

## Copplestone Gate and Conistone Pie 2

We start in Conistone, using roadside parking adjacent to the bridge over the River Wharf. Please park in a manner considerate to local residents, and make sure you leave room for large vehicles to access the stables. Conistone is just off the B6160 between Threshfield and Kettlewell and is well signposted. To find the start use grid reference SD97876750, or the rather splendid what-3-words tag **satin.hamsters.dries**. Satnav users should find that postcode BD23 5HS gets them to the bridge.

From the bridge we head East over the river, and slightly uphill into Conistone, passing the trekking centre on our left. From there we soon arrive at the very attractive centre of the village with the tall maypole ahead of us. We take the left hand fork to pass the maypole and then almost immediately find a track on our right heading out toward the Dib.

The route through the Dib is clear but can be challenging – particularly in wet conditions, as some clambering over quite large stone steps is required. We are in the realm of tough walking here rather than rock climbing, but if a gentler route is required, rather than taking the first lane in Conistone take the road past the church and take a right up Scot Gate Lane until you find the Dales Way where the two alternatives come back together.

At the top of the Dib, we arrive at a flatter area where we find the Dales Way crossing our path. We briefly take this to the left through a wooden gate and head uphill to meet Scot Gate Lane – a wide green lane that eventually finds its way over to Mossdale. Scot Gate Lane is also the “easy” route up from Conistone, so if you opted to take that route, welcome back.

At the point where the Scot Gate Lane and Dib routes come together, we also find the Dales Way, which we use as a return route later in the day. Scot Gate Lane becomes Bycliffe Road at this point, and despite the names sounding like well-made tarmac roads, these are just rough green lanes and there is no traffic, other than the occasional horse to worry about. Our route is signposted for “Sandy Gate”, and we are now walking on much flatter land than at the start of the walk. As Bycliffe Road heads up toward Conistone Moor, we pass through an area of really atmospheric limestone pavement - to see this area at it's best you need to make a point of looking back every now and again though.

The Bycliffe Road continues on, and soon approaches a gate, beyond which it is enclosed between drystone walls. 200m later, we arrive at a crossroads where the route ahead becomes very overgrown. This is not a problem though because our route, signed for Copplestone Gate, leaves on the left. We are now on the Conistone Turf Road. This heads North toward a stand of conifers where we find a gate leading onto Conistone Moor, where we follow round the edge of the trees to pick up a drystone wall which we follow up a steep hill. The path here is not particularly clear, and it may be easier to take a somewhat “alpine” approach to the climb. As long as you end up at the opposite corner of the field uphill from where you enter, everything will work out.

Ahead of us at this stage is a striking limestone scar – we need to crest this before we see the route continuing to climb, but now much more gently, toward Copplestone Gate, and a trig point at 512m.

Just to the right of the Trig point is the Copplestone Gate – also known as Capplestone Gate. We take the gate and find ourselves on Conistone Moor, a large and rather bleak expanse of moorland that can be quite boggy after heavy rain, so if you want to explore off the main paths – take care.

We are now into an area that was once an important lead mining area, and the scars of this industrial activity are still clear. The mining was based on primitive “Bell Pits” where a shaft is sunk to reach the mineral, which is excavated by miners, and transported to the surface by a bucket attached to a winch, much like a well.

The path through the lead mines is marked by a series of wooden stakes with yellow tops, and then as we get further into the spoil heaps, we see a distinct fingerpost. On our previous visit to this area, we headed up past the post and along the drystone wall at the top of the scar. Today however, we take the ladder stile in the wall (400m after the Copplestone Gate), to take a gentler route slightly downhill. This takes us across a field, and then via another stile where we meet the path coming down from the scar which now looms above us. This is a good point to take a break and enjoy the views across the Wharfe valley to Kilnsey Moor and Crag.

From here we head west, taking a clear and easy track down to woodland at Highgate Leys Lane, about 1km down the hill. This is where we meet the Dales Way again, and it would be easy to be tempted into the woodland and on to Kettlewell. That is indeed a good walk, but it’s not our route today, so we head sharp left (almost reversing our direction) to follow the contours around the base of Swineber Scar for 1500m. As we continue along the Dales Way, we see Conistone Pie come into view. The Pie is a prominent limestone outcrop shaped, unsurprisingly given the name, reminiscent a stand-pie and it commands extensive views of both Littondale and Wharfedale which are divided by the Birks Fell ridge.

The Dales Way path passes to the left of the Conistone Pie, but the pie is worth a moment or two to visit – on a clear day there are great views from the top. Once we leave the Pie though take care to use the stile on the Dales way – if you continue within the drystone wall, you will meet a dead end and need to reverse.

We stay with the Dales way for the next 500m until we meet Scot Gate Lane again. Just as on the way up, we have a choice of two routes, the lane or the Dib. Given that we used the Dib in the morning, and we were running out of light, we opted for the lane, turning right and heading downhill toward the radio mast.

After about 1000m this meets the minor road between Conistone and Kettlewell, where we head left. This brings us to St Mary’s Church, which was originally built in the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> century. In 1846 the chancel was added, and the nave and aisle were rebuilt under the supervision of the Lancaster architects Sharpe and Paley, who maintained its original Norman style of architecture. Another period of renovation was undertaken in the 1950s, which uncovered Saxon markings on undiscovered stones in the churchyard. This led to (unproven) speculation that the church could be the oldest building in Wharfedale, and possibly in Craven.

Of note within the grounds of St Mary’s, just to the left of the entrance gate is the memorial to those lost at Mossdale.

From the church we continue along the minor road to Conistone where the walk ends.

- **Total distance 11.1 km (6.9miles)**
- **Total Ascent 369 m**
- **Easy walk**