

HERITAGE TRAILS GUIDE

Redcar and Cleveland

Explore the natural
and built heritage
of the Tees Valley

River Tees
Rediscovered

THE TRAILS



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#heritagetrails

WELCOME

The Black Path from Middlesbrough to Redcar meanders through the heart of industrial Teesside. Once used by sailors to reach their ships as well as thousands of steel and iron workers commuting between home and their shifts. The cinder-covered route was also popular with families, who followed it from tightly packed terraces to Bran Sands and Redcar for fresh air, sand, sea and cockling. The Black Path forms part of the longer Teesdale Way and also forms part of the England Coast Path.

Over the last 150 years, the landscape has changed dramatically; where once upon a time at high tide, you would have crossed saltmarsh populated by farms, hamlets and the remains of an ancient salt-making industry. The Industrial Revolution brought with it ironworks, ship building yards and chemical industries dominating the river frontage as land was reclaimed from the tides and put to work. The advent of the railway forced the path to move to its current line, passing many train stations which have long since closed down, now empty and deserted.

However time and tide waits for no man and today businesses still thrive along the river including Svitzer, a tugboat company, BOC and MPI Offshore. Teesport with its cranes and warehouses; the Lackenby steel rolling mills are all part of today's industrial Tees Valley and all visible from the Black Path.

Unusual flora is in abundance thanks to the steel slag which makes up much of the path's foundation. Including soft pink flowers of crown vetch to the strange dried flower heads of carline thistle to fragrant water mint and the brazen yellow flowers of coltsfoot - nature has found a way in this highly-industrialised place.

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

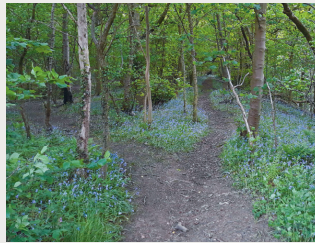
The open countryside around Darlington and to the west of Stockton-on-Tees has rich alluvial soils and so is largely farmed, mainly for crops, but some pastures too. Wildlife benefits from a good network of hedgerows between fields and alongside country lanes. Broad and mixed leaf woodland is found in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

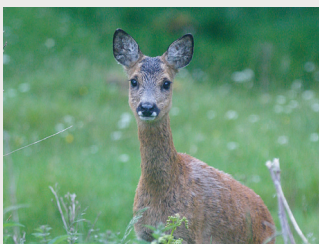
The waters of the Tees are rich in wildlife. Salmon is distributed throughout the river, while the numbers of brown trout have declined, as a result of the degraded and fragmented habitat. Brook lamprey can be found in the Rivers Leven and Tees.





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.

