



REETH

WALK
33

Around Reeth in the Heart of Swaledale

Farmers, miners, knitters and nuns all played their part in the history of this part of Swaledale.

DISTANCE 5.5 miles (8.8km) **MINIMUM TIME** 2hrs

ASCENT/GRADIENT 508ft (155m) ▲▲▲ **LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY** +++

PATHS Field and riverside paths, lanes and woodland, 14 stiles

LANDSCAPE Junction of Swaledale and Arkengarthdale, with field and surrounding moorland

SUGGESTED MAP OS Explorer OL 30 Yorkshire Dales – Northern & Central

START/FINISH Grid reference: SE 039993

DOG FRIENDLINESS Dogs should be on lead for majority of walk

PARKING In Reeth, behind fire station, or by the Green (voluntary payment requested)

PUBLIC TOILETS Reeth, near Buck Hotel

Reeth has always had a strategic role in the Yorkshire Dales. Set above the junction of Swaledale and Arkengarthdale on Mount Calva, it controlled the important route westwards from Richmond. Sheep were, for a long time, the basis of Reeth's prosperity – it has been a market town since 1695 – and there are still annual sheep sales each autumn, as well as the important Reeth Show around the beginning of September. The wool was used in Reeth's important knitting industry – both the men and women would click away with their needles at stockings and other garments. Reeth also used to be a centre for the lead-mining industry, which extended up Arkengarthdale and over Marrick Moor.

Two Bridges and a Church

Reeth Bridge, reached by the Leyburn road from the Green, has suffered over the years from the effects of the swollen River Swale. The present bridge dates from the early 18th century, replacing one washed away in 1701, itself built after its predecessor succumbed in 1547. The path beside the river takes us to Grinton Bridge. Nearby is Grinton church, once the centre of a huge parish that took in the whole of Swaledale, making very long journeys necessary for marriages and funerals. Curiously, it began life as a mission church for the Augustinian canons of far-away Bridlington Priory on the east coast.

Nuns and Schools at Marrick

The approach to Marrick Priory along the lane suggests that you are about to reach one of the most important churches in the Dales. In a way that is true. Marrick in the Middle Ages was home to a group of Benedictine nuns. It was founded by Roger de Aske, whose descendent, Robert, was one of the leaders of the Pilgrimage of Grace, the uprising against King Henry VIII's closure of the monasteries. Hilda Prescott's novel *The Man on a Donkey*, about Robert Aske and the Pilgrimage, is partly set at Marrick.

