

# Walks Around Upper Wharfedale

## Walk information

**Distance:** Roughly 11 miles.

**Height to Climb:** 230m (750 feet)

**Start:** SE 003637. The car park in Grassington where the bus also leaves from. Check the Dalesbus.org website for up to date bus times.

**Difficulty:** Medium. Quite a long walk but straightforward and easy to follow.

**Refreshments:** Grassington has a good range of places to eat and drink, as does Kettlewell earlier in the walk.

**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 (O/S Explorer OL2) 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.**

## The walk

**L**INEAR walks are often the most enjoyable. This is certainly the case in Upper Wharfedale where, making use of the Dalesbus, you can enjoy some delightful riverside walking followed by a short climb and a longer stroll through some lovely limestone country.

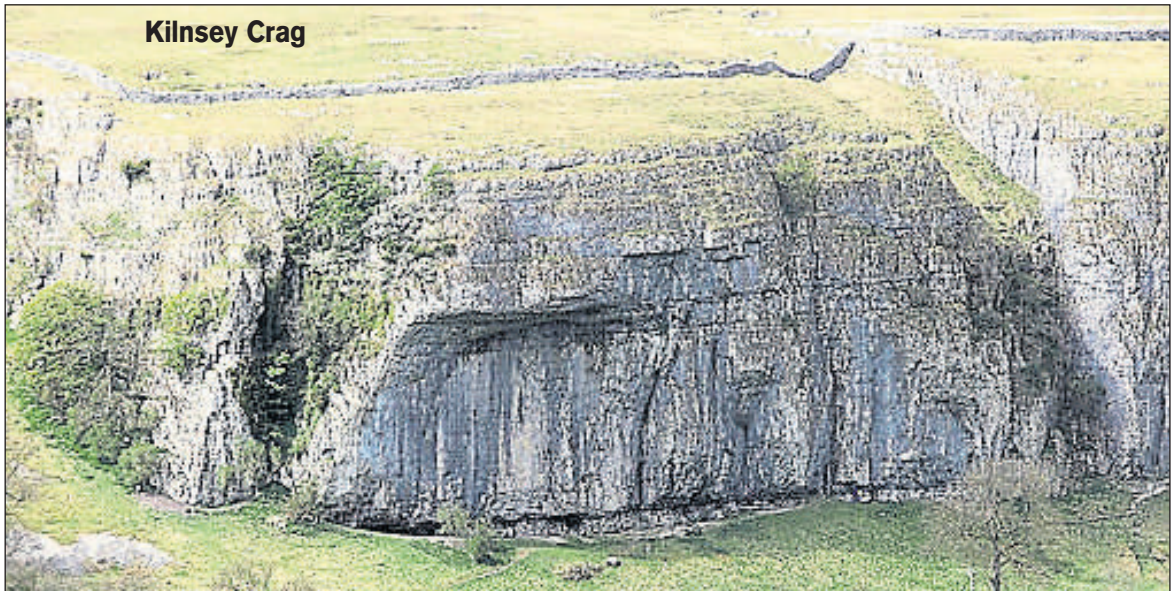
I do believe that using a bus (or train) enhances a walk, particularly when it takes you to the far point of your proposed walk and you can avoid any repetition by heading back to your start. Leaving the car in Grassington the 72 heads regularly up the valley to Buckden taking just over half an hour to arrive. It is a pleasure,

as a driver, to be able to look out on the countryside instead of concentrating the road.

Buckden is a pretty village at the head of Wharfedale, from the car park cross the river and just over the bridge turn left on to a riverside path. For the next four miles the path follows the west bank of the River Wharfe all the way to Kettlewell. The glacial silt has left a rich but often wet valley bed, perfect for bird watching; on my last visit I was able to spot a curlew, lapwing and even viewed a heron gracefully exiting the river. After two miles a bridge leads over to Starbottan, one of the most attractive and unspoilt villages in the Dales, well worth a ten minute detour.

Another village which is worth exploring is Kettlewell which is slightly larger than Buckden and Starbottan and has a fine history stretching back over 1,000 years. In particular the village has a cotton mill, five pubs and three blacksmiths! Today it is more geared for us walking types and has a few pleasant cafes and pubs if you need to partake this early in the walk. Exit the village on the quiet road opposite the bus stop and keep to the west side of the river. Follow this road for nearly a mile, passing the popular religious retreat at Scargill House, a spectacular looking building.

