

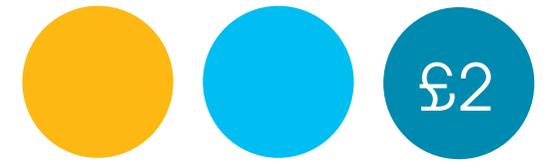
River Eden Catchment Area

Scottish Border



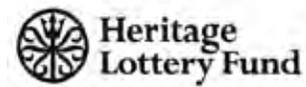
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Wetheral and Cotehill

a walk with a priory gatehouse, ancient oaks, rolling farmland, the river Eden, extensive woodland and a monastic hiding place in a cliff



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'Discover Eden' is a countryside recreation and interpretation programme being managed by East Cumbria Countryside Project in partnership with the Eden Rivers Trust supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Fourteen circuitual routes at dispersed locations throughout East Cumbria provide an opportunity to explore the great scenic diversity associated with the Eden catchment landscape.

Each route is well way-marked with arrows and the distinctive 'Discover Eden' kingfisher logo. Watch out for a series of small bronze panels etched with motifs depicting aspects of human and natural heritage. Rubbings can be taken from these using paper and crayon.

By walking all routes you can eventually collect rubbings of eighty four images.

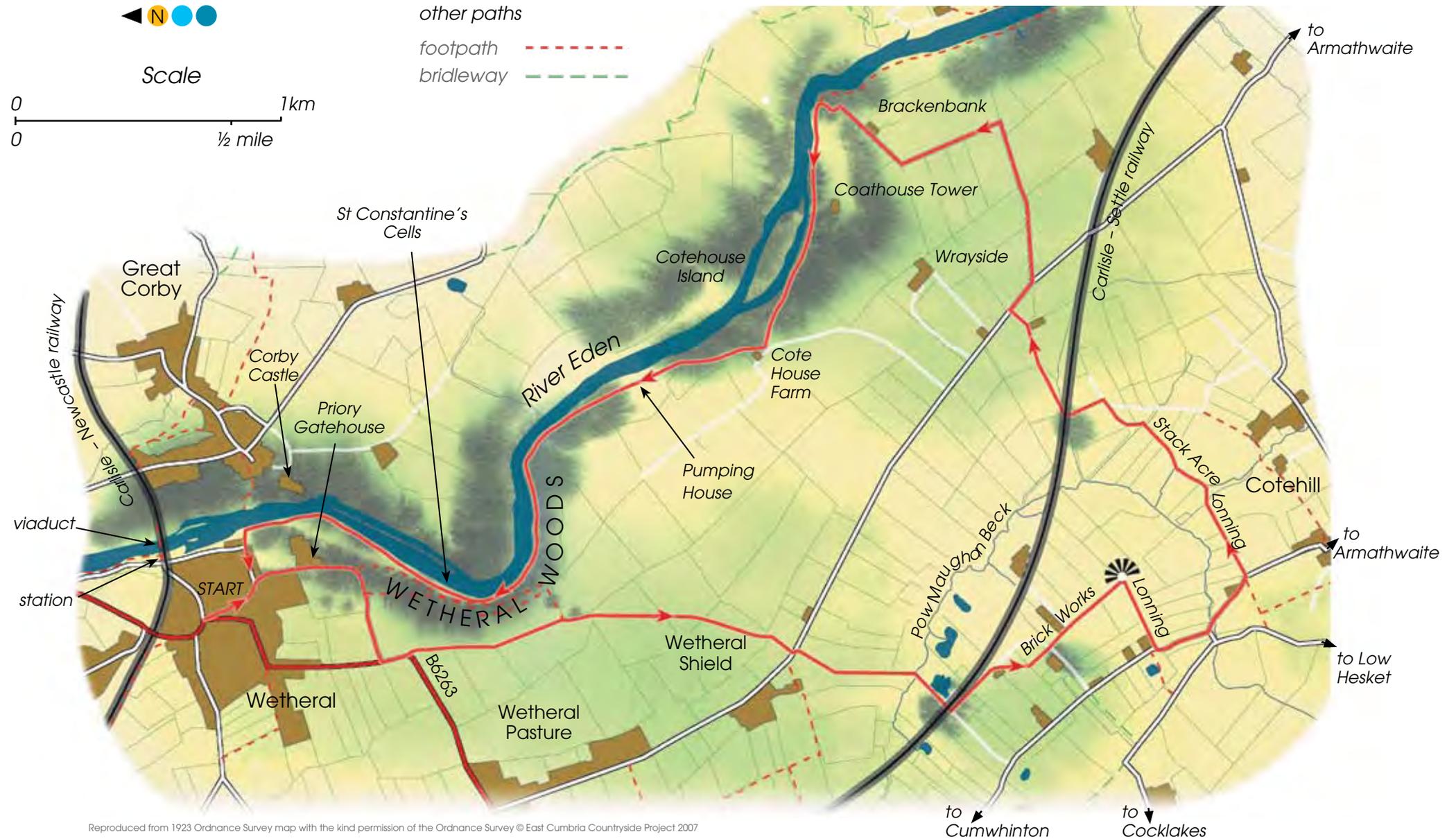


bronze motifs by Pip Hall

Brief details for main route:

Parking: alongside Wetheral village green
 Length: 6¼ miles 10 kilometres 3 - 4 hours
 Grade: moderate, some steep slopes and muddy surfaces in wet weather
 Route: Wetheral - Wetheral Priory - Cotehill (north of) - Brackenbank - river Eden - St. Constantine's Cells - Wetheral

A longer walk via Armathwaite
 Total length: 16 miles 25 kilometres 7 - 10 hours
 Grade: moderate conditions
 Route: There are brief directions for the longer route on pages 14 and 15. ECCP have undertaken substantial refurbishment work to the path and it is well way-marked. However the path returns across the impressive Wetheral Viaduct, 100 feet above river level, **so do not attempt this longer route if you suffer from vertigo!**



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images by Val Corbett, Rob Colman and ECCP:
