

# Walks Stags Fell Stone Mines

## Walk information

**Distance:** 10 km (6.25 miles)

**Time:** 3 hours

**Maps:** OS Explorer Sheet OL30 - always take a map on your walk.

**Start/Parking:** Car Parks throughout Hawes

**Refreshments:** Hawes, Hardraw & Simonstone

**How to get there:** Hawes lies along the A684 in Upper Wensleydale

**Terrain:** This walk follows clear paths along riversides, across meadows and fields for the majority of the walk, with a short section through woodland beside Hardraw Beck. There is a short but fairly steep climb up across fields to reach Stags Fell stone mines from where a level track leads on before dropping steeply down across rough ground and fields to join the road at Simonstone. After a short section of road walking, a clear path leads across flat pastures through a succession of squeeze-stiles to reach Sedbusk from where field paths lead back down to Hawes.

**Caution:** The path up alongside Hardraw Beck between Low and High Shaw is slippery underfoot. Do not explore the old stone mine workings or enter the disused levels. This walk includes a number of quite steep sections. Some road walking, and numerous stiles.

## Points of interest

This is a delightful walk, taking in the villages of Hardraw, Simonstone and Sedbusk, with a particularly beautiful stretch along the wooded riverbank of Hardraw Beck with its series of waterfalls. The highlight of this walk is the section across the old spoil heaps of the Stags Fell Stone Mines, with superlative views across Upper Wensleydale.

## The walk

**1** From the Market Place in the centre of Hawes, walk up along the main road through the Market Place passing the Crown and Board Inn on your right then turn right along a lane to the right-hand side of 'Bear Cottage Interiors' (opposite

the Fish & Chip shop). Follow the lane down then, at the houses, turn left to reach a small gate beside a garage (waymarkers). Head across the field (passing houses on your left) and through the small wall-gate ahead, after which bear to the right down across two fields then pass through a tunnel through the embankment beneath the old railway line. Head straight on to reach the River Ure. Turn right and follow the riverside path through two bridle-gates in fairly quick succession, after which follow the river as it bends round to the left, then straight on through for 500 metres through three more bridle-gates (walking along the riverside levee with the river on your left). After the third bridle-gate, follow the path to the right (signpost) across pastureland away from the river, over a footbridge across Gayle Beck then on to join the road beside Haylands Bridge.

**2** Turn left over Haylands Bridge across the River Ure then follow the road round to the left alongside the river then, where the river turns away, take the first footpath on your left (signpost) through a gate. Head straight across the field, passing a meander in the river and on to reach a ladder stile beside a gate. After the stile continue straight on, running alongside the wooded limestone scar on your right at first and then alongside a stone wall - just before the gate in the stone wall across your path turn right through a small wall-gate (waymarker). Walk up to the left across the next field, through a gate in the wall (signpost) then head straight on along the stone-flagged path across several fields to reach Hardraw opposite the Green Dragon Inn.

**3** Turn right along the road for a few paces then head left immediately after the Green Dragon Inn through a small wall-gate just to the right of the large gate (signpost 'Simonstone') that leads through the yard of a house and out onto a field. Follow the path straight up the hillside, with the wall on your left at first then quite steeply up steps to a stile at the top of the field, after which carry on across the field to reach a gate just to the left side of West House Farm.

After the gate, follow the track to the left (passing the barn on your right) up to join the road beside Simonstone Hall Hotel. Turn left along the road then, where the road bends right (after 100 metres) take the enclosed path to the left just before the houses (signpost 'Shaw Gill') and follow this enclosed path down to soon reach a footbridge across Hardraw Beck. Do not cross the footbridge, but follow the stone-flagged path heading up through woodland with the stream on your left (caution: slippery path), passing a series of waterfalls and another footbridge to eventually reach a small gate that leads onto a lane at High Shaw (opposite the campsite entrance). Turn right along the lane then, after a short distance (50 metres before the road), take the path up some steps back on yourself to the left (signpost 'Sowry Head') and follow this on passing a house on your right to reach a small gate that leads out onto a field. Head straight on across the field (campsite across to your left) to reach a wall-gate ahead, after which continue straight on across the next field and through another wall-gate across your path then carry on, over a small side-stream and continue straight on across the undulating field (Hearne Beck to your left) to reach a large ladder stile over a wall (with Hearne Beck just beyond). After the ladder stile turn right heading up with the wall on your right (Hearne Beck on your left) to quickly reach a squeeze-stile in a wall across your path, after which continue on (stream on your left) up some steps to reach another squeeze-stile in the wall corner (stream bends away) that leads out onto a field. Head straight on climbing quite steeply up the field, keeping close to the wall on your right, to reach a gate/ladder stile in the top right corner (near a small barn). Head through the gate, passing the barn and head on across the small field to reach the road (Buttertubs Pass road) through a gate.

