

*Vic & Mike's
Harrogate & Knaresborough Heritage Trail*

Route Description

Summary

A 22 mile walk, covering field paths, old railway lines, riverside woods and tracks in and around Harrogate and Knaresborough. The route passes many sites of historical interest and includes some road walking.

The route starts at Pannal railway station, familiar to many as the base and start point for the Ringway footpath. It also includes a number of shops where refreshments and provisions can be obtained.

Map :OS Explorer 289 –Harrogate, Wetherby, Pontefract & Leeds

Upon leaving the station car park, turn right, passing over the Leeds to Harrogate railway line. Take the next road on the right (SP Station Road) passing the village shop to reach the traffic lights on the main Harrogate to Leeds road (A61). You are now leaving the village of Pannal, which was burnt to the ground in 1318 by the Scots after the historic battle of Bannockburn. Cross the A61 and continue up the road directly in front of you (Follifoot Road) , keeping Pannal golf course on your right.

While continuing up Follifoot Road, notice the Crimple valley and the Crimple Viaduct, 31 arches in length, which carries the Harrogate to Leeds railway 110 feet above the valley floor and built in 1848 by George Hudson for the York and North Midland Railway. The disused railway tunnel, which carried the line towards Wetherby, passes under the road upon which you are now walking. Continue up the road and over the rise.

At the bottom of the hill, ignore the road on the right (SP Hags Road) and carry on for about 200 yards to the end of the houses on the right. At the left hand side of the white house, take the track, which goes under the Harrogate Southern Bypass. At the far end of the underpass, turn left along a track, but first look sharp left to see the entrance to the old Prospect Tunnel (mentioned above). The track joins the old road from Pannal to Follifoot. Follow the road to the end, then turn right to head to Follifoot village, the name Follifoot meaning ‘fighting horses’. In the village, turn right down the main street, with the village stocks on the left. Looking back, note the southern entrance to Rudding Park. The house was started in 1805, and now serves as a conference centre and golf course. In about 25 yards, opposite the 250 year old Harewood Arms pub, turn right up a few steps (SP: Spofforth Hags Road), follow the narrow path over some steps, turning right onto the road then grassy trail. At the gates this bears right. Follow the grassy track to a hard road. Turn right, and then , in 20 yards, bear left at a gate and follow this for a further ¼ mile to the old railway line. Cross the railway and proceed up the steps, with the hedge, and then fence on the left, to the road (Hags Road – BEWARE TRAFFIC), turning left along the road for 200 yards until you reach a double footpath sign (SP Lodge Farm) on the right. Follow this farm track downhill to the cattle grid. Continue to bear left, ignoring the FP to Kirby Overblow. In 40 yards, as the track starts to climb uphill, note the footpath sign on the left (SP Public Bridleway). Turn left through the gate and follow the footpath through fields, keeping the fence and woods on the left. Go through the first gate.

When you meet a wire fence coming in on the right, bear slightly left downhill through Gorse bushes. Cross the stream on the little bridge (note: gate at either end) and follow the track to the right, keeping the golf course on the left. Continue along the track uphill, with fencing on the left and right initially, and then gorse bushes on the left and right further up. Ignore the cross-track through the private gate. Cross the stream and follow the track uphill into Spofforth, passing under the old Harrogate to Wetherby railway line.

Immediately after passing under the railway, turn left along a fenced green track, through a gate and into the grounds of Spofforth Castle. The castle was constructed in 1308, and was the home of the De Percy family. At the main road, cross and turn right, taking the first left down Beech Lane. Follow this to the junction and cross to Mill Lane.

Continue down Mill Lane to house entrance (note double gate and millstone).

At the entrance, note the narrow track passing to the left of the millstone.

Continue along the enclosed path, reaching and crossing the bridge over Mill Race.

Continue along track and cross bridge over Crimple Beck. Turn left immediately after crossing to walk alongside the beck, with open fields to the right. Continue along this path, passing through five fields, for approximately 1.5 miles. While passing along this stretch, note Cropper Farm to your right, along with a collection of large rocky outcrops which bear the name "Hell Hole", derived from a deep hole in the rock and connections with druidical worship. The farm was the site of Bramham Manor in the 12th century.

At Follifoot road ignore the stile by the bridge. Turn right to follow field then with the wood boundary on your left, to reach the main A661 Harrogate to Wetherby road.

