Enjoy exploring Frosterley, Weardale and the surrounding area.

A leaflet on Frosterley Marble is available from the North Pennines AONB Partnership.

In Weardale and Durham County Council.

Tel: 01388 528801, or go to www.northpennines.org.uk

This leaflet is funded by HLF with a partnership of funders through the Mineral Valleys Project designed to bring communities together to enhance and celebrate their natural and social history.

Walks from the series are available from station offices and tourist information centres in Weardale and Durham County Council.

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Before you start, you need to know:

Walk 1 is a 2 km/1 1/3 mile route and takes approximately 1 hr 15 minutes. This short walk is a circuit through fields and along tracks taking in some of the old quarrying sites, a visit to Frosterley Church and points where you can view Frosterley marble in its traditional worked and raw forms.

Walk 2 is a 5.5km/3 2/3 mile route and takes about 2 hours. It gives great views across Weardale and a fascinating return via an excellent exposure of Frosterley marble in its raw form in the riverbed of the Bollihope Burn.

Walk 3 is 7.5km/4 miles and takes about 2 hrs 30 mins. This route follows Walk 2 but incorporates a simple there-and-back extension and gives the chance to explore a quiet limestone valley with close up views of water worn limestone, ancient yew trees and an abundance of beautiful flowers in spring and summer.

You can join Walk 2 and see the excellent Frosterley marble exposures. Please keep to the path when at the quarry.

Walk 1: 2km /1 1/3 mile
Walk 2: 5.5km/3 2/3 mile
Walk 3: 7.5km/4 miles

WALKS FROM FROSTERLEY RAILWAY STATION

Wearhead

Once you leave Frosterley Station and take the path to the left, you will pass directly over the line before the site of the quarry. After about 100m you come to the site of the quarry which is now a car park.

This is where the stone sculptures were shaped and polished. The stone sculpture on the left is a large piece of Frosterley marble which has been shaped and polished.

Quarrying in Frosterley

Limestone has been quarried from the valley sides around Frosterley since the 12th century but it was in the 1800s that the village became an important centre for limestone quarrying. Limestone has many uses - as a roadstone, agricultural lime, for flux in the iron and steel industry and for cement.

A special type of limestone is found in Frosterley, this fossil-rich stone, known as Frosterley marble, can be polished to a high shine. Technically, it is not a proper marble. Marble is formed when limestone is heated or subjected to pressure (or both) which causes it to recrystallize into marble. This limestone has not been altered in this way. It is the white fossils, from a tropical seabed of 325 million years ago, encapsulated within the dark grained limestone which make this such a decorative stone.

The earliest known reference to the rock is via ‘Lambert the marble cutter’ who is mentioned in the Bolden Book, a northern version of the Domesday Book commissioned by Bishop Hugh de Puiset in 1183.

The most famous use of Frosterley marble is in Durham Cathedral. Here, the ceiling of the Chapel of the Nine Altars is supported by slender columns of this unusual stone. The columns would have been roughly cut, possibly from the Bollihope Burn river bed, then transported to the cathedral building site. Here, industrious Norman monks would have begun the laborious process of polishing, using blocks of sandstone lubricated with water and leather cloths impregnated with fine sand and silt, to bring the stone to a smooth decorative finish.

Locally, in Frosterley Parish Church (built in 1869) you can see a Frosterley Marble font rescued from the church grounds at Gainsborough in Lincolnshire. It has been installed as a result of a local public appeal.

A large piece of Frosterley marble in its raw state can be seen in the public car park adjacent to the village hall. Broadwood Quarry still quarries Frosterley marble today.

Please keep to the path when at the quarry.

In Frosterley village beside village hall or at Frosterley Station

Weardale Motor services bus 101 provides a regular service between Wolsingham, Frosterley and Stanhope

The Black Bull Inn, Frosterley
The Forester Inn
Frosterley Fish and Chip Shop
Frosterley Cooperative store
Tourist Information Centre at The Durham Dales Centre, Stanhope

In the village, opposite car park

www.weardale-railway.org.uk or 01388 526203

Cautionary note about cows and calves...

Cattle may be inquisitive and approach you, especially if you have a dog. Please:

• avoid walking through a herd of cattle and never come between a cow and her calf
• keep your dog under close control, preferably on a short lead
• if you have a dog with you and feel threatened by cattle, let the dog go and retreat.

