

GRASS WOOD and GHAISTRILL'S STRID

FROM GRASSINGTON 4½ MILES (7.2KM)

This short walk from Grassington has an excellent variety of woodland and river scenery. We visit the flower rich Grass Wood which is a haven for many rare species. Our return along the riverside is a real treat, always beautiful, with more wild flowers and birds to look out for.

Grass Wood is an important nature reserve, covering an area of over 250 acres (101ha). It is sited on a mass of great scar limestone and has been credited with between 300 and 400 species of wild flowers, many of them very rare. The wood is managed by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust which has added a selection of hardwoods and conifers to the established ash and birch woodland. Coppicing and selective felling have been reintroduced to encourage the growth of the natural species of trees and re-establish ground flora.

Near the entrance to the wood is an ancient Iron Age settlement. Although it is now quite difficult to make out, several circular dwellings were dug out of the hillside to a depth of about five feet. The rock face was used for the rear wall and then rubble walls were built in a rough circle to give an internal diameter of about ten feet. The walls tapered towards the top, indicating that they are likely to have had stone roofs and a central hearth. The entrance was through a narrow passage 7 feet (2.1m) long.

Our path climbs gently from the settlement site and leads us to Fort Gregory. This was a Brigantian stronghold and it played an important role in resisting the Roman onslaught in AD 74. The fort is sited on a limestone plateau 350 feet (107m) above the river Wharfe and commands superb views of the valley. The summit was enclosed by a wall

approximately 500 feet (152m) by 200 feet (61m) where livestock and cattle were kept during hostilities. Brigantia was ruled by Queen Cartimandua, who accepted the rule of Rome in return for material benefits. However, her consort Venutius did not. He led an uprising, and withstood the might of the Empire against all odds. The Brigantes were eventually subdued by the might of the Roman army led by general Petilius Cerealis c.AD 75. Many were enslaved to prevent further insurrections and some were put to work in the lead mines.

Grass Wood has a darker side. Here in 1766, Dr. Petty of Grassington was brutally murdered by Tom Lee, the village blacksmith. Lee was also a poacher, and the doctor, who had occasionally attended to his wounds, suspected him of other crimes in the area. Fearing that the doctor would inform the authorities, Lee made plans to get rid of him. One night when Dr. Petty was returning home from Kilnsey, Lee lay in wait by the entrance to Grass Wood. As soon as the doctor entered the wood he was knocked to the ground and savagely killed. Lee hid the body, first in the wood, then in a peat bog on the moor. Finally, he threw it into the river at Loup Scar near Burnsall. It was two years before Tom Lee was brought to justice at York Assizes, where he was found guilty

and hanged. His body was returned to Grassington and hung in chains from a gibbet in Grass Wood.

From the wood we follow a beautiful stretch of the river Wharfe to the narrow gorge at Ghaistrill's Strid. Here the river is a turbulent series of rapids and its banks are well known for wild flowers and birds. We continue along the riverside to Grassington Bridge. This was built in 1603 and is the oldest bridge across the Wharfe, having escaped the flood of 1673. The bridge was widened in 1780 and raised to its present level in 1825. Underneath the arches the two stages of building can be seen and the older section bears some masons' marks.

After crossing the road, we continue to the 'Tin Bridge' at Linton Falls. The name refers to the original bridge which was built in 1814. It was covered with sheets of tin from old oil drums to stop the wearing away of the timber. The present bridge was built in 1989 by the Royal Engineers and is expected to last for 150 years.

Leaving the river behind we follow a narrow walled path known locally as 'the Flags' or 'the Snake Walk'. The path suffered the insult of being tarmacked at some time. Fortunately this surface is wearing away and the original flags have started to reappear. We follow the path uphill back to the car park.

Start/Parking:

Grassington National Park Centre car park, off the B6265 Pateley Bridge road.

Location:

Grassington is situated 10 miles (16km) north east of Skipton. Leave the B6160 at Threshfield and follow the B6265.

Grid Ref:

SE 002 638. Postcode: BD23 5LB.

Distance:

4½ miles (7.2km) circular. Allow 2½ hrs walking time.

Total Ascent:

774 feet (236m) Maximum Elevation: 944 feet (288m).

OS Maps:

Explorer OL2 (1:25,000) or Landranger 98 (1:50,000).

Refreshments:

Several pubs, tea rooms and a fish shop at Grassington.

Public Toilets:

Grassington.

