

# Walks Willance's Leap & Richmond Racecourse

## Walk information

**Distance:** 11 km / 6.8 miles; **Time:** 3 - 4 hours; **Maps:** OS Explorer Sheet 304 Darlington & Richmond; **Parking:** Parking available throughout Richmond; **Caution:** This walk is not suitable for dogs.

## The walk

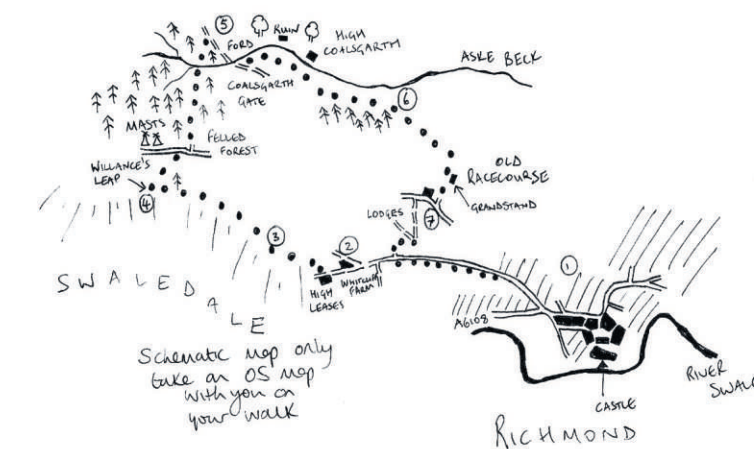
1. Leave Richmond along Victoria Road (A6108 Reeth/Leyburn road), passing the turn for Hudswell then continue along this main road for a short distance then, where it swings round to the left, take the turning off to the right passing to the right of West End Stores. Follow this road (Westfields) straight on rising up out of Richmond. As you reach the last houses (just before 'Dead End' sign) bear off to the left through a kissing gate by a small parking area, then follow the clear path straight on walking parallel with the road alongside a fence/hedge on your right along the top of the slope, with views across Swaledale to your left. Follow this roadside path straight on for 850 metres all the way to reach a small side-valley falling away in front of you and a double wooden gate in a small enclosure, where you head right through a kissing-gate back onto the road (opposite 'Natural Retreats'). Turn left along the road down over the bridge across the small stream then rising up for 300 metres to reach Whitcliffe Farm (just after the Richmond town sign).

2. As you reach Whitcliffe Farm, carry straight on along the lane passing in front of the farm then continue along the lane for 250 metres to reach High Leases Farm on your left. Where the lane bends left into the yard of the house, carry straight on along the rough track ahead for 35 metres then, when you are parallel with the house to

your left, turn right over a stile that leads out onto a field. After the stile, follow the grassy path straight on bearing slightly left heading up the hillside before bending more distinctly left and passing above an area of gorse bushes to reach the brow of the hillside/escarpment overlooking Swaledale. As you reach the brow of the hillside, bear right across the field to quickly join the line of an old hedgerow to your right (a couple of old hawthorn trees); this old hedgerow soon ends - carry straight on along a clear wide grassy path across the top of the escarpment, bearing slightly right, to join a wall on your right, which you follow to reach a stile over a wall/fence across your path in the corner of the field.

3. Cross the stile then walk straight on across the middle of the field, bearing very slightly left (do not walk alongside the wall on your right) keeping quite close to the fence/top of the wooded escarpment on your left, to reach some stiles over a fence across your path, after which bear left down to a stile in the bottom corner of the field then continue straight on alongside the fence/top of the escarpment on your left to reach a stile in the corner of a small plantation. Cross this stile and continue straight on (with the plantation on your right) along the path along the top of the escarpment to quickly exit the plantation, then continue straight on alongside the wall/escarpment on your left for 175 metres to reach the Memorial at Willance's Leap.

4. Head through the kissing gate to visit the Memorial, then return back through the kissing-gate (with the two radio masts ahead of you) then head diagonally to the right (45 degrees) across the rough pastureland heading towards the right-hand corner of Beacon



Plantation to reach a stile (signpost) that leads onto the road towards the far right corner of the field. Turn right along the road (take care) for 50 metres then left through a gate by the corner of the plantation (signpost 'Public Bridleway'), then follow the rough grassy track straight on with the plantation on your left and an area of felled forest on your right for 175 metres to reach the end of the felled forest on your right. Carry straight on along the wide grassy path/track into the dense forest and follow this very muddy/waterlogged track straight on heading gradually down for 525 metres to emerge into clearing in the upper reaches of the valley of Aske Beck. Cross the stream then carry straight on along the muddy path up through the forest again for 225 metres to reach a fence/wall and stile/gate across your path at the end of the forest. Do not cross the stile/gate but turn right alongside the wall on your left and follow the track heading down with the forest on your right and wall on your left for 300 metres to reach a ford across Aske Beck at Coalsgarth Gate.

