



Hackfall

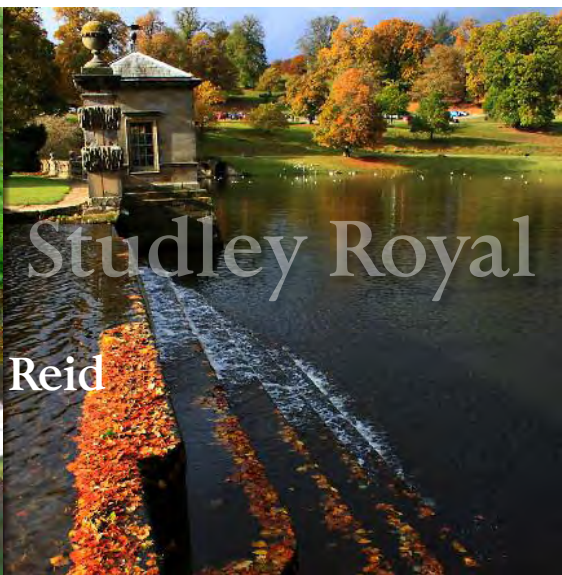


The Aislabie Walk

A journey through picturesque landscapes
Studley Royal | Laver Banks | Hackfall



Mark Reid



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WALK INFORMATION

Short route 7.5 miles (12 km) Allow 3 hours

Medium route 11.5 miles (18.5 km) Allow 6 hours

Long route 17.5 miles (28 km) Allow 8 – 9 hours

Map OS Explorer Sheet 298 'Nidderdale'

Start/Parking Lakeside car park (pay & display), Studley Royal Deer Park (Grid Ref: SE 279 692).

Refreshments Pubs, cafés and/or shops at Fountains Abbey, Galphay, Kirkby Malzeard and Grewelthorpe.

Terrain Undulating tracks and paths through woodland, along riverbanks and across fields, with some stretches along quiet country lanes. Many of the paths are muddy underfoot. There are numerous stiles to cross.

How to get there Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal lies to the west of Ripon just off the B6265. The Lakeside car park (Studley Royal Deer Park) is accessed via Studley Roger.

Please note There are several roads to cross as well as short stretches of road walking. The woodland paths through Hackfall are muddy underfoot in places with one or two narrow sections where there are steep drops to the side of the path. You may encounter livestock in some fields.

THE WALK

POINT
1

From the Lakeside car park (Studley Royal Deer Park) – *with your back to The Lake* – walk across the car park and follow the grassy path heading up a slight grassy 'gully' (sign 'St Mary's Church, Visitor Centre'), passing mature trees and up onto the Deer Park where you carry straight on across the Deer Park to reach St Mary's Church and a lane across your path. Turn left along this lane and follow it up to soon reach a gate in the deer park boundary wall. After the gate head immediately left and follow the clear roadside path for 400 metres then, where the path forks just before you join the road (before the roundabout), follow the right-hand path to quickly reach the road. Cross the road and follow the grassy bridle-path opposite, which you follow to the left alongside a hedge and the road on your left. Follow this bridle-path straight on passing the roundabout beside the entrance to Fountains Abbey Visitor Centre then continue along the roadside path for a further 300 metres to re-join the road (just before the road bends right). Head straight on along the road for a short distance then cross over and take the stony track ahead just as the road bends to the right. Follow this track down to re-join the road. Turn left down along the road then, where this road bends sharp left (road 'chevron' sign) turn right over a stile beside a gate (signpost). After the stile, follow the track straight on down to join the banks of the River Skell on your left. Follow this riverside track straight on to soon reach a gate across the track that leads into Spring Wood, beside an old stone bridge across the river. Head through the gate (*ignore bridge*) and follow the riverside track straight on heading up through the steep-sided wooded valley of the River Skell, with the river on your left, following the sweeping curves of the river valley for 1.75 km through woodland and across open pastures (*keep to the track and ignore bridges across the river*) all the way to reach the ruinous stone buildings of Aldfield Spa, with its adjacent sulphur springs.

