



Fountains Abbey to Markenfield Hall, near Ripon

Introduction

This walk links two important medieval sites near Ripon in North Yorkshire – Fountains Abbey and Markenfield Hall. In monastic times their lands adjoined. In the 16th century both sites lost their original owners in the turmoil that followed Henry VIII's break with Rome. In the 20th century, changes of ownership led to restoration and conservation for them both.

For more details about these two sites please consult their official websites nationaltrust.org.uk/fountains-abbey-and-studley-royal-water-garden and markenfield.com



Nidderdale
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Map

OS Explorer 298:
Nidderdale

Distance/Time

6.5miles (10.5km). Allow about 3 hours.

Starting Points

- Car park at West Gate of Fountains Abbey, shown at point 1 on the map.
- From Ripon, walk up Whitcliffe Lane and join the walk at point 6. The 36 bus passes the end of Whitcliffe Lane and Quarry Moor, where a path takes you to Whitcliffe Lane.
- Take the 36 bus from Ripon or Harrogate passing the entrance to Markenfield Hall (Hell Wath Lane) and join the route at point 9. Alight at the Hollin Hall bus stop.

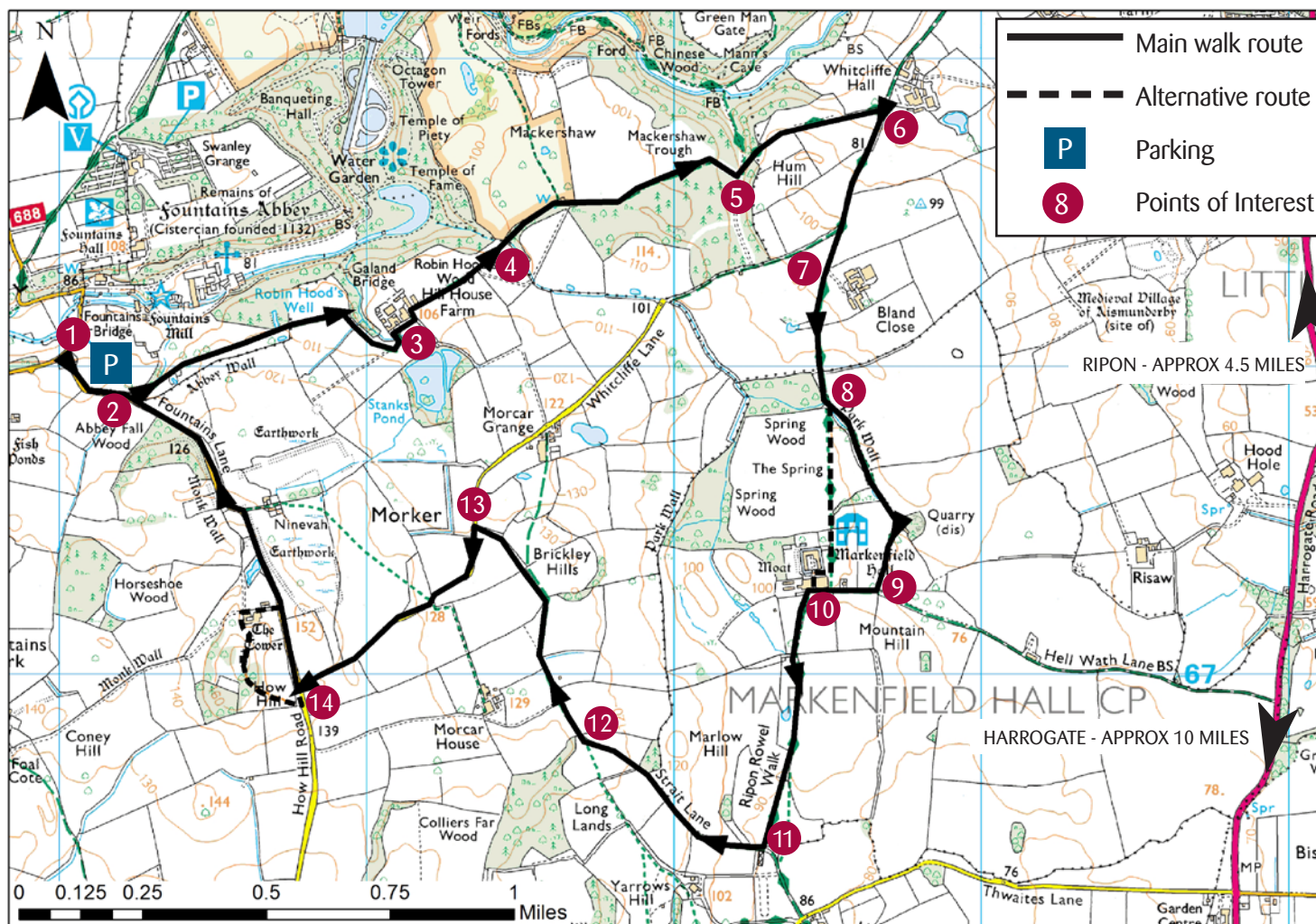
Terrain

Mainly field paths and through woods, with some gentle climbs. In wet weather, sections of the route are very muddy. All paths used are public rights of way and permissive paths. Dogs on a short lead please.