All information correct at time of printing.
Directions

Walks 1, 2 and 3:

1. Start at Frosterley Station. Leave the station and at the road (opposite the Black Bull Inn) turn left to cross the bridges over the railway line and River Wear.

2. Pass the Old Sunday School and Primitive Methodist Chapel on your left and take the next left in front of Old Bridge House (look out for the finger post on the right hand side of the road). Follow this track in front of Old Bridge Farm. Keep left, passing the large modern barns and then fork right through a gate (with a yellow footpath waymarker).

3. The path climbs gradually and goes through a second gate. After about 250 metres, where the track turns right, turn left along the footpath, following a fence on your right. Take care as this path can be slippery.

4. Go through a kissing gate and into an area of old spoil heaps. You will notice an old railway track bed which is cut off by the river (the abutments are still in place). Follow the old railway track bed towards a cutting ahead (the entrance to a disused quarry). Do not go into the quarry, instead keep left on the stony path that climbs up to a kissing gate.

Walk 1 leaves Walks 2 and 3 at this point.

5. For Walk 1, go through the kissing gate and follow the footpath to a memorial bench. Carry on for 100 metres to a track junction. Turn left down to a footbridge across the River Wear. Then follow the directions from 1 back to the start.

6. For Walks 2 and 3, don’t go through the kissing gate but turn right to head up through the hawthorn grove to overlock the old quarry on your right and a working quarry (Broadwood) on your left. Go through a second kissing gate and then turn right along a fence running along the top edge of the old quarry.

7. After 200 metres, go through a gate and drop down to a surfaced farm track. Turn right to pass an old brick building and continue on the track as it curves left then climbs to the road. Turn left down the road, past the ‘White Kirkley’ sign, over the river to a gate on your right signedpost Geardale Way.

8. For Walk 2, now follow directions from 1 back to the start.

9. For Walk 3 Only: Go through this gate, (if you find yourself crossing a road bridge, you’ve gone too far). Follow this track up the valley of the Bollihope Burn to a footbridge.

Beyond this footbridge you will notice the steep banks of old grazed-over spoil heaps which support a good variety of limestone loving plants, such as Black Knapweed (left). Enjoy the plentiful and contrasting landscape of this narrow gorge-like valley.

The track follows an old railway branch line built to transport limestone to the main rail line (constructed in 1847) leading from Weardale to Middlesbrough via Darlington and Stockton.

Follow the path as it leads through a rock gap. Here you can see the effects of thousands of years of water dripping onto and sculpting the sides of this rocky gorge. This was probably once the river course until it found the route to your left. Limestone rivers are notorious for changing their courses, leaving riverbeds dry once the water finds an alternative route through cracks and fissures in the rock.

Head up the valley past a series of pools (remnants of the quarrying operations here) and head to a second footbridge. This is the turning back point. As you head back down the valley you will probably notice more of the quarrying evidence, such as the stones lining the banks of the Bollihope Burn beside one of the pools.

Return to the road and turn right.

10. Stay on the road, and cross the bridge into the hamlet of White Kirkley, turn left (opposite White Kirkley farmhouse) through a kissing-gate marked with a finger post, ‘Weardale Way’.

11. Go straight ahead for 30 metres and then keep left past a gate. Now head half-left, down the hill (towards a large tree) and through a gate in the bottom field corner. If you look to your left over the Bollihope Burn you can see the ruins of Bishopley Lime Kilns.

Bishopley Lime Kilns

These massive kilns were built for the production of lime which was added to pastures in order to ‘sweeten’ grass and improve the grazing. Limestone was leached with coal and set at a slow burn, creating a powder suitable for spreading on acid pastures. The kilns closed in 1850 but following the Agriculture Act of 1876 (when the sale of lime on the land was financially assisted through the Land Fertility Scheme) they were reopened by the Broadwood Limestone Company. The quarry and kilns were still working as recently as 1975.

Follow the river passing through another two gates.

12. Where the path climbs away from the river, look for a kissing gate ahead next to a field gate. Go through the kissing gate into a shrubby woodland, where there are some of the building remains of Harehope Gill Lead Mine. Climb to go through another kissing gate and follow the fence to a stile on your left marked ‘Permissive Footpath’. Go over this stile. To your right is Harehope Quarry.