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Rylstone Cross and Cracoe War Memorial Ridge

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Lay-by yards north of the village pond at Rylstone, on the B6265 between Skipton and Grassington (SD 969588)
Ordnance Survey map	OL2 Yorkshire Dales – Southern & Western
Distance	6.6 miles
Date of Walk	17 February 2015
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: Rylstone Cross and Cracoe War Memorial ridge is a popular Yorkshire Dales walk for those who know it but it may elude those who don't, because it is not covered by Rights of Way on the OS maps. It is the ridge which looks down on you as you drive along the B6265 between Skipton and Grassington. The cross and the memorial are prominent landmarks which sit at either end of the ridge.

The ridge, which is on the edge of Barden Moor, is also covered as part of my Upper Barden Round walk but this is a shorter route for those who just want to do the cross and memorial ridge.

The walk starts from a lay-by at the village of Rylstone. Apart from the cross, its claims to fame are that it is home of the real Calendar Girls and it featured in a poem by William Wordsworth, The White Doe of Rylstone (or, The Fate of The Nortons). This is too complex a tale to explain here!

Sitting at the southern end of the ridge, Rylstone "Cross" was originally a large man-shaped rock, known as "The Stone Man". A wooden cross was subsequently erected to celebrate the "Peace of Paris" in 1783, a number of treaties which ended the American War of Independence. Finally, the current cross was erected in 1995.

Cracoe War Memorial to the locals who perished in the two World Wars, sits at the northern end of the ridge and is in the form of a massive obelisk.

Views all along the ridge are far reaching and both monuments provide for good picnic spots amongst the rocks.

For the majority of this walk, route finding is easy. However, most descriptions which I have seen, describe it in an anti-clockwise direction. Having been a victim in the past and having met others who have also suffered, I can say with confidence that trying to find a **particular**, described, descent route **from** the Cracoe War Memorial end is all but impossible, as there are no clear paths. One ends up cursing one's way down an unpleasant steep descent of rough and in some places severely furrowed grass, with no clear point of reference. At best, it does not do the knees any favours!

A clockwise ascent is (a bit) easier to describe and at worst, you know where you are aiming for – the top! It does not matter at which point you reach the ridge. You just turn right when you get there. Here, it is Access Land so in essence, the route is up to you. The GPX route is based on the track of my actual ascent.

The walk starts from a lay-by yards north of the village pond at Rylstone, on the B6265 between Skipton and Grassington.

Please note there is no access for dogs on Barden Moor as a result of one of 52 bylaws which were introduced by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority when the 11th Duke of Devonshire introduced open access on to Barden Moor in 1969. The 52 byelaws were introduced in the main for conservation purposes.

Start: From lay-by (SD 969588), cross the B6265 and head up the obvious lane opposite the village pond, following the fingerpost for “Rylstone Church” and “Manor House Farm”. Continue straight ahead at the church, ignoring the route off to the right which is your return path.

At the farm, head through the gateway, just to the right of the farmyard, following the fingerpost for “Cracoe” and walk along the track to the left of another pond. You now follow this track for three quarters of a mile. It soon becomes a walled lane.

The track curves back to the B6265 but just before you get to the road, turn right on to what is almost a secret and very pretty lane into Cracoe (Back Lane) (SD 976560). Passing tourists would never learn of this lane. Follow it through the village and round a 90° right turn.

Turn left at the next junction and after 100 yards, arrive at a ‘T’ junction where you are faced with an information board about Barden Moor and Barden Fell Access Areas. Turn right here (SD 980601).

Follow this walled lane past two distinct copses of trees. 100 yards or so after the second, the walled lane ends at a series of sheep pens. Go through the farm gate on the left (SD 987598).

A faint path starts, following the wall and as you progress starts to very gradually move away from it. There are a couple of places where you might be tempted by tracks going off to the right but my advice would be to ignore these.

This is where describing a route becomes difficult. You may notice what I can only describe as a “knobbly bit” of hillside ahead of you, with a number of deep gullies/furrows leading in its direction (SD 993599). If you go right and uphill here, you should see a reasonable way to ascend.

Not far above this, I followed faint quad bike marks uphill. As an aiming point, if you look up the hill you should be able to see what at first glance looks like a ruin but is actually a rocky outcrop – see picture. You are aiming to pass just to the right of this (SD 997596).



Rock "Aiming Point"

Once you get to this outcrop, just continue uphill and you will soon see the wall which runs along the ridge. I arrived just by a large flat rock (SD 997593). Turn right at the wall.

At the war memorial (SD 993588), you need to climb over the wall via the ladder stile, then, turn right to follow the wall all the way along the ridge.

At Rylstone Cross (SD 982576), if you want a closer look and to see the view, there is another ladder stile but otherwise, follow the wall down until you meet a clear path at a 'T' junction, by a gate (SD 985571). Turn right, through the gate. There are some posts with blue tops marking the route to begin with.

As you go through a depression, the track becomes wider and the correct route is now crystal clear.

Follow the track down to another 'T' junction by a three way fingerpost. Turn right (SD 974577) for "Rylstone". There is another information board here about Barden Moor and Barden Fell Access Areas.

After a quarter of a mile, where there is a three way fingerpost turn right through a gate by a copse of trees for "Rylstone Church" to follow a curving path to back to St Peter's Church (SD 973581). Turn left at the church, back to the car.

Rylstone Cross and Cracoe War Memorial

