

7 – 9 MILE WALKING GROUP – Report by Peter Singer

Our June outing was an exploration of Upper Arkengarthdale and 12 of us gathered on a warm and sunny day outside the CB Inn in Langthwaite, named after Charles Bathurst, who expanded leadmining in the dale from about 1670. The first part of the walk was alongside the delightful Arkle Beck, through Eskeleth Wood and some lovely hay meadows. The wild flowers were at their peak and we saw buttercup, yellow rattle, ragged robin, wood cranesbill, greater stitchwort and lots of clover. Just before the hamlet of Whaw (pronounced, Chris B informed us, to rhyme with car rather than war), we investigated a traditional cowhouse that had been restored and dedicated to Alf Wright (aka James Herriot). At Whaw, we stopped for coffee and a snack at the bridge, the top half of which had been swept away in 1986, when Hurricane Charley caused a wave of floodwater to roar down Great Punchard Gill and into Arkle Beck. Pressing on, we climbed up through more meadows, passing Hill Top Farm, Dale Head Farm and Raven's Park Farm, the highest point of the walk at c.1,300 feet, where we had a welcome lunch break. Turning back on the return leg, we emerged onto the open moor, above the intake wall and strode out, accompanied by curlew, lapwing, redshank and several oystercatchers, piping away in alarm. Leaving the wall at Colt Park Corner, we dropped down to a stream and then up again to the very remote High Fagnergill Farm. From here, it was all downhill (well, almost, apart from a couple of gently uphill bits). The walking now was along a farmtrack and road until we picked up a field path back down to Arkle Beck, where we heard the distinctive, rising "weef" call of a redstart, although sadly it was hidden in the dense foliage of the trees. We crossed the beck on a smart, new footbridge and walked through meadows with more ragged robin, northern marsh and common spotted orchids and bright yellow tormentil, before regaining the road back to the start, passing the impressive ruins of the Octagon smelting mill. A splendid walk on a beautiful summer's day, rounded off with refreshments at the CB Inn – what more could you ask?

The next walks are on Wednesday 17 July when Pete will take us on a 7 mile walk from Barnard Castle via Lartington and Deepdale. On Wednesday 15 August Alan is planning a walk 7 mile moorland walk from Blackton reservoir via Cotherstone Moore and Race Yate Rigg. Please contact Nicky Grace nickygrace729@gmail.com if you would like to come along

