

# Smardale Nature Reserve



A walk at Smardale Nature Reserve will be full of fascinating history and wildlife for your family to discover. Stunning views, a hair-raisingly high railway bridge, and woodlands full of birds and butterflies make this walk very popular with local people.



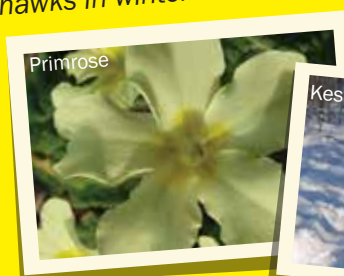
Included in this pack:

- Information on getting to and around the nature reserve
- A short history of Smardale Nature Reserve
- Spotter sheets - easy, medium and difficult
- A quick quiz
- Draw or write about what you saw

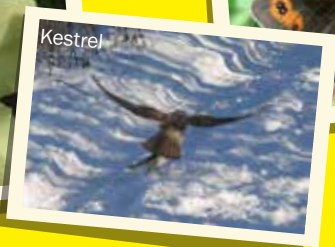
## Your walk

The footpath takes you on a 5 mile walk along a disused railway line and if you wish to head back to your starting point there are various circular route options which you can see on the map. If 7 miles is too far for your family we recommend you walk as far as the viaduct, which is about half way from either end. The walk from Smardale to Newbiggin is flat and easy underfoot, the walk from Smardale to Waitby is more difficult. Please wear sturdy boots and remember to take waterproof clothing, sunscreen and hats – it's easy to get caught out in the Cumbrian weather!

Andrew Walter the Reserve Officer says  
"Look out for primroses during the spring, orchids, common blue and Scotch argus butterflies in summer, the berries of hawthorn and guelder rose during the autumn, and kestrels and sparrow hawks in winter."