 inside flap

1. River Eamont 2. Mayburgh Henge 3. Red River benchmark near Temple Sowerby
4. Mosedale near Calbeck 5. Haaf netting in Solway 6. Ravenstonedale
7. Appleby horse fair 8. River Eden near Wetheral 9. Pendragon Castle

Wetheral Woods



Wetheral

*“To meet the Atlantic’s boundless time,
See old Ituna’s waters glide,
As rolls the river to the sea
So time unto eternity.”*

Carved by William Mounsey on rock near St. Constantine’s Cell. ‘Ituna’ was the Roman name for the river Eden.

Our circuitual route starts from the village green in Wetheral and goes through an interesting agricultural landscape, which was once part of the Forest of Inglewood. It is full of reminders of the past, including ancient oak trees, an ancient monastery-gatehouse and a monk’s cell excavated into a stone cliff above the river.



view towards sea from Wetheral viaduct



Wetheral Priory Gatehouse

'Wether' is an old Anglo-Saxon word for a castrated male sheep and is still used to this day. The village would once have been a hub of busy farming activity with goats, pigs and geese, as well as sheep grazing the village green and a communal water supply in constant use in the corner, by the three pillars. Villagers would also have spent much of their leisure time here, and a maypole once stood where the stone cross is now situated.

From the village green, follow the quiet side lane down below the stone cross towards the river, but turn right to Wetheral Priory Gatehouse.

The big mansion on the other side of the river is Corby Castle. The Priory Gatehouse is all that is left of what was once a thriving monastery. Built in the 12th century and situated where the farmstead is now, the main priory building disappeared long ago but for over two hundred years, until 1538, it had a significant impact on the area. The monks ran a guest-house and a school, where they gave instruction in religion, medicine and agriculture. They also provided employment for many local people.

