

## Seams of 'black gold'

A self-guided walk around Silkstone in South Yorkshire



Explore sites of early mining operations

Follow in the footsteps of coal along a historic wagonway

Discover how coal transformed the local villages

Find out about a mining disaster that changed the course of history

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*the stories of our landscapes  
discovered through walks*





This booklet is to be used alongside the audio commentary for this walk

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Cover image: Replica coal waggon at Silkstone Cross © Jenny Lunn

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## Seams of black gold

### Discover the early days of the coal industry around Silkstone in South Yorkshire

Coal from the famous 'Silkstone seam' was valued for its quality to give off considerable heat while leaving little ash after burning.

It was named after the South Yorkshire village where the coal deposits were found near to the surface.

Visit the sites of early mines dating back to the early 1800s and find out about the primitive methods of extraction using day-holes and drift mines.



This walk follows in the footsteps of coal along the Silkstone Waggonway which was constructed to take loads of coal from the small-scale mining operations scattered across the countryside to the nearest canal basin for onwards transportation to the towns and cities where demand was growing.



Find out about the wealthy landowners who started the 'black gold' rush and the poor workers who migrated from across the country to work in the mines.

Visit the site of a mining disaster at the Huskar Pit that devastated the local community but went on to change the course of history in Britain.

Enjoy paintings, drawings and poems created especially for this walk by Silkstone artist, Granville Daniel Clarke FRSA.

Top: Sleeper stones along the Silkstone Waggonway © G C Clarke  
Bottom: Huskar mining disaster memorial sculpture in Nabs Wood © G C Clarke

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## Practical information

<b>Location</b>	Silkstone and Silkstone Common, near Barnsley, South Yorkshire
<b>Start point</b>	Entrance to Nabs Wood (near disused railway bridge), Moorend Lane / House Carr Lane, Silkstone Common, S75 4QZ
<b>Finish point</b>	Silkstone Cross, end of High Street, Silkstone, S75 4JR
<b>Getting there</b>	<p><b>Car</b> – The villages of Silkstone and Silkstone Common are located either side of the A628, 4 miles west of the centre of Barnsley and just 2 miles west from Junction 37 on the M1; there is a small layby under the railway bridge where Moorend Lane becomes House Carr Lane.</p> <p>The walk is linear so you may prefer to park near the station in Silkstone Common as a more central point for returning at the end.</p> <p><b>Train</b> – The station at Silkstone Common is less than half a mile from the walk start. Silkstone Common is served by trains running hourly between Sheffield and Huddersfield via Barnsley.</p> <p><b>Bus</b> – Silkstone and Silkstone Common are served by local bus services in the Barnsley area; see <a href="http://www.travelsouthyorkshire.com">www.travelsouthyorkshire.com</a> for details.</p> <p><b>Bicycle</b> – The start of the walk is adjacent to The Trans Pennine Trail (national coast-to-coast cycleway) which is designated as National Cycle Route 62. Through the Silkstone area it is designated as the Dove Valley Trail and uses a disused railway line between Silkstone Common through Dodworth and Worsborough towards Wombwell.</p>
<b>Walk distance</b>	3 ½ miles
<b>Level</b>	<b>Moderate</b> – There are some steep sections, rough ground and stiles
<b>Terrain</b>	Woodland paths, urban pavements, field paths, unpaved track Some of the paths and tracks can get muddy after wet weather
<b>Shorter options</b>	There are two shorter alternatives around Silkstone village suitable for those less able to cope with hills. The route is relatively flat and step-free although the surface along the waggonway is uneven in places. - Stops 12 to 19 is a 1½ mile circuit from Silkstone Cross - Stops 12 to 19 minus Stop 15 is a ¾ mile circuit from Silkstone Cross
<b>Suitable for</b>	<p><b>Families</b> - those with pushchairs or prams can make use of the suggested shorter routes</p> <p><b>Dogs</b> – the woodlands and waggonway are popular among dog walkers; take care in the villages and when crossing main roads</p>

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## Refreshments

The **Cottage Bakery** on Ben Bank Road in Silkstone Common near the railway station (near Stop 9) bakes daily on the premises and sells fresh sandwiches and snacks.

**The Station Inn** is next to Silkstone Common railway station (just before Stop 9).

The petrol station at Silkstone Cross (Stop 11) sells provisions.

**The Potting Shed** at Pot House Hamlet in Silkstone (Stop 14) is a coffee shop and bistro serving light refreshments, full lunches and ice creams. It is open 10am to 5pm, 7 days a week. [www.rileyspottingshed.co.uk](http://www.rileyspottingshed.co.uk)

**The Red Lion** on the High Street in Silkstone serves drinks (Stop 17).

**Bells Steak House** on the High Street in Silkstone serves meals (Stop 18).

## Toilets

There are no public toilets in either village

- Patrons of the pubs and cafes en route (see above) can use their facilities

- There is a toilet at the petrol station

- There is a disabled toilet and baby changing facilities at Pot House Hamlet

## Places to visit

**Silkstone Parish Church** – The church of All Saints and St James the Great dates from the 15th century although there has been a church on the site since about 1150 AD. This impressive Grade I listed church is known as the Minster of the Moors.