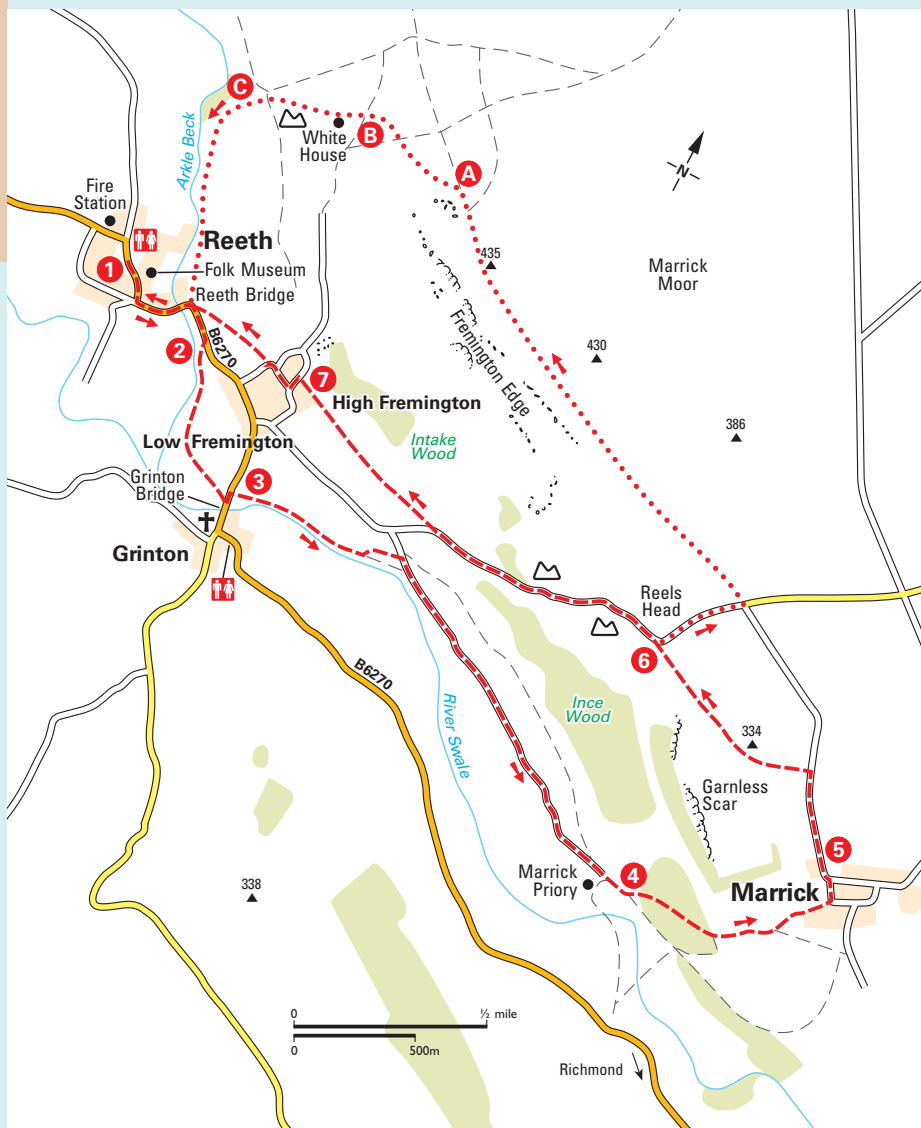


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Today the nuns' buildings are partly demolished or absorbed into farm buildings. The church was reduced in size in 1811, and the complex is now used as a Youth Centre for the Diocese of Ripon and Leeds, offering outdoor sports and adventure training.

After Marrick Priory the path climbs steeply uphill on rough stone steps called the Nun's Causey (a corruption of causeway). Now used as part of the Coast to Coast Walk, from St Bee's Head in Cumbria to Robin Hood's Bay on the east coast, this is said to be the route which the nuns from the priory built so they could reach the old Richmond road that ran along the summit of the hill. The original 365 steps have been broken up and removed over the centuries, but the path still retains a suitably medieval atmosphere.

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WALK 33 DIRECTIONS

- 1 From the Green, walk downhill, in the direction of Leyburn, to Reeth Bridge. Over the bridge, continue along the road as it swings right. About 100yds (91m) along, turn right at a footpath sign to Grinton.
- 2 Follow the riverside path to a signpost, then continue on a well-marked path across fields to ascend steps on to Grinton Bridge. Turn left a few paces, cross the road and take a track beside the bridge.
- 3 Follow the riverside path for about 0.5 mile (800m) to a metalled lane. Turn right and follow the lane to Marrick Priory. Walk past the buildings, over a cattle grid, and bear left through a gate signed 'Marrick'.
- 4 Walk up the grassy track, then follow the paved path through

WHILE YOU'RE THERE

See the little Swaledale Folk Museum in Reeth, which has displays about life in the Dales.

Lead mining and knitting, farming and religion, trades and professions, stone-walling and building are all shown through scenes of everyday toil. Alongside the exhibits are fascinating original photographs of Reeth and the Dales in the past.

woodland. Continue through fields, with a wall on the right, on to a metalled lane. Opposite Harlands House turn left, then left again at a triangular junction.

- 5 Follow the road for 0.25 mile (400m), and turn left over a stile at a footpath sign. Follow the wall, crossing to the other side at a waymarked stile. Continue along the wall then keep on in the same direction, descending slightly to meet a road.
- 6 Turn left and follow the road for 0.75 mile (1.2km). On a left bend near an obvious track to a farm, cross a stile on the right, signed 'Fremington'. Go straight ahead to a stile then continue along the well-marked path through fields, until a final gate leads on to a walled path behind houses. Go straight ahead to a lane.
- 7 Turn left then first right. As the lane bends left, go ahead to a stile by a gate. Keep by the wall on the left, and follow the path through more stiles back to Reeth Bridge. Cross the bridge and follow the road back to the Green.



WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Traditionally, Dales farmers had their own way of counting their sheep, starting (from one) yahn, tayhn, tether, methar, mimp, hither, lither, anver, danver...and wherever you go in this area you are likely to come across the Swaledale sheep. This hardy breed, which spends much of its life out in the open on exposed moorland, has thick wool that is very resistant to wet. When spun it is very hardwearing, and modern treatment methods ensure that any harshness is removed. This didn't seem to have worried the Swaledale knitters, who from the time of Queen Elizabeth I onwards used the wool in their products. She encouraged the production of woollen stockings, and Swaledale's first pair was presented to her. By the 18th century 18,000 pairs, all hand knitted, were being produced annually.