Useful Information

The West Gate car park is the only car park on the route. It is free to non-members of the National Trust. This car park is designated disabled parking so you are asked to park at the back of the parking area.

There is a regular bus service (36) from Leeds, Harrogate and Ripon. For timetable go to www.harrogatebus.co.uk/times



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The Route

1: From the West Gate car park turn right uphill, signed “Harrogate”. Turn left at the fork in the road, signed “Markington, Harrogate”.

2: Just after the road bends right, leave the road through a gate or over a stile on your left into a field. The field entrance is marked with a National Trust sign and bridleway signs. The grassy path leads straight on with the Abbey wall on your right. Continue past a pond in the wood to your left. *Stop at the telegraph pole for views of Fountains Hall and a small red roofed barn, behind which are a group of yew trees known as the Seven Sisters and said to have been planted by the monks. The wall is said to be the largest remaining monastic boundary wall in Europe. At two big oak trees, look down at the lumps and bumps in the sloping ground which are the remnants of the abbey’s industrial area. There is a second pond which may have supplied water or been connected with the tanning of leather.* Continue past two more ponds, go through the gate and keep to the track, following way-marks, then turn right through a metal gate and continue straight ahead, keeping the farm-house on your left. The track swings left over the stone bridge toward the farm.

3: This is Hill House Farm. Go through a metal gate at the other side of the bridge. Follow the way-marks to turn right in front of a large barn, then left following a FP sign, and right in front of more cattle sheds with an FP sign,

to a metal gate. Pass through onto a track, with a hedge to your right. When the hedge ends, bear slightly left downhill and cross the field to a gate into a wood.

4: Go through the gate and follow the track in the wood, passing an old archway in the Abbey Wall on your left, originally part of Mackershaw Lodge. *This is an entrance to Studley deer park – red deer can sometimes be seen grazing here.* Continue along this wide track for about 1km and descend to a junction of paths.

5: Here the track from Studley Park and Studley Roger comes up from the left. Go straight on, following the ascending way-marked path to reach a gate marked with a Ripon Rowel Walk sign. Go through this gate and continue straight on, following a line of trees towards a gate. Go through this gate and turn right.

6: You are now on Whitcliffe Lane. The lane rises and at the top, continue straight on, passing a picnic seat.

7: Cross a cattle grid at Bland Close, bear right and continue keeping the hedge on your right to reach a stile and gate. Cross the stile and continue straight on along the way-marked track across two fields.

8: Soon after, the track is joined from the right by the old deer park wall of Markenfield, you have a choice of

route. In dry weather you can reach Markenfield Hall by crossing the wall at a stile on your right leading down to a footbridge, over a stream, and uphill across an arable field to Markenfield Hall. *At this point you will have a fine view of the Hall.* At the end of the field, cross a stile into pasture, walk across the field close to the moat, cross a stile to your right over the stone wall and walk across the car park towards the gatehouse on the right. Turn left between farm buildings, then right. DO NOT go into the courtyard through the gatehouse (see point 9).

Alternatively, if the route above is muddy, continue along the track following the old park wall on your right, shortly becoming a newly repaired wall. *From here on you will have occasional views of Markenfield Hall across the fields.* Go through a gate and bear right when the park wall moves to your left and follow the track to reach a gate. Go through the gate and turn right on the tarmac drive.

9: You are now on Hell Wath Lane (as signified on the OS map) leading from the A61 to Markenfield Hall. Walk up the drive to the farm buildings, and where it turns right to the hall entrance you may follow it up to the moat and gatehouse. Here you can admire views of the Hall and courtyard. *Here you can admire views of the Hall and courtyard. Please respect the privacy of the residents and DO NOT go into the courtyard.*

10: Return from the gatehouse to Hell Wath Lane and turn right, then shortly go through the left hand of the 2 metal gates (way-marked) to head (south) along a grassy track passing through three fields and crossing two stiles.

