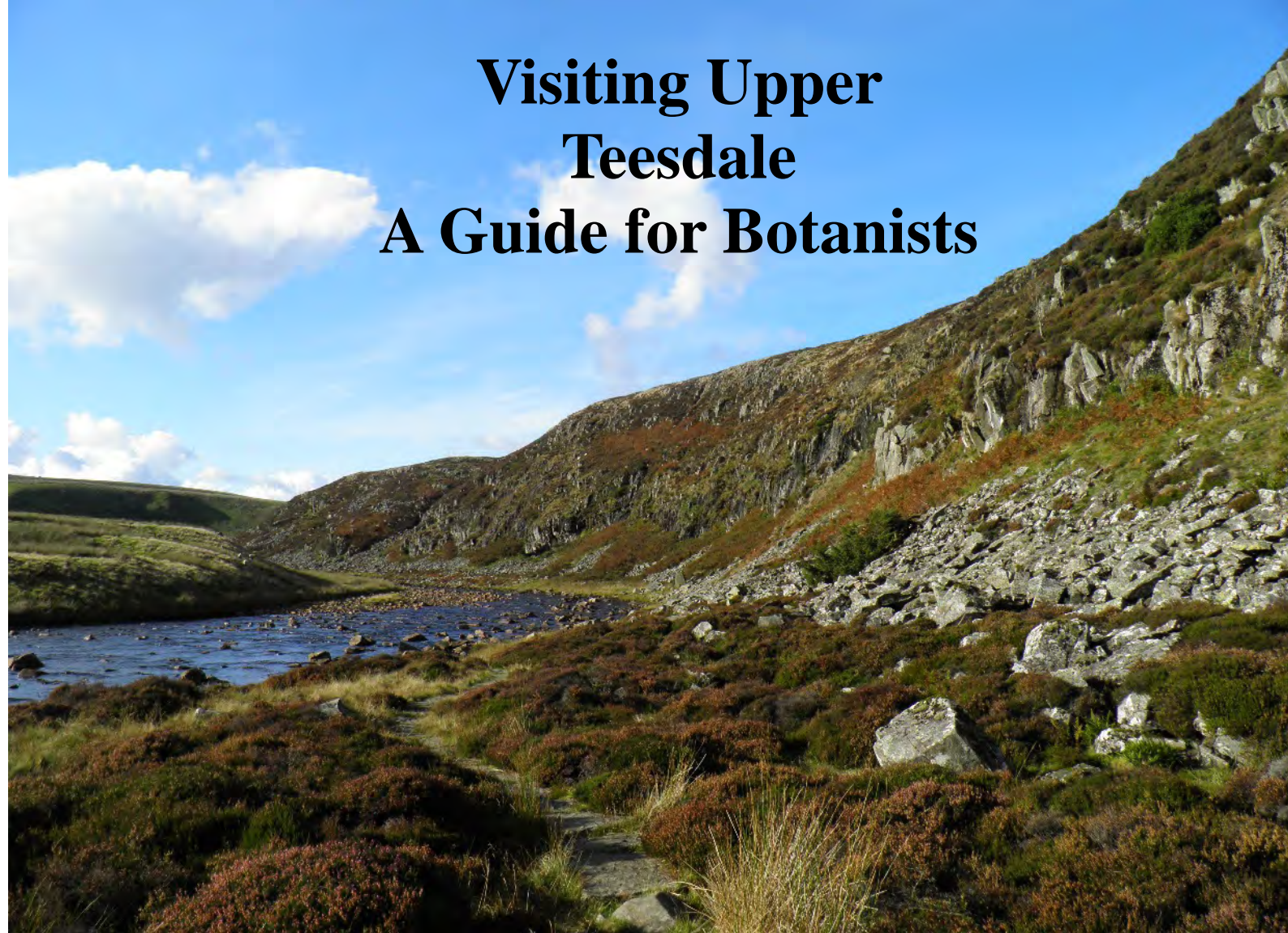


Visiting Upper Teesdale

A Guide for Botanists



Four walks in Upper Teesdale, famous for its rare arctic-alpine flora, taking in High Force, Low Force, and Widdybank and Cronkley Fells.