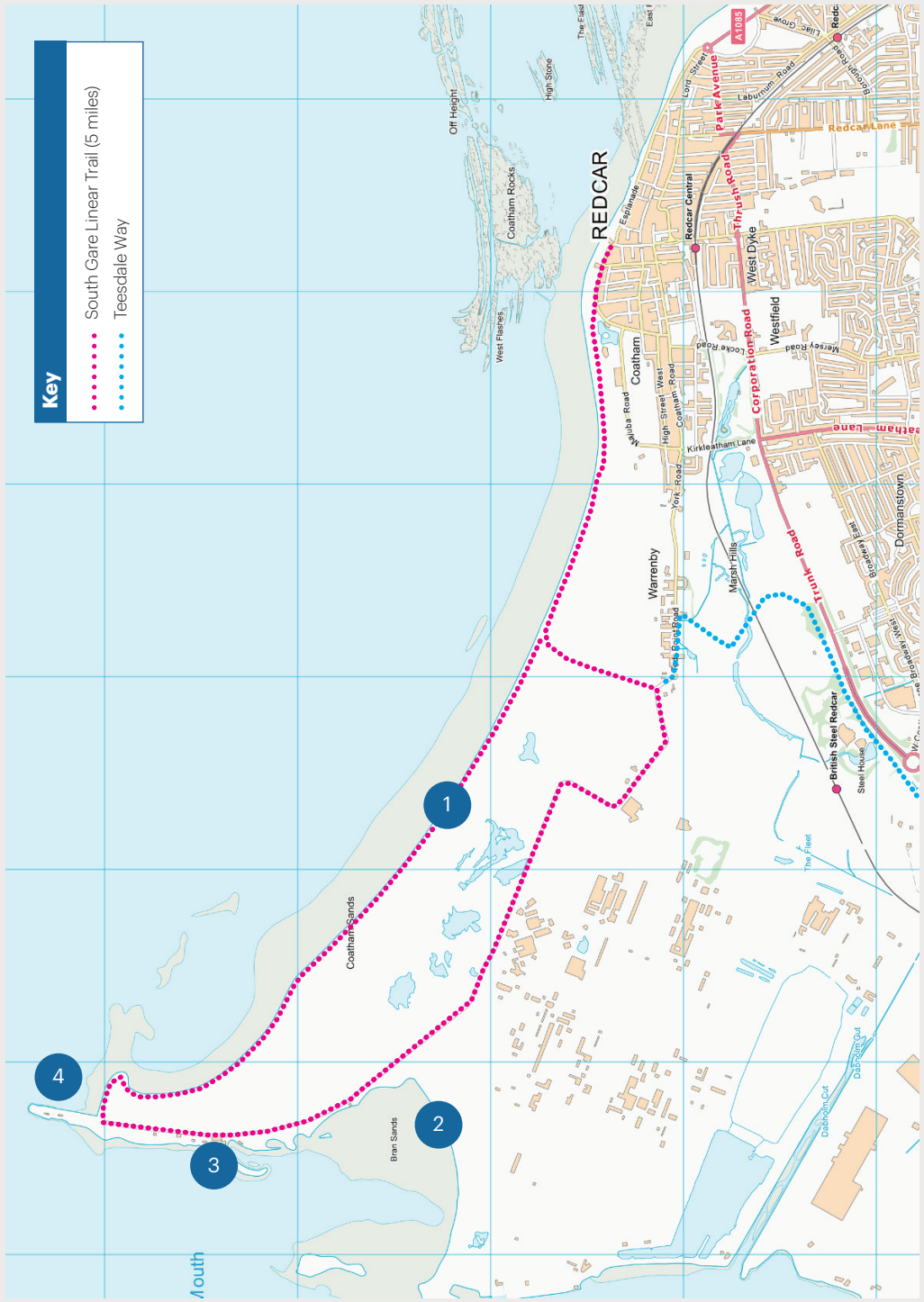


South Gare and Coatham Sands

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

- South Gare Linear Trail (5 miles)
- Teesdale Way



SOUTH GARE LINEAR TRAIL

1

Reclaimed from the North Sea by the Victorians, South Gare has offered safe harbour in stormy weather to ships off the coast and allowed for the dredging of the River Tees entrance for over a century.



▲ South Gare Lighthouse



▲ Bran Sands

Before the building of South Gare, permanent dry land stopped at Tod Point, giving way to Coatham Sands and the mudflats of Bran Sands. The creation of South Gare extends this by a further 2.5 miles. The Gare was constructed from 1861 to 1884 using five million tonnes of blast furnace slag and 18,000 tons of cement at a total cost of £219,393.

Highlights

1. **Coatham Sands** is a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The dunes on the eastern flank are protected by three slag banks close to the breakwater, partly exposed at low tide. They are known as the German Charlies after a WWI German ship that ran aground there.

2. On the inner side of the breakwater is **Bran Sands**

known for its bird life and the wooden wreck of a ship in the sands – not to mention a number of underwater wrecks which lie off the coast.

3. **Paddy's Hole** is a small harbour constructed from slag in the lagoon. It is named Paddy's Hole because of the many Irishmen who helped build the South Gare. There are also two smaller harbours south of Paddy's Hole named Guy's Hole and Powder Hole.

4. The original **South Gare Battery** was built from 1890 to 1892 and fitted with two guns. Over the years, its been modified, improved, and in 1938 the battery was reconstructed and fitted with two larger guns. At the end of the breakwater, you'll find **South Gare Lighthouse**, built in 1884.

