

Rev William Walton: locations in Allenheads

Walton was appointed rector of St Peter's Allenheads and chaplain to Allenheads chapel in 1822. The chapel was a chapel of ease for private use by the Beaumont family, the church—located a couple of miles north of Allenheads village in Sparty Lea—was for the miners and community.

Walton's appointment was followed both by the rebuilding of the two houses of worship and that of his vicarage. Allenheads chapel was built in 1825-6 on the site of an earlier chapel and 'near to it a handsome mansion (was) erected for the residence of the chaplain, the Rev. William Walton'.¹ St Peter's church was also rebuilt in 1826, replacing an earlier structure dating from 1701.

Walton was curate until 1851. He is recorded as resident in the Vicarage (Allen House) in the 1851 census and was succeeded by Rev Constantine O'Donel later that year².

Allenheads vicarage (now Allen Lodge)

Walton's vicarage was built adjacent to Allenheads chapel so the curate had a four mile round trip for Sunday services at St Peter's. Well after Walton's tenure, in 1877, a new vicarage was built closer to St Peter's, likely both for the ease of the curate and because the Beaumont family were less frequently in Allenheads.

Walton's residence lies on the west side of the East Allen valley and faces north-east, with the valley side sloping up behind it (grid reference NY 85812 45570). The chapel (NY 85792 45541) is located to the west of the residence.

Coordinates of Allen Lodge: grid-reference NY 85812 45570; 385812 Eastings 545570 Northings; 54.804794 Latitude, -2.2222504 Longitude; elevation 399m (lies just below 400m contour on OS Landranger map 87).

Allenheads School

In common with Rev Robert Harrison, his counterpart at nearby Carrshield chapel, and superintendent of the school there³, Walton also acted as schoolmaster of the small school at Allenheads. From 1825 to 1848 this was housed in a building just up the valley side from Allenheads chapel (grid reference NY 85659 4560). A larger, new school was subsequently built in a different location under the auspices of Thomas Sopwith, who became mining agent in 1845.

The building lies on the west side of the East Allen valley and faces north-east, with the valley side sloping up steeply to the west behind it.

¹ WM. White and WM Parson (1827) 'History, Directory & Gazetteer of Durham & Northumberland, Vol 1, p.399

² Northumberland County History Committee (1893) 'A history of Northumberland', Vol 4, p.100

³ WM. White and WM Parson (1827) 'History, Directory & Gazetteer of Durham & Northumberland, Vol 1, p.399

Coordinates of old Allenheads school: NY 85659 45601; 385659 (eastings) 545601 (northings); 54.805068 Latitude, -2.2246215 Longitude; elevation 411m (lies just below 400m contour on OS Landranger map 87).

Meteorological observations

Walton's meteorological observations date to the period 1 January 1839 to 31 December 1839. At this time he was living at Allen Lodge and was master at Allenheads school. Either location would thus be a logical candidate for the observations and they are 152m apart, a short walk up/down the hill.

Given the readings were recorded at 9am and 3pm, it may suggest the school house was more convenient, although we have no record of what the school hours were at that time.



The old Allenheads school, c. 1980, photo looking east.

The schoolhouse might be somewhat better located as a weather station being —as the photo shows— higher up the valley side and thus in a more open environment. The vicarage, just a few metres above the river, is and was in a steeper and more wooded part of the valley.



(right) Allen Lodge, photo looking west, c.1925. The old school building is out of shot to the right.



Allenheads; detail from 87 OS Landranger, Hexham & Haltwhistle

Purple circle: Vicarage (Allen Lodge)

Yellow circle: Allenheads Old School