



Blubberhouses Tree Trail, Blubberhouses



Nidderdale
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Introduction

This delightful 3 mile riverside walk is full of interest with a variety of tree species, an abundance of wildlife and glimpses of an industrial heritage. The walk takes you up the beautiful valley of the River Washburn, returning via Scaife Hall Farm to Blubberhouses. Yorkshire Water has created permissive paths linking the public rights of way so that walkers can enjoy a circular route. This is an enjoyable walk at any time of the year.

Map

OS Explorer 297:
Lower Wharfedale
& Washburn Valley

Distance/Time

Full route: 3 miles (5km)
Shorter route: 2.5 miles (4km)
1-2 hours

Starting Point

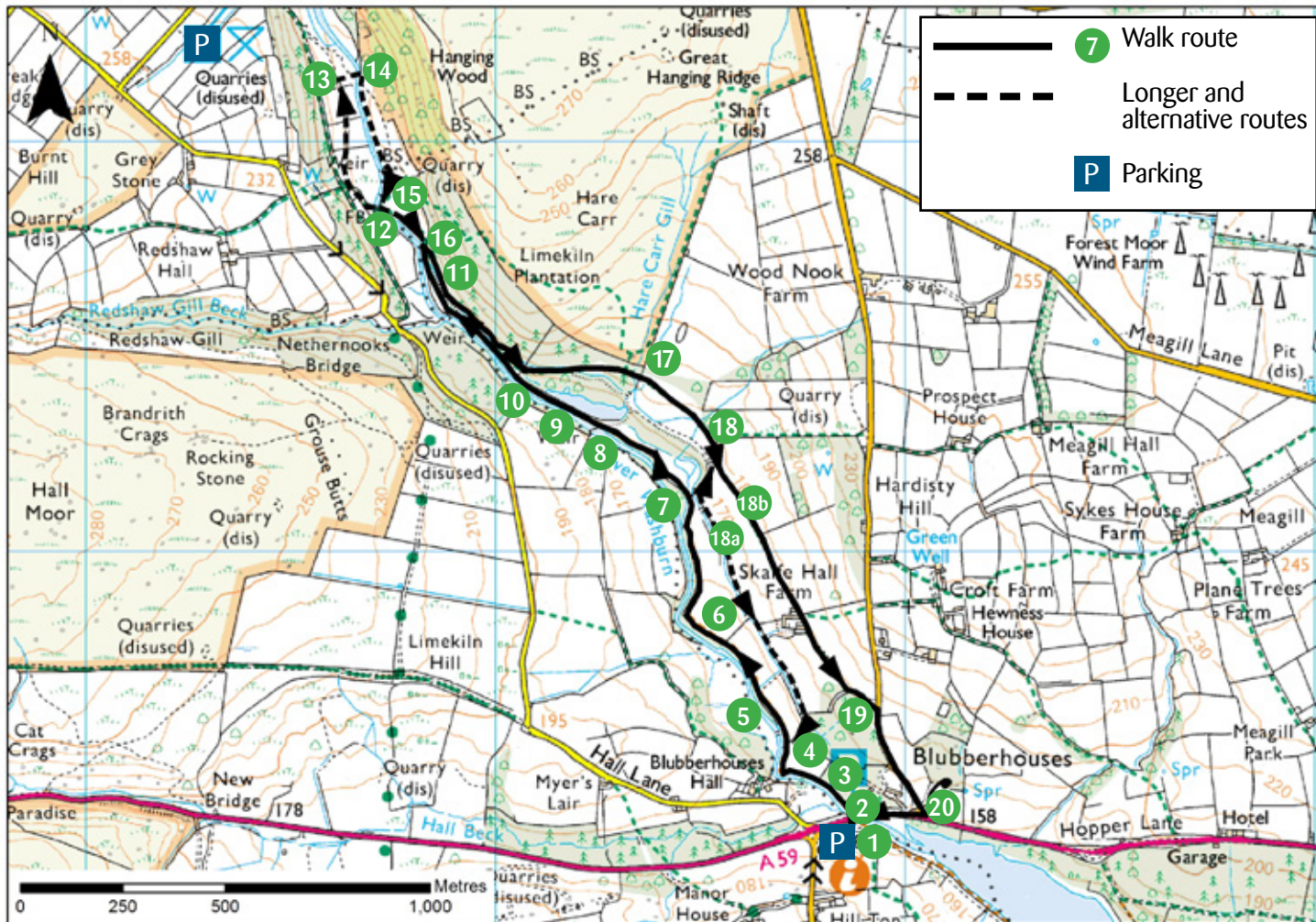
Start from the Yorkshire Water car park next to the A59 at Blubberhouses.

Terrain

This is a moderate route on riverside paths and through farmland. The route is mainly on the level but some parts of the path are uneven and can be muddy.

Useful Information

- This section of the river is used for wild water canoeing events and Yorkshire Water arrange increased outflow from Thruscross Dam for these. Water in the river can therefore rise very rapidly and produce a strong current so you are strongly advised to keep away from the river bed at all times.
- In the interests of the countryside, wildlife and safety please keep dogs under control and out of the ponds.