This guide includes where and when to go, and the best routes to see most of the “Teesdale assemblage”. A checklist of nationally rare and scarce plants is included on the last page.

Health and safety for botanists- the weather in Upper Teesdale can change very quickly, and produce wind and rain like you have never seen before. The rocky paths along Falcon Clints and the descent of Cauldron Snout can be tricky, and very slippery when wet. Be prepared. The walks can be linked together, by footpaths and bridges. Don't attempt to wade the Tees.

Health and safety for plants- it should go without saying, but just a reminder that this flora is delicate and valuable. Please do not pick plants, or “adjust” them for photographs. The sugar limestone and the sykes, in particular, should not be walked on or trampled in any way. You can see all of the plants from the paths.

Timing- Most visitors want to see the Spring Gentians in flower, which is usually from the second week in May to the third week in June, though this varies with the spring weather.

Widdybank and Falcon Clints

This walk is marked on the map with black arrows numbered “1”

The 11 kilometre walk starts at the Cow Green Reservoir car park, heading south along a surfaced track, coloured orange on the map. By the sides of the track, you will see limestone grassland, and, as you head south, some of the “sugar limestone”, which has been transformed by the volcanic whin sill. The best places to see the Teesdale flora are the small fenced off “exclosures”, which protect some of the best areas from overgrazing, and the points at which the track crosses small streams, called “sykes” in Teesdale.

In the exclosures, you should be able to see Spring Gentians, Teesdale Violet, False Sedge, Moonwort, Alpine Meadow Rue and Scottish Asphodel.

At the sykes, you should be able to see Variegated Horsetail, Hair Sedge, Alpine Rush, Three-Flowered Rush, and Bird’s Eye Primrose.





From the foot of Cauldron Snout, turn left and follow the path downstream. The crags on your left are Falcon Clints, made of volcanic rocks with occasional bands of limestone.

The route is a mixture of rough paths, boardwalks and scrambling over scree.

Falcon Clints is one of the best British sites for ferns. You should be able to spot Mountain Male Fern, Holly Fern, Beech Fern, Oak Fern, Green Spleenwort, Lemon-scented Fern, Fir Clubmoss and, at “Ken’s Rock”, pictured below, Northern Buckler Fern.

Flowering plants include Bird’s Eye Primrose, Butterwort, Orpine, Juniper, Mossy Saxifrage and, high on the crags, Bear Berry.



At the end of the crags, the walk becomes easy again, (orange line) fairly level to Widdybank Farm, where there are toilets.

A surfaced track takes you back north to the minor road, and then west back to the car park. If you have 2 cars, you could avoid the uphill and less interesting walk along the minor road.

The Cronkley Fell walk begins at Hanging Shaws car park, by the side of the Teesdale road at NY867298. The route is the **magenta** line on the map.

This an 8 kilometer, short but steep walk down to the Tees and up to Cronkley Fell, where most of the Teesdale rarities can be seen from the footpath.

Cross the road and, two hundred metres west, head south down a farm track. Pass the farmhouse on your left and carry on down the hill. After 200 metres bear right, not very well signposted, and follow the path down to Cronkley Bridge. Just before the bridge, you come across some interesting wet meadow habitats.

Cross the bridge (now entering VC65 !) and follow the farm track south to Cronkley Farm. Pass the farm on your left, and then steeply downhill to the foot of Cronkley High Crag. Over a stile, and then steeply up the bank past the rocky crag. This is a good spot for ferns and bryophytes.



Looking back at Cronkley Farm from High Crag

From the crag, continue heading southwards, with a great view down the valley to your right. This is the largest area of juniper in England. On the way back, you could head east here, through the junipers and along the banks of the Tees down to the High Force waterfall, about two kilometres away.

