

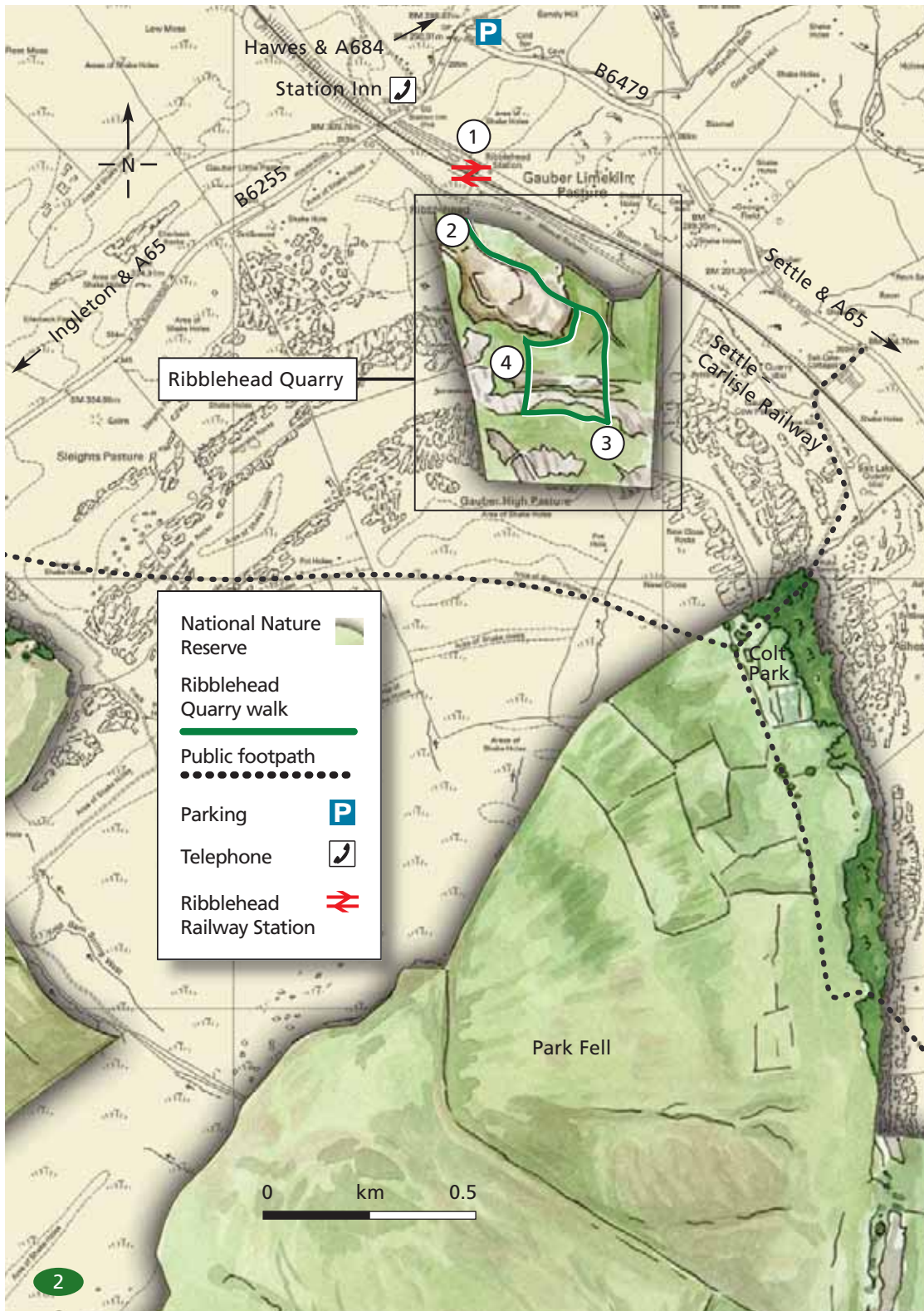


Ribblehead Quarry walk

Ingleborough National Nature Reserve



working towards *Natural England*
for people, places and nature



Ribblehead Quarry walk

Ingleborough National Nature Reserve is renowned for the wildlife and geology of its limestone pavement and other limestone features. The area's importance has been recognised by English Nature through the creation of this National Nature Reserve which covers an area of 1,014 hectares. Ingleborough is also a wildlife site of international importance, being part of the Natura 2000 series created by the European Union.

