

Smardale Walk D

*A circular walk
from Newbiggin-
on-Lune to
Smardale
viaduct*

Start: Newbiggin-on-Lune

Grid Ref: NY 703 053

Nearest postcode: CA17 4NY

Distance: 6.5 miles / 10.5km

Terrain: Tarmac, hard track, grassy footpath

Ascent: Approx. 100 metres

Difficulty: Easy walking on the flat to start with, becoming rougher on stony tracks and grassy footpaths. There are some steep slopes, steps and stiles. Beware: one section of track becomes narrow, with a significant drop to Scandal Beck below. The second half of the walk becomes easy again, along the route of the disused railway.

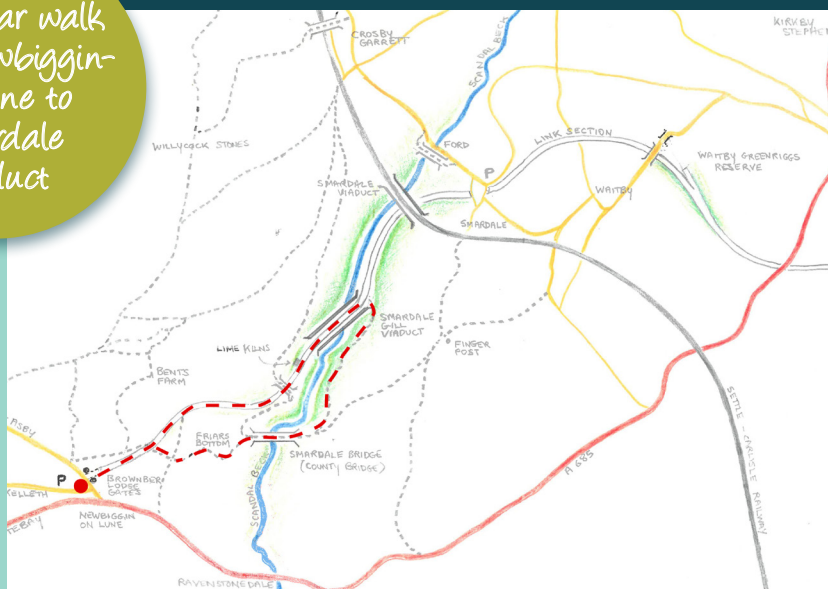
Parking: Roadside parking.

Public Transport: A limited bus service runs from Kendal, Sedbergh and Brough to Kirkby Stephen. The Settle–Carlisle railway goes through Kirkby Stephen.

Directions: Leave the A685 at the western end of Newbiggin-on-Lune signed to Kelleth/Great Asby (heading north). Then take the immediate left for Kelleth and park by the roadside.

Facilities: No facilities along route.

OS Map: OS Explorer map OL19.



Map by Richard Hughes. Smardale landscape by John Morrison.

The route

- ❖ **Imagine times gone by as you walk along an old drove road, pass two former quarries and follow the line of the disused Stainmore railway.**
- ❖ **Enjoy the array of colourful wildflowers as you make your way through the former limestone quarry back to Newbiggin-on-Lune.**
- ❖ **Look out for butterflies, including the Scotch argus and northern brown argus.**

Return to the minor road towards Great Asby and after 50 metres turn right between the imposing stone gateposts. Walk past the house and proceed along the lane until you come to the Smardale Nature Reserve entrance.

Carry on for about 500 metres until you come to a footpath sign to the right. This leads you along a narrow path between

walls to Badger Hill past Friars Bottom farm and on to Smardale Bridge on the old drove road.

Cross Smardale Bridge and head briefly uphill on the track. In about 150 metres you arrive at a stile and fingerpost on the left. Proceed along the footpath in the direction of Witches Stride, passing a number of quarries where sandstone was quarried for the viaduct. If you are paying attention you may spot the "pillow mounds" which are the remains of rabbit warrens, probably belonging to the monks based at the Abbey (now a ruin) at Ravenstonedale.

Scandal Beck is now to your left and you will be treated to some spectacular views of Smardale Gill viaduct in front of you. As you approach the viaduct the last couple of hundred metres of track become increasingly narrow and there is a significant drop to the river on the left, so take great care, especially when it is wet or windy. A stile gives access to the old railway track at the end of the viaduct.

Smardale Walk D route – continued

Turn left and cross the viaduct. Carry on South along the dismantled railway line passing a limestone quarry and some old lime kilns – there is an interpretation board that is well worth a look at. You will eventually arrive back at your start point. In the summertime it is worth keeping a careful eye out for butterflies. The low-flying northern brown argus is particularly rare.



Before you set off

The weather in Cumbria can change quickly, particularly on the fells, so please be prepared, as changes in weather can alter the difficulty of a route. Appropriate clothing can make all the difference – it is important to be warm, comfortable and dry when out exploring.

An Ordnance Survey map of the area, a compass and the knowledge to use them are invaluable.

Please observe the country code when out walking and, where possible, stick to public footpaths and bridleways. Stock is frequently grazing in these areas so dogs must be kept under control.

Wildlife Highlights

Visiting this nature reserve allows you to explore an unspoilt corner of Cumbria where stunning scenery and wildlife-spotting opportunities await at any time of the year.

The nature reserve itself offers something for everyone: from the the species-rich grasslands around the former quarries to the beck below and fells above, each area has its own community of plants and animals, as well as a fascinating history.

Dipper breed close to the beck in the spring, so keep an eye open and binoculars at hand to be in with a change of spotting one of these remarkable little birds. Other birds

include long-tailed tit, goldfinch and robin, as well as birds of prey such as buzzard and kestrel, which can be seen soaring overhead.

The hay meadows are full of pretty flowers from spring to autumn – look out for northern marsh, fragrant, and common spotted orchids along the banks.

Around the limestone quarry common rock rose, wild thyme, bloody crane's-bill and devil's-bit scabious bloom in the thinner soil, and numerous butterflies feed on the nectar from these plants.

The Scotch argus butterfly is found here at the southern limit of its range and the nature reserve is also home to a large colony of northern brown

argus butterflies. Other butterflies include dark green fritillary, red admiral, common blue, meadow brown and orange-tip.

This is a walk full of interesting history with plenty of wildlife-spotting opportunities!



Footpath to Witches Stride



Approaching Smardale Gill viaduct



Returning to Newbiggin-on-Lune

Photographs: Footpath to Witches Stride, approaching Smardale Gill viaduct, and returning to Newbiggin-on-Lune by John Morrison; northern brown argus butterflies by Andrew Walter; dipper by Angus McNiff and common spotted orchid by Tom Marshall.

Please note: Smardale Gill viaduct is owned and managed by the Northern Viaduct Trust, www.nvt.org.uk

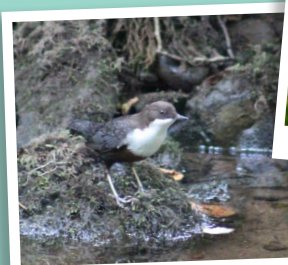


Cumbria
Wildlife Trust

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Dipper



Northern brown argus butterfly



Common spotted orchid