1. Edward I Monument
Burghead Marsh

When Edward I died nearby, on Burgh Marsh, his body was brought into St Michael’s church to lie in state and for ten days events at the Wall. It occupies the site of one of the central buildings of the fort, probably either the headquarters or the granary.

2. St Michael’s
Burghead CA 56 AW

The church of St Andrew stands in a lovely rural setting commanding fine views of Skiddaw and the Northern Fells. It is approached through a novel kissing gate made from two large slabs of stone, supported by a stone post. A fine example of Norman architecture, the lych gate and undecorated chancel church have a nave and chancel from the original C12 building. The south aisle was added in 1869. The original roof timbers, exposed only in 1869, are a feature of the church. In the porch is a C13 coffin lid, with a sword carved into it, known as the Monvie grave slab. The square bowl of the font is late C12, and each of the four sides of the font has a different design. In Victorian times the graveyard was visited by the ‘Resurrection Men’ – a term applied to those who engaged in the practice of body-snatching and then selling the corpses to medical schools for dissection and research.

3. St Andrew’s
Aikton CA 70 HJ

The church of St Andrew stands in a tranquil setting away from the crowds of visitors. The church is built of sandstone and is a wonderful piece of architectural design. The church was built in the early English style, and behind this are traces of the north wall. The chancel arch is typical of early Norman, although there have been some other churches in the area, it was in a ruinous condition by the early 1700s. In 1700 Bishop Nicholas of Carlisle remarked that “it looks no more like a piggery than the house of God”. This neglect evidently continued, as by 1800 the villagers were wondering whether the wall would fall inwards or outwards! The present church was substantially restored and extended the church in the original Anglo-Norman style.

4. St John The Evangelist
Newton Airlash CA 75 SET

Standing on a hill at the northern end of the village, the church occupies an important place in the locality, on the site of a Roman fort. The fort was in a ruinous condition by the early 1700s. In 1700 Bishop Nicholas of Carlisle remarked that “it looks no more like a piggery than the house of God”. This neglect evidently continued, as by 1800 the villagers were wondering whether the wall would fall inwards or outwards! The present church was substantially restored and extended the church in the original Anglo-Norman style.

5. St John The Evangelist
Newton Airlash CA 75 SET

The church of St John the Evangelist is a Norman church, fashioned from stones largely recycled from the Roman fort, and replaced an earlier structure. The square font is carved in the early English style, and behind this are traces of the north door or “Devil’s Door” and the outlines of two Norman windows. The chancel arch is a typical early Norman, although there have been suggestions that it is of an earlier, Saxon date. In common with some other churches in the area, it was in a ruinous condition by the early 1700s. In 1700 Bishop Nicholas of Carlisle remarked that “it looks no more like a piggery than the house of God”. This neglect evidently continued, as by 1800 the villagers were wondering whether the wall would fall inwards or outwards! The present church was substantially restored and rebuilt in 1799, when the porch was added.

6. Holme Cultram Abbey
Bowness on Solway CA 75 AF

Holme Cultram Abbey was founded in 1150 by Cistercian monks from Melrose Abbey in the Scottish Borders. Prior Henry, son of King David of Scotland, granted the foundation charter as at this time the Solway area belonged to Scotland. The Abbey is the daughter of Melrose Abbey and the grand daughter of Rievaulx Abbey.

The new Abbey flourished. After draining the nearby marsh it amassed vast amounts of land, used for the farming of sheep and pigs and the planting of orchards. The monks also had their own salt pans and fishing. By this time the area was part of England, and because of its proximity to the Scottish border it was in constant danger from the Border Reivers. In 1538 with the Dissolution of the Monasteries the land passed to the Crown, and the monks were dispensed.

The centre of the Abbey has survived, the Parish Church, with the rest of the Abbey falling into dereliction. In the church you can see, today, six of the nine bays of the nave of the original Abbey are the result of restoration begun in 1703, with further work being done in 1883 and 1913. Following an arson attack in 2006, the Abbey has undergone a major restoration and extension.

Special Features: Entrance to the Abbey is through a superb Norman Archway, Robert the Bruce’s father, Robert de Bruce, Earl of Carrick, is buried here. The ‘Inwards of Edward I’ are also buried here.

7. St Michael’s
Bowness on Solway CA 75 SAF

St Michael’s Church is not an ancient church building, but is the remains of the original Norman church, but there are visible clues showing the likelihood of a church of prior historic site since Roman times. Walkers of the Pennine Way will not feel out of place here – Bowness-on-Solway is a very special place.

Skinnydinsburn (or Griname as it was then known) was a growing town and port which serviced the ships of King Edward I in his campaign against the Scots. In gratitude, recognition, Edward granted Griname ‘Free Borough’ status promoting the Bishop of Carlisle to grant a charter to the Abbot of Holme Cultram in 1310 to build a church.

Long before, however, in 1093, William the Conqueror, having defeated the Scots at the Battle of the Standard (c.1093), returned to his castle of Carlisle and immediately granted the Barony of Carlisle to one of his fellow Normans, Guy of Lusignan. The castle was a base for the local rule of the King’s heir. Indeed his son was proclaimed King Edward II in Carlisle tower was built as a fortress and place of refuge for villagers, whose animals were driven into the church for safety during the raids of the Border Reivers.

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The church was founded in 1174 and is still very much as it was built but with the Victorian additions of porch and vestry. A carved Norman doorway leads into the church and the Norman chancel archway has wonderful carving with the face of a green man on the left. During restoration work in the 1870s the plaster was removed from the chancel archway and a Roman carved stone was revealed (probably taken from Hadrian’s wall a mile away).

To the left in the sanctuary there are two features, one is a ‘lepers squint’ or dale window where people could see the priest celebrating communion, and also an aumbry – a wall safe for locking away the valuable church plate. On the right of the altar there is a restored piscina for washing out the communion vessels.

Two belfries that were cast in 1705 are still in use. The organ was a gift from a former Rector in the late 1800s and the windows are also Victorian given as memorials to local people. It is a witness of local people that the church has seen continuous worship for over 800 years, and it is still a very important part of the community.

Special Features: Grade II* listed. The Roman stone in the south wall – no doubt brought from Hadrian’s Wall, has an inscription that reads VEX, LEG P.F.F.EC meaning ‘The troops of the 6th Legion, the victorious, pious & faithful did this work’.

Discover a cluster of unique churches built from the stones of Hadrian’s Wall in the years following the Norman Conquest (1066-1190). Places of peace and spirituality fashioned from the building blocks of conflict.

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Find out why Burgh by Sands was briefly the centre of government thanks to its links with Edward I during his conflict with Robert Bruce and the Scots.