

Walks Fountain's Fell nr Malham

Walk information

Distance: Roughly 8.5 miles
Height to Climb: 380m (1,260 feet)
Start: SD 884691. Near Tennant's Guill Farm on the Malham Littondale road.
Difficulty: An easy climb to Fountain's Fell followed by rough walking up and down Darnbrook Fell.
Refreshments: The nearest refreshments is either a 3 mile drive to Arncliffe in Littondale or a slightly longer drive to Malham
Be Prepared: The route description and sketch map only provide a guide to the walk. You must take out and be able to read a map and in cloudy/misty conditions a compass. You must also wear the correct clothing and footwear for the outdoors. Whilst every effort is made to provide accurate information, walkers head out at their own risk.
Please observe the Countryside Code and park sensibly.

FOUNTAIN'S Fell tends to be overlooked with most walkers heading for the more popular fells in Wharfedale or the vastly more popular 3 Peaks. Hidden between is Fountain's Fell (and its neighbour Darnbrook Fell) which is full of interest, both historical and today as a true farming community. Away from Fountain's Fell the walking is rough, but the views excellent and a feeling of real remoteness is very appealing.

A mile north of Malham Tarn, on the road between Malham and Littondale, lies Tennant's Gill Farm and to its north the slopes of Fountain's Fell. There is no official car parking nearby but it is a quiet road and there are opportunities to park roadside. At the entrance to Tennant's Gill Farm join the Pennine Way. The Pennine Way can be followed

for nearly two miles towards the summit of Fountain's Fell, the path climbs steadily through rough farmland and then open access moorland.

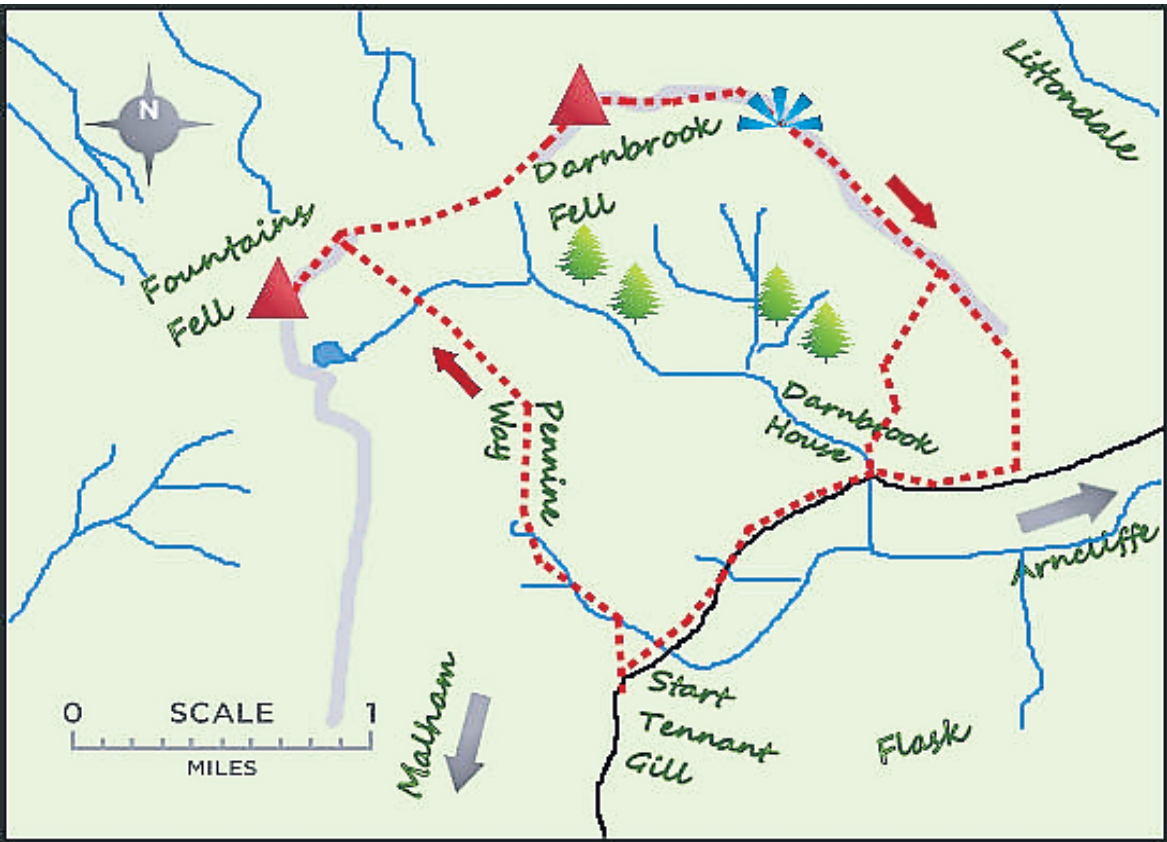
Where the path reaches its high point near some tall boy cairns a faint track on your left heads on to the summit area of Fountain's Fell. This is an area of historical interest with numerous mine shafts, cairns and a well preserved bee hive coke oven 2m high. The area was used to mine coal before it was taken down to the valleys to power the early mills. The mine shafts were mainly sunk at the turn of the 19th century and when they became too large to mine, abandoned and a new one was sunk...that is why there are so many. The summit cairn for Fountain's Fell is to the west end of the summit plateau meaning you have to walk through the old workings...very eerie in misty conditions.

