

A WALK THROUGH TIME UP FLINTERGILL OUTRAKE

To Wharfedale, highest peak 2,415ft.
 ← 7 miles back to Dent THE OLD OCCUPATION GREEN LANE → To Barbondale, 4 miles back to Dent



Dent from Flintergill



Viewpoint with Toposcope



The Limestone Quarry



High Ground Barn



The Lime Kiln



Haymaking



The Dancing Flags



The Wishing Tree



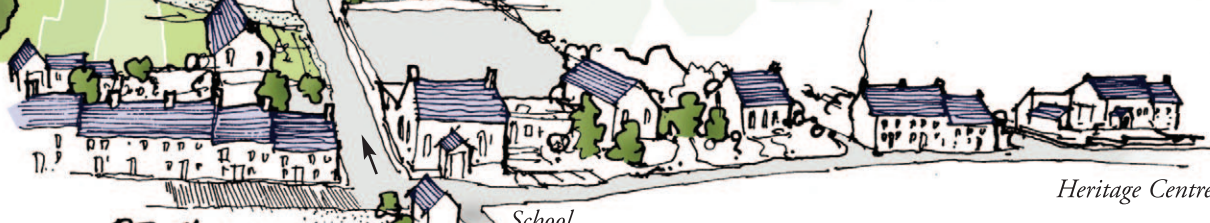
High Laning Caravan Park



The Weaver Fairy of Flintergill



Dent Village Heritage Centre



Heritage Centre

DES METCALFE.

School

To Flintergill Outrake Nature Trail

This short linear walk "there and back" of about 1½ miles (2.4 km) up beautiful Flintergill is situated just south of the village of Dent and culminates in a superb elevated viewpoint near the summit of the area known as High Ground above High Laning Farm. From here the extensive panorama of Dentedale's magnificent surroundings is positively stunning and provides a truly memorable climax to a visit to the Heritage Centre itself. The path climbs uphill for most of the way and is quite stony and rough. The Gill is an interesting geological area, it is so steep it cuts through all types of rock.

To begin the walk, turn right on leaving the Centre and follow the main road through the village for a short distance to arrive at a road junction just opposite the Dales Car Park and public toilets. At this point turn right, as indicated by a blue sign, and continue on to reach the village green, also known as "Dragon Croft". Follow straight on from here, passing the Vicarage on right, to cross a further road and very shortly pass the old Zion Chapel, now a Meditation Centre, on the left. Soon the houses that were the Weavers' Cottages are left behind as the surface road swiftly degenerates into a rough track, signposted 'Flintergill'.

Only a few yards beyond the cottages and just slightly left of the track in the level bed of the Gill, lie the "Dancing Flags", a large expanse of flat natural rock slabs used for centuries by local weavers for "wauling" their newly-woven lengths of cloth, or "webs" as they were called. This was done by first wetting the fabric thoroughly with bare feet, causing it to shrink slightly and "felt up" to create a much thicker, and therefore much warmer material. At one time this was a universal practice and in many places became known as "dancing the web" - hence the name of the flags. Indeed, its association with "Webs" and "dancing" may also account for the lingering belief that fairies frequented this particular spot!

The track now leads up to a steep stile beside a large wooden gate. Go through this and then, with the lovely wooded Gill beside you, continue on along the wide but stony track soon to see, thrusting boldly out on the left, the huge dark outline of the Gill's legendary "Wishing Tree" Centuries old, its guardian spirit traditionally promised to grant a wish to all who made their way "deiseal", or clockwise, three times through the huge twisted arch of knotted roots around its base - but be sure not to go "widdershins", or anti-clockwise, for it is said bad luck will surely befall those who do!

On leaving the Wishing Tree, the real ascent of Flintergill Outrake begins, its sylvan beauty and the gently tinkling waters of the beck down in the little ravine on the left, amply compensating for the rough stoniness underfoot as the track continues on to pass through a further large wooden gate close to old High Ground Barn. The latter has recently been transformed from a roofless ruin into the perfect setting for a fascinating collection of period farming machinery and implements together with the old cattle "bosses", or stalls, and one may view these to learn at first hand how Dalesfolk used to manage the many arduous outdoor tasks that occupied so much of their working lives.

Almost opposite the barn is a recently excavated lime-kiln, lime-burning being at one time a major task on many a Dales farm. The process involved filling the bowl of the kiln with coppice wood, peat, or coal from the 'Crag End' coal mines, evidence of the mines can still be seen on the fellside above the Occupation Road. This was then layered with broken limestone and allowed to burn for a few days, after which the cobs of lime were raked out and "slaked" with water to produce what was known as quicklime, for which many uses, both domestic and agricultural, were found.

Continuing on once more there is time to appreciate the wonderful variety of trees in the Gill, from the canopy of newly regenerated oaks to the glistening hollies, graceful ash and nodding hazels. Note also in season the carpets of wood anemones, bluebells and other native wildflowers that star its banks. And as you plod ever onwards and upwards think too of the many weary packmen who came this way in the old days, "sniggin" their often back-breaking portable loads of domestic necessities, as well as perhaps a few little luxuries such as ribbons, laces and other simple vanities, to cheer the often bleak lives of the hardworking womenfolk of the Dales.

A little further on, the track passes through yet another large wooden gate, just beyond which a little signposted path climbs up the right-hand bank to arrive finally at the magnificent Viewpoint, complete with toposcope indicating all the salient features in the surrounding landscape. This is the culmination of the walk, but those with sufficient energy left may wish, before returning down the track, to continue on a little further in order to view the junction of Flintergill Outrake with the impressive Old Occupation (Green Lane), or "Occy" as the locals call it. This was originally an ancient droving route which was rebuilt as an access road in 1859 at the time of the Enclosures. However, since then it has sadly become much worn and rutted through over-usage by unsuitable vehicles.