Climb through the wall on the stile, and turn right alongside the main road for a short distance, turning left to Plompton Rocks. The 23 acre park, which also incorporates a lake of 7 acres, was the property of Plompton Hall, seen further on in the walk. It was from here that the stone came for the Devil's Arrows at Boroughbridge. Follow the track uphill and straight on between the cottages, following the track towards Plompton Hall. At the track junction., ignore the farm track on the right. Immediately after the track junction, turn left through gate (note: 'Route Diverted –Follow Way marks') Follow the white electric fence through the field, and head for the gate, situated to the left of an old wooden building. Through the gate, follow the track over rough ground, through a wooded area to a clear farm track junction. Turn left, and, in 10 yards, right (SP Public Bridleway – NYCC) through wooden five bar gate. Follow track through field to metal gate. Turn right to follow wire fence uphill, then turn left to follow wood boundary, turning right when the wood boundary bears uphill. Follow track uphill to main track junction . Note Plompton Hall on the right. This was built in the reign of Edward IV, pulled down in 1760, rebuilt and then pulled down again. The old clock is now situated in Harewood Church.

Turn left on the main track, follow track around field boundary to edge of wood. Turn left on small track (signposted) through Birkham Woods (Note: wire fence on right) Continue on the track across the main A658 Harrogate Southern Bypass and on through Birkham Woods. I about 100 yards the path bears right. Just before this there is a track junction. You take the path on the left, over the stile and follow field hedge boundary, eventually heading downhill where the hedge makes a 90 degree turn to the left. Half way down in a dip go through two gates then up over a rise to a gate at the tree line. Cross the stile, turn left and zig zag right in 20 yards to follow the track

down towards the river. Turn right and follow the riverside path for approximately half a mile, passing an old well on the right hand side(where the track crosses a plank between five tree stumps) to the point where the path goes up some steps, away from the river, and along the edge of the caravan site. When the path ends, turn left between caravans. Continue along the track past the 'rock fall' signs.

(Note: wooden fence also on the left. Follow the track around Grimbald Crag and continue through the caravan site, past the shop and farm buildings, onwards to the traffic lights and the river bridge. Turn left, cross the bridge , and then immediately left down Abbey Road. Follow Abbey Road (note that you are now following the River Nidd in the reverse direction) In doing so, you will pass a slight parking area layby on the left – if you look in the left hand corner, you will see the entrance to St Robert's Cave and the Chapel. This was a habitation during from the 13th Century onwards (though obviously not in this day and age!!!) and was often visited by King John..

When you come to the barriers across the road, the site to the left was the location of the old Abbey. This has now long gone, but if you look carefully at the walls and house ends (where the track bends left and then right into the wooded area and beneath the crags) you will notice that some of the stones clearly originate from the Abbey. Where the track is overlooked by the Crag, look for a green gate on your right. This is the entrance to 'The Chapel of Our Lady Of the Crag', thought to be third oldest wayside shrine in England, dating from about 1408.

A little further along the track., a glance up to your right will reveal a glimpse of the 'House in the Rock', formerly Fort Montague. Thomas Hill and Son started chipping away at the Rock in 1710, completing the House about 16 years later.

At the end of Abbey Road, you will come to a cross roads (river bridge on the left). Turn right uphill, towards Knaresborough town centre. At the top of the hill, opposite the church, turn left along Cheapside. Where the road bends, follow it around and into the Market Square. Cross the Square and then turn left. On the right is England's oldest Chemist Shop. It became a pharmacy in 1720, but the building itself is much older.

Head for the left hand corner of the Square, turn left, following the road round to the police station. Cross over, passing through the gates and car park towards the castle. Pass to the left of the castle and then take in Surprise View.

The Main Stone Castle was started after 1066, added to in 1130, such that the building had 12 towers. The killers of Thomas A Beckett were among the guests here before the castle was pulled down in 1644.

Take the second set of steps down on your right, then bear left and right down the steps, then left again down to Waterside (note: toilets on the left, along with a variety of cafes, restaurants and pubs). Turn right past one such café, Marigolds, where, in summer, boats can be hired. Continue along Waterside, passing under the railway viaduct. This was completed in 1851 after first falling down in about 1848. It carries the main Harrogate to York railway line . Continuing along Waterside, you will pass one of the oldest houses in Knaresborough, on the edge of Water Bags Bank, the road that was used to transport bags of water from the river up into the town. This is also a way up to the railway station, or to have a look at the Norman church of St John.

