

WOLD RANGERS

The Yorkshire Wolds is one of the main agricultural areas of the United Kingdom. Inevitably over the centuries there have been times of prosperity and times of struggle. As the industrial revolution moved to its final climax, wages for farm labourers were very low and the labourer's wife had lost her traditional income from spinning, sewing and craftwork which were removed to the factories in the towns. 40% of farmers now only employed casual labour and the numbers of vagrants increased dramatically. The 19th century saw the first arrival of the Wold Rangers, men (and some women) who roamed the region living and working in a nomadic way.



The onset of the Great War in 1914 saw the Wold Rangers melt away, many of the younger ones joined up and there were plenty of jobs going for those who wanted work but in the years immediately after 1918 the Wold Rangers multiplied again, nearly all having served in the army and, when they came out to no work, they just couldn't stick the towns.

The Wold Rangers were a familiar sight camping out on the green lanes and chalk pits.

So many and pitiful were they that a tradition started amongst farmers never to refuse some help to those who asked for it. The Wolds farm custom was adopted of leaving one barn door open at night time. It was rare any Ranger was sent away without some food and the open barns, horse boxes and ruined cottages at their disposal show how they were accepted. It is said there existed a mutual trust between farmers and the Wold Rangers, that they were renowned for their honesty.



Sir Tatton Sykes was renowned for his generosity and became known as the "Wold Ranger's friend". He instigated the hanging of a bell over the back door at Sledmere House and ordained that anyone who rung it would be given on demand a meat sandwich and mug of tea. (The custom remained in full use until the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939).

Some Wold Rangers were old soldiers, gentlemen, or women fallen on hard times, many were good workers – even entrepreneurs – facing life's challenges as best they could, others were thieving ruffians. They fell out and fought (especially after heavy drinking) but also watched out for each other and would leave secret signs in the hedges near farm gates with such messages as 'bad house', 'work to be had', 'dog bites' or 'good for a touch'.



For some the way of life may have been born of necessity, but to many it seems the free life was a choice. There was no welfare state for them to depend on – they were paid by results and their fall backs were the workhouse and prison. Most poached for the pot only, not selling the game – if they caught a lot, they ate a lot.

Green lanes in the Wolds landscape were not once Roman roads (straight though they are) but made at the time of the late 18th century enclosures. The lanes have the advantage of being 'rights of way' whilst also at the heart of farmland, with game abounding.

Chalk pits by the 1920s were largely disused, but made excellent camping grounds, with a bit of privacy provided by the bushes of hawthorn and sloes that had grown in their shelter.



Spike Casualty Ward, more commonly known today as the workhouse, was a welcome break from the outdoor life. According to Dog Geordie, you could stay for 3 days and get a bed and somewhere to sit. During the winter he would do the rounds of York, Malton and Drifffield. Indeed, another welcome refuge from the harsh Wold's climate was the local cells, Dog Geordie was one time caught by the police with poached rabbits on his shoulder. When summoned by the Magistrate and fined £2, he said, "where will I get that from?" and was told it was £2 or a month in jail. He thought he could do worse than a month in jail. It was not uncommon for vagrants to orchestrate arrest for a minor offence to get a short time inside.

The Wold Rangers have a special place in the folklore of rural East Yorkshire, and in the hearts of many, most especially the older farming generation, who as children, still recall the Rangers visiting their farms.

Discover our Trods named after Ginger Joe, Horse Hair Jack, Dog Geordie, Mad Halifax, and Croom Mabel for shorter circular routes.

THE WOLD RANGERS WAY STEP BY STEP

Start Point



Drifffield Market Place

From the Market Place set off west along Mill Street, continuing straight ahead on Kings Mill Road until reaching the first entrance into Drifffield Millennium Green on your right. Enter the park and follow the path keeping right, passing a bench on your right before bearing right between the two more benches and follow the path.



Keep on this path through the canopy of trees to a kissing gate at the A614 road. Turn right, walking along the pavement and on reaching the roundabout, turn left, crossing towards a metal gate into York Road. This is a very busy road so please take care and use the roundabout pedestrian crossing points.

Continue along York Road straight through Little Drifffield past the pond on your left and where the road bends right, go straight ahead between the trees and hedge onto a broad grass track. This soon reaches the road. Remain on the footpath until you reach the broad grass verge (3a, do not cross the road). Walk on the broad grass verge for approximately 0.2 mile and turn left onto the service road (3b) and passing Elmswell Hall Farm. Follow this rough road, walking between two stone pillars onto the 'green lane' until it reaches a junction with Garton Balk green lane.

Turn left on the green lane and follow the track that in 1 mile bends sharp right in a wooded area (4a). Heading west it continues in a straight line for 2.7 miles, crossing Station Road (4b) and passing Sand Pit Cottage (4c) and Little Grange (4d). Here the track surface becomes a road called Cadger Castle. Keep on this and cross the B1248 road (4e) into a green lane.

