

TRANS-DALES TRAIL 1

A 60 mile walk across the Yorkshire Dales

from Ingleton to Ripon.

Devised and written by Arnold Underwood assisted by Peter Tomkinson.

Photographs by Peter Tomkinson & Arnold Underwood

The author

Arnold Underwood is an experienced walker and a leader of his local Walking Club. He lives near Beverley and is the East Yorkshire/Humberside correspondent for Country Walking Magazine. In addition to the walks mentioned in the pre-ramble he has also completed the Pennine Way, The Ridgeway Path, the Wolds Way and the Lyke Wake Walk. He has walked much of the Yorkshire Dales, Moors and Wolds and to a lesser extent in the Peak District, Lake District, North Wales and elsewhere.

NOTE

Whilst the route description was correct at the time of going to print, details may change with time and the author cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies that may arise.

TRANS-DALES TRAIL 1

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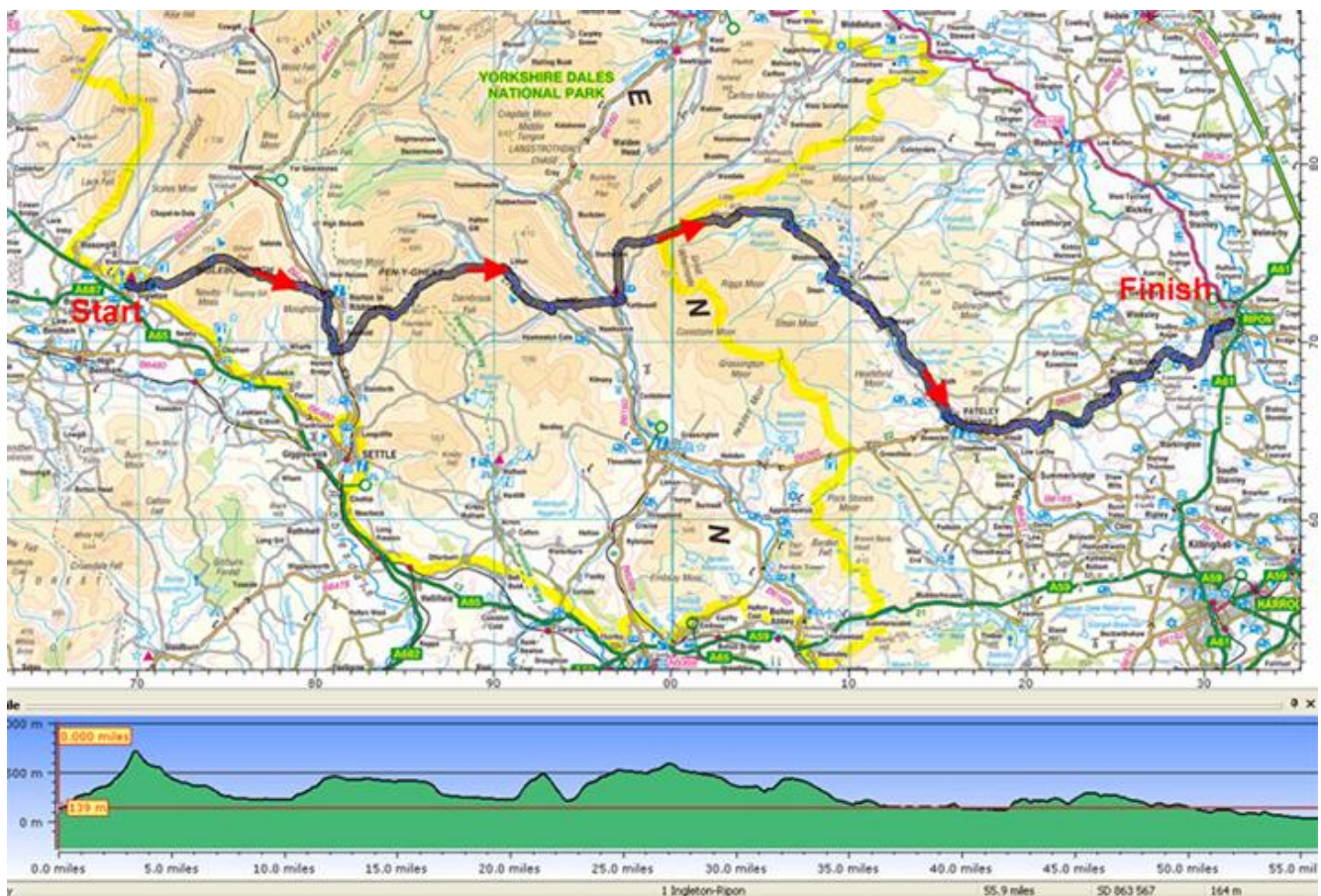
DAY ONE	Ingleton to Helwith Bridge (or Horton)
DAY TWO	Helwith Bridge (or Horton) to Kettlewell
DAY THREE	Kettlewell to Middlesmoor
DAY FOUR	Middlesmoor to Pateley Bridge
DAY FIVE	Pateley Bridge to Ripon

Notes

North for each map is towards the top of the page.

Hand-drawn maps are drawn to scale of approximately 1:50000

You are advised to obtain and use the relevant OS Maps as detailed in the texts.



TRANS-DALES TRAIL 1

Ingleton to Ripon - A pre-ramble

The Yorkshire Dales are so well endowed with paths, bridleways and lanes that there are innumerable possible routes across the. Hence the reason for calling this walk 'A Trans-Dale Trail' as there are plenty more just waiting to be devised.

There is a definite feeling of achievement if you complete a walk that actually goes somewhere that is from 'A' to 'B' rather than in a circuit from the car park at 'A', back to 'A'. Most visitors to the Dales will be doing the latter - walking in circles with only a few hardy souls passing through on the long distance paths. This means that footpaths in some areas, like round Horton or Kettlewell are being over-walked whereas the paths linking such places see much less use.

As I will explain later there were purely selfish reasons for devising this Trans-Dales Trail but having now completed the trek I think it would be unfair to keep it to myself, hence this Guide.

This 60 mile trek passes through some of the best Dales scenery, visits some delightful villages and uses some ancient green lanes, tracks and paths that appear to be rarely walked. As the saying goes - 'Use them or lose them' - the footpaths that is. The walk passes through some very popular locations but, part from on the first day, you won't meet many other folk between those places.

I, along with my good friend Peter Tomkinson, have developed a habit of doing a longish walk together through the Dales each year. In 1993 we completed the Dales Way from North to south and in 1994 we followed John Gilliam's route, 'A Bowland-Dales Traverse' from near Slaidburn to Richmond. Both routes pass through the popular Wharfedale village of Kettlewell. When planning our 1995 walk it occurred to me that Kettlewell was more or less the centre of the southern Yorkshire Dales area so I made the decision that this and any future Trans-Dale Trail should, if possible, pass through Kettlewell.

