

Walk the Way in a Day

Walk 25 Cotherstone Moor and the Bowes Loop

Combining the alternative Pennine Way routes of the 'Bowes Loop', this moorland walk can be hard-going in places. Points of interest include Bowes Castle and God's Bridge (a thick slab of limestone, spanning the River Greta).



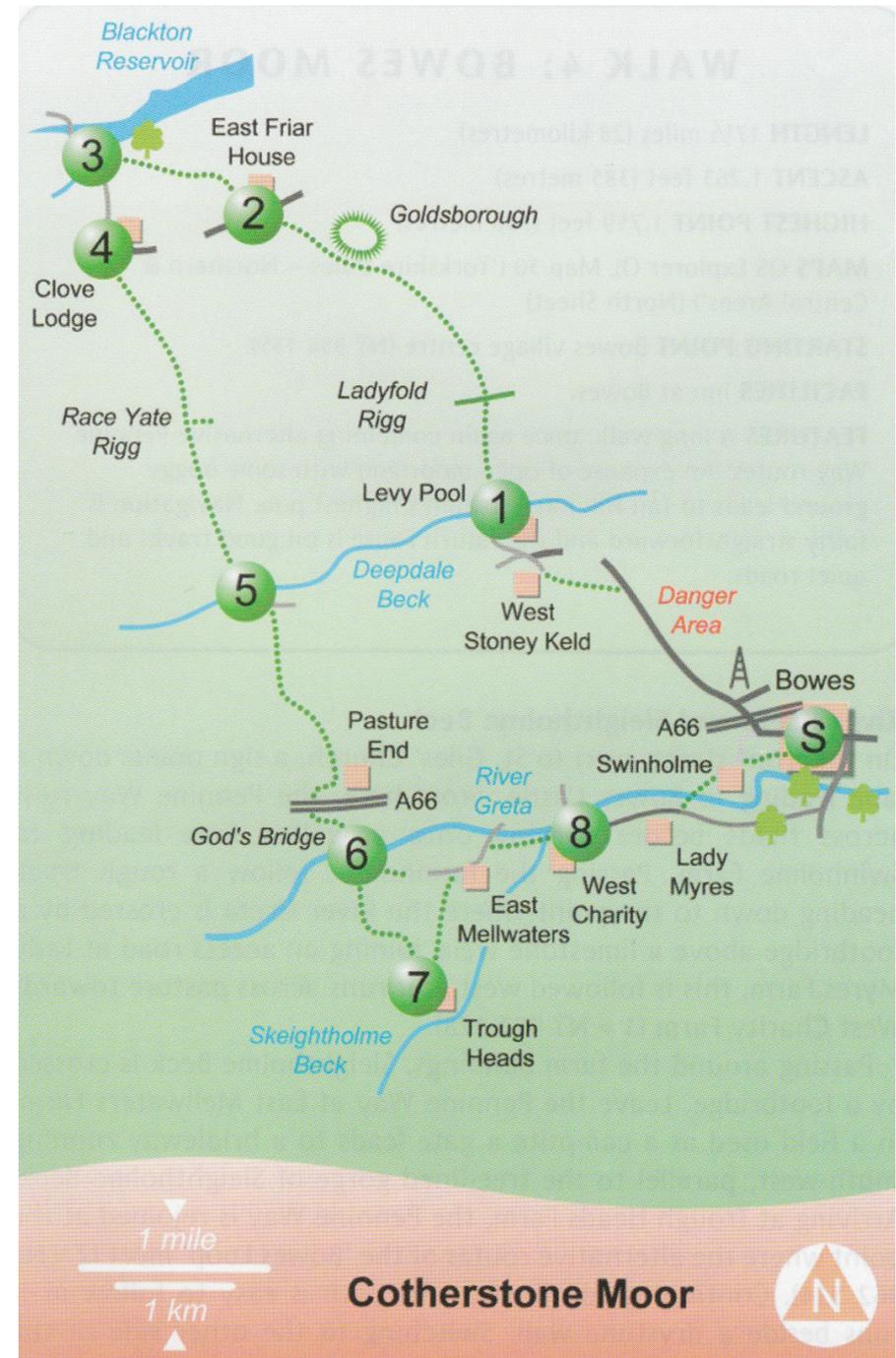
Length:	14 miles (22½ kilometres)
Ascent:	1,526 feet (465 metres)
Highest Point:	1,385 feet (422 metres)
Map(s):	OS Explorer OL Map 31 ('North Pennines - Teesdale & Weardale') (East Sheet)
Starting Point:	Bowes village centre (NY 994 135)
Facilities:	Inn at Bowes.
Website:	http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/pennine-way/route/walk-way-day-walk-25-cotherstone-moor-and-bowes-loop