5. Cross the shallow ford, a few paces after which turn left over a stile beside a gate (signpost), after which follow the grassy track heading down through the valley of Aske Beck along the foot of the steep bank of Coalsgarth Edge to your right and the stream down to your left. Follow this track for 600 metres (passing a roofless ruin across the valley to your left) then, where the grassy track bends sharp left towards the unoccupied High Coalsgarth Farm (hidden amongst trees) head to the right through a gate in the field corner then immediately left (heading in the same direction as you have been walking down through the valley). Walk straight across the middle of the field heading down through the valley, passing to the right of an enclosed spring (Coalsgarth Spring) to reach a gate, after which carry straight on alongside the tumbledown wall on your left heading across two large rough fields (with a plantation up to your right) to reach two gates at the end of this field and the end of the plantation on your right.

6. At the end of these large fields,

head through the right-hand gate (waymarker) then turn immediately right alongside the wall and plantation on your right heading up the hillside. You soon leave the plantation behind - continue up alongside the wall on your right rising up onto the broad ridge of land (views open out) then, gently down to reach a gate to your right in the bottom corner of the field (Richmond Racecourse information sign). Head through the gate and walk through the trees/undergrowth to soon emerge out onto the old Richmond Racecourse (caution - horses training). Walk straight on bearing slightly right passing the old stone-built grandstand then straight down to reach the small parking area and the road.

7. Turn right along road (take care) and follow the road bending left at High Gingerfield Lodge then continue along the road for 75 metres then take the path to the left through a gate (signpost). Follow the lane straight on then, as you reach the bottom of the hill and the lane bends sharp right, head straight on the grassy path to join a wall. Turn right alongside the wall heading down for 125 metres to join a rough track across your path (railway sleepers signpost) where you turn left to soon reach a gate. Turn left along the lane and follow it straight on back to reach the houses where you continue along the road to the junction beside West End Stores. Follow road back to Richmond.

**Mark Reid**  
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## Countrydiary By Phil Gates

**P**ICTURE a warm summer afternoon and one of the images that might spring to mind is a hoverfly, apparently suspended in a shaft of sunlight. Few other insects are capable of hovering in one spot for such long periods, but with the help of a magnifying glass it's not difficult to see the special structures that give it this ability.

All flies have a single pair of wings and if they depended on these alone they could fly, but would have a tendency to move up with every down-stroke and down with every up-stroke of their wings, so they'd follow a rollercoaster flight path. But just behind a hoverfly's wings there's a pair of club-shaped structures called halteres which move in opposition to the wing strokes, smoothing out the flight path. Hoverfly wings beat extremely quickly and this, combined with the stabilising action of their halteres, allows them to hang motionless in one spot, like a jewel in the sunlight.

Hoverflies are amongst the most useful insects in the garden. The adults feed on pollen but their larvae consume vast numbers of greenfly. Watch a hoverfly closely and you'll see it deposit one of its white, oval eggs close to a greenfly infestation. When the small, slug-like grub hatches it will create havoc amongst its victims and panic spreads through the colony. The attacked greenfly release a chemical alarm signal that causes those around it to stop feeding and drop to the ground. For every one that's eaten, many more are forced to fall from the plant. The best way to tempt hoverflies into the garden is to plant plenty of flowers on the daisy family, which provide pollen for the adults.



## Birdwatch By Ian Kerr

**O**UR owls, always a favourite with birders and the general public alike, could be heading for a bumper breeding season because of an abundance of voles, their main prey. It could compensate for a run of poor seasons caused by the bitter winters of 2010 and 2011 and last year's cold late spring.

Barn owls, particularly in the uplands, have suffered high mortality in recent years but are staging an impressive revival. Several ringers have reported excellent results with many healthy early broods. In my own village, barn owls resumed regular breeding in 2008 after an absence of half a century using a nest box I put up in a derelict farm building. For the first time, we have two pairs just 250 yards apart and each has three large young.

Tawny owls are also doing very well. Forestry Commission ornithologists who have monitored nest boxes for over 30 years tell me that for the first time they had a pair with seven eggs compared with

the normal two to four. Short-eared owls, which usually only breed on our high moorlands in good vole years, are also taking advantage. A few pairs normally breed but this year a staggering 17 pairs have been found on the RSPB's Geltsdale reserve in the North Pennines.

Vole populations normally rise over a four-year period and then crash. At the moment we seem to be at the peak of the cycle. This abundance should also help other classic vole-hunters, including kestrels. Still on breeding species, the region's only two pairs of ospreys have now each hatched three young at Kielder. The summering bird remained at Derwent Reservoir.

A white-winged black tern at Saltholme, a purple heron at Whitby and a hobby chasing swallows at Bowburn were the pick of the latest rarities. Turtle doves, a rapidly declining breeder, were found at Thirsk and Sutton Bank and at Druridge Bay.