THE NORTH YORK MOORS

About the Author

Paddy Dillon is a prolific walker and guidebook writer, with over 90 guidebooks to his name and contributions to 40 other titles. He has written extensively for many different outdoor publications and has appeared on radio and television.

Paddy uses a tablet computer to write his route descriptions while walking. His descriptions are therefore precise, having been written at the very point at which the reader uses them.

Paddy is an indefatigable long-distance walker who has walked all of Britain's National Trails and several major European trails. He lives on the fringes of the Lake District and has walked, and written about walking, in every county throughout the British Isles. He has led guided walks and walked throughout Europe, as well as in Nepal, Tibet, Korea, Africa and the Rocky Mountains of Canada and the US. Paddy is a member of the Outdoor Writers and Photographers Guild and President of the Backpackers Club.

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Walking on Jersey
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Walking on La Palma
Walking on Lanzarote and Fuerteventura
Walking on Malta
Walking on Tenerife
Walking the Galloway Hills

THE NORTH YORK MOORS

50 WALKS IN THE NATIONAL PARK

by Paddy Dillon

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Front cover: Looking across Bilsdale from high on Rievaulx Moor (Walk 8)

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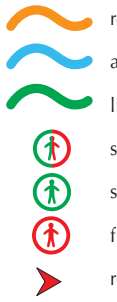

for OS legend see printed OS maps

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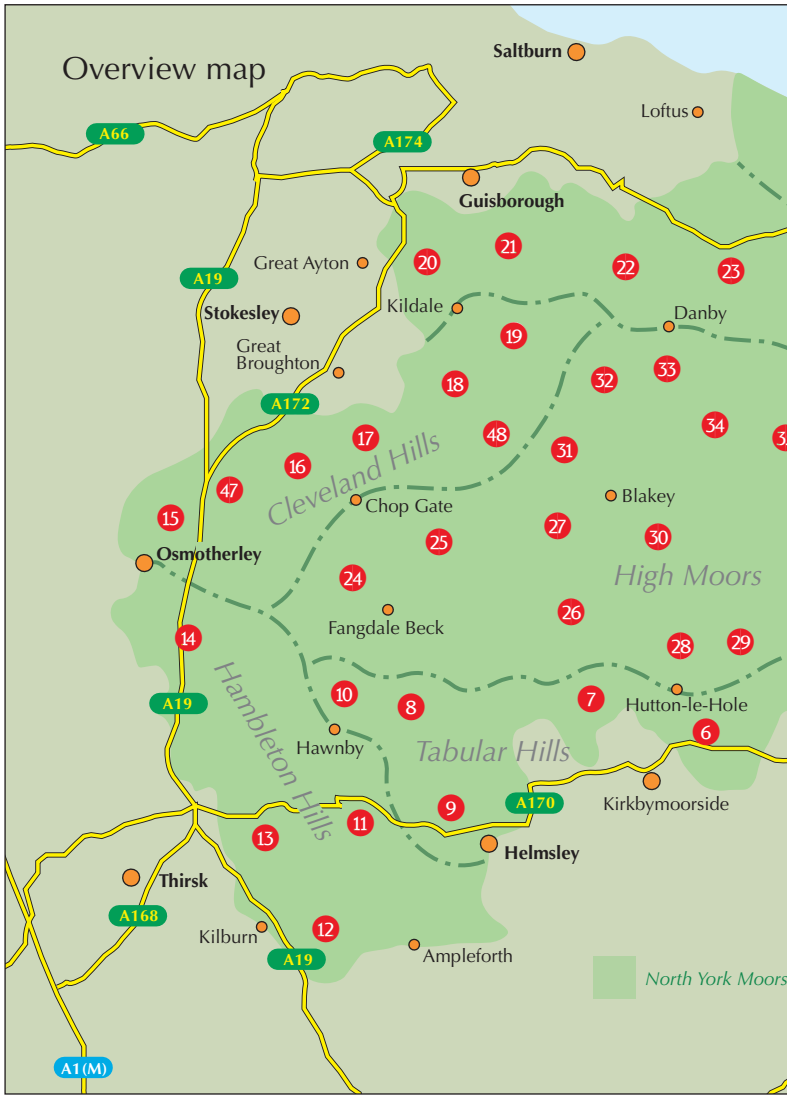
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Sheep grazing has ensured that the dales have been close cropped for centuries