Distance

5 miles

Estimated walk time

1 hour 40 minutes

Suggested start/finish

Start: Redcar Beacon

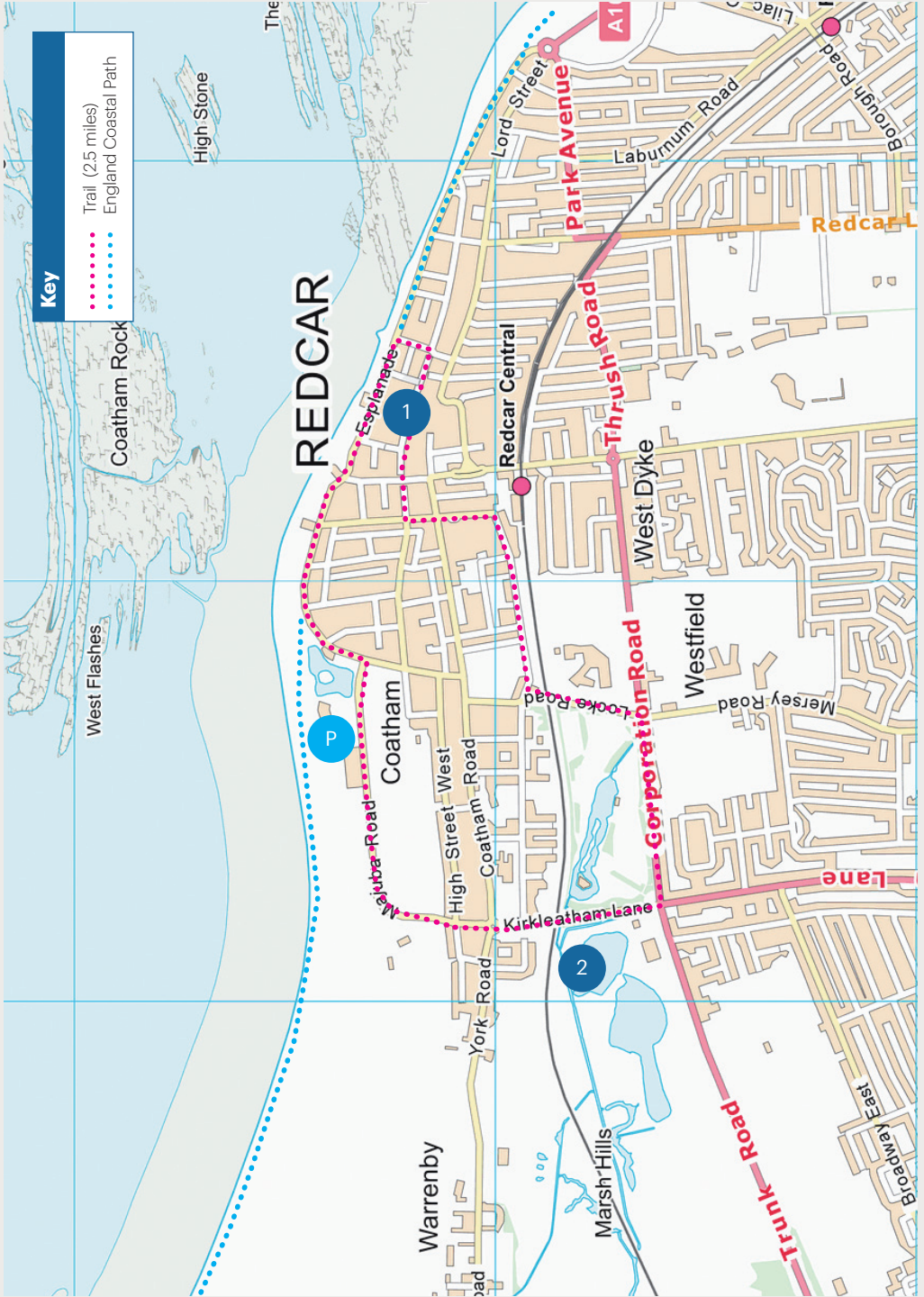
Finish: South Gare point

Route information

From Redcar Beacon, walk west along the Esplanade and pick up the England Coastal Path towards Warrenby and the edge of Cleveland Golf Course, where the route joins the Teesdale Way. A quiet minor road skirts around the perimeter fence of the former steelworks. The road then passes through the sand-dunes at Bran Sands and heads into the narrow spit of land separating Teesmouth from the North Sea, called the South Gare Breakwater. Entry to the lighthouse on the tip of the breakwater is not permitted but there is access to a narrow, grassy or rocky strip on the west side of the breakwater.

▼ Paddy's Hole





COATHAM HERITAGE TRAIL

2

Coatham began as a market village in the 14th Century to the smaller adjacent fishing port of Redcar but as their populations grew from the 1850s, the space between them reduced.



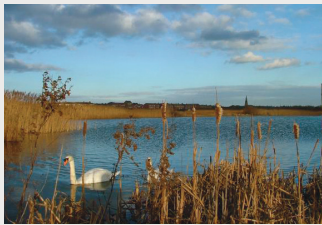
▲ Redcar Beach

Today Coatham is now only a mile-wide district in the town of Redcar, but boasts attractive Victorian architecture, a popular stretch of beach loved by both windsurfers, kitesurfers and Coatham Marsh nature reserve.

