

## Appersett to Mossdale and Cotterdale

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Appersett – large roadside rough lay-by (SD 858907)
Ordnance Survey map	OL 19 – Howgill Fells and Upper Eden Valley
Distance	9.1 miles
Traffic light rating	

**Introduction:** I imagine at least 90% of visitors to the Yorkshire Dales know of Airedale, Wharfedale, Wensleydale and Swaledale. However mention Mossdale and Cotterdale and I guess many brows would furrow. Each form an arm at the north-west end of Wensleydale.

This extremely attractive walk explores both. It takes you past the impressive waterfalls of Cotter Force and Mossdale Beck before arriving at the unbelievably pretty and tranquil hamlet of Cotterdale, in a dead end (by road) valley, which time looks to have forgotten . It then climbs the lower slopes of Great Shunner Fell to reveal stunning views of Cotterdale and Wensleydale and long distance glimpses of Ingleborough.

The walk starts from the small, rather plain hamlet of Appersett, which lies a mile west of Hawes on the A684. There is a large rough lay-by on the north side of the road in the hamlet, next to the village green, where the locals often hang washing.

There are no refreshment opportunities en route other than your own sustenance. Afterwards, there are plenty of cafes/pubs in Hawes.

**Start:** From the lay-by (SD 858907) turn right (west). Cross the first river bridge over Widdale Beck and walk along the A684 for about 200 yards. Immediately before the next roadbridge, on the left, look out for a short ladder and descend this to the footpath (SD 858909).

Follow the path along by the River Ure until after crossing a ladder stile, it bears off slightly left and runs along the top of a small wood. Continue to follow the path until you reach a ladder stile on the right (SD 850913). This is the route to Cotter Force. Cross this and descend through the woods.

At the bottom of the woods, cross some small rather precarious stepping stones and then turn left. Go to the right of a barn where there is a fingerpost indicating the route. Follow the field wall on the right until you get to its end at a fingerpost indicating “A684 100 yards” (SD 847915). This is the spot to which you retrace your steps to resume the rest of the walk.

On reaching the road, turn right and walk along for about another 100 yards until just after the bridge it until you reach a fingerpost on the left indicating “Cotter Force ¼ mile”. A well manicured path takes you to the falls, a series of 6 rock shelves, the largest being 1.5 metres. The artist JMW Turner was evidently inspired to sketch here.

Retrace your steps as above and at the fingerpost, turn right for "Mosssdale 1¼ miles".

Where the track forks right to Birkrigg Farm (SD 845916), keep left. Note the viaduct on the left which once carried a branch line from the Wensleydale Railway from Hawes to Garsdale Head.

When the track forks again, stay left again on the main track and when it swings left to a farm, turn right indicated by the fingerpost. On reaching Mosssdale Head Farm, pass in front of the farm then left between two barns indicated by a yellow footpath arrow then turn right to follow the farm drive.

As you cross the farm bridge over Mosssdale Gill (SD 827919), to the left is another railway viaduct. The gill flows beneath it in a series of impressive waterfalls. Immediately over the bridge, go through the two gates straight ahead then turn right indicated by a fingerpost.

The track climbs to a gateway, follow it through the gate (SD 826920) and turn right to follow the wall. As the wall bends right, go straight on to meet another wall which you follow to the road (the A 684) at Thwaite Bridge. Cross straight over the road indicated by the fingerpost to "Cotterdale 1 mile". You cross the River Ure.

After crossing the river, go straight ahead at the trees to climb the steep path to a ladder stile (SD 827923). Over this, follow the fairly obvious footpath which bears away to the right over more open pasture.

Cross another ladder stile to arrive at a broad track. Go straight across this. The path is a little indistinct but keep straight ahead bearing just slightly right. The path becomes more obvious after a short distance and a marker post with a faded yellow arrow confirms you are on the right route. There are good views down Wensleydale from this point.

Go through a gated stile and go straight ahead ignoring the track which crosses your path. As you go over another ladder stile (SD 831928), the beauty of Cotterdale unfolds before you.

Descend the path into the valley going right at a fork. At the road, go straight ahead through the little gate (SD 834933) then turn left following the fingerpost for "Cotterdale ¼ mile". Follow the footpath along by the river. Note that this is becoming badly eroded for a 50 yard stretch to the right of the stone wall close to the hamlet and in the absence of repair, the wall is likely to collapse into the river necessitating a walk along the edge of the field. When you get to the hamlet, turn right.

Walk through the hamlet and follow the stream until you get to the wooden bridge (the second bridge) (SD 833943). Turn right where a finger post indicates the bridleway route for "Hardraw 3¾ miles" and "Jinglemea Bog 1¼ miles".

You enter Cotterdale Woods, part of High Abbotside Moorland Regeneration Project. Just here are some picnic tables where you might enjoy your sandwiches! Climb the path and when you reach the broad forestry track, turn left.

Follow this track as it zig-zags, rising through the trees. Fingerposts confirm your direction.

As you exit the trees, keep straight ahead on the obvious broad grassy track. Cotterdale is below you to the right and on the hill to the left above you is the old beacon tower.

After about ¾ mile, you reach a fingerpost on the right (SD 847932) which indicates you are joining the Pennine Way (for a short distance). Follow the fingerpost indicating "Hardraw 1¾ miles", bearing right through a gateway.

As the path descends, there are good views down Wensleydale and Ingleborough can be seen in the distance. Pass and ignore a fingerpost on the right for Cotterdale.

At a threeway fingerpost, turn right, still following the Pennine Way.

After passing through two gates across the track which form a sheep pen, at a fingerpost on the right for New Bridge (SD 859919) turn right and head for the bottom left hand corner of the field where there is a ladder stile.

Over this stile, descend the steep grassy slope and look out for a threeway fingerpost, probably slightly to your left. Follow the direction for Appersett. A series of posts with somewhat faded footpath arrows mark the fairly obvious path.

You soon come in sight of the two bridges at Appersett.

As you enter the last field before the road, with a stone barn, the small gate into the road is not easy to spot in the stone wall. Head for the collection of road signs and you will see it.