INTRODUCTION

This guidebook offers 50 walks in the varied landscape of the North York Moors National Park. The park was designated in 1952 and covers 1432km^2 (553 square miles) of land, comprising the largest continuous expanse of heather moorland in England. The moors are of no great height yet offer a wonderful sense of spaciousness, with extensive views under a 'big sky'. There are also deep verdant dales where charming scenes and hoary stone buildings can be found, as well as a remarkable cliff coastline designated as the North Yorkshire and Cleveland Heritage Coast. The long-distance Cleveland Way wraps itself around the moors and coast, but there are many other walks that explore the rich variety of the area, focusing on its charm, history, heritage and wildlife.

The walks are distributed through seven regions within the park, enabling walkers to discover and appreciate the Tabular Hills, Hambleton Hills, Cleveland Hills, Northern Moors, High Moors, Eastern Moors and Cleveland Coast. For those who like a challenge, the course of the classic Lyke Wake Walk, crossing the national park from east to west, is also offered, split over a four-day period to allow a leisurely appreciation of the moors. Almost 725km (450 miles) of walking routes are described here, although the national park could furnish you with many more splendid ones from a stock of 1770km (1100 miles) of public footpaths and bridleways.

People have crossed the North York Moors since time immemorial, and some of their routes survive to this day. Stout stone crosses were planted to assist travellers and traders with a safe passage, and these days practically all rights of way are signposted and walkable, although some routes are used far more than others.

Despite having the appearance of a wilderness, this area has often been, and remains to this day, a working landscape. The moors are scarred and quarried in places by man's search for mineral resources, and the heather cover requires year-round management for the sport of grouse shooting. Walkers with enquiring minds will quickly realise that the human history and settlement of the moors, even at its highest points, stretches back over thousands of years. Our own enjoyment of the moors, in contrast, may be nothing more than a transient pleasure.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MOORS

Early settlement

The first people to roam across the North York Moors were Mesolithic

Walkers follow an old railway trackbed above Rosedale (Walk 30)

nomads, eking out an existence as hunter-gatherers some 10,000 years ago. Swampy lowlands surrounded the uplands, and apart from a few flakes of flint these people left little trace of their existence. Evidence of the Neolithic settlers who followed can be seen in the mounds of stones they heaped over their burial sites, called barrows, which date back to 2000BC. Soon afterwards, from 1800BC onwards, the Beaker People and Bronze Age invaders moved into the area. They used more advanced methods of land clearance and tillage, and buried their dead in conspicuous mounds known as 'howes'. These people exhausted the land, clearing too much forest too quickly. Minerals leached from the thin soils, so that the uplands became unproductive. Climate changes led to ground becoming waterlogged and mossy, so that tillage became impossible and scrub moorland developed. Iron Age people faced more of a struggle to survive and had to organise themselves in defensive promontory forts. Perhaps some of the linear dykes that cut across the countryside date from that time, although many structures are difficult to date with any degree of certainty.

Roman settlement

The Romans marched through Britain during the first century and founded a city at York. Perhaps the most important site on the North York Moors was Cawthorn Camp near Cropton, which was used as a military training ground. Although Wade's Causeway in Wheeldale is often referred to as a Roman road, it may not be. Hadrian's

Wall kept the Picts at bay to the north, but the east coast was open to invasion by the Saxons, so the Romans built coastal signal stations in AD368 at Hartlepool, Hunt Cliff, Boulby, Goldsborough, Whitby, Ravenscar, Scarborough, Filey and Flamborough Head. Some of these sites have been lost as the cliffs have receded. By AD410 the Romans had left Britain, and the coast was clear for wave upon wave of invasions.

