

# Walks Finghall to Constable Burton

## Walk information

**Distance:** 6.7 km / 4.2 miles

**Time:** Allow 2 hours

**Map:** OS Explorer Sheet 302

**Parking:** On-street parking throughout Finghall

**Refreshments:** Queen's Head at Finghall

**Terrain:** This walk follows field and riverside paths and tracks, with road walking at the end.

**How to get there:** Finghall lies just off the A684 between Patrick Brompton and Constable Burton (to the west of Bedale).

**Caution:** Take care crossing the roads and the railway line (stop, look and listen). Take extra care walking along the road at the end of this walk – make yourself visible to traffic or face oncoming traffic, walk in single file and on the verge if possible.

## Points of interest

THIS walk was meant to follow field paths between Constable Burton and Finghall, however, a herd of aggressive cattle meant that the route had to be changed to follow the road instead, which is why there is a stretch of road walking at the end of this walk (blame the bullocks).

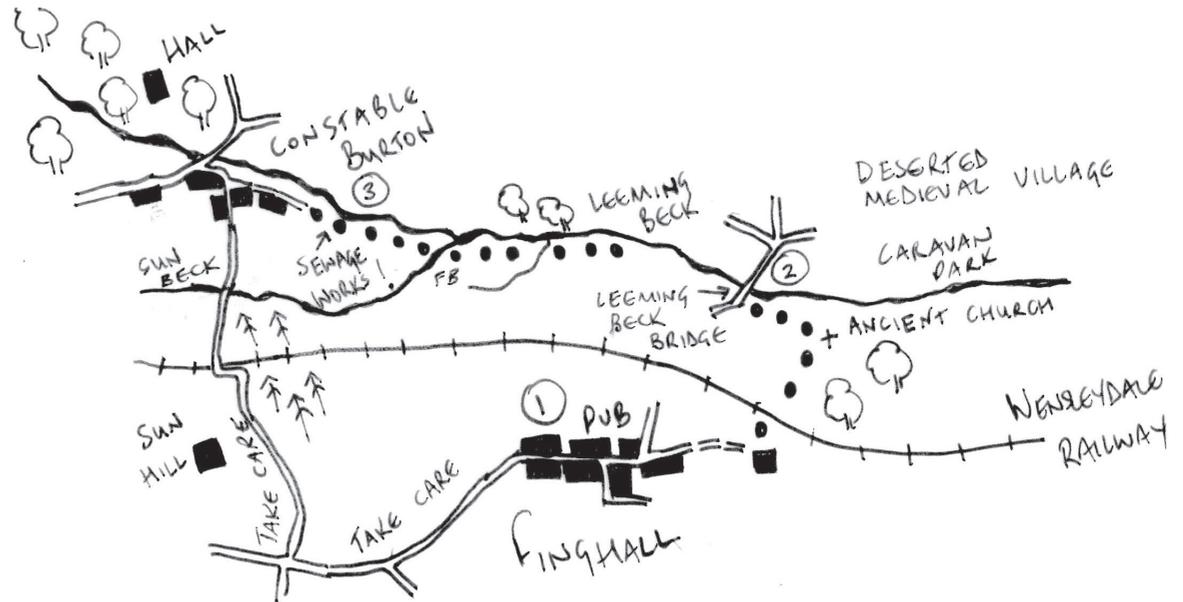
Our route starts from the attractive village of Finghall, which is situated on a rise of land overlooking Leeming Beck in lower Wensleydale. It is just a short walk along a track and then fields to reach St Andrew's Church, which stands on its own in a field beside a stream. Built in typical Dales style, it is a simple stone church that dates from the 12th Century, although there has been a place of worship on this site since at least Saxon times; there are fragments of Anglo-Saxon sculptures inside. This was the site of the original village of Finghall, which appears to have been a place of some

importance in Saxon times; indeed some accounts claim there was a sizeable town here at one time. The village has gone, except this old church, and those medieval homes are no more than grassy bumps in the surrounding fields; a large caravan park now occupies much of this medieval village site. As with countless other Deserted Medieval Villages (DMVs to archaeologists!) throughout England devastated by The Plague, people believed the disease to be water-borne and so moved to higher ground, hence Finghall's present-day elevated location.

From this old church, a delightful riverside path weaves its way across pastures and through woodland to Constable Burton. This village is home to Constable Burton Hall (not visited on this walk), which was built by famed architect John Carr in the late 18th Century for the Wyvill family, and still owned and occupied by them.

## The walk

**1.** From the centre of Finghall (with your back to the pub), turn left along the road through the village towards 'Hunton, Bedale' then, where the road turns sharp left at the bottom of the village, head straight on along Church Lane and follow this down out of the village. Follow this lane down passing houses on your right and then a barn on your left, 100 metres after which head left through a kissing-gate beside a field gate, marked by a signpost (with Spruce Gill Farm ahead). After the kissing-gate, walk straight on across the top of the field alongside the hedge on your right, through a gate in the field corner after which head to the left across the middle of the field, with the wooded stream to your right, through another kissing gate that leads across the railway line. Cross the railway line (take care) and head through the gate opposite then down across the field with



the stream on your right. As you approach the bottom of the field head through a kissing gate in the fence to your right then follow the path down to join the stream on your right. Do not cross the stream, but carry on down alongside this stream to reach St Andrew's Church. Head through the gate just to the left of the churchyard wall, then walk down (churchyard on your right) to soon join a lane. Turn left along the lane and follow it to reach the road beside Leeming Beck Bridge.

