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Walks

by Mark Reid

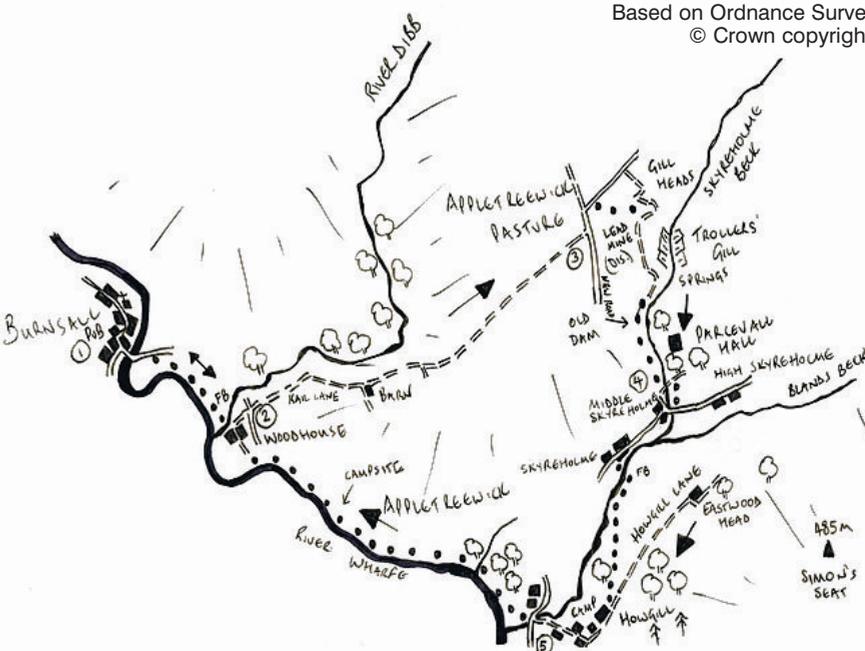
ABOVE Trollers Gill, in Wharfedale, are the crumbling remains of Gill Head Mines, the last working underground mines in the Yorkshire Dales. Lead was mined here between the 18th Century and the early 1900s; however, it reopened in the Twenties as a fluorspar mine which then continued in production until 1981. The surrounding moors are littered with the remains of the lead mining industry that once flourished in this area. Lead mining can be traced back to the Romans, although it was during the 18th and 19th centuries that the mines were developed on a large-scale commercial basis with the advent of new mining and pumping technologies. Many years ago a pig of lead was discovered on the flanks of Nursery Knot with the Roman inscription of "Trajan" on it, although this has since been lost.

1 From the Red Lion at Burnsall (with your back to the pub) turn left along the road over Burnsall Bridge across the River Wharfe, just after which take the footpath to the right through squeeze-stile beside a gate (signpost "Appletreewick, Howgill"). After the gate, bear left across the field then up the grassy bank through a scattering of trees to reach a bridlegate, with the River Wharfe down to your right. Follow the clear riverside path straight on for 600 metres to reach a footbridge across the side-stream of Barben Beck (also known as the River Dibb). After the footbridge head straight on to quickly join a track just before Woodhouse Farm. Turn left up along the track to soon reach a road.

2 At the road take the track opposite through a gate (signpost "New Road") and follow the clear track climbing up across the hillside, alongside a wall/fence on your left. After 500 metres the track bends right and levels out – carry straight on along the enclosed track (with the deep valley of Barben Beck falling away to your left) for a further 400 metres to reach a gate across the track just before some large barns. At the barns bear left along the clear enclosed track for 100 metres to reach a gate at the end of the enclosed track, after which continue straight on along the track alongside the wall on your left for 300 metres to reach another gate, where you carry straight on along a short section of enclosed track to soon reach another gate (enclosed track ends). After this gate follow the track straight on for a short distance to reach a junction with another track (wall corner in front of you) where you head left and follow the clear track straight on across fields (Appletreewick Pasture) for 1.4 km to reach New Road.