Highlights

1. The Town Clock, was conceived around the time of King Edward VII's coronation in 1902 and was built in 1912. It subsequently became a memorial clock, as the King (who was a frequent visitor to the town) died two years previously. It was funded by public subscription and built by John Dobson of Redcar, with an opening ceremony on 29 January 1913.

2. The beauty of the wild North Sea coast is complemented by Coatham's other natural



▲ Coatham Marsh

highlight - the ancient marsh and grassland of **Coatham Marsh**. This 134 acre nature reserve bordered by Redcar on two sides, the former steel works and the sea on another. Its wetland features attract a diverse and important number of birds. Its two large lakes, Round Lake and Long Lake, are fringed with phragmites, while low-lying, flood-prone Middle and West Marsh are useful areas of exposed mud for waders to feed. These last remaining wildlife habitats have survived the industrial and urban reclamation of virtually the entire South Tees estuary. Despite its industrial environs, the reserve still manages to provide a sanctuary for more than 200 species of bird and a wonderful variety of wildflowers.

Distance

2.5 miles

Estimated walk time

50 minutes

Suggested start/finish

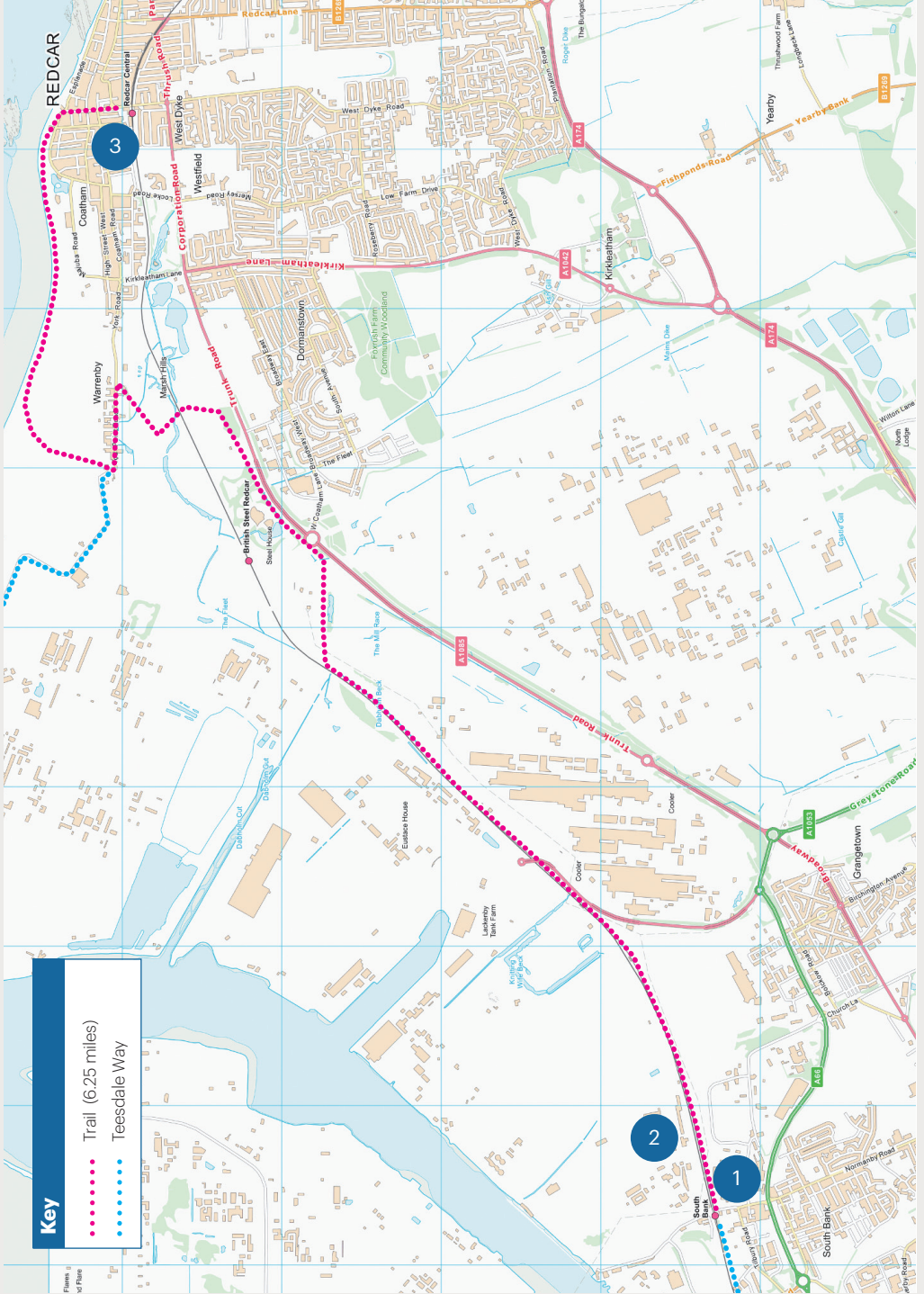
Majuba car park

Route information

From the car park at Majuba Road head past the boating lake. The route continues along Kirkleatham Lane and passes Coatham Marsh to the right. Turn left onto Corporation Road keeping Locke Park to your left. Turn north on to Locke Road then take Kirkleatham Street, Station Road, Millbank Terrace and follow the route to the Town Clock on High Street East. Complete the trail by heading north towards the Esplanade turning westwards towards the Redcar Beacon, Redcar Beach and returning to the car park.

▼ Redcar Town Clock





REDCAR TO SOUTH BANK STATION RAIL TRAIL

3

The arrival of the railway in 1846 brought about great change to both Coatham and Redcar, playing a significant role in the area's industrialisation. The railways remain an important part of industry to this day.



▲ Dorman Long Coal Tower



▲ South Bank Station (present)

Coatham was chosen as the location of grand villas and townhouses built for Teesside industrialists and their families including the famous Bell family who owned the Port Clarence Ironworks.

Highlights

1. The present South Bank Station was opened in July 1984 by British Rail to replace a previous structure situated half-a-mile farther east that was inconveniently sited in the middle of a heavily industrialised area and in the way of a planned new dockside access road. This previous station, with its island platform was opened by the NER in 1882 to serve the growing town of South Bank and replaced the original station (initially called Eston) built in 1853 by the Middlesbrough & Redcar

Railway. Ironically, this was located on the same site as the present station.

2. Dorman Long Coal Tower (a coal supply bunker) is an iconic landmark adjacent to South Bank Coke Ovens.