Now for the really selfish bit... looking at the map I soon spotted the possibility of a west to east crossing via many routes and places new to me. So the walk could start at Ingleton (simply because I had never approached Ingleborough from that side). As it turns out Ingleton is a pretty good choice as it is quite accessible being on the A65 Skipton to Kendal road, it is not far from the M6 and has a fairly good bus links with Lancaster and elsewhere. The chosen route could cross Old Cote Moor between Littleton and Kettlewell, follow Nidderdale down to Pateley Bridge and visit Brimham Rocks and Studley Royal - all places that I hadn't previously visited. This led to a logical end on the steps of Ripon Cathedral. Ripon is, of course, not far from the A1 with bus links to Harrogate, York and elsewhere.

Well it all seemed straightforward on paper, but would it work in practice? To find out, read on and, if that whets your appetite, then try it for yourself.

Good Walking

Arnold Underwood October 1995

PS Many thanks to...

Peter, my long suffering companion on this and other treks; Peter's wife, Pam, for getting us to Ingleton on a Sunday morning; My wife, Ann, for rushing from work to Ripon to pick us up on a Thursday evening; the rest of both our families for somehow managing without us for five days!

TRANS-DALE TRAIL 1

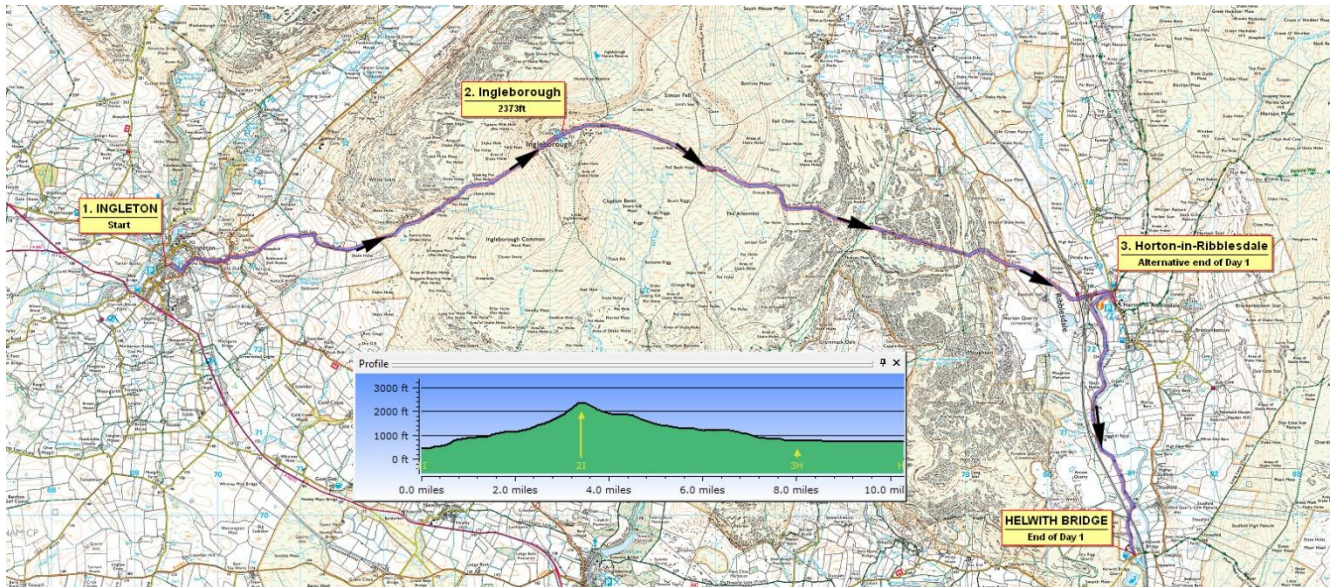
Day One: Ingleton to Horton-in-Ribblesdale and Helwith Bridge

10 miles Ascent 2000 ft

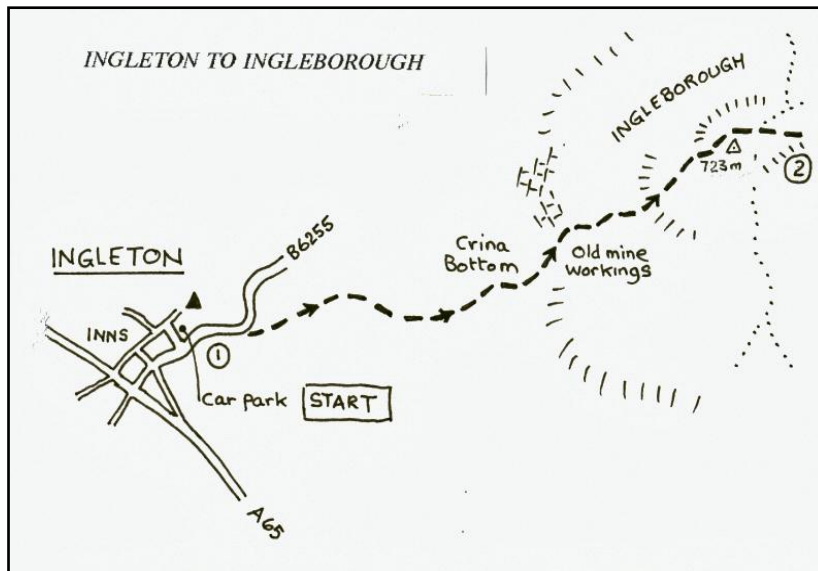
Maps OS 1:50000 Sheet 98 Wensleydale & Wharfedale

OS 1:25000 Outdoor Leisure Sheet 2 Yorkshire Dales (West)

There is nothing like starting a walk with a good uphill stretch to get those lungs and legs working. You begin this trek with a direct assault on Ingleborough - something that involves a climb of about 2,000 ft.



1. From the centre of Ingleton join the B6255 Hawes road and follow it uphill out of the village. Where the road bends left by the last group of cottages a stony track on the right continues straight up on the grassy hillside. Keep on this track for over a mile to the isolated farm house at Crina Bottom, set in a sheltered hollow below the bulk of Ingleborough. Pass to the right of the farm on a rough path that winds its way up through the overgrown spoil tips of ancient mine workings. The going gets steep, followed by a welcome respite before steepening again. Looking back you may be lucky to see the sun reflecting off the waters of Morecambe Bay, and further up North, the Lakeland Fells. The final assault involves a bit of a scramble up onto Ingleborough's summit plateau at 2,373 ft above sea level. You will appreciate that this, the highest point of the entire 60 mile walk has been attained within 2 hours of setting off! It is understandable to think that it is all downhill from here; but alas it is not to be!



