



## HARDBERRY HILL and HUDESHOPE BECK

FROM MIDDLETON-IN-TEESDALE 7½ MILES (12.1KM)

**T**eesdale's industrial heritage is just as enticing as its scenery and this walk has a good mixture of the two. The woodland around Hudeshope Beck sustains a rich variety of wildlife and makes a wonderful finish to the walk.

Middleton-in-Teesdale, revered as the 'capital' of Upper Teesdale, lies in the very heart of the most beautiful and enchanting scenery that can be imagined. It was founded c.1031, when King Cnut granted it, as part of a much larger estate, to the monks of St Cuthbert at Durham. However, it did not begin to grow significantly until the nineteenth century when it became an important lead mining centre.

In 1815 the Quaker-owned London Lead Company established their northern headquarters at Middleton. They built houses, schools and libraries for their workers and became the first British company to introduce

the five day working week. Water was piped to convenient points around the village and some of the original tap housings can still be seen in the walls. Every house had its own vegetable garden and some even boasted a purpose-built pigsty at the back door.

The Parish church, dedicated to St Mary, the Virgin, was rebuilt c.1878. It has several medieval grave-covers built into the interior of the north wall. The east window of the original church is now erected in the churchyard. One of the most interesting features of the church is its detached bell-tower, the only one of its kind in the Diocese of Durham. This was built about 1557 to house three bells bequeathed by William Bell, 'prest and parson of Middleton in Tesdaill'. The bells are reputed to have been pealed by one man who used both hands and one of his feet.

Our route from Middleton follows a quiet road which has tremendous panoramic views

of Teesdale. The river Tees meanders along the valley floor with the impressive Holwick Scars as a backdrop. The vista improves further when we leave the road to begin our ascent of Hardberry Hill. To the west stands Great Dun Fell, easily identified by the radar station on its summit, right of this is Little Dun Fell and then Cross Fell, the highest peak on the Pennine ridge.

After crossing the shoulder of Hardberry Hill the harsher scenery of the lead mining period becomes more apparent. The valley is strewn with the remains of the Coldberry Mine which closed in 1955 after more than 200 years of lead production. Coldberry was one of the largest lead mining complexes in the North Pennines. The immediate area of the mines has been granted the status of a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The most prominent scar is Coldberry Gutter, the result of an early open-cast mining technique known as 'hushing'. This involved the construction of a reservoir with a turf dam on the moor above the suspected vein. When the reservoir was full, the dam was breached so that the sudden torrent swept down, tearing away the soil and surface rocks to expose the vein. Then picks and crowbars were used to loosen and remove the ore. This process was carried out repeatedly, creating deep gullies on the hillside which are visible from many miles around.

During the descent, remnants of a water balance system can be seen. This consisted of a wheeled water-tank which moved down an incline between two walls. A rope from the tank was attached to a bucket of ore in the shaft and, as the tank went down, the bucket came up. Using the weight of water to raise the ore from the shaft was both economical and energy efficient.

Leaving behind the ravages of the mines we descend gradually to Hudeshope Beck. The scenery quickly begins to improve and there are excellent views across Teesdale with the distinctive wooded crest of Kirkcarrion in the distance.

As we approach the Miners' Bridge the well preserved Skears kilns come into view. These impressive kilns date from 1840 when the first pair were built, a second pair was added later in that century and a single semi-circular kiln was added in the early twentieth century. The final kiln, which has now collapsed, was built in 1941 to help satisfy the larger demand for lime during World War II. Limestone from the nearby Skears Quarry was burnt here and the lime extracted was used mainly to help neutralise acidic soils. The kilns remained in production until 1960.

From the kilns we follow a pleasant lane alongside the beck passing the attractive Horseshoe Falls. The lane leads back onto the road and returns us Middleton.

### Start/Parking:

Middleton-in-Teesdale, in the car park by the memorial fountain. There is a second car park at the Working Men's Club near the bridge over Hudeshope Beck.

### Location:

Middleton-in-Teesdale is situated 10 miles (16.1km) north-west of Barnard Castle on the B6277 Alston Road.

### Grid Ref:

NY 948 254. Postcode: DL12 0SL.

### Distance:

7½ miles (12.1km) circular. Allow 4 hrs walking time.

### Total Ascent:

1083 feet (330m) Maximum Elevation: 1656 feet (505m).

### OS Maps:

Explorer OL31 (1:25,000) or Landranger 91 (1:50,000) or Landranger 92 (1:50,000).

### Refreshments:

Inns and cafes at Middleton-in-Teesdale.

### Public Toilets:

Middleton-in-Teesdale, none en route.

### Other:

Shops, Post Office, fish and chip shop, bus service, telephone.

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- 1 (GR: 948 254) From the car park, turn left and follow the road towards Alston. Go past the Teesdale Hotel and cross the bridge over Hudeshope Beck.
- 2 (GR: 947 257) Leave the main road and follow the road to Middle Side, which climbs steeply at first. Continue along the road climbing more gradually for just over two miles (3.2km) to the road junction near Stable Edge.
- 3 (GR: 922 278) Leave the road via a gate on the right (SP Public Footpath). (There are two gates with signposts close together but our route uses the second one). Follow a rough track uphill through two gates. Leave the track and continue climbing alongside the right wall. Go through a gate and stay with the wall, climbing to a stone step-stile.
- 4 (GR: 928 283) Go over the stile and continue climbing beside the wall. Near the wall corner bear right and cross another stone step-stile.
- 5 (GR: 929 284) Bear right and head roughly north-east to follow a sketchy path over the moor to a fence. Cross a wooden stile in the fence and descend to cross a stone step-stile in the wall.
- 6 (GR: 937 288) From the stile continue on roughly the same heading and descend to the Coldberry Lead Mine.
- 7 (GR: 942 290) Cross a wooden step-stile, turn right and follow a rough track alongside the fence to reach a minor road. Turn right, go through a gate and follow the road for about ten yards (9m).
- 8 (GR: 944 286) Leave the road via a stile on the left (SP Public Footpath). Follow a clear path descending diagonally through the field. Cross a stone step-stile, continue descending over Club Gill Sike and go over another stone step-stile.
- 9 (GR: 946 279) Continue through three more fields and enter a woodland area via a ladder-stile and a wooden step-stile.
- 10 (GR: 947 276) Follow a clear track and begin a steep descent, cross a wooden step-stile at the bottom and a plank bridge. Bear right and follow a clear track alongside Hudeshope Beck to the Miners' Bridge and Skears kilns.
- 11 (GR: 948 271) Cross the bridge, turn right and follow a good tarmacked lane through the wood. (There is a beckside path although it is not a public right-of-way).
- 12 (GR: 948 259) Turn right and continue descending to Middleton-in-Teesdale. Turn left at the road junction, go past the Teesdale Hotel and return to the car park.



### LODGINGS – FIT FOR A KING!

Mine-shops, like this one at Coldberry, were built to house the lead miners between their working shifts. As many as forty miners lodged here in cramped conditions with little privacy. They elected a leader known as the 'king'. He held a regular court and the community will was expressed by a code of rules and the enforcement of discipline. Card-playing was strictly forbidden and defaulters had to pay a shilling into the shop fund which was used to buy cooking utensils and other amenities.

