

Walks Marrick Priory & Fremington Edge

Walk information

Distance: 12 km / 7.5 miles

Time: Allow 4 hours

Map: OS Explorer OL30 - always carry a map on your walk

Parking: On-street parking around Reeth village green

Refreshments: Reeth and Grinton

Terrain: Field paths, stone steps up through woodland, country lanes, moorland paths and tracks (boggy, rough and exposed to the elements), rough stony track.

How to get there: Reeth lies along the B6270 to the west of Richmond.

Caution: This walk includes a long and fairly steep climb up through Steps Wood from Marrick Priory to Marrick village, and then up onto Marrick Moor. Take care crossing and walking along the roads. The moorland section is rough underfoot, boggy and exposed to the elements. The descent from Fremington Edge is quite steep along a rough, stony track.

Points of interest

FROM Reeth, our route head down across fields beside Arkle Beck to reach Grinton Bridge. St Andrews Church, just across the river, is known as the 'Cathedral of the Dales'. This site has been used as a place of worship for over 1,000 years, originally by the ancient British as a pagan site and then adopted by the Christian church. Parts of the original Norman church survive, although much of the present church dates from the 14th to 16th Centuries. The parish of Grinton once stretched as far as the old Westmorland boundary making it the largest parish in Yorkshire. For centuries the people of the upper dale had to carry their dead along a 12-mile journey known as the 'Corpse Way' for burial at Grinton. This journey originally stemmed from Norse mythology in which the 'Corpse Way' mirrored the final passage of the soul from earth to the next life. Thankfully for the people of the upper dale a church was built at Muker in 1580. The church has many interesting features including a leper's squint window and grooves in the stonework by the porch where men, waiting for their lords to finish their pre-hunt service, sharpened their arrows. Grinton is surrounded by the extensive remains of earthworks and ditches, as well as two hill-forts. These were built by the Brigantes tribes, probably in the late Iron Age, to defend their lands against the advancing Roman legions and

to mark out their kingdom.

Just to the west of Grinton are the remains of Marrick Priory. This Benedictine priory was founded in 1154 by Robert de Aske for a small community of nuns. Unlike many other priories and abbeys, Marrick did not accrue vast estates of land and only had twelve nuns at the time of its Dissolution under the orders of Henry VIII in 1539, after which the buildings were used as the Parish church for Marrick and more recently as an outdoor centre and farm. The Priory has a lovely setting beside the Swale, a scene that inspired Turner to capture it on canvas. A series of old stone steps, known as the 'Nuns Causey', still links Marrick Priory with the village of Marrick perched 300 metres up on the hillside.

Marrick Moor is scarred by old lead workings. Lead mining in the Dales can be traced back to Roman times, and the mines around Marrick are said to be the oldest in the Dales, and are where Brigantian slaves of the Roman Empire were sent to dig for lead deposits. Cheaper imports and dwindling reserves meant that by the end of the 19th century lead mining in the Dales had come to an end.

The walk

1. From the centre of Reeth, follow the main road down across the green towards 'Richmond' and out of the bottom corner of the green, bending round passing the village shop and on to reach Reeth Bridge across Arkle Beck on the edge of the village. Cross the bridge (take care) and follow the roadside pavement bending round to the right (Arkle Beck on your right) then, after 150 metres, take the footpath to the right (signpost) just before you enter Fremington. Follow this path straight on through undergrowth alongside Arkle Beck passing farm buildings and the remains of Fremington Mill on your left then follow the clear enclosed path straight on across fields for 250 metres (through small gates) before bending left across more fields for a further 250 metres then up steps onto Grinton Bridge across the River Swale.