Inside the church are excellent information boards about the history of the parish including the church, the coal industry and waggonway, and the glass industry. Volunteers in the **Bramah Gallery Archive** at the back of the church will share further details on local heritage. Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10am to 4pm. <http://www.silkstonereflects.co.uk/>

**Pot House Hamlet** – This complex close to the Parish Church on the site of a 17th-century glassworks and 18th-century pottery is home to an excellent café and a number of independent retail outlets including womenswear, home accessories, greetings cards and plant nursery. Opening hours are slightly different for each business but essentially 10am to 5pm, 7 days a week. <http://www.pothousehamlet.co.uk/>

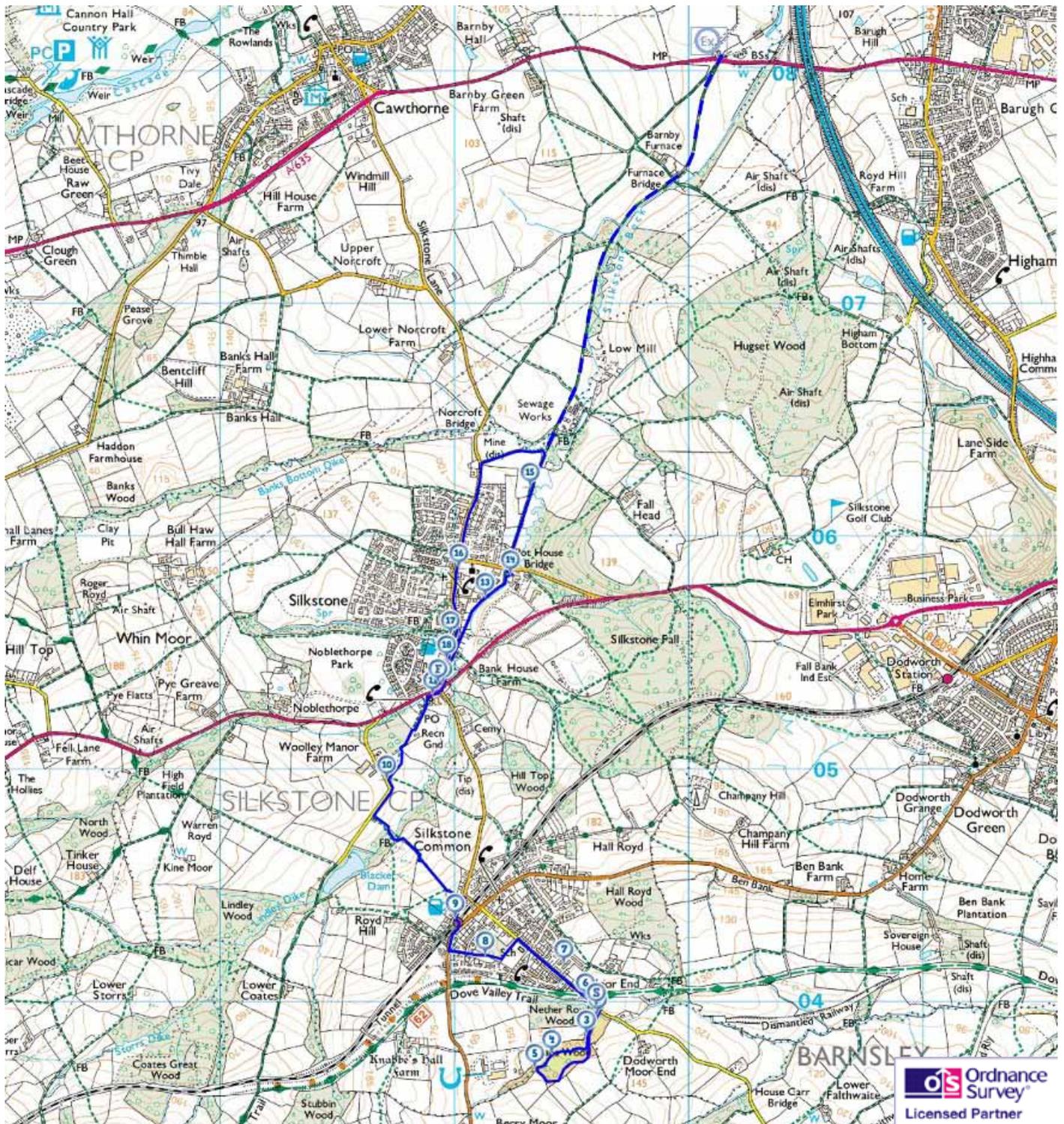
**National Coal Mining Museum for England** – This free museum at Caphouse Colliery near Wakefield is an excellent way to find out more about the coal mining industry in South Yorkshire and beyond; underground tours available. Open daily 10am to 5pm <http://www.ncm.org.uk/>

