

Walks Willance's Leap and Swaledale

Walk information

Distance: 8.5 km / 5.3 miles

Time: 3 hours

Maps: OS Explorer Sheet 304 'Darlington & Richmond'

Start / Parking: Round Howe Car Park (pay & display), just to the west of Richmond along the A6108 Leyburn / Reeth road (beside Richmond Caravan Park).

Refreshments: None en route – bring a flask.

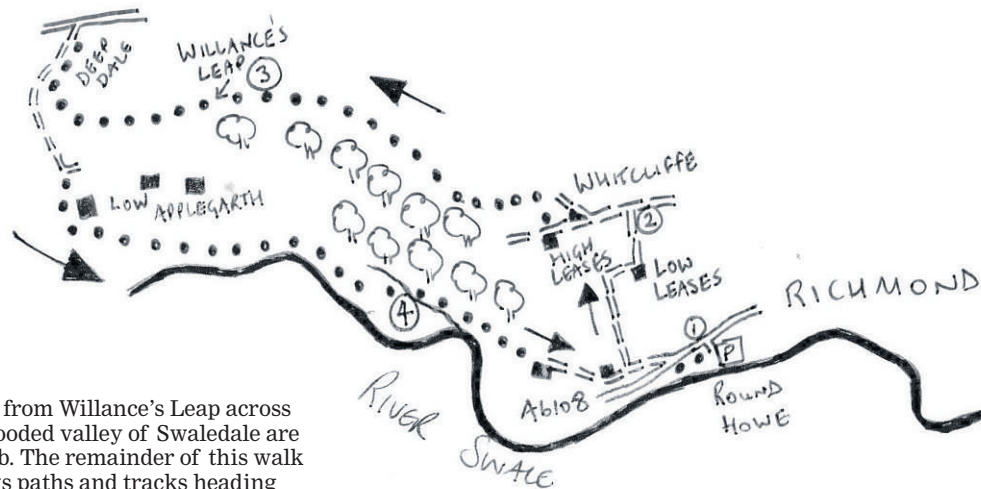
Terrain: Tracks and paths through woodland, across fields, along an exposed escarpment above Swaledale and along the banks of the River Swale, with a busy road to cross at the start and end of the walk. Lots of stiles to cross.

How to get there: Richmond lies along the A6108 from Scotch Corner.

Caution: Take care crossing the A6108 at the start and end of this walk. Keep away from the riverbank. Some of the paths are slippery underfoot. This walk includes a long climb up onto the escarpment. Livestock and cattle in some fields – always give cattle a wide berth.

Points of interest

THE walk to Willance's Leap along the top of Whitcliffe Scar is beautiful, with superb views back towards Richmond with its castle, and beyond across the flat Yorkshire vales. Along this escarpment is a curious memorial to one of Richmond's most famous events. In 1606, Robert Willance, a draper who lived at No.24 Frenchgate, escaped death when his horse galloped over the edge of Whitcliffe Scar in thick mist. The horse died instantly but, fortunately for Robert, helped cushion his fall; Robert suffered a broken leg. Robert was so grateful to the horse for saving his life that he erected a monument at the spot that is still known as Willance's Leap: "Glory be to our merciful God who miraculously preserved me from the danger so great". The



views from Willance's Leap across the wooded valley of Swaledale are superb. The remainder of this walk follows paths and tracks heading down past the old farms of the Applegarths to reach the banks of the River Swale, with some lovely woodland to finish.

The walk

1 From Round Howe Car Park (facing the footbridge across the river), turn right across the car park (river on your left) then, at the end of the car park, carry straight on along the riverside path across the small picnic area to reach a fork in the path just before you enter the woodland. Take the right-hand path that leads into woodland then, after 15 metres, take the path to the right that leads up to join the road (A6108). Cross over the road (take care) and take the track opposite (signpost), which you follow for 250 metres then, 75 metres before you reach a house (barn conversion), turn right up along a grassy track enclosed by hedges (Green Lane). Follow this grassy lane climbing steadily up for 500 metres then turning sharp right and levelling out then sharp left at Low Leases Farm up along a clearer track to reach a junction with a metalled lane.

2 Turn left along this lane and follow it rising up to reach a fork in the lane just before Whitcliffe Cottage. Head straight on passing Whitcliffe Cottage on your right and follow this lane for 300 metres to reach High Leases Farm (end

of the metalled lane). Where the lane bends left into the yard of the house, carry straight on along the rough track ahead for 35 metres then, when you are parallel with the house to your left, turn right over a stile that leads out onto a field. After the stile, follow the grassy path straight on bearing slightly left heading up the hillside before bending more distinctly left and passing above an area of gorse bushes to reach the brow of the hillside/escarpment overlooking Swaledale. As you reach the brow of the hillside, bear right across the field to quickly join the line of an old hedgerow to your right (a couple of old hawthorn trees); this old hedgerow soon ends - carry straight on along a clear wide grassy path across the top of the escarpment, bearing slightly right, to join a wall on your right, which you follow to reach a stile over a wall/fence across your path in the corner of the field.