2. After a well earned breather by the stone shelter continue east across the rocky plateau to pick up the path down to Horton. It is easy to get disorientated on the top of Ingleborough so you should be prepared to use your map and compass, particularly if the summit is in cloud. If the day is clear there are good views across Chapel-le-Dale to Whernside and Ribbleshead Viaduct. After an initial steep descent a good path leads gradually down the flanks of Simon Fell and across the limestone pavement of Sulber. The characteristic outline of Pen-y-Ghent is straight ahead on the other side of Ribblesdale.

You will probably meet more walkers in the next 5 miles than in the remaining 50 miles of the Trail because you are on the popular Three Peaks route. Eventually after Sulber you leave the white limestone behind and cross undulating green pastures to arrive at, and cross, the railway at the picturesque Horton station. You will have passed quite near to the eyesore of Horton Quarry (hardly noticeable from this direction). Follow the road into the village. Just before footbridge over the River Ribble note a wall stile on your right and footpath sign for Helwith Bridge. This will be your route outward after visiting Horton for refreshment - where a mug of tea at the Pen-y-Ghent Café is a must. The shop also provides for all a walker's needs from Kendal Mint Cake, maps and guidebooks to expensive Goretex waterproofs, so stock up whilst you can.



Horton-in-Ribblesdale Church with Pen-y-Ghent in the background

3. Note that there is no footbridge across the River Ribble on the path heading south from the lane opposite Horton Church, although you may be able to ford the river if the water is low. I recommend that you return to the wall stile (SP Helwith Bridge) mentioned earlier and follow the riverside path towards Helwith Bridge. For the next two miles your route coincides with the Ribble Way, denoted by 'wavy' *RW* initials on signposts. You pass a sewage works and later the stone supports of the missing footbridge. The western side of the valley is scarred by quarrying near Horton and Helwith Bridge. By Cragghill Farm a rather dubious tree-trunk bridge spans the river, but there is no public access to it from the Horton direction.

Just before passing under the railway a path, left over another footbridge, leads to Studfold where there is a choice of B&B accommodation. Continuing under the railway you soon arrive at the Helwith Bridge Hotel.

Despite its grand title it is an unspoilt local inn which provides good value bar meals. All day, trucks to and from the quarries thunder over the narrow road bridge spanning the river and railway next to the inn. Fortunately peace returns when darkness falls.

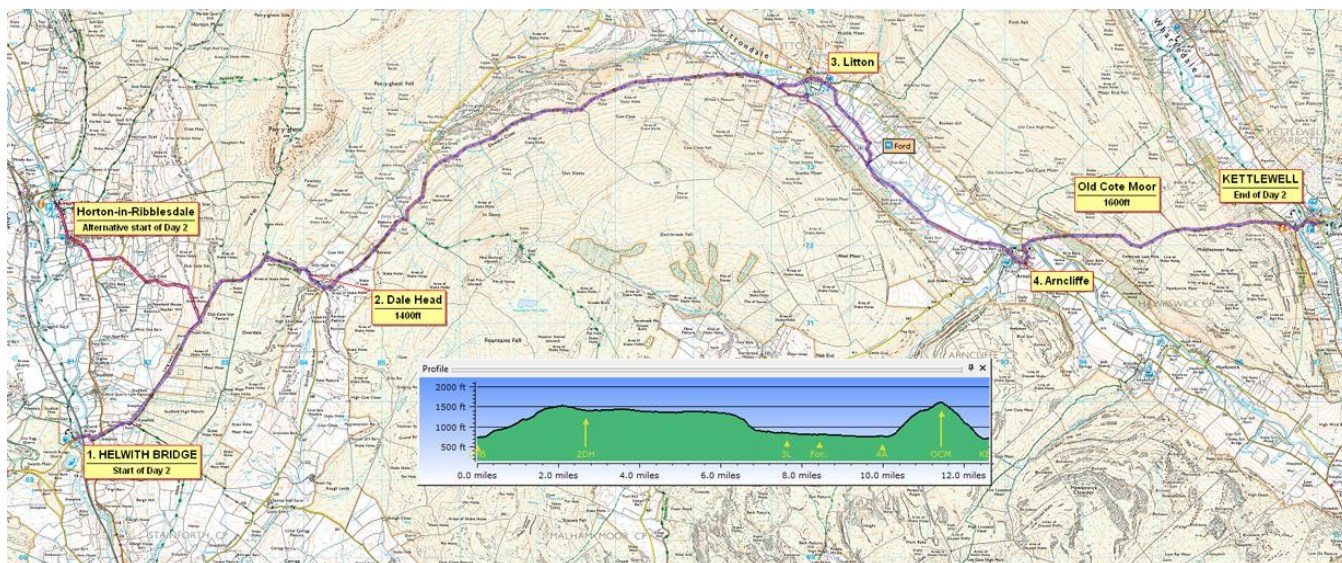
I have deliberately extended this day's walk to Helwith Bridge to reduce the mileage on the second day. If you do stay overnight in Horton you could miss out the section by the river and set off tomorrow up by Dub Cote to join Long Lane.

Day Two: Helwith Bridge to Kettlewell

13 miles Ascent 1500 ft

Maps OS 1:50000 Sheet 98 Wensleydale & Wharfedale

OS 1:25000 Outdoor Leisure Sheet 2 and 30 Yorkshire Dales (West)



1. At the bend in the B6479 road on the Horton side of the junction for Helwith Bridge a walled track, known as Long Lane, heads north-east (SP Dale Head RW). For the first $\frac{1}{4}$ mile you are still on the Ribble Way but at the fork (SP RW) you bid it farewell. As it goes right, you go left. The track climbs steadily, making a bee-line for Pen-y-Ghent, as yet out of sight. You pass a path which has come up from Horton via Dub Cote camping barn - the possible alternative route for anyone staying overnight in Horton. The gradient eases and Pen-y-Ghent looms ahead - an awesome prospect for those tackling the Pennine Way. Your route meets that one and you turn right (SP Pennine Way) to go down past Dale Head Farm and the Halton Gill Road.