## Tourist information

<http://www.yorkshire.com/places/south-yorkshire>

<http://www.visitpenistone.co.uk/>

## Route overview



**Start**

Nabs Wood, Silkstone Common

**Finish**

Silkstone Cross, Silkstone

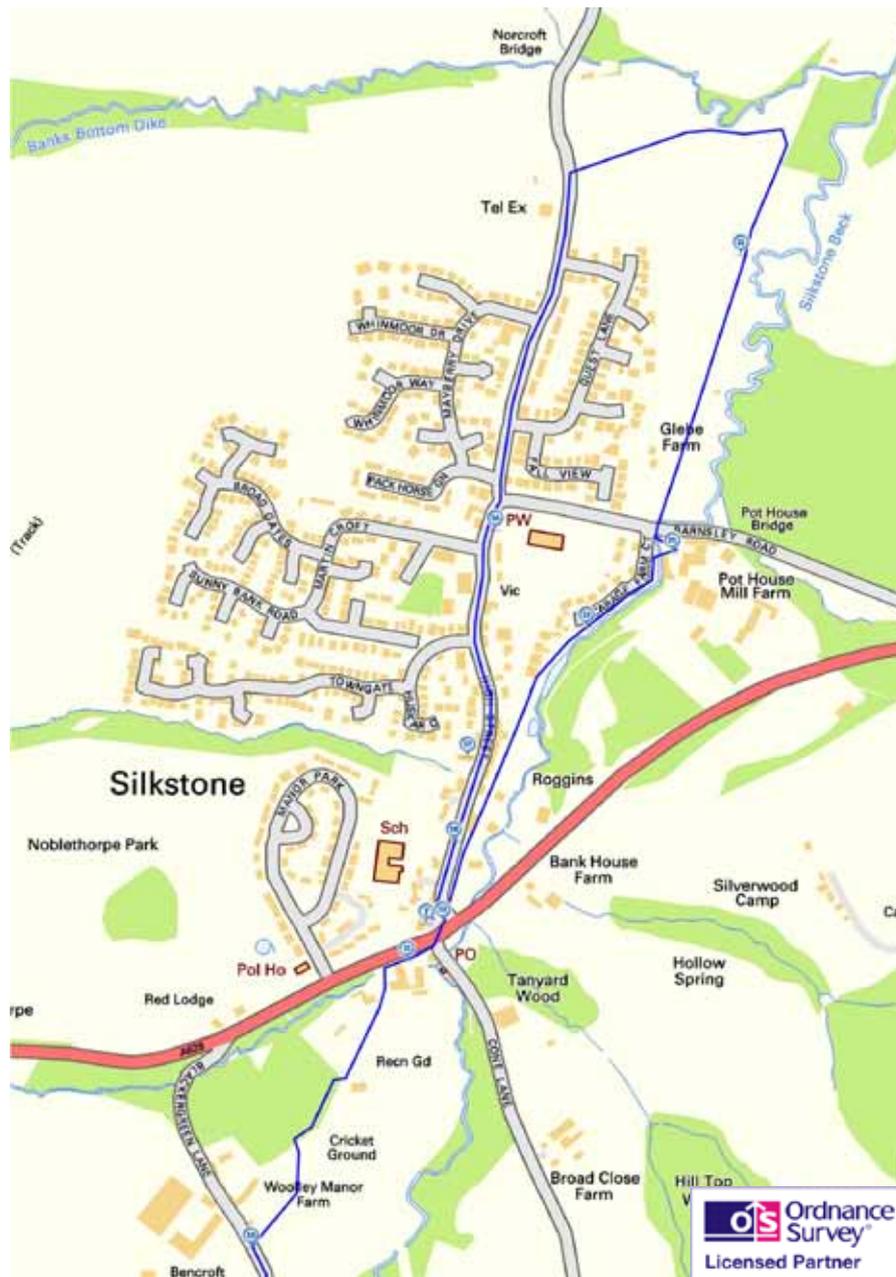
**Optional extension**

Barnby canal basin



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## Detail of last part of route



### Stopping points

- 11.** Petrol station, Barnsley Road
- 12.** Waggon replica, Silkstone Cross
- 13.** Waggonway path, by Vicarage Farm Court
- 14.** Pot House Hamlet
- 15.** Waggonway path, beyond Barnsley Road
- 16.** Huskar Monument, Silkstone Parish Church
- 17.** The Red Lion, High Street
- 18.** Silkstone Primary School, High Street
- Finish** Waggon replica, Silkstone Cross

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## Directions

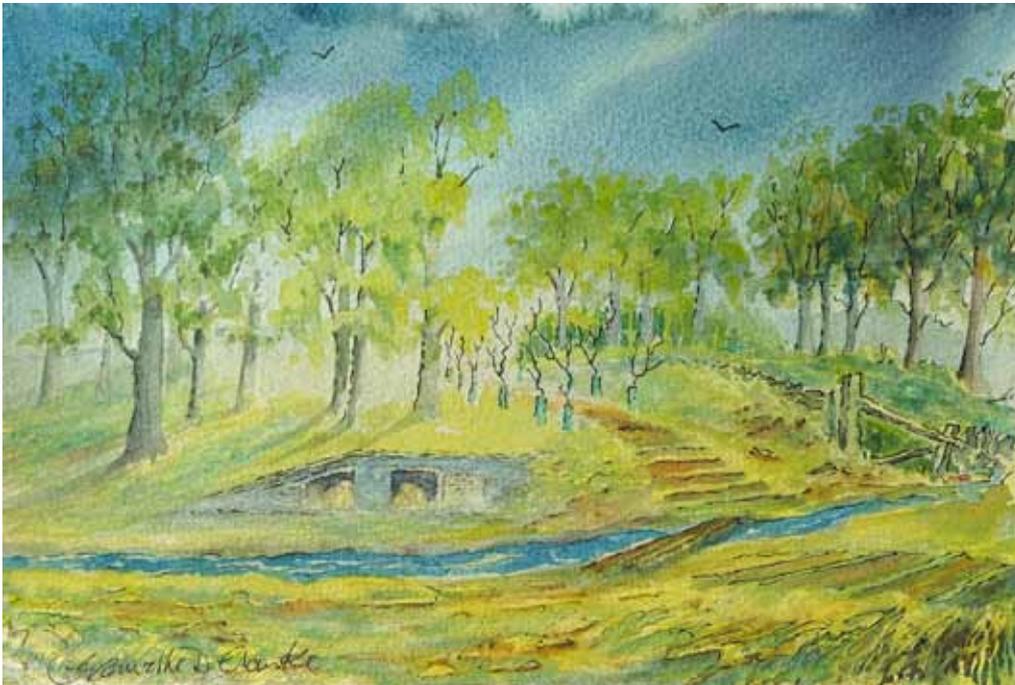
Listen to each track then read the directions in the boxes below to get to the next stop.

### 1. Welcome to Silkstone Parish

#### Entrance to Nabs Wood, House Carr Lane

##### Directions 1

From the road, go through the opening into Nabs Wood. Go past the information board and down the steps. Cross the bridge over the stream and look on the left at a low stone sculpture featuring two crouching figures. Listen to Track 2.



