

Welcome to historic Bishop Auckland. Throughout the town there are a number of information boards, linked by walks, bringing to life our cultural and natural heritage, from the Romans to Stan Laurel. We hope that this series of leaflets describing the walks and points of interest will help you enjoy discovering County Durham's "best kept secret".

## Bishop Auckland Town Trails



## Centre of the Universe

### *Centre of the Universe*

For most of us our children are the centres of our universe. It is fitting then, that this walk was the inspiration of the children of St. Joseph's School. The children take us on a journey from their school through farmland to the observatory at Westerton, which has historical links to one of the area's most famous people. In 1780, Thomas Wright started building the observatory in Westerton, though he never used it, or saw it complete. One of the most original thinkers of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Thomas was born in Byers Green in 1711. An astronomer, navigator, and mathematical instrument maker, he worked at the cutting edge of discovery in his age.

In 1750 he wrote his "Original Theory of the Universe", in which he gives his own explanation of the Milky Way, with his concept of our galaxy as disc-shaped. His work inspired Immanuel Kant to develop his famous theory of celestial evolution.

Widely travelled, Thomas Wright returned to his birthplace in 1756, and built Byers Green Hall for himself. He died in 1786.

### *Mason Dixon Line*

Jeremiah Dixon was born in Bishop Auckland in 1733, and became famous through surveying, with his colleague Mason, what became known as the Mason-Dixon line. Whilst still a young man, he became friends with Thomas Wright, and John Bird, one of the most celebrated makers of mathematical instruments of his day, who was also from Bishop Auckland. Jeremiah was recommended by Bird to accompany Mason on an astronomical expedition, and was later to be employed by the Astronomer Royal.

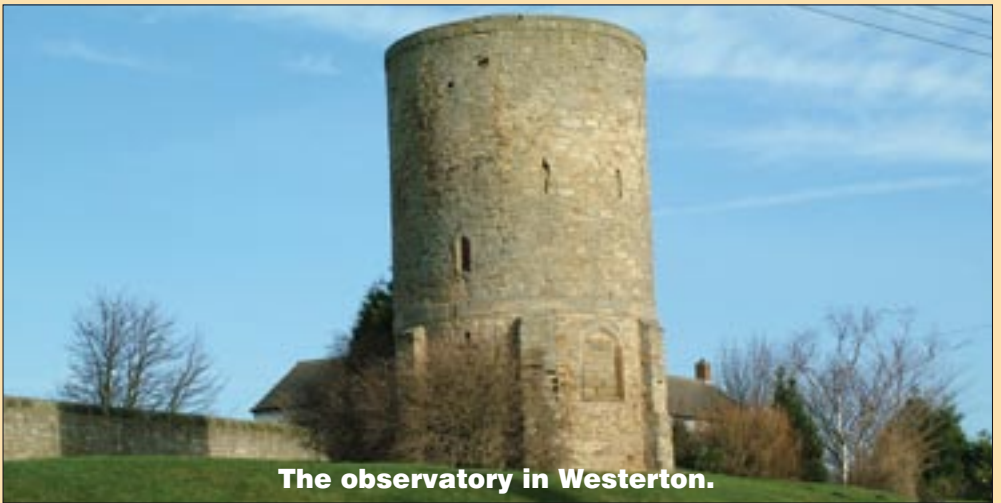
From 1763 to 1768 Mason and Dixon were engaged to fix the disputed boundary between Maryland and Pennsylvania. A hundred years later, the Mason-Dixon line marked the division between the free states and the slave states in the American Civil War, and thus became a highly emotional symbol.

The word "Dixieland" comes directly from Jeremiah Dixon's name. When he came back he surveyed the park for the Bishop, and his map is framed in the Castle entrance.

## Look around you:

There are a number of attractive walks available in this area that will bring you close to nature and offer fine views of the surrounding countryside. A lot of the walks are alongside or through cultivated fields and some may be difficult to follow at certain times of the year. Please follow the country code and keep to the paths.

1. Starting from St Joseph's School, turn right and walk down Victoria Lane, passing Coundon Primary School on the left.
2. Cross over Leeholme Road by the post box and follow the footpath sign. The path lies diagonally across the large field: head for the large trees to the north west. From there the path follows the hedgerow to your right.
3. A number of footpaths join here, offering the walker a choice of routes. The footpath to the left takes you toward a block of woodland, across cultivated fields.
4. Cross the stile into the field, and keep the woodland to your left.
5. A number of footpaths join in this area. Turning right and uphill will take the walker alongside the hedgerows to a well defined farm track. Turn right and when you reach the next hedgerow follow it uphill to its end.
6. Cutting across the pasture to the gate in the corner of the field brings you to Westerton and the observatory.
7. The return footpath is signposted and runs for a short way between new houses.
8. The field beyond is open, but the path runs towards the telegraph pole. At this point the path runs alongside the hedgerow, leading you back to point 3 and Leeholme.



**The observatory in Westerton.**