At the end of Waterside, at the main road junction (A59) turn left over the bridge, noting the entrance to Mother Shipton's cave and the Dropping Well on the other side of the river. At the other side of the bridge, turn right between the 'Yorkshire Lass' pub and the wall, SP 'Beryl Burton Way' -a tribute to a prominent local cyclist who was killed in 1997.

Follow the track alongside the river. As the track bears left at the cycle sign, and upon reaching a white barrier, take the path on the right uphill. You are now passing, on the left, Mackintosh Park, named after the famous toffee magnate who, for a while, lived in Conyngham Hall, the large house across the river. At the top of the hill, the path joins the main cycleway. Go through the latch gate and onto the cycleway. At the cycleway barrier, take the Ringway path to the right. (The paths re-join further along) and continue uphill. Carry straight on, climbing slightly uphill and passing Bilton Hall on the right to reach the main road.

This building was formerly part of the park keeper's lodge for the Forest of Knaresborough. From about 1500 onwards, the keeper of the Castle of Knaresborough lived there.

At the cross roads, carry straight on along 'Old Bilton Lane', once the turnpike to Ripon, built by Blind Jack of Knaresborough, a local man born in 1777 who, despite lack of sight, managed to build around 200 miles of road in the area. After his death at the age of 93 in 1810, he was buried in Spofforth churchyard.

Carry on along Old Bilton Lane for about 1.5 miles, passing the 'Bilton Hilton' and the caravan site on the right, then downhill and past the Gardener's Arms Pub on the right. Having passed the pub, the road starts to climb uphill into the very edge of suburban Harrogate. Just before the start of the houses, look out for the old railway crossing and small parking are on the left.(note: SP Starbeck). And follow the onto the old railway line. In 80 yards, the line splits, forming part of the 'Bilton Triangle' – referring to the railway junction of the Harrogate to York and (now disused) Harrogate to Northallerton line on which you are now walking. Turn right, Continue along the old railway line for about half a mile. It then turns sharp right to join a cycle track coming in from the left and right. Turn left along this track to approach and cross the "Iron Bridge" across the railway line. Immediately after having crossed the bridge, turn right up the snicket to a road. Follow the road as it bears left and then right and then eventually to a main road junction. As you approach the main junction, note the business park, which was the site of the old West Yorkshire bus garages between 1927 and 1990.

At the main road (note: pelican crossing immediately to the left of the junction) cross and turn right back over the railway bridge, taking the first left (SP: Grove Road). Note that the grassed area to the front of the grand looking building (now a primary school) forms the extremity of Harrogate's Stray, a 200 acre area of grassland, protected by special laws to prevent building and development work on it. This can be appreciated to greater effect to the south of the town centre, on the approaches from Leeds and Wetherby.

Continue along Grove Road, crossing a number of streets taking the left hand turn along Franklin Road. When the road bends to the left(Note: two roads joining on the right), cross the road and go down the snicket, next to the large litter bin. At the end of the snicket, turn left for a few yards, then turn right and then left again.

You are now heading towards the main 'Kings Road' with the conference centre in front of you. This is one of the premier conference and entertainment venues in the Harrogate District and frequently hosts national business and political conferences. Construction work started in 1976 on the site of the Rose Gardens and Tennis Courts.

Turn left along Kings Road, passing the Conference Centre and the Exhibition Hall. Continue to the second main set of traffic lights and cross, heading for the gardens in front of you. Look to your right at this point to see the Royal Hall, formerly a Kursall built between 1902 and 1903. It can seat 1,300 people. The Royal Baths on your left date from 1894 –1897 and were the first centre for hypnotherapy in the world. Today, you can drink in one of the bars and then take a relaxing Turkish Bath.

The Gardens themselves are overlooked by the Council Offices, which were built in the early 1900's as the Victoria Baths. As the road passes the Turkish Baths (which is also the venue for the local Tourist Information Centre) note the road junction and the one way system. Follow the road around to the left. Upon reaching the little white cottage on the left (which was formerly the site of the Montpellier Baths Ticket Office (now long gone), cross the road on the zebra crossing and follow across the front of the Crown Hotel on your right. This was one of the first big hotels to take advantage of Harrogate's up and coming reputation as a venue where medical ailments could be miraculously healed by drinking the local waters. In fact, the hotel itself had it's own baths and water treatments. On your left, there is a further opportunity to see part of the Stray, as the road curves uphill towards Betty's café and the town centre.