Entrance to Nabs Wood and the Huskar memorial  
Original pen and wash © Granville Daniel Clarke 2014

### 2. Children of the dark

#### Huskar memorial sculpture, Nabs Wood

##### Directions 2

Facing the memorial, go up the steps to the right. Where the path divides, keep right through the sapling tree tunnel. Stop by the dry stone wall on the right which looks out onto a field and listen to Track 3.

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### 3. From swamp to seam

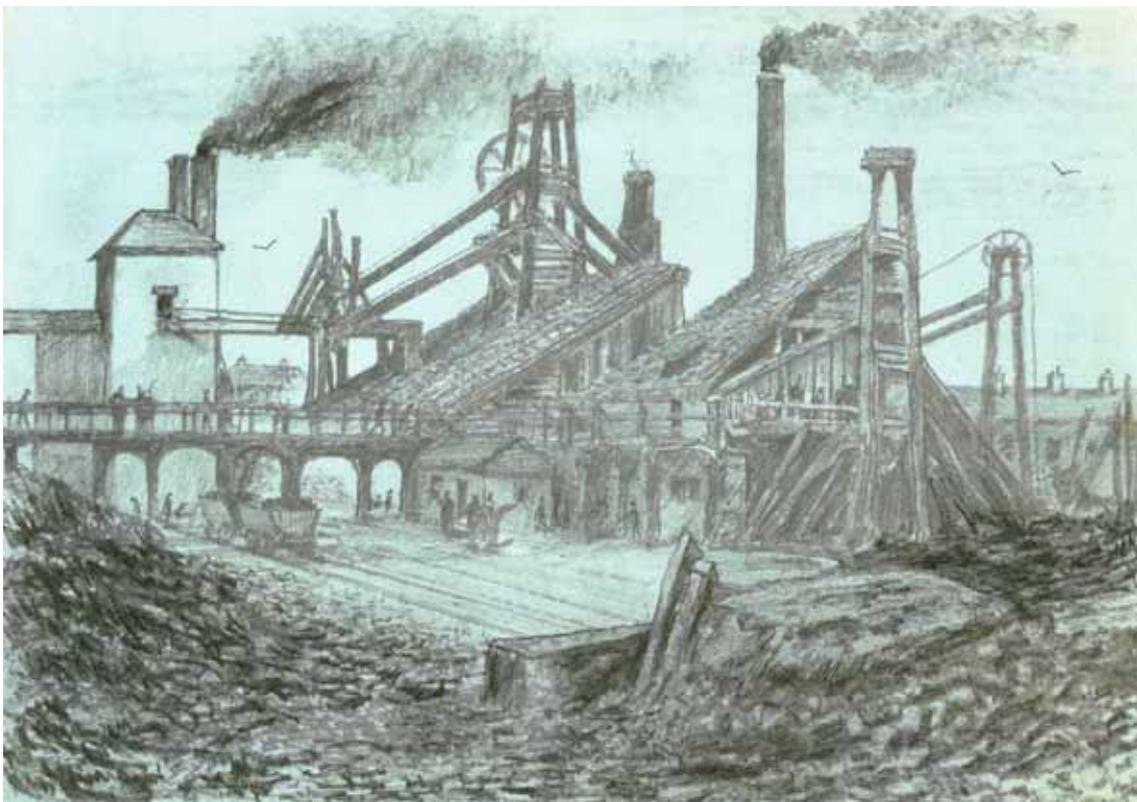
#### By dry stone wall, Nabs Wood

##### Directions 3

Continue following the path through the woodland as it ascends steadily. After a short distance look for a large hole to the left of the path with a wooden rail around. Stop here and listen to Track 4.

### 4. Day-holes and drifts

#### Old entrance to Huskar day-hole, Nabs Wood



Typical scene in one of Clarke's coal and coke yards (1800s)  
Unknown artist, enhanced by Granville Daniel Clarke 2014

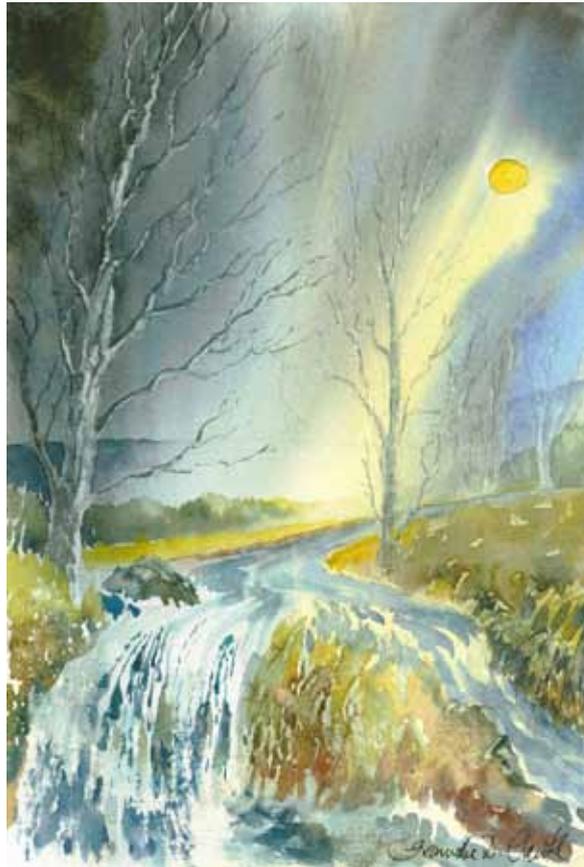
##### Directions 4

Continue following the path up through the woodland which goes up some steps and bears round to the left. Stop when you reach a crossing over a stream and listen to Track 5.

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## 5. A tragic end

### Path across House Carr Dyke, Nabs Wood



Flash flood in Nabs Wood  
on a stormy summer afternoon  
Original watercolour © Granville Daniel Clarke 2014

#### Directions 5

Cross the stream and climb the steps on the other side. Follow the path through the woodland which brings you back to the memorial sculpture. Go up the steps to the entrance of the wood and turn left onto House Carr Lane. Stop underneath the railway bridge and listen to Track 6.

