

Walk: Kirkham Priory and the River Derwent

The walk:

A five-mile (8km) circular walk starting from Kirkham.

Difficulty: Flat with steep sections at the beginning, several gates and boardwalk on the route. Allow 2.5 hours to complete.

You will need OS Explorer Map No.300 Howardian Hills and Malton (Yorkshire Wolds North).

Parking: Kirkham, parking area in front of Priory.

Public transport: The 840, 845 or 843 service runs between Malton and York half-hourly Monday to Saturday. Get off the bus at Whitwell on the Hill, which is a short walk from the start of the walk. On Sundays, services run hourly.



Remember to keep to marked footpaths and treat the countryside and farmland with respect.

1. Exit the parking area turning left (L) crossing Kirkham Bridge over the River Derwent and secondly a railway line.
2. At the public footpath sign turn L and take a steep uphill path through Oakcliffe Wood to emerge onto a road. Turn L and proceed along the road for a very short distance. As you walk south past Oakcliffe Farm you go past several fields of very good ridge and

furrow. You may be able to spot the curves which reflect the way the old ox ploughs turned at the headland. These fields relate to the medieval village of Crambe or Crambom as it was spelled in Domesday Book in 1086.

3. At the public footpath sign turn L and walk along a track by the edge of the woodland on the left. The path continues through the trees to a field gate at the far end. Pass through the

gate and turn immediately right (R) along the right-hand edge of the field. In the corner turn L and soon head downhill to join a track. There are fine views across the Vale of York to the edge of the Wolds and the Howardian Hills. Continue along the track until it joins the road. A Viking hogback stone is built into the chancel wall of the church. Well defined earthworks of earlier buildings and garths are visible on the village green and to the north of village.

4. Turn L and proceed along the road, crossing over the railway line. After approximately ¼ mile (400m) turn L at the public footpath sign. The railway was built as an extension of the York and North Midlands railway in the 1850s, taking it through to Scarborough. It is still open.

5. Follow the path across the field, ahead is a view of Howsham Hall and church on the opposite side of the river. Keep ahead across the next field, cross a footbridge over a ditch and continue across the next field. Heading down to the river after the level crossing you will see the park of Howsham Hall, an early 17th century house, now a school.

6. On approaching the river bank pass through the gate and turn L onto the path beside the River Derwent and follow the river back to Kirkham Bridge. The route is pleasantly tree-lined. There are several footbridges and short sections of boardwalk. The terrain is mainly a mixture of woodland and meadow. Sections of the path are likely to be muddy and boggy. The ruins of Kirkham Priory draw the eye across the river. Founded between 1122 and 1130 by Walter L'esper, it was extensively enlarged and rebuilt in the first half of the 13th century. It was heavily in debt by 1380 and consisted of a prior and sixteen canons at this time and at the dissolution in about 1535.

7. Finally, go through a kissing gate onto the road by Kirkham Bridge and turn R over it to return to the start.