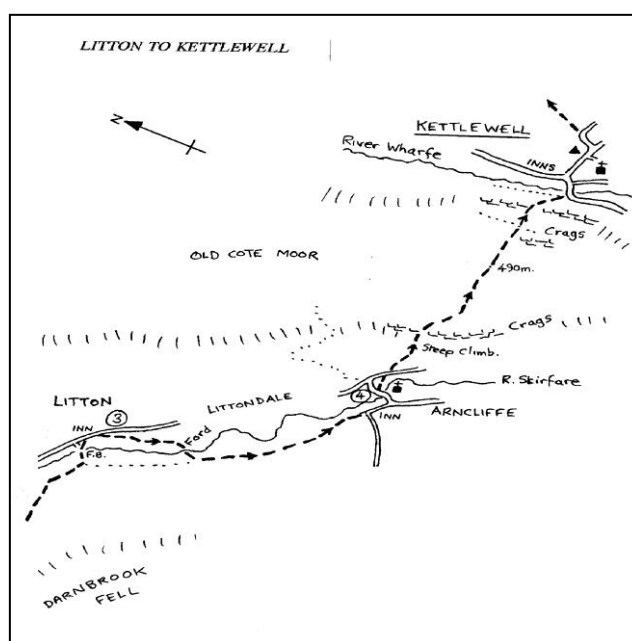


Long Lane, Helwith Bridge

2. Head north-east for about a mile along this unfenced road with Pen-y-Ghent on your left and Fountains Fell to your right. As the road turns downhill bear right at a 'No Through Road' sign along a track across Dawson Close (SP Bridle Road to Litton). This is a delightful walk which, for about 3 miles keeps close to the 1300 ft contour

round Darnbrook Fell. To your left Pen-y-Ghent Gill deepens dramatically, then lovely Littondale comes into view with Halton Gill at the head of the valley. The track, now enclosed by walls, descends to a cluster of farm buildings. Signs indicate a choice: left to Litton or straight on to Arncliffe. Although heading straight for Arncliffe would save a little time and distance, I recommend that you take the detour to the picturesque village of Litton. Go left and head across fields to a footbridge over the River Skirfare. As you cross the bridge note how much water, if any, is flowing below. Turn right along the road and, on the edge of the village, the 'Queen's Arms' awaits to refresh you with drinks and bar meals.

3. 100 yards along the road from the Inn, a sign indicates a 'Footpath to Ford'. This path, partly enclosed by walls leads across fields to the River Skirfare which can be crossed easily if its waters have gone underground. If not you should return through Litton to cross via the footbridge used earlier. Head down the valley across meadows where the path keeps to a fairly straight course (SP Footpath) ignoring the meanders made by the river. You pass through a farm yard, with barking dogs, to arrive at Arncliffe where there is a tea room and another inn... The Falcon. Cross the village green and turn left along the road past the school and the church.



4. Over the bridge a path (SP Kettlewell) cuts across a field by the river up to the Hawskwick road. This well-used path continues across the road and climbs diagonally up the steep valley side. There is about 600 ft of ascent in about half a mile. Some elementary scrambling is required to negotiate the crags to emerge from Byre Bank Wood onto Old Cote Moor. Now the gradient eases and you cross the heather-clad moor to summit at about 1600 ft. The path across the moor is quite clear and is marked by the occasional footpath sign. Descend from the moor down steepening grassy slopes and occasional limestone steps. A superb panorama of Wharfedale unfolds before you, from Buckden to Kettlewell with a backdrop of hills - Buckden Pike, Tor mere Top and Great Whernside. Tomorrow's route out of Kettlewell is clearly visible, but first you have to get down from these heights into the valley below. So you continue down the hillside, cross a farm track and reach the edge of a sheer limestone crag above Kettlewell. A gully, known as 'The Slit' caused by a fissure in the rock face, provides a means of negotiating this obstacle - again basic scrambling skills are useful. Below the crags the path continues down over loose rock and scree to a gate and on to a road by the bridge over the River Wharfe. Turn left across the bridge into Kettlewell where there are shops, a post office, tea rooms and three pubs. By the way, if there is an ice-cream stall by the bridge give yourself a treat, stop and buy one!

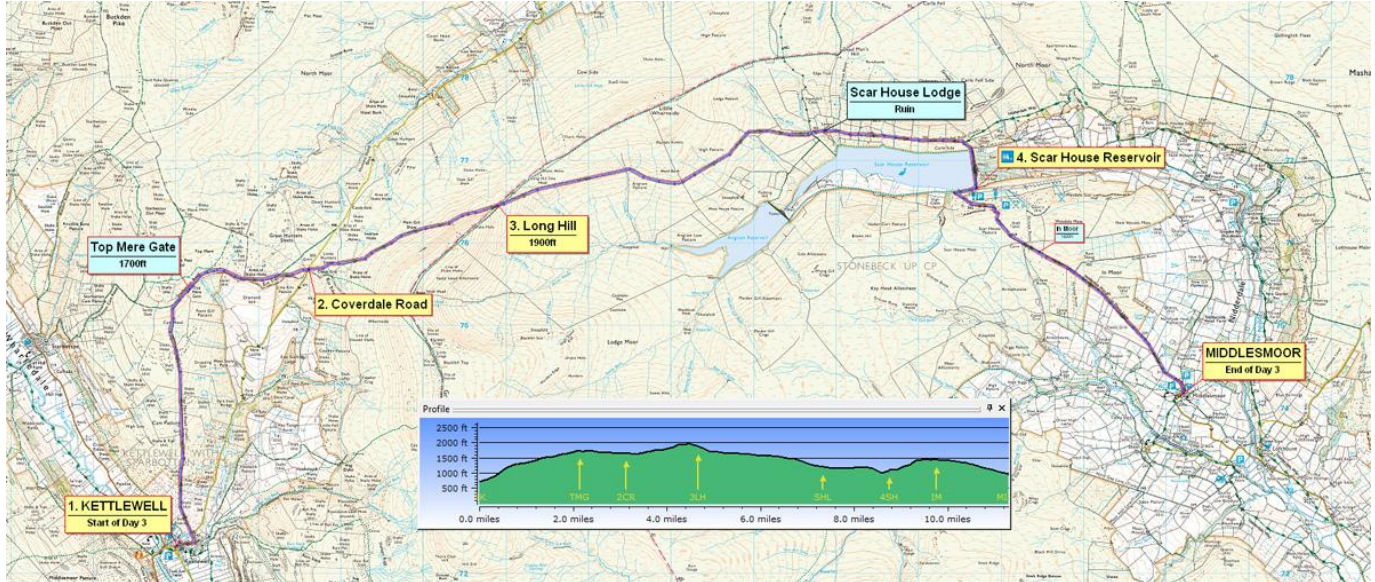
Day Three: Kettlewell to Middlesmoor

13 miles Ascent 1700 ft

Maps OS 1:50000 Sheet 98 and 99 Northallerton & Ripon

OS 1:25000 Sheet 30 Yorkshire Dales (Central)

Before setting off check your waterproof gear and emergency rations. Today you will encounter the bleakest and remotest terrain of the Trail as you cross the northern flanks of Great Whernside into upper Nidderdale.