In good weather the views of Pen y Ghent are excellent, unusual as it is usually viewed from the other side, and more interesting as a result.

Return to the tall boys and, in wet weather, or if you are not keen on taking to the rough often trackless moorland, return back down the Pennine Way. However if you are after more of an adventure cross the Pennine Way and head towards Darnbrook Fell. The crossing to Darnbrook is made easier if you stick close to a wall that bends right and then left to the col before continuing up steady slopes to Darnbrook Fell.

The trig point at the summit is on the wrong side of the wall and perched on a peat hag. It is interesting to see such a trig in all its glory, the large concrete base (never usually seen) a reflection of the big effort required to build each one.

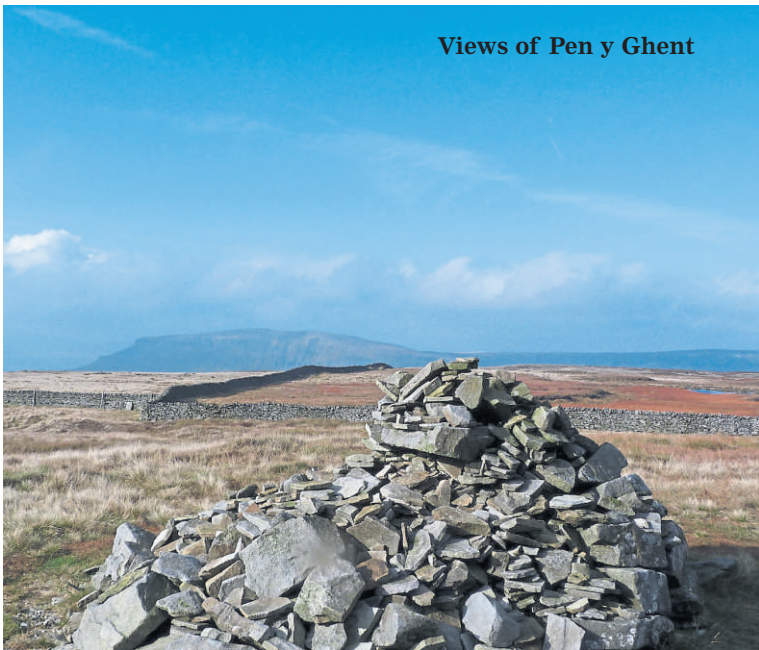
From Darnbrook Fell follow the fence, changing to a wall east and then south east along the high shoulder. The walking is



rough over peat and moor, but the views over Littondale and Upper Wharfedale do compensate. After two miles follow the walls west as the land drops towards Darnbrook House Farm, keeping the small plantations below before heading down to the farm is a good marker.

From the farm join the main road and return to the car at Tennant's Gill Farm

*** Jonathan Smith runs Where2walk, a walking company in the Yorkshire Dales. He has written his own book, the "Dales 30" which describes the highest mountains in the Dales. He also runs one day navigation courses for beginners and intermediates. Join his Learn a Skill, Climb a Hill weekends in the Dales. To find out more details on any of the above visit where2walk.co.uk**



Views of Pen y Ghent

Birdwatch By Ian Kerr

ONE of our most familiar garden birds, the greenfinch, is in real trouble. Their numbers have plummeted to such an extent they could soon be placed on Britain's red list of species of major conservation concern. Population declines of many other common species are often hard to understand and probably involve multiple factors, but with the greenfinch the cause is, sadly, all too clear.

They are being badly affected by a widespread and severe outbreak of a parasitical disease known as trichomonosis which was first noted in wild garden bird

populations in 2006. While it has been found in small numbers of house sparrows, dunnocks, great tits, chaffinches and siskins, it's the greenfinch which has been severely affected and many have died.

The 20th annual Bird Trends report from the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) shows that while they are still reasonably common, their numbers have slumped by 59% across the country in just ten years. The red list is regularly reviewed and to be included populations have to have slumped by half over a period of 25 years. That has happened over a much shorter time-span with

greenfinches, something that would have seemed unthinkable a decade ago when they were an everyday sight in gardens.

The disease causes swelling and blockages of the throat and is obviously highly infectious. It seems to be spread when birds are unable to swallow seed and other food. It is then regurgitated and taken by other individuals quickly spreading the disease. The BTO is urging everyone to regularly scrub down and disinfect bird tables and feeders as a way of at least partially combating the problem

The decline seems to have been

patchy with some areas much more severely affected than others. I used to see greenfinches daily on the seed feeders in my back garden. This winter they have been noticeable by their absence although friends elsewhere tell me they are still seeing them regularly. In fact, over the winter I can recall seeing only three or four individuals during all of my outings whereas in the past they were so familiar that they tended to be ignored.

The big influx of hawfinches from the continent has been one of the highlights of winter. Unfortunately, apart from a party at the Yorkshire Arboretum

and up to eight at Morpeth, most have been further south. Scattered records of ones and twos elsewhere may have involved birds from our resident, but making a single a good find for one birder at Low Newton Junction local nature reserve.