This fascinating short walk takes you into and around a disused quarry which is being recolonised by nature. The walk explores an area of limestone pavement and visits a Viking age settlement. The walk is approximately 2.5 kilometres long (1.5 miles) and should take approximately 1 hour to complete.

Difficulty level is easy to medium with some rocky stretches. Please take note of warning signs. It is advisable to keep away from the cliffs around the quarry edge as these are unfenced, up to 10 metres in height and may have loose rocks. There are also several ponds with deep water. Please be aware of traffic on the short road section.

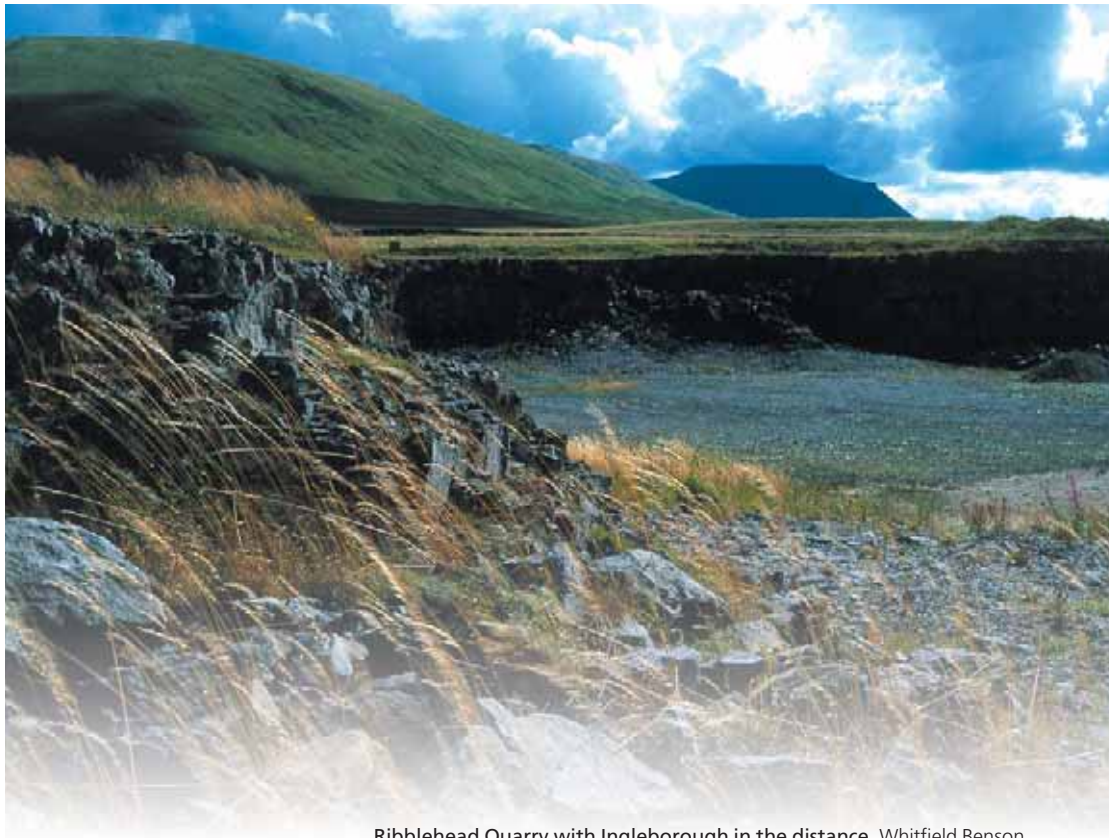
1 Arriving by train? Alight at Ribbleshead Station and walk down the access track to the main road (B6255). Turn left under the bridge and then left again up the rough track running parallel with the railway line. After about a quarter of a mile you will reach the quarry entrance on your right. If arriving by car, please park at the Ribbleshead lay-bys and then walk along the road westwards under the railway bridge,

turning left up the rough track to reach the quarry entrance.