## 6. The Silkstone Waggonway

### Under railway bridge, House Carr Lane

#### Directions 6

Continue up the road which changes name here from House Carr Lane to Moorend Lane. After about 150 metres stop outside a row of Victorian cottages on the right side which is known as South Yorkshire Buildings. Stop here and listen to Track 7.

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## 7. Houses for the workers

### South Yorkshire Buildings, Moorend Lane

#### Directions 7

When you have looked inside South Yorkshire Buildings, continue up Moorend Lane. Immediately after passing Silkstone Common Primary School, turn left through a gate into a small woodland known as Orchard Wood.

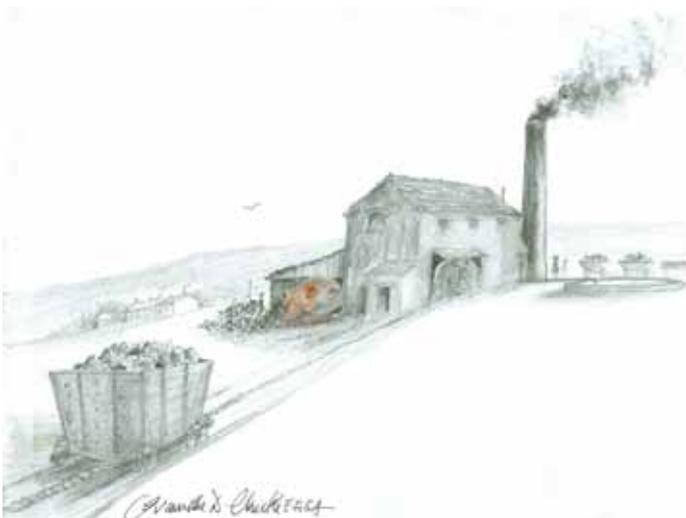
Follow the path up the side of the school and bear round to the right at the top. Where the path forks, bear left. Stop in the open grassy area and listen to Track 8.



South Yorkshire Buildings  
Original pen and wash © Granville Daniel Clarke 2014

## 8. Ride the black horse

### Orchard Wood, off Moorend Lane



Coal waggon being hauled up the inclined plane towards the Black Horse engine and boiler house  
Original sketch © Granville Daniel Clarke 2014

#### Directions 8

Leave the open grassy area by the gate at the top corner onto Woodland View. Walk along Woodland View until you reach the main road (Knabbs Lane) and turn right. Cross carefully when you see the pedestrian entrance to the railway station.

Use the pedestrian crossing to go over the tracks - **take great care to look and listen for trains**. Go through the gate on the other side onto Cone Lane. Look on the low wall immediately opposite for a plaque saying 'Black Horse Tunnel'. Listen to Track 9.

## 9. Over the top

### Black Horse Tunnel plaque, Cone Lane

#### Directions 9

With your back to the station, turn right along Cone Lane. Just before the lane meets the bend in the main road, turn left along the public footpath signed Blacker Green. Go over the stile and follow the path between houses and gardens.

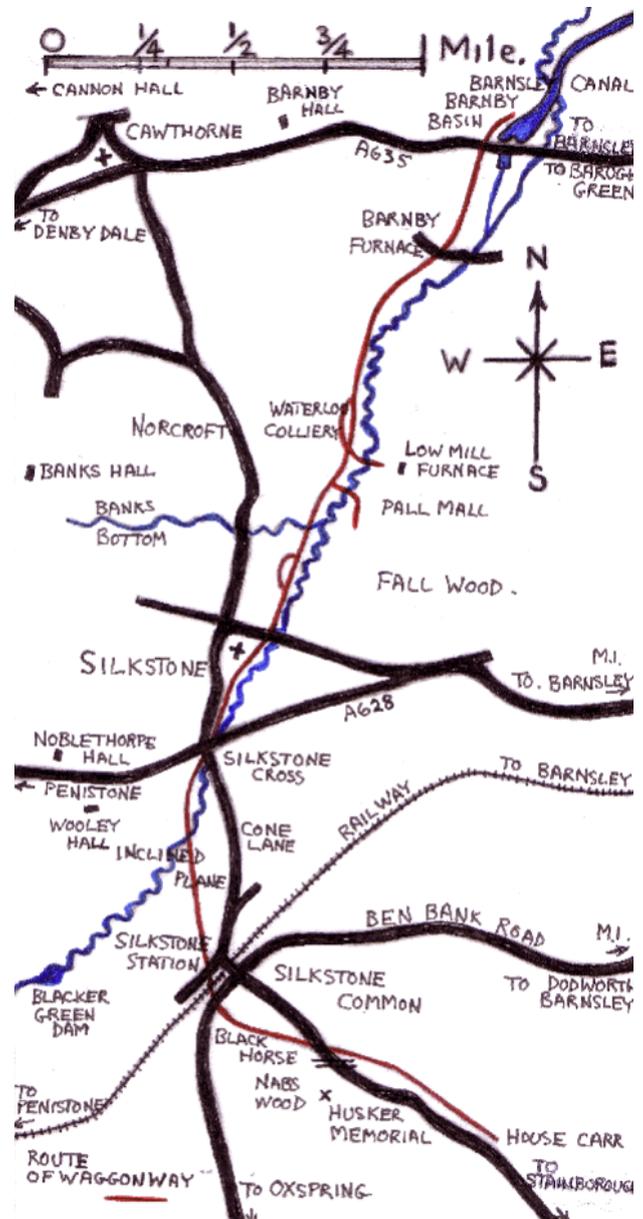
Cross another stile and shortly afterwards look on the right side for a horse ménage. This has been built across the route of the waggonway which made its way diagonally down the hillside towards Silkstone.