POINT
2

Immediately before the ruinous buildings of Aldfield Spa, take the grassy path to the right that leads behind the buildings then, after a few paces, take the path up to the right that quickly leads up to join a clear, level path which you follow to the right heading back down through the valley (track you just walked along down to your right). Follow this path straight on, level at first then rising up across the wooded valley side to reach a stile at the top of the wooded bank. Cross the stile and walk straight on along a slightly sunken grassy path out onto a field. After a short distance this sunken path disappears – bear left across the middle of the field (towards the buildings of Aldfield) and through a gateway in a fence/hedge, after which continue straight on across the field and through a gate in a fence to the left of the buildings/houses (edge of Aldfield) then walk straight on across the next field to reach a wrought-iron gate in a wall at the top of the field that leads onto the road at Aldfield.

POINT
3

Turn right along the road into the centre of the village then take the footpath to the left through a kissing-gate 75 metres beyond Bay Tree Farm (opposite the 'phone box'). After the kissing-gate, head across the field to quickly reach two stiles in quick succession on either side of a line of trees, after which bear left across the field to join the fence on your left. Follow this fence straight on across the field then, where this fence bends

slightly left as you approach the end of the field (line of telegraph poles), carry straight on (bearing away from the fence) to soon reach a stile over the fence/hedge, with Clip'd Thorn Farm ahead of you. Cross the stile and walk on across the field to reach a gate that leads onto the road opposite Clip'd Thorn Farm (signpost). Turn right along the road for a few paces then left immediately after the house over a stile (signpost) that leads across the gardens and driveway to reach a small gate in the corner of the small enclosure beside a wooden shed. After the small gate, head straight across the field bearing very slightly left (waymarker post) to reach a stile over a fence just before (and to the left of) North House. Cross the stile then walk across the small enclosure (house to your right) to reach a stile beside a gate, with views ahead across the Laver Valley towards Winksley Church. After the gate, walk straight down across the field to reach a stile in the bottom right corner then continue straight down across the next field to reach another stile in the bottom corner that leads into Winksley Plantation. Cross the stile and follow the narrow path straight on (fence on your left) down through trees/undergrowth to join a road.

POINT
4

Turn right along the road for 300 metres through woodland then, just before the road bends up to the right, take the track off to the left. Follow this track straight on through woodland for 450 metres to reach a T-junction with another track (end of woodland). Turn left and follow the track (woodland on your left) for 250 metres to

reach a fork in the track, where you take the left-hand track that leads down through woodland (Laver Banks) to reach Woodhouse Bridge across the River Laver.

Short route: Turn right immediately after Woodhouse Bridge along a track and follow this riverside track/path (waymarkers) for 1.25 km meandering through woodland and across riverside pastures (keep to the riverside) all the way to reach Galphay Mill Bridge across the River Laver. As you reach this bridge, follow the field boundary round to the left (walking parallel with the road) for 50 metres to reach a gate to your right that leads onto the road. Turn right along the road, over Galphay Mill Bridge and follow the Route Description from **Point 16**.



Woodhouse Bridge

POINT
5

Cross Woodhouse Bridge and follow the track straight on, then climbing up through woodland to soon reach Wood House just to your right (top of the wooded bank) where you follow the track bending left to quickly reach a stile beside a gate that leads out onto a field. After the stile, bear diagonally to the right up across the middle of the field, passing through the top of a line of trees/old field boundary (this line of trees is rising up across the field), where you carry on to soon reach the corner of a hedge protruding into the field (waymarker). Carry straight on alongside this hedge on your

