

### The Shorter Walks Group Report by Jean Kipling – May 2022

On May 23<sup>rd</sup> ten members of the group travelled to Bowlees for a circular walk encompassing Low Force and Holwick. The weather was looking dodgy as we drove up, but as we approached Bowlees the roads were dry and the weather remained perfect for our walk.

As we crossed the field towards Wynch Bridge we were intrigued to see men erecting scaffolding over the footpath, but were told this was to be the site of Teesdale's Platinum Jubilee Arch, representing the landscape and agriculture of Teesdale – hence the use of sheep's wool for cladding.



We crossed Wynch Bridge, turned left and followed the Teesdale Way footpath through a glorious display of bluebells. Our attention was drawn to the baked rocks on the riverside. A member of the group explained how they were formed. The upstanding mass of rock is part of the Whin Sill but at its base there are layered rocks. These are sandstones and shales which were once above the Whin Sill. When the Whin Sill was molten, the slab of layered rocks sank into it, was baked and became the hard layered rocks we see today.

As we continued along the riverside path we noticed more wild flowers including globeflowers marsh marigolds, and milkmaids. In the fields to our right there were gated mine entrances and some small spoil heaps. We soon came to Scorberry Bridge, which like the original Wynch Bridge was built so that the lead miners from Holwick could cross the river to work in the mines on the north side of Teesdale. We also crossed the bridge but turned right onto a flat outcrop of Cockleshell Limestone and began fossil hunting. We saw fossil shells, corals and crinoids. These creature lived here about 330 million years ago in the Carboniferous Period, when the North Pennines were covered by shallow tropical seas.

We crossed back over the bridge and followed the footpath across the fields to Holwick, passing another amazing display of bluebells. Just before the last stile we saw the remains of a medieval house. Following the road to our right we passed by the dramatic Holwick Scars (one of the best places to see the Whin Sill). The cliffs contain vertical cracks and rough columns, having been shaped by millions of years of natural processes.

We continued along the road to a cattle grid with lapwings performing overhead, and then followed the yellow footpath markers across three fields, where we saw violas. We arrived back at Wynch Bridge and retraced our steps back to Bowlees. .

Although this walk was only 2.5 miles, there was so much to see that it took us 2hrs to complete! Thanks to our own guide, we all came away with more knowledge of the special area in which we are so fortunate to live in.