

Walks Galloping around Middleham

Walk information

Distance: Roughly 5.5 miles.

Height to Climb: 200m (650 feet)

Start: SE 127877. There is parking in the village, just park considerately.

Difficulty: Easy/Medium. A straightforward walk on easy terrain.

Refreshments: Middleham has a choice of pubs and cafes next to its cobbled streets.

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.

racehorses bred in Middleham for 200 years but it is likely that the Cistercian Monks at nearby Jervaulx Abbey were breeding a long time before. It is part of the past and the future of the area.

Half a mile from the centre of Middleham a footpath heads right, through a gate and on to the wide expanse of the Gallops. As a walker you do tend to feel a little out of place (a bit like footpaths on golf courses) but the views of Lower Wensleydale are exceptional and on a breezy day this part of the walk is invigorating. Having walked on relatively flat ground for one and a half a track heads at right angles to the footpath. Turn south and drop steadily down to Tupgill Gardens and Forbidden Corner. The gardens are excellent but it is Forbidden Corner which makes this part of the Dales so popular. A labyrinth of follies, chambers and tunnels make up Forbidden Corner, worth visiting with the children.

The walk carries on south through Tupgill Gardens, turning left at the road at its foot and then soon left in to the little hamlet of Coverham. Coverham has a lovely church and the remains of an abbey (one of the many dissolved by Henry VIII in 1536. All of these abbeys have impressive ruins and worth seeing. From Coverham the path heads east to the River Cover before climbing up to the road. It is a shame that the footpath does not carry on along the river before joining the Six Trails footpath back to Middleham but it is possible to cut back to the river through the access land and join the riverside path in 200 metres.

Whichever route that is taken on the return you will arrive to be greeted by the exceptional site of Middleham Castle (the Windsor of the North). This is my favourite castle in Yorkshire (Richard III thought so too) as it has the right combination of ruggedness, completeness, situation without being overly repaired. It somehow feels

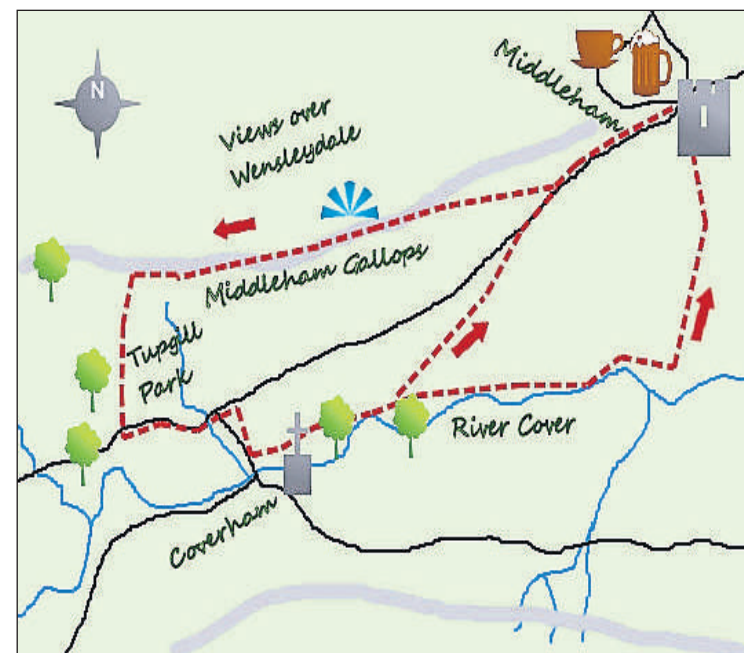


genuine to me and it is easy to picture it during its long and fascinating history. The castle is preserved impressively by English Heritage and offers a wonderful conclusion to this short walk that is packed with interest.

Jonathan Smith runs Where2walk, a walking company in the Yorkshire Dales. He has written his own book, the "Dales 30" which describes the highest mountains in the Dales.

He also runs one day Navigation Courses for Beginners and Intermediates. Join his learn a skill, climb a hill weekend.

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



The walk

THERE are two things you should know about Middleham; it is the home of racehorse training in the Dales and it has a fabulous castle! What is less well known is that Middleham is a very attractive cobbled Yorkshire village and the 'Gallops' have some great views across Lower Wensleydale.

There is some roadside parking in the centre of Middleham. Rather than explore the castle before the walk I tend to head out of the village on to the 'Gallops' (a two mile stretch of open land used by the jockeys to exercise their horses). Even on the short climb out of the west end of Middleham before reaching the Gallops there is every chance that you will see thoroughbreds heading out. There have been

Birdwatch By Ian Kerr

THE short nights of mid-summer, if you're willing to brave the midges and mosquitoes, are the best time to see and hear one of most elusive and enigmatic breeding species, the nightjar.

They are not a species you stumble across by accident or luck. You really have to make the effort.

In our region they are now a rare species, virtually confined to upland forests where they favour clear-fell, young plantations and moor edges. They seem particularly to like areas with a few taller dead trees on which to

perch. Once young conifers begin to grow and cut off light to the ground vegetation they usually move on.

This summer there have been regular sightings from forests at Hamsterley, Slaley and Guisborough and from around Sutton Bank. The other evening, a wonderfully clear and warm period after a sweltering day, I joined a group of friends at Winnows Hill on the edge of Slaley Forest above Derwent Reservoir, one of the best and easiest places to find these strictly nocturnal birds.

These days my bird-watching

outings usually involve census work, nest-finding or ringing. This was nothing more than sheer indulgence. Just after 10.15pm, a couple of nightjars began to churr, a strange far-carrying purring noise which rises and falls as the unseen birds turn their heads. A few minutes later we heard a male wing-clapping in display over the moor edge and caught a brief glimpse of a flying, twisting silhouette against the darkening sky. That's normally all you can hope for unless one perches high against the sky. Nightjars take moths and other flying insects which they scoop up through wide gaping mouths.

There's great uncertainty about breeding numbers simply because they are so difficult to locate. But there could be more than we realize, as I found some years ago when I took part in a survey of a huge upland area of moor and forests where it was believed about a dozen pairs were present. Because people put in the time and effort, 40 pairs were discovered, a surprise to everyone.

Like other nocturnal creatures, owls being the prime example, there is much myth and folklore about nightjars, particularly about their old name of "goat-suckers." That stemmed from a centuries-old belief that at

night they sneakily and silently took milk from resting animals. Nightjars probably did habitually feed around flocks of animals because of the swarms of flying insects they attracted. But a goatherd finding animals that failed to yield could be mistaken for putting two and two together and getting five!