left across the top of the field to reach a gate in the field corner (waymarker). Turn left immediately before this gate through a fence, and walk up across the field alongside the hedge on your right then, halfway up this field (where the hedge on your right bends slightly left in front of you), cross a stile by a gate in this hedge (waymarker). After the stile, turn right alongside the hedge on your right, quickly passing through a gateway in a fence/trees then continue straight on across the next field alongside the hedge on your right to reach a gate to your right just before the field corner. Do NOT head through this gate, but turn left back on yourself up across the field to reach a gate in the hedge on your left halfway up the field, after which turn right along a track that leads up to a gate in the top right corner of the field (Laver Banks Farm ahead). Turn right after the gate to reach a stile in the corner of the field. After the stile, walk straight on alongside the fence/hedge on your right to reach another stile in the corner of the field, then carry straight on down across the middle of the field to join a fence on your left halfway down the field (enclosure with small barns/sheds) which you follow straight on down to reach a stile, after which bear slightly left to reach another stile that leads onto a farm lane, with Skeaf House to your left. Cross the lane over the stile opposite then head straight down across the field and over another stile just beyond a small stream, after which head straight on alongside the fence on your right across two fields to join the road on the edge of Galphay.

POINT
6

Turn left along the road and follow it winding through the village, passing the phone box (ignore turnings off) to reach the large village green (with its maypole) where you follow the road to the right towards 'Kirkby Malzeard' passing the Galphay Inn then, where the road bends sharp left as you reach the edge of the village (sports field on your left) head straight on off this bend through the ornate wooden gates of the Braithwaite Hall Estate (signpost). After the gate, follow the track straight on alongside the hedge on your right across parkland for 700 metres to reach a cattle grid across the track, with the buildings of Braithwaite Hall just across to your left.

Medium route: Cross the cattle grid and walk along the track for a few paces to reach a crossroads of tracks. Turn right along the track and follow this straight on (lake down to your left) to soon reach a fork where you take the right-hand track curving gently to the right to soon reach a gate (clear track ends). Head through the gate and follow the grassy track straight on along the edge of the field to reach a bridlegate at the start of an enclosed track (Hubber Lane). Follow this enclosed tree-shaded bridleway straight on, which soon becomes a wider track that leads steadily down for 0.75 km to reach Mill Farm (track becomes a lane). Continue along the lane passing Mill Farm on your right down to reach a bridge/ford across Kex Beck at Azerley. Cross the bridge and follow the lane rising up the small bank to quickly reach a fork in the lane. Turn right along the lane to soon reach Azerley Grange Farm where you follow the Route Description from **Point 14**.

POINT
7

Cross the cattle grid and walk along the track for a few paces to reach a crossroads of tracks where you follow the middle track straight on curving down to the left to reach a 'turning circle' in front of Braithwaite Hall. Follow the track curving round to the right (ponds across to your right) – the track soon becomes grassy underfoot and

leads on through woodland to soon reach a choice of two gates at the end of the enclosed grassy track. Head through the right-hand gate, then walk straight across the middle of the field, keeping fairly close to the field boundary on your left (passing a small pond on your right) down to reach a gate in the fence/old hedge towards the bottom left corner of the field. After the gate head straight on to quickly join a clear track, which you follow straight on (to the left) for 0.5 km to reach the house and buildings of Lawnwith. As you reach the house, continue straight on along the lane for a further 350 metres to join a road. Turn left along the road, over Creets Bridge across Kex Beck and follow the road up into Kirkby Malzeard.

POINT
8

As you reach the road junction beside the old Market Cross, turn right along the road towards 'Grewelthorpe, Masham' and follow this down passing the church and school then winding steeply down (*take care*) to reach a couple of houses (old mill) set in a wooded valley and another bridge across Kex Beck. Cross the bridge and follow the road rising up for a few paces then take the path off to the right (signpost) climbing up through trees to quickly reach a stile that leads out onto a field. Head straight on across the narrow field to quickly reach another stile that leads onto a farm track, where you head straight on across the field to reach a stile over a fence, after which head straight on alongside the fence on your left, through a gate then continue on across the next field (following the fence/wall skirting to the right around the perimeter of Mowbray View house) to reach a stile over a fence/hedge in the corner of the field (beyond the house). After this stile, carry straight on across the large field alongside the hedge/fence on your left and through a gate in the field corner, after which continue across the next field and over a stile to the right of some barns/sheds. After this stile, head diagonally to the right up across the middle of the field to reach a stile in the far top corner of the field that leads onto the road on the edge of Grewelthorpe.

