

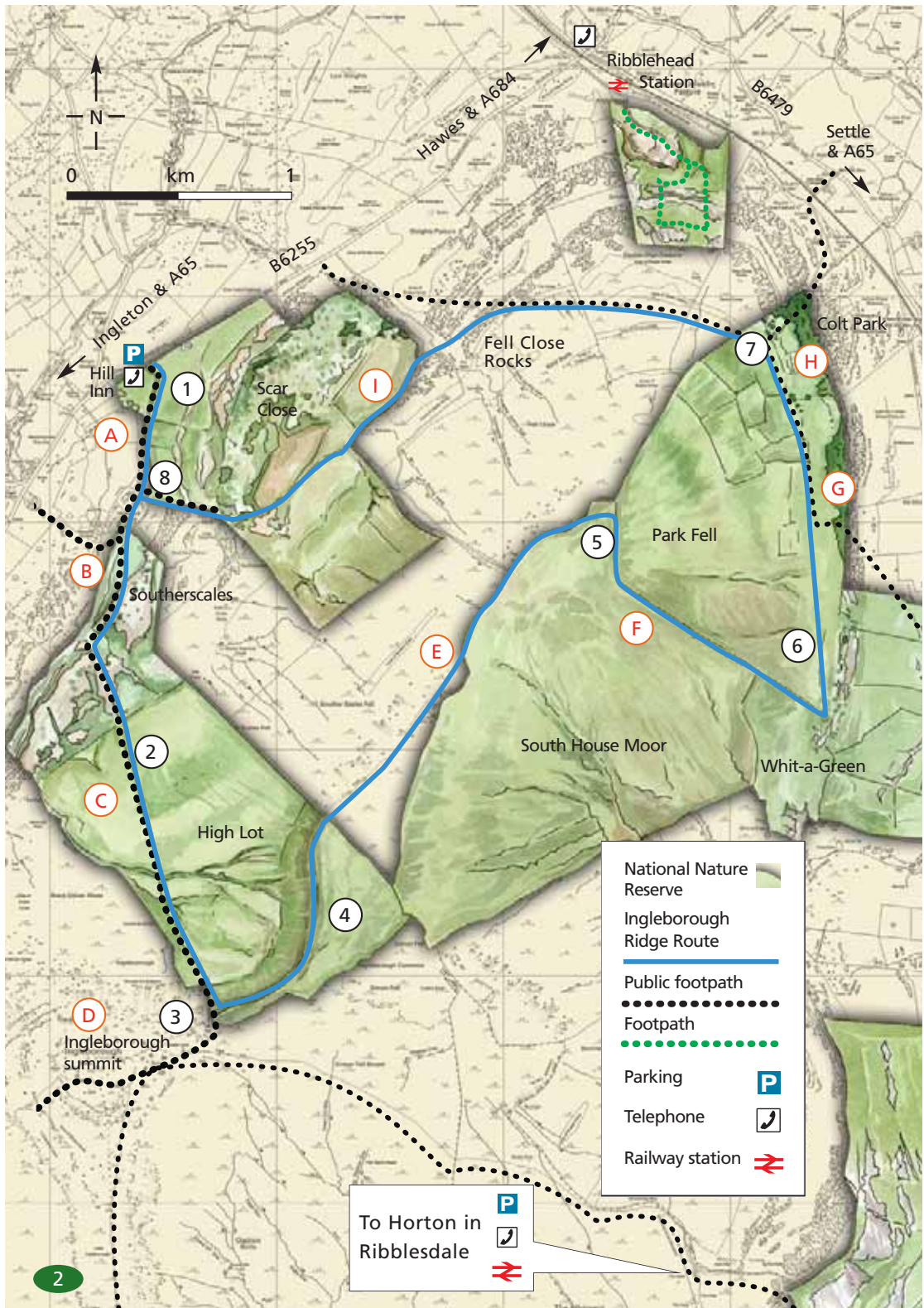


# Ingleborough Ridge Route

Ingleborough National Nature Reserve



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



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To Horton in Ribblesdale

- National Nature Reserve
- Ingleborough Ridge Route
- Public footpath
- Footpath
- Parking
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# Ingleborough Ridge Route

*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 walk, with its outstanding views, is approximately 15 kilometres (9.5 miles) long and should take about 4.5 to 5 hours to complete.

