
49 Hallbankgate

Theme: Heritage and mining

Location

49 Hallbankgate — coal, limestone and shale extraction. There is a small car park at Clesketts and you can walk across the old quarries [NY 585 574]. It's a 4 kilometre walk along the old rail line to Gairs mine

Description

The countryside between Talkin and Tindale is peaceful today but the scars of a noisier, industrious, past are everywhere: old quarries, overgrown mine dumps and derelict limekilns.

Mines and quarries occur all across Cumbria, but here, on the very northern edge of the Pennines, the exploitation of the county's natural resources was comprehensive. Every rock type in the area was put to use; coal, limestone, brick shale and sandstone were extracted; even zinc ore was smelted. Connecting all these endeavours was a pioneering railway system, the first to use wrought iron rails and the last to see George Stephenson's Rocket haul a waggon in earnest.

One hundred years ago and more the basis of the bustling local economy was its Carboniferous rocks. What were once, 330 million years ago, peat swamps, river deltas, muddy lagoons and coral seas had become coal, sandstone, shale and limestone. But it was coal that was the foundation for it all; a seam called the Little Limestone Coal. Not the thickest but so persistent it extends from Alwick in Northumberland, to south of Alston. Villages and towns along its outcrop owe their existence to this understated 'little coal' and their communities their livelihoods. When this coal was a swampy forest, it must have been one of the most extensive in the north of England.

With a little help from us, nature is steadily recovering from all that industry. Trees are being replanted and wildlife is re-colonising the diggings, rail lines and moorland. Owls, barn, short-eared and long-eared, are commonly sighted and the higher ground is home to black grouse (blackcock), golden plover and merlin.

Photographs

(Photo 49-1) 49 View northeast over limestone and brickshale workings near Hallbankgate.

(Photo 49-2) 49 Hallbankgate.



(Photo 49-1) View northeast over limestone and brickshale workings near Hallbankgate.



(Photo 49-2) Hallbankgate.