Bus Service:

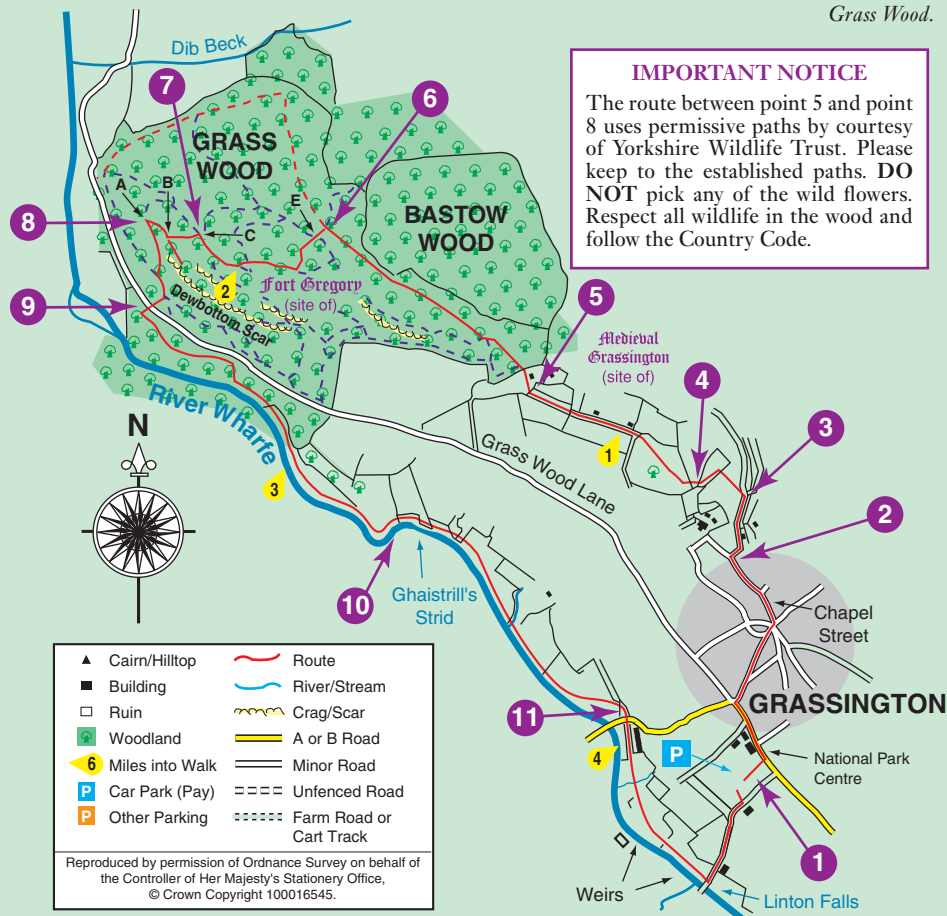
From Ilkley and Skipton, more information from www.dalesbus.org.

Other:

Post Office, telephone, shops, museum.



Grass Wood.



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- 1 (GR 002 638) From the car park entrance turn left and follow the road into Grassington. Turn right into Main Street, keep to the left of the cobbled square and go past the Devonshire Arms. Turn left into Chapel Street and follow it to Bank Lane.
- 2 (GR 002 644) Turn right (SP Dales Way Footpath/Grass Wood Lane 1½) and follow the lane to a junction of tracks.
- 3 (GR 002 646) Leave the lane via a gate on the left (SP Dales Way Footpath/Grass Wood Lane 1½) and bear right to a stone step-stile. Cross the stile (SP Public Footpath) and descend to another stile in the bottom of the field.
- 4 (GR 001 647) Go through the stile (SP Public Footpath), cross to the wall opposite and go through another stile (SP Grass Wood). Descend to the right of a tree and go through a gap stile onto a walled lane. Follow the walled lane to its end and go through a gate into a narrow field. Continue through the field to another gate.
- 5 (GR 995 650) Go through the gate and bear right to cross a stone step-stile leading into Grass Wood. Continue straight ahead and follow a clear track uphill to a signpost.
- 6 (GR 989 655) Turn left (SP Fort Gregory) and follow a rough track. Cross a forest trail at marker post E and climb to the site of the fort. Cross the summit and descend onto another forest trail. Turn right and follow this trail ignoring all side tracks to marker post C.
- 7 (GR 984 655) Turn Left and follow the path to marker post B. To visit the viewpoint at Dewbottom Scar, turn left and follow the path for about 25 yards (22m). Return to marker post B and continue straight ahead descending to marker post A.
- 8 (GR 982 656) Turn sharp left and descend steeply to join another track coming from the right. Follow this track for about 15 yards (14m) and turn right onto a clear track leading down via a stile onto the road.
- 9 (GR 983 653) Cross the road and go through the gate opposite (SP Grassington Bridge 1½). Bear left and follow a clear path through the wood, eventually dropping down to the river. Go through a gate and then continue downstream to Ghaistrill's Strid.
- 10 (GR 991 645) At Ghaistrill's Strid continue via a combination of stiles and gates. Further downstream go through a gate and cross a footbridge. After the next gate bear left away from the river and go through a gate leading up the main road.
- 11 (GR 999 639) Cross the road and go through a gate opposite (SP Hebden/Burnsall). Follow a clear path, cross a plank bridge and continue downstream. At the wooden bridge go through a gate (SP to car park & Grassington). Turn left and follow a walled track uphill via two gates and then go through a gate on the left leading back into the car park.



The weirs near Linton Falls.