Difficulty level is medium to difficult with some very steep stretches on unstable rocky paths. Severe weather conditions may be encountered.

- 1 Take the public footpath (signposted to Ingleborough) which leaves the B6255 road 100 metres north-east of the Hill Inn at Chapel-le-Dale. Continue along this footpath (part of the Three Peaks footpath) on a well-defined track across three fields and through Yorkshire Wildlife Trust land at Southerscales.*
- 2 Continue up the paved path through High Lot and climb the steep rocky path to reach a flatter plateau area.*
- 3 A half mile detour (climb) to the west will take you to the summit of Ingleborough.*
- 4 From the summit retrace your steps. However, instead of descending back down the stone steps, continue on the path which heads north east along the edge of the escarpment, a route which provides exceptional views across Chapel-le-Dale, Whernside and the Ribbleshead Viaduct.*
- 5 After almost 2 miles, and after crossing several stiles, you will reach the plateau of Park Fell. Take the waymarked path to the trig point and then descend southwards down through South House Moor and Whit-a-Green.*
- 6 Upon reaching flatter ground strike north along the waymarked path, joining the public footpath and then continue on through Colt Park Meadows.*
- 7 After passing Colt Park, cross over the ladder stile and take the public footpath westwards. Follow this path for approximately 1 mile, eventually crossing an area of limestone pavement and over a stile at Fell Close Rocks. Follow the track alongside the wall until you reach the edge of Scar Close where you will pass through a small handgate and pick up another waymarked path which will take you through Scar Close Moss to reach Great Douk Cave.*
- 8 From here take the footpath to the north retracing your steps to the starting point.*



Ingleborough. Whitfield Benson

### **A) Limestone landscapes**

Look down Chapel-le-Dale and you glimpse distant beginnings. The rocks which dominate this landscape were laid down as marine deposits during the Carboniferous period 300 million years ago. They consist of shell debris compressed and recrystallised to form the spectacular limestone rock we see today.

This Great Scar Limestone is, in places, up to 200 metres thick and outcrops as a series of benches and scars in terraces around the flanks of Ingleborough. The outcrops of limestone and its distinctive landscapes are known as 'karst'.

Looking up to Ingleborough's summit you will see the Yoredale series of rocks which sit on top of the Great Scar Limestone. This series is characterised by bands of limestones, shales and sandstones. The summit is capped with a layer of Millstone Grit. The entire region, including the summit of Ingleborough, was covered by ice during past Ice Ages and the Chapel-le-Dale and Ribblesdale valleys were scoured out by glaciers.

### **B) Limestone grasslands**

As you enter Southerscales the textures and images change. The thinner drier soils give rise to flower-rich limestone

grasslands. The most common wildflower species is the fragrant wild thyme, while early-purple orchids are scattered across the landscape. By early summer yellow rock-rose, bird's-foot trefoil and white limestone bedstraw are in flower. As we move into mid-summer the colour-cast shades to blue as the flowers of small scabious and harebell take their turn. Controlled grazing allows the range of plants to flower, providing nectar for various butterfly species.



Above: Bird's-foot trefoil.  
Laurie Campbell  
Left: Common blue butterfly  
Dave Mather

### C) Heather moorland restoration

The moorland vegetation of High Lot Pasture is dominated by acid-loving plants, in particular heath rush and purple moor-grass, amongst which you may see the green and red bog