Deep Dale and Goldsborough

Bowes is located on the A66 trans-Pennine route, 16 miles (26 kilometres) from Scotch Corner. Parking on the front street, cross over the A66 by a road bridge at the west end of the village and head up an unclassified road. Ignoring a right turn, continue along the road as it runs through an area of rough pasture. Flanking the road are the remains of Air Ministry buildings, with signs warning of poisonous gas buried here at the end of World War I. As the scattered farmsteads of Deep Dale come into view, a finger sign on the left shows the Pennine Way leaving the road, heading north-west over fields.

Bowes

Bowes is located above the River Greta - a substantial tributary of



the Tees. The ruined Norman keep dominating the village was built upon the site of a Roman fort, Lavatris, which guarded the east end of the Stainmore Pass (its counterpart at Brough, Verteris, stood at the west end, a day's march away). The fort dates from the Flavian period (AD 69-96), and covered an area of 4 acres (1¾ hectares). Also of historical interest is the Ancient Unicorn, an old coaching inn where Charles Dickens stayed during 1838 while researching his novel 'Nicholas Nickleby'. Dotheboys Hall, the school featured in the novel, was based upon Bowes Boys Academy, which stands at the top of the front street. The headmaster, William Shaw, was the model for the infamous Wackford Squeers. After serving as a transport café, the building was converted into private flats.

Cutting across pasture, drystone walls are crossed by stiles that can be hard to spot. A fenced enclosure surrounding a large cairn marks the location of Stonykeld Spring ('keld' being the Old Norse word for a spring). Arriving at West Stoney Keld farm, the road is rejoined just before its end. Ignoring a finger sign marking the start of a bridleway to Pasture End, continue along a hardcore track heading north-west towards Levy Pool farm. Leaving the track just before it reaches the farm, head down to Deepdale Beck (1 = NY 968 154).

Levy Pool

Levy Pool supplied water to the Roman bath-house at Lavatris via an aqueduct - the River Greta being below the level of the fort. Its name is connected with that of the fort, and probably refers to a river bed. The farmhouse dates from 1736 and features the last surviving example of a heather-thatched roof in the Durham Dales.

This tributary of the River Tees is prone to big spates, although it can now be crossed safely by means of a newly constructed footbridge. From here a marker post provides an indication of the route, although the best guide as the faint path heads generally north is a drystone wall off to the right. Progress over the rushy ground is made easier by following sheep tracks as the route rolls over a low ridge, dropping into the gully of Hazelgill Beck before climbing towards Ladyfold Rigg.

Heading north-west, MoD warning signs over a fence on the right mark the boundary of a firing range. Beside the path is a flat rock bearing cup and ring markings. Passing through a gate in a drystone wall, a narrow path runs across grassy moorland towards Goldsborough. It is possible to join a quad track running over the top of this distinctive hillock, although the literal route contours around its western flanks. From here the Pennine Way heads down to join an unclassified road running up Baldersdale (2 = NY 947 179).

Goldsborough

Goldsborough is thought to be the site of an Iron Age hill-fort. At 1,276 feet (389 metres) it provides a grandstand view of Baldersdale with its chain of reservoirs and scattering of farmsteads. The Millstone Grit outcrops flanking the hillock are popular with rock climbers.