3 Turn left along the road then follow it bending to the right after 100 metres then take the footpath to the right after 50 metres (signpost "Skyreholme"). After the stile, follow the boggy path straight on bearing very slightly left then gently drop down (passing Hell Hole pothole on your left) to join a track. Follow this track to the right winding downhill through a dry valley for 250 metres to reach Gill Heads Lead Mine (disused). Head straight on along the path passing these old lead workings and through a bridlegate, after which follow the grassy path down through the valley then curving left heading steeply down through the valley to reach the bottom of the hillside where this side-valley opens out into the larger valley of Skyreholme Beck (Trollers Gill short detour to your left). As you open out into this larger valley, follow the clear path to the right to quickly reach a wall stile. Cross the stile and head straight on along the clear path down through the valley (Skyreholme Beck to your left) to reach an old grassy dam (breached) and a ladder stile beside a gate just beyond. Cross the ladder stile then follow the clear path heading down through the valley with Skyreholme Beck to your left to join a road beside a wooden bridge across the beck (near the entrance to Parceval Hall).

4 At the road, turn left over the bridge then, where the lane bends left between the cottages, head right up over a wall-stile on this bend (signpost). After the wall-stile, head straight on across two fields then, at the end of the second field, bear right through the large gap in the wall and head down across the field to reach the road at the hamlet of Middle Skyreholme (beside the



Fact file

- ▶ **Distance:** 12 km (7.5 miles)
- ▶ **Time:** 4 hours
- ▶ **Maps:** OS Explorer Map OL2
- ▶ **Refreshments:** Pub at Burnsall.
- ▶ **Parking:** Car park at Burnsall
- ▶ **Terrain:** Riverside paths, farm tracks and field paths, with a number of ascents and descents throughout the walk. Many of the paths are wet or muddy underfoot.
- ▶ **How to get there:** Burnsall lies in the heart of Wharfedale along the B6160
- ▶ **Caution:** Do not explore the old lead mines at Gill Heads.

The riverside paths may be wet or muddy after rain. There were cows and calves in some fields – always give them a wide berth and never walk between a cow and its calf. If accompanied by a dog, walk around the field perimeter and let the dog go if you feel threatened.

Points of interest

Among the hills near the village of Appletreewick is a limestone gorge so dark and forbidding that our ancestors once feared it. They believed it to be the haunt of trolls, hence its name of Trollers Gill. According to

legend these trolls, or mischievous fairies, roll stones down the steep hillside onto the heads of unwary walkers! A more sinister tale is told of a wolf-like beast that lives in a cave in this ravine, with large fangs and staring eyes the size of saucers. This is the infamous Barguest, which preys on unsuspecting travellers – if your eyes meet then it is certain death! These legends have their origins in Norse mythology. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is said to have written The Hound of the Baskervilles after hearing this tale.

“Surrounding moors are littered with the remains of the lead mining industry that once flourished”

road-bridge across Skyreholme Beck). Turn right along the road over the bridge across Skyreholme Beck just after which take the road turning to the left passing the phone box. Follow this road straight on for 500 metres to reach the hamlet of Skyreholme. Immediately after the row of three-storey mill-workers cottage on your left take the lane to the left (signpost "Howgill Lane") then, where this lane bends right after a short distance, follow the enclosed path straight on down to reach a footbridge across the stream. After the footbridge, follow the path to the right across the field keeping close to the stream on your right for 300 metres to reach a tumbledown wall across your path and a small stream. Cross the wall and stream then bear left up across the hillside to reach a ladder stile over a wall. After the ladder stile, head straight on up across the field to a large gap in the wall in the top corner of the field, after which follow the grassy track straight on alongside the wall to reach Howgill Lane (track). Turn right along the track and follow it gently dropping down passing Howgill Lodge and then the campsite entrance after which you reach a crossroads of tracks (Barden Fell information board). Turn right down along an enclosed track (How Beck on your right) and follow it to reach the road beside a bridge across How Beck.

