

# Walks Stanhope and Heathery Burn

## Walk information

**Distance:** 6.75 km (4.25 miles)  
**Time:** 2 hours  
**Map:** OS Explorer Sheet 307  
**Parking:** Durham Dales Centre, Stanhope  
**Refreshments:** Pubs, cafés and shops at Stanhope. No facilities en route.  
**Terrain:** Clear paths, tracks and lanes all the way. Crawley Edge is exposed to the elements.  
**How to get there:** From the A68, turn west along the A689 through Weardale to reach Stanhope.  
**Caution:** This walk heads up onto the moorland above Crawley Edge, which is exposed to the elements. Take an OS map and compass with you

## Points of interest

Due to illness, this walk has been taken from my archives and dates from September 2011. There may have been some changes to the route description in the intervening years, so please take an OS map with you.

Stanhope is the ‘Capital of Weardale’, an attractive small town set amongst the fells of the North Pennines. The history of Stanhope is closely associated with the Prince Bishops of Durham, whose hunting lands stretched westwards into the upper reaches of Weardale, as well as the once booming lead and iron ore mines and stone quarries, whose scars still litter the landscape. Stanhope was granted a market charter in 1421, however, over the years this market lapsed and so in 1669 Bishop Cosin re-founded the market and erected a ‘new’ stone cross in the Market Place. This cross was replaced in 1871 and the old, weathered cross moved into the churchyard – the weekly markets ceased during the late 19th Century. St Thomas’s Church dates from around 1200, built to serve the spiritual needs of the Prince Bishops and their entourage

during their summer hunting trips in the Forest of Weardale. Across the road from the Church are the battlements and imposing gates of Stanhope Castle. Just above Stanhope are the remains of Ashes Quarry, a deep scar across the hillside that stretches for about a mile just below Crawley Edge. This quarry was worked from the 1870s until the 1940s by the Consett Iron Company, where men toiled by hand using picks and shovels to extract limestone; it must have been back-breaking work. The limestone was taken by wagon up along the Crawleyside Bank Incline, hauled by the Weatherhill Engine, where it joined a railway line on top of the moors. This extraordinary railway was the Stanhope and Tyne Railway, built in 1834 as one of the first railways in the country to transport iron ore and limestone from the mineral-rich hills above Stanhope over to the burgeoning industrial town of Consett and on to the River Tyne. The line closed in 1968 and is now the Waskerley Way walking route.

Our route follows the Crawleyside Bank Incline and then turns off into the side-valley of Heathery Burn. In the 19th Century a cave was discovered in this valley which contained some of this country’s most important Bronze Age finds, including pieces that pointed to the first use of domesticated horses and wheeled vehicles in Britain. The finds are now housed at the British Museum. A track drops down into Stanhope Burn, a delightful wooded valley. Here are the remains of 19th Century lead and iron-stone mines, 20th Century fluorspar mines, smelt mills, blast furnaces, stone quarries and lime kilns.

## The walk

**1** From the Durham Dales Centre, turn left along the main road to quickly reach Stanhope Market Place, with St Thomas the Apostle Church on your left. Take the walled lane to the left (Church Lane) immediately after the Church (just before the Bonny Moor Hen) and follow this up to reach

a T-junction. Turn left along the road for 200 metres, passing the Methodist Church on your right just after which turn right up along a walled path (signpost ‘Ashes Quarry’). Follow this enclosed path up through a kissing gate and out onto an area of old quarry workings and spoil heaps (Ashes Quarry). Head straight on up alongside the wall on your right passing between large spoil heaps then continue straight on up over two footbridges above deep quarry workings to reach a kissing gate in a fence/wall just beyond. Head through this kissing gate and follow the clear path alongside the fence on your left rising up and round to the left. The path levels out and leads on alongside the fence on your left (old quarry workings down to your left) for 100 metres to reach a fork in the path – follow the less distinct grassy path branching off to the right rising up across the hillside to soon reach a kissing-gate in a wall. Head through this kissing-gate and then another kissing-gate just beyond, after which turn left along the clear path alongside the fence on your left to quickly reach a path junction (waymarkers) where you carry straight on along the clear path rising up across the bracken-covered hillside (house down to your left) up onto the flat escarpment of Crawley Edge. Follow the path straight on along the top of this escarpment (fine views) for 350 metres to reach a small enclosure (tumbledown stone wall) and dilapidated corrugate barn set into the corner, where you carry on alongside this wall/enclosure on your left to reach a metal gate in a fence just before the road.