Continue along the lane and take the second signposted footpath to the left, through the gate and along the track.

The large oak trees are hundreds of years old. Oak woodland is the natural 'climax' vegetation in England and, in the Middle Ages, provided huge quantities of timber not only for houses, churches and cathedrals but also the Royal Navy's ships. Nelson's fleet of ships represented two and a half square miles of naturally regenerated mature oak forest. Since that time, it has disappeared from our countryside at a rate of 100,000 trees a year and, although it is still valued for its strong, durable timber, it is rarely planted commercially because of its slow rate of growth. It is, however, extremely valuable for nature conservation as it supports more wildlife than any other British plant.



oak leaves



remains of oak woodland

Cross the stile by the next gate and proceed to the end of the field. Do not go through the gate but turn right along the field edge, with the fence on your left. Follow the corner around to the left and go through a kissing-gate where the path goes up the next field, bearing slightly to the right.

Over to the right is the Cumwhinton water-treatment works, where water from the river Eden and a local reservoir is cleaned and purified prior to supplying Carlisle.

Pass through a second kissing-gate in the hedge at the top of the field and continue diagonally right.

The view as you cross the field is of an agricultural landscape typical of the late enclosures, when the outer fringes of the ancient Inglewood Forest, once the largest hunting preserve in England, were transformed into farmland.

At the far side of the field, go through a third kissing-gate and bear diagonally left across the next field, known locally as 'Far Freckie', to the far corner, and through another kissing-gate leading into a hedged lonning.

The boggy verges support a variety of trees and shrubs, including goat willow, grey willow and dog rose, providing a useful habitat for wildlife. The area here is called Wetheral Shield, the word 'shield' deriving from Old Norse for 'shelter'.

dog rose



ancient woodland transformed by agriculture



Turn left onto the road and then immediately right, through a kissing-gate, along a path signposted Public Bridleway Acrehead, past some cattle-pens and into a field. Follow the curve of the hedge over on the left.

The three fields on your right used to be known as 'Day's Work' because they could be ploughed in one day.

Go through the gate at the bottom of the field, then bear slightly left to a small bridge over Pow Maughan Beck. Go straight ahead onto an old lonning.

Pow Maughan Beck flows north from here, past Scotby, and joins the river Eden north of Aglionby. The pond fringed with rushes to the left was originally one of several clay pits relating to the brick-making industry. When brick-making ceased, the pits quickly reverted to nature and are now part of a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest, consisting of four ponds and surrounding areas of pasture, fen, scrub and woodland.

reedmace

flag iris seed pods

coot

Illustration based on © image Roger Wilmhurst (rspb-images.com)

Go straight on under the railway bridge. Turn left immediately beyond the bridge, climbing three steps to a stile, signposted to Brickworks Lonning, along a grassy track. The path comes out onto a disused railway track alongside the main line Settle – Carlisle railway. Keep over to the right of this wide, grassy area.

This used to be the branch line to the Cocklakes anhydrite and gypsum works until the 1960s, when the works closed. The small brick building on the right was the wash-house for the brick-workers' cottages, hidden behind the trees. Brick-kilns stood behind the cottages and across the tracks.

Turn right just after the wash-house, cross a step-stile, cut diagonally left across the field and over another step-stile. Turn left, then immediately right, keeping the row of trees on your right. Cross the stile and down the steps into the railway-cutting and, on the far side, pass through a grove of larch and beech trees.

Continue directly along an enclosed track joining Brickworks Lonning on a bend. Continue straight ahead along the hedged lonning, which shortly turns sharply to the right.

flag iris

North Pennine fells



Where the lonning bends sharply to the right there is an impressive view, to the left of the Settle Carlisle railway, of the water-filled clay pits, the ordered, enclosed, agricultural landscape and the Pennine hills in the distance beyond. As you get to the end of this track, you will glimpse the Lake District mountains as well.