Do take time on your way downhill to admire the expansive views both ways. This gives you a better feel for the undulating landscape of this area which posed such a challenge to the transportation of coal. It certainly engenders some admiration for the ingenuity of the system installed to haul the coal up hill and down dale with such basic technology.

Go over the next stile and follow the path down through the woodland. Note the very lumpy ground on the left which could possibly be more surface coal mining areas.

At the bottom cross the small bridge over the stream and follow the path up the other side with a field on the right and a garden on the left. Once you are beside the house you reach Blackergreen Lane.

Turn right along the lane. After the lane bends round to the left look for a stone stile on the right. Stop beside it and listen to Track 10.



Route of the Silkstone waggonway (in red) from House Carr and Moorend collieries at bottom to canal basin at top

Courtesy of Roggins Local History Group

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## 10. Where there's coal there's brass

### Blackergreen Lane



Noblethorpe Hall west wing today  
Original pen and wash © Granville Daniel Clarke 2014

#### Directions 10

From the lane, go over the stile and follow the path across the field in front of the row of houses. At the far corner, go over another stile and into woodland. Follow the path with a cricket ground on the right.

On this cricket ground were once the coal yards and the coke and gas operations owned by the Clarke family. The waggonway ran down the steady incline at the side. Leave the woodland via another stile and go down the driveway with the football pitch on the right. Stop at the petrol station on the main road and listen to Track 11.

## 11. Boom times

### Petrol station, Barnsley Road

#### Directions 11

Go carefully through the petrol station forecourt. Cross carefully over the main road (A628 Barnsley to Manchester road). On a grassy triangle on the opposite side is a replica of a coal waggon. Stop here and listen to Track 12.

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## 12a. Along the artery (Part 1)

### Waggon replica, Silkstone Cross

#### Directions 12a

Carefully cross the road (High Street) and have a look at the information board. Follow the footpath at the back of the information board with the back of the buildings on High Street on your left and the stream of Silkstone Beck on the right. Listen to Track 12b as you walk along the waggonway path.



Replica waggon on iron rails and stone sleeper blocks along the waggonway  
© Jenny Lunn

## 12b. Along the artery (Part 2)

### Waggonway path, parallel with High Street

#### Directions 12b

Continue along the waggonway path. When you see the modern detached houses of Vicarage Farm Court on the left, look over the fence to the stream on the right and listen to Track 13.

## 13. Coloured water

### Waggonway path, by Vicarage Farm Court

#### Directions 13

Continue along the waggonway path with the stream on your right. After about 150 metres cross a small footbridge over the stream on the right into Pot House Hamlet. Stand in the car park and listen to Track 14.

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## 14. Pots, glass and grain

### Pot House Hamlet



Old Pot House pottery (early 1800s)  
Sketch by JC Nattes enhanced by Granville Daniel Clarke 2014

#### Directions 14

The Potting Shed Cafe is highly recommended for refreshments, lunches and ice creams. You may wish to stop now or come back at the end of the walk which finishes a short distance away.

When you are ready, go back across the footbridge and turn right along the waggonway. Cross the main road (Barnsley Road) carefully and continue straight along the waggonway. Stop when you reach a widening of the path where there are some rails and a plaque in the wall on the right. There's a bench here if you need a rest. Listen to Track 15.

## 15. From waggonway to waterway

### Waggonway path, beyond Barnsley Road

#### Directions 15

Continue along the waggonway for a short distance until you reach an area where there are piles of loose material – this is one of the last remaining colliery spoil heaps on the waggonway and known locally as Pop Pits.

**For the optional walk extension to Barnby basin follow the instructions on the next page. To continue to Stop 16 follow the instructions below.**

Turn left and follow the track until you reach the road (Silkstone Lane). Turn left onto the road and walk along the pavement on the left side back into the village. Look out for Number 1 Highfield Cottages where there are several mining relics displayed in the garden that have been collected by the owner and a small information board beside the garden wall.

Continue along Silkstone Lane until you reach a major junction opposite the church. Cross over the road carefully (this corner can be busy) and go straight on into High Street. Walk along the pavement beside the wall of the churchyard until you are alongside a large stone memorial with a pyramidal apex. Stop here and listen to Track 16.

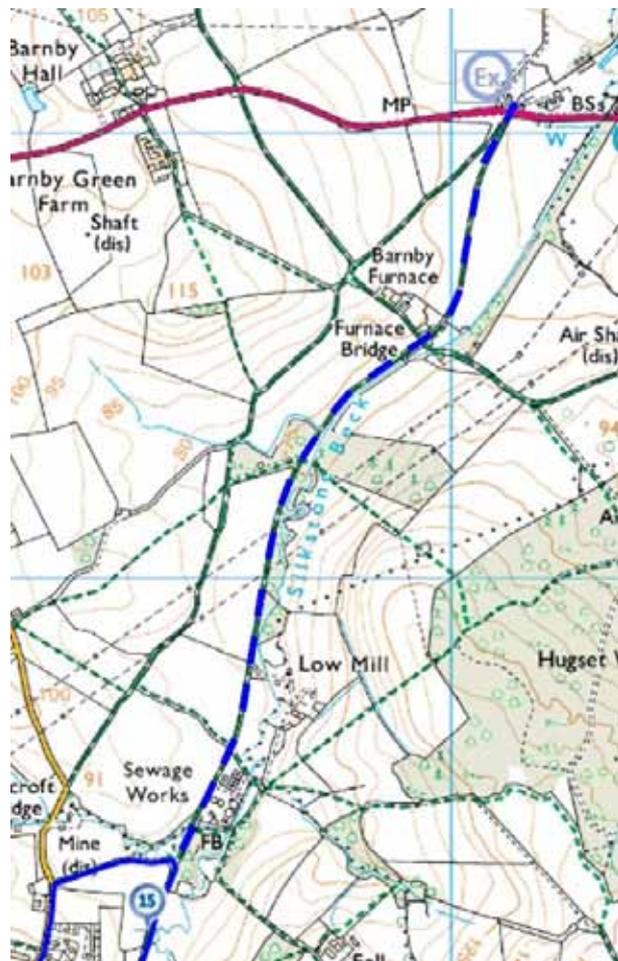
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## Optional walk extension to Barnby canal basin

### Directions

Continue straight on, over a bridge and past a sewage farm. Follow the track for a short distance to Barnby Furnace hamlet which was the location of the colliery first connected to the canal.

