

Some distinctive wildflowers flourish in the lead-rich soil around Nenthead. Look out for mountain pasties (right), spring sandwort and alpine pennycress.



© M Byron

Nenthead is a beautiful but sometimes challenging place to live. This has made our community determined and resilient, and sometimes a law unto ourselves! But we never stand still. We have been shaped by our mining heritage, and found ways to thrive after the mines closed. We create new uses for our historic buildings, including the shop in the old Reading Room and new community and visitor centre in the former Nenthead Chapel, and welcome new ideas and opportunities. Explore our village to find out more.

The next chapter

Nenthead is a spectacular place to get away from it all, and people come to enjoy outdoor adventures, underground exploration, our dramatic scenery and distinctive wildflowers. We have been welcoming people from around the world for at least 100 years, when miners from across Europe came here to work for the Vieille Montagne company. Our remote location, fresh air and healing reputation have also attracted people seeking an alternative way of life. Some who came to our infamous 1980s music festivals are still here!

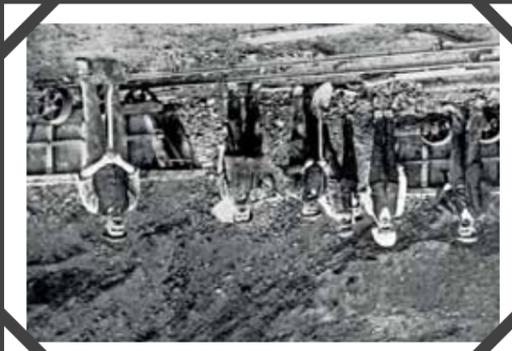
Living the High Life

People had been mining and quarrying on Alston Moor for thousands of years, but local fortunes changed significantly when the London Lead Company arrived in 1700. They financed large-scale mining and built Nenthead, a self-contained village to house their workers. After lead mining fell into decline in the 1880s, Nenthead flourished for another 50 years while the Belgian Vieille Montagne company mined zinc here. Our last mine may have closed in 1964, but Nenthead's industrial heritage remains stamped on the landscape and celebrated in the village. You can find out more on one of the occasional volunteer-led tours of the mine - check noticeboards for details.

Riches beneath our feet



Miners working one of the last shifts at Nenthead's Rampgill Level in about 1910, just before it closed.



© Beamish Living Museum of the North

Everyone in the village turned out in their best clothes to celebrate Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1897.



© Beamish Living Museum of the North

The first schoolrooms in Nenthead were built in 1818, beside the market hall, and were later converted into a public wash house and laundry. They stood beside Peter the Clock, a landmark in the village until 1910.



© Beamish Living Museum of the North

Community members celebrating the National Lottery grant to restore Nenthead Methodist Chapel in 2016. The building is now a buzzing Arts & Visitor Centre.



Nenthead became popular in the 1970s with people looking for an alternative lifestyle. Many came for the three 'Moon Festivals' held here in the early 1980s (and some stayed!)



© Janet Thompson

When the old schoolrooms were converted into a public wash house, an upstairs room was put aside for the village band to meet and practice. This picture shows Nenthead Band leading a procession past the Rampgill Mine.



© Beamish Living Museum of the North

On top of the world

Welcome to Nenthead, one of England's highest villages. Our buildings might look firmly embedded in the North Pennines hills, but Nenthead is actually a relative newcomer to this upland landscape.

The village is less than 300 years old, having been built specifically to house the workers for the local lead mines. The London Lead Company provided the homes, shops, schools and places of worship for the miners and their families. By the middle of the 1800s, there were 2,000 people living here.

Changing fortunes

Although the last mine closed in the 1960s, the village has continued to thrive. Today, people are drawn to live and visit by the dramatic landscape and endless open space, by our remarkable history, and by the powerful sense of community.

Living up here, particularly during the hard times of mine closures and poor harvests, has made us a robust and resilient bunch! But whatever the weather - and it can get pretty wild up here - we offer a warm welcome to everyone. And, above all, we love sharing the stories of our place and our people with our visitors.

Take a walk with us around Nenthead, and find out more about our village and the people who have visited, lived and worked here over the last 300 years.



© M Byron

Netties beside Gillgill Lane, the old road into Nenthead.

About this walk

Nenthead is built into the side of a valley. The trail includes stretches of footpath, which can be steep, uneven or muddy. There are also gates, stiles and steps along the route. **Please take care.**

The route is a figure of eight, starting and finishing at **Nenthead Arts & Visitor Centre**. The red Village Loop is 1 km/¾ mile long. The blue Mines Loop is 1.5 km/1 mile long. You can choose one or other route, or link them together to make a longer walk.