The road continues past the hotel and round to the famous Pump Rooms, built in 1842, where thousands flocked to taste the waters in the early 1900's and, in fact, still do so. To taste the waters, go around the far side of the building and press the button. If you look behind you, at the top of Swan Road, is the famous Swan Hotel, where Agatha Christie was found hiding in 1926.

Having tasted the water, one of the ninety one varieties of water in Harrogate, cross the road by the pedestrian zebra crossing to pass through the gates of the Valley Gardens. These were laid out in 1886 -1887. Keep to the left, on the lower path, eventually reaching the Magnesia Well, now a tea room.

The path goes around the circular, fountained flower bed very slightly uphill keeping crazy golf, tennis courts and golf on the left The old Royal Baths Hospital (now converted into luxury apartments) was built for the town in 1826, for the treatment of all rheumatic diseases.

At the top of the hill, the path splits. Take the middle path, (SP Harlow Carr Gardens) to the left of the Memorial Cross, into the Pine Woods. In 200 yards, cross the road (footpath SP 'Crag Lane') Go straight on, through the trees to a large green. Turn right along the boundary of the green, keeping the trees on the right, to pick up a hard surfaced track. Follow the track to a road junction, noting the Army College on the skyline to the right.

At the road junction (note: Harrogate Arms Hotel and Birk Crag just out of sight on the right), turn left, passing the entrance to Harlow Carr Gardens. Continue along this to the main road junction and cross to Beckwith Head Road.. You are now following part of the Harrogate Ringway footpath. Carry on up the road, going uphill to the crossroads. Carry straight on (SP; Ringway). Continue past first gate (SP: Beckwith Lodge Farm) and ignore this. At the second gateway on the left, go over the narrow stile. Follow the enclosed path between the wall and fence to the next stile. Continue slightly uphill to the next stile, to the left of a wooden gate. Bear slightly left up the field to next stile, to the right of some Pine Trees. Continue along the track, now enclosed by a fence and a hedge. Follow the path over the stone wall stile and then head across the field to a point to the left of the metal buildings. Cross the stile and then follow the enclosed path to the road.

Turn right (SP Ringway) down the road. Ignore the road on the left (Whinney Lane) unless you want a drink at the Squinting Cat pub, which can be seen over to the left. In a few yards, turn left through a metal gate (SP Ringway). Follow down the hedge on the right to a stile, and then straight ahead, with the hedge coming in on the left. Aim for a stile in the left hand corner of the field and cross it. Then head for the first tree on the left hand side of the field, taking the stile to the left of the tree. Climb over the stile , with the hedge on your right. When the hedge ends, (barbed wire fence bears sharp right) follow the slight raised ground past the line of tree trunks to the trees.

Follow the line of trees, on a worn track until the fifth tree. Where the track heads downhill, stay high alongside the fence now coming in on the right. Head for the corner of the field (stile) and cross. Head up the field, straight ahead, to the stile in the far hedge and then across the next field to the stile.(Note: hedge on the right and then on the left). Continue to ladder stile, cross, then follow fence, wall and hedge to the next stile.(ladder). Aim straight down the next field, to the right of the tree in the middle of the field and pick up the hedge and fence on the right. Follow to the stile, then between the hedges to the road.

Turn right along the road and in 15 yards, turn left where the driveway comes up from the house. (SP: Ringway). Pass through the kissing gate at the top of the drive, and down through the field, keeping the wall on the right. Continue downhill, through two further kissing gates, to the stream, and cross on the bridge. Follow the path uphill to the road. Turn left along the road, following the road as it bends right and then left. Fifty yards after the road sign, turn left at the Ringway sign. Follow wide enclosed track to next road. Cross straight over the road onto a wide track. Note the Big Barn House on the right and cricket field on the right. Follow the track. Go through the metal gate and pass through the courtyard. Continue straight on (do not turn left) between the house on the left and the wall and bushes on the right, to continue along the footpath, now with Crimple Beck on the left hand side. Follow this path to the pond and the Old Mill.

At the end of the pond, turn left along the road to the main road. Turn right up the main road to the station car park.

WELL DONE!!!

Please note that the originators take no responsibility for any loss or damage, however caused.