2. Turn left along the road for a few paces then turn right (take care crossing the road) immediately after the bridge down along a track to quickly join a riverside path. Follow this riverside path straight on alongside the Swale for 0.75 km over a number of stiles to eventually climb up

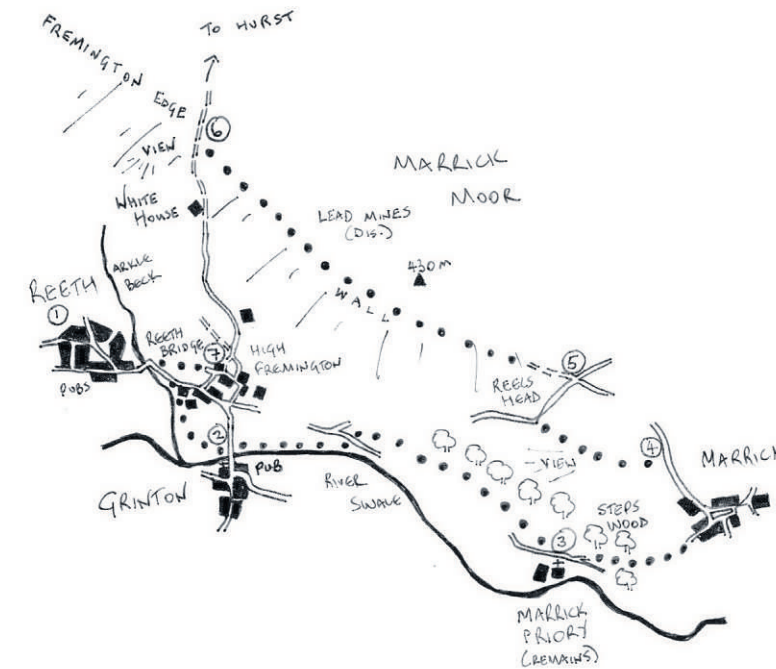
the wooded riverbank to reach a road.

Turn left along the road then, after a short distance, take the footpath to the right over a stile (signpost Marrick). After the stile, head to the right across the middle of the field gradually rising up to reach a stile over a fence beside a gate (just up from the right angle in the fence). Cross the stile and continue straight on through a small wall-gate (with Colt Park Wood up to your left), after which follow the path ahead through a series of wall-gates and stiles (with the tower of Marrick Priory ahead) eventually dropping down to reach the road at Marrick Abbey through a gate in the bottom corner of the field.

3. Turn left along the road passing the farm, outdoor centre and priory buildings, over a cattle grid across the road just after which take the footpath off to the left (signpost Marrick). Head up the grassy track to the right and through a gate that leads into Steps Wood. Follow the Nuns Steps climbing steadily up through the woods to reach a gate at the top of the steps/woods then continue straight on up alongside the wall on your right, through a gate in the field corner that leads onto a track by a barn. Follow this track straight on into Marrick. Follow the lane into the village, passing the old Methodist Chapel, and take the first turning on the left up to reach a road junction beside a small triangular 'green'. Head straight on to the left up along the road out of the village passing a farm on your left. Continue along the road, which soon levels out then gradually drops down into a small dip (275 metres after the farm buildings), where you take the footpath to the left through a small squeeze-stile.

4. After the squeeze-stile, walk up across the field alongside the wall on your right then, as you near the top of the field and a gate across your path, head through a stile through the wall to the right. After the stile, turn immediately left heading up alongside the wall now on your left - follow this wall up over a slight rise of land then gradually down (views of Swaledale ahead), keeping the wall on your left, to join the road on a bend at Reels Head. At the road, turn right rising up for 400 metres to reach a road junction where you turn left through a squeeze-stile beside a gate along a track.

5. After the gate, follow this grassy track straight on with a wall to your right (passing a lime kiln) and through a gate



across the track, after which continue along the track with the wall now on your left to reach another gate that leads out onto Marrick Moor. After this gate, continue straight on along the clear rough track alongside the wall on your left heading along the top of Fremington Edge (the actual escarpment is just across to your left) for 2 km, gently rising up then levelling out before passing an area of old lead mining spoil heaps to reach a ladder stile over a wall across your path. After the stile, continue straight on alongside the wall on your left for a further 600 metres to reach a gate in another wall across your path, just beyond which you join a clear track with a gate to your left.