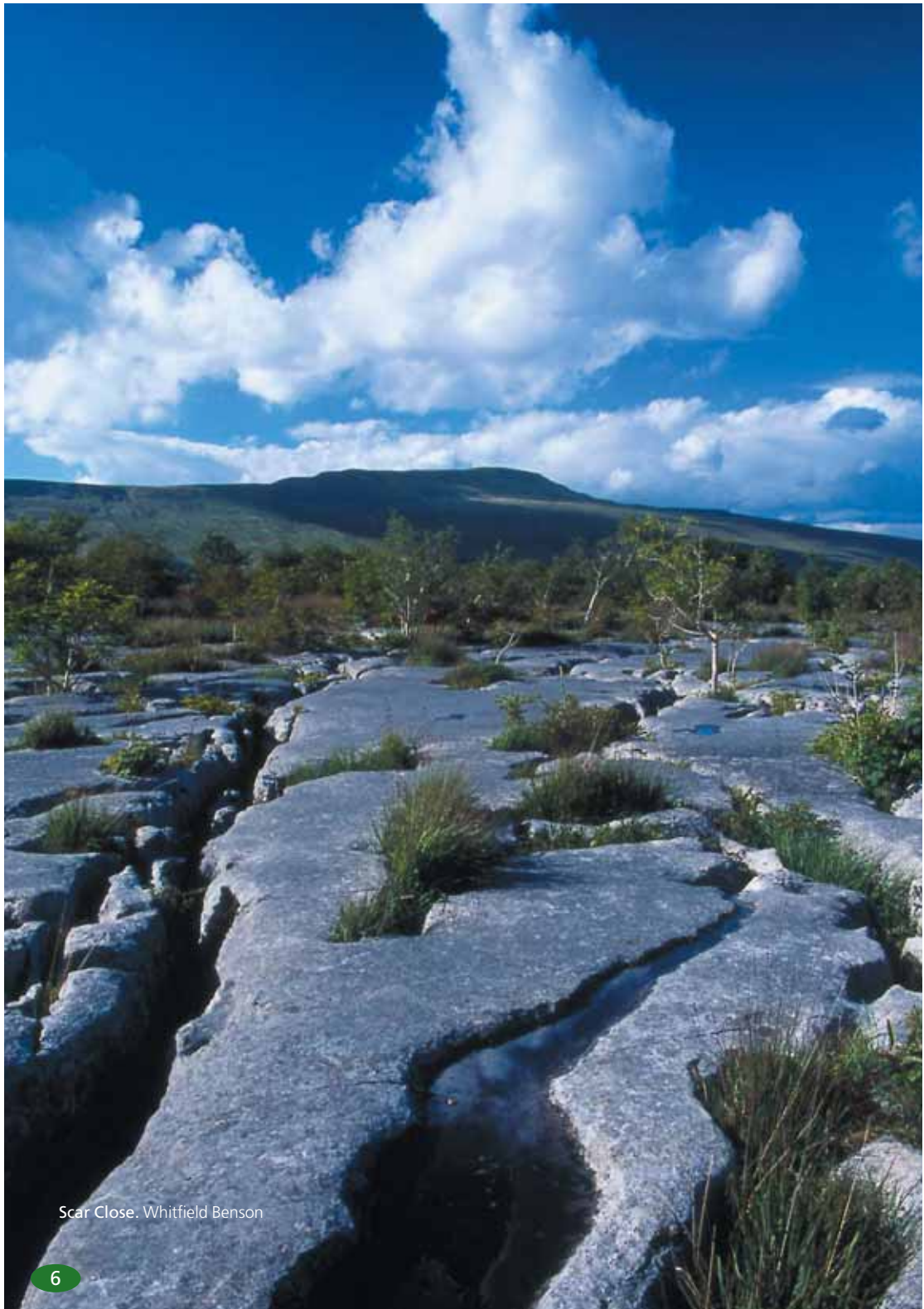
Ling heather.  
Mark Hamblin

(*Sphagnum*) mosses. The land is currently being managed to allow ling heather and bilberry to grow back following years of heavy sheep-grazing.

### D) Summit view and hill fort

On a clear day the views from Ingleborough's summit are stupendous. Pen-y-ghent and Whernside (the other two of the Three Peaks) will gain your immediate attention. But, on a good day, the Lake District can be seen in the west and the Irish Sea shimmers on the horizon.

The summit plateau – over 700 metres above sea level – was once topped with a hill fort. This Iron Age fortification was believed to have been constructed by a British tribe, the Brigantes, probably in the first century AD when the area was under attack from the Romans. It was a fortified village with a stone rampart 1,000 metres long – now badly damaged, partly by walkers taking stones to make cairns. A keen eye, however, can still make out the remains of over 20 circular stone huts.



Scar Close. Whitfield Benson

### E) Views across Scar Close to Ribblehead Viaduct and Whernside

Views from the western escarpment of Ingleborough and Simon Fell give a wonderful view down onto the extensive grey shelf of the Great Scar Limestone which outcrops around the flanks of Ingleborough and Whernside.

Most of the limestone pavement on both sides of the valley is bare of vegetation and its grey-white colour contrasts vividly with the surrounding grasslands. Directly below you is Scar Close which has a very different look. Livestock has been excluded from here for over 25 years and trees such as ash, hazel and rowan cover the rocks. These trees will never grow fully due to the lack of soil and exposure to the harsh upland climate.