5 Turn right over the bridge then immediately left (signpost "Appletreewick, Burnsall") through woodland alongside How Beck on your left to quickly reach a gate that leads out onto a field. Follow the path bearing round to the right across the field to join the wooded riverside (river on your left). Follow the clear riverside path straight on (river on your left) through woodland then across pastures (keep to the riverside), passing a campsite on your right after 1.5 km where you continue along the riverside path for a further 600 metres then bending distinctly round to the left (following the river) to quickly reach a path to the right. Follow this path to the right (away from the river) across fields (passing a barn) to reach Woodhouse Farm. Head straight through the farmyard just after which, where the

track bends right, head straight to quickly reach the footbridge across Barben Beck once again. Cross the footbridge and re-trace your steps along the riverside to reach the road on the outskirts of Burnsall. Turn left along the road back over Burnsall Bridge into the village.

Mark Reid, author of The Inn Way guidebooks (innway.co.uk)

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IT looks like being one of the best autumns in a long while for hedgerow fruits and seeds – the natural supplies that are critical for the survival of so many birds and animals over the winter.

There seems to be a particular heavy crop of hawthorn berries this year, just in time for the annual influx of winter migrant redwings and fieldfares that descend on these crimson fruits as soon as they make landfall, after the long flight from Scandinavia.

Some of the summer migrants that are now leaving our shores have already made inroads into the dangling bunches of scarlet rowan berries, fuelling up for the journey south.

Those berries that are left will eventually be finished off by our resident blackbirds, but if enough of these fruits remain they often attract the attention of flocks of waxwings that sometimes arrive in large numbers from the Nordic countries.

It's well known that many trees produce heavy crops of fruits and seeds only in alternate years. Last autumn, oaks in my local woodlands and hedgerows produced meagre crops but this year there's a bumper supply of acorns, attracting large flocks of pigeons that gorge themselves on these nuts while they're plentiful. Acorns are also favourite food for jays and a few days ago I watched one of these colourful members of the crow family shuttling between the edge of an oak wood and the grassland beyond, carrying acorns in its beak. Jays, pictured, bury acorns as an insurance against hard times in the winter months ahead, but only ever manage to recover a small proportion of their buried larder. Those that they forget will germinate – and perhaps become oak trees – if they escape the attention of rabbits.

Phil Gates



Birdwatch

THE North Atlantic/Europe weather map at the time of writing is completely opposite to the situation on which I focused last week. Now an intense low pressure system lies to the west of Britain, while high pressure over western Russia is slowly moving towards us.

That High will lead to light easterly winds tomorrow and over the weekend and they will surely drift a large number of migrant songbirds originating in northern Europe and Russia on to our coast. Almost inevitably, rarities will be among them and local birders are dreaming of something on the scale of last October's big national event – Britain's first ever eastern crowned warbler from north-east Asia at South Shields.

Maybe that's too much to expect, but we can anticipate at least more of the scarce migrants associated with the last spell of east winds – notably barred and yellow-browed warblers and great grey shrikes – and perhaps some of the typically later arriving species such as the tiny Pallas's warbler with its delightful array of lemon yellow markings.

Meanwhile, there have been some leftovers from that last influx, especially the young woodchat shrike – present for its tenth day on Tuesday – in the Croft gardens beside Hartlepool harbour and a rustic bunting spending its seventh day at Flamborough Head on Monday. Among new arrivals over the Friday to Monday period were a shore lark at the Long Nab, Burniston, near Scarborough (following six between north Northumberland and the Humber over the previous week) and a Richard's pipit on the Farne Islands.

East coast sea-watching has been poor this week. Indeed the top recent seabird report was well inland – a Sabine's gull in the lower Derwent valley south-east of York on Monday. Most likely it had been blown there from the West – like the American golden plover at Great Heck, south-east of Selby, on show since Sunday.

Brian Unwin