Turn left onto the road toward Cotehill and then, at the junction, follow the road to the left, past the house on the left and along Stack Acre Lonning, which is signposted Public Bridleway Wrayside. Follow the lonning, cross the Settle - Carlisle railway line with care, and then take the path to the right. Keep straight on along the edge of the field until you reach the farm buildings and come out onto the road. Turn right along the road and then left to Brackenbank.

Most of the land along here is farmed very intensively to support dairy cows, with crops of silage and hay being cut every year to feed the stock through the winter.

On reaching Brackenbank, you can continue on the circuitual route (page 17) or extend your walk, returning via Armathwaite and along the opposite riverbank (page 14 - this will add a further 21 kms (13 miles)).



Cotehill

Extended route via Armathwaite and Corby viaduct

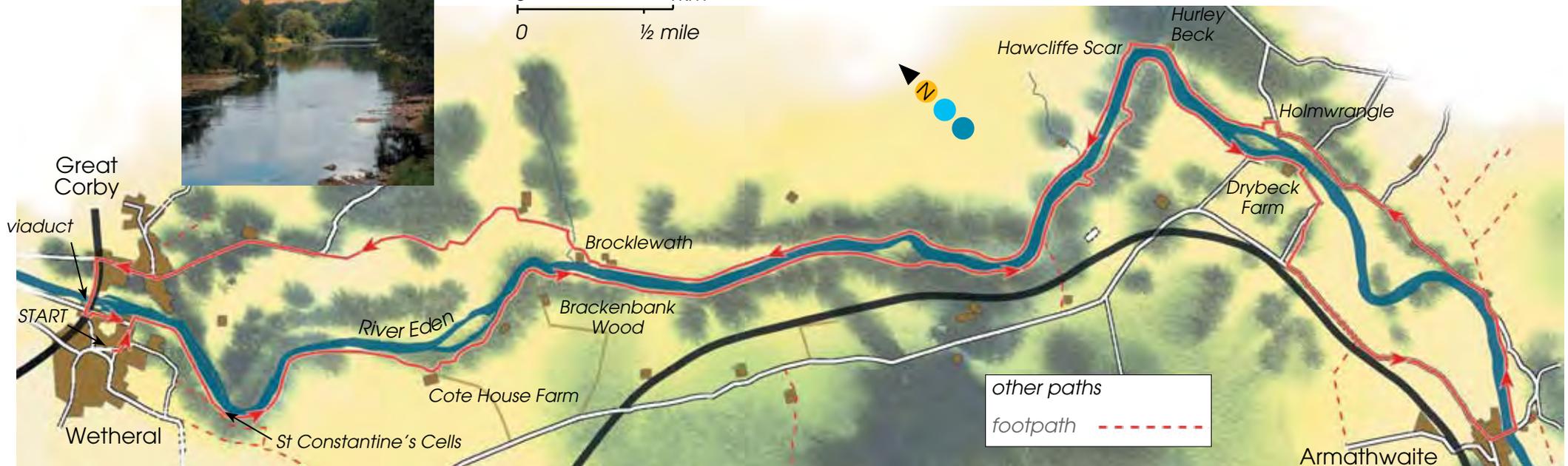
Brackenbank Wood to Armathwaite – 8 km (5 miles)

At Brackenbank, continue on the footpath beside the River Eden. The extended route follows the river closely from here to Drybeck Farm 6.4 kms (4 miles), before swinging uphill on a minor road to join the Cumwhinton – Armathwaite road for the remaining mile and a half to Armathwaite. Keep the river on your left and you shouldn't go wrong.

view towards Armathwaite



Scale



Armathwaite to Wetheral – 12.8 km (8 miles)

Cross the bridge to the east side of the Eden and drop down the stone steps on the left side of the bridge into a field. Again the walk follows the river closely for most of the way. There are two sections of road walking: about a mile and a quarter before Holmwrangle, then a mile of road close to the end, approaching Great Corby.

The Hurley Beck and Hawcliffe Scar section, towards the middle of the walk, has a steep and challenging climb which can be quite overgrown at times.