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The Route

1. Taking great care, and when it is safe to do so, cross the A59 road and turn right; walk along the grass verge behind the safety barrier. This section of the road bridges the Washburn River which is almost concealed by willow trees growing from the banks.

2. Just before the end of the safety barrier turn left down some steps to descend the embankment.

3. Following the path upstream note the lime trees on the left of the path.

4. Continue along the path between the cricket field and the river. The wall at the far side of the cricket field is the only visible remnant of the large Victorian textile mill complex that once stood here. You will see evidence of water control systems for the mill at various places on the walk.

5. As you follow the path you will notice a number of tree species here – broadleaf trees like alder along the water's edge, ash, beech, birch, elm, oak and sycamore, and conifers like sitka spruce.

6. A feature of this stretch of path is the odd-shaped beech trees, some of which appear joined together. This is most likely due to cutting back the young trees many decades ago, possibly to create a hedge, and subsequent neglect of the regrowth. Beech trees are not native to this area and are likely to have been planted as part of a landscaping scheme in the Victorian mill owner's estate.

7. Beyond the little bridge over a side stream are some mature lime trees with their typical brush of growth round the lower trunk.

8. Shortly after these on the right is some coppiced hazel: coppicing (meaning 'to cut') is an ancient technique to harvest small stems of hazel for weaving into basket ware or fencing; the re-growth creates a multi-stemmed tree. On the opposite bank, the roots of the beech trees extend up and downstream, a complex interwoven pattern providing cover and shelter for birds like grey wagtails, dippers and wrens.

9. Go past a large mill pond on the right: known as Low Dam this would have served as a reservoir for a steady supply to the water-powered mill. Keep your eyes peeled for dragonflies in the summer months.

10. At the end of the mill pond on the right you will notice an information panel. This was created, along with the wall and seat, as part of a restoration project of the wetland in 2009.

11. The valley broadens a little for a few hundred metres, and then narrows where the wooded slope on the right converges on the river: at this point the path meets a bridleway coming in from the right. **FOR THE SHORT WALK**, turn sharp right here and back down the valley following the bridleway that rises gently up past a new plantation with the stone-lined mill race running alongside (follow instructions from point 16).

12. **FOR THE LONGER WALK**, continue upstream. The valley opens out with larch on the higher slopes to the left, and the oak trees of the ancient woodland at Hanging Wood on the far right. The dam of Thruscross Reservoir forms the head of this section of the Washburn Valley. Follow the path over a bridge over the

river and bear right along a track that eventually arrives at a level surfaced area below Thruscross Dam. This is a private parking area with a small stone utility building on the left.

13. The construction of Thruscross Reservoir was completed in 1966. The dam height is 39.2 metres and holds back more than 1725 million gallons of water. If you are feeling energetic you can continue up the very steep steps to the left, to the top of the dam from which you may view the reservoir.

14. Turn immediately right as you enter the car park and cross the surfaced area to a bridge, cross the bridge and immediately bear right along the riverside path back down stream. Alder trees predominate along the river.

15. Continue downstream with the river on your right until you meet the original path again at the first bridge. Retrace your steps downstream to where the path divides (location 11).

16. A bridleway marker points you to the left alongside the stone-lined mill race and up past a new plantation. Take this path away from the river and gradually up into the woodland. Note the crab-apple tree on the right of the path.

17. At the end of the new plantation a gate leads into a field. Continue through the gate and along the track to the next gate with a stile next to it.

18. From here there are two choices of return: **a)** Take a permissive path, across the field to the right and return along an old mill race and back past the cricket ground. **b)** Or continue straight ahead on this bridleway along

the track to the farm and the road.

18a. The permissive path: turn right down the hill following waymarks and turn left onto the mill race. This mill race ran from Low Dam to the now demolished Westhouse Mill which produced cotton, flax, linen and silk in the Victorian era. Follow the mill race to where a new permissive path takes you to the right downhill past the cricket ground to the river, and retrace your steps downstream and back to the A59 road and car park, taking great care as you cross the busy road.

18b. The bridleway route: continue through the field along a well-defined track. To your left on the skyline behind the beech trees is the High Apprentice House which used to house the young mill workers. It is said that remote from the urban mill inspectors, these children were worked very hard. A fine old ash tree grows next to the track in the field. The three mounds planted with trees seen to the right along the route are spoil heaps from the excavation of a culvert that ran from High dam to power a turbine which is still standing in buildings occupied by the Cricket Club. Follow this track past Scaife Hall Farm and out onto the road.

19. Bear right and continue downhill along the road, keeping close to the wall. Be alert for traffic and take care, but do pause to admire the view down the Washburn Valley and Fewston Reservoir below.

20. The road meets the busy A59 at the bottom of the hill. Turn right along the grass verge. Taking great care, cross the road when it is safe to do so and follow the path back to the car park.