1. As Alfred Wainwright would say, "Gird up your loins" and strike out from Kettlewell up the very steep 1 in 4 Leyburn road. At a right bend continue straight on up the walled track known as Mere Top Road (SP Cam Head). For two miles this track heads straight up the spur of the hills between Wharfedale and Park Gill. For the first mile the gradient is steep but the view back over Kettlewell provides a good excuse to pause for breath now and again. By a gate there is a conveniently situated seat: a memorial to a 'dear departed'. As you gratefully slump onto it, puffing and perspiring, you wonder as to the significance of its location! After a little more climbing the gradient eases and eventually levels off at about 1,500 ft. This is Cam Head, a wide expanse of upland pasture and rough grazing for a hardy herd of cattle. The track passes a 'Deep Bog' and swings right to merge with another track, the Starbottom Cam Road (SP Hunters Sleets). Continue below the line of crags and arrive at Top Mere Gate. Here the track shares the same path as a stream. Go through the gates and wend your way u through old spoil tips past a signpost pointing back to Starbottom and Kettlewell. You are now on the ancient Tor Dike which you follow to the Leyburn road. You join the road near the summit of its climb from Wharfedale over into Coverdale.



Kettlewell after a light snowfall

2. Across the road a signpost points to the desolate wastes ahead (SP Scar House Lodge 4 miles). You could get a lift from a passing motorist back down to Kettlewell or over to Coverdale, but you are heading for Nidderdale and the only way there is across the moorland between Great and Little Whernside. The route is shown on the map as a bridleway, but in the mud and peat I saw no hoof or boot prints. Instead tyre tracks of a lone motorcycle had blazed trail across the boggy wilderness. There would otherwise have been almost no trace of the path, so have your map and compass ready.
The ground underfoot is very wet and boggy - it was so even after the hot dry summer of '95 - and the going will be slow as you pick your way steadily onwards and upwards. The ridge will probably be enveloped in cloud and if it is going to rain at any time during this walk it will most likely be up here!
So it is a long tiring 1½ miles from the road to a gate in the wall on the ridge at about 1800 ft above sea level. This wall marks the boundary of the Yorkshire Dales National Parks. Ahead lies Nidderdale, for some reason excluded from the park, but now recognised as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). One slight disappointment is that the two reservoirs in Upper Nidderdale, so clear on the map, are not yet in sight.
3. Go through the gate and head downhill, keeping alongside the wall, to a wooden post. There strike off east across the rough ground of Angram Pasture, with the path being marked by wooden posts about every 200 yards... fine if the visibility is good. The going is better on this side of the hill with only occasional boggy patches to negotiate. There are nearly three miles of this featureless terrain to cover. About halfway you arrive at a gateway in a wall running down the slopes of Little Whernside. This provides a possible place to sit in shelter for a few minutes and survey the scene. To the south-west there is the bulk of great Whernside, in the valley below - Angram River to the east - Scar House Reservoir and beyond - a glimpse of the green valley of Nidderdale. Press on downhill with renewed vigour and you will soon reach a stony walled track. To the right it leads back to Angram Dam and is followed by Yorkshire Water's circular walk round Scar House Reservoir. Your way through is straight on and at a group of trees you pass the ruins of Scar House Lodge, a long four miles from the Coverdale road. The track continues along the contour above the reservoir and then drops down to the road across the dam (SP Nidderdale Way). Here you join the Nidderdale Way, which will be followed for much of the next 15 miles or so. Don't panic, you only have about 3 miles left to do today. Above the reservoir the landscape is bleak and barren, below in the valley it is lush green, pastures and woodland. Cross the dam to where there is a car park and toilets - you are back in civilisation.
4. Walk along the access road beside the reservoir for about 200yds to where a Nidderdale Way sign points back up the hillside. Follow this rough track which gains height quickly as it zigzags up past the old quarry workings onto In Moor. The quarries on both sides of the valley date from when Angram and Scar House Reservoirs were constructed. They supply water to Bradford and were built in the early 1900s. At a gate at about 1400 ft the track becomes enclosed by walls and begins the gradual descent into Middlesmoor. You join a metalled road and enter the village past a small car park. Middlesmoor is an attractive huddle of stone buildings on the edge of the moor between the valleys of the River Nidd and How Stean Beck. On your right is the village Post Office and Inn for a well deserved afternoon tea. There is a superb view down Nidderdale from here.