2 Pass through the handgate and into the quarry. The route is waymarked in front of you, bearing left around some old spoil heaps, then right before climbing up a rough stone slope. Pass through a gate and keep to left hand track, following the waymarking through another gate and onto the open hillside.

3 The waymarked route bears right and passes around and then through an area of limestone pavement until you meet a narrow path. The walk turns right at this point to a gate in the drystone wall, however a short detour of about 20 metres directly in front of you takes you to an ancient farmstead.

4 Returning to the route, pass through the gate and then follow the waymarked route. Take care, as the quarry faces are directly to your left (north) of this path. Eventually you will meet a track where you should take a left turn to rejoin your earlier route. Walk back through the quarry to the entrance gates.



Ribblehead Quarry with Ingleborough in the distance. Whitfield Benson

The quarry

As you pass through the handgate you enter into a ‘rockscape’ – an expanse of bare rock and boulders. Small-scale quarrying to produce limestone for agricultural purposes has taken place for centuries in the Dales; however the proximity of this site to the railway resulted in more commercial limestone extraction. This quarry opened in 1943 to produce high quality limestone for the iron industry in Durham. A powdering plant actually within the quarry produced limes for use in agriculture, toothpaste, cosmetics and scouring powders. The quarry closed in

1958 and has lain dormant ever since. In 2000, Hanson Aggregates handed over the quarry to English Nature, thereby forfeiting the right to extract several million tons of new stone.

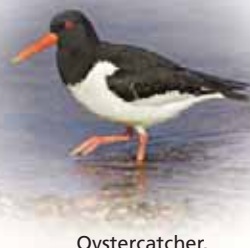
Restoration

Worked-out quarries can be very inhospitable places with steep cliffs, solid rock floors and little or no vegetation. They are, however, reminiscent of periods such as that following the last Ice Age when the glaciers melted leaving behind rock piles, small pools and areas of exposed bare rock.

With the help of the former quarry owner, piles of abandoned rock and stone were spread around creating boulder fields and making areas where water could collect.

The land was left for nature to recolonise and this process has already begun. Special plants like bird's-eye primrose have appeared and the wetter areas have the northern spike rush.

Ground-nesting birds such as oystercatchers, redshank and ringed plover now visit the site along with the magnificent raven. Dragonflies and damselflies dart over the pools on warm summer days.



Oystercatcher.
Mark Hamblin



Bird's-eye primrose. Allan Potts

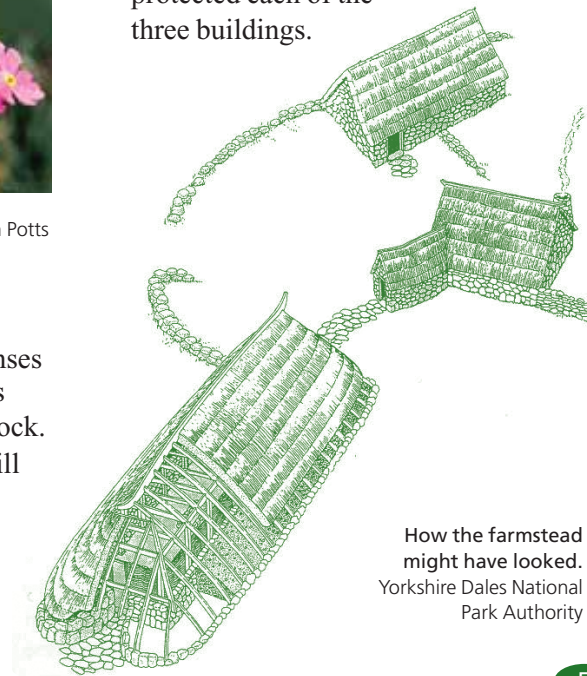
Limestone landscapes

Above the wall you enter open 'Limestone Country' – large expanses of lush green limestone grasslands interspersed with grey limestone rock. Walk here in the spring and you will see a number of attractive plants – the fragrant wild thyme, a scattering of early-purple orchids and the yellow bird's-foot trefoil.