Follow the track for another half mile until you reach the main road (A635). There is an information board at the end of the track on the left and Barnby canal basin is on the opposite side of the road.



Barnby basin was an important hub in the transport network and a flourishing hamlet. Little remains today but the interpretation board suggests what it used to look like.

The Ordnance Survey map of 1851 shows the canal and basin, the waggonway with four sidings and four loading staithe, and a series of lime kilns.

There are also a number of buildings including a row of five cottages which probably housed people such as a sawyer, carpenter and boat builder (occupations listed in the 1841 Census). A building at the side of the road was probably a workshop and stables.

One of the buildings still standing is a white house which the waggonway passes; this was the basin manager's house, with an office for the tallyman. In the garden was a wash-house used by families living on board visiting barges.

Two buildings are known to have been demolished in the 1930 and 40s, one of which was a three-storey warehouse adjacent to the canal basin with a public house called The Jolly Sailor attached to one side.

### Directions

To return, retrace your steps along the waggonway. Just after passing the sewage farm is Pop Pits, the area where there are piles of coal spoil. Bear right and follow the track until you reach Silkstone Lane. Then resume Directions 15.

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## 16. The price of coal

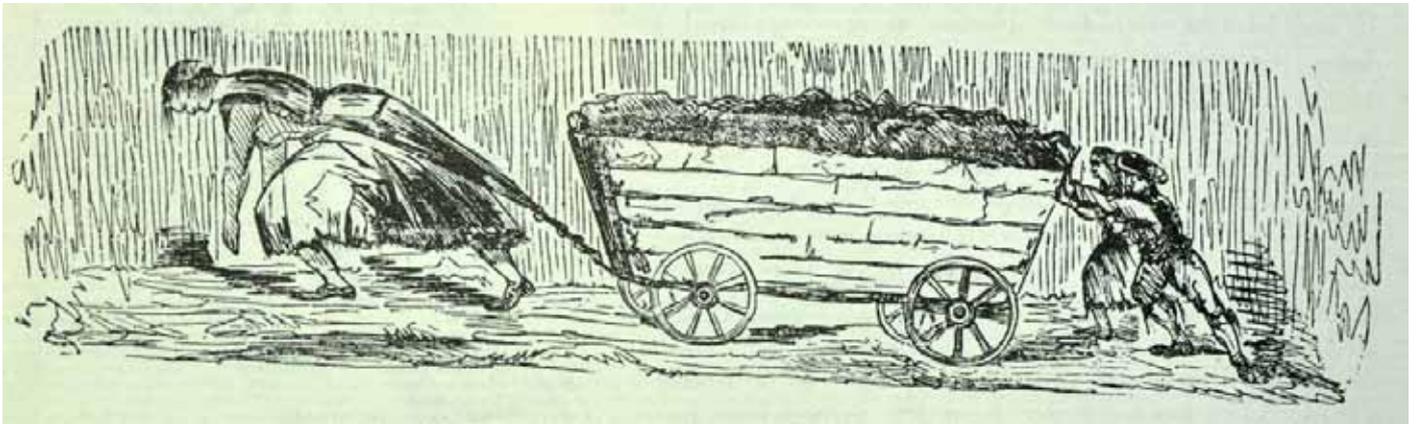
### Huskar Monument, Silkstone Parish Church

#### Directions 16

Do take the opportunity of visiting the church which contains numerous information boards about Silkstone's heritage (open Tuesdays and Wednesdays). When you are ready, continue along the High Street. Stop when you reach The Red Lion pub on the right hand side. There is a large inscription on the wall to the left of the main door. Listen to Track 17.

## 17. A Royal Inquiry

### The Red Lion, High Street



Adult female and two young children hurriers

From the Royal Commission Report on the employment and conditions of children in mines and manufactories (1842)

#### Directions 17

Continue a short distance along High Street. On the left is Bells Steak House, once the Six Ringers pub. It was here in January 1843 that the first ever union meeting in the area was held. The following year the miners held an 11-day strike which resulted in the mine owners agreeing to reduce the working day to no more than 8 hours. Now look opposite at the entrance to Silkstone Primary School.

## 18. Children of the light

### Silkstone Primary School, High Street

#### Directions 18

Continue along High Street back to the replica coal waggon at Silkstone Cross where we stopped earlier and listen to Track 19.

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## 19. A transformed landscape

### Waggon replica, Silkstone Cross



Nabs Wood, once a hive of industrial activity  
is now a tranquil bluebell woodland  
Original watercolour © Granville Daniel Clarke 2014

#### Directions 19

If you wish to return to Silkstone Common to collect your vehicle or catch a train, you can either retrace your steps up the footpath to the right of the petrol station or go up Cone Lane to the left of the petrol station.

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## Eyes of perception

### A poem inspired while creating this walk

I visit my old locale and – re-trace my past  
With fresh eyes...

The nearby local woodland and its history  
With open eyes...

My feet walk on the ashes of the early coal mining disaster of 1838  
With reflective eyes...

Where small children died – and devastated a community  
Seen with sad eyes...

I no longer hear the old railway line's clattering noises from the goods waggons  
With joyful ears and eyes...

