

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 got a bed and somewhere to sit. During the winter he would do the rounds of York, Malton and Driffield. 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 and Croom Mabel for shorter circular routes.

THE WOLD RANGERS WAY STEP BY STEP

MAD HALIFAX

A giant of a man, with long, wild unruly hair and a very long ginger beard was not who you wanted to see on the horizon striding like a demented scarecrow towards the farmhouse! Mad Halifax, a parson's son who could tell you all you ever wanted to know about Norman and Saxon churches yet struck complete terror amongst the women and children. No bread or pie was safe as his huge nose could sniff out the fresh baking as it cooled in the farmyard from miles away, a momentary turn of the back and the cunning Halifax would have those pies and be off! Memories of the terrifying Mad Halifax lasted long in the minds of the children of the Wold's farmsteads and tales of his antics are what legends are made of – setting huge fires to make tea in a bucket, sneaking into the loose boxes to steal the kit bags from fellow Rangers as they slept and pinching sandwiches from petrified children as he lurked in the shadows near the schools.

He finally got his comeuppance when a young farm lad, George Nellist, unwittingly plunged his pitchfork into a great mound of hay only to find the staggering sight of Mad Halifax, hair waving wildly and ginger beard strewn with hay, emerge without a stitch on, having got caught in a storm the previous evening and had taken his raggedy attire off to dry!

Start Point



Driffield 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 Driffield 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 Driffield 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 (do not cross the road). Walk on the

broad grass verge for approximately 0.2 mile and turn left onto the service road (3a) 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.

At this point you leave the main Wold Rangers Way and follow the Mad Halifax Trod

Walk up hill through the woods. After 1000 yards, the main Wold Rangers Way takes a left turn at a bridleway sign, ignore this and carry straight on.



After about 1/2 mile, take the right turn off the green lane onto the footpath through Thorn Dale heading North towards the village of Wetwang.

Keep straight on past the lane on the left for Lodge Cottage and Huggate Lodge and join Thorndale Lane where you then turn right and follow the footpath that brings you into Wetwang on Southfield Road.

Turn left and follow Southfield Road until it meets the A166 main road through the village. Take care crossing the road onto Northfield Road which is slightly opposite (to the right). Walk down Northfield Road and where the road bends sharply to the right, take the footpath on your left and walk diagonally across the field to the gate in the far corner. From here walk diagonally again across the next field to the B1248.

Cross the B1248 (taking care of traffic) and follow the footpath which takes you across the field to join with the green lane to the West of the B1248.

On joining the green lane, turn right back towards the B1248 and again, cross the road back onto the green lane. Follow the green lane (York Road) heading towards Sykes Monument, which should be visible to the North East.

Return to the Wold Rangers Way.



After the monument, cross the B1252 Garton Hill Road, passing Monument Cottage and Sledmere Grange Farm to descend to Garton Bottom Road. Go through a kissing gate onto a field edge bridleway and uphill, crossing the former Cottam airfield. The track continues as York Road towards Kilham Westfield Farm. Turn right at the direction post.



Head southeast for 1.5 miles, initially on a minor road and then green lane, passing Westfield Farm and Danes' Graves Plantation to reach Garton Balk. Turn right and follow the bridleway until it meets a broad unsurfaced road near Clitheroe Farm. Turn left.

This is Long Lane, aptly named, being approximately 2.5 miles in length and the route back to Driffield Town Centre. It has a changing surface, in part road, green lane and bridleway. Heading south follow it, taking care crossing the Kilham and A614 Bridlington Roads. The track emerges between houses at the junction with Scarborough Road.

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 Driffield Market Place.

Finish Point

Version 2 (April 2022)

22 miles
TROD
MAD HALIFAX
THE
WOLD RANGERS



WALKING MAPS OF THE YORKSHIRE WOLDS

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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

SPORT
ENGLAND



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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.

J R 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 Driffild, 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 Driffild 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'.

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.

RAF Driffild

Opened in 1935 RAF Driffild played a vital role in the Second World War. Days after the declaration of war on Germany on 1st September 1939, three sorties left Driffild to drop leaflets on the Ruhr. The airfield was badly bombed in August 1940 during the Battle of Britain, resulting in 14 deaths, however after repairs re-opened in 1941 and RAAF flew Halifax's from the air base as part of Bomber Command. During the Cold War RAF Driffild played host to the Thor nuclear missiles and eventually closed in 1977.

Pockthorpe

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

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.

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.

0 1/2 1 1 1/2 2 miles

Mad Halifax Trail

Tumuli
Earthworks

WOLD RANGERS

