

## Ladies Riggs and Ashfoldside



2-3  
hours



5.5 / 8.8  
Miles / KM



Moderate



Heritage/Scenic



© Espeth Wild

Upper Nidderdale is renowned for its stunning natural beauty. This engaging walk around Ladies Riggs and Ashfoldside is one of a series of trails offering the chance to enjoy the contrasting landscapes and fascinating heritage that make Upper Nidderdale such a special place. Along this route you will walk through the abandoned industrial landscape around Prosperous Smelt Mill, enjoy the secluded beauty of Ashfoldside Beck and take in the atmospheric Ladies Riggs and Bale Bank.

 **PARK:** Pateley Bridge/Bridgehouse Gate

 **EAT & DRINK:** Pateley Bridge/Bridgehouse Gate

 **SHOP:** Pateley Bridge/Bridgehouse Gate

View online at [uppernidderdale.org.uk](http://uppernidderdale.org.uk) and print off at A4. Please follow the countryside code. Keep your dogs on a lead and close gates behind you.

- 1 Begin the walk at the bottom of the High Street in Pateley Bridge. Walk over the bridge and past the recreation ground to your right. Cross over Low Wath Road and take the pathway immediately to your right after you pass the petrol station, also on your right. Follow the path up the hill, turn right onto the narrow road through Bridghouse Gate and take the track that almost immediately runs off between the houses to your left.
  - 2 The path takes you up the hill out of Bridghouse Gate. After about 150 yards (130 metres), you reach a gate. Go through it and follow the path which is now lined by a hedge on one side and trees on the other. Carry on along this path until you reach a gate with an open field beyond. Go through the gate and follow the path along the left edge of field. You will see a large house to your left. This is **Eagle Hall**. At the end of the field, go over the stile and you emerge onto West Lane, the single track road that carries on up the hill to your right known as Ladies Riggs.
  - 3 Turn right and follow West Lane, passing Riggs House on the left as you climb uphill and Lady Riggs Farm on your right as you reach the bottom of the hill.
  - 4 Stay on West Lane and around 600 yards (550 metres) after passing Lady Riggs Farm the road takes a sharp right-hand turn just as it crosses a bridge over a small beck. This is Throstle Nest Bridge and **Throstle Nest Wood** runs along the sides of the beck as it flows downhill to your right. Go over the bridge and stay on the road as it bears to the left, passing a house called Hillend. Here the road becomes an unmade track. Stay on the track until you reach another sharp right hand bend as Brandstone Dub Bridge crosses Brandstone Beck. Go over the bridge and continue along the track which now turns sharply to the left and begins to climb up hill.
- LOOK OUT FOR NEAR HARDCASTLE**

At the top of the hill a track leads off to the left and heads towards a bleak hillside around 400 yards (350 metres) away. This was the site of Far Hardcastle, a small hamlet that was first established as a Fountains Abbey grange and housed lead mining families who worked in the area until it was abandoned in the late 19th century.
- 5 Carry on along the path and just after you reach the top of the hill a dramatic landscape with huge barren spoil heaps opens out in front of you. This is the site of **Prosperous Lead Mines and Smelt Mill**. At the top of the hillside there is a panel explaining the history of the site and outlining a route around the main features. Follow this route down the hillside and cross the bridge over Ashfoldside Beck, where there is a second panel with details about the ruined smelt mill on the beck side.
  - 6 Once over the bridge continue on the footpath that climbs diagonally to your right until it meets a track. Turn right and continue down the track that after around three quarters of a mile (1.2 km) begins to wind its way through Heathfield caravan site. When passing through the caravan site you will see the **Heathfield Smelt Mill**, which is now home to the caravan site office and shop. Shortly after passing the old smelt mill the road leaves the caravan site and reaches a road junction. As you approach the junction, look across to your right and at the other side of the beck where you will see **Foster Beck Water Mill** now converted into flats.
  - 7 Turn right at the junction and you soon reach another junction, this time with the main Pateley Bridge to Middlesmoor road. Go straight across the road, through the gate in front of you and across the field keeping the house to your right. Carry on through another gate and follow the footpath along the side of Foster Beck. The path soon crosses the beck over a footbridge before passing buildings to your right. After passing the buildings the path runs across an open field towards the river bank.
- LOOK OUT FOR TRADITIONAL HAY MEADOW**

The field the path crosses just before reaching the river Nidd has been transformed into a traditional hay meadow. An interpretation panel at the site gives you more information.
- 8 Continue along the path as it runs by the river bank back to Pateley Bridge.



### PROSPEROUS SMELT MILL

Built around 1815, the mill processed lead ore from a number of mine shafts in this intensively worked area. In 1840 one mining agent proclaimed '...probably, no piece of ground in Yorkshire of the same extent has been more productive'.

