



The Vintage Minor Register Northern Weekend Saturday 28th July 2012

ROUTE 1 – WEARDALE & TEESDALE (80 miles)



Route Summary

The route is a round trip of 80 miles and takes in some of the best scenery of the North Pennines, designated an **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**. It includes forests, hills, wild moorland and rivers and the pretty villages and historic towns along the way. Starting at the village of Romalldkirk near Barnard Castle in County Durham it takes the road up Weardale to the Cumbrian town of Alston, the highest market town in England. The tour returns via Upper Teesdale, where a stop can be made to visit one of England's highest waterfalls at High Force, before following the Tees valley back to Barnard Castle (before the shops close).

More detailed route information will be available later.

The **START** of the tour and initial assembly point is the village of **ROMALDKIRK**, 7 miles NW of the town of **BARNARD CASTLE** in County Durham.

BARNARD CASTLE gets its name from the Norman fortress, now ruined, that overlooks the River Tees. It was founded shortly after the conquest and past owners have included the Scottish king John Balliol, Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick and King Richard III. Charles Dickens stayed at the King's Head in Barnard Castle in the winter of 1837-38 while researching his novel 'Nicholas Nickleby'.



www.panoramicbarnardcastle.co.uk

Barnard Castle is the home of the magnificent **BOWES MUSEUM**



Photo: John Pallister

THE BOWES MUSEUM was purpose-built as a public art gallery for John Bowes, the illegitimate son of John Bowes the 10th Earl of Strathmore and Kinghorne, and his wife Joséphine Benoîte, Countess of Montalbo, who both died before it opened in 1892. It was designed by the French architect Jules Pellechet in a grand French style within landscaped gardens and contains works by El Greco, Goya and Canaletto as well as a sizeable collection of decorative art. A famous 18th century silver swan automaton performs every afternoon at 2.00 pm.

Directions from Barnard Castle to the START at Romalldkirk :-

*From Barnard Castle town centre take the road marked **Bowes A67**, past the octagonal Butter Market (which was once the town gaol) and down a steep hill to the river. Immediately after crossing the stone bridge turn right on the **A67**. After 100 metres keep straight on onto the **B6277** towards Teesdale and High Force (brown sign)*

*Continue North West on the **B6277** through the villages of **LARTINGTON**, and **COTHERSTONE** to **ROMALDKIRK**.*





www.hectorparr.freueuk.com

THE ROSE AND CROWN at **ROMALDKIRK** is the **ASSEMBLY POINT** and **START** of the route.

Please park considerately on the road near the hotel

From **ROMALDKIRK** the route crosses the Tees to **EGGLESTON**.

EGGLESTON is first mentioned in tax records of 1196. The remains of ridge and furrow from the medieval period can still be seen. The Society of Friends, who owned lead mines in the area, built many of the 18th century cottages. Forty men were employed as miners until 1904 when the company closed the smelting mills. The ITV series 'Ladette to Lady' used Eggleston Hall as the finishing school.



The road now rises up over Langleydale Common and continues through **HAMSTERLEY FOREST**, via a toll road. The forest has a visitor's centre, toilets, picnic areas, mountain bike trails and car parks.



The route emerges from the forest at **BEDBURN**, then steeply up **Shull Bank** before descending into **WOLSINGHAM**, a small market town on the River Wear.

WOLSINGHAM was a Saxon settlement and the home of Saint Godric for almost two years about 1120 AD. It was an important market town, granted a charter in 1615, one of the first in County Durham.



Photo: Keith Moorcroft

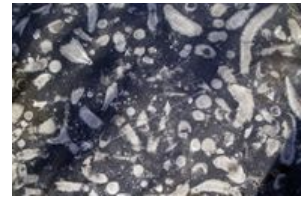
*Wolsingham is a stop on The Wear Valley Railway that runs between **STANHOPE** and **BISHOP AUCKLAND**. It is a heritage line operated by volunteers and runs steam trains on selected days.*

The route now heads up the Weardale valley and into the **NORTH PENNINES AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY** designated in 1988 for its heather moorland and hay meadows, rare plants, birds and animals. It is also a **EUROPEAN AND GLOBAL GEOPARK**.