This area is home to a range of woodland plants – the luxurious fern growth being particularly impressive. Rigid buckler fern, limestone polypody, maidenhair spleenwort and wall-rue are all found here. Where shallow soil has developed on top of the limestone, islands of peat have formed. These are remarkable for their diversity of plants, including lily-of-the-valley, angelica, grass of Parnassus and globeflower.



Lily-of-the-valley. English Nature

The Ribblehead Viaduct, which took over five years to build, has 24 arches and is 400 metres long.

### F) Re-wilding – ungrazed moorland

South House Moor is a special area.

Once covered in heather and home to many breeding birds – in particular the red grouse – years of heavy grazing have damaged the vegetation. Five years ago English Nature took the bold decision to allow nature to take back the land and heal the scars left from man's activities. All grazing livestock has been removed and the area is being allowed to 're-wild'.



Red grouse.  
Mark Hamblin

Even in this relatively short period you will notice the dramatic difference from the other terrain you have experienced around Ingleborough. High up on the moor, heather flowers purple in the heat of the summer and mosses up to a foot deep, carpet the hillside.

At the foot of South House Moor small areas of land have been planted with



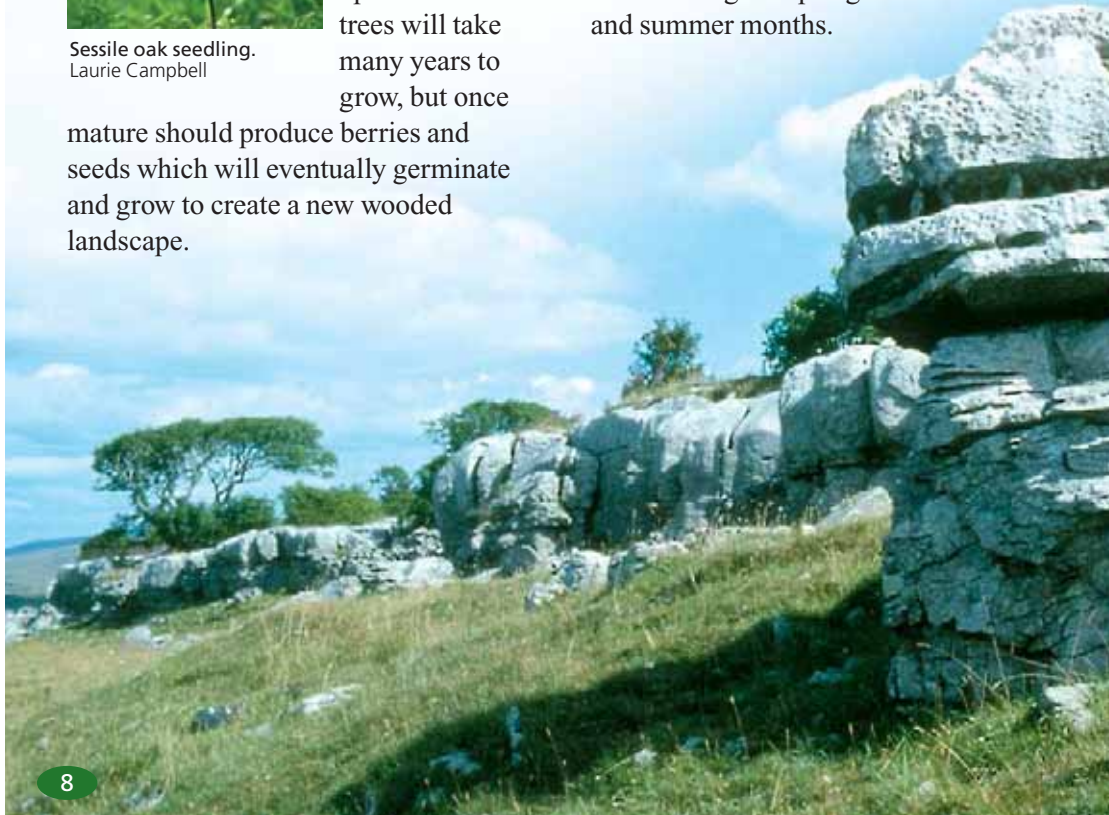
Sessile oak seedling.  
Laurie Campbell

birch, ash, oak, alder, hawthorn and willow – species which would once have covered large areas of the Dales uplands. These trees will take many years to grow, but once

mature should produce berries and seeds which will eventually germinate and grow to create a new wooded landscape.