POINT
9

Turn left along the road into Grewelthorpe, passing the village pond on your left and then the Crown Inn on your right, immediately after which (and before St James's Church) turn right along a lane. Follow this lane straight on heading out of Grewelthorpe, gently dropping down for 300 metres then, where it bends sharp right, take the footpath to the left over a stile through the hedge (signpost 'Hackfall'). After the stile, head to the left along the edge of the field (narrow path) keeping close to the hedge on your left to reach an old wall-stile in the corner at the end of the field. After the stile, head straight on across the next field then, just as you approach the end of this field, follow the path bending left through the hedge then immediately right to quickly reach a stile that leads into woodland (Hackfall).

POINT
10

After the stile, head down to quickly reach a small bridge across Grewelthorpe Beck (at the head of the small valley), after which follow the path up then bearing round to the right over another bridge after a short distance (sign 'Fountain Pond and Follies') then follow the clear woodland path straight on heading through Hackfall, with the small valley of Grewelthorpe Beck down to your right (*ignore rough path branching up to your left*). After 400 metres you reach an obvious junction of paths/tracks (gate on your left), where you head straight on along the level path ahead (sign 'Ruin') then gently rising up and bending round to the left (following the curve of the hillside) before

climbing more steeply up to reach the impressive building of The Ruin (holiday cottage), set magnificently on the edge of a dramatic escarpment.

POINT
11

As you approach the Ruin (holiday cottage), follow the path skirting to the left around this building (over stiles), to re-join the woodland path along the escarpment just beyond (*alternatively, between 11 am and 3pm, follow the path straight on across the Ruin Terrace*). As you re-join the path just beyond the Ruin, carry straight on along the clear woodland path along the top of the escarpment heading away from the Ruin (views to your right) for 300 metres to reach a fork in the path. Follow the right-hand path (sign 'Fountain Pond') winding quite steeply down the hillside to reach another fork, where you head to the right along the clear path heading down across the wooded hillside to reach Fountain Pond. Follow the path straight on passing the Pond on your right (and the Rustic Temple folly on your left) to soon reach the Grotto folly (and Forty-Foot Fall to your right) where you continue down through the woods to reach a junction of paths by a small stream. Cross the stream then turn immediately left and follow this path to reach Fishers Hall (octagonal folly) set on a rise of land above the rapids of the River Ure. As you reach the folly, pass to the right of it and follow the path to the right down steps to join the wide riverside path (by a small ford).



View from The Ruin Terrace

WTFU/David Rodway

POINT
12

As you reach the riverside, follow the path to the right over the small ford (river to your left) and follow this meandering path through the woods, crossing small side-streams, for 400 metres then gently rising up across the steep riverbank, with the river down to your left (passing the path to Mowbray Castle). The path then leaves the river behind and heads through dense woodland (river now out of sight across to your left) meandering through the trees for 0.75 km to reach a fork in the path (waymarker). Follow the right-hand path through the woods for a further 250 metres to reach a gate at the end of the woods. After the gate, turn immediately left to quickly reach another gate (muddy), after which walk straight on alongside the woodland and fence/hedge on your left heading across the field to reach a road.

POINT
13

Turn right along the road for 150 metres then turn left along a track through a gate (signpost), just where the road bends up to the left. Follow this grassy track straight on along the foot of the small bank on your right heading through a shallow valley for 300 metres to reach a gate that leads into Coal Bank Wood. Head through the gate and follow the track (which soon becomes a path) straight on through woodland (stream to your left) for a further 700 metres to reach a gate at the end of the woods. After the gate, walk straight on alongside the fence/overgrown hedge

on your left across fields all the way to reach a road. Turn right along the road and follow it for 800 metres to reach a T-junction with another road. Turn left along this road (*take care*) for 100 metres then, where the road bends left (by the post-box), take the turning branching off to the right ('Dead End' sign – *ignore driveway to the right beside the gatehouse*) and follow this road for 0.5 km into the hamlet of Azerley.