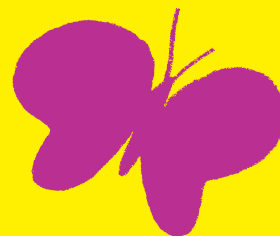
Primrose



Kestrel



Scotch argus butterfly



WILDLIFE  
WALKS

# Smardale Nature Reserve



**Cumbria**  
Wildlife Trust


## GETTING TO THE NATURE RESERVE

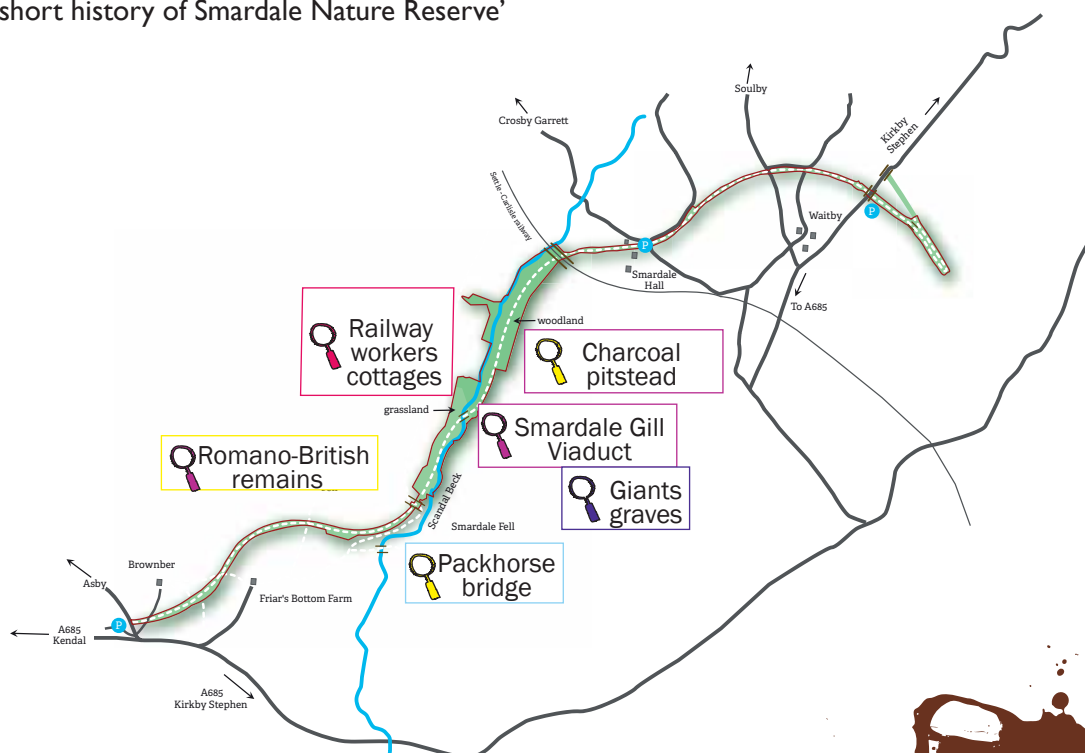


- *By car* To Smardale car park: from A685 between Ravenstonedale and Kirkby Stephen, take the Smardale turning (unsigned) 200m west of the A683 junction. Cross over the railway after 1.6km/1 mile and turn left at the T-junction. Continue for 1km/0.6 miles then bear right over the disused railway and turn immediately right. The car park is 200m on your right. To Newbiggin-on-Lune parking area: From the A685 at Newbiggin-on-Lune take the Kelleth/Great Asby turning then take the immediate left to Kelleth and park on the roadside. Walk back the way you came and join the road signposted Great Asby and turn left. Walk uphill and turn right into the drive for Brownber House, past the lodge. The nature reserve is just along this drive to the right. The distance from the parking area to the entrance is 250m.

## GETTING AROUND THE NATURE RESERVE

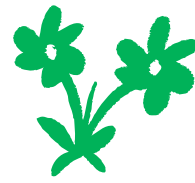
- *By bicycle* The Smardale entrance is 2km/1.2 miles, the Newbiggin entrance is 4.8km/3 miles
- *By public transport* The nearest train station is Kirkby Stephen West. Buses run from Kendal, Sedbergh and Brough to Kirkby Stephen.

 For more information on features marked with this symbol, see 'A short history of Smardale Nature Reserve'






# A short history of Smardale Nature Reserve






**Cumbria**  
Wildlife Trust

You may think on first seeing the secluded wilderness of Smardale that this is a lost valley, untouched by the progress of people. Unbelievably, the area has been inhabited or used in industry for thousands of years.



 **Features with this symbol are marked on the nature reserve map**

The first known inhabitants left remains of their  Romano-British settlements on the hills above the valley to the west. You can just see the faint outlines of walls from the public footpath that runs long the eastern side of the valley.

They don't call it the dark ages for nothing, because after the Romans left Britain in 410, evidence of human life doesn't show itself again until the 15th century when the old county road and  packhorse bridge were built. Old  charcoal pitsteads show that at one time the valley would have had many more trees. Wood from the trees would have been stacked, set fire to and covered in soil. Before the wood burned away the fire would be put out forming charcoal. Charcoal was needed because it was the only material that would burn hot enough to forge iron.

If you look carefully on the eastern side of the valley you will see the  giants' graves. The mounds are thought to be man-made rabbit warrens built to home rabbits when they were introduced from abroad. The rabbit is from the Mediterranean region and were probably introduced by the Crusaders in the 12th century. The rabbits would have been an important food source and something of a delicacy, and if you owned a warren it was an impressive status symbol.

The next industry that entered the valley is where most people now walk - the old railway track, which was built here in the mid 1800s.

 Smardale Gill Viaduct is the largest and most dramatic structure on the whole of the South Durham & Lancashire Union Railway and was built in 1860 to carry the trains.  The cottages, now sadly boarded up, would have been built at the same time to house railway workers.

The valley was finally quiet again over one hundred years later in 1962 when the railway closed. It may not be as busy with the industry of man anymore but wildlife is thriving here and many people enjoy a walk through the valley to take in the stunning scenery.



**WILDLIFE  
WALKS**



# EASY

## SPOTTER SHEET

Smardale  
Nature Reserve



Tick them off as you spot!

☐

Flowers

☐

Trees

☐

Viaduct

☐

Lime kiln

☐

Scandal Beck



What else did you spot?





# Medium

SPOTTER SHEET

Smardale  
Nature Reserve



Tick them off as you spot!

☐

Red squirrel

☐

Orchid

☐

Bumble bee

☐

Common blue butterfly

☐

Buzzard



What else did you spot?



# Difficult

SPOTTER SHEET

Smardale  
Nature Reserve



Tick them off as you spot!

☐

Hover fly

☐

Bloody cranesbill

☐

Lizard

☐

Rock rose

☐

Dipper



What else did you spot?





# QUICK QUIZ

Smardale  
Nature Reserve



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How long is Smardale Nature Reserve? .....

Why was charcoal so important to industry in the past? .....

Who introduced rabbits from the Mediterranean region in the 12th century?

.....

In what year was Smardale Gill Viaduct completed?

.....

Tick the wildlife that lives at Smardale Gill

☐

Common lizard

☐

Dipper

☐

Chimpanzee

☐

Roe deer

☐

Do Do

☐

Coconut

☐

Orchid

☐

Red Squirrel

☐

Butterflies



DRAW OR  
WRITE ABOUT  
WHAT YOU  
SAW

Smardale  
Nature Reserve



**Cumbria**  
Wildlife Trust

