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Aysgarth Falls to Askrigg

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Aysgarth Falls – YDNP pay and display car park (SE 010886)
Ordnance Survey map	OL30 – Yorkshire Dales Northern and Central
Distance	9.8 miles
Date of Walk	8 April 2015
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: This Wensleydale walk from Aysgarth Falls takes you to the attractive villages of Carperby and Askrigg. In the process you get some tremendous views of Wensleydale without having to do a great deal of climbing. The route passes evidence of mining indicating the valley was not always just a rural idyll!

Aysgarth Falls is a well known beauty spot. The falls tumble over a series of limestone steps and featured in Kevin Costner's film "Robin Hood Prince of Thieves". The walk starts at the Yorkshire Dales National Park car park but saves the Upper Falls until the end. The route does not include the Middle and Lower Falls but these could be visited afterwards by walking a further half mile along the river.

At the river bridge, note the massive four storey mill building, Yore Mill, originally built as a cotton mill in 1784 then rebuilt in 1852 after a fire. It "multi-tasked", carding and spinning knitting yarn and grinding corn. Needless to say, the river Ure provided the power.

Carperby was at one time a major centre in the valley and was granted a Market Charter in 1305. It is a Conservation area and is unusual in that it has two distinct centres. Its prosperity declined in the 16th Century as Askrigg began to take over as the major commercial centre although there was a revival in the 17th Century. The market cross which my route passes bears the date 1674.

Askrigg is a charming village with cobbled streets and was the setting for "All Creatures Great and Small". Skeldale House on Main Street was the vet's surgery. The name Askrigg stems from old Norse words "askr" (ash tree) and "hryggr" (ridge). The town was at its most prosperous in the 18th Century, deriving income from textiles, knitting and clockmaking.

There are plenty of picnic spots en route and several refreshment opportunities in Askrigg.

The walk starts from the pay and display Yorkshire Dales National Park car park at Aysgarth Falls where there is an information centre and toilets.

To get there, turn north off the A684 for Aysgarth Falls (signposted), about half a mile to the east of Aysgarth itself.

Start: Leave the car park by the main car entrance and turn left along the road (SE 010886). Follow it round the bend and past the entrance to Aysgarth Falls station. Around 50 yards after the entrance, turn right on to a footpath through the woods indicated by a public footpath fingerpost (SE 012889).

Cross another footpath and continue through a walkers gate, which takes you out of the woods into a field. Cross a stile to the right of the grassy mound and follow the obvious footpath across the fields, passing to the right of two small barns. Through the next stile after the barns, turn sharp left (the fingerpost was a little misleading when I did the walk).

Go through a gated stile on to the tarmac lane SE 011896). Turn right then immediately left to follow the fingerpost for "Carperby".

In the second field after the lane, head for the far left hand corner of the field, through a gated stile then turn right to follow another fingerpost for "Carperby". The path exits into the main street through Carperby, almost opposite the Wheatsheaf Inn (SE 008898). Turn left.

Walk along the street and when you get to the market cross (a Scheduled Ancient Monument), follow the road to its right. When the tarmac ceases, turn right along the left hand side of the bungalow and through a walkers' gate (SE 005897).

At the farm, go straight on between the barns and into a long narrow field, exiting in the top left hand corner, through a squeeze stile. Then, bear left at about 45° to the next (gated) stile. Through this, turn right on a broad track. This goes through one field and in the next, turns left but here you leave it go straight on climbing slightly.

Go through a gate and turn left, where the wide path levels off. At SD 999902 is the entrance to Carperby stone mine, where sandstone was mined from a narrow band and used for roofing local buildings until 1914.

Continue past the mine. The path meets a wall and curves right to follow it, before turning left through a gateway, at the foot of a steep banking.

Not far past the gate, the path forks. Take the left fork and go through another gate. At SD 990901 you pass to the left of Ox Close stone circle, an Iron Age, Scheduled Ancient Monument. This section of path is named as Ox Close Road on the OS map.

You start to cross a broad plain with old spoil heaps, a legacy from extensive lead mining at Ivy Scar. When the path divides, take the left fork to follow the bridleway fingerpost.