POINT
14

At the obvious fork in the lane (with a bridge across Kex Beck down to your right), turn left and follow the lane to soon reach Azerley Grange Farm where you continue along the lane (Kex Beck down to your right) to soon reach Home Farm. Carry straight on along the track passing the farmhouse then passing to the right of the large barns after which continue along the track for 400 metres to reach a fork in the track. Follow the right-hand track straight on for a further 300 metres to reach another fork, where again you follow the right-hand track (left hand track leads into woodland, marked 'private') which heads down across the field for 300 metres to reach an old metal gate at the end of the clear track (stone table). After the old gateway, turn left along the indistinct grassy track alongside the field boundary on your left (overgrown intermittent hedge/trees) then, as you reach the end of the field, follow the indistinct track down to the right, through a gateway then straight on to reach a footbridge across Kex Beck. Cross the footbridge then walk straight across the field to reach Witch of the Woods House, surrounded by a small enclosure.

POINT
15

Pass to the left side of the enclosure surrounding the house then turn right, following the enclosure round passing in front of the house then, where the enclosure ends, carry straight on bearing slightly left to reach a double gate in the fence at the end of the field. Head through the gate then turn left along the track and follow this through a series of gates to reach Cow Myers Farm (equestrian centre). As you reach the farmyard, carry straight on along the driveway passing immediately to the right of the farmhouse then follow this driveway away from the farm across fields to join a road. Turn left down along the road to reach Galphay Mill Bridge across the River Laver.

POINT
16

Cross Galphay Mill Bridge and follow the road climbing up across the wooded Laver Banks then, as you emerge from the woods at the top of the bank (house on your left) turn right along a track (signpost) and follow this across fields for 1 km to reach Low Lindrick Farm. As you reach the farm, follow the track straight on passing to the left of the buildings, after which carry straight on along the driveway heading gently down across parkland for a further 0.75 km to reach the B6265 opposite the North Gate (Lindrick Gate) into Studley Royal. As you reach the road, turn right along the verge for a short distance then, just after the entrance to High Lindrick Farm (track and a roadside cottage), head left across the road and through the door in the deer park boundary wall (National Trust sign 'Fountains Abbey & Studley Royal'). After the doorway, follow the track to the left to soon join the metalled lane leading from the North Gate entrance. Turn right along this lane and follow it for 850 metres across the Deer Park to reach a crossroads of lanes, where you carry straight on down along the lane to reach The Lake. Follow the lane curving round to the right alongside The Lake back to the car park.

THE AISLABIE WALK

During the late 17th and early 18th centuries, there was a movement amongst the wealthy and well travelled to embrace, enhance and appreciate the natural environment, whereas previously it was viewed as a resource or, in more remote and mountainous areas, with fear. An ideological movement developed known as 'picturesque nature', where the natural landscape was enhanced to create a contrived and tamed 'wilderness' that could be viewed and enjoyed by visitors using carefully planned follies, vistas and driveways. Interestingly, the word 'picturesque' is derived from the Italian *pittresco* which means 'in the manner of a painting'. This nicely encapsulates the desire to create a landscape that was pleasing to the eye and composed in such a way as to replicate a landscape painting. The Aislabie family were at the forefront of this movement and influenced the future design of grand landscape gardens throughout this country and beyond.

During the mid 18th century, William Aislabie established a circuit between his estates at Studley Royal and Hackfall with carriageways, bridges and vistas forming a private route for his family. The Aislabies created a vast 'picturesque landscape' that included Studley Royal, Laver Banks and Hackfall. This circuit remained until the early 19th century thanks to the growing popularity of Hackfall and Studley Royal. Unfortunately by the late 19th century it had fallen out of use and the exact route has now been lost. However, there are enough clues and evidence to piece together much of this circuit, with a little 'artistic licence' to fill in the gaps whilst also taking in some of the other fascinating points of historic interest along the way. It is not a historically accurate route, but more of a walking route that explores the historical landscape so you may experience the 'picturesque' circuit of Studley Royal, Laver Banks and Hackfall as William Aislabie originally intended some 250 years ago.