**2.** Head through the kissing-gate opposite (signpost), then head straight on across the field bearing slightly to the right to join the stream (Leeming Beck) on your right and cross a wooden stile over the fence in the right-hand corner of the field. A clear narrow path now leads straight on along the wooded riverbank (with the river just down to your right) to soon reach a kissing-gate that leads out onto a field, where you walk straight on, bearing slightly right, to reach a stile over a fence beside

the river on your right. After the stile, walk straight on along the riverside path across the field, through a gateway in a fence then carry straight on across the next large field (still with the river on your right) to reach another gate in a fence/hedge and a small bridge across a side-stream. After this gate, walk straight on alongside the fence/hedge on your right (with the river just across to your right) for 400 metres to reach a kissing gate to your right that leads into woodland. Cross the stile and drop down through the trees to reach a small wooden bridge across Sun Beck. Cross the bridge, then head straight on along the narrow path through the plantation (pheasant enclosures) to reach a kissing gate amongst the dense trees. Cross the stile then follow the clear, wide path straight on along the wooded riverbank alongside Burton Beck for 300 metres to join a clear track beside Constable Burton Sewage Works.

**3.** Continue ahead through another kissing-gate then straight on

to reach a row of houses and a metalled road at Constable Burton. Continue straight on along this road to soon reach a T-junction in the village, where you turn left. Follow this road up out of Constable Burton then continue up along the road (take care - walk on verge) for 650 metres to reach the railway bridge across the road. Follow the road under the railway bridge and bending sharp left then right and continue up along the road for 800 metres (passing Sun Hill Farm across to your right) to reach a crossroads. Turn left at this crossroads (signpost Finghall) and follow this road (take care - walk on verge) back into Finghall.

Mark Reid  
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## Countrydiary By Phil Gates

**T**HE tall, purple flower spikes of rosebay willow herb are such a common sight in summer that it's hard to believe that in the 19th Century it was a rare species. Now you can expect to see it almost everywhere in Britain.

Rosebay willow herb isn't a native species but botanists are uncertain where it actually came from, although Canada, where it is the floral emblem for the Yukon, seems to be a likely location. There it's called fireweed, because it is one of the first colonisers of scorched earth after a forest fire. What is certain is that it has spread the length and breadth of Britain over the last century. Some botanists believe that war may have played a part in its territorial gains, which have also been aided by its prolific seed production, with up to 100,000 wind-dispersed plumed seeds per plant. The strategic need for timber during the First World War led to the felling of large areas of forest, opening up an ideal habitat for the plant. Then, during the Blitz in the

Second World War it colonised scorched earth on bomb sites in city centres.

It's always worth taking a close look at patches of rosebay willow herb at this time of year because it is the food plant of the spectacular caterpillar of the elephant hawk-moth. The delta wings of the adult insect are striking shades of green and pink but the large caterpillar, which is up to three inches long, is brown and has elongated front segments like an elephant's trunk. When it's disturbed it draws these into its body so that the head-end swells, enlarging false eye spots on the sides of the front segments. To add to the air of menace it then rears up and wriggles from side to side.



## Birdwatch By Ian Kerr

**S**ome of our rarest breeding birds of prey are having a good season. I recently reported how two pairs of ospreys each had three young at Kielder. Now a third pair have two rapidly-growing chicks, and it could be a record year for these spectacular fish-hunters.

With ospreys also summering at Derwent and Hurworth Burn and appearing at other Durham reservoirs, it must only be a matter for further colonisation.

The Kielder pairs use platforms erected high on lopped trees, showing they appreciated a bit of help. When platforms are stacked with brushwood and daubed with white paint to simulate splash they really act as magnets.

It's a technique pioneered in Scotland and adopted very successfully elsewhere, but requires co-operation from reservoir owners and landowners.

The area's only breeding marsh harriers are doing well with five chicks at Druridge Bay. But our most illegally persecuted

raptors, hen harriers, have not bred. Last year a pair on the Durham moors laid eggs, but then disappeared in suspicious circumstances, and a second pair failed to hatch eggs in Northumberland, the only attempts in England.

Although a male regularly performed his dramatic 'sky-dance' display at the latter locality this year, he failed to attract a mate. Three other pairs have been successful elsewhere so they are just about hanging on as English breeders.

The superb bridled tern at the Farne Islands attracted crowds. But just as impressive was the discovery there of a breeding Arctic tern ringed 31 years ago. With migrations to and from Antarctica, it must so far have clocked up 600,000 miles, the equivalent of halfway to the Moon!

The little bittern at Gosforth Park continued to appear fleetingly until the weekend, although one unlucky birder from Teesside watched for 24 hours over three days without so much as a glimpse.