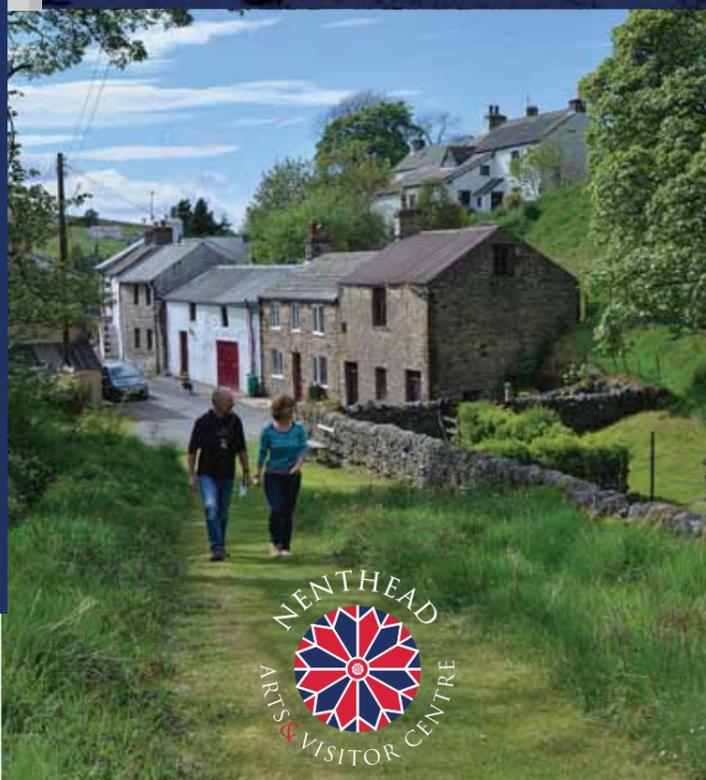
The routes are not marked on the ground, so please use this map and instructions to find your way.

How to find us!

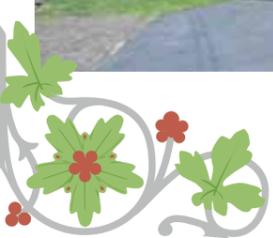
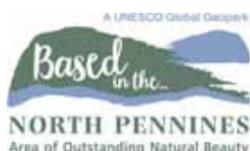
- ✉ Nenthead Arts & Visitor Centre, Nenthead, Alston CA9 3PF
- ☎ XXXX XXXXXX
- 🌐 www.nentheadchapel.co.uk
- 🐦 @NentheadChapel

On top of the world at Nenthead

A walk around one of England's highest villages



Follow in the footsteps of miners, Methodists, innovators and heritage lovers, and discover Nenthead's remarkable history, community and landscape.



The Village Loop

The trail begins at Nenthead Arts & Visitor Centre. 1

This building was the village's Wesleyan chapel, built in 1873. John Wesley's Christian Methodism suited industrious and self-sufficient communities like Nenthead, and he visited twice. Wesley preached education, tolerance, generosity and the importance of helping others.

Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.

John Wesley's 'Rule of Life'

Opposite the Centre door is the **village community shop**, formerly the **Reading Room 2**. Nenthead was the first 'model village' to be specially built to house industrial workers. Its Reading Room was also the first free library in England, where villagers could gather to borrow books and read the papers. Later, the Women's Institute and Over 60s groups met here.

Look for the colourful 1877 ironwork **drinking fountain 3** across the road from the shop. It remembers W A Bainbridge, superintendent of the London Lead Company works in Nenthead.

Now turn right to walk along the main road, passing the Visitor Centre to reach **The Miners Arms**, the original village pub. 4 Inside are some of the pews that began life in the chapel next door. When the mines were in their heyday at the start of the 19th century, there were four inns in Nenthead offering accommodation and refreshment.

Walk past the pub, then take the path on your right that initially leads gently uphill. The houses with large gardens to your right as you walk along the path are called **Hillersdon Terrace 5**. They were built by the London Lead Company for their key workers: the miners, smelters and overmen (supervisors).

Look for a narrow path on your right at the end of these gardens, which leads up to the church. You will be turning here shortly. But first walk a little farther on to admire the remarkable **model village 6** in the next (private) garden, created by local builder and former miner Lawson Robinson. Can you spot Nenthead Chapel in pride of place? Now backtrack to take the footpath up towards the church. Cross the road and go through the gates into the churchyard.

St John's Church 7 is the highest parish church in England. It was built on London Lead Company land in 1845, in just four months. This may explain why it has been renovated at least four times since then! Look inside to find the beautifully carved oak pulpit and communion rails, said to date from the 14th century.



© Beamish: Living Museum of the North

St John's Church in about 1900. The large house on the right is the vicarage

Walk past the church porch and continue on the path up through the churchyard. As you go, look for the distinctive red granite headstone to **Stephen Spink**, Master of Nenthead School, who died in 1909. 8

At the churchyard wall, climb the stile. Then turn right and walk along the walled track (which can be muddy). There are wonderful views across the valley on your right from here 9. The steep-sided grassy mounds that dot this landscape are overgrown **spoil heaps from the mine workings**.

Follow the footpath signs through two gates and continue along the walled track. The large building on your right is **Nenthead Village Hall 10**. This was the village school, built by the Lead Company in 1864. Attendance was compulsory for the miners' children, or their dads risked losing their jobs...