FOUNTAINS ABBEY & STUDLEY ROYAL

In 1132 a group of thirteen Benedictine monks set off from St Mary's Abbey at York in search of a more austere way of life. They stayed at Ripon on Christmas Day before walking some four miles further west to an area of land in the valley of the River Skell given to them by the Archbishop of York. Despite its current gentle sylvan appearance, this remote wooded valley was said to be "more fit for wild beasts than men to inhabit" in 1132.

It was on this land that the monks established Fountains Abbey, which became part of the Cistercian Order. It grew over the centuries into one of the richest and most powerful monasteries in Europe with vast tracks of land throughout the North of England from the Lake District to the North Sea. However, bad harvests and frequent Scottish raids during the 14th century brought about economic collapse. Despite its financial problems, Fountains Abbey remained of great importance with its Abbots sitting in Parliament. All this came to an abrupt end in 1539 with Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries;



Studley Royal

although Henry did give the Abbot and his monks generous pensions! Today, the ruins of Fountains Abbey are the largest remains of a Cistercian abbey in Europe. They are an outstanding example of Cistercian architecture, including well preserved sections of the precinct wall, an exceptional stone-vaulted Cellarium and one of the finest Cistercian corn mills in Europe.

John Aislabie, MP and Chancellor of the Exchequer, inherited the Studley Royal estate in 1693. In 1720, he left office in disgrace for his part in the infamous South Sea Bubble financial scandal, and returned to Yorkshire to devote his time to his estate. Although an amateur, Aislabie transformed the wild wooded valley of the River Skell into a landscaped water garden with formal walks, vistas and water features. He also planted thousands of trees throughout the park. In 1731 he bought Hackfall, which his son William was later to develop as a 'wilderness' garden. After John's death in 1742, William continued and extended his father's work developing the estate in the fashionable naturalistic and 'picturesque' styles of the time. Needless to say this contrasted sharply with his father's more formal gardens. In 1767 William purchased the adjacent ruins of Fountains Abbey and incorporated them into his landscape designs.

Studley Royal Water Garden now stands as one of the most important Georgian water gardens in England with ponds, lakes, water features, Classical temples, statues and mature woodland. The Water Garden occupies 60 acres of the 760 acre Studley Park, which itself includes avenues of trees, planned vistas and driveways, and an extensive deer park where over 600 deer of three species (red, sika and fallow) roam across the magnificent parkland. Studley Royal Park, including the ruins of Fountains Abbey, was deservedly designated a World Heritage Site in 1986.

ALDFIELD SPA

From Fountains Bridge across the River Skell, a delightful track leads up through the deep wooded river valley passing through Spring Wood and Spa Gill Wood to reach the ruins of Aldfield Spa. The first section of this river appears to have been channelled with

a finely built stone bridge. This stretch of the valley originally formed part of the landscaped gardens of Studley Park developed during the 18th century by the Aislabies. The ancient woodland is a delight in spring with its profusion of wild flowers including bluebells, wild garlic, yellow archangel, primrose, greater stitchwort and lesser celandine.

Sulphur springs were discovered beside the River Skell below the village of Aldfield in the late 17th century, at a time when the 'healing properties' of spa water were gaining popularity. Indeed, nearby Harrogate was one of the leading spas in the 18th and 19th centuries, with thousands of people flocking to this town to bathe in or drink the 'cure'. The mineral waters were used for a variety of ailments from constipation to skin complaints.



Mark Reid

Aldfield Spa

Aldfield Spa, as it became known, grew in popularity and soon had its own spa building and is shown on historic maps as Aldfield Spa Magnesia and Sulphur; indeed, in the early 1900s the water was piped all the way to Ripon to supply the newly-opened Spa Baths in the city. Sadly, spa treatments waned during the 1930s, and Aldfield Spa closed. The ruined spa buildings are still clearly visible, with a rare example of an 18th century well-head nearby. Just across the river is another sulphur well, with a deep open well of water. The 'rotten egg' smell is powerful – it is amazing to think that people thought something so unpalatable must have been good for them!

