

Walks

Exploring the Dales

Walk information

Distance: Roughly 12.5 miles
Height to Climb: 450m (1,480 feet)
Start: SE 092743. There is a small car park at the top end of Middlesmoor.
Difficulty: A long day but on good tracks and paths throughout. There are some steep climbs and certainly start the walk early.
Refreshments: Middlesmoor has a pub called the Crown, as does nearby Lofthouse.
Be Prepared: The route description and sketch map only provide a guide to the walk. You must take out and be able to read a map and in cloudy/misty conditions a compass. You must also wear the correct clothing and footwear for the outdoors. Whilst every effort is made to provide accurate information, walkers head out at their own risk.
Please observe the Countryside Code and park sensibly.

THIS is a fine airy walk, perfect for a bracing winter day in the moors (leave plenty of time as it is a long walk but on good tracks). The walk is full of contrasts, open moorland, remote farms, stunning views and all framed by two remote reservoirs. The first time I visited the Upper Nidd I was attacked by an angry pheasant (I had probably disturbed its young) but it never put me off, it is still one of the classic places to explore in the Dales.
I prefer starting this walk in Middlesmoor but it is just as convenient to start in Lofthouse, ½ a mile away. Both villages are very pretty, both have a pub named the Crown and both have sufficient parking. Middlesmoor has a small car park a 100m above the Crown, head north east from here, along a good farmers track. The track climbs steadily to the high point at 1,500feet at Rain Stang before the views open up impressively to the north and some wild lands.

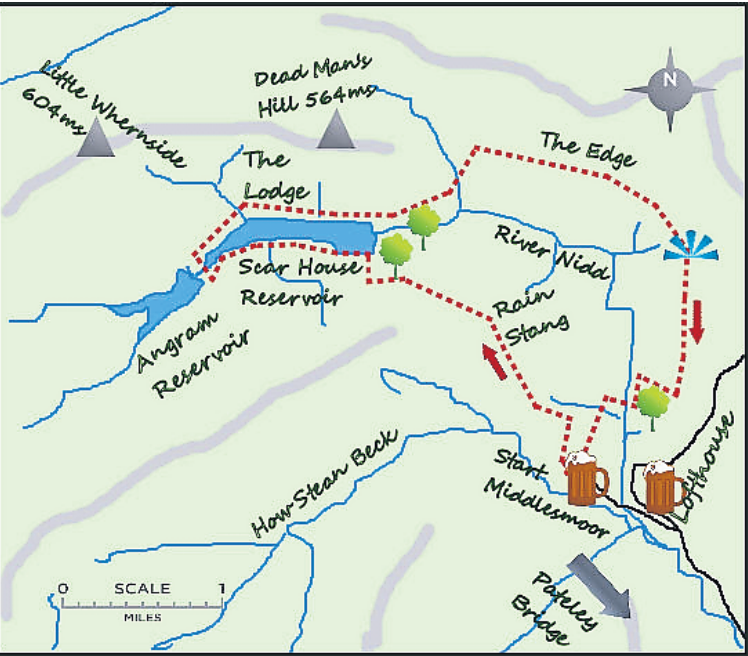


Scar House Reservoir

The track then drops steeply towards the first of the 2 Upper Nidderdale Reservoirs, Scar House. There are 3 reservoirs in the valley but Gouthwaite is further south. Scar House Reservoir was completed in 1936 and provides water for Bradford, plenty of it with the dam itself over 50 m high. Apparently it is great for fishing, with brown trout the most common catch and it is also a fine location for bird watching. On meeting the reservoir head west alongside the waters till arriving at the second reservoir Angram. Go no further west. Ahead is bleak country, I once found myself in this vast bog whilst seeking a new route up Great Whernside, never again.
Cross the over the dam of Angram and head north east along a path soon turning in to a good track to the north of Scar House Reservoir. On reaching the track let your imagination take over at what has become known as the 'Lost Village of Lodge'. Remains exist of a village that almost certainly dated back to the Middle Ages. During the summer of 2016 archaeologists discovered remains that confirmed its ancient beginnings. In the 19th century Lodge was a busy