Baldersdale

Heading along the road a short way, a finger sign shows the Pennine Way turning down a hardcore track leading to East Friar House farm. Following a narrow passage down the side of a byre, a step stile marks the start of a steeplechase path running west over walled pasture. Crossing How Sike by a footbridge, the path continues over fields towards the bridge at Hunder Beck, where a finger sign marks the point at which the alternative Pennine Way routes meet (3 = NY 933 181). It is here that we begin our return journey. Heading south-east up a farm track, the road is re-joined at Clove Lodge farm. Passing a small parking area, a finger sign shows the Pennine Way heading back onto Cotherstone Moor (4 = NY 935 176).

Race Yate and God's Bridge

The indistinct path runs south-east over tussocky grass, avoiding rushy areas as height is gained. Swinging around to head south, it runs over the crest of Race Yate Rigg. Heading gently downhill beside a drystone wall, the path is easier to follow. Joining a quad track, continue down to the

point where Deepdale Beck is crossed by a narrow footbridge (5 = NY 948 148).

From here a grouse shooters' track running to West Stoney Keld farm offers a potential escape route. However, the Pennine Way turns off the track almost immediately, heading south-east over the moors. There is nothing to indicate the start of the route, although there are a few marker posts along the way. The narrow path runs through heather as it climbs towards an area known as Ravock Castle, where a cairn is all that remains of a shepherd's hut. From this point there are good views over Bowes Moor towards Tan Hill Inn. Continuing over ground that is mossy but firm, a few small cairns provide reassurance of the route. Arriving at Pasture End farm, the Pennine Way passes under the A66.

The Stainmore Pass

The boundary between the North Pennines and Central Pennines is defined by the Stainmore Trough. This pass has long been used as a trans-Pennine route, with a Roman road linking Dere Street and Watling Street, guarded by a chain of forts, camps and signal stations. Close to the summit is the Rey Cross, which marks the location of the Battle of Stainmore, where Eric Bloodaxe was defeated in AD 95. England's highest railway once ran over the pass, reaching 1,370 feet (418 metres) at its summit. It was built by the South Durham & Lancashire Union Railway Company in 1861, and remained open until 1962. Today the busy A66 trunk road links the A1 at Scotch Corner and the M6 at Penrith. With an exposed summit at 1,467 feet (447 metres), it is frequently closed to high-sided vehicles.

Exiting from the underpass, the normally dry course of the River Greta can be seen down in the valley, as can the ponds of the nearby Otter Trust. Heading down a hardcore track leading to a bungalow, pass through a gap in an old railway embankment close to a lime kiln. Ahead is God's Bridge, where the River Greta is crossed with dry feet thanks to a quirk of geology (6 = NY 957 126). Ignoring a finger sign indicating a short-cut to Bowes, head south, following a drystone wall uphill. Passing through a gate in

an intersecting wall, the route runs onto heather moorland. Following the boundary east for a way, the path turns south once more, with a couple of marker posts providing guidance. Close to Trough Heads farm, a finger sign marks the point at which the alternative Pennine Way routes meet (7 = NY 962 114).

God's Bridge

God's Bridge is a thick slab of limestone, spanning the River Greta at the point where it re-emerges from a subterranean passage.

The river is swallowed by fissures some way upstream, the dry bed recalling the origin of its name (which is connected with the Old Norse 'griota', 'stony').

River Greta

The final part of the walk follows the alternative Pennine Way route for 3½ miles (5½ kilometres) to Bowes. The path runs north-east then north beside a drystone wall, crossing rough pasture. Arriving at a hardcore track, turn right and head towards East Mellwaters farm, before joining a made path that follows the south bank of the River Greta. Crossing a tributary (Sleightholme Beck) by a footbridge, head around West Charity farm to join an access road running east (8 = NY 973 128).

Just past Lady Myres farm, a marker post shows a path heading down to a newly constructed footbridge providing a safe crossing over the River Greta. This stands above a weir where the river was formerly crossed by means of limestone outcrops that served as stepping stones. On the north bank a rough track heads up to Swinholme farm, then a walled lane continues towards the village. Half way up the lane, an acorn marker on the right shows the Pennine Way cutting across fields, passing the Norman keep before exiting onto the front street. If daylight is failing, from Lady Myers farm simply stay on the access road as it continues towards Gilmonby, joining an unclassified road heading back into Bowes.

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