At SD 981904 you come to a gate with a sign "Boundary gate Please keep closed at all times", followed by a footbridge. Before through the gate, it is worth taking the little path on the left and scrambling down for a good view of Disher Force waterfall and remains of an old 1902 model Gilkes Vortex Turbine. I am informed this was installed by the owner of Woodhall Garage, in the village below, to supply electrical power to the garage. It worked so well that it was able to supply electricity to his

house and some of the other houses in the village. Take care however because the path is steep and limestone which can be slippery when wet.

Return to and cross the bridge above.

Pass along a section where the path is walled and come to a three way fingerpost. Keep straight ahead for "Askrigg Moor Road 2¾ miles". Beyond the fingerpost, follow the left hand boundary.

Go through a gate in the far left hand corner and immediately through another gate on the left to join a broad track. Turn right here.

Follow the track until just past some more old mine workings, go through a gate by a copse of trees (SD 978906).

After about a mile and going through a gate, the track becomes walled. On meeting another broad track, turn right for about 75 yards then turn left over a step stile following the fingerpost for "Newbiggin" (SD 962918).

After going through an open gateway, turn left and take the path through the trees. At a wall, turn right and follow the wall along (do not be tempted by the gate straight ahead). You should be going anti-clockwise round the barns, which seems to be the opposite of the indication on the OS map.

As you come round the corner of the barn, aim for and cross the step stile ahead.

The route is obvious over the next two stiles but then turn right to follow the footpath to the hamlet of Newbiggin, which is visible.

Walk through Newbiggin past its little green then take the track following the fingerpost for "Moor Road ½ mile". When the track turns into a field, take the walled path off to the left, then follow the right hand boundary in the next field.

At Moor Road, turn left for Askrigg (SD 950915). As you come to the outskirts, there is a handy bench for a picnic stop, on the left, with a good view over the village to the distinctive hill Addleborough (SD 950913).

Moor Road becomes Main Street in Askrigg and there are several places where refreshments can be obtained.

The onward route from Askrigg begins along a footpath off to the left as you walk down Main Street. It is to the left of a house called Hillgarth and there is a fingerpost attached to the wall of the adjacent house "Low Gate (Worton Road) ¼ Mile" (SD 949911). Follow the track to a barn and go to its left. Go through a walkers' gate and follow the left hand boundary.

Look out for a small gate by a barn and go through this to the road and turn left and in a few yards, turn right indicated by a fingerpost for "Aysgarth".

At a barn, keep to its right, then over a stile next to a gate at the end of the field. The next stile is straight ahead. Keep to the left of the next barn then to a gate to the right of the power poles. There are two more obvious stiles before arriving at the road (SD 958908). Turn left.

Walk along the road for a quarter of a mile and after crossing a "Weak Bridge", turn left over a gated stile then right to follow the fingerpost for Woodhall and Aysgarth. In the right hand corner of the field go over another stile.

The footpath now initially follows the course of the old railway line, sometimes on it, sometimes to the north and sometimes to the south but the route is well marked with yellow arrows and fingerposts. To the left is the Grade I listed Nappa Hall, a former fortified manor house, built in the 1450s. At SD 876898, the river Ure joins the party!

Follow the footpath, now between the river and the old railway track. Keep a look out for a bridge across the river. This might be difficult to spot when the trees are in leaf but when you join a broad track which comes from the bridge, go straight across following the fingerpost for "Aysgarth Falls".

The path crosses the field at, theoretically, about 45 degrees heading to the railway track once more but there was a large boggy area to negotiate when I did the walk so I went round the right hand side of a prominent rock in the middle of the field (SD 997890) and joined the railway line beyond that, turning right. Follow the line briefly before branching off left via a walker's gate.

There are now a series of stiles and fingerposts which make this well walked section clear. You cross a lane leading to Bear Park, a 17th Century Grade II listed building, with gardens (not open to the public). The footpath route circumnavigates it in a clockwise direction, before cutting through the railway embankment, then turning left to follow the river below. It then drops down to Aysgarth Falls (Upper Falls).

After viewing the falls, follow the footpath to the road then take the elevated path on the left back to the car park.