3. Redcar Central Station. The Middlesbrough and Redcar Railway opened to passengers in June 1846, but was also an important goods route. The first train on the line was hauled by Stephenson's famous Locomotion No 1.

The original station had a single platform, leading to heavy congestion and delays for Victorian commuters and holiday makers during the summer months. A second platform (westbound) was introduced by LNER in 1935.

Distance
6.25 mile

Estimated walk time
2 hours

Suggested start/finish
Redcar/South Bank Station

Route information

The route forms part of the longer Teesdale Way and England Coastal Path and can be walked in either direction.

▼ Top: Redcar Central Station 1950s. Below: South Bank 2nd Station 1905





SOUTH TEES VIEWPOINT CIRCULAR WALK

4

A reclaimed salt marsh nestled beside Teesport Commerce Park. This unsung green space commands panoramic views across the river's industrialised north bank, the mouth of the Tees and beyond.



▲ Teesport

Though perhaps at first sight, not an obvious location to choose to celebrate, the South Tees Viewpoint is undoubtedly an impressive vantage from which to appreciate a living urban-scape in this busy post-industrial heartland. Once an expansive salt marsh, the South Tees Viewpoint could not be more different today.

Highlights

During the 18th Century the area around Cargo Fleet was known as Cleveland Port and was the point where large ships off-loaded their cargoes onto fleets of smaller vessels that would continue the journey along the River Tees to Stockton.

During the 20th Century further down river – towards



▲ Riverside View

South Bank stood Smith's Dock a centre for shipbuilding on the river.

1. Today, **South Tees** Viewpoint offers one of the best views of this part of the river.

Looking west you'll see the Tees Transporter Bridge and Riverside Stadium. To the east, Teesport Commerce Park – a hub of maritime and logistics activity. A 135-acre site, it is a key location for offshore energy operations, sitting in the midst of the Tees Valley.

To the south, Eston Hills and Flatts Lane Country Park are visible with the Cleveland Hills in the far distance.

Distance

0.5 mile

Estimated walk time

10 minutes

Suggested start/finish

Teesdale Way

Route information

The route forms part of the longer Teesdale Way and England Coastal Path. The viewpoint is accessed via a footbridge across the railway line.

For such a compact urban site, there is a surprisingly rich variety of flora and fauna on show. Common grassland species and planted daffodils have naturalised around the site. The site is rich also with butterfly species and skylarks are noted on the grassed areas. Cormorants and seals are occasionally spotted in and around the river.

Please note, tethered horses may be present at this location.

WILDLIFE WATCH SKYLARK



SPOTTERS NOTES

Use these pages to note anything of interest on your walks.



River Tees Rediscovered

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