



Walk 1 – Heber’s Ghyll and the Swastika Stone

Distance: 4 miles (6.5km)

Time: 2 to 3 hours

Terrain: Mainly good tracks and broad paths, but some very steep steps and muddy moorland paths.

Parking: Roadside and public car parks (and toilets) in Ilkley town centre. **Public**

Transport: Metro Wharfedale line, X84 bus from Leeds, 650 from Bradford.

Start: Ilkley Manor House (just off the A65, behind the church).

Please abide by all governmental guidance with regard to Covid-19.

This ramble provides an excellent introduction to Ilkley’s famous Moor and some of splendid scenic walking routes laid out in mid Victorian times to encourage patients at the town’s grand hydro establishments to enjoy the benefit of Wharfedale’s fresh air and landscape beauty – as well as offering an insight into the area’s long history.

1. Turn left outside the archway leading into the Manor House into Church Street, crossing at the pedestrian lights and keeping ahead to the traffic lights. Turn right into Brook Street. At the top of Brook Street turn right to walk along The Grove with its fashionable shops and Betty’s famous café. As the main road bends right, cross to the little Memorial Garden opposite and continue half left along Grove Road, past Victorian stone terraces dating from the early years of the railway, and grander Edwardian villas; passing a post box and then, on the right, Heathcote, the spectacular Italianate village designed for a Bradford wool magnate by Sir Edward Lutyens, the iconic Edwardian architect.

2. Continue until you come to a pillar box and cross roads with Victorian Avenue. Turn left uphill, past new housing development. Where the road bears right, becoming Hollingwood Rise, take the narrow enclosed alleyway or ginnel straight ahead. This soon meets an unsurfaced road. Cross, keeping straight ahead up the path which ascends into woodland up steep, uneven stone steps. After a short steep climb you reach the end of Queen’s Drive by a tall stone house. Turn right to follow a beautiful path through Panorama Woods, a fine deciduous wood that covers the hillside, before gradually descending to join Hollin Hall Road, where you turn left to join a grassy path, parallel to the roadside fence, through a gap stile on the right. This soon bears right following garden walls and fences.

3. At the fork by overhead power lines, take the right hand path which soon descends, via steps, to the road. Turn left then first left again along on a broad path across the first of seven bridges of Heber’s Ghyll, which you keep to your left. This is a beautiful semi-natural gorge, intensely green, moss-covered rocks and ferns penetrated by a tumbling stream, a natural Victorian garden with footpaths and wooden bridges carefully constructed to take advantage of views of tumbling waterfalls, through lovely oak, birch, holly, sycamore and pine woods. It’s a steep but rewarding climb with frequent benches for the less energetic.



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4. At the top of the Ghyll, bear right by the remains of an old shelter, to emerge on the edge of the moor at a metal gate. Turn right along the outside wall, to another metal gate, and make your way over a narrow gill and a stream (when wet) to bear left up a narrow path through bilberry and bracken. Bear right to emerge on the moor edge to join a broader path leading westwards towards what appears to be a little iron cage on a craggy rock ahead.
5. This is the celebrated Ilkley Moor Swastika Stone or “Fylfot”. On the rock protected railings, is the faint carved Indo-European symbol of eternity - a modern replica close by is more legible. This is only one of many hundreds of mysterious markings or “cup and ring” stone on craggy outcrops of the huge expanse of Rombalds Moor, of which Ilkley Moor only forms a part. Dating from Bronze Age times around 1,800 BC, the origins and purpose of the markings are a mystery, but may be linked to religious activity or tribal boundaries. It is also is a magnificent viewpoint across the valley to Addingham and beyond. Beamsley Beacon is the notable pinnacle on Langbar Moor ahead.
6. Return on the broad path parallel with the hillside, through a broad gate and then over a footbridge with Panorama Reservoir some 100 yards below, and Silver Well Cottage above to your right. Keep left and then join the wallside track, keeping ahead through the gate across the track, continuing below a small car park, before bearing slightly left over a stone bridge across Spicey Gill to join the moor road, Keighley Gate. Keep left downhill, but soon cross to bear right along a narrow signed path onto the moor. This contours the hillside, past manhole covered springs, to join the main track over a shallow ford up to a knoll, crowned by a complex of white buildings and pines.
7. This is White Wells, a remarkable mid 18th century Bath House, build by local landowner Squire Middleton to enable the sick and infirm, carried up from the town by donkey, to be immersed in the supposedly healing ice-cold spring. A little tap in a stone well behind the house still dispenses the waters. On most weekends and holiday times the Plunge Baths are open and the café serves light refreshments. This is another splendid viewpoint, this time looking eastwards towards Norwood Edge and Almscliffe Crag.
8. To return to Ilkley, take the narrow path to the east from the far corner of the stone patio to descend to little Upper Tarn. Unless choosing to explore this semi-natural pool, continue down the steep path to The Tarn, a charming if urbanised ornamental pond complete with shelter. Keep left to join the main path to Wells Road, and turn left, over the cattle grid, to cross to Darwin Gardens and car park. This Millennium Green Garden, complete with maze, celebrates Charles Darwin’s visit to Ilkley in 1859. After visiting the maze, make for the bottom corner, or the far end of the car park, where a bridge crosses to a streamside path. Follow this downhill, across the entrance to former Wells House, keeping the same direction through Linnburn Mews, across Queen’s Drive and into Wells Walk where on the right a metal gate leads into Mill Ghyll. Follow the path by the stream through this attractive park back to the centre of Ilkley.

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