

Yarnbury Lead mines & Mossdale

We start at Yarnbury. The only road access to Yarnbury is via Grassington, by driving up Main Street until it becomes Moor Lane, and then continuing until the metalled road ends. At this point you will see signage for the lead mines and can park at the roadside. The What-3-Words tag for the parking spaces is **tiptoes.marathon.laminate**, which corresponds to OS map reference SE01516588. If you are using Satnav to get there, then the address is Moor Lane Grassington, and the postcode **BD23 5EQ** relates to the house opposite the mines.

Opposite the mine site are two buildings – Notice the gate to the right of the house. The public footpath goes up here and passes to the right of the house before heading slightly right and uphill through the first of many spoil tips that we will see before the day is out. The path through the spoil heaps soon arrives at a rough lane, which we follow to the left. We are now heading Northwest toward Conistone. We follow the lane to High Barn where the track continues, though we bear left and head across a field to a disused barn with no roof. Note that if you were to continue along the path we initially followed, it continues North to the Cairn at Kelber, so this is a potential shortcut – either at the start to go straight to Mossdale, or on the way back to make this a short walk to Conistone Dib only.

Passing the barn, we enter an open pasture to head slightly downhill toward a disused farmhouse – Bare House. Once this comes into sight, the path bears slightly to the left and passes the front of the farm before heading downhill. As the path heads downhill, it bends to the right, and very soon we have the radio mast on Scot Lane at Conistone Dib in view. We now head toward the mast along a path that whilst clear can be somewhat boggy after heavy rain, so be prepared for the occasional diversion to find a secure route.

At the far bottom corner of the field, we go through a gate and then pick up the line of the wall to take us to the next gate where we enter an area with visible limestone pavement emerging through the thin soil. We maintain our Northwest direction toward the radio mast and ignore the temptation of the tracks made by the Farmer's quad bike as they tend the sheep.

Our next landmark is a stile in the drystone wall at the opposite side of the field. As you approach this you are likely to see other walkers using a path that meets ours at the stile. They are on the popular Dales Way between Grassington and Kettlewell. On the far side of the stile, we find a way marker offering a choice of route – we take the rightmost option signed for Kettlewell and stay with the Dales Way for a little while.

The path is very clear now, and heads uphill toward the top of Conistone Dib – an area we last visited on the Copplestone Gate and Conistone Pie walk. At the top of the Dib the path reaches a gate and a further way marker. We now head right and uphill, along a clear track known as the Bycliffe Road, but don't forget to look back and slightly to the right to see one of the best areas of limestone pavement anywhere in the Dales.

The Bycliffe Road continues Northeast for a while, until we arrive at a four way junction where we go right – still on the Bycliffe Road. We continue uphill along the Bycliffe Road until we come to a gate where we enter a field which often has horses within. We cross the field, climbing to a further gate where we exit and head left, to follow the line of the drystone wall uphill. We are now at Kelber Gate.

We follow the path which remains very clear for a while now. The moor to our right is Kelber, and before long we arrive at a small cairn on the right which marks a path which we could take back to High Barn.

Our route continues straight on and approaches a green metal gate before winding onward through flat and boggy land at Bycliffe, and then on to a junction where we find an information board describing Grassington Moor. At this point, we see two options, a steep path rising to the right and a flat path straight on. We will eventually take the steep path as this is the way back to Yarnbury through the Lead Mines, but if you have the time and energy, it's well worth taking a short diversion to Mossdale Scar.

Having visited the scar we reverse until we arrive back at the junction where we saw the information board. Here we head uphill along a very clear track, with the mines as our destination.

The track remains clear all the way back to the mines – initially there is little evidence of the industrial past, and we are likely to see Curlews, Lapwings, and Red Kites. The further we go though, the more evidence we see of mining spoil with a damaged but still attractive landscape. Eventually we start heading downhill and start to see an increasing number of spoil heaps and disused mine shafts – these are fenced off and covered with railway sleepers. Ahead, we see a large chimney, and we use this as a landmark as we follow the track down to the mines. There are good number of tracks through the mines; the one we are following is the largest and clearest, but if in doubt – head for the chimney.

We leave the track and head across the moor to the base of the chimney. Once there, it becomes apparent that the chimney was positioned at the end of a system of unusual ground level flues which connected at the other end to the smelters where the lead ore was processed. There are in total something like 1.7 km of flues serving the site. We head on down the central flue toward the remains of the condenser house. This structure was used in combination with the long near-horizontal flues to slow down the lead in the exhaust gases allowing it to condense and be collected.

Following the flue still further we arrive at the smelters themselves these were referred to as “Cupola” smelters – the remains date from 1792. These were part of a significant modernisation of the mines with the new coal fired smelters achieving a far larger output than the previous peat and wood fired devices.

From the smelters we head left back to the track, which continues back to our starting point, with remnants of mine usage throughout. There are signs of early free mining pits, of horse drawn lifting gear, mills, and washing ponds, and tramways, and finally, and easily missed as we exit the site, there is a rather fine portal to a tunnel entering a mine shaft referred to as Barrett's shaft.

There is much to see here – so much so that another visit surely beckons.

- **Total distance 16.0 km (9.9 miles)**
- **Total ascent 333 m**
- **Challenging walk**