Dark Age settlement

Saxons, Angles, Danes and other invaders left their mark on the North York Moors, establishing little villages and tilling the land, mostly in the dales, as the higher ground had long since reverted to scrub. Many of these settlers were Christian, and in AD657 a monastery in the Celtic Christian tradition was founded at Whitby. Whitby Abbey was notable for one of its early lay brothers, Caedmon, who was inspired to sing, and whose words comprise the earliest written English Christian verse. During the successive waves of invasion there were times of strife, and the abbey was destroyed in AD867. Other small-scale rural monastic sites are known. Many early Christian churches were simple wooden buildings. Some of the earliest carved stone crosses date from the 10th century.

Norman settlement

A more comprehensive invasion was mounted by the Normans, who swept through the region during the 11th century. They totally reorganised society, establishing the feudal system and leaving an invaluable insight into the

Lilla Cross is the oldest Christian monument on the moors (Walk 40)

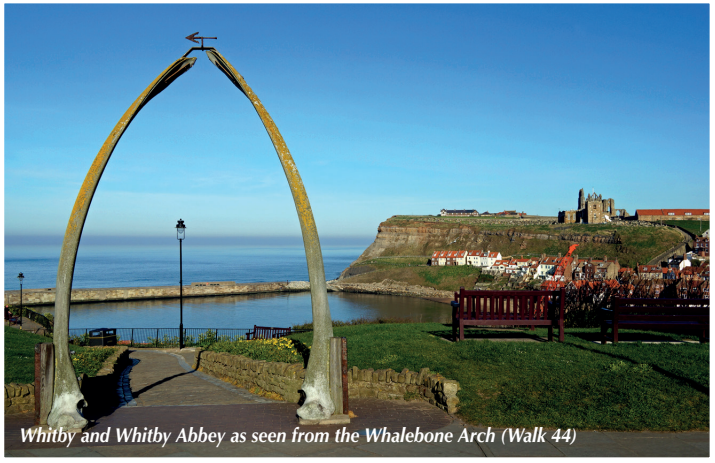
state of the countryside through the vast numbers of settlements and properties listed in the Domesday Book. In return for allegiance to the king, noblemen were handed vast tracts of countryside and authority over its inhabitants. Resentment and violence was rife for a time, and the new overlords were obliged to build robust castles. Many noblemen gifted large parts of their estates to religious orders from mainland Europe, encouraging them to settle in the area.

Monastic settlement

Monasteries and abbeys were founded in and around the North York Moors in the wake of the Norman invasion, and ruins dating from the 12th and 13th centuries still dominate the countryside. Stone quarrying was important at this time, and large-scale sheep rearing was developed, leading to the large, close-cropped pastures that feature in the dales. There were still plenty of woodlands for timber and hunting, but the moors remained bleak and barren and were reckoned to be of little worth. Early maps and descriptions by travellers simply dismissed the area as 'black-a-moor', yet it was necessary for people to cross the moors if only to get from place to place, and so a network of paths developed. The monasteries planted some of the old stone crosses on the moors to provide guidance to travellers. This era came to a sudden close with Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries in the 16th century.

Recent settlement

Over the past few centuries the settlement of the North York Moors has been influenced by its mineral wealth and the burgeoning tourist industry. At the beginning of the 17th century an amazing chemical industry developed to extract highly prized alum from a particular type of of shale. This industry lasted two and a half centuries and had a huge impact around the cliff-bound fringes of the North York Moors. From the mid-18th to mid-19th centuries, Whitby's fishing industry specialised in whaling, and the town benefitted greatly. The 19th century was the peak period for jet production, often referred to as Whitby Jet. Railways were built in and around the North York Moors throughout the 19th century, bringing an increase in trade and allowing easier shipment of ironstone from the moors. Railways also laid the foundation for a brisk tourist trade, injecting new life into coastal resorts whose trade and fishing fleets were on the wane. Tourism continues to be one of the most important industries in the area, and tourism in the countryside is very much dependent on walking.



