

# Walk the Way in a Day

## Walk 36 Gargrave to Malham along the River Aire

An enjoyable walk through pleasant countryside, linking a string of picturesque villages running up the valley. The route follows the Pennine Way over pasture and beside the infant River Aire before returning by a combination of paths and tracks.



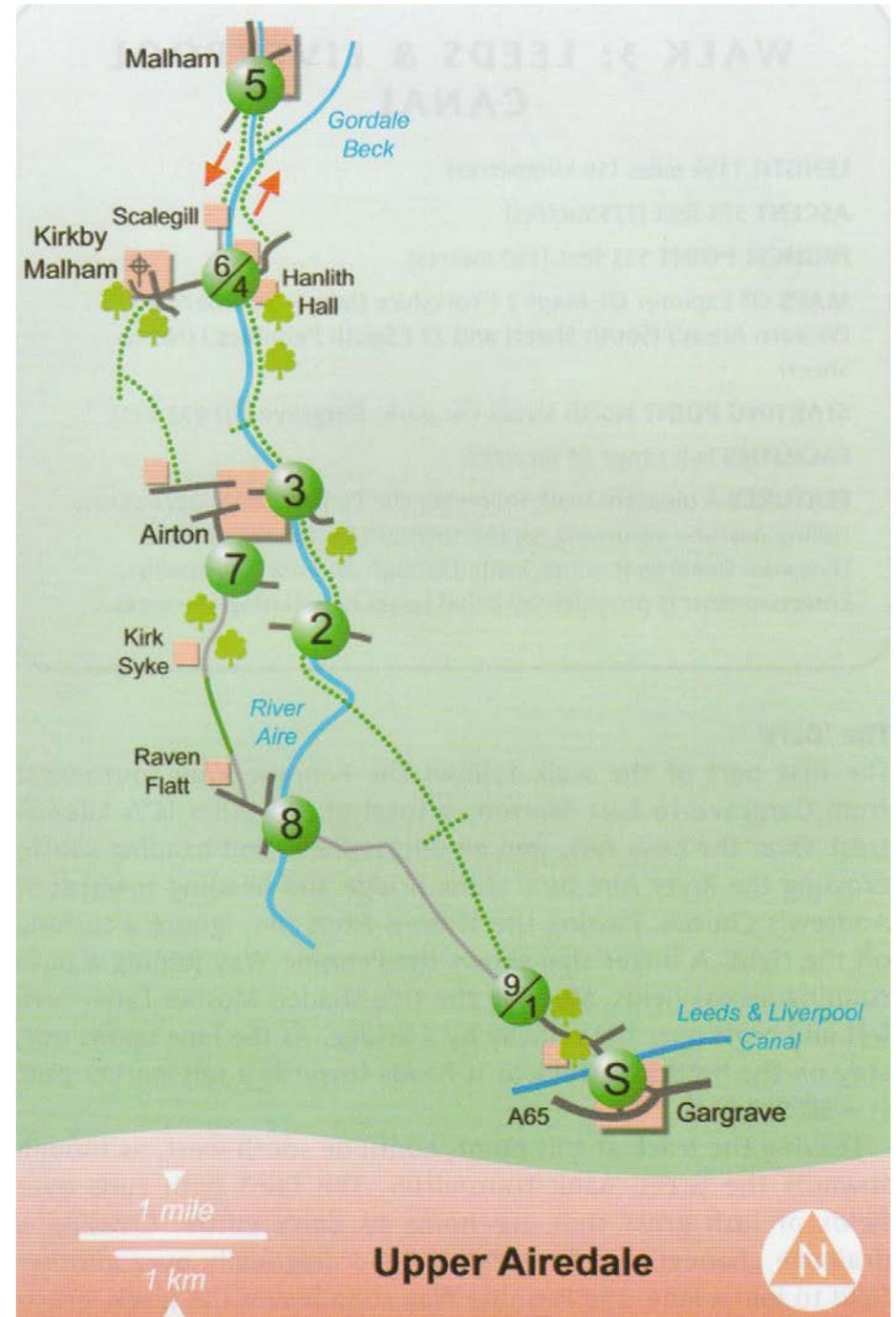
Length:	14¼ miles (23 kilometres)
Ascent:	1,066 feet (325 metres)
Highest Point:	804 feet (245 metres)
Map(s):	OS Explorer OL Map 2 ('Yorkshire Dales - Southern & Western Areas') (South Sheet)
Starting Point:	North Street car park, Gargrave (SD 932 543)
Facilities:	Full range of services.
Website:	<a href="http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/pennine-way/route/walk-way-day-walk-36-gargrave-malham-along-river-aire">http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/pennine-way/route/walk-way-day-walk-36-gargrave-malham-along-river-aire</a>

### Eshton Moor

There are two free car parks close to the village hall at Gargrave, signposted from the A65. There is also a railway station to the south of the village. The first part of the walk follows the Pennine Way to Airton, a total of 3¾ miles (6¼ kilometres). Starting at the village hall, a quiet road heads north-west out of the village, crossing the Leeds & Liverpool Canal just above a lock. Ignoring a right turn, continue along Mark House Lane, which is flanked by lime and maple trees. Continuing along the lane as it runs out into open countryside, eventually a finger sign shows the Pennine Way crossing a step stile on the right (1 = SD 925 550).

