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Grassington Moor Lead Mines and Mossdale Scar

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Rough, free parking at Yarnbury (SE 015659)
Ordnance Survey map	OL2 – Yorkshire Dales, Southern and Western
Distance	7.1 miles
Date of Walk	21 September 2014
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: Having recently compiled the walk from Hebden via the lead mines, I decided to return to the area to take a closer look at some of the aftermath of the mining activity on Grassington Moor. There is a defined lead mining trail but I did not set out to replicate this. Also, I wanted to see Mossdale Scar where Mossdale Beck disappears dramatically beneath the Scar.

This walk is very easy to follow, being on clear and wide well defined tracks for almost its entirety.

It could be combined with the walk from Hebden if you wanted a much longer walk.

As is obvious if you look at the OS map, the lead mining area to the north of Grassington is vast. Its heyday was between 1821 and 1861 then a steady decline set in, as the mines became exhausted and cheaper foreign imports grew. The last activity, to recover ore from spoil heaps, ended in 1963. My main targets for the walk were to see the smelt mill chimney, its extensive flue and the curious circular structure which you can see across the fells. This turned out to be the remains of a grinding mill.

The walk across to Mossdale Scar was through something of a wilderness of spoil heaps although there are good long distance views.

Mossdale Scar is a limestone cliff and beneath this, Mossdale Beck gurgles as it disappears into caverns beneath. The caverns are rather notorious in that on 24 June 1967, a group of six cavers became trapped and five were killed, despite extensive efforts to rescue them. Their remains still lie entombed in the cave system. There is a cairn on the hill above which marks their position below.

The walk starts from Yarnbury, high above Grassington. To get there, head north from Grassington centre, up Main Street (to the left of the cobbled car parking area). At the top of Main Street, keep straight ahead, to the left of the Town Hall (with the clock). This is Moor Lane. Follow it until the tarmac runs out at Yarnbury, where there is an entrance on the right to the rough parking area.

There are no refreshment facilities en route but some rocks on which you can perch at Mossdale Scar, for a picnic.

Start: From the parking at Yarnbury (SE 015659), continue on the main track away from the entrance and when it splits, go left.

You will soon see a black arrow on a post on the right. Leave the main track and follow this arrow. You arrive at the Cupola Smelt Mill (SE 026664), number 12 on the Lead Mining Trail. An information board tells you about it.

Continue to follow the Lead Mining Trail which follows the course of the flue to the chimney. You can see into the flue at various places. Spare a thought for the poor souls who had to sweep this so that every last drop of lead could be extracted from the flue gas deposits. One suspects they did not reach a ripe old age!

The clear path leads directly to the chimney (SE 030666), including a paved section. At the chimney, be sure to admire the view up Wharfedale behind you. The chimney was saved by the Earby Mines Research Group through restoration in 1966 and 1971.

From the chimney, continue on the path ahead, in the same direction as you arrived, heading for the spoil heaps. Just past the spoil heaps is Coalgrove Beck reservoir (No 16). This was used to provide water to drive the High Grinding Mill and High Winding House. You cannot see the reservoir until you get to it.

Follow the path along the left hand side of the reservoir. Just before the end of the reservoir, turn left between the spoil heaps heading for the round stone construction ahead (the High Grinding Mill).

From the High Grinding Mill (SE 028667), with it behind you, turn left to follow the main track. At a crossroads of tracks, keep straight on (SE 029668). You now follow this clear track for 2.5 miles.

At SE 024681, pass a cairn on the right of the track where the track curves sharply right. This is marked on the OS map.

As you approach Mosssdale, note the hill Great Whernside on the horizon.

On a sharp right hand bend, having been walking through a gritstone landscape, you are suddenly faced with an outcrop of limestone. The track joins another in the valley bottom (SE 013695). Turn right here for $\frac{1}{3}$ mile for Mosssdale Scar. There are some convenient rocks here for a picnic stop.

After inspecting Mosssdale Scar (SE 016698) and the unusual disappearance of Mosssdale Beck, retrace your steps, passing a stone sheepfold (SE 016697) and the track on the left down which you came.

From this junction, stay on the main track for $\frac{3}{4}$ mile. Shortly after passing through a metal gate, look out for a grassy footpath on the left marked with a small stone cairn and turn off here (SE 006687). It is easy to be seduced by the continuing track ahead if you are not concentrating!

The grassy footpath is pretty clear (watch out for various lengths of old fencing wire which might trip you up) and when it arrives at two gates side by side, go through the left gate into a walled track. After 250 yards or so, the walled track opens into a large field, through a gate. The route is over to the right, following the line of the wall. Ignore any routes off via stiles to the right.

Continue to the end of the field and go through a gate on to another section of walled track. Follow this to Yarnbury and at the junction with the track/road, turn right back to the car park. Note the little low stone parapet to the left. If you walk round the other side of it (do **not** jump over it - you will find a nasty drop!), you will see this is the entrance to Barretts Incline, built in 1828, to link with shafts below. An information board explains.