**4** Turn right along the road then take the path to the left after a short distance over a ladder stile beside a gate (signpost 'Simonstone'). Follow the grassy path straight on gently slanting

up the hillside (alongside an old overgrown sunken path) to reach a stile beside a gate in a wall. After the stile, follow the clear grassy path gently rising up (with the wall on your right for 100 metres) then levelling out to reach several large stone-built cairns that mark the Stags Fell Stone Mines (wall bends down to the right just before these cairns). At these cairns, carry straight on along the flat, wide grassy path to soon reach an area of old spoil heaps where you follow the wide path gently rising up between these spoil heaps (small retaining walls). The path soon levels out and leads on through the old spoil heaps (superb views to your right) after which continue on along the clear level path across the hillside then, just before the grassy path bends up to the left (700 metres from the first group of stone cairns), turn right back on yourself (large cairn) down along a narrow path heading quite steeply down across the scree slopes, then through bracken to reach a wooden stile over a stone wall at the bottom of the bank (near a couple of trees along the wall). After the stile, head down the hillside with the wall on your right then, where this wall turns sharply to the right after a short distance, head to the right diagonally down across the middle of the field (towards the stone barn) to reach a small gate in the wall (just before the stone barn)

towards the far bottom corner of the field (waymarker). After the small gate, head straight on (wall on your right) to reach a gate in the corner of the field ahead, after which head on down to join a track before a house where you head to the left along the track and through a gate that leads into the farmyard of Low Shaw Farm. Follow the farm lane down to reach the road at Simonstone.

**5** Turn left along the road (take care) passing Simonstone Hall Hotel on your right then follow the road bending round to the right then take the path to the left just after a gate on your left (signpost 'Sedbusk'). Head straight on along the track for 175 metres to reach a group of barns, where you carry straight on across several fields over a succession of stiles for 400 metres to reach a track across your path leading from a bungalow (ignore the track). Carry straight on along the clear path through a succession of squeeze-stiles (over a dozen) for 500 metres heading across a series of narrow fields across the flat shelf of land to reach Sedbusk. Follow the path between the houses to emerge out onto the small village green opposite the phone box in the centre of Sedbusk.

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## Birdwatch By Ian Kerr

**T**HE run of summer rarities has continued while some of our rarest breeding species have now hatched young.

It's turning out to be a good year for summering spoonbills, pictured, and red-necked phalaropes. Spoonbills are one of the most distinctive of our large white waterside birds with the long, curiously-shaped bills which provides their name. Several have been reported over the past week, including singles at Saltholme, Nosterfield and Druridge Pools and a couple at Lindisfarne.

Another red-necked phalarope was found, this time at

Nosterfield. It may have been the individual seen earlier at Kilnsea and Easington Lagoons in East Yorkshire. The bird which lingered for a fortnight at Grindon Lough in west Northumberland and attracted many admirers has now disappeared.

An osprey at Lockwood Beck Reservoir, one of a number of non-breeders summering in the region, was seen to take a fish. Meanwhile, at our only breeding site around Kielder Reservoir, three pairs have now hatched young although the recent high winds have been causing concern for their safety.

Among smaller species, the marsh warbler has continued to sing at Bowesfield Marsh and a rose-coloured starling was a startling find in a garden in Billingham. They are rare visitors from south east Europe and Asia. Most which turn up are rather dowdy youngsters but this one was an adult in full pink and black plumage. Two turtle doves were seen at Saltholme.

Among wildfowl, a drake ferruginous duck of unknown origins was again at Washington Wildfowl Park and a drake ruddy duck turned up on Bothal Pond in south Northumberland. Ruddy ducks, so called because

of their rich reddish plumage rather than their behaviour, are a North American species whose European populations derive from escapes from captivity.

A highly controversial decision was taken by conservation organisations some years ago to try to eliminate them by shooting and trapping. The argument was that they were a menace because they could inter-breed with the rare and very similar European white-headed duck which has its main population centre in Spain. It was claimed that this might eventually lead to its dilution and then extinction as a separate species.

The case for getting rid of ruddy ducks caused a huge debate in the birdwatching world with many not accepting the arguments. On a couple of visits to Spain I found that local birders were baffled by the decision because they had never even seen ruddy ducks. Whatever the arguments, as the elimination programme has progressed, ruddy ducks have become a progressively rarer sight in Britain. We live in a very strange world.