Finally, the path leads across the impressive Wetheral viaduct, 30 metres above river level. At Wetheral Station, cross the pedestrian bridge, then follow the lane back to the village green to conclude your walk.



Matthew Knublay's memorial to his parents

Direct return route beside the river

Once past Brackenbank follow the track and go through a kissing-gate on your right, signposted to Cotehouse and Wetheral. Descend the steps through the woods and turn left.

The gravestone on your right was erected in the early 19th century by Matthew Knublay, a local man, in memory of his parents. There were once three 'freestone' quarries along the river, where Wetheral parishioners could take stone free of charge on condition that it wasn't taken out of the parish. As Matthew's parents were buried in another parish, he erected the stone as a memorial here, by the quarry.

Bear right, down to the river, and turn left along the riverbank. (If the river is too high, go over the stile to your left and walk along the edge of the field).



Our route now follows the river Eden back to Wetheral.

The majestic scale of the river here reflects the fact that it has been joined up-stream, at regular intervals on its journey, by hundreds of tributaries, some of them substantial rivers in their own right, flowing down from the surrounding hills and mountains.

Cote House Tower farmhouse, up on the left, was built in the 1840s with a tower from which the owners could look out for salmon poachers. The largest salmon ever caught in England have been caught in the river Eden and, up until the 1960s the Eden had England's finest run of Spring salmon. In recent times, there has been a decline due to over fishing at sea and pollution from agriculture but in general ecological terms, the river is still one of the cleanest in England. The whole river and most of its tributaries were designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest in 1997 and more recently, in an EU context, a Special Area of Conservation, because it contains habitats and species of wildlife which are rare or threatened throughout the European Union.

The main course of the river is deflected to the right here, by an island, leaving a section of usually slower-moving and sometimes still water on this side.

salmon



Atlantic salmon

Atlantic salmon migrate throughout the year from the sea up to the higher reaches of the river Eden and its tributaries, to spawn in late November, December and January. They currently do so in far fewer numbers than years ago, due to pollution from domestic sewage and agriculture, although there are signs that the situation is improving thanks to the conservation work of the Eden Rivers Trust.

Female salmon lay their eggs in gravelly scrapes excavated at the bottom of clean, shallow rivers and streams. The male fertilizes the eggs and both adults then cover the eggs with gravel to keep them safe.