11: In the third field, follow the track between fences, at the end of which bear right and cross the field on an obvious path to a stile. Cross the stile and turn right up the narrow way-marked track called Strait Lane. *This lane is probably very old and is called a “holloway”.* Continue along it for nearly 1km, passing Christmas tree plantations on both sides, to emerge into a field through a small gate.

12: Follow the way-marked path along the edge of a field with the hedge on your right and *views of How Hill to your left.* At the field end, go through a metal gate in the corner into another field with the hedge on your right. Pass through another metal gate at the end, then in the next field go right across the field, to reach a third metal gate. In the next field corner, take the gap in the hedge to the left of a wooden gate to walk along a permissive path with the hedge on your right to a metal gate onto Whitcliffe Lane. *As you walk across these fields you have views of Morcar House to the left and How Hill now ahead.*

13: Turn left onto Whitcliffe Lane, following it to the T-junction with How

The Route continued

Hill Road. *Here you can turn left to climb How Hill for the views, or right to return along Fountains Lane and the West Gate car park.*

14: To visit How Hill, *the former chapel of St Michael*, cross the road and walk 75 metres left and take a permissive path through a small gate on your right after a small copse. Climb the hill bearing right to reach the chapel. *From here there are fine views to Ripon Cathedral, York Minster and possibly Selby Abbey. It is thought this was a place of pilgrimage in medieval times (because of the views of 3 religious buildings).* Look also for the *Yorkshire Moors and the White Horse to the NW.* Return to How Hill Road, by walking down hill on the other side, to the left of How Hill Cottages, and then right past the cottages to the road. Turn left and follow the road back to the car park.

This walk route has been prepared by the Historic Parks and Gardens Study Group with support from Nidderdale AONB and in collaboration with the National Trust and the owners and Friends of Markenfield Hall.

**National Trust**

**HISTORIC PARKS AND GARDENS STUDY GROUP**

**Markenfield Hall**

The Markenfield to Fountains Trail - historical information

Introduction
Fountains Abbey and Markenfield Hall have a long and interlinked history. Fountains Abbey was founded in 1132, and the first reference to Markenfield appears in William the Conqueror’s Domesday Book. Interaction began early on in their respective histories, with the Markenfield family making a number of grants, of both land and money, to the Abbey, in return for spiritual rewards, throughout the 12th and early 13th centuries. For example, Ralph Le Bret (Le Bret being an old family name of the Markenfield family) gave Fountains Abbey 20 acres of land for himself and his family to become ‘sharers in the brotherhood of the church of Fountains and the prayers and benefits of the Cistercian Order’. Early residents of Markenfield, gave large tracts of land, and some money in return for the Fountains monks saying prayers for the family, or, occasionally, interment in the abbey’s burial ground. In 1410 Markenfield even provided refuge to the ousted Abbot of Fountains Abbey, Roger Frank.

In the period after 1230 dealings between Fountains and Markenfield took on a more practical, business-like tone. Most records we have relate to transactions of land for money. There was also some exchanging of supplies. Around 1314, John de Markenfield oversaw the construction of a lead conduit built to convey water from the well-head on monastic land to Markenfield. It is not until the 15th

century and the Wars of the Roses that we again see a close relationship between the Markenfields and the monks of Fountains Abbey. This came through the political unity of another John de Markenfield and the Fountains Abbot John Greenwell, in their support for the Lancastrian claim to the English throne.

After the end of the Wars of the Roses, however, the two sites again drifted apart. In the early sixteenth century both had their own issues to overcome. The Markenfields had lost favour with the Tudor dynasty after playing a part in the Pilgrimage of Grace, a rebellion against the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536. Shortly after this Fountains itself became a victim of the dissolution when, in 1539, the then Abbot of Fountains, Marmaduke Bradley, along with his monks, surrendered the Abbey to Henry VIII’s forces.

During the 16th century the Markenfield family fell from favour with the royal household after their involvement in a series of rebellions. After the Pilgrimage of Grace, the Markenfield family were lucky to escape the severe punishment meted out to their contemporaries. However, during the reign of Elizabeth I, in 1569 after the family’s second rebellion against the new religion, the Markenfields were not forgiven. Owing to the part Sir Thomas Markenfield played in the Rising of the North his lands were confiscated, and he and

some of his relatives fled into exile. His wife lived on in the service village and died in poverty. It is the family’s decline which we have to thank for the remarkably original condition the house and moat remain in today.

Fountains Hall
As you walk from the car park along the Abbey wall, you will be treated to splendid views of Fountains Hall. This early 17th century Elizabethan country house is a Grade 1 listed property.