© Nidderdale AONB



### HEATHFIELD SMELT MILL

Now the caravan site shop, this mill was built in 1855 by John Yorke to replace an older mill situated nearby. Yorke was a major landowner in the area and leased mineral rights to various mining companies. The mill was last used for lead smelting in 1909. Look out for the date stone on the front of the building.

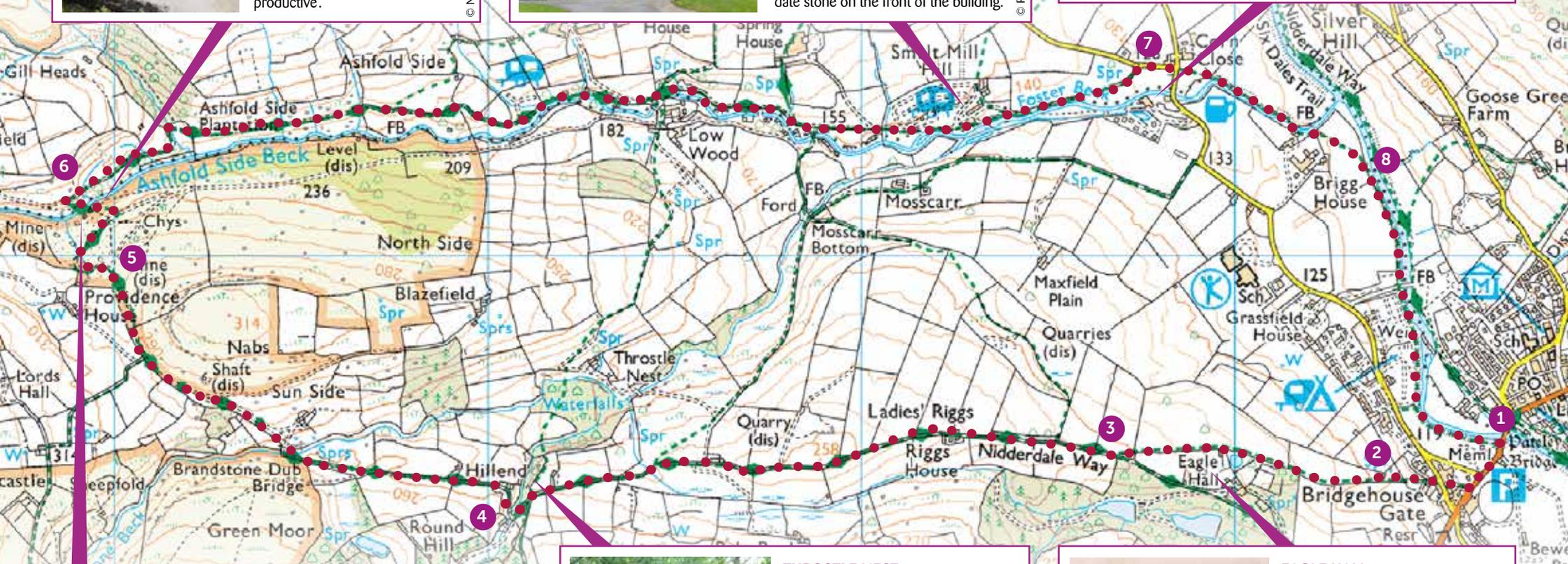
© Rob Light



### FOSTER BECK FLAX MILL

Built in 1864 this former flax mill still has its 35 foot (10 metre) diameter waterwheel which was installed in 1904. After ceasing production in 1966, the mill became a public house before it was converted into residential use in the early 2000s.

© Nidderdale Museum



### PROSPEROUS LEAD MINE SHAFT

Although first recorded in 1781 when it was leased by John Lupton and Thomas Barker, it is likely that the mine here was first sunk many years earlier. It was capped with a metal grill in 2016 allowing the stone lining at the top of the shaft to be safely viewed.

© Tim Davies



### THROSTLE NEST BRIDGE WOOD

This ancient woodland clinging to the sides of a tributary of Brandstone Beck is a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. It contains important woodland plant species such as wild garlic, yellow pimpernel, rosy garlic and toothwort.

© Robert Light



### EAGLE HALL

In the 18th and early 19th centuries the Eagle Hall estate was owned by the White family. They held the mineral rights for Bewerley, which included Ashfoldside and Greenhow Hill. The estate was later bought by Elizabeth Rawson of Nidd who rebuilt Eagle Hall in the 1870s.

© Nidderdale Museum

0 1 (km)

## Seasonal Features

**Summer:** In Throstle Nest Bridge Wood, pale purple toothwort shoots push through the ground and begin to flower in April/May.

**Winter:** Wild flowers such as eyebright, red clover, yellow rattle, march marigold and meadow cranesbill blossom in the traditional hay meadow by the river Nidd just past Brigg House.