

Walks Kirkham Priory and the River Derwent

Walk information

Distance: Roughly 7.5 miles.

Height to Climb: 210m (690 feet)

Start: SE 736659. There is some free parking (for about 50 vehicles) near the priory.

Difficulty: Medium/Easy. The walk is on good paths and country lanes. Take great care crossing the A64, the traffic is travelling quickly.

Refreshments: There is a snack bar at the entrance to the priory and a pub (the Stone Trough) in the village.

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 (O/S Explorer OL26) 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.

The walk

A walk of considerable interest on the outskirts of the Howardian Hills and variety taking in the delights of Kirkham Priory, Huttons Ambo and always staying close to the River Derwent. The walk passes through quintessentially English countryside and is perfect on a fine summer's day.

The start of the walk at Kirkham Priory and a visit to the ruins of this Augustinian Priory. English Heritage are responsible for its preservation, with the impressive Gatehouse the best preserved feature. I was intrigued to know why this was a priory and not an abbey as many of the main monastic ruins are; apparently it

is simply that a priory is run by a less important person (a prior not an abbot!) and is likely to be in a more remote setting. The setting is certainly fabulous and the temptation is to linger.

However the walking starts by heading east up the road following signs for the Centenary Way. After half a mile turn north in to the small village of Firby before continuing east on a good footpath to the banks of the River Derwent. Follow the river for a further half a mile till it meets the smaller (and uncrossable) Howl Beck. Follow the path south back to the road, turn left and almost immediately north returning along a quiet country lane to the river and a suspension bridge that crosses the River Derwent.

The footbridge will take you in a lovely settlement called Huttons Ambo; confusing because Huttons Ambo does not exist but is the name used for the amalgamation of two separate villages Low Hutton and High Hutton. Low Hutton is the largest village of the two but High Hutton is more attractive with a fine village church. Take the minor road from Low to High Hutton. At a sharp right hand corner in the village a footpath heads west across some fields before meeting a bridlepath which heads past some woodland to stop at the fence bordering the A64. Take great care crossing the A64 here (the traffic is going fast) and join a lane on the north side of the road.

At a farmhouse quarter of a mile along the lane head directly east downhill and through some pretty woodland. From here climb uphill to re-join the Centenary Way. The views here are excellent in all directions. Follow the path south to re-cross the A64 and head in to the preserved, private village of Crambeck. Immaculately maintained the village is worth exploring and is really quite unique. A nature trail leaves the village (still following the Centenary Way) along a footpath



above the western banks of the River Derwent. The woods are peaceful and the walking pleasant until the path drops to the railway (York/Scarborough line) near the road bridge at Kirkham Priory

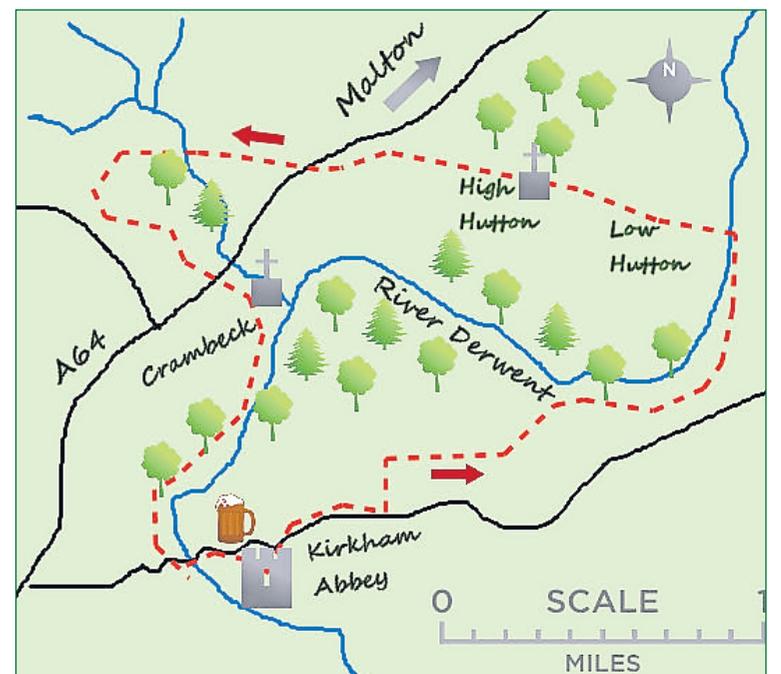
Jonathan Smith runs Where2walk, a walking company in the Yorkshire Dales:

- 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 Weekend (one in June, one in October)

To find out more details on any of the above and details of many more walks in the area visit his popular website, where2walk.co.uk/



Birdwatch By Ian Kerr

If there is a single bird which captures the spirit of mid-summer then it's surely the swallow. As a species they have everything going for them. We welcome they are harbingers of spring, marvel at their courage in travelling the entire length of Africa and half of Europe and even find ourselves feeling a bit privileged that they've come to live alongside us for the summer.

They have the added advantage that they're amongst the most beautiful of birds, particularly when the sun catches their steely dark blue plumage as they race and dart taking insects, their tail streamers flexing and twisting.

They also become fearless of our presence, flashing past to feed hungry broods shrilling on the edges of their cupped nest of mud.

This year fewer than normal seem to have reached us and I've heard a lot of comments about their absence from some very regular nest sites. They certainly arrived in some breeding areas two or even three weeks later than normal, indicating that they'd had a difficult migration probably with heavy losses along the way. This has resulted in a later than usual breeding season. This week I've been checking around local sites in my village where I've been ringing these charismatic

birds for the past 15 years. Most sites are being used although one, which according to elderly villagers has been occupied annually since their childhoods over 70 years ago, is vacant for the first time anyone can recall.

The pairs I've checked cover the whole range of breeding. Late arrivals are still on eggs while others have young of varying ages. I've come across both newly hatched young and one brood on the point of fledging, four large youngsters lined up on the edge of their nest ready for their first hazardous flight.

This week the RSPB said

that nationally the number of swallows, house martins and swifts which all winter south of the Sahara, seem to be down, finding that will confirm the impressions of local birders.

Recently I mentioned that there had been an influx of rosy starlings into Britain from their more easterly haunts. Last weekend there was Durham's first record from this movement when a sub-adult was found in gardens at South Hylton. Unfortunately it quickly seems to have moved on as did last week's woodchat shrike which was a great, but rather brief attraction at Scaling Dam.

Among rare breeding species, displaying honey buzzards have been reported almost daily from their one regular site in the region, Wykeham Forest in North Yorkshire.

