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## Cover Bridge to Thornton Steward and Jervaulx Abbey

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Lay-by at Cover Bridge (SE 144871)
Ordnance Survey map	OS Explorer 302 – Northallerton and Thirsk
Distance	7.2 miles
Date of Walk	25 September 2024
Traffic light rating	

**Introduction:** This walk is a really pleasant Wensleydale wander, taking in various interesting sights. I particularly noticed some wonderful trees and I would guess this would be a great walk to see autumn colours. The route briefly follows the course of the River Ure from the historic Ulshaw bridge and after Jervaulx Abbey then briefly the River Cover.

Ulshaw Bridge is a late medieval structure built 1673/74 and is a Grade II Listed Building. There are triangular cutwaters rising to provide refuges and two have built in seats. Unusually, one also contains a pillar which was a base for a sundial. In the Middle Ages, it was a main crossing point for the River Ure and there has been a crossing point here since Roman times

Danby Hall is an extensive building of great antiquity. The original building may have been constructed in the 14<sup>th</sup> century but it was enlarged around 1570 and significantly altered in the 1850s. There is a date stone on the balustrade at the top of the house showing 1658.

St. Oswald's church dates from the 11<sup>th</sup> Century and is believed to be the oldest church in Wensleydale. It stands a little way out of the village to the west.

Thornton Steward is a very upmarket looking village. Records show a village existed here as long ago as 1041. The name may have originated from Thorn (the bush) and Olde English "Tun" meaning small farmstead plus Steward, the name of someone who once held the manor. It has provided a super facility for walkers – The Ramblers Retreat which is a perfect picnic lunch stop.

The walk goes through Jervaulx Abbey grounds though not in close proximity. If you want to see it, it is privately owned and open from dawn till dusk on an 'honesty box' basis. It was one of the great Cistercian abbeys of Yorkshire and was dedicated to St Mary in 1156. It is a Grade I listed building.

The walk starts from a small lay-by adjacent to the Cover Bridge Inn. To get there, take the A6108 from Ripon. About three quarters of a mile after passing the turn for East Witton, you go across the bridge over the river Cover. The pub is immediately on the left along with the lay-by.

**Start:** From the lay-by (SE 144871), cross the road and walk along the road signed for "Spennythorne 1¾ miles". Cross the Ulshaw Bridge then turn right following the sign for "Thornton Steward 2½ miles".

Follow the road for just under a quarter of a mile and as it turns sharply left, keep straight ahead along a broad track indicated by a public bridleway fingerpost (SE 147872).

Pass Danby Low Mill (indicated by a large millstone by the track) and continues on the obvious track to Danby Hall, pretty much unmistakable because of its grandeur.

As you get opposite its centre and the main path continues to curve left, leave the main path and continue straight ahead across the grass to a corner of the field where there are two gates. Go through the right hand gate marked with a yellow arrow. There is also a sign indicating "Landowners welcome caring walkers" (SE 161871). Follow the left hand boundary of the field, leaving the field via a gate in the corner in the direction of the yellow arrow, now following the right hand boundary.

Follow the right hand boundary in the next two fields also, then go through a metal gate.

Now follow the left hand boundary in this and the subsequent field reaching St. Oswald's Church (SE 170869). Go through the gate into the churchyard, leaving via a walkers' gate into the woods.

Bear left in the woods to a stile at the boundary. Cross and bear roughly towards the building in the far corner. As you get closer to it, you will spot a stile into the trees. Cross and follow the path through the wood.

It joins a tarmac lane. Turn left along it which takes you into Thornton Steward. Just into the village reach Ramblers Retreat – a great spot for lunch. I won't spoil the surprise!

Continue along the main street of Thornton Steward, passing the old village pump and information board at what looks like a stone bus shelter (though I don't think the village is served by buses).

Virtually opposite the 'bus shelter', turn right following a public footpath fingerpost (SE 178871).

Follow the lane and after going through a walkers' gate, you reach a four way fingerpost. Keep straight on following the sign for "Kilgram Bridge".

Go through two walkers' gates in quick succession then aim for the left hand end of the group of trees ahead.

From the corner of the trees, turn left to follow the right hand boundary in that and the next two fields.

Reach a large barn and go through the gate following a yellow marker (SE 187866). The path here is well used and easy to follow.

Go through a gate into a field and head for the far left hand corner.

Half way down the next field, turn left through the gate and follow the left hand boundary (SE 187863).

Cross a stile and bear right. If, as when I crossed, it was planted, walk in single file to minimise crop damage. You are heading for a stile and gateway to the right of the bank of trees ahead (SE 190861). From there, follow the grassy lane to the road. Turn right along the road.

Follow the road for just over half a mile. As it turns sharply left, continue straight ahead, between two stone gateposts with ball finials following an old stile public footpath fingerpost, through the grounds of Jervaulx Abbey.

Stay on this tarmac drive all the way through the grounds, passing a pond and the ruins of the abbey until you reach the road at the far side. Turn right along the road. There is a wide verge for most of this section but be careful of the traffic as it is quite a busy road.

After about three hundred yards, look out for a fingerpost on the right for “Six Dales Trail” and “Cover Bridge 1¾ miles” (SE 167859). The broad track leads down to the river where you turn left to follow the riverside path back to Cover Bridge where you turn right back to the lay-by.