In the valley bottom (NY860280), which can be quite wet, you come to a T junction with a better track. Turn right (west) , and this takes you onto a long slow uphill track to the top of Cronkley Fell. The best places for the flora are in and around the “exclosures”, which are beside the track and are marked on the 1 in 25,000 OS map.

In and around the exclosures, you should be able to see Spring Gentians, False Sedge, Moonwort, Bird's Eye Primrose, Alpine Meadow Rue and Scottish Asphodel. Here, but not at Widdybank, there are also the beautiful endemic Hoary Rock-rose, and Mountain Avens. There is a small population of Dark Red Helleborine.

The small streams and marshy ground near the exclosures can be interesting.

Further along the track, bouldery areas are good for ferns and clubmosses.

You can return the same way, perhaps visit High Force, or carry on westwards to the Tees, returning along the south bank to Cronkley Bridge.



Looking back down the Cronkley Fell track

The Harwood Beck walk begins at Hanging Shaws car park, by the side of the Teesdale road at NY867298, and follows the route of the Cronkley Fell Walk as far as Cronkley Bridge. The route from the bridge onwards is the **purple** line on the map. The walk is 6 kilometres over easy ground.

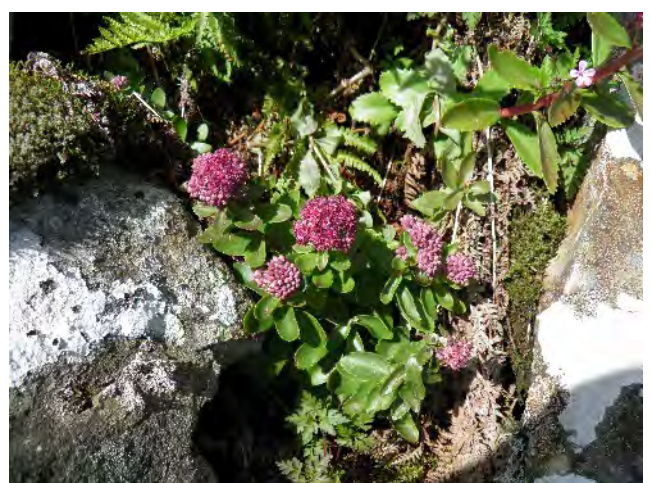
Do not cross the bridge, stay on the north bank and follow the Tees upstream to its confluence with the Harwood Beck.

