



Dukesfield



What will I see?

A very elegant set of old arches. They are the most striking remains of one of the region's largest lead smelting mills, an industry that was the backbone of the south Northumberland economy. It processed lead ore (called galena), that was mined in the Pennine hills to the south, into ingots of lead.

How old is it?

The Dukesfield smelting mill was built around 1665 and continued to process lead and silver from ore until 1835. The veins of galena – the source of the lead and silver - were once hot mineral-rich fluids, heated by a granite under the Pennines, that filled cracks and fractures in Carboniferous sedimentary rocks around 290 million years ago.

Did you know?

The Dukesfield smelting mill was most active during the Napoleonic wars years – between 1803 and 1815. This mill and others were in the ownership of the very old and very wealthy Blackett and Beaumont families.

Why it is here?

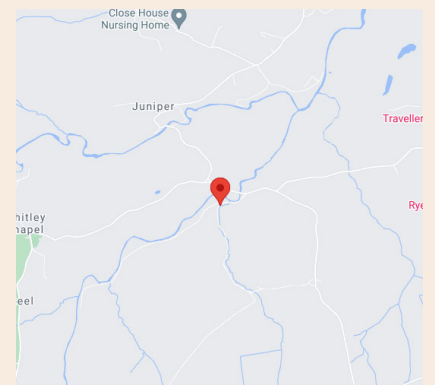
It was sited where supplies of lead ore were close and the market and transport were also close – the wharves of Newcastle. Plus there was coal and water to power the machines and furnaces. Pack horses took the galena down from the hills to the smelter and then the refined lead onto Newcastle.

And wildlife?

Despite consolidation works, tree seedlings of many different species are growing in the masonry as woodland tries to reclaim the site. A variety of herbs are also present – in late summer there are harebell and devil's-bit scabious, and heather nearby.

Where is it?

South of the hamlet called Juniper, which is south of Hexham. A short walk west (upstream along the track) from the bridge over the Devil's Water. [NY942580].



Want to know more?

- **Dukesfield**
- NNP Geodiversity Audit
- Onshore GeoIndex
- iGeology
- Geological history of Northumbria
- Carboniferous rocks