6. Turn left through this gate along the clear, stony track and follow it slanting quite steeply down (superb views unfold) across the limestone escarpment of Fremington Edge to reach another gate across the track after 375 metres, after which continue down along the track passing above the White House where the track becomes a road. Follow this road straight on heading gradually down for just over 1 km into the hamlet of High

Fremington, where you reach an obvious road junction amongst the houses of High Fremington.

7. At the road junction, turn right and follow the road for 150 metres then, where the road bends down to the left out of High Fremington, head straight on along a track through a gate (signpost). Head straight on along the grassy path alongside the wall on your left for 200 metres across two fields then, halfway across the third field, head through the squeeze-stile in the wall to your left, after which head on across the field to reach the road beside Reeth Bridge. Cross the bridge and re-trace your steps back up into Reeth.

Mark Reid
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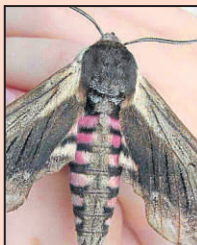
Countrydiary By Phil Gates

HAWK-MOTHS are amongst the most spectacular insects that can be found in our region. Some, like the hummingbird hawk-moth, are migrants, but the resident species that most commonly breeds here, the poplar hawk-moth, has a flight season that lasts until the end of July and its caterpillars become increasingly conspicuous as they feed during August.

The poplar hawk-moth can sometimes be found resting on tree trunks and fences during the day. This large grey-brown insect may not be particularly colourful, but its size and the peculiar arrangement of its delta-shaped wings when at rest, with the underwings projecting forward from the leading edge of those above, makes it easily identifiable. Typically the insect rests in a tail-up position as if ready to fly but it's reluctant to take flight in the daylight hours. Then, if you give it a gentle poke it will display its most colourful features - red patches on its underwings that are hidden unless it's threatened. Its plump caterpillar,

which grows to a length of about two and a half inches, is bright green with a row of slanting yellow bands on its flanks and a menacing but harmless horn-like projection on its tail. Look for it on willow, aspen and poplar branches, where its colours conceal it but where chewed leaves often betray its presence.

Willow is also the host plant for the spectacular puss moth caterpillar, which is sometimes mistaken for its hawk-moth cousin and is about the same size. This too is a large green and yellow larva, but it has two long, curled, red-tipped tail filaments that are harmless and normally hidden. It has a remarkable technique for frightening potential predators - give it a gentle poke and it will wave those tail appendages and rear up.



Birdwatch By Ian Kerr

THE bridled tern, star attraction at the Farne Islands, has wandered again, to the delight of birders on the Durham and Cleveland coast. It flew south off Whitburn, Hartlepool Headland and Seaton Carew on Sunday morning just a couple of days after venturing northwards up the Scottish coast. While many had already made the trip to see it at the Farnes this summer or last, there's always something special about experiencing it on home ground.

Each July a group of friends and I attempt to hear and see one of our most secretive summer visitors, nightjars. These strictly nocturnal birds breed sparsely in young forest where trees are too small to shade out the ground cover needed for nesting. An ancient name is 'goatsucker' from the mistaken belief that they stole milk under cover of darkness.

Hamsterley and Slaley forests are among regular nesting areas and it was the latter site we staked out the other evening.

Conditions were perfect; clear skies, not a breath of wind, a silver moon over the fells and a background chorus of sheep, bubbling curlew, chipping snipe, red grouse, the occasional croaking woodcock and even a skylark singing after dark. Midges were also out in force.

Because the sky was so light the nightjars did not begin their wonderfully evocative churring songs until 10.35, much later than expected. The long continuous song is something I first heard 40 years ago when a friend and I used to watch nightjars and then settled down in sleeping bags in the heather for a repeat performance before dawn. Shortly afterwards we heard a sharp crack as a flying male clapped his wings to proclaim its territory. Then, apart from the occasional black silhouette against the sky, there was silence as the nightjars set about scooping flying insects with their incredibly wide gapes. Nightjars make for a wonderful experience which I can strongly recommend.