Stop at the end of the track, where it joins the road. This steep road 11 is known informally as **Ranters' Bank**, as it led up to the Primitive Methodist ('Ranters') chapel at Whitehall.

Join the road and head downhill. The steepest part of the hill is **cobbled**. This helped the ponies get a grip as they pulled heavy carts of goods and mining spoil up and down the hill.

As the road levels out, look left along **Gillgill Lane**. This is the oldest part of Nenthead. Stroll along the lane if you want to extend your walk along the blue Mining Loop. Otherwise keep right to walk back to the Nenthead Arts & Visitor Centre. On your right spot **Ivy House**, originally one of the London Lead Company's offices. 12

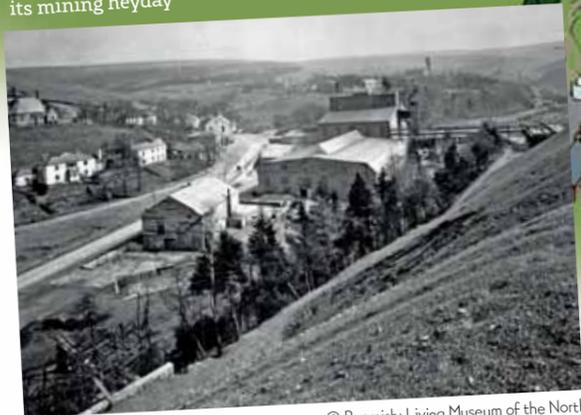


© M Byron

Water avens, which loves damp places, grows on Gillgill Lane



Nenthead was dominated by mine buildings and spoil heaps during its mining heyday



© Beamish: Living Museum of the North

The Mines Loop

This trail also begins at **Nenthead Arts & Visitor Centre**, or you can join it towards the end of the Village Loop.

Directly opposite the centre is the **village community shop**, the former **Reading Room**. Turn left after the shop. Walk past **Ivy House**, once a London Lead Company office, then turn right into **Gillgill Lane 13**. The cottages on this lane are the oldest in the village. Spot the row of outside netties (toilets) just beyond them.

Join the grassy track that starts to climb uphill. This was the **old road 14** into Nenthead, used until a new one was built in the 19th century. Look left to spot an arched mine entrance beside the sparkling gill (stream) and an **old water pump**.

The old water pump
Spot the metal plate for resting water containers



© M Byron

John McAdam, the famous engineer and inventor of 'macadamised' roads, described Alston Moor's roads as 'the worst [he'd] ever seen!' His designs for Nenthead in the 1820s included a new road into the village.

Keep walking up the track (which can be muddy) to reach the road. Cross over onto the pavement, then turn right and walk downhill. Stop where the road starts to bend to the right. Across the road is the grand **Nenthead House 15**, built in about 1817 as a home and offices for the local mine manager.

Go through the gate on your left, and walk along the tree-lined track to reach the **Nenthead Mines**. On the way, you can take a short signposted diversion along a grassy path to your left to see the entrance to **Brewery Shaft 16**, which gave access to the underground mine system. The pipes and valves you can see were used to produce compressed air for the zinc mining operations.

At **Mill Cottage**, you can turn left to explore more of the mine site. Otherwise, turn right to join the main track back towards the village, along the River Nent.

Walk along the track, passing through the Mines car park, to reach a T-junction. You'll see the village's popular Play Area on the other side of the road. Cross over, then turn left to walk towards **Overwater**.



© Jo Scott

The popular walk along leafy Dowgang Hush starts in Overwater. Miners 'hushed' for lead by building a dam, then using the floodwater to scour the hillside and reveal the lead veins underneath.

Just after the **Play Area**, take the path to the right that leads up onto the grassy bank. This is all that's left of a **huge spoil heap** that stood here when the local mines were at the height of production. There was no direct road linking Nenthead and Overwater at that time, and the spoil heap blocked the view between them! 17

Follow the path along the top of the bank. Look left between the trees to see the houses of Overwater. Spot the white house with three tall six-paned upstairs windows. This was the 19th century **Rechabite Hall 18**, where the friendly society of tee-totallers gathered and promoted abstinence from alcohol.

Over the wall to your right, you'll see the concrete base for a gantry that supported a two-mile long **aerial ropeway 19**, built for the lead mine in 1929. Two of its cables still lie along the river bed. On the other side of the river is the **bus depot 20**. Wright Brothers have been running the local bus service from there since 1926.

At the end of the path, go down the steps to rejoin the road. Turn right and follow the road back towards the centre of the village. Look for the circular feature that commemorates Nenthead's mining history on your right. The panels include some great photos of the village and mine. Look across the road to **Smeaton Place 21**. Can you spot which house used to be the village **Co-op store**, which opened in 1869? It had a big shop window that has since been bricked up. Then continue along the road, past the **Miners Arms**, to return to the Arts & Visitor Centre.



Smeaton Place is named after John Smeaton, the world's first civil engineer. He planned the Nent Force Level, the 8km (5 mile) long access tunnel for Nenthead Mines.