Day Four: Middlesmoor to Pateley Bridge

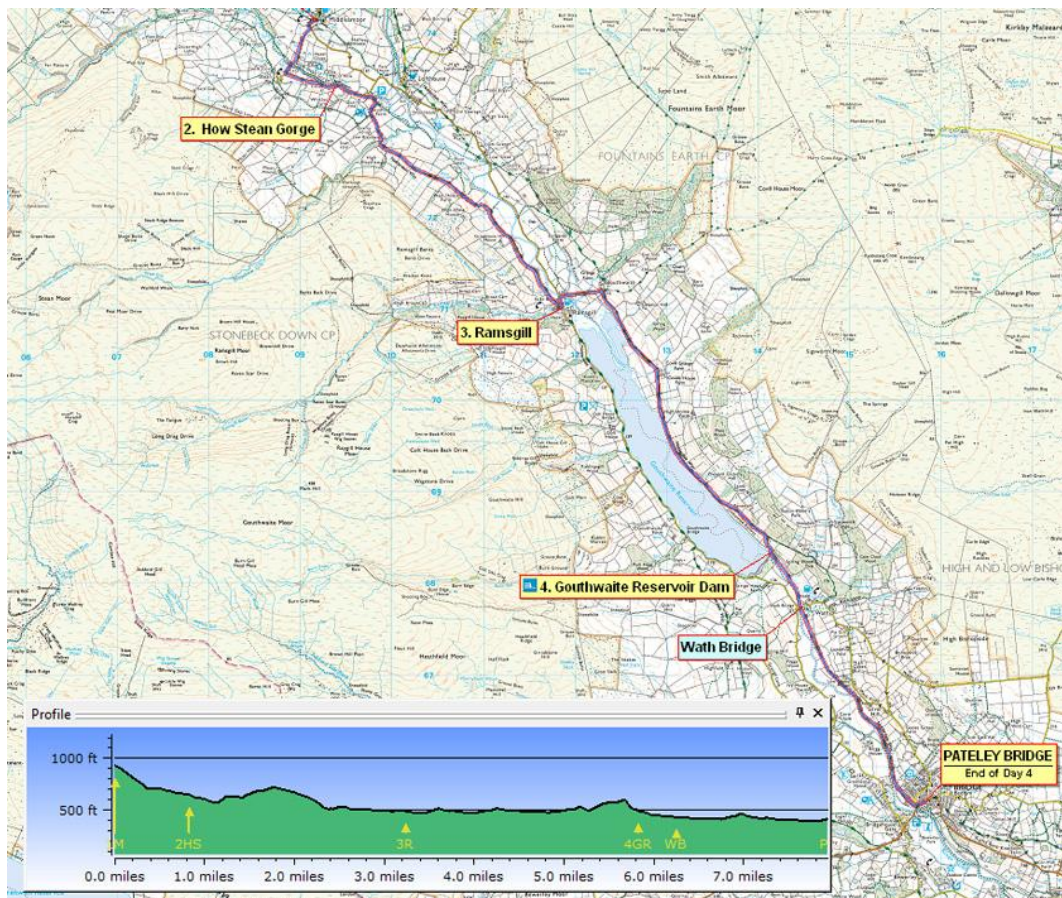
9 miles Ascent 200 ft

Map OS 1:50000 Sheet 99 Northallerton & Ripon

Nidderdale Way Guidebook

After the strenuous efforts of the preceding days, you deserve a bit of a break so have a lie-in and a late breakfast today. You have a leisurely 9 mile ramble down Nidderdale with time to savour its delights, time for a leisurely pint or two, time for cups of tea.

For most of the time you will be following part of the Nidderdale Way, a 55 mile long waymarked circuit of the dale, up the eastern side and back down the west side - at least that is the way it is described in the guide book. So your route will follow the Nidderdale Way in the 'right' direction as far as Ramsgill where, to avoid several miles of road walking, you cross the valley and follow it in the 'wrong' direction down to Pateley Bridge.



1. As you leave Middlesmoor, you will again appreciate that today is different - it is the only morning when you will set off downhill! Go down the road and as it swings left down the valley look out for the 'squeezer' stile in the wall on your right. A well walked path leads down the side of the pastures towards Stean. At a Nidderdale Way Sign bear right and head down to the tree-lined How Stean Gorge. Go over the footbridge and up the other side to the plantation of mountain ash to an unusual lift 'stile'. Go to the right of a caravan to another stile in the corner and out onto the road. Turn left down the road from which there is a good view back across to Middlesmoor. Over the wall, How Stean Gorge deepens dramatically and you soon arrive at the entrance with its car-park, toilets and restaurant. The Gorge is well worth a visit if you have time but there is an admission charge to the network of paths and bridges that thread through it. You can get a glimpse of the gorge from that bridge leading across into the car-park. A little further down the road by a cottage there is another entrance/exit and if you do walk down the Gorge you could rejoin the road here.

2. Walk on down the road to where it turns left by the caravan site and there go straight along the track (SP Bridleway to Ramsgill) to the right of the caravans. Turn right (SP Nidderdale Way) up past a cottage then left (SP Bridleway). You will follow the line of this ancient lane through to Ramsgill. It is enclosed by walls until just past Blayshaw Gill after which it enters farmland and continues as a green way across grazing land. Note there may be a bull with the cattle in this vicinity. A section of the lane hereabouts is being 'improved' by the dumping of rocks - it may be better for tractors but not for walkers or horses. Follow the lane through the gates, each with an adjacent stile and pass West House Farm. After the next field the track bears right and heads up a bank to a further gate and stile. Beyond, keep alongside the fence as the track descends gradually to come close to the River Nidd for the first time. Leave the field at a gate and pass through a farmyard where you may have to run the gauntlet of two or three barking, but thankfully, tethered dogs. By the farm a Nidderdale Way sign confirms that you are on the right path. You have reached Ramsgill and a short distance along the road is the Yorke Arms Hotel. This imposing building overlooking the village green welcomes walkers and actually runs weekend breaks for guided walks.

3. Head back up the road over the river bridge and take the narrow lane on the right to Bouthwaite. Just after bridging a beck note the hose on the right, once Ramsgill Station on the Nidd Valley Light Railway and still retaining the platform. This railway linked Lofthouse with Pateley Bridge and closed in 1930. In Bouthwaite turn right (SP Wath) along a tarmac lane, which becomes unmetalled after Coville Farm. Your route keeps alongside the old railway track bed for the next three miles. Unfortunately what would be an ideal walking surface is 'out of bounds' over the fence on Yorkshire Water land within the Gouthwaite Reservoir Nature Reserve, as signs keep reminding you. So you will have to keep to the rough lane as it undulates along overlooking the reservoir. After passing a barn the path climbs up away from the reservoir and about ¼ mile further on a track from Lamb Close Farm joins from the left. In another 200yds, at a stone gateway in the wall (chalked arrow on gatepost), you bear right down a green path to a stile by Gouthwaite Reservoir Dam.

4. The gates giving access to the roadway across the dam are padlocked. Not to worry, as your route goes through the smaller metal gate to the left and follows the path through the trees and across the riverside meadows to a stile onto the narrow Wath Road. The Sportsman's arms in Wath can be seen about 100yds up the road to the left. Continue across the road into more meadows where the path swings left and, for a while, merges with the old railway track-bed on a low embankment. Note that stiles are still set to one side as originally the right-of-way would have been alongside the railway line. However soon you leave the old line for a fenced path alongside the River Nidd for the final mile or so into Pateley Bridge. You pass a Council depot and a Scout Hut built on the site of the old railway goods yard and enter the bustling little town by the bus terminus and a new housing development. Just around the corner is the narrow High Street with its shops, cafés, pubs, and Fish & Chip shops. All traffic to and from Harrogate and Ripon has to negotiate this steep, narrow road with its narrow pavements, which means that walking up the High Street is not a pleasurable experience. There is a choice of accommodation in the town or just across the river in Bewerley. Note that the town can be very busy at the end of September, when it stages the annual Nidderdale agricultural Show.

