

# Walk: Seven Bridges, Birstwith

## Notes

- Historic environment
- Wreaks Mill at Birstwith was a corn mill, with a cotton mill just upstream.
- Near Nidd House Farm, the Monk Wall marked the boundary between the Fountains Abbey estates and the Forest of Knaresborough in the medieval period. Originally a wall or ditch, its course is now shown by dry stone walls and hedges.
- New Bridge was built in 1822, replacing a packhorse bridge on the track from Otley to Ripon.
- Hirst Grove is thought to have been the home of the Rev Benjamin Jowett (1817-1893), professor of Greek at Oxford University.
- A rare (for this area) coal mine, Wreaks Colliery was worked in the 19th century. Old maps show pits and buildings between the river and Clapham Green.
- This area has a number of pollarded oak trees where timber has been harvested, perhaps for pit props.



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**The walk:** A 7.3-mile (11.75km) circular route starting from Birstwith, near Harrogate.

**Difficulty:** Moderately flat, but with some uphill sections. Steps and stiles are also encountered on the route. You will need OS Explorer Map No.298 Nidderdale (Fountains Abbey, Ripon & Pateley Bridge). National Grid Reference: 42407 45953.

**Parking:** Birstwith car park (near the post office).

**Public transport:** A regular bus service operates to Birstwith. Service 24 (Harrogate & District Travel) operates hourly Monday to Saturday between Harrogate, Birstwith and Pateley Bridge, and two hourly on Sundays and bank holidays. Check times by visiting [www.northyorks.gov.uk/businfo](http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/businfo) or by phoning traveline on **0871 2002233** (calls from landlines cost 10p per minute).



- From the car park turn right (R) to Wreaks Bridge and cross the River Nidd. Immediately turn left (L) and follow the path alongside the river. Turn R at the permissive path to Nidd Lane. Turn L and follow the bridleway to Tinkler Lane, turn L along the lane to New Bridge and cross the Nidd.
- Turn immediately R and proceed westerly, south of the river. Exit onto the Darley road.
- Turn immediately R towards Ross Bridge. Cross the Nidd towards the mill and turn L and follow the bridleway, then the footpath proceeding westwards through the Nidd Valley to its junction with a bridleway at White Oak Farm. Follow the bridleway south to the

- bridge and cross the Nidd.
- Turn immediately L, follow the path and look for a gate on your right. Pass through the gate and turn L. Follow the path to exit onto the Darley road. Turn L and follow the road for a short while to the second public footpath sign on the right.
- Enter the field and follow the direction of the path, enter Low Reynard Crag and bear to the right to follow the path and then the bridleway to Red Gate and continue towards Swarcliffe.
- Take the first path on your R and head south to exit onto Back Road. Turn L and follow the road in a generally easterly direction through the bend in the

- road to the first public footpath sign on your R.
- Enter the field and follow the direction of the path to exit onto Stock Stile Lane and continue straight on along the road.
- Take the first path on your L and follow the path to Hirst Lane at Clapham Green, cross the road and follow the path alongside Tang Beck towards Bracken Bridge and exit onto the Hampsthwaite road.
- Turn L and follow the

- road towards a public footpath sign located immediately after a small farm building on your right. Follow the path alongside the River Nidd towards Wreaks Mill, at the mill bear L and follow the path to the road, turn L back to the car park.
- Please take care when walking on or crossing roads along this route.
- Remember to keep to marked footpaths and treat the countryside and farmland with respect.

## Ecology

- The walk passes through areas of pasture, with hedgerows and mature trees, crosses the river, lined with trees and shrubs along much of its length, and passes close to woodland blocks. This landscape provides a good range of wildlife habitats.
- The woodlands contain a variety of trees and shrubs, including birch, holly, ash, beech and the occasional scots pine. Some planted species, such as the snowberry bush, can cause problems by spreading widely and shading out other species.
- Hazel, hawthorn and blackthorn bushes can be found in hedgerows and woods. Look for the red berries on the hawthorn in autumn, sloes on the blackthorn and nuts on the hazels. These fruits attract small mammals and a range of birds, such as redwing, fieldfare, blackbird and mistle thrush.