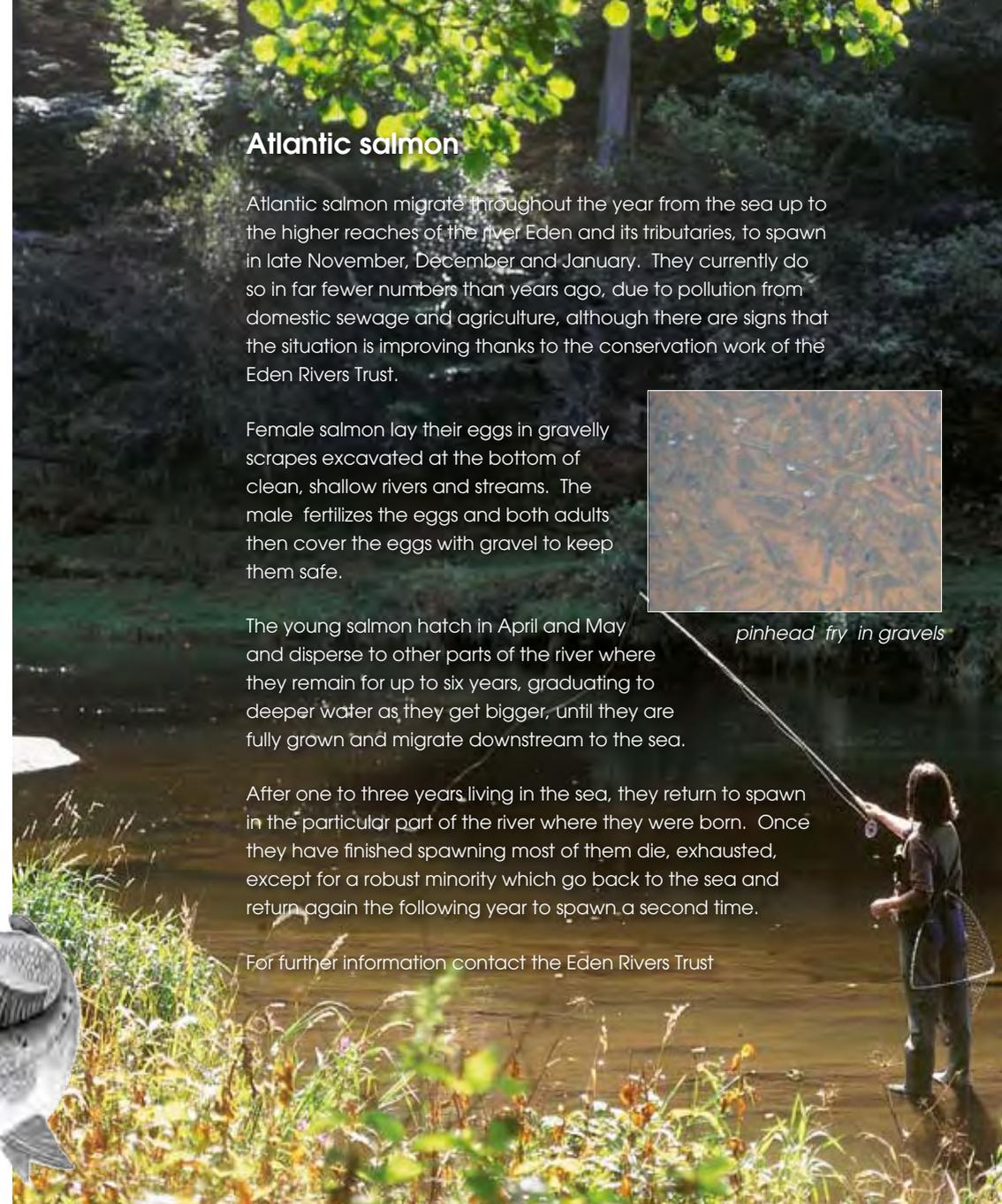


pinhead fry in gravels

The young salmon hatch in April and May and disperse to other parts of the river where they remain for up to six years, graduating to deeper water as they get bigger, until they are fully grown and migrate downstream to the sea.

After one to three years living in the sea, they return to spawn in the particular part of the river where they were born. Once they have finished spawning most of them die, exhausted, except for a robust minority which go back to the sea and return again the following year to spawn a second time.

For further information contact the Eden Rivers Trust





St. Constantine's Cells

Continue along the river bank for about 100 metres and then follow the path away from the river, up through the woods and over a wooden stile at the top, where you emerge at Cote House Farm. Bear to the right and over a stile onto a wide track, which takes you down to the river again.

The buildings at the bottom are the Wetheral pumping station, where river water is extracted and pumped to Cumwhinton Waterworks.

Go between the buildings and into Wetheral Woods.

Owned and managed by the National Trust, the woods support an abundance of wildlife including, in the spring and summer, pied flycatcher, wood warbler and chiffchaff.

Cross a small bridge, go up some steps and over a second bridge.

As you approach the second bridge, you will see a small cave-dwelling in the cliff, high above the river. This is known as St. Constantine's Cells.



marsh woundwort



St. Constantine's Cells

The path goes above the cells and you can visit them by turning right and forking back down a lower path, which ends at the cells.

Any connection with St. Constantine has been lost in the mists of time, but Roman inscriptions in the vicinity may be evidence that excavation of the cells pre-dates the Romans, who quarried stone from the cliff here for Hadrian's Wall. The cells were probably improved subsequently by the monks from Wetheral Priory and it is likely that access to the cells was once only available by ladder, thus providing a very secure hiding place for the monks and their valuables at times of danger.

