

Welcome to Deepdale Nature Reserve

A 4 kilometer/2 1/2 mile circular walk
starting at Barnard Castle.



"and last and least but loveliest still, Romantic Deepdale's slender rill"
Sir Walter Scott

A few minutes walk from Barnard Castle, and adjacent to the Caravan Club site, Deepdale Wood is one of Teesdale's finest and most beautiful woodlands. The 100 acre nature reserve is owned and managed for nature conservation by John Durkin. Responsible public access is encouraged, and there is a good network of footpaths with footbridges and stepping stones across the Deepdale Beck and the Ray Gill.

This leaflet takes you on a circular walk around the nature reserve, and gives brief information on what you may see.

Detailed information about Deepdale Nature Reserve can be found at www.durhamnature.co.uk/deepdale.html

Starting from Barnard Castle,

There are parking areas in the market place, Scar Top and Raby Avenue areas of Barnard Castle. Follow one of the footpaths down to the “Pipe Bridge”, a footbridge over the River Tees upstream of the Castle. Cross the footbridge, then cross Lartington Lane, and go through the gateway which is across the road and to your left. There is also a small parking area here at the reserve entrance. A level, surfaced path takes you through the woods and meadows alongside the Deepdale Beck. After 600 metres you arrive at the ford over the Ray Gill. If the Gill is flowing too deeply to paddle through, there is the Ray Gill footbridge 20 metres further upstream, to your right.

For the circular walk, cross the Ray Gill footbridge and turn left through an area of “coppiced” woodland. Turn right onto the level path, and after 100 metres cross the Deepdale Beck over a second footbridge. Turn right, and follow the beck upstream. The building on your left is the remains of an old shooting range from the First World War. It can be handy if there is a shower of rain.



The rifle range buildings

The path follows the beck, until a large fallen tree has collapsed the original streamside footpath. At this point you leave the Nature Reserve, but you are still on a public footpath. Return to the Beck after the fallen tree, and stay alongside the Beck – the path becomes narrower here. After crossing a side stream called the Smart Gill, the Great Stone is through a gate on your right, a nice little spot to watch the Beck flowing over its limestone bedrock. The Great Stone is a pink granite “erratic”, brought from Shap Fell by an ice sheet during the last ice age.



The Great Stone

Returning to the main path, keep to your right, follow some footpath signs, and you will come to a stile over a fence, and the ford over the beck. This can usually be paddled in trainers or boots in summer, but the beck is liable to spate and bare feet or wellies may be necessary. If the water is low, small fossils, “crinoids” can be found on flat, orangey coloured rocks.

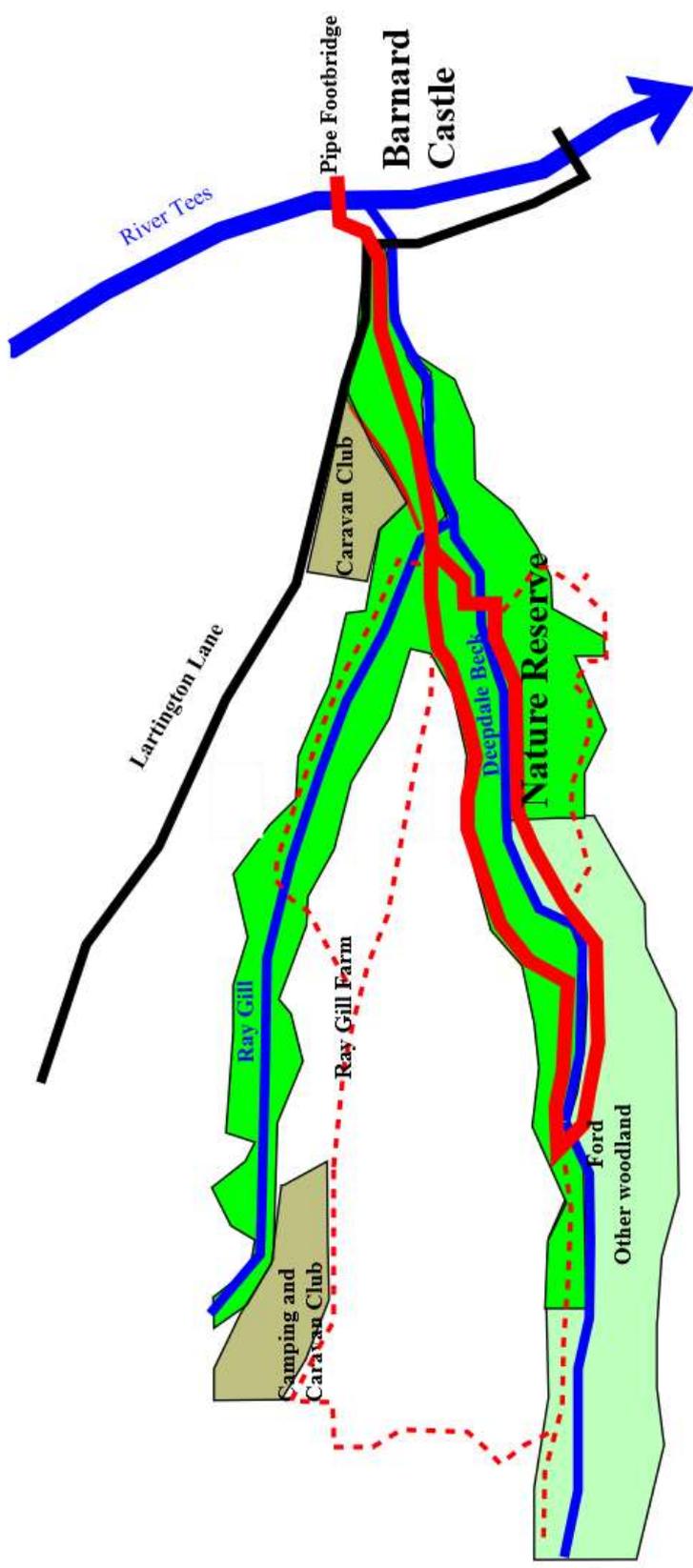


The ford

Once across the beck, you are back in the nature reserve land, and a level path continues upstream, and can be followed for several miles. Our route doubles back downstream to your right after the ford, past a short and slightly scrambly section of path, then the path improves again. Follow the path downstream to the Great Stone, where the main footpath leaves the beck and heads up the hillside to your left. This is a good area for woodland flowers. From the Pine trees at the top of the hill there is a good view over the dale. Continue on into an area of more open woodland, where there are several paths, all taking you back down to the Ray Gill Footbridge or to the Ray Gill ford, then back along the level path to the Pipe Footbridge and Barnard Castle.

[If you want to walk in the woods but don't want to paddle across the Deepdale Beck ford on the circular walk, then you should do the circular part of the walk in the reverse direction, crossing the Ray Gill footbridge as described, but then staying on the north side of the beck instead of crossing the Deepdale Beck footbridge. When you reach the Deepdale Beck ford, you can then either return the way you came, or else continue to follow the beck upstream. This later takes you outside of the Nature Reserve, but is a public footpath that can be followed through the wood for several miles.]





Deepdale Wood Nature Reserve.

Public footpaths are marked in red.

www.durhamnature.co.uk/deepdale.html