community, situated well on a well-travelled pack horse route, with many nearby farms and a bustling community, even before the arrival of the reservoir builders. Now most, but not all, lies under the reservoirs and much that remains are the village and engineering (including a narrow gauge rail track/route) from the construction of the reservoirs. A truly fascinating history.
However this is a walk and there are many miles yet to complete. Follow the excellent track east to the end of Scar House Reservoir and then take the footpath which climbs for a 100 m when the main track drops to the dam. The path (part of the Nidderdale Way) heads over the wonderfully name Woo Gill. It is near here that 3 tinkers bodies were once discovered, headless, in a place known as Dead Mans Hill! Take the high route from Woo Gill that bends gradually south with spectacular views over the Upper Nidderdale Valley. I do prefer this high route purely for the views both behind you to the west and ahead to the south.
Once the path settles in to a southerly direction it soon meets a shooters track and carries on its

southerly course, sticking close to the rim of the Nidd valley. After a further mile the track arrives at the spectacularly situated Shooters Lodge, from here take the bridleway steeply downhill, in to the valley at Thrope Farm. Cross the River Nidd at the farm and walk for a 200m alongside the river before taking the footpath to your right, and after 10 miles of walking, depressingly steep slopes. However it genuinely is not as bad as it looks and before you have time to get grumpy you are back I Middlesmoor and probably the Crown pub.
Jonathan Smith runs Where2walk, a walking company in the Yorkshire Dales. Jonathan has written his own book, the "Dales 30" which describes the highest mountains in the Dales. He also runs 1 Day Navigation Courses for Beginners and Intermediates. Join his Learn a Skill, Climb a Hill weekends in the Dales. To find out more details on any of the above visit his popular website, where2walk.co.uk



Birdwatch

By Ian Kerr

THE illegal persecution of raptors is back in the news with two developments within the past week which highlight the problem. The first was the publication of the latest update from the RSPB's investigation team which neatly coincided with a controversial decision by Natural England to press ahead with its "brood management" scheme for hen harriers, the most systematically persecuted species of all.
The RSPB team detailed the deliberate burning of a harrier nest on a moorland site and reported that another satellite-tagged bird had vanished in

suspicious circumstances. There was also a pair of peregrine falcons found poisoned near their nest which held three young. Fortunately, the young were rescued, placed in other nests with similar sized chicks and all were successfully fostered and fledged. Away from raptors, there was also a sickening case of a North Yorkshire man convicted of persecuting a family of greylag geese, chasing and killing three goslings with a spade.
Meanwhile, the decision by civil servants at Natural England to issue a licence to legally allow hen harrier eggs or chicks to be taken from nests on northern grouse

moors brought condemnation and derision, almost in equal measure, from birders. The idea is to rear the young in captivity and then released them back into the wild. The stated aim is to help the species which is on the brink of extinction in England as a breeding species.
The plan will come into effect if two pairs of harriers are found nesting within 10km of each-other. As there were only three successful breeding pairs bred in England last year, all in Northumberland and none on grouse moors, this threshold may prove a bit difficult to reach.

Critics claim the initiative is simply to appease wealthy and politically influential grouse shooting interests and has nothing to do with helping the species. The RSPB says it is implacably opposed and has described the proposals as nonsense. It is calling on Environment Secretary Michael Gove to intervene, withdraw the licence and concentrate instead on combating the regular and illegal shooting of hen harriers and other raptors if he really wants to help these species. The general view of birders is that adult hen harriers rather than civil servants are probably best at rearing young

hen harriers. No doubt it's a subject we'll be hearing a lot more about.
Back in the real world, the desert wheatear, present at Whitby since before Christmas, suddenly vanished last weekend. Four tail feathers found at its regular site indicated that it may have come to a sad end.