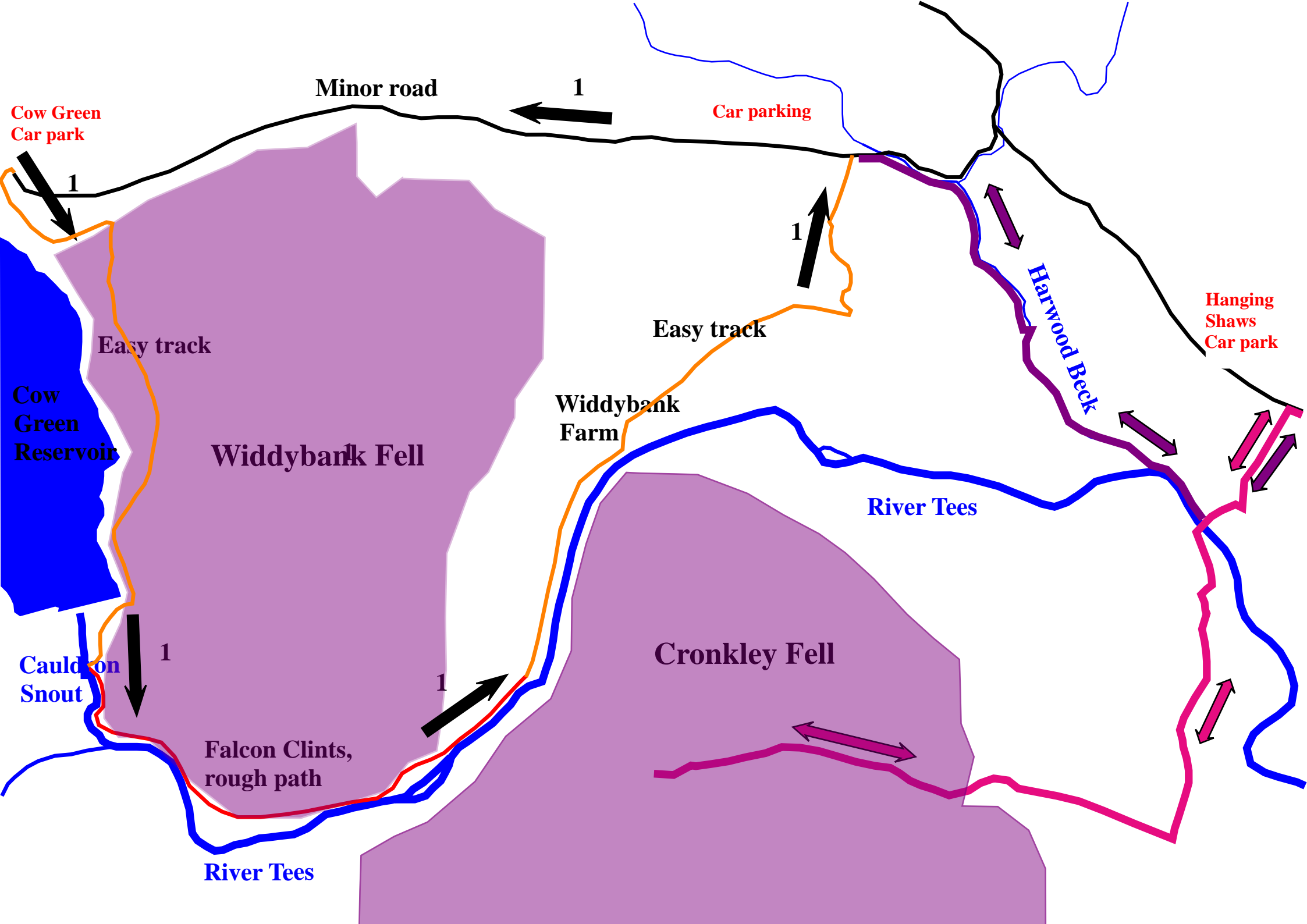


Just before the confluence, (picture left) and in several places further on, there are steep, eroding banks, which is where conditions are best for the Teesdale plants.

Follow the Harwood Beck upstream on the east bank, crossing to the west bank after one kilometre. Some of the hay meadows next to the footpath are quite flower-rich. The path then follows the west bank to Intake Farm. Just before Intake Farm there is one of the best sites for Shady Horsetail, on the stream banks. Carry on northwards, crossing the Harwood Beck and then on to the small village of Langdon Beck, where there is a pub.

You can return the same way, perhaps go on up to Cronkley Fell, or head west on to the Widdybank Walk.





Minor road

1

Car parking

Cow Green Car park

1

1

Easy track

Easy track

Harwood Beck

Hanging Shaws Car park

Cow Green Reservoir

Widdybank Fell

Widdybank Farm

River Tees

Cauldron Snout

1

1

Falcon Clints, rough path

Cronkley Fell

River Tees

Low Force to High Force Walk

A scenic 8 kilometre walk along the banks of the River Tees between the Low Force and High Force waterfalls. Fairly easy going. Park at the large county council car park at Bowlees, NY908282.