The soft sandstone has attracted much graffiti over the years, most notably that carved in 1852 by William Mounsey who walked the length of the river Eden from Rockcliffe, where he lived, to the source of the river in Mallerstang, near Kirkby Stephen. His inscription is a quotation in old Welsh from the songs of Llywarch Hen, a Welsh poet of the early 9th century.

*"This leaf which is being persecuted by the wind,
Let her beware of her fate.
She is old though only born this year."*

Return up the steps and follow the lower path, keeping a wary eye on the steep slope down to the river. Where the paths merge, fork right along the lower path.

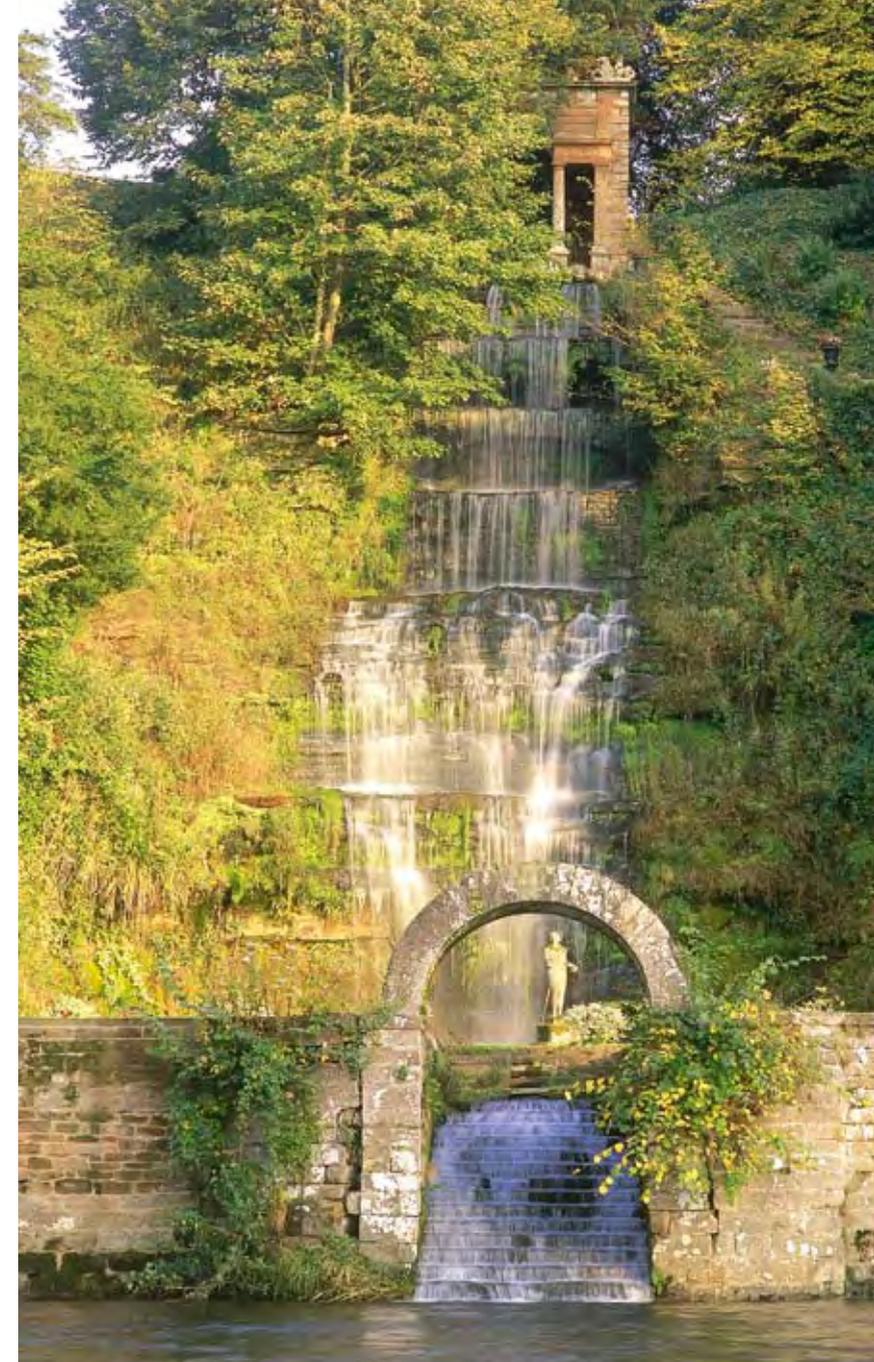
On the other side of the river, you will see an artificial island and medieval fish traps built by the monks, who had exclusive rights to all the fish between here and the ford below Wetheral viaduct.