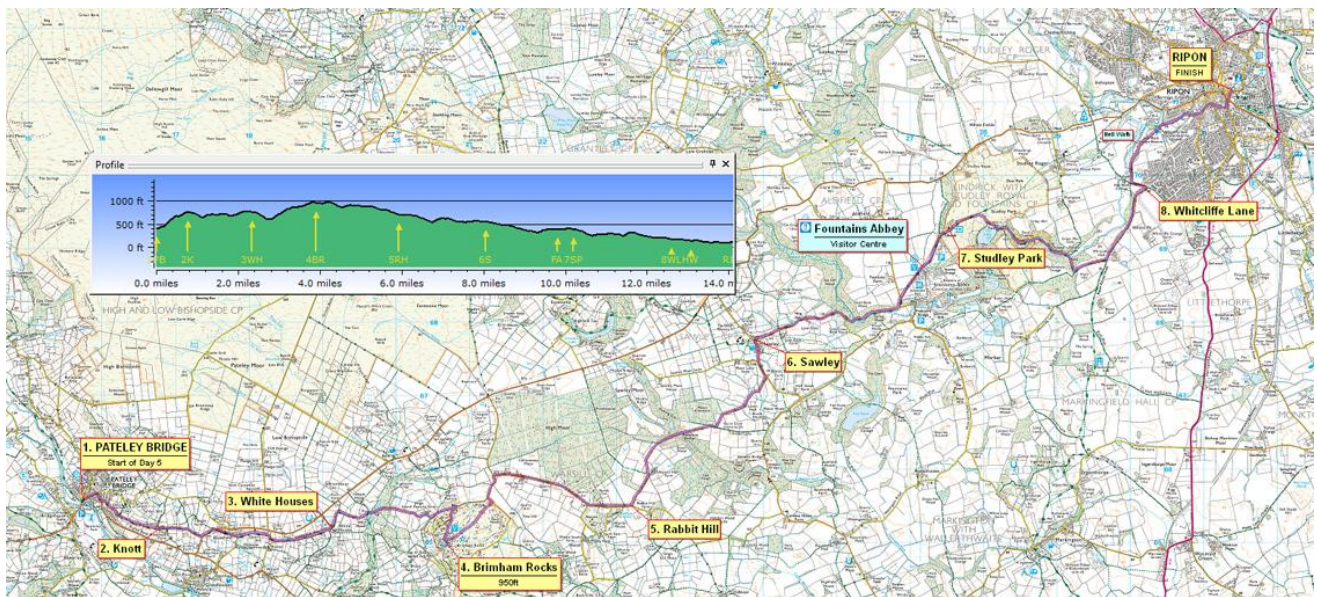
Day Five: Pateley Bridge to Ripon

14 miles Ascent 1,000 ft

Map OS 1:50000 Sheet 99 Northallerton & Ripon

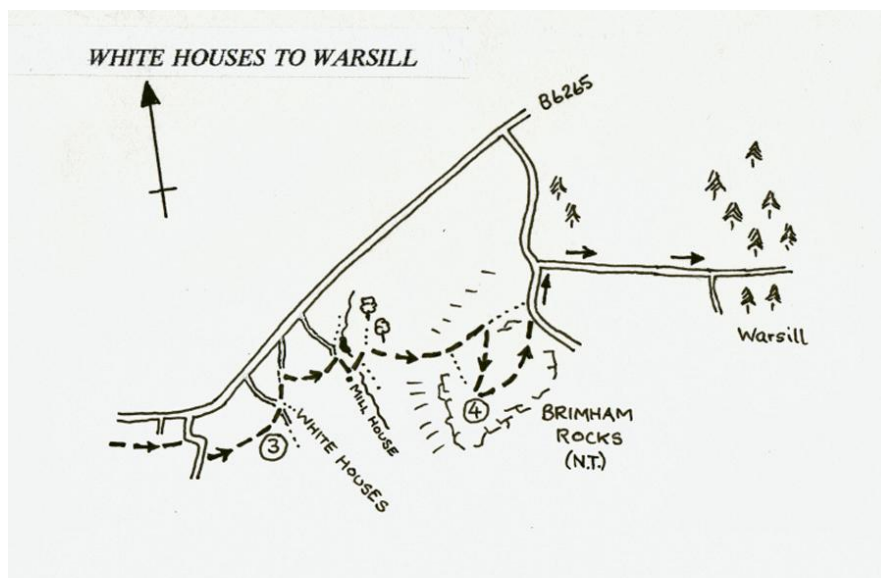
Map OS 1:25000 Explorer: Fountains Abbey

With the hills and moors behind you, you could think that today would be a leisurely ramble through pastoral countryside from one beauty spot to the next. Well you would be wrong - not only are there quite a few short, steep infuriating ups and downs, but route-finding is tricky through some rarely walked areas. For the first few miles you still follow the Nidderdale Way, but after that signs and waymarks become inconsistent and frequent checking of the map becomes necessary. This slows down your progress and although the day's mileage is no greater than some other days you will be on your feet for a longer time. At least you now have this guide to follow, but I still recommend that you get the 1:25,000 OS map for this section.



1. In Pateley Bridge head up the High Street and follow it round to the right at the top of the hill. Just past the Methodist Church turn up a flight of steps on your left by a blue metal 'Panorama Walk' so enjoyed by the locals - the view extends up Nidderdale from Guise Cliff with its transmitter mast, past Bewerley and over the roof tops of Pateley Bridge to Gouthwaite Reservoir and Middlesmoor. There is a purpose-made viewing area and seat at the top of the hill.
2. Continue, on the level now, through the tiny settlement of Knott and where the lane bears right continue straight on along an unsurfaced track (SP Nidderdale Way). Ignore any other footpaths and keep along the walled bridleway to a junction of tracks. Bear right and drop down onto a road. This is the B6265 Ripon road and it can be quite busy. Head left up the road and go right along a lane in front of a row of cottages (SP Nidderdale Way). These cottages have a super outlook over the valley to Guise Cliff on the other side. After passing Rock House you come to a minor road and turn left. At a bend just before this road meets the B6265 a walled path continues straight on (SP Nidderdale Way). This path, which can become overgrown with bracken by late summer, leads to another minor road. There turn right and go downhill round the bends to a gate on the left (SP Nidderdale Way). This track leads through trees to another gate after which it climbs again. The bank here is planted with a variety of conifers and mountain ash. Pass through another gateway to arrive at a crossroads of tracks at the cluster of farms and cottages referred to as Whitehouses on the map. Here there are no signs to guide you on your way, even though the map shows several paths.
3. Go straight on in front of a house, down a walled track towards another cottage, by this cottage (beware of the dogs) a Nidderdale Way sign points right, along a narrow path which leads into open fields. On the skyline ahead are Brimham Rocks. Walk down the fields towards Mill House in the valley. As you near the buildings a line of marker posts lead you left to join the unfenced track by a cattle grid. Cross the cattle grid and turn right

following the Nidderdale Way down to a footbridge over the beck. This is your last Nidderdale Way sign - from now on you are on your own! Take the path on the left over a stile into a field. Make your way up the left-hand side of the fields, ignoring two waymarked stiles into the woods on your left. Have faith in the 1:25000 map, continue up the field side and you will come to a stile over the wall at the top. After this stile veer right up the grassy bank to another and keep to the path mown across the paddock by Brimham rocks Farm. Go past the buildings, where there is an exhibition of glass engraving and along a driveway. By the gateway stile on the right provides direct access to the Rocks but only for rock-climbers. An easier route is to continue along the drive until a small path goes off to the right. This joins a grassy track which climbs gradually onto the rocky plateau and leads eventually to the Visitor Centre and café.



