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Middleham to Aysgarth

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Middleham Castle – Free parking Main Street/market square, Middleham (SE127876).
Ordnance Survey map	OL30 Yorkshire Dales – Northern and Central Areas
Distance	10.5 miles
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: This is a linear walk from Middleham to Aysgarth so you need to work out tactics for the return journey by car/bus. It is possible to return via the river footpath but this would make the walk somewhat long. At the time of writing, buses do connect Middleham and Aysgarth.

There is some road walking, mostly on quiet lanes where you are more likely to meet horses than traffic but there is one brief stretch along the A684 - less than ½ mile and there are narrow grass verges.

This is a varied walk, starting in the pretty Dales village of Middleham, takes in Penhill, which at 526 metres provides good views of Wensleydale and passes attractive waterfalls along the River Ure, including the famous Aysgarth Falls.

Middleham is the centre of racehorse country and is famous for its massive castle, greatly out of proportion to the relatively small village. It has an attractive cobbled centre and Georgian houses and cars can be parked free in the market square and on the main street. Public toilets and a selection of cafes/pubs are available both at Middleham and at Aysgarth. This walk finishes at the George and Dragon in Aysgarth.

As a common point of reference, the walk starts at the entrance to the castle.

Start: Facing the castle entrance (SE127876, turn left and walk up the track. Look out for a gap stile on the right with a gate and go through this. Cross the field behind the castle bearing slightly right, towards the end of the row of cottages. The path then swings left to follow the high stone wall.

Go through a narrow slit stile and walk along the edge of the road for a few yards (SE 122874). Go through the gateway across the road which leads on to Middleham Low Moor and the Gallops and turn left.

Head towards the highest point and when you get to the horse track, cross it and follow its left hand side. As you reach the end of the horse track, you will see the trig point (SE 105874). From this, bear slightly left and walk more or less along the centre of the Moor. Eventually the track to follow becomes more distinctive.

On reaching a broad stony track (SE 093872) turn right and after 50 yards or so, turn off left on to a grassy track. There was a post with a dilapidated white marker on it when I did this walk.

Follow the track to a road junction (SE 089872) and go straight ahead on the road – Common Lane (i.e. do not go left or right). Walk along this quiet road for just over 1½ miles and at the junction by Penhill Farm (SE 068875), turn left for Melmerby. After 5/600 yards, turn right on to the bridleway for Penhill (SE 067869).

The path is obvious and goes through several gates, passing to the right of a pond. On reaching the base of Penhill, the steep route to the top and the huge “drystone wall” style cairn is clear (SE 056867). It is not very long but if you want to even out a little of the gradient, take the broad grassy track to the left and go right to follow a dilapidated wall to the top.

From the cairn, take the broad track which continues beyond it bearing slightly right to the edge of the plateau and go left along the edge (SE 046867). This path is not shown on the Ordnance Survey map but is clear on the ground. Follow the edge of the plateau, until you reach a broad track going down to the right, initially doubling back on yourself.

Follow the track downhill until you almost get to the old quarry where you turn left (SE 048868). There are what look like some very low drystone walling at this point.

Continue descending until you reach another path and turn left. Follow this until it reaches a stone wall at a broad track and turn left. This track goes right through a gate.

Pass a two way finger post confirming the public footpath. Go through a gated stile and continue on the obvious track. At a junction of broad tracks through a gate (SE 045879), turn left. The track soon becomes a walled lane.

After just short of half a mile, at a gateway where there is a large rectangular boulder, turn right on to another walled track (SE 038882). At a sharp bend in the track, take the left turn following the finger post for Templar Farm 1½ miles. After passing between two copses of trees, the path opens up into a large field. Head towards the bottom right hand corner, passing to the left of the ruins of the Knights Templars’ Penhill Preceptory, (fenced) (SE036888).

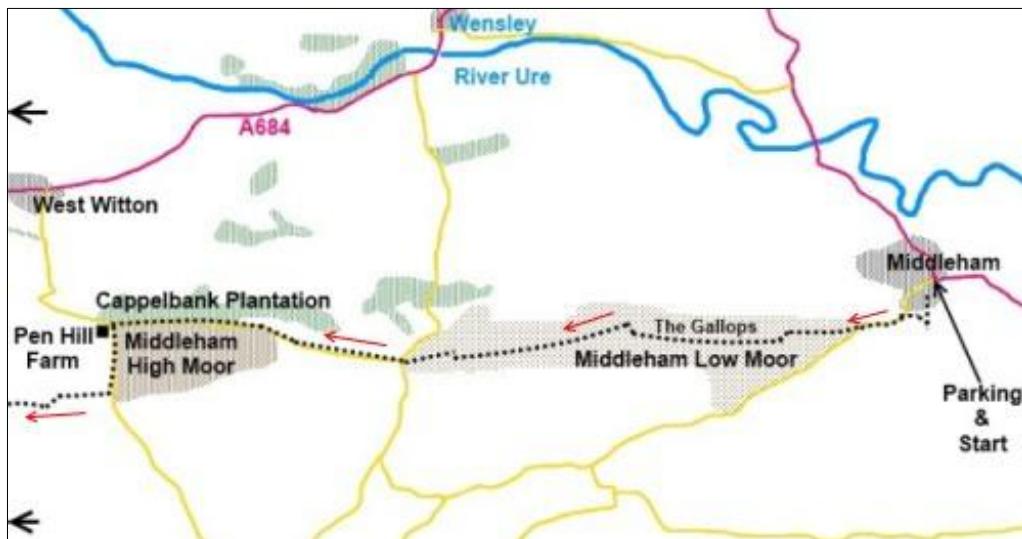
Go through the walkers’ gate in the corner following the sign for Templar Farm along the downhill stony track. Pass the farm and at the main road opposite the Temple Folly (SE 033980), turn left along the A684. Care is needed here as it is quite a busy road but there are narrow grass verges and you only remain on it for half a mile.

Pass the turn for West Burton and an AA box, cross the river bridge, then turn off the road to the right through a small walkers gate by the public footpath fingerpost

(SE 025889). The path leads down to the river where you go left to follow the bank. There are some impressive waterfalls along this stretch.

On arriving at St Andrew's Church at Aysgarth, it is worth a look inside at the intricately carved 16th century screen which came from Jervaulx Abbey.

Walk down the left hand side of the church to the river, cross the river bridge and take the footpath immediately on the left to visit the famous Aysgarth Falls. Return then to the bridge and walk up the hill for about 150 yards before turning right in the direction of the fingerpost for "Aysgath Village ½ mile" (SE 011885).



Note - because this is a linear walk, to maintain legibility, the map is split into two and would join at the bold black arrows