The hall was built by Sir Stephen Proctor; the money to build the house came by marriage and some of the stone to construct the Hall came from the nearby Abbey. Proctor even relocated an entire staircase from the Abbey to his new home.

The hall has had many uses since its construction, including stately home, courthouse, estate employee’s lodging and farmer’s house. Today it is owned and managed by the National Trust and some rooms are open to the visitors to Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal. The rest is still tenanted being holiday flats and staff accommodation.

Fountains Abbey
The Abbey itself was founded in 1132, by thirteen monks who had left the Benedictine Abbey of St Mary’s in York, to live a simpler life in the way of the fast growing Cistercian order.

Continued over

The Markenfield to Fountains Trail - historical information continued

The Abbey

expanded quickly throughout the 12th and 13th centuries, amassing huge tracts of land from the Lake District to the North Sea. The Abbey, the ruins of which we see today, was built in the 12th century after the previous buildings had been burnt down as the result of an external dispute concerning the archbishopric. Fountains Abbey became a large and important abbey in England. However, it was not immune to changes throughout the 14th century and went into decline. In addition, the community of monks had been affected externally by the Black Death arriving in England in 1348. Furthermore, by this time in English history, monasteries were beginning to be seen as outdated institutions and people were beginning to look elsewhere, often to their parish church for spiritual benefits, as opposed to the monasteries. This is illustrated by the behaviour of the Markenfields who no longer made donations for spiritual rewards.

Fountains Abbey did experience some revival in the late 15th and early 16th centuries, when its community grew from just thirty three monks to around eighty, reaching somewhat near its pre-plague level. However, this resurgence was swiftly ended during the reign of Henry VIII, when the Abbot of Fountains surrendered the Abbey at the dissolution of the monasteries in 1539.

The Abbey Wall and Mackershaw Lodge

The Abbey wall dates back to the construction of the Abbey itself in the 12th century. The wall originally stood at eleven foot or three to four metres high. Allowing for the lower average height of people who existed at the time of its construction the wall would have stood at roughly double the height of most people. The wall, therefore, gave the Abbey an immediate sense of importance and power in the eyes of the surrounding populations.

Set into the wall part way round this walk is an archway. This is an entrance to the Abbey grounds, but also existed to provide access to Mackershaw Lodge. Mackershaw Lodge was used both as an estate worker's house, and gatehouse throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Markenfield Hall

Markenfield Hall is a beautiful, and extremely rare, fortified mediaeval manor house. The owner of the hall received a licence to crenellate in 1310. The Markenfields were a prominent and important family in the Northern nobility, and had close relations with the Percy family, the most important noble family in the north of England.

However during the 16th century the family fell from favour with the royal household after their involvement in a series of rebellions.

After the Markenfields' lands were confiscated they were awarded to Laurence Meres MP. Later they passed to the family of Sir Henry Gates MP whose daughter married a member of the Egerton family. Later it was let out as a tenanted farm house. This situation continued until at least 1761, when the hall was bought by Fletcher Norton, later ennobled as Lord Grantley, the direct descendant of the Sir Richard Norton, uncle of the last Sir Thomas Markenfield. For the Grantley family Markenfield remained as a tenanted farmhouse as part of it is today. In the 1980s restoration began in earnest on the mediaeval hall and it is now occupied by a descendant of the family.

The reason why Markenfield remains so close to its original design of the 1300s is because, unlike other large manor houses, there was no ambitious owner to "improve" the house, or, as often happened, knock it down and construct a large country house or stately home in its place. This was the fate of most manor houses in England dating from the 14th century, making Markenfield Hall one of only a handful of such houses which still exist.

How Hill – Chapel of St Michael the Archangel

According to Walbran the earliest mention of a chapel is 1346. A document of that date grants 100 days indulgences to anyone leaving gifts for the maintenance of the chapel.

The purpose of the chapel is unclear. Was it for celebrations, the reception of pilgrims or to provide for the spiritual needs of the inhabitants of the Vill or the servants at the granges of Morker and Haddockstones? It was probably restored by Abbott Huby and sold after the dissolution.

The site was bequeathed to John Aislabie in 1716 by the Rev Robert Weeks, rector of Goldsborough, in exchange for providing a dowry for his daughter and settling his debts.

The tower was erected by John Aislabie in 1718 who used it as a banqueting house and a prominent feature of his garden design.

In the 20th century Markenfield Hall and Fountains Abbey have undergone programmes of restoration and conservation. English Heritage has given a Grade 1 listing to Markenfield Hall. In 1986, the Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal estate was recognised as a World Heritage Site.