### G) Colt Park Wood

This woodland is a most unusual feature of the site. It is a rare survivor of the woodland which once covered much of this high limestone area. Here, ash, bird cherry, rowan and hazel grow on the limestone pavement. The humidity within the shelter of the woodland encourages moss growth and the grikes (crevices) within the limestone pavement are clad in their luxurious green growth. There are many ferns, including hart's-tongue fern and green spleenwort. Globeflower, giant bellflower, wood crane's-bill and lily-of-the-valley all provide colour to this woodland scene during the spring and summer months.



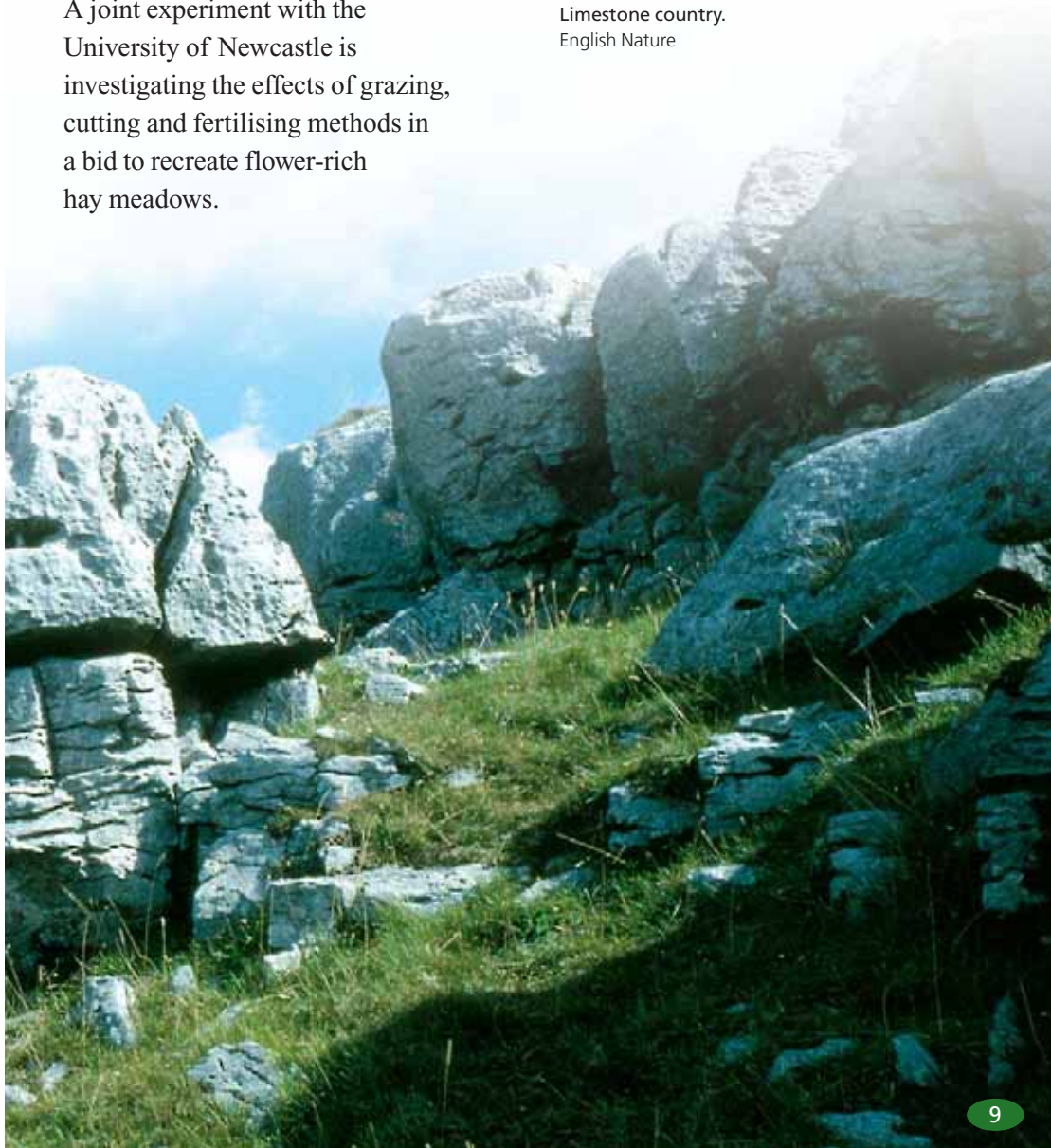
## H) Colt Park Meadows

For the next mile you will be walking through Colt Park Meadows. Prior to acquisition by English Nature, these meadows had been subject to agricultural improvement and the application of fertiliser.