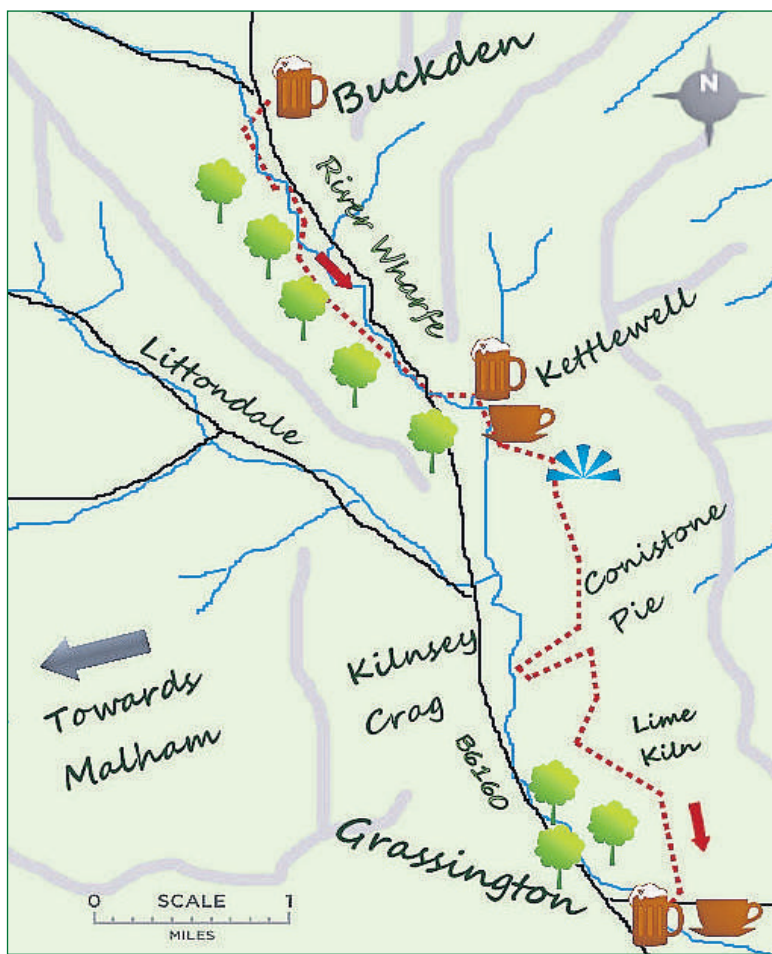
The hard graft on this walk comes next, a track climbing 100 metres up the fellside through open fields and finally in to the woods. There is a gate just before emerging from the woods, take the path to the right and do not continue climbing directly up the hillside. For the remainder of the walk keep heading just east of south on an obvious path, enjoying the continually wonderful views of Wharfedale, Littondale and some of the best limestone scenery the Dales can offer. This is at its best at the Conistone Pie, a distinctive outcrop that can be seen for miles around. Across the valley to the right is Kilnsey Crag, an



overhanging cliff popular with local climbers.

Two more striking features arrest the attention as you walk the five miles from the woods to Grassington village. The first can be seen soon after passing Conistone Pie, a dry deep valley known as 'the Dib' leads steeply in to the dale below. Further along the path passes an impressive limestone kiln, one of many in the area. The limestone was heated in the kiln and quicklime was produced, the lime diluted and spread in the nearby fields to improve the fertility of the soils for agricultural purposes. Look to your left and second kiln is visible on the hillside. From the kiln the track carries on south until the high land ends and the village of Grassington lies below.

**Jonathan Smith runs Where2walk, an outdoor business 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. Learn a Skill, Climb a Hill Weekends. To find out more details on any of the above and details of many more walks in the area visit [where2walk.co.uk](http://where2walk.co.uk)**



## Birdwatch By Ian Kerr

**T**HE late spring passage of waders is well underway with flocks which have spent the winter much further south, some down the coasts of West Africa, now surging onwards towards Arctic and other northern European breeding grounds.

Prominent among them are familiar species including ringed plovers, dunlin and sanderling but, as usual, May can be relied upon to produce some more uncommon species and the odd rarities. Many whimbrels, slightly smaller relatives of our familiar curlews, have been involved, often first noticeable by their lovely and

far-carrying trilling calls as they pass overhead. Most have passed up the coast although the other day I did hear one calling over the north Durham moors.

There has also been a scattering of wood sandpipers, delicate slim-line individuals, pausing on migration at both coastal and inland ponds. Among rarities was a Temminck's stint at Saltholme. Among the tiniest of Eurasian waders, smaller than a starling, they winter in Africa and breed in Northern Scandinavia and Russia. They take their names from an 18th century Dutch ornithologist and collector. Their close relatives, little stints, are also pretty rare

on spring passage but one has frequented a flooded field just north of Druridge Pools reserve where the very obliging glossy ibis has remained.

The other great rarity was a red-necked phalarope at Grindon Lough in the Roman Wall country of west Northumberland. It's tempting to think that this is the individual which has summered there for the past two years. This week it has spent most of its time on a small pool just north of the Lough and further away from the only accessible viewing point on the minor road overlooking the site. It was viewable with a telescope - but only just.

Smaller classic spring rarities have been rather scarce although on Tuesday a singing male red-spotted bluethroat was on Coquet Island and a rustic bunting turned up on the Farne Islands. Single red-backed shrikes visited Spurn and Kilnsea and two were found at Low Newton in Northumberland. A corncrake, a real rarity these days, called over a period of days at North Duffield Carrs in North Yorkshire.

Many people have commented about how suddenly late spring has arrived. It's as if Mother Nature, left groggy by the Beast from the East, suddenly realized the date and decided

she'd better get her boots on. The growth from bud to full leaf and blossom, which normally takes place so gradually, seems to have been compressed into a couple of weeks. It's certainly left everywhere looking stunningly fresh and beautiful.

