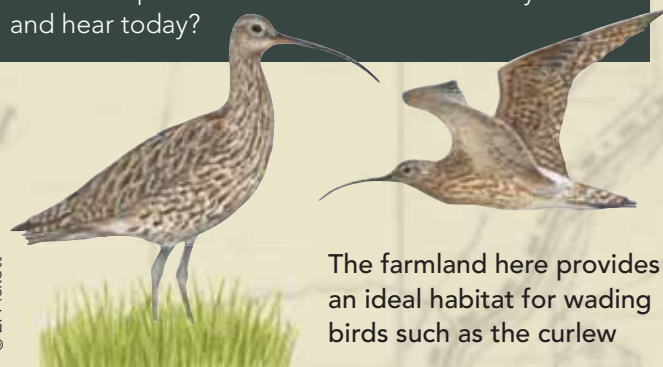
Cross the ramparts and head towards the ladder stile



in the wall ahead. Keep straight on and up to join the Pennine Way at a fingerpost and information panels. Turn right, following sign to Kirkhaugh.

G As you join the Pennine Way – the old medieval road to Carlisle – you can begin to see the shape of the fort and imagine the way it might have looked to a passing traveller. What might have been here before the Romans arrived? You can imagine the impact of the fort being built and how they may have felt having to pass here. As you continue walking downhill you will notice how the fort is built on a downward slope. You can see the shape of the fort really well from here, with its ramparts that have survived over 2,000 years. At the gate you can take in the view that you might have seen in Roman times.

Stepping back in time you would have been walking through a very busy and noisy landscape. Take some time to stop and listen and look – what can you see and hear today?



The farmland here provides an ideal habitat for wading birds such as the curlew

At the next finger post turn right through kissing gate ('Epiacum Roman Fort').

H The artist's impression on the panel here shows a glimpse of Roman life at Epiacum. Romans are known for their love of baths but even so, it is hard to imagine a bathhouse here! The one shown on the illustration is thought to be a later addition and that there was an earlier bathhouse on the south-western side of the fort. As you walk past the bathhouse area, note the missing ramparts. Originally the ramparts would have gone right around the fort but were later flattened to make way for the new bathhouse. Perhaps this signifies that the defences were not required any longer.



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The old Carlisle road (now Pennine Way), with the Vicus (settlement) and Epiacum Roman fort beyond

Passing through the gate, head to a gap in the ramparts and climb up back into the fort.

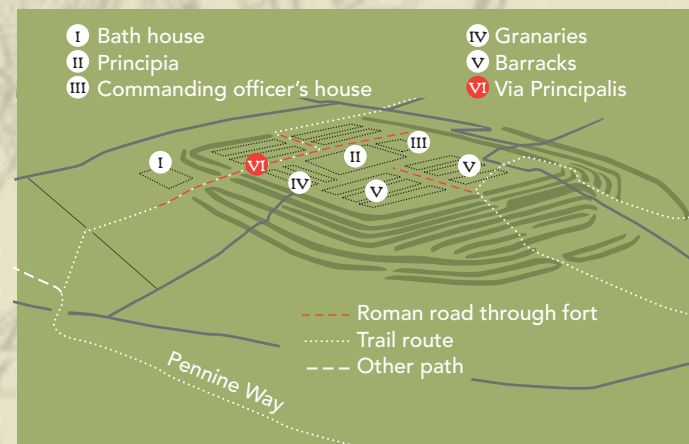
I The gap is where the main gateway once stood. In Roman times you would not have got through the gates without raising an alarm! There were four gates into the fort – this one is the northern gate. They were doubled-arched (one entry and one exit) and heavily guarded. Only Romans or their visitors would be allowed in.

This leads you on to the main road running through the fort – the Via Principalis.

Take some time to explore the central area of the fort, where you can see foundations and shapes of all kinds of buildings – the granary and headquarters buildings are close by. The road would have been cobbled or paved in Roman times and suitable for horses and carts.

You can also see the foundations of a Victorian drystone wall that intersected the fort until 2018, when it was removed to improve access and understanding of the site.

Leave the fort by a gap to the east (look for the white house on the far side of the valley again) and follow the signs back to the cafe and car park.



© M Byron (based on C Earnshaw drawing adapted from English Heritage material)