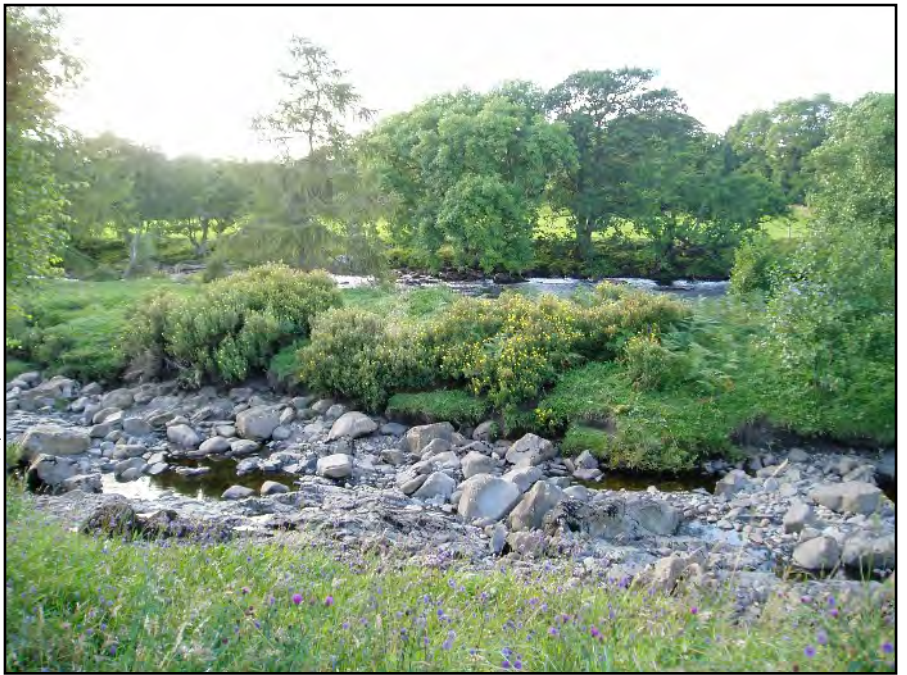
Before you set off on the walk proper, or afterwards, you might want to walk up the Bowlees Beck footpath to Summerhill Force, also called Gibson's Cave, a small waterfall. The walk is pretty butb lacking in scarce species. The disused quarry (NY908286) is more interesting botanically, with Greater Butterfly Orchid and Flat Sedge. By the footpath close to the former chapel there is a planted Rock Whitebeam Tree.

The walk heads south across the Teesdale road towards Winch Bridge, a suspension footbridge over the Tees with a great view of Low Force. Once you are safely over the bridge, the walk turns right, upstream past the falls and a sheep sculpture. If you want to see the Rock Whitebeams, though, turn left instead and walk downstream for a 500 metre detour. After crossing a footbridge over a side-stream, look for the "Yorkshire" tree above you on your right. The main site is on the opposite, north, bank of the Tees, a little further on, at NY907276. The 50 or so whitebeams are on a low cliff, which you can usually get close to by walking out very carefully over the rocky riverbed.



Back on the main walk, the route follows the Tees upstream with unimproved grassland and rocky riverbanks easily accessible. There are some interesting hayfields alongside the path, on you left. You should be able to find Bird's Eye Primrose, Globeflower, Alpine Bistort, Variegated Horsetail, Mountain Everlasting, Mountain Pansy, Melancholy Thistle, Shrubby Cinquefoil, and Northern Bedstraw. Shady Horsetail and Flat Sedge are harder to spot. Willows include Tea-leaved, Dark Leaved and their hybrids, and *Salix caprea* subspecies *sphacelata*.

When you arrive at the ferny Holwick Bridge, NY889283, you have a choice of routes. Staying on the south, Yorkshire side takes you up into the largest English area of Juniper. There are some cautious viewpoints from the top of High Force. This walk could be continued to join up with the Cronkley Fell route, 4 km further on.



Rocky islets with Shrubby Cinquefoil

Back at Holwick Bridge, the main route crosses the bridge back into Durham and heads upstream along the river and up a steep path to the road by the High Force Hotel. There is a small charge for admission to the walk down to the foot of High Force, which starts a few metres along the road to your left. This part of the walk is less interesting botanically, but the view of the Tees falling over the whin sill to make England's highest waterfall is outstanding. At the foot of the falls, there is Shrubby Cinquefoil and Juniper and Rock Whitebeam are visible on the cliffs across the river.