### Gargrave

Gargrave ('Gara's grove') sits uncomfortably on the busy A65 trans-



*Pennine route, with the Leeds & Liverpool Canal to the north and the Lancaster to Leeds Railway to the south. Although blighted by traffic, it is an attractive village of stone-built cottages, standing on either side of the River Aire. At the south end of the village stands St. Andrew's Church, which alone among the seven churches in the area was not torched by raiding Scots - it being dedicated to their patron saint. There are pleasant riverside walks, with stepping stones crossing the river, and a canal towpath that is always popular with visitors.*

From here the route runs north-west over pasture, crossing a series of fence stiles along the way. A couple of finger signs confirm the route, although navigation is still fiddly. Looking to the right, Barden Moor with its Millstone Grit scenery can be seen in the distance. A short way to the left is an OS pillar standing atop a hillock (Haw Crag). Arriving at a finger sign marking a crossroads of paths, the Pennine Way here runs over Eshton Moor, the name of which is a misnomer. Continuing north-west over pasture, the path converges with a road, with Newfield Hall not far ahead. Turning through a gate, the River Aire is crossed by a footbridge then followed upstream. Heading along the tree-shaded riverside, cross an area of rough grazing and climb a few steps to arrive at Newfield Bridge (2 = SD 907 581).

Over the bridge, a finger sign shows the Pennine Way heading through a gate. Following the river upstream, the clear water runs swiftly down a stony bed between banks lined with sycamore, ash and hawthorn. Crossing drystone walls by step stiles, the path runs beneath the wooded river terrace. Eventually another stone bridge is encountered, this time opposite the village of Airton (3 = SD 904 592).

### **Hanlith**

Instead of crossing the bridge, a finger sign shows the Pennine Way continuing along the east side of the river, 2½ miles (4 kilometres) to Malham. Crossing a side stream by a footbridge, continue north over rough grazing and along the tree-lined riverbank. Approaching Hanlith Hall, the

flood plain takes on the character of parkland, with sycamore, beech and horse chestnut dotted about. Eventually the path arrives at Hanlith Bridge (4 = SD 900 612).

Here a finger sign shows the Pennine Way turning right, following a steep road up through the hamlet of Hanlith. At a sharp bend another finger sign marks the start of a path heading north over fields, with the view ahead now dominated by the limestone scenery of Malhamdale. The path runs above the wooded valley side before hooking around a dry gully and heading down to a concrete bridge near the confluence of Malham Beck and Gordale Beck. Continuing upstream beside Malham Beck, once again use either the ford or the clapper bridge to reach the National Park visitor centre (5 = SD 901 626).

### **Kirkby Malham**

The first part of the return route runs 3½ miles (5¾ kilometres) back to Airton, this time on the west side of the valley. A finger sign opposite the visitor centre marks the start of a path to Hanlith Bridge, crossing a step stile and heading over meadows towards Aire Head Springs (the official birth-place of the River Aire and the point at which the outflow from Malham Tarn re-emerges from its underground passage). Passing a reed-choked mill pond, the path follows a race towards an old mill (Scalegill). Joining an access road, continue along the tree-lined riverbank to arrive back at Hanlith Bridge (6 = SD 900 612). This time follow the road towards Kirkby Malham, crossing over a busy road to reach the parish church.

### **The Cathedral of the Dales**

*The parish of the Church of St. Michael the Archangel covers seven districts, earning it the title 'Cathedral of the Dales'. It was built during the 15th century on the site of an earlier (8th century) structure. One of the church bells - cast in 1601 - weighs over a ton and is the second largest in country. In the churchyard is a preaching cross and a set of stocks. The church is usually open and welcomes visitors who remove their boots. One visitor was Oliver Cromwell, who witnessed three marriages here in 1655.*

Beside the church's parking area, a finger sign shows a path heading down into a dene, where Kirkby Beck is crossed by a footbridge. Climbing slippery steps towards a gate, the path heads south-west over fields. Over a small footbridge at the head of another dene, cross a step stile and continue beside a drystone wall. Eventually a finger sign marks a left turn through a gate. There is some fiddly navigation ahead, so follow the map carefully. Arriving at a barn, turn right and follow a field boundary until a step stile is met. From here the faint path runs down through fields, crossing intersecting walls by step stiles. Passing some farm buildings to arrive at an unclassified road, head towards some stone-built cottages marking the outskirts of Airton. Before reaching the village centre, turn onto a ginnel signed as a bridleway to Town End. Arriving at another road, turn right, then left, following the Bell Busk road a short way before turning onto a hardcore track (7 = SD 902 588).

### **Airton**

*Airton is an attractive little village with long-standing Quaker associations. A meeting house in the centre of the village is still in use. On the village green is a 'squatters house' dating back to the 17th century (at that time there was a law that anyone who could build a house and have smoke rising within 24 hours was entitled to the freehold!). Beside the river is a converted linen mill that was once owned by the canons of Bolton Priory.*

### **Bell Busk**

The remainder of the return route follows lanes for 4¼ miles (6¾ kilometres) back to the starting point. The track is flanked by sycamore and ash trees as it runs towards Kirk Syke farm, where it fords a shallow stream and continues south. Eventually the route narrows to a path running along the side of a field. A finger sign marks a left turn through a gate, joining a quad track running over rushy grazing. Crossing Otterburn Beck by a bridge, the track continues towards Raven Flatt farm, passing the derelict farm buildings to arrive at an unclassified road. Turning left, follow the road as it runs parallel to the beck. Arriving at a junction, cross

over the beck by a stone bridge (Red Bridge). Here a finger sign marks the start of a bridleway (Mark House Lane) (8 = SD 904 565).

Crossing the River Aire, the track heads uphill. Just before reaching a barn, turn left onto a stony track following a walled lane (ignore a waymarked gate on the right). As the lane veers to the right (south-east), a gate on the left offers a 'there and back' detour to Haw Crag, which provides a good viewing point. Continuing down the lane as it runs through pasture, the stony track becomes uncomfortable for a way. Passing the point where the lane was left earlier in the day (9 = SD 925 550), retrace your steps along a quiet road leading back to Gargrave.

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