I remember coal strikes and disputes that changed lives and this area  
With mixed feelings and wiser eyes...

I now see tree beauty and green landscape  
And breathe its gift of clean air to live a healthy life and bless nature...  
With grateful eyes.

**Granville Daniel Clarke, October 2013**

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## Credits

The RGS-IBG would like to thank the following people and organisations for their assistance in producing this Discovering Britain walk:

**Granville Daniel Clarke FRSA** for suggesting the walk, researching and writing the materials, creating artwork and poetry especially for this walk, providing the audio commentary and photographs ([www.granvilledclarke.co.uk](http://www.granvilledclarke.co.uk))

**Jenny Lunn** for editing the walk resources, acting as narrator and providing photographs

**Colin Bower**, Secretary of Roggins Local History Group and Director of Learning for Heritage Silkstone project for sharing his immense knowledge of the waggonway and local history, extensive archive searches and providing photographs

**Jim Ritchie**, Chairman of Roggins Local History Group, for detailed historical explanation about the waggonway and help with archive searches

**Margaret Bower** for assistance with archive searches

**Tom Horsfield**, the owner of Pot House Hamlet, for sharing anecdotes from his family history

**Bill Brown** for reminiscing on his life as a miner

**Barnsley Archives and Local Studies** for permission to reproduce documents and maps from the Clarke Papers

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**The National Archives** for permission to reproduce a map of the Barnsley Canal

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**John Robertson** and **Brian Parkhurst** for help with scanning images and photographs

**Caroline Millar** for editing the audio files

**Howard Lunn** for assistance with testing the walk

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## Further information

### Visit Penistone

[www.visitpenistone.co.uk](http://www.visitpenistone.co.uk)

### A history of Silkstone Parish

[www.silkstoneparishcouncil.gov.uk/Silkstone-Pc/parish\\_history-4503.aspx](http://www.silkstoneparishcouncil.gov.uk/Silkstone-Pc/parish_history-4503.aspx)

### Silkstone Reflects

[www.silkstonereflects.co.uk](http://www.silkstonereflects.co.uk)

### Roggins Local History Group, Silkstone

[www.priorycampus.co.uk/rlhg](http://www.priorycampus.co.uk/rlhg)

### Victoria's Children of the Dark: The Women and Children Who Built Her Underground

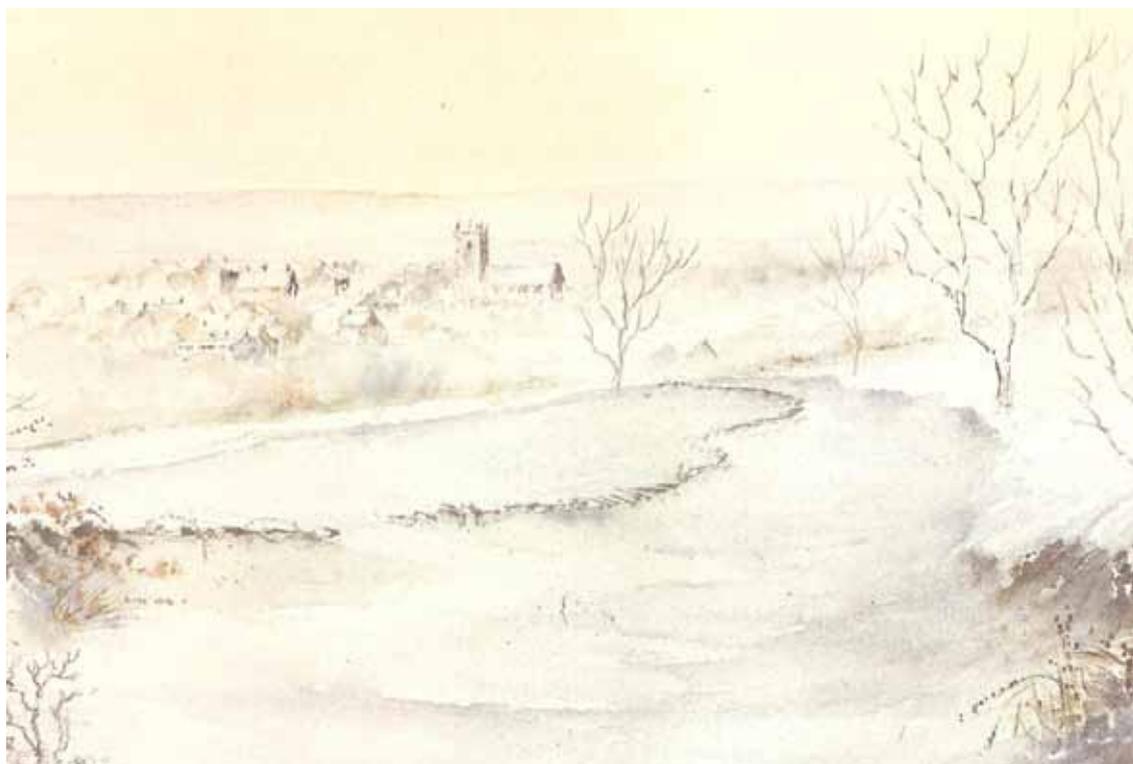
Book by Alan Gallop about the Huskar mining disaster (The History Press, 2010)

### Profit and Loss

Community play about the Huskar mining disaster ([www.grass-roots.org.uk](http://www.grass-roots.org.uk))

### The Royal Commission Reports on Children in the Mines, 1842

[www.cmhrc.co.uk/site/literature/royalcommissionreports](http://www.cmhrc.co.uk/site/literature/royalcommissionreports)



Winter view down Coln Lane towards Silkstone  
Print from an original painting © Granville Daniel Clarke

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<http://www.discoveringbritain.org/walks/region/south-east-england/faversham.html>





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