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Pateley Bridge to Dacre Banks

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Pateley Bridge – pay and display car park by the river (SE157655)
Ordnance Survey map	OS Explorer 298
Distance	8.8 miles
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: This Nidderdale walk from Pateley Bridge to Dacre Banks is a mostly very easy walk with just a short section of about half a mile of steepness out of Bewerley, to which I have allocated an amber traffic light. There are extensive views across the moors, especially attractive when the heather is in bloom.

The route takes you past the twin pillars of Yorke's Folly, built at the end of the 18th century as a philanthropic gesture, by the Yorke family, to provide employment during a recession. Originally there were three pillars but one blew down in 1893. They were built to resemble the ruin of a religious edifice. From that point, the walk is level or downhill.

The walk offers splendid views up and down Nidderdale, some quite dramatic from the section which follows the edge of Guise Cliff. There is the opportunity for refreshments at the Royal Oak pub in Dacre Banks before making the return journey.

If you look at the OS map, you will see there is a return path along the river before Glasshouses. This is tempting but I think the slightly higher route via Harewell Hall provides better views than the wooded riverbank. You will drop down to the river anyway at Glasshouses Dam (fishing lake).

There are public toilets opposite the main car park in Pateley Bridge where the walk starts and also at the little village green in Dacre Banks. It is worth commenting that although the car park in Pateley Bridge is pay and display, it is very reasonably priced. My walk to Wath, Gouthwaite Reservoir and the mines and the Pateley Bridge to Brimham Rocks walk also start here.

If you have time, please pay a visit to the Nidderdale Museum, tucked away on King Street to the north of Main Street. This is a fascinating museum of local life with quite a tale to tell about life in the workhouse. It is very cheap! Check their website for opening times.

Start: From the car park (SE 157655), turn left along the B6265 and just as the road starts to climb, turn left opposite the Royal Oak pub (not to be confused with the one at Dacre Banks) signposted Bewerley Park Centre and Bewerley Hall Farm one mile. Pass the Pateley Bridge auction site on the left.

Walk through Bewerley, keeping right at the triangular village green. Pass Bewerley Grange Chapel, a quaint, tiny church dating from 1494 and built by the Abbot of Fountains Abbey. It is worth a look inside.

Pass the end of Peat Lane.

The road crosses over a stream. At the road junction (SE 158645), turn right signposted "Otley 14 miles". The road starts to climb. Pass the entrance to Skrikes Farm and just after a sharp left hand bend as the road steepens considerably, leave the road for the footpath on the right following the fingerpost for "Nidderdale Way" and "Nought Moor ½ mile" (SE 157644).

The path climbs steeply towards the trees (Skrikes Wood), bearing left from the gate. Looking back, Nidderdale begins to open up.

At the trees, follow the Nidderdale Way through them along the obvious path. As you come out of the trees, there is a rather unclear fork. Keep left. To your right you will soon see a curious structure built into the hillside. Maybe a Hobbit House? But more likely an old ice house. These were used to store ice from the winter throughout the year, prior to the invention of the refrigerator.

As you leave the Skrikes Wood enclosed area via a kissing gate, you briefly cross Nought Moor before arriving at the road via another kissing gate by a three-way fingerpost (SE 156637). Go straight over the road to follow the fingerpost for "Guise Cliff" immediately opposite.

After a brief climb, the path levels out and you get the first sight of Yorke's Folly. Follow the path past the folly and on reaching a three-way footpath "marker" (rather than fingerpost), turn right through a walkers' gate. A sign warns of dangerous crevasses but as long as you stick to the obvious path you should have no problems.

The path follows the course of a wall on your left and you soon catch sight of the radio mast which you will pass in due course. To the right on the horizon, you may notice the trig. point at High Crag but we do not go there. Continue to follow the path along the wall.

After going over a small ladder stile, the wall drops away but stay on the obvious path. It is worth mentioning that on the OS map, the Nidderdale way route goes more to the right across the moor but our route follows the edge of Guise Cliff, for the fabulous dramatic views. The well walked path is clear.

The radio mast will have disappeared from view but don't panic! You come back to it.

The path turns right at the end of an old stone wall (SE 170632). Keep to the right of the wall here as there are steep drops the other side. You are close to the radio mast here and the path swings round to pass to its right. The "golf balls" of the Menwith Hill RAF (or mainly USAF) "listening" establishment are ahead.

Turn left immediately past the radio mast then right to follow the Nidderdale Way signs, effectively along the access route to the mast. When it joins another broad track leading to a house, turn right.

Go through a gate by the house "Hill Top" and a three-way fingerpost and follow the sign for "Heyshaw", along the main track, ignoring the track off to the left just after the house.

Heyshaw is a tiny hamlet. Turn left in its centre and follow the fingerpost for "Dacre Banks" you will soon see, just past the entrance to Heyshaw Farm and crossing a stone stile. Go over the small wooden stile across the track and head for the ladder stile which you can see.

Once over the ladder stile, head for the left corner of the plantation ahead (SE 177617). From here, follow the edge of the trees and through the courtyard area of Lanes Foot Barn, to follow the broad track round to the right.

At a major crossroad of tracks at Lane Foot Farm (SE 182615). Turn left along Monk Ing Road, following the fingerpost for "Dacre Banks". Pass the entrance to Northwoods. As the broad track turns left for "Eastwoods", keep straight ahead on the Nidderdale Way through the little stile, heading gently downhill.

This next section of path is a little indistinct but to the right is a tumbledown wall. Head for the left hand end of this, where there is a stone step stile (SE 188617). Follow the fence line along for 70/80 yards to a wooden stile. Cross this and go through the accompanying walkers' gate.

Follow the right hand boundary of the next two fields and at the end of the second one, go through a walkers' gate in the right hand corner. Follow the obvious path round the right hand border of the next field to the farm and go through the farmyard to follow its access track, to the right.

The track curves right then, just before reaching the house, which looks like a converted chapel with long windows, turn left through a narrow kissing gate (SE 194620 and follow the left hand boundary of the next two fields.

Go through the walkers' gate at the bottom of the second field (you cannot see this until you get to it) and turn right, to follow the tarmac lane. As it swings left, keep straight ahead down the little footpath.

On arrival in "suburbia", turn left to join the main road (the B 6451).

To visit the Royal Oak, turn right, then left at the telephone box at the corner of the small village green. Otherwise, turn left.

Head north along the B6451 and turn left on Cabin Lane (SE 197622), just before the filling station. Then turn immediately right along Harewell Lane, following the public footpath fingerpost. Pass behind Holy Trinity Church.

Stay on the broad track ignoring any turns off and after passing the sign for Harewell House, fork right. The track ends at a gate. Follow the right hand boundary of the field beyond the gate.

At the end of this field, join a broad track and turn right. You pass Harewell Hall with its stone mullion windows. This is a Grade II listed building dating from 1662. Turn left as you get close to the Hall along a concrete track. The viaduct for the now defunct railway line can be seen shortly, to the right.

Stay on the concrete track and when it forks by a small pond, go right. The concrete gives way to tarmac. Follow this down to the river bridge, cross it and turn left along the footpath, passing Glasshouses Dam fishing lake. The fingerpost tells you it is 1¼ miles to Pateley Bridge.

Stay on the riverside path to Pateley Bridge, turning left over the river bridge to return to the car park.