Flat expanses of limestone rock are known as limestone pavements. These fascinating rock forms have been created by glaciation and water erosion. Look closely among the rocks and you will find a number of common woodland plants – dog's mercury and the delicate white flowered wood sorrel. The damp, shaded conditions encourage a number of ferns – brittle bladder fern, hart's-tongue and spleenworts.

Farmstead from Viking times

A short distance above the path are the remains of a farmstead from Viking times. The foundations of three buildings survive as low walls, now partially grassed-over. Substantial thatched or turved roofs probably protected each of the three buildings.



How the farmstead might have looked.
Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

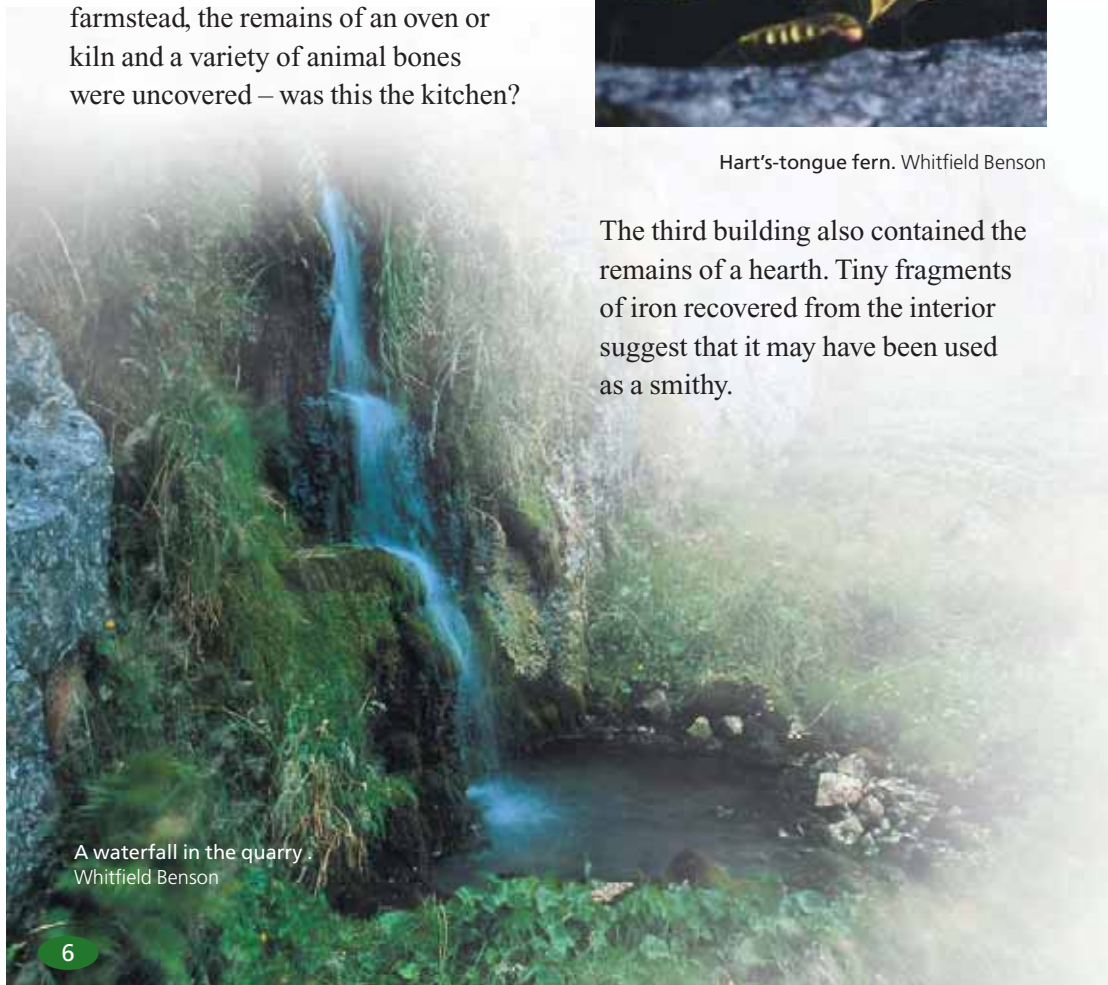
The largest building – the Longhouse – is rectangular with entrances built into each gable end. This was the main farmstead where people ate and slept, and was the principal focus of activity on the farm. In the surrounding area, fragments of drystone wall mark the boundaries of the fields in which the farmstead's inhabitants once worked.