LAVER BANKS

Between Fountains Abbey and Galphay, the River Laver flows through a deep and winding valley, its steep sides cloaked with trees. This is the famous Laver Banks, an area that was developed during the 18th century by William Aislabie to create a 'picturesque' landscape between Studley Royal and Hackfall. He made good use of the vistas but never developed Laver Banks to the same degree as Studley or Hackfall. It is also believed that he built Woodhouse Mill with a terrace close by from where visitors could take in the views. Unfortunately, there is little surviving evidence to show exactly what the designed landscape of Laver Banks looked like back in the 18th century.

GALPHAY

Galphay is a beautiful village that lies amongst the rolling hills and meandering rivers between Ripon and Masham. Old cottages face out across a large village green complete with maypole. Close by is the famous Galphay Inn. The name of the village is believed to mean 'the enclosure of the gallows'. It is thought that the monks of Fountains Abbey also owned land in this area.

BRAITHWAITE HALL

This beautiful old farmhouse possibly dates back some 500 years, although it has been altered over the intervening years and extensively restored in the 1970s. It boasts an unusually large roof, elaborately carved lintels and a door halfway up the gable end, all of which give it the appearance of a gingerbread house. The cobbled farmyard is in perfect order and overlooks a small lake complete with island and resident wildfowl.

KIRKBY MALZEARD

Now there's a name – Malzeard. There are not many, if any, other places with that name. It means 'poor clearing' and is of Norman origin from the words 'mal – assart'. Kirkby Malzeard would have existed as a small village before the Normans arrived. Its present church was built on the site of a pre-Conquest church and the name 'kirkby' is Danish meaning the settlement by the church.

Roger de Mowbray built his Norman castle in the village, although the only reminders of this fortress are overgrown earthworks. The castle was demolished in the 12th century on the orders of Henry I following an ill-fated rebellion when Roger de Mowbray joined a conspiracy with the Bishop of Durham to replace the King with his cousin, Prince Henry.

St Andrew's Church dates back to 1150, although it was extensively restored in the 19th century and later severely damaged by fire in 1908. The church is well worth a closer look. This lovely old building has many interesting features including an impressive

Norman doorway with three rows of zigzags, Norman stonework around the base of the 16th century tower, and Norman sundial remains above the entrance porch. Look out for mice, of the wooden variety, amongst the Mousey Thompson furniture.

Edward I granted John de Mowbray a market charter in 1307. With its castle and imposing church, Kirkby Malzeard developed into a busy market town with regular markets held until 1816. The market cross in the centre of the village dates from 1886 and replaced a medieval one. Today, Kirkby Malzeard is a quiet village with many fine old stone houses, a variety of shops, two pubs, and its own cheese factory.

GREWELTHORPE

'Thorpe' is a Scandinavian word meaning small settlement. Grewelthorpe embodies this in every sense. It is an attractive village of old stone cottages and farms facing out across a large village green, at the heart of which is a pond that is home to friendly and inquisitive ducks. There has been a village here since at least the 9th century, with evidence of settlement in this area dating back to prehistoric times. Interestingly, a complete skeleton of a Roman soldier was found on Grewelthorpe Moor many years ago giving rise to the belief that there may have been a Roman camp nearby, possibly at Camp Hill where there is an ancient earthwork. Grewelthorpe once boasted two inns but the Hackfall Inn closed several years ago. The Crown Inn dates back to the early 17th century when it served as a coaching inn, and is an excellent place to call in to rest weary legs before venturing into the nearby woods at Hackfall.

HACKFALL

Hackfall lies just outside the village of Grewelthorpe, an extensive area of semi-natural ancient woodland that cloaks the steep banks of the River Ure. It is an absolute delight to explore the maze of paths that criss-cross this woodland, especially in spring when the ground is carpeted with bluebells and wild garlic.

Hackfall was bought by John Aislabie in 1731, who most famously laid out the formal water gardens of Studley Royal. His son William transformed Hackfall into a romantic 'wilderness' garden with trees, walkways, waterfalls, surprise views and follies. Hackfall has provided inspiration for many of our great artistic minds, including Turner who came here to paint, and William Wordsworth who recommended a visit to the woods en route to the Lake District. Hackfall featured on the 'Grand Tour' itinerary during the 1800s and also on a Wedgwood dinner service made for Catherine II of Russia!