This is not a circular walk, as there is footpath back to Bowlees along the north bank. The quickest way back is along the road, but there is no footpath on the verge. Returning back the way you came gives you great views of the Holwick Scar cliffs and the Tees, and you always spot something that you missed on the way out.



Further information

"Plants of Upper Teesdale" by Christopher Lowe, 1990

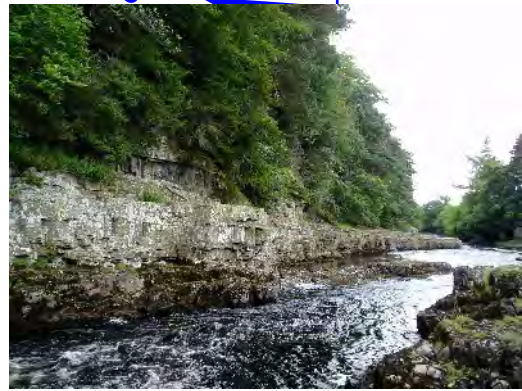
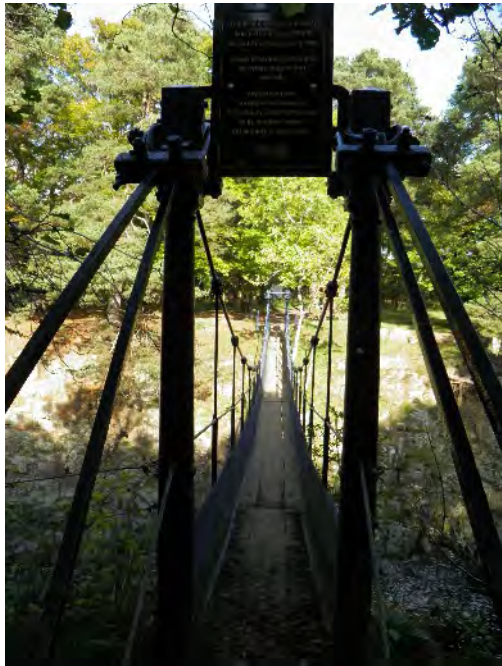
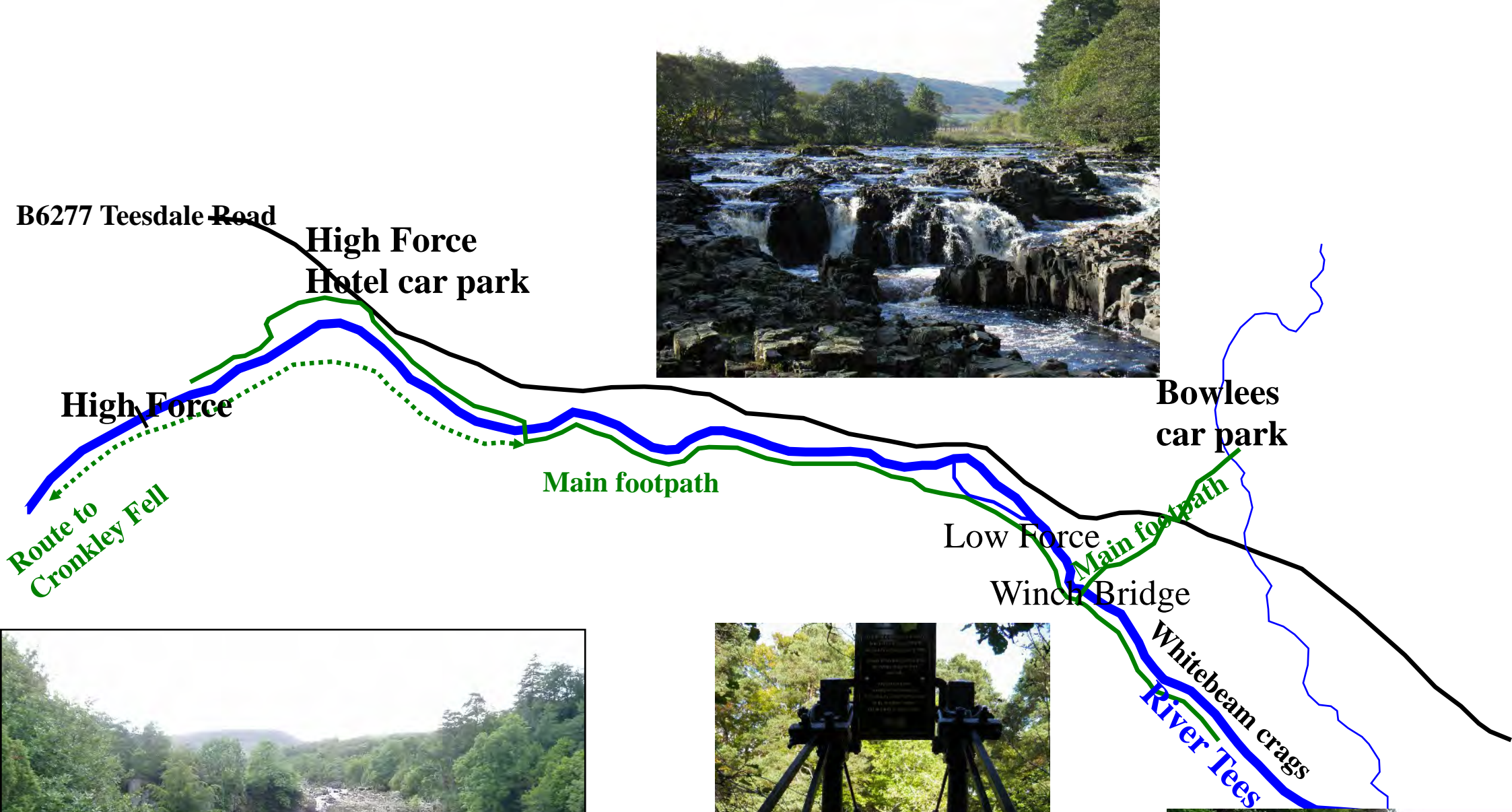
"The Natural History of Upper Teesdale" by Margaret Bradshaw