Whitby and Whitby Abbey as seen from the Whalebone Arch (Walk 44)

NORTH YORK MOORS INDUSTRIES

Alum

Throughout the North York Moors National Park huge piles of flaky pink shale have been dumped on the landscape, sometimes along the western fringes of the Cleveland Hills, but more especially along the coast. These are the remains of a large-scale chemical industry that thrived from 1600 to 1870. The hard-won prize was alum: a salt that could be extracted from certain beds of shale through a time-consuming process.

Wherever the shale occurred, it was extensively quarried. Millions of tons were cut, changing the shape of the landscape, especially along the coast. Wood, and in later years coal, was layered with the shale, and huge piles were set on fire and kept burning for months, sometimes even a whole year. The burnt shale was then soaked in huge tanks of water, a process known as leaching. Afterwards, the water was drawn off and boiled, which required more wood and coal, as well as being treated with such odious substances as human urine, brought from as far away as London. As crystals of precious alum began to form, the process was completed with a purification stage before the end product was packed for dispatch.

Alum had many uses but was chiefly in demand as a fixative for dyes, as it promoted deep colours on cloth, which became colour-fast after washing. The Italians had a virtual monopoly on the trade until the alum shale of Yorkshire was exploited from 1600. However, the local industry went into a sudden decline when other sources of alum, and more advanced dyestuffs, were discovered from 1850. The long and involved process of quarrying, burning, leaching, boiling, crystallising and purifying

THE TABULAR HILLS

The Tabular Hills stretch along the southern part of the North York Moors National Park. The land rises gently from south to north and is cut by a series of dales that leave tabular uplands between them. The gentle slopes often end abruptly at their northern ends in a series of shapely knolls, or nabs, that look out towards the rolling moorlands at the heart of the national park. From east to west, from Scarborough to Helmsley, the more prominent nabs include Barns Cliff, Langdale Rigg End, Blakey Topping, Whinny Nab, Levisham Moor, the Nab, Boonhill Common, Birk Nab, Helmsley Bank, Easterside Hill and Hawnby Hill. Prominent dales from east to west include the Forge Valley, Hole of Horcum, Newtondale, lower Rosedale, lower Farndale, Sleightholm Dale, Riccal Dale, Ash Dale, Beck Dale and lower Ryedale.

The rocks that make up the Tabular Hills are seldom exposed but belong to the Middle Oolite Group in the Corallian series of the Jurassic period and, hence, are around 170 million years old. They are essentially a limestone and lime-rich sandstone series, porous enough to allow surface water to drain away rapidly. In the more deeply cut dales the bedrock is formed from the older Oxford Clay, which is impervious and supports the flow of rivers and streams. Some areas of the Tabular Hills have been turned over to commercial forestry. The land is very fertile and easily ploughed but the soil is often too thin to support good root crops. However, grain crops such as wheat, barley and oats are grown in rotation, and oilseed rape blazes yellow early in summer.

As if to celebrate the distinct nature of these gentle heights, the waymarked Tabular Hills Walk has been established. It traverses the low hills and intervening dales from the coast at Scalby Mills to the bustling market town of Helmsley, a distance of 80km (50 miles). The signposts and waymarks for the route feature directional arrows and a Tabular Hills logo. The route has been designated a regional trail and is an initiative of the North York Moors National Park Authority.

Ten walking routes through the Tabular Hills are described, including two routes around Hackness, three in the Lockton and Levisham area and one each around Hutton-le-Hole, Gillamoor, Rievaulx Moor, Helmsley and Hawnby. Some of these take in the distinctive nabs, while others wander more through the dales. From time to time, on the higher ground, it is possible to look along the range and see how the higher nabs end abruptly, and the High Moors then stretch northwards into the heart of the North York Moors.