The area had been neglected for many years and looked destined for 'redevelopment' when The Hackfall Trust and the Woodland Trust stepped in and acquired Hackfall on a long term lease in 1989. Thanks to generous grant funding of almost £1 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2006, many of the original Aislabie

garden features have now been restored. Hackfall now has Grade I registered status due to its importance as a designed garden, whilst the flora and fauna of the woods make it a Site of Special Scientific Interest. It has also been awarded the Europa Nostra Award for conservation.

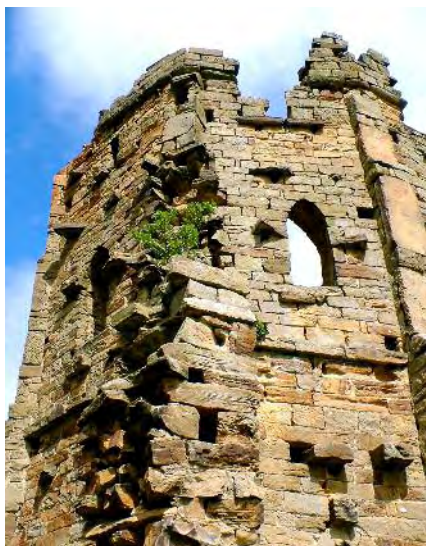
The whole of the walk through Hackfall is a delight, but one of the highlights includes The Ruin set magnificently on the edge of the steep escarpment known as Mowbray Point. From here there are wonderful views across the Vale of Mowbray towards the North York Moors, not to mention the tree canopy of Hackfall beneath your feet with its scattering of follies and water features. There is also a fine view towards Mowbray Castle set on the escarpment across the side-valley of Grewelthorpe Beck. This is another of William Aislabie's follies built to resemble a ruined medieval castle that was designed as an 'eye catcher' to add texture to the view. The Ruin was built in 1767 by William Aislabie as a Banquet House, with its eastern facade developed to look like the ruined arches of a Roman bath house. The Ruin has been restored by The Landmark Trust and is used as a holiday cottage.

Below The Ruin, set amongst the trees is Fountain Pond and Rustic Temple. The large fountain in the pond is fed by an ingenious gravity water system whereby its tank is filled with water from a natural spring high up on the hillside then, when a certain level is reached, a valve opens and up shoots the fountain. This gravity-fed system takes around 10-15 minutes to refill. A short walk down from the Pond is the Grotto, with fine views of the Forty-Foot Fall. The path continues down to reach the octagonal Fisher's Hall, set impressively above some rapids along the River Ure. Note the datestone and initials 'WA 1750'; this was the first folly built by William Aislabie at Hackfall. The walls of this building are decorated with tufa and broken glass fragments, an original 18th century feature. Below this folly, our route follows the riverside path through Hackfall, a delightful combination of trees, flowers, birdsong and tumbling water.

The recent restoration and engagement work at Hackfall has been made possible due to grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Yore Venture and North Yorkshire Aggregates Grant Scheme.

AZERLEY

This was once an important township with a grange, or monastic farm, belonging to Fountains Abbey. Over the centuries the population has slowly dwindled so that it is now just a handful of scattered farms and cottages set amongst the mature trees and ornamental lakes of Azerley Park. From Azerley, a track leads past farms to reach the isolated Witch of the Woods House (private). This 17th century cottage is situated in a small, wooded enclosure in the middle of a field, a remarkable survival of an old country cottage, without electricity or mains water. When I first visited this house in 1997, it was falling into ruin and certainly lived up to its name; however, since then it has been restored and is once again habitable, although I would not like to stay here on a dark, windswept winter's night!



WTPU/Michelle Davies

Mowbray Castle, Hackfall



Witch of the Woods house

Mark Reid





The Aislalie Walk

A journey through picturesque landscapes
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woodlandtrust.org.uk/hackfall

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The path to The Grotto, Hackfall: WTPL/Michelle Davies; Studley Royal: Andy Johnson; Deer at Studley Royal: Richard Jemison;
Walkers at Aldfield Spa: Mark Reid