3 Cross the stile then walk straight on across the middle of the field, bearing very slightly left (do not walk alongside the wall on your right) keeping quite close to the fence/top of the wooded escarpment on your left, to reach some stiles over a fence across your path, after which bear left down to a stile in the bottom corner of the field then continue straight on alongside the fence/top of the escarpment on your left to reach

a stile in the corner of a small plantation. Cross this stile and continue straight on (with the plantation on your right) along the path along the top of the escarpment to quickly exit the plantation, then continue straight on alongside the wall/escarpment on your left for 175 metres to reach the Memorial at Willance's Leap.

4 Head through the kissing gate to reach the Memorial, then immediately turn right and follow the clear path, keeping close to the stone wall on your right, over a small stream then on along the top of the escarpment following the clear undulating path. After a while, the path bends round to the right following the edge of the escarpment (and the stone wall) into the side valley of Deep Dale. As you approach the head of this valley (just before the solitary solar powered TV aerial), head down to the left to quickly join the metalled lane. Turn left along this lane down through Deep Dale then, just before the cattle grid across the road (where the roads swings left), take the path to the right through a small wall-gate. Follow the path down (wall on your left and tumbledown wall on your right) to quickly reach a crossroads of paths. Turn right through the tumbledown wall (4-finger signpost) then, after only a couple of paces, bear down to the left (signpost 'River Swale, Richmond'), roughly following the tumbledown

wall at first, heading down a clear grassy path, to reach a stile beside a gateway at the bottom of the field (Low Applegarth Farm across to your left). After the stile/gateway, walk straight ahead alongside a wall on your left for 25 metres then turn left a large gap in this wall (waymarker), after which bear right down across the middle of the field to reach another stile beside a gate in the wall opposite (waymarker). After this stile, carry straight on across the field (heading towards the river in the distance) to reach an old tumbledown wall beside a ruinous barn at the end of this field, where you carry straight on down across the field, over another stile beside a gate to join the banks of the Swale on your right. Walk straight on across the middle of the large field (river gently curves slightly away to your right) to reach a stile beside a gate at the end of this field, after which follow the clear riverside path straight, over a stile then continue along the riverbank for 0.75 km (part of which is a permissive path) all the way to reach a gate that leads into the bottom of Whitecliffe Wood (river on your right).

5 After the gate, cross the small footbridge over a stream and turn right then follow the clear, rough track meandering through the woods for 400 metres then, as you emerge from the woods with Lownethwaite Farm just ahead, cross the stile just to your left. After the stile, walk straight on alongside the hedge/trees on your right skirting around the farm buildings to reach a stile to your right through the hedge just beyond the farm buildings that leads back onto the track. Follow this track straight on (away from the farm) all the way back down to reach the A6108. Cross the road (take care) and take the path opposite (signpost), which you follow down to the left through the woods back to Round Howe Car Park.

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Birdwatch By Ian Kerr

IN a normal October everyone would be very excited about the fantastic range of rare Asian species which have turned up, thanks to that long period of light easterly winds which marked the first half of the month.

But this is proving to be far from an average autumn. Eagerly sought-after species such as Pallas's warblers, often the star birds of autumn, have been completely eclipsed by the arrival of Siberian accentors. These small distant cousins of our own humble dunnocks, an everyday sight in our gardens, had never been recorded in Britain until October 10 when one

turned up in Shetland. That led to a frantic race northwards by those desperate to "twit" such an outstandingly visitor in what most then considered a once-in-a-life time opportunity, well worth the time and expense.

As it turned out, they needn't have worried or travelled so far. Another quickly followed last week at Easington in East Yorkshire, attracting 800 birders from throughout the country on its first day. Amazingly, a third individual was then found last Saturday at Saltburn, on Sunday another turned up at Hendon South Dock in Sunderland followed on Tuesday by yet

another on Holy Island. With every birder in the country now on high alert, others will surely be found.

Siberian accentors feed on the ground and behave just like our dunnocks. Unlike them, they have a bold yellow eye-stripe and buff yellowish breast and flanks. They breed from the Urals eastwards and have always been extremely rare visitors to northern Europe. But the expectation of one eventually reaching Britain rose earlier when five were found in Sweden and four in Finland. Hundreds who at last had an opportunity to see this long-awaited species will regard

it as the supreme bird of what is proving the best autumn for rarities for many years.

Most birders count themselves lucky if they get to see a single Pallas's warbler in autumn. They come from the same breeding areas as the accentors and are named after the 18th Century German zoologist and explorer Peter Pallas. He was the first to describe them during expeditions to some of Russia's most remote eastern provinces.

In most years only two or three occur in the region. This year is proving very different with over 20 recorded along the

coast from Scarborough to north Northumberland. Most sightings, at localities including Hartlepool Headland and Whitburn, have been of singles although up to six have occurred on that migration hotspot, Holy Island, where another mega-rarity, an Isabelline shrike, also turned up on Tuesday.