WALK 1

West Ayton, Hackness and the Forge Valley

Start/finish	Ye Olde Forge Valley Inn, West Ayton, SE 987 847
Distance	15km (9½ miles)
Total ascent/descent	240m (790ft)
Time	5hrs
Terrain	Easy walking along woodland paths and field paths, as well as farm tracks and minor roads
Maps	OS Landranger 101; OS Explorer OL27 South
Refreshments	Ye Olde Forge Valley Inn at West Ayton, East Ayton Lodge Hotel and Denison Arms at East Ayton, Everley Country House Café is off-route between Mowthorpe and Hackness, and Hackness Grange Hotel is off-route near Hackness
Transport	Regular Scarborough & District buses serve West and East Ayton from Scarborough, Pickering and Helmsley

The River Derwent once flowed straight from the moors to the sea, but at the end of the Ice Age its course was blocked and water overflowed, carving out the Forge Valley, which was later choked by wildwoods. These trees were harvested for charcoal to fuel small ironworks in the 14th century. The River Derwent repeatedly flooded the low-lying Vale of Pickering, so in the 18th century the Sea Cut was engineered to take the river along its original course to the sea. This walk explores the wooded Forge Valley, takes a look at the Sea Cut and offers the chance to visit the lovely estate village of Hackness.

Start at Ye Olde Forge Valley Inn at West Ayton. Follow the A170 road across the bridge to **East Ayton** and turn left along a road called Castlegate, signposted for the Forge Valley. Pass the East Ayton Lodge Hotel and walk down the road. Follow the road until a **public footpath** (not a public bridleway) is signposted on the right, flanked by fencing for a few paces. Walk up a broad woodland path parallel to a deep groove. Turn left near the top of

the wooded slope and follow a path just inside **Ruston Cliff Wood**, with occasional views out across fields. Pass attractive pantiled stone buildings at **Osborne Lodge** and walk straight ahead. Fork left downhill, walking straight ahead to pass an information board.

FORGE VALLEY WOODS NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE

Towards the end of the Ice Age, around 10,000 years ago, a mass of stagnant ice dammed the broad valley, causing water to form the temporary Lake Hackness. This overflowed and carved the deep, steep-sided Forge Valley. The fields above the valley lie on soft Hambleton Oolite, while its sides are formed from hard Lower Calcareous Grit, and its floor is impervious Oxford Clay. The valley became choked with wildwoods, which in turn provided charcoal for small iron foundries in the 14th century. This is one of the best valley-side mixed deciduous woodlands in Yorkshire.

Continue along the path, eventually reaching a parking space at Green Gate. Turn left, then right down a road signposted for Hackness, where there is access to a viewpoint on the left at Hazel Head. Walk down the road to cross Mowthorpe Bridge over the Sea Cut.

THE SEA CUT

The River Derwent has its source on Fylingdales Moor, a mere spit and a throw from the North Sea. It begins by flowing towards the sea, but only 6km (4 miles) short of it, the river suddenly swings west and heads far inland. Its waters eventually spill into the North Sea via the Humber Estuary after a circuitous journey of 240km (150 miles). The Sea Cut, engineered by the distinguished inventor Sir George Cayley (a pioneer in the science of aerodynamics, amongst other things) in the early 18th century, diverts the headwaters of the River Derwent into Scalby Beck, passing floodwater straight into the sea instead of allowing it to inundate the Vale of Pickering.

Pass **Mowthorpe Farm** and walk a little way up the road, then turn right as indicated by a footpath sign. Go through a kissing gate and turn right to walk downhill

The Sea Cut uses the original course of the River Derwent from Mowthorpe Bridge

a little, then turn left to walk up a grassy groove alongside an old hedgerow. Go through a gate, then turn left up to another gate that gives access to **Hawthorn Wood**. Follow a clear path across and up the wooded slope, then walk beside a field to reach **Suffield Ings farm**, at around 160m (525ft). Keep to the right of the buildings as marked and leave along the farm access road. Keep straight on at a junction, but later, when the track swings right, leave it by following a path down to the left. This goes down a wooded valley and passes a crumbling limekiln. When a road is reached, turn left; it is hardly necessary to walk on the road, since as one path joins it, another heads off to the left. ▸

