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## Masham to Druids Temple

<b>Starting point and OS Grid reference</b>	Masham – Honesty box parking in market square. (SE 225807)
<b>Ordnance Survey map</b>	OS Explorer 298 – Nidderdale and OS Explorer 302 – Northallerton and Thirsk.
<b>Distance</b>	12 miles
<b>Traffic light rating</b>	

**Introduction:** This walk from Masham follows the Ripon Rowel walk for parts of its length. This should make these sections easy to follow, although I did find some did not seem particularly well marked. The first half of the walk, until I climbed to the Druids' Temple, was also obscured by thick mist in the valleys (which lasted longer than forecast!), so photos are more limited than usual.

The Druids Temple is a folly built around 1820, by William Danby of Swinton Hall to provide employment. It is a pretty realistic creation and if you did not know otherwise, it could be thousands of years old. Above it is an impressive pillar of flat stone slabs.

The latter part of the walk follows the course of the river Ure.

There is some walking on country lanes but there is very little traffic. I saw only one post van on the lanes during the entire walk.

It is an easy, fairly level walk, so do not let the distance put you off, as you can make good time. There are some muddy sections so I recommend gaiters after wet weather.

There is a café at High Knowle Farm, about half way round which seems to be open most days (more limited in January – check website)

The walk starts from the large market square in Masham which has an “honesty box” scheme of modest request. Public toilets are nearby. Masham is situated just off the A6108 about half way between Ripon and Leyburn.

**Start:** In the market square (SE 225807) with the market cross behind you and the flagpole in front, walk ahead to Chapman Lane and turn right to Church Street. Turn left along Church Street and follow it left round the corner past the HSBC bank when it becomes Park Street. Turn right on Red Lane (just before the Co-op shop).

Follow Red Lane and fork right at the fire station. Continue to follow Red Lane until it eventually becomes Westholme Road. Stay on Westholme Road until it bends right at 90°. Turn left on the bend along Foxholme Lane (SE 220809), over the narrow bridge and passing Jamesons Animal Feeds.

Just past the factory, the tarmac ends. Go straight ahead following the public footpath fingerpost for “Ripon Rowel” and “Micklebury Lane 1 mile”. Ignore a turn off to the left almost immediately and stay on the broad track.

As the track turns into a farmyard, go left along the right hand edge of the field following the yellow footpath arrow. At the end of the first field, go through two gates and then turn left, again following the yellow arrow.

You reach a road on a bend with a covered water reservoir to the right (SE 203809). Turn left and walk along the road for less than a quarter of a mile. When the road bends left (SE 202806), turn right along a broad rough track and when it reaches another road, turn left (SE 187804).

Stay on the road, crossing the River Burn and at the 'T' junction, turn right signposted "Ilton 1½ miles".

Remain on the road for a third of a mile and, on a sharp left hand bend, continue straight ahead on the public bridleway, passing under some power lines and passing a stone sign for "Broadmires".

Just past the farm, go through a gate and continue straight ahead, following the obvious track.

Go through another gate by the trees and go straight ahead following the blue bridleway arrow.

Walk alongside the next set of trees (Hall Wood). The edge of the trees curve away from the track at SE 169795. Stay on the track but before entering the next group of trees, turn sharp left at a three way fingerpost (SE 167793) to continue to follow the Ripon Rowell Walk towards Lower Knowle Farm.

Close to the diagonally opposite corner of the next field, go through a walkers' gate and follow the broad track just above the gate, rising left towards the trees. This track then curves right, along the edge of the trees.

The track turn left through a gateway (SE 175291), indicated by a public footpath sign, then turns right, soon passing between two ramshackle stone structures and lines up with power lines. Follow the track to the road and turn right (SE 179788), entering the Swinton Estate to see the Druids' Temple. This is accessed by a clearly delineated grassy path from the car parking area.

After seeing the Druids' Temple (SE 174787), return to the point where you joined the road and turn right to follow the fingerpost for "Public Footpath, Ripon Rowel, Sole Beck ½ mile".

Walk down past High Knowle farm. There is a café here which seems to be open every day except January, when it is weekends only. Turn left at the rear of the farm and follow the buildings round. Opposite the far back corner, turn right over a wooden stile following the yellow footpath arrow.

The path descends to Sole Beck where you turn left to follow the broad grassy track by the trees (SE 184785).

On reaching the road, turn right. You soon come to Ilton. Stay on the main road through the hamlet. Just after passing Manor Farm to your left, the road bends sharp left. Leave the road here by the footpath straight ahead (SE 191781). Cross the rough ground heading for the far left hand corner where there is a narrow stone slit stile. Cross this and go straight ahead for about 50 yards where there is another similar stile on the left. Go through this and bear right. You should be able to see the next stile in the wall at the top of the field.

Once through this stile, the path is obvious. It bends right after a few yards and runs along the rear of a number of shooting butts across an area intriguingly called Galloper on the OS map.

Just before a stone house, join a stony track and turn left (SE 199744), through a metal gate. Stay on this track until you get to a crossroads and go straight ahead on the road.

At the next road junction, turn right following the road signs for "Grewelthorpe 2¼ miles" and "Kirkby Malzeard 4 miles".

Stay on the road for about a third of a mile and on a slight bend, look out on the left for a double public footpath fingerpost pointing into the trees (SE 210779). Turn left here and follow the main track, which curves to the right.

At the road, go virtually straight on (SE 224783), leaving the road on a public bridleway which swings left. This runs virtually parallel with the road but is a more pleasant walk than the road.

When the bridleway rejoins the road, turn right along the track to Nutwith Cote Farm (SE 232788). Pass the farm, then, as the main track bends right, you go straight ahead. Follow the left hand boundary of the field and go through a metal gate. There is a yellow footpath arrow to indicate the route. Note the ruin on the hill to the right. Evidently this is the ruin of a dovecote.

Turn left and make your way down to the river, turning left to follow the riverside path. Initially, it follows the River Ure but at the junction with the River Burn, swings left to follow this to the road. Here, cross Lower Burn road bridge then turn immediately right to follow the opposite bank of the River Burn, rejoining the River Ure footpath. Along here is a mysterious stone arch (SE 232801) – see photo. Evidently this is a stone sculpture by Alain Ayres from the 1990s called the Floating Leaf and marks the spot where there once was a ferry across the river.

Follow the footpath which eventually becomes a tarmac lane eventually forming Millgate which opens into Masham market square. The steeple of St Mary's Church in Masham provides a reference point and will have been in sight for some time.

