

The Mines of Greenhow and Bewerley Moor

Through a landscape of lead mining, from one of Yorkshire's highest villages.

Distance 6 miles (9.7km)

Minimum time 2hrs 45min

Ascent/gradient 1,181ft (360m)

Level of difficulty Medium

Paths Field and moorland paths and tracks, 5 stiles

Landscape Moorland and valley, remains of lead mining industry

Suggested map aqua3 OS Explorer 298 Nidderdale

Start/finish SE 128643

Dog friendliness Dogs can be off lead for much of route

Parking Car park at Toft Gate Lime Kiln

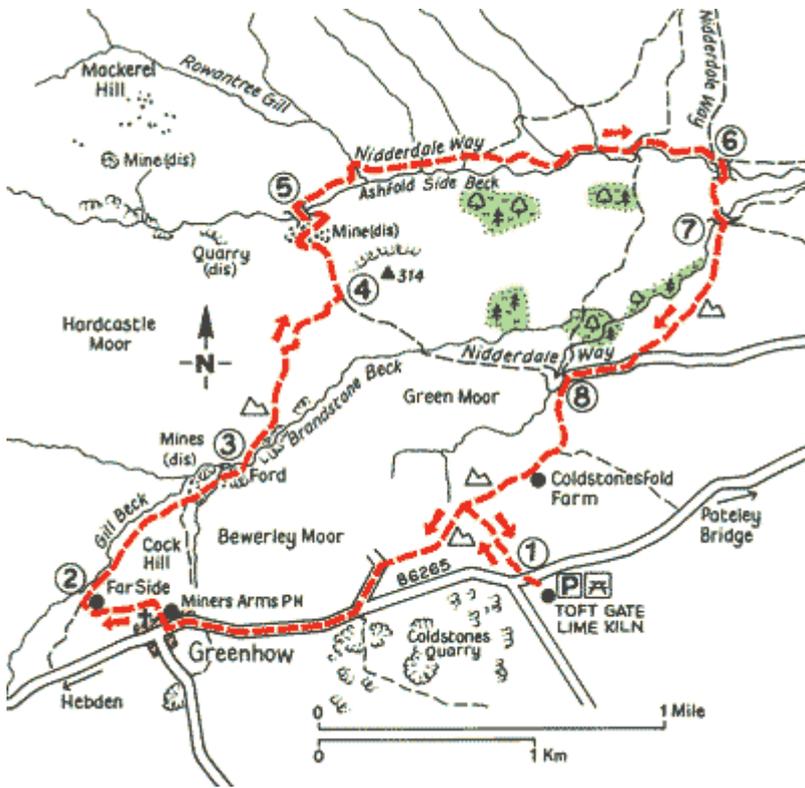
Public toilets None on route

It is a long haul from Pateley Bridge up Greenhow Hill to the village of Greenhow, one of the highest in Yorkshire, at around 1,300ft (396m) above sea level. Until the early 17th century this was all bleak and barren moorland. When lead mining on a significant scale developed in the area in the 1600s, a settlement was established here, though most of the surviving buildings are late 18th and 19th century. Many of the cottages also have a small piece of attached farmland, for the miners were also farmers, neither occupation alone giving them a stable income or livelihood. In a way typical of such mining villages, the church and the pub - the Miners Arms, of course - are at the very centre.

Romans are the first known miners of Greenhow, though there is said to be some evidence of even earlier activity, as far back as the Bronze Age. The Romans had a camp near Pateley Bridge, and ingots of lead - called 'pigs' - have been found near by, dating from the 1st century ad. In the Middle Ages lead from Yorkshire became important for roofing castles and cathedrals - it is said that it was even used in Jerusalem. Production was governed by the major landowners, the monasteries, and some, like Fountains and Byland, became rich from selling charters for mining and from royalties. After the monasteries were dissolved, the new landowners wanted to exploit their mineral rights, and encouraged many small-scale enterprises in return for a share of the profits.

As you leave Greenhow and begin to descend into the valley of the Gill Beck, you pass through the remains of the Cockhill Mine. It is still possible to make out the dressing floor, where the lead ore was separated from the waste rock and other minerals, and the location of the smelt works, where the ore was processed. Beyond, by the Ashfold Side Beck, were the Merryfield Mines and, where the route crosses the beck, there are extensive remains of the Prosperous Smelt Mill. All these mines were active in the middle of the 19th century, and some had a brief resurgence in the mid 20th.

The vast retaining banks of Coldstones Quarry rise above the car park at Toft Gate Lime Kiln. This enormous hole (you can see it from the viewing point at the top of the bank) opened about 1900 and produces almost 1 million tons of limestone a year. Around Greenhow the limestone layers are particularly deep, allowing large blocks to be cut. Across it run two mineral veins, called Garnet Vein and Sun Vein, both of which have been mined for lead and for fluorite. Other minerals found in smaller quantities in the rock here are barite, calcite and galena, as well as crystals of cerrusite, anglesite and occasionally quartz.



1 Cross the road from the car park and go over the stile opposite into a field. Follow the faint path downhill, over a gate in the wall and to the right of a barn. Cross another stile and descend to the track Turn left and walk up the hill through two gates to a road. Turn left and walk up to the main road. Turn right and follow this past the burial ground and the Miners Arms. About 100yds (91m) after the pub, just past a converted chapel, take a lane to the right. At the junction go left and follow the lane to a cattle grid and through a gate. Curve right, round behind the farmhouse.

2 Follow the track downhill into the valley of Gill Beck and then Brandstone Beck, where there are the extensive remains of lead mining activity. Where the track swings left, go ahead down the valley to reach the main track near a concrete building. Go right of the building and just beyond go ahead down the valley to the ford.

3 Cross and follow the obvious track up the hill. Go over a stile beside a gate by trees then, 100yds (91m) beyond, take another stile on the right. Follow the track towards the farm, going left between stone walls, and descend to another stile on to a track.

4 Turn left and go through a waymarked gateway. By a spoil heap follow the track to the right and downhill. Veer slightly left, past an iron cogwheel, to cross Ashfold Side Beck on a concrete causeway to a gate.

5 Follow the bridleway sign to the right and climb the hill, to a Nidderdale Way sign, where you turn right along the track to a gate. Wind round the head of a valley through two gateways and over three cattle grids. Just beyond the third, go through a metal gate to the right and over the bridge.

6 Go ahead then bear left to another gate and follow the track uphill and left to a wall. Turn right at the end of the wall along a lane between stone walls. Continue along the track to a gate and cross a footbridge.

7 Turn right through a gate and follow the track uphill, passing through another gate. Turn left at another track, making towards the farmhouse, but bear right across the grass to meet a metalled lane. Turn right and follow the lane over a cattle grid.

8 About 100yds (91m) beyond the farm on the right, turn left up a path. After a cattle grid turn right and follow the track through a gate. At Coldstonesfold Farm turn right and follow the track uphill through a gate, before turning left over the stile to retrace your outward route to return to Toft Gate Lime Kiln.