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Gargrave to Airton

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Gargrave - free car park on North Street (SD 932543)
Ordnance Survey map	OL2 Yorkshire Dales – Southern and Western
Distance	8.8 miles
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: Gargrave is a “honeypot” village between Settle and Skipton on the A65 in North Yorkshire, very popular with day trippers. Contrary to what many believe, it is not within the Yorkshire Dales National Park boundary, which is why I have listed this walk under North Yorkshire, although most of it does fall within the National Park. The walk is a very easy one through pleasant rolling countryside with nice views, especially of Flasby Fell and in part follows the course of a youthful River Aire which later, having grown in stature, flows through the City of Leeds. The walk also passes the attractive village of Airton, formerly a Quaker village, so no pub! A majestic mill building by the river has now been converted into apartments.

Refreshments and public toilets are available in Gargrave along the A65.

Some road walking on quiet lanes is involved.

The walk starts from a free car park in Gargrave. To get to it, turn off the A65 at the Old Swan Inn on to North Street. The car park is a hundred yards or so on the right hand side.

Start: At the corner of the car park (SD 932543), there is a multi-fingerpost with one pointing to the Leeds Liverpool Canal along West Street. Follow this direction and cross the canal, then keep straight ahead.

At the road junction (SD 931545), straight ahead again, along Mark House Lane. Continue along the lane round a couple of bends and keep going until you reach a clear finger post on the right bearing the long distance footpath acorn symbol signing the Pennine Way and Airton 3 miles (SD 924551).

The track across the field is reasonably clear and initially parallels the lane before heading to the right of a barn on a small hill then swinging left. Go through a kissing gate and the path then climbs the gentle hill to the corner of the trees where a fingerpost confirms the Pennine Way route.

Follow the fence line along and go through the kissing gate then head for the gate opposite. The path then goes to a point just to the left of the trees then follows the line of the wall on the right.

Go through the gate in the corner and follow the direction of the finger post for the Pennine Way.

Go through a double set of gates and head downhill to the right of the wall ignoring any turns off. In the corner of the field, by the road, go through the kissing gate (SD 912575) staying with the Pennine Way and "Airton 1¹/₃ miles" signs (do not go on to the road).

The path goes left through a walkers gate and follows the River Aire for a short distance to a footbridge. Cross the footbridge and continue to follow the course of the river until you get to a road (SD 907581). Turn right, cross Newfield Bridge over the river then go immediately left to continue to follow the river.

At the next bridge, go up on to the road where you can turn left along the road to have a look at Airton and the impressive mill building but our route turns right along the road, leaving the Pennine Way.

Stay on the road to the village of Calton. As the road bends right, go straight ahead on the "no through road" (SD 908591). As the road/track divides at Manor Farm, go right. You get to a confusing conglomeration of gates and farm buildings, just keep straight ahead on the main track. As it divides SD 913590), bear left following the finger post for "Cowper Cote 1 mile".

The route becomes a little walled lane before opening into a field. Keep straight ahead where a post with a walkers arrow confirms the route. The path passes in front of an old stone barn (Farlands Laithe) then through a walkers gate and straight ahead over a stile at the bottom of the field then to the left of the farm buildings you can see on the near horizon, which is Cowper Cote.

Go over the ladder stile to the left of the farm then over a second and keep straight ahead in line with the two stiles. After passing under the power lines, the path swings slightly left then down to a small stile to the right. Do not follow the power lines.

Once over this stile, head to the opposite corner of the field where a small gated step stile next to the large gate takes you into the road (SD 930585).

Turn left and walk along the road to the junction just over a small bridge (SD 934585) then turn right staying on this road for about ³/₄ mile. You pass the fantastic Friars Head farmhouse, a 17th Century farmhouse with great mullion windows. It is said to stand on the site of a monastic farm that once belonged to the monks of Furness Abbey.

About 250 yards past Friars Head, as the road bends right, go left (in effect straight on) through a walkers gate (SD 933573). As you approach the trees, the footpath goes around the left hand side. There is an old lime kiln to the left.

As you approach the house (Brockabank), go through the gate to its right. The path then curves left in front of the house and when you reach its drive, turn right along it, crossing the river by a stone bridge. As the track starts to rise towards the next farm, go through the walkers gate on the left (SD 934565). Keep straight ahead ignoring any paths off until you reach the road. At the road the route is almost straight ahead. A finger post indicates Gargrave 1¼ miles.

Go across the field to a stile in the left hand fence. Cross it and walk to the left of the power pole nearest to you at which point you should see another stile going into the trees via a kissing gate (SD 935560). The path through the trees is clear.

As you exit the trees, head slightly left. Flasby Fell looks down on you from the left. Head for what looks like a jumble of posts/fence tensioners where there is quite an unusual metal stile. Cross and head for the far left corner of the field and on to the road. Turn right until you get to the Leeds Liverpool Canal. Go right and walk along the towpath to the next bridge. Go left along the road back to your starting point.

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