lino print for bronze motif

You emerge from the woods through a kissing-gate and follow the path beyond.

The landscaped woods of Corby Castle were laid out in the 18th century by Thomas Howard, the owner at that time. The impressive cascade falls 30 metres to a basin where there used to be a fountain. Descend a flight of stone steps to the riverbank. Corby Castle is not much like a castle now but there was a wooden castle here in the 11th century, which was replaced by a stone pele tower in the 13th century. Henry Howard completely remodeled the castle in 1812, creating the classical façade with its Doric portica we see today, which hides the pele tower. The current owner, Edward Haughey, who became Lord Ballyedmond in 2004, added the stone walkway along the bank below.



Corby Castle cascades



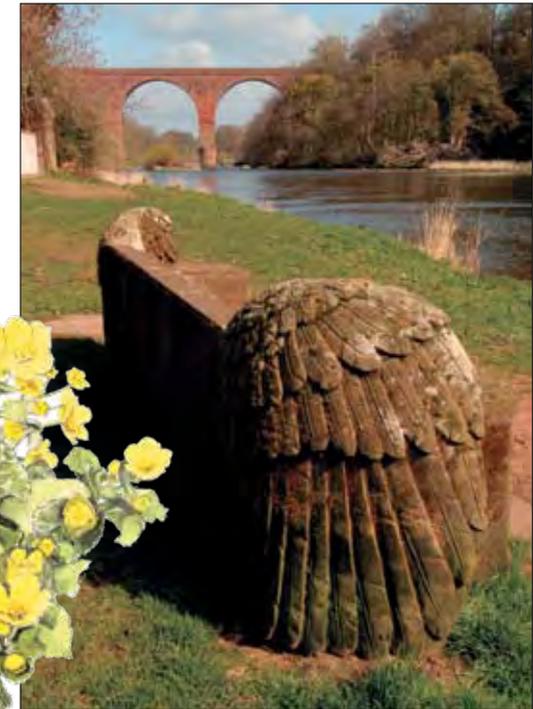
'Flight of Fancy' (detail) by Tim Shutter

Continue along the riverbank towards the viaduct.

Built between 1830 and 1834, the viaduct carries the Carlisle to Newcastle railway and also provides a footway between Wetheral and Great Corby. A rowing boat ferry was available here until the middle of the 1950s and the ferryman lived in the cottage opposite.



marsh marigold



'Flight of Fancy' and Wetheral viaduct

Although it looks older, the carved stone seat was installed in 1997 and is one of 10 sculptures in the Eden Benchmarks series, commissioned by East Cumbria Countryside Project to celebrate the millennium. It is called 'Flight of Fancy' and was sculpted by Tim Shutter. A booklet about Eden Benchmarks is available from Tourist Information Centres and ECCP.



Holy Trinity church, Wetheral

Return to Wetheral village green up the hill past the church to conclude your walk.

The early 16th century English style of the main part of the church, with its fine pitched roof, contrasts sharply with its Victorian tower, which replaced a square tower dating from 1760.