Natural England website

Flora of North East England website

Durham Wildlife Trust website

Durham pages on the BSBI website



Upper Teesdale Checklist

Some species are mainly found in hay fields or meadows, not publically accessible.

Scientific name	English name	Status	Notes
<i>Alchemilla acutiloba</i>	Starry Lady's Mantle	Vulnerable	
<i>Alchemilla glomerulans</i>	Clustered Lady's Mantle	Vulnerable	
<i>Alchemilla monticola</i>	Velvet Lady's Mantle	Endangered	
<i>Alchemilla subcrenata</i>	Large-toothed Lady's Mantle	Endangered	
<i>Alchemilla wichurae</i>	Lady's Mantle	Endangered	
<i>Asplenium pachyrachis</i>	Lobed Maidenhair Spleenwort	Near Threatened	
<i>Bartsia alpina</i>	Alpine Bartsia	Rare	Easily found
<i>Betula nana</i>	Dwarf Birch	Nationally Scarce	
<i>Blysmus compressus</i>	Flat-sedge	Vulnerable	
<i>Carex capillaris</i>	Hair Sedge	Nationally Scarce	
<i>Carex ericetorum</i>	Rare Spring-sedge	Vulnerable	
<i>Carex magellanica</i>	Tall Bog-sedge	Nationally Scarce	VC65 only
<i>Carex vaginata</i>	Sheathed Sedge	Nationally Scarce	VC65 only
<i>Chenopodium bonus-henricus</i>	Good-King-Henry	Vulnerable	Easily found
<i>Crepis mollis</i>	Northern Hawksbeard	Endangered	
<i>Dactylorhiza viridis</i>	Frog Orchid	Vulnerable	
<i>Dryas octopetala</i>	Mountain Avens	Nationally Scarce	VC65 only
<i>Epipactis atrorubens</i>	Dark-red Helleborine	Nationally Scarce	VC65 only
<i>Equisetum pratense</i>	Shady Horsetail	Nationally Scarce	Easily found
<i>Equisetum variegatum</i>	Variiegated Horsetail	Nationally Scarce	Easily found
<i>Euphrasia arctica arctica</i>	Eyebright	Nationally Scarce	Easily found
<i>Euphrasia arctica borealis</i>	Eyebright	Unknown	
<i>Euphrasia confusa</i>	Eyebright	Unknown	
<i>Euphrasia officinalis</i>	Eyebright	Vulnerable	
<i>Euphrasia officinalis monticola</i>	Eyebright	Vulnerable	
<i>Gentiana verna</i>	Spring Gentian	Rare	Easily found
<i>Gentianella campestris</i>	Field Gentian	Vulnerable	Easily found
<i>Helianthemum oelandicum levigatum</i>	Hoary Rock-rose	Vulnerable	VC65 only. Easily found
<i>Juncus alpinoarticulatus</i>	Alpine Rush	Nationally Scarce	
<i>Juniperus communis</i>	Juniper	BAP	Easily found
<i>Kobresia simpliciuscula</i>	False Sedge	Rare	Easily found
<i>Minuartia stricta</i>	Teesdale Sandwort	Vulnerable	
<i>Minuartia verna</i>	Spring Sandwort	Near Threatened	Easily found
<i>Myosotis alpestris</i>	Alpine Forget-me-not	Near Threatened	VC65 only
<i>Myosotis stolonifera</i>	Pale Forget-me-not	Nationally Scarce	
<i>Neotinia ustulata</i>	Burnt Orchid	Endangered	
<i>Noccaea caerulescens</i>	Alpine Penny-cress	Nationally Scarce	
<i>Oenanthe fistulosa</i>	Tubular Water-dropwort	Vulnerable	
<i>Peucedanum ostruthium</i>	Masterwort	Near Threatened	Easily found
<i>Platanthera bifolia</i>	Lerrer Butterfly Orchid	Vulnerable	
<i>Platanthera chlorantha</i>	Greater Butterfly-orchid	Near Threatened	
<i>Polygala amarelle</i>	Dwarf Milkwort	Rare	
<i>Polystichum lonchitis</i>	Holly-fern	BAP	Easily found
<i>Potentilla crantzii</i>	Alpine Cinquefoil	Nationally Scarce	Easily found
<i>Potentilla fruticosa</i>	Shrubby Cinquefoil	Near Threatened	Easily found
<i>Primula farinose</i>	Bird's-eye Primrose	Vulnerable	Easily found
<i>Pseudorchis albida</i>	Small-white Orchid	Vulnerable	
<i>Salix caprea sphaelata</i>	Goat Willow subspecies	Nationally Scarce	VC65 only
<i>Saxifraga hirculus</i>	Marsh Saxifrage	Vulnerable	
<i>Saxifraga hypnoides</i>	Mossy Saxifrage	Vulnerable	
<i>Sedum villosum</i>	Hairy Stonecrop	Near Threatened	
<i>Sesleria caerulea</i>	Blue Moor-grass	Nationally Scarce	Easily found
<i>Sorbus rupicola</i>	Rock Whitebeam	Nationally Scarce	Easily found
<i>Trichophorum cespitosum</i>	Northern Deergrass	Nationally Rare	
<i>Viola rupestris</i>	Teesdale Violet	Nationally Rare	Easily found
<i>Woodsia ilvensis</i>	Oblong Woodsia	Endangered	