

BARNBURGH

Distance: 3 miles (4.9km)

Ascent: 90m **Time:** 1-2 hours

Public Transport: Barnburgh is on the 219/219a bus route between Barnsley and Doncaster.

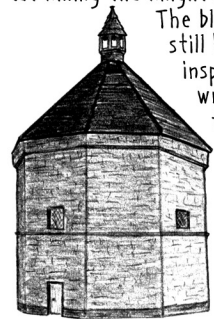
Parking: Free parking by St Peter's Church.

Refreshments: Food available at the Crown Inn near Barnburgh.

Character: A beautiful walk around this attractive village, visiting the wood-fringed limestone crags of Barnburgh Cliff and ancient site of St Helen's Chapel. Great views across Hughes's South Yorkshire.

Barnburgh's 'cat and man' myth describes how a knight was attacked by a wildcat on nearby Cat Hill before engaging in a five-mile rolling maul that ended with the cat killing the knight in the porch of St. Peter's Church.

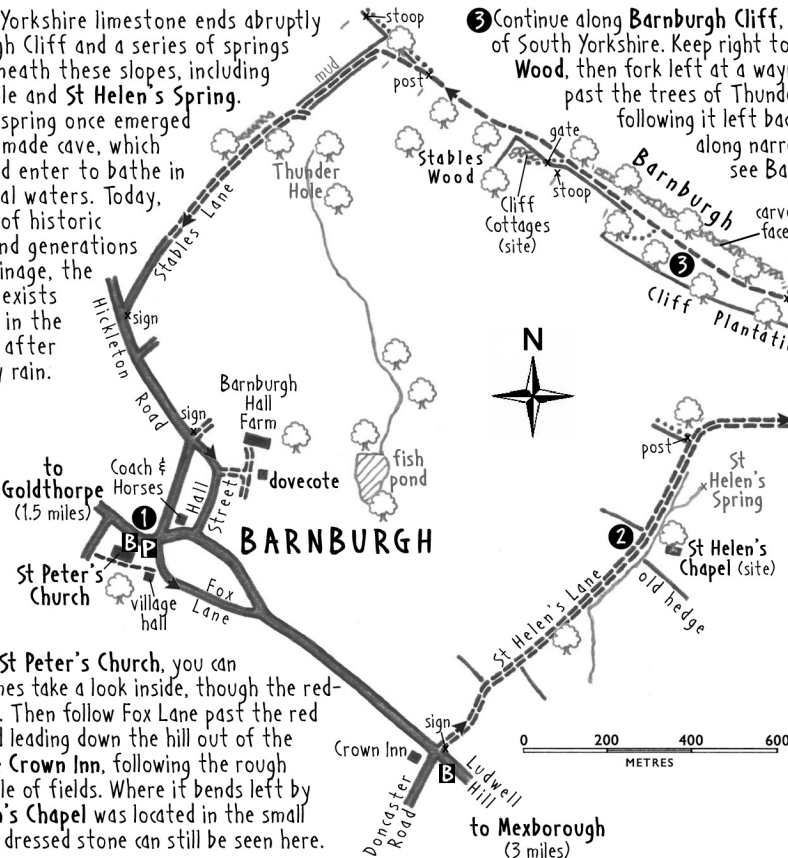
The blood-stained church floor stones still have a red hue and the story inspired Hughes's poem *Esther's Tomcat*, written for artist Leonard Baskin's first wife, the 'Esther' of the title.



Barnburgh Hall dovecote

① From the bus stop and parking by St Peter's Church, you can wander round the church and sometimes take a look inside, though the red-stained porch is evident from outside. Then follow Fox Lane past the red brick village hall to join the main road leading down the hill out of the village. Turn left at a sign beyond the Crown Inn, following the rough track of St Helen's Lane across a couple of fields. Where it bends left by an old hedgeline, the ancient St Helen's Chapel was located in the small copse of trees to the right and some dressed stone can still be seen here.

The South Yorkshire limestone ends abruptly at Barnburgh Cliff and a series of springs emerges beneath these slopes, including Thunder Hole and St Helen's Spring. The latter spring once emerged into a man-made cave, which people would enter to bathe in the medicinal waters. Today, as a result of historic 'filling in' and generations of field drainage, the spring only exists as a trickle in the arable field after fairly heavy rain.