Brimham Rocks

4. Alas you can only spend a short time exploring the weird and wonderful rock formations because Ripon is still about 9 miles away! From the Visitor Centre you need to head north-east across the plateau - there is a clear narrow path through the heather - to arrive at another outcrop on the edge, above a road. There is almost a 360° panorama from up here - the hills of the Yorkshire Dales to the west and north, Yorkshire Moors to the east. Harrogate and the Menwith Hill 'golf balls' to the south. Descend and join the road near the access to Brimham Rocks Farm - the track you turned off from earlier. Go up the road and turn right along a minor road (SP Warsill ¼ mile). Unfortunately you have nearly 2 miles to walk along this road, but there are compensations, like the view right back to Brimham Rocks and across to Harrogate. The road enters woodland and passes the turn for Warsill (still a mile away!) After dropping downhill you pass a caravan park on the right and emerge from the woodland.

5. Soon you come to a slight right-hand bend and a footpath sign on the left shows this is where to leave the road and return to field paths. Note that most of the farmland in this area is used for grazing cattle. Go along the field side to a green metal kissing-gate leading into the next field. Keep alongside the wall towards Warsill Farm. Here there are no indications of where to head next. Do not continue towards the Farm but at the end of the wall, just before reaching the barns, turn left through the gate into the next field. Almost immediately look for the remains of a stone step stile in the wall on your right - it is near a stone cattle trough. Clamber over as best you can without dislodging any more stones. Head straight across the field to a green gate after which you bear right and keep by the wall down the next field. Go through the gateway in the next wall and walk straight across the field to the gate directly ahead (not the one to the right). Here you will be relieved to see a public footpath sign. The next bit, where you drop down through woodland with a stream below on your left, is quite delightful. Unfortunately this is short-lived as you come across a scene of devastation where tree-felling operations are in progress. Take notice of any warning signs and keep to the footpath as directed by the signs. At the time of my visit, after crossing Picking Gill you were directed left up a forest track, followed shortly by a right turn up another track. The path then heads up a forest track, followed shortly by a right turn up another track. The path then heads up through unspoiled forest and brings you to a gate at the woodland edge. Once more you enter grazing land and again, there may be a bull with the cows in this field. What's more it is a large field and you have to head diagonally across it, aiming for the right-hand end of the woodland ahead. Leave the field via a metal gate and enter a grassy enclosed lane. Cross the wall left, into the first field after the woodland and follow a faint path through the grass to the opposite corner passing close by the ancient Lacon Cross. Squeeze past the railings and over the wall. Go down the field towards Lacon Hall Cottages and follow waymarked past the buildings and along the access track. I could see no sign of the field paths leading towards the village of Sawley, so I recommend that you follow the track towards the village of Sawley. There you can indulge in a well-earned pint at the Sawley Arms, but remember to take your boots off. This pub has a very popular, high class restaurant - probably too classy for the likes of you or I!
6. Soon you must pull your boots on and scrunch back across the gravel past the Range-Rovers and BMWs in the car-park. Go along the lane opposite the pub towards Low Gate. After about a mile, having passed two or three farms and cottages the lane bears right and, by a Lowgate Lane sign, a public footpath (SP) on the left takes you down into more woodland. This is another pleasant section, reminiscent of the descent to Picking Gill but without the tree-felling. Although you are now only a 'stone's throw' from Fountains Abbey this path does not seem to be frequently walked. You drop down through the trees to cross an old packhorse bridge over the River Skell. Turn right along the track parallel to the river. You will probably encounter lots of peasants in this area. At a gate you leave the woods and enter grazing land again which has the appearance of once being parkland. Above the trees ahead you catch a glimpse of the tower of the 800 year-old Fountains abbey. At the road go left up the hill and at the top, take the track on the right towards Studley Park. This soon meets another road, the access road, which can be very busy, join and follow this bridleway past the Visitor Centre or call in if you have time. Just beyond a roundabout cross the road again and mingle with the day trippers along the path to the gateway in the wall leading to Studley Park.



Studley Park with Ripon Cathedral in the distance

7. Inside the park you could easily miss the Obelisk among the trees on your left, whilst directly ahead is the graceful Victorian Church of St Mary. This Church stands in a prominent position overlooking the medieval deer park. If time permits, take a look around the church then continue down the driveway passing the Lodge, now home for the Estate Office. Keep a look out for the herds of deer amongst the trees. The drive stretches ahead down an avenue for about a mile to the park gates. In the haze beyond stands Ripon Cathedral, about three miles away and exactly in line with the Avenue and St Mary's Church in Studley Park. Journey's end is in sight, but your route will be more devious. When you approach the crossroads of drives turn right across the Park down towards the lake. Walk along the lakeside and cross the footbridge over the weir at its outfall. Follow the little River Skell as it winds through a delightful valley enclosed by steep rocky cliffs - it is almost a gorge. In dry weather the waters of the river may well retreat underground. The path crosses the river five times by little stone bridges before reaching a gate at the Park boundary. Go through the gate and enter a wooded section of the valley, described on notices as a 'Game Conservation Area'. In late summer there are young peasants everywhere - so completely unafraid of people that you almost have to step over them. When you come to a footbridge and ford cross the river to follow the track that climbs quite steeply through the trees out of the valley. At the top the way straight ahead is private. Turn sharp left (SP Ripon) to arrive at a gate leading into farmland. Go across the field and follow the line of hawthorn trees, presumably the original field boundary, to a blue gate. This brings you out onto the lane by Whitecliffe Hall. Turn left and walk along this lane, which in about a mile brings you to a modern housing estate on the outskirts of Ripon. The Cathedral dominates the skyline ahead.
8. You could continue down Whitecliffe Lane, now a wide road through this residential part of the town but a more pleasant route is to go left to a kissing gate leading to playing fields. This is Hell Wath, an area of common land between the houses and the River Skell, used partly for sports fields with the rest being open meadowland. Turn right near Hell Wath Cottage along the side of the playing fields where the path forks and bear right and walk across the common. At the corner, steps take you down through the trees to the river bank. Turn right along the riverside path which eventually joins Borrage Green Lane. Continue along the lane to its junction with the main road. Now that the Ripon Bypass is open, walking through the town is much more pleasant. By the river bridge cross over into Barefoot Street alongside the river. There is an impressive Riverside building development here. Go past a bridge and continue along the footpath to a road and turn left. Say farewell to the River Skell as you cross it for the last time and walk up to the Cathedral and journey's end. The narrow Kirkgate, opposite the West front leads to the Market Place and a footpath past the Court House leads to the main car park and bus terminus. There is a wide choice of cafés restaurants and inns where you can have a well deserved meal and a drink or two to celebrate completing a Trans-Dale Trail.