Passing through **FROSTERLEY** and **STANHOPE** the road climbs upwards, following the river to **WESTGATE**, **ST JOHN'S CHAPEL** and **IRESHOPEBURN**, home of the **WEARDALE MUSEUM**. (not to be confused with the Lead Mining Museum at Killhope, further up the valley)

FROSTERLEY was once an important centre for the limestone industry. Its renowned black marble, an ornate limestone containing 323 million year old fossil corals, was in great demand in the Middle Ages. The decorative polished columns found in Durham Cathedral date from about 1350.



*In the 18th century John Wesley visited the dale on a number of occasions and the valley became a Methodist stronghold. **HIGH HOUSE CHAPEL** near Ireshopeburn has been claimed to be the Methodist chapel with the longest history of continuous use in the world and contains the **WEARDALE MUSEUM**. It has a room devoted to Methodist and Wesley memorabilia.*



www.widecow.com



www.killhope.org.uk

The road continues to climb up the valley, through **COWSHILL** to **KILLHOPE**, site of **THE NORTH OF ENGLAND LEAD MINING MUSEUM**.

*N.B. Anyone wishing to visit the museum can do so and meet up in **ALSTON**, (8 miles away)*



Lianne Jarrett Associates

WEARDALE was historically important for lead mining and the museum incorporates the preserved 19th century Park Level Mine. At Killhope (pronounced "Killup") is a huge working water wheel. This was installed in the 1870s to power the crushing of grit in tanks in an adjacent building, so as to complete the separation of lead ore from worthless stone. The Museum also exhibits a fine collection of local minerals, as well as 'spar boxes' - display cases made by miners to show crystal specimens they had found.



The upper valley beyond **KILLHOPE** is surrounded by high fells (up to 2454 feet at Burnhope Seat) and heather grouse moors. This is the highest part of the route at over 600m (2000ft). Winters can be harsh and prolonged with regular snow. The road crosses the border into Cumbria and descends into **ALSTON**. (42 miles)

The steep cobbled descent of Alston Front Street leads through the town to a **PETROL STATION** and **ALSTON RAILWAY STATION CAR PARK**.

ALSTON is the venue for a LUNCH STOP

It has several pubs, cafes and restaurants and a good variety of shops.

ALSTON claims to be the highest market town in England, being about 1000 feet above sea level. The area was extensively mined for lead, silver, zinc, coal and fluorspar. Noted for its steep cobbled streets and 17th century stone buildings, there are some interesting craft and gift shops and an organic bakery. The Pennine Way passes through Alston. There is a popular narrow gauge railway between Alston and Kirkhaugh, two and a quarter miles in length, operated as the South Tynedale Railway.



After lunch the route returns through the town, climbing the steep cobbled hill and taking the road South East towards Teesdale, crossing the dramatic moorland country of the upper Tees valley to **LANGDON BECK**.



14 miles from Alston, at LANGDON BECK, the cataracts of CAULDRON SNOUT on the River Tees are reckoned to be the longest in England. (They can only be reached by a 3km walk from the car park at nearby Cow Green Reservoir).



Photo: Andrew Leaney. www.leaney.org

Just beyond **LANGDON BECK** is the more accessible **HIGH FORCE**, a dramatic waterfall and one of the area's main attractions.



Photo: Rob Bishop

HIGH FORCE, although not the highest waterfall in England, has a drop of over 70 feet and the whole of the River Tees plunges dramatically over the precipice in two stages. If the sun is shining a brilliant rainbow is created in the mist above the deep pool below.

A stop can be made here to see the falls which are a short walk from the large car park. (There is a charge for parking and visiting the falls).

The route now continues down the Tees valley to the small town of **MIDDLETON IN TEESDALE**, sometimes called the capital of Upper Teesdale, and the farming village of **MICKLETON** before returning to the starting point at **ROMALDKIRK** - the end of the tour.



Photo: Discovery Photo library

(Total distance - 80 miles)