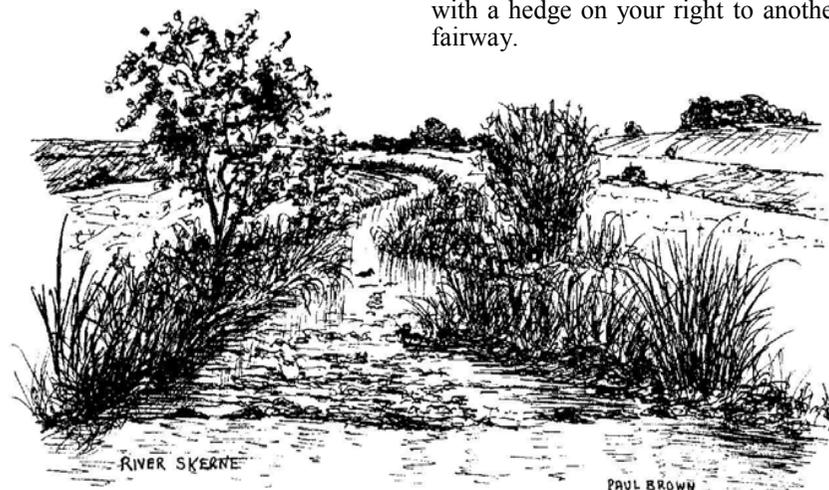


The Lane skirts Skerningham Plantation alongside a ditch to turn left across a cart bridge with vehicle barrier. Salters Lane now zig-zags up through two large fields, coming close to the main railway line at one point, then again at a bridge over it to Glebe Road, an alternative starting point for the walk. Turn left instead past a wartime pill-box up the access track to Skerningham Farm, the views of the surrounding countryside improving from this elevated position. At the first of the trees around the farm, turn right down the hill. Follow the field edge track, with a hedge on your left, as it rises gently almost into a corner by Hutton Plantation.

Turn left into the wood along the track between the trees. Do not be tempted to carry on further but after 80 metres turn right instead along a short path to emerge in the corner of a pasture. With the hedge on your left descend to cross a footbridge over a ditch and pass through a copse to the end of another pasture. Cross a facing stile to step onto Darlington Golf Course and immediately turn right, taking care on the 50 metre walk up the edge of the fairway, facing the direction of play. At two trees turn left and keep to the left of a mound, a former hedgeline, across the course. Head for a gap in the end of the plantation, cross a tee, and proceed with a hedge on your right to another fairway.



RIVER SKERNE

PAUL BROWN

*Skerningham was named as far back as 1390, becoming a manor in mediaeval times with its own water mill. The name of the wood derives from the Hutton family, associated with the manor from the early 17th century. Your route from here follows an old church path which led from Skerningham directly to St. Andrews in Haughton. Part of this original path near the farm was diverted.*

Look left while crossing to a substantial kissing gate in the security fence, pass through and turn left onto a footway between the course and the houses of Whinfield. Follow this until the security fence turns right and ends at a small wood, emerging into Caithness Way. Turn left up the street, swing right, then follow cut-through paths via Tayside and Annandale back to the starting point.

# Walks around THE BOROUGH OF DARLINGTON

## No. 4: Barmpton & The Skerne Valley



BARMPTON HALL

PAUL BROWN

**T**he walk starts at the junction of Whinbush Way with Barmpton Lane in the Whinfield area of Darlington, but it can also be conveniently joined at Glebe Road, Harrowgate Hill. It is a tour of the Skerne Valley, which borders the Ketton Country. Walking up Barmpton Lane the path is only kerbstone width at first, but it is surprising how quickly the residential area is left behind for the tranquillity of the Darlington countryside. After Elly Hill House, the road descends to Barmpton Bridge, then just beyond as the road swings right, go through a gate by a footpath sign on your left to pass in front of Barmpton Hall.



### INFORMATION

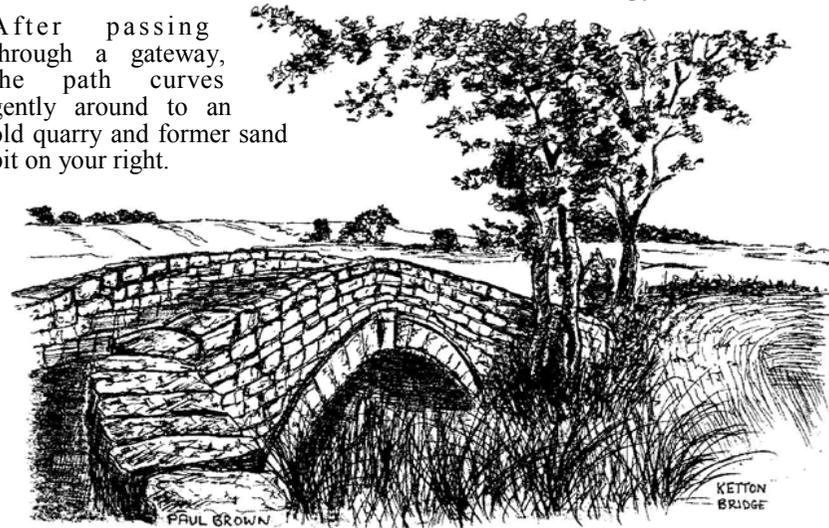
Distance: 9 km (5½ miles)  
Time: allow 3 hours  
Standard: gentle rises, easy going  
Transport: bus to Whinfield  
Refreshments: pubs & shops nearby



Enquiries about this leaflet can be made to: Tourist Information Centre, Dolphin Centre, Darlington, Co. Durham DL1 5RP. tel: 01325-388666.

The Hall is better seen from a few paces up the road. It was the home of Robert Colling, who with his brother Charles of Ketton Hall bred the famous herd of shorthorn cattle and the Ketton Ox.

After passing through a gateway, the path curves gently around to an old quarry and former sand pit on your right.



When Barmpton Bridge was rebuilt, a stonemason digging here discovered a British sword with iron blade and bronze scabbard which is now in the British Museum. An ancient British pick made of deer antler was also found.

The next mile is a delightful stroll through pastures. Route finding is easy, directions unnecessary. Simply keep the river on the left all the way.

The high banks up to your right are known as the "Welsh Mountains" locally, probably named by the Rise Carr colony of Welsh ironworkers in the mid-19th century as a reminder of home.

When the cart bridge over the Skerne is reached, cross the facing stile and take the short detour to the right to visit the famous arched Ketton Packhorse Bridge.

Following the diversion of the Skerne last century, no water now flows under the bridge. Its parapet was made low to allow the panniers of the ponies using the ancient Salters Lane trade road to swing free over it.

Ketton Bridge is a scheduled ancient monument and listed building, one of the finest of its type. On its north side is an iron signplate, like several others in the district used for marking the limits of the road over the old Ketton estate.

Return to the cart bridge and cross it. The Salters Lane right of way goes straight forward across the arable field, heading directly for the corner of the wood ahead. The track to the right, which follows the river at first, has the same destination and has been the subject of a highly controversial application to divert Salters Lane onto it.

The Lane takes its name from the Salters of bygone times who used it to bring salt inland on ponies from the coastal salt pans at South Shields and Greatham, for preserving meat over winter.