A joint experiment with the University of Newcastle is investigating the effects of grazing, cutting and fertilising methods in a bid to recreate flower-rich hay meadows.

The marked out blocks visible just south of Colt Park Barn are part of this work. Already we have had some success and, year by year, we are seeing some of the more colourful flowers returning to the area.

Limestone country,  
English Nature



## 1) Scar Close Moss and Pavement

In rainy weather the land south of Scar Close Pavement may become very wet underfoot. This area is peat bog which formed over the limestone thousands of years ago when the British climate became colder and damper.

Aerial photographs have revealed areas where peat was once cut for fuel. In the wetter areas, bog mosses (*Sphagnum*) dominate: the remains of these mosses will form the peat of the future.

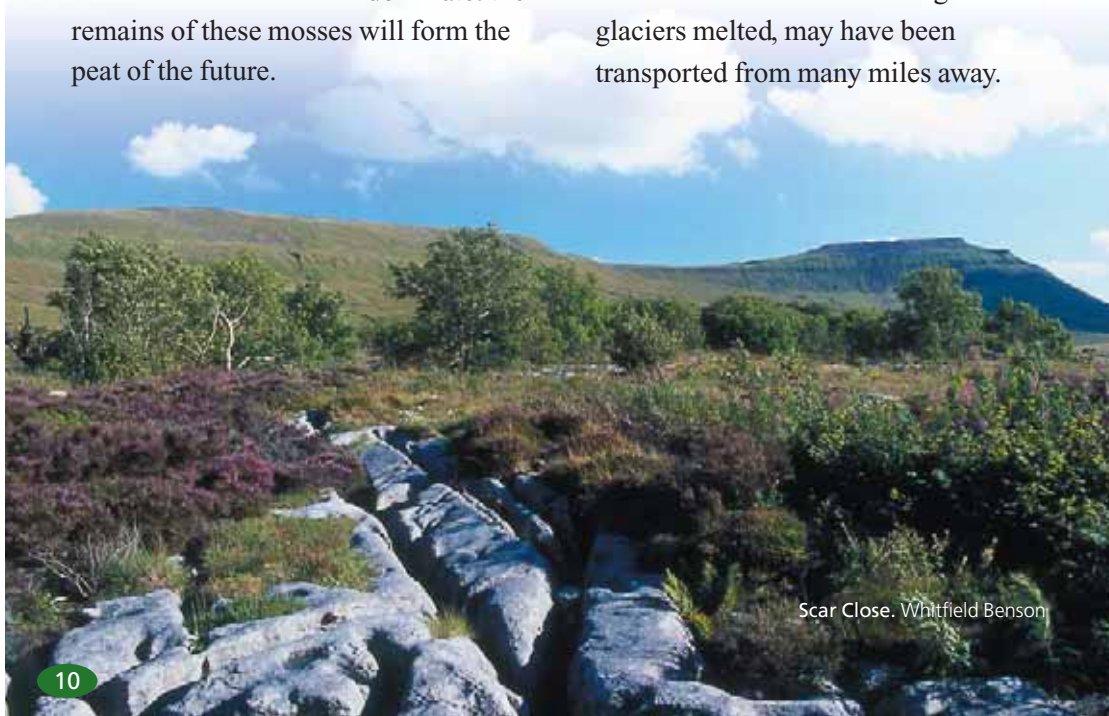


*Sphagnum* moss.  
Laurie Campbell



Looking towards Whernside. Whitfield Benson

Beyond the peat bog is Scar Close – one of the finest limestone pavements in the Dales. Here the limestone rocks are exposed and a surface of bare, grey limestone is revealed. In places large boulders sit on top of the limestone surface. These glacial ‘erratics’, left behind at the end of the Ice Age as glaciers melted, may have been transported from many miles away.



Scar Close. Whitfield Benson

# Take your own safety seriously on the Ingleborough Ridge Route

*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 phones at the Hill Inn or 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.

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Front cover photograph:  
South House Moor.  
English Nature



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.