Excavations undertaken during the mid-1970s revealed that the farm was occupied during the 9th century AD. In the building nearest the main farmstead, the remains of an oven or kiln and a variety of animal bones were uncovered – was this the kitchen?



Hart's-tongue fern. Whitfield Benson

The third building also contained the remains of a hearth. Tiny fragments of iron recovered from the interior suggest that it may have been used as a smithy.



A waterfall in the quarry.
Whitfield Benson

Take your own safety seriously on the Ribblesdale Quarry walk

There is much to see and enjoy here, but peace of mind is something only you can ensure by being informed and prepared.

Ingleborough is a wonderful but demanding reserve. A remote and often deserted mountainous area (rising to 650 metres) it is subject to extreme weather conditions, including sudden and dense hill fog. We recommend you come equipped with the following:

- A map and compass – make sure you know how to use them
- Waterproofs, spare clothing
- Emergency food and water
- A torch and whistle
- A mobile phone – limited reception but worth a try
- A rucksack to carry it all in

It makes sense to tell a responsible person exactly where you are going, how long you plan to spend and what time you will return.

The lie of the land

Many rocks are slippery and loose and there are deep holes concealed by

vegetation, so keep your eyes peeled and don't try to travel in poor light.

There are many caves and potholes. Unless you are part of a properly equipped, experienced and supervised group, stay well away from them.

Take care with the old drystone walls – many are topped with rusty barbed wire. They may be unstable and it may be unwise to climb over or on them – use the stiles or gates provided.

Keeping an eye on livestock

- Please try not to disturb the livestock
- If left alone, animals will generally not cause a threat to visitors
- However, cattle can intimidate, crowd or kick
- Do not get between cows and their calves
- If you are walking a dog and cows become agitated and crowd around you, let go of your animal

Public phones

Public phones are located at Selside (SD785757) and Horton in Ribblesdale (SD807726). You may also be able to use a phone in the Station Inn, Ribblesdale.



English Nature, the Rural Development Service, the Countryside Agency. Working in partnership to conserve and enhance our landscapes and natural environment to promote countryside access and recreation as well as public well-being, now and for future generations.

This is one of a range of publications published by:

North & East Yorkshire Team, English Nature,
Asquith House, Leyburn Business Park,
Harmby Road, Leyburn DL8 5QA.

Tel: 01969 623447

Fax: 01969 621298

www.english-nature.org.uk

© English Nature 2005

Printed on Evolution Satin, 75% recycled post-consumer waste paper, Elemental Chlorine Free.

ISBN 1 85716 895 X

Designed and printed by
Cameron Publishing NE11 0HF,
5M, 5M.

Front cover photograph:

Ribblehead Quarry,
Whitfield Benson



Natura 2000 is a network of internationally important wildlife sites, protected under EC Habitats and Bird Directives. They have been set up to help halt the loss of European biodiversity.



Awarded for excellence

For further information contact:

The Site Manager,
English Nature,
Colt Park Barn,
Chapel-le-Dale,
Carnforth LA6 3JF.

Tel: 015242 42021