Walk up hill through the woods and after 1000 yards turn left at a bridleway sign, go through a gate and follow a bridleway track south across the first field (with hedge to the left), turn right and then left at the dew pond (5a). Walk straight following the track through Angus Farm (5b) to reach Tibthorpe Road

(5c). Turn right and after 400 yards of road-walking turn left on to a field edge bridleway. This goes downhill to a junction with a further bridleway (5d). Turn right, following the track west for 3 miles to cross Huggate Road (5e) and onto Hawold Bridle Road. Remain on this bridleway, part of The Minster Way Trail as it heads west for another 3 miles, crossing Mill Lane (5f) and Cobdale Lane (5g) to descend into Nettle Dale and reach a junction with The Yorkshire Wolds Way National Trail.



Turn right and follow the scenic Yorkshire Wolds Way trail for 6 miles descending to the dale bottom following the line of trees. Climb the steep ascent and turn right now following the dale top and Yorkshire Wolds Way signs with accompanying acorn symbol to take you around Jessops Plantation (6a), across Pocklington Lane (6b) and York Lane (6c), past Glebe Farm on the outskirts of Huggate, then north (6d) to Fridaythorpe walking through Horse Dale into Holm Dale (6e) through the gate and straight onto the green lane. You are almost at the half way point of The Wolds Rangers Way and also the highest village on the Wolds.

Turn right at the end of the lane by the phone box and go through Fridaythorpe village, turning left at the Manor Inn. Pass the pond on your left (7a) and church (right). Follow the road to Thixendale and just past the edge of the village, join the track on the left, again following The Yorkshire Wolds Way direction signs for approximately 3.75 miles to reach Thixendale. Enjoy the views as the route descends and ascends across open access land of Brubber Dale and Thixen Dale.



Turn left off the road into Thixendale village and then turn right at a Centenary Way direction post and remain on this track, that is also part of The Chalkland Way, passing The Cross Keys pub and cricket pavilion in Water Dale. The path bears left slightly up the hill across the field towards Raisthorpe Manor. To the left of the farm entrance (8a), go through the gate and follow the path and on reaching a junction with the Yorkshire Wolds Way (8b) turn right, following the combined route of Yorkshire Wolds Way, Centenary Way and Chalkland Way.

As it bears left towards Deepdale and Wharram Percy medieval village keep going straight ahead towards a kissing gate and remaining on the path until reaching a road where the Chalkland Way turns right (9a). Follow the Chalkland Way with views on the left of Fairy Dale and Whay Dale (9b), along this quiet road for approximately 2.75 miles as it descends to the village of Finber.

Passing the village pond, leave Finber, crossing the B1251 road to a field entrance track (10a). Take the left path, going diagonally uphill across the field and field edge paths, continuing in a south east direction on the Chalklands Way until reaching a junction with a broad green lane.

Turn left on the green lane and walk 3 miles to Sir Tatton Sykes Monument (11a), visible on the horizon. After the monument, cross the B1252 Garton Hill Road, passing Monument Cottage and Sledmere Grange Farm (11b) to descend to Garton Bottom Road. Go through a kissing gate onto a field edge bridleway and uphill, crossing the former Cottam airfield (11c). The track continues as York Road towards Kilham Westfield Farm (11d).

Follow the track and turn right at the direction post. Head south east for 1.5 miles, initially on a minor road and then green lane, passing Westfield Farm (12a) and Danes' Graves Plantation (12b) to reach Garton Balk (12c). Turn right and follow the bridleway until it meets a broad unsurfaced road towards Clitheroe Farm and turn left following the way marker.



This is Long Lane, aptly named, being approximately 2.5 miles in length and the route back to Drifffield. It has a changing surface, in part road, green lane and bridleway. Heading south follow it, taking care crossing the Kilham road (13a) and especially A614 Bridlington Road (13b). The track follows a pleasant wooded area and emerges between houses at the junction with Scarborough Road in Drifffield.

On Scarborough Road, turn left and where the road forks, keep right with the high brick wall of Highfield House on your right. On North Street, cross the road and walk through Remembrance Gardens turning right over the footbridge into Northfield Park. Walk through the park (with the stream on your left) and bear left over a footbridge. Turn right onto Laundry Lane and pass the old water pump on your right. Turn right onto Bridge Street and at the Church, turn left onto Middle Street North for the final 500 yards to Drifffield Market Place.

Finish Point



Dedicated to the Wold Rangers and the memory of Angela Antrim, whose book 'The Yorkshire Wold Rangers' so inspired the trustees and extracts of which feature in our leaflet.

We hope the Wold Rangers Way will as Angela wished, 'keep their memory green'.



ramblers
at the heart of walking



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Wharram Percy
A 3 mile detour takes you to the English Heritage site of Wharram Percy, the largest and best preserved deserted medieval villages in the country, occupied for six centuries until its abandonment soon after 1500.

