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Wharram Percy to Thixendale

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Free car park at the Wharram Percy medieval village site (SE 867645)
Ordnance Survey map	OS Explorer 300 – Howardian Hills and Malton
Distance	7.9 miles
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: This Yorkshire Wolds walk from Wharram Percy to Thixendale provides an opportunity to examine the remains of the deserted Wharram Percy medieval village and its ruined church, the prettily sited village of Thixendale and enjoy the beauty of some almost artistically perfect valleys, sculpted by glaciers.

There are supposedly some 3,000 or more deserted medieval village sites in the country but Wharram Percy, abandoned in around 1500 AD is one of the most studied. The site of many of the buildings can be seen – this is especially noticeable from aerial photos. English Heritage has provided numerous boards which give much information and the outlines of some buildings have been depicted by edgings and gravel.

Between 1950 and 1990, led by Maurice Beresford and John Hurst, historians, archaeologists, and botanists, literally dug extensively into the village's past. It seems after a natural decline, the last remaining villagers were removed by the lord of the manor to make way for sheep!

Much of the church remains.

The route follows the Yorkshire Wolds Way, Centenary Way and Chalkland Way signs and the crossing and linking of these names can be confusing at times but the paths are easy to follow on the ground. In the process, there are views of the spectacular valleys - primarily Deep Dale, Water Dale and Thixen Dale.

The route passes through the high wold village of Thixendale. It is a popular spot for walkers being on the 79 mile long Wolds Way which runs from Hessle to Filey Brig. There is a small shop and a pub, although judging from its sign, it does not open at lunch times. Several information panels, at the village hall, tell you about the village and the area.

The walk is straightforward and mostly level. It starts from the free car park which serves the Wharram Percy medieval village site. To get there, turn SW off the B1248 just south of the village of Wharram-le-Street. The car park is just over half a mile from the turn, on the right.

Start: Take the obvious footpath at the rear of the car park which descends gently. At a kissing gate, a fingerpost points to the Wolds Way and you continue in this direction to the right of a hump in the ground.

You soon come to the site of the medieval village (SE 858643), marked by an English Heritage information board. As you progress along the track towards the cottages, you need to veer off to the right, up the bank, to get a closer view of the village remains. There are a number of panels with information about the settlement.

When you have had your medieval fill, return to the main track and go through the gate into the courtyard area. Walk round the cottages and have a look at the ruined church. The route continues through the graveyard, all marked with yellow arrows.

At the old fishpond, you have the option as to which way round it you go. An anti-clockwise circuit takes you over a footbridge, with an attractive view. Clockwise takes you past another information board. Either way, you need to follow the oddly angled fingerpost for "Yorkshire Wolds Way and Thixendale 3½ miles," up the bank (SE 859642).

At the top of the bank, the path bears right following the direction of another fingerpost for the "Wolds Way". You follow the valley of Deep Dale and as it curves round, although still on the Wolds Way, you also join the Centenary Way for about ½ mile, in effect turning right as you join it (SE 858630).

Continue to follow the top of the valley. After the ½ mile, at a three-way fingerpost, the Centenary Way goes off to the left but you keep straight ahead.

After a further ¾ mile, you meet the drive to Wharram Percy Farm (SE 836629). Turn left, continuing to follow the Wolds Way/Centenary Way fingerpost. It is perhaps worth mentioning that this perhaps unexpected re-meeting with the Centenary Way is because it has looped round via Thixendale to the south. You now follow both to Thixendale village.

As the farm track bends right, keep straight ahead into a field and follow its left hand boundary. At the end of the field, the route drops down a grassy track to Vessey Pasture Dale. In the valley bottom can be seen the remains of ancient earthworks.

Climb the obvious path at the far side of the valley up Vessey Hill and through a kissing gate, turn right.

At the top of the hill, follow the right hand boundary of the field. At the corner, turn left, following the yellow arrow and finger post for "Wolds Way" (SE 833619). Turn right at the next "Wolds way" fingerpost, joining a broad track between the fields. Turn left on this, heading towards the right hand side of a wood.

The track forks, the left leg heading for a barn but ignore this and keep straight ahead. The track descends to the attractive village of Thixendale passing the ends of Water Dale (with the road through it) and Thixen Dale, almost parallel.

Meet the road through Thixendale village at Cottage farm. Turn left. There is an interesting village hall with information panels about the village and the area.

As you near the end of the village turn left by the Cross Keys pub following the "Centenary Way" fingerpost (SE 845610).

The path passes the cricket/football field to the right of the pavilion, along the valley floor. Keep to the left of the valley floor ascending the side slightly left, to meet a stile and fingerpost.

As you get to the end of the field, join a broad track briefly. You can see the fingerpost at the base of the hill (SE 850615). Follow the Centenary Way path up the hill to the left of the trees, to walk along the top of what is Court Dale.

As you get to the end of Court Dale, where it turns left to become Honey Dale, turn right through a walkers' gate and right at a broad track (SE 848621). Continue along this track until at SE 851623, turn left at a broad track following the fingerpost for "Centenary Way" and "Chalkland Way"

Keep straight ahead on this track, ignoring one which forks off left along the side of a large field. The next fingerpost is visible ahead.

At this fingerpost, turn right following the public bridleway sign (SE 850625).

Follow the path through the trees and follow the left hand boundary of the field you come to. At the end of the field, go through the gap in the hedge and turn right, to follow the right hand boundary of the next field.

Turn left at the corner, following the public bridleway arrow, along the edge of the trees.

At the next corner of the field, join a broad bridleway, turn left.

At the end of this field, go through the gap in the hedge and turn left to follow the left hand field boundary. There are some faded arrows on a post and it is not easy to decide which side of the hedge to walk along but you definitely want the hedge on your left as is clear from the next fingerpost you reach.

You cross the top of a second, narrower field and at the end of it, turn right (SE 865634). Follow the path to the road and turn left. There are good views along the road here. The road leads back to the car park.

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