CROOKHILL PARK

Distance: 1 mile (1.7km)

Ascent: 30m **Time:** ½ hour

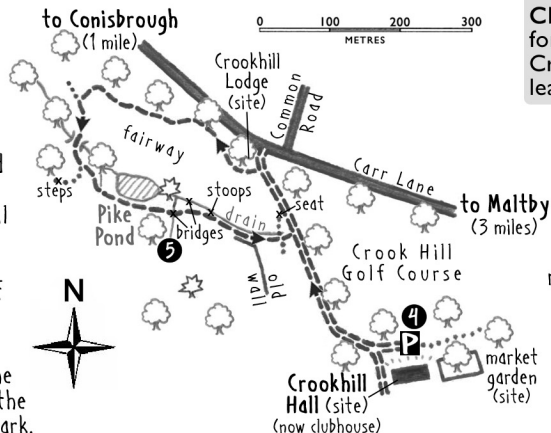
Parking: Free parking at Crook Hill Golf Club by club house.

Character: A gentle wander around the former grounds of the Receiving Hospital at Crookhill Hall to the 'pike pond' where Hughes learnt to fish and that inspired his poem *Pike*.

Crookhill Hall was an elegant Georgian country house built by the Woodyear Family in 100 acres of landscaped parkland. By the early 20th century it had been transformed into Crookhill Hall Receiving Hospital, a tuberculosis sanatorium. The father of Hughes's friend John Wholey was Head Gardener here and so, from the mid-1940s, the Wholey's home at Crookhill Lodge became a second home for Hughes. He would stay there most weekends and for large parts of the school holidays. The trees along the drive to the hall were planted in the 1940s while Hughes was visiting here.

At Crookhill, Ted and 'Johnnie' fished, shot, felled trees, made tree houses, dammed streams and built bonfires. The half-acre pond held perch, roach and pike. Hughes attributed his acute observational eye to the 'hundreds of hours he spent staring at a float when fishing there.' This inspired one of his most famous poems, *Pike*.

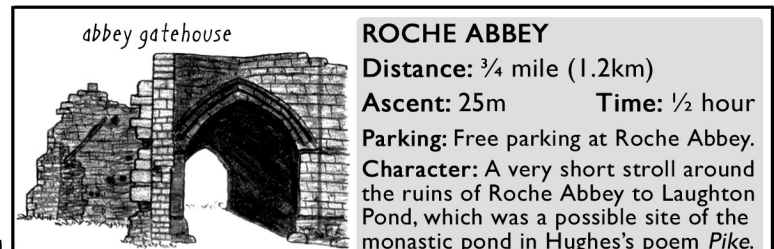
⑤ From the 'pike pond', follow the right side of the drain straight up the hill across the golf course to rejoin the vehicle track and return to the car park.



③ Continue along Barnburgh Cliff, with wonderful views opening out across much of South Yorkshire. Keep right to follow the field along the top edge of Stables Wood, then fork left at a waymark post to join Stables Lane as it descends past the trees of Thunder Hole. Continue all the way to Hickleton Road, following it left back into Barnburgh. At the bend go straight on along narrower Hall Street and, at the next bend, you can see Barnburgh Hall's 16th century dovecote straight ahead. Follow Hall Street to the right and turn right at the end to return to the centre of the village.

St Helen's Chapel was built near the site of St Helen's (Elen's) Spring in the mediaeval period. Elen was the Celtic goddess of armies and roads, her name later Christianised to Helen. The few remains of the chapel here are Norman and there is a hollowed out stone that may have been a holy water stoop. The chapel had an accompanying graveyard (closed with the chapel during the Reformation), and human bones are sometimes exposed during ploughing.

② Continue up St Helen's Lane past the site of St Helen's Spring and follow it right to Hangman Stone Road. Follow this left up the hill, then turn left by a small lay-by on a lovely path through the woods below Barnburgh Cliff. These partially-quarried limestone rock walls are carved with several faces, most striking about 200m beyond a signpost.



abbey gatehouse

ROCHE ABBEY

Distance: ¾ mile (1.2km)

Ascent: 25m **Time:** ½ hour

Parking: Free parking at Roche Abbey.

Character: A very short stroll around the ruins of Roche Abbey to Laughton Pond, which was a possible site of the monastic pond in Hughes's poem *Pike*.

Roche Abbey was a Cistercian monastery founded in 1147, the name relating to the great limestone cliffs towering over the site. After lying in ruins following the 16th century Dissolution, the landscape was remodelled by Capability Brown in the 1770s. Laughton Pond was created in the 12th century as a mill pond, with the cascade added by Brown, and is and is probably the inspiration for the monastic pond referred to in 'Pike'. The abbey ruins are open Wed-Sun during the summer.

⑥ From the first parking area, follow the vehicle track left down past the ruins of the gatehouse. Fork left to follow a path round the ruins of Roche Abbey and keep right to cross the river. Reaching the foot of Laughton Pond, you can continue a few yards to the Kissing Tree (worn smooth by those making a wish by kissing its bark) on the left or the site of the old boathouse on the right, but the onward route turn right over the cascade and joins the track to return to the car park.

0 100 200 METRES

to Maltby (1 mile)
to Blyth (6 miles)