JR Mortimer
Fimber is the birthplace of the generally acknowledged 'Father of Modern Archaeology' J R Mortimer in 1825. Famed for his careful excavations of prehistoric burrows on the chalklands and burial mounds in the Garton and Wetwang area. Later settling in Driffield, Mortimer dedicated the first archaeological museum ever in the town in 1878.

The Malton Dodger
Affectionally referred to as the Malton Dodger, the railway line between Driffield and Malton opened in 1853, retains still a place in the heart of the folklore of the area, despite closing completely in 1958. The line featured the famous Burdale Tunnel, transporting chalk from the quarries at Burdale and Wharram. In 1948 King George VI, Queen Elizabeth and the two princesses, travelled the Malton Dodger, alighting at Sledmere and Fimber station as they visited the Sykes family of Sledmere House. A short section of this beloved line has been re-opened and restored by the Yorkshire Wolds Railway.

Sykes Monument
Standing 37 metres high, the Sykes Monument dominates the Wolds landscape and a familiar landmark to the Wold Rangers since its erection in 1865. Built of Whitby and Mansfield stone in tribute to the 4th Baronet Sir Tatton Sykes of Sledmere 'by those who loved him as a friend and honoured him as a landlord'.

Garrowby Street
Parts of our route forms the ancient Roman Road from York to Bridlington, known as Garrowby Street. Geophysical studies have suggested evidence of the Romanised track adjacent to the green lanes of Fridaythorpe, Fimber and Wetwang, moving on eastwards towards Kilham and the coast.

St Michael and All Angels
Described by many as 'the most beautiful church of its size in Yorkshire' St Michael and All Angels at Garton on the Wolds was restored in the 19th century by the first Sir Tatton Sykes of Sledmere. The church features breathtaking coloured frescos, reredos and intricate wooden carvings as well as a beautiful mosaic tiled floor and stained glass windows.

The Second Battle of Waterloo
After severe drought in 1826 Fimber and Fridaythorpe went to war, as the inhabitants of Fimber denied their neighbours access to their ponds as one had dried up. In desperation the whole male population of Fridaythorpe invaded Fimber to take water by force. A great battle, in which the ladies of Fimber also join brandishing any available weaponry, broke out until the retreat of the invaders was achieved. Remembered with great pride by those from Fimber as 'the second battle of Waterloo'.

Red Kites at Holm Dale
Reintroduced over 30 years ago to Yorkshire, initially at Harewood House, but quickly spreading to the Yorkshire Wolds, look out for the beautiful Red Kites swooping elegantly over the dale with their characteristic forked tail.

Warrior Queens Chariot
Discovered in 2001, and heralded as 'the most significant and exciting middle Iron Age burials ever found', this Parisi tribe Warrior Queen's skeleton and her magnificent chariot was excavated at Wetwang and were over 2500 years old.

Garton Slack Chariot & Wetwang Slack Cemetery
In 1971 an early Iron Age chariot and the skeleton of its 30 year old owner were discovered at Garton Slack. Very close by in between 1975 and 1979, the Wetwang Slack Cemetery was excavated of 446 Iron Age skeletons with numerous accompanying weapons and jewellery.

Henry Best and Elmswell Old Hall
Elmswell Old Hall, built in 1634, Grade II* listed, one of the first brick buildings in East Yorkshire and the only Tudor hall of this style left in the region, sadly in a state of disrepair, was built by Henry Best. Best was famed for his Farming and Memorandum Books of 1642, a nationally important chronicle of farming and post medieval rural life and is regarded as a pioneer of agricultural development.

Huggate Well
Huggate is one of the highest villages on the Yorkshire Wolds and boasts the second deepest well in England at 339 feet in depth. It was dug into solid chalk in 1765 and it took 2 men 20 minutes to pull up a bucket of water, which probably explains why it was boarded up in 1873 and is now marked by a millstone on the Village Green.

Cottam Church
The Church of Holy Trinity is all that remains of the deserted village of Cottam. RAF Cottam was built as a bomber airfield in the Second World War, but due to the infamous cross winds was never used for flying.

Danes Graves
Known since time immemorial as Danes Graves, featuring small but numerous barrows, an archaeological burial site of the Iron Age Arras culture and excavated by, amongst others, J R Mortimer, who discovered various artefacts including a decorative cast bronze brooch in 1900, currently housed at the Hull and East Riding Museum with the remainder of the extensive Mortimer collection.

Pockthorpe
Pockthorpe Hall is the only remaining evidence of the hamlet of Pockthorpe, recorded in the Domesday Book but deserted by 1772 and enclosure.

Dew Ponds
Once a regular and distinctive feature of the Wolds landscape, these manmade ponds created in the 18th and 19th centuries to provide water for the animals in the dry chalk landscape. The cone shaped holes made in the chalk were lined with alternating layers of clay and straw and finished with a layer of stones. Restored by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust see dewponds in the valley bottom at Huggate and also Thixendale.

Waves and Time
A celebration of the chalk valleys and their formation thousands of years ago through ice and water, enjoy the serenity and beauty of this spiral earthwork created as part of the WANDER Wolds Art Trail in 2010.



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