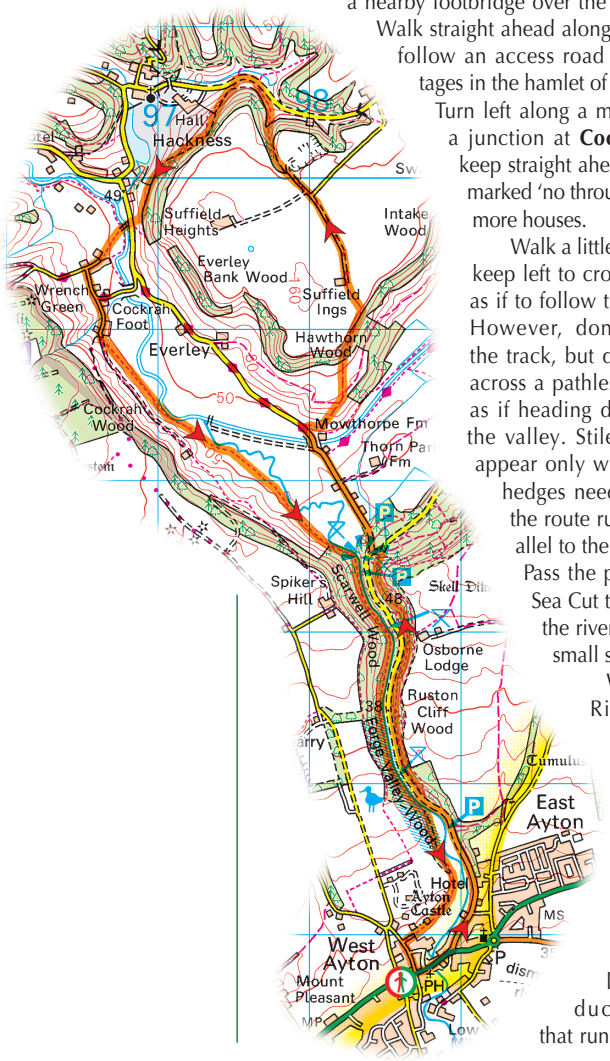
Hackness village and Walk 2 are easily reached from here.

The path climbs a wooded slope, followed by a grassy slope, apparently for no other reason than to provide a fine view of **Hackness Hall**. Having achieved this aim, the path turns right downhill, crosses a stile and enters a wood, then runs gradually downhill across a slope. Leave the wood at another stile and contour across a grassy slope overlooking Mill Farm and the Derwent Valley. Turn right

downhill as marked to cross a road, followed by a nearby footbridge over the River Derwent. Walk straight ahead alongside a field and follow an access road past some cottages in the hamlet of **Wrench Green**. Turn left along a minor road, pass a junction at **Cockrah Foot** and keep straight ahead at a junction marked 'no through road' to pass more houses.

Walk a little way uphill and keep left to cross a cattle grid, as if to follow the track ahead. However, don't walk along the track, but drift slightly left across a pathless grassy slope, as if heading directly through the valley. Stiles and markers appear only when fences and hedges need crossing, and the route runs roughly parallel to the **River Derwent**. Pass the point where the Sea Cut takes water from the river, leaving only a small stream.

Walk beside the River Derwent, avoiding muddy patches and gorse by drifting uphill a little. Enter **Scarwell Wood**, following a clear duckboard path that runs parallel to the



river. You can gain access to a car park across a footbridge, where an information board illustrates local wildlife. If you do not require the car park, there is no need to cross the river, and the duckboard path can be followed further downstream through the **Forge Valley Woods**. The woodlands are dense and the undergrowth is lush, so the route is rather like a jungle trek!

The duckboard ends suddenly at a gate. Walk through a narrow meadow between the river and a wooded slope. Towards the end of the meadow, watch out for a track heading up to the right. Go through a gate and follow the grassy track past the tottering 14th-century ruins of **Ayton Castle**, then continue along a road past cottages at Castle Rise. Turn left down Yedmandale Road to return to the main road and Ye Olde Forge Valley Inn at **West Ayton**.

The duckboard riverside path through the jungle-like woods in the Forge Valley