**2** Do not head through this gate but turn right before it along a grassy path alongside the wall on your left, passing a large corrugated barn and then a stone house on your left (Crawley Engine) just after which (where the wall bends left) you join a track. Follow this track to the left alongside the wall for 75 metres then bending round to the right then, where the track

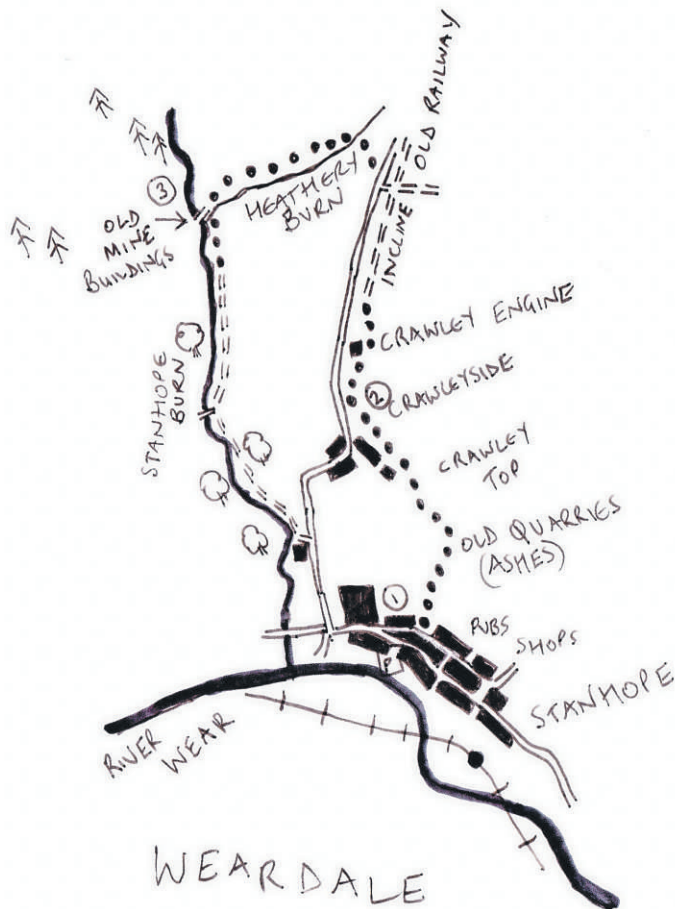
bends left towards the road, head straight on along the clear raised track-bed of the Crawleyside Bank Incline (old railway). Follow this track straight on gently rising up across the hillside (road across to your left), passing a rectangular enclosure (stone wall) on your left after 500 metres then, immediately after the enclosure, you reach a track across your path where you turn left to quickly reach the road. At the road turn right for 50 metres then take the track to the left (signpost). Follow this track straight on down into the side-valley of Heathery Burn, bending sharply round to the left over the stream then straight on heading across the side of the valley, with the valley falling away to your left (track becomes grassy) before gently dropping down. The track becomes stony underfoot again and drops more steeply down and joins a wall on your left. Continue down this track alongside the wall then, as the old mine buildings come into view at the bottom of the valley (Stanhope Burn) follow the track as it bears slightly away from

the wall and leads down to reach a gate in a fence across the track. Head through the gate and follow the track winding down to reach a junction of tracks and a bridge across Stanhope Burn set amongst disused and ruinous old mine buildings and workings.

**3** Turn left along the track (do not cross the bridge) and follow this track heading down through the wooded valley of Stanhope Burn, with the stream on your right (track soon becomes a lane), for 1.5 km all the way to reach the B6278 road, beside Stanhope Grange. Turn right down along the road (pavement) and follow this all the way down to reach a T-junction with the A689 at Stanhope. Turn left along this road back into Stanhope.

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## Birdwatch By Ian Kerr

**T**HE south westerly air-flow dominating the recent weather; culminating with the strong winds from the tail of Storm Ophelia, has played havoc with the migration patterns we expect during mid-October.

These conditions mean that migrants gathering to make the North Sea crossing from Scandinavia have been reluctant to move off into strong and dangerous headwinds. They’ll be sitting tight until conditions improve.

This means that so far we haven’t had the huge influxes of redwings, fieldfares, blackbirds, bramblings and other common

species or the rarer visitors which often accompany them and which made the coast so exciting in mid-October. No doubt they’ll come in a rush when the winds change to a northerly or easterly direction.

The result has been frustrating for folk seeking their normal October rarities. One visitor to Holy Island, usually one of our migration hot-spots, reported; “There are far more birders than birds here today.”

The few rarer northern and eastern species now with us probably made it across to Scotland a couple of weeks ago and have been simply filtering their way southwards. A dusky

warbler and a yellow-browed warbler were on the Farne Islands and another yellow-browed was at Hunmanby Gap.

Great grey shrikes are always one of most attractive autumn arrivals along the coast. One reason for their popularity is that they don’t normally hide away like many migrants but are bold and showy, often perching very prominently on the tops of bushes and on fences and power lines. One was an attraction at Blackhall Rocks and another was showing in their regular wintering haunts at Dalby Forest.

Other rarer species included a Lapland bunting at Hunmanby

Gap, hawfinches at Skelton and a great white egret at Darlington which was flushed from the beck on the west side of the Staindrop road. Cetti’s warblers, a southern European species now occurring more frequently in the region, are always an attraction. One has been singing at East Chevington on Druridge Bay and another was found in the more unusual setting of an ornamental lake in a business park near the MetroCentre in Gateshead.

During migration periods a scattering of coastal localities have the reputation for attracting the rarer migrants. Holy Island has already been mentioned but

the same applies to Whitburn, Hartlepool Headland, the South Gare and a few others. Visitors to East Chevington on Sunday, hoping to see the Cetti’s warbler, were treated within an hour to a flypast by two bee-eaters, a bittern and a black tern. Not at all bad for an otherwise rather quiet period.

