

A Walk Around Pickering

Distance – 2 miles

Start – Pickering Information Centre

Toilets – Ropery Road (Op. Inf. Centre), Pickering Castle, Railway Station, Eastgate (near roundabout)

Map – free Pickering map from Information Centre.

Time – as long as it takes, there is a castle, interesting church and museum on the route.

Starting from the Information Centre walk along Ropery Road towards the railway station, cross the road and walk through the large gates on your left, at the start of the railway line. On the right is a length of the original railway line that carried the horse drawn carriages from Whitby to Pickering before the advent of steam traction. Walk along to the station which is now the terminus of the North Yorkshire Moors Railway. Walk down the entrance steps and turn left, in the wall is a Victorian letter box (VR cast on the face), probably one of the original fittings of the station, which was built in 1845. Cross the road and turning left, pass a steep footpath with a name board Brant Hill, this is dialect for steep. Continue along bearing right up Castle Road, this is now traffic free although once a public road! Where the road levels out is a good view of the railway and the old cottages below, the small hill on the horizon is Beacon Hill and has been used for signal and celebratory bonfires, and was used by the Royal Observer Corps. In W.W.2. Pickering had three water mills, all still standing, together with their weirs and water runways. High mill is the large red brick building with the water running underneath the mill and then, under the railway to rejoin Pickering Beck. The other mills will be passed in walks in the book Straight ahead of you looms the walls of Pickering castle. Turn right and at the top of the hill, on your left, is the entrance to Pickering Castle, now in the care of English Heritage. A lot of material was taken away to repair Scarborough Castle after being besieged during the Civil war, also many local houses were built of stone from the castle. The area to the North of Pickering was a Royal hunting forest, much of the area still belonging to the Duchy of Lancaster (the Crown).

From the castle walk along Castle Gate, at the end of the row of old cottages is a mounting block, High Hall used to stand opposite and judging by the wear on the steps, many boots climbed up here to their horses. Beside the block, the large gates give entrance to the Meeting House of the Society of Friends, the date of building above the entrance 1793. Continue down the street to the top of the Market Place, turn left at the end of the shops and before you are steps leading to the Parish Church dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul. Over the entrance porch is an ancient sundial, walk into the church and inside are some of the finest medieval frescoes (Biblical wall paintings) in England. You can purchase a guide to the frescoes in the church.

Leaving the church, walk straight ahead and at the junction of paths turn left. This path takes you into Hallgarth. At the top of the street is an imposing house with iron gates, this is the old vicarage, now a private residence. The building on your left as you leave the path is now the Church Hall but evidence of its school past is displayed by the legend Boys/ Girls above the entrance doors (sex discrimination?). Turn right and walk down the hill, the open grassy area is called The Old Cattle Market, the new cattle market is now the large car park in Eastgate! farmers once gathered here to sell their produce, the market cross is relatively new, dating from 1902. The building looking down the green proclaims its use, Liberal Club. Walk down to the bottom of Hallgarth and cross the road. Pickering had two halls but never a Lord of the Manor, due to the surrounding land belonging to the Crown. The building on the corner, now the Forest and Vale Hotel, was once Low Hall, the site of High Hall being passed earlier in the walk. Turn right along Hungate. Many of Pickering's streets end in -gate, the town never had walls or gates the word gate coming from the Danish gade or way. Where the footpath narrows, a plaque on this house (Houndgate Hall) states that Dr. Kirk once lived and practiced here. Dr Kirk was the founder of the collection of artifacts, now displayed in the Castle Museum, York and their reproduction street is named Kirkgate. A visit to this museum is highly recommended. The area has a strong non conformist history, as evidenced by the number of chapels in Pickering and the surrounding villages. The next large building along the street is the Kirk Theatre, converted from a disused chapel; it is now the home of Pickering Musical Society. Diagonally across the road is the United

Reformed Church. Before crossing the river bridge, look downstream and the large brick building is the engine shed built to house two railway engines, when Pickering was a busy rural terminus. Walk along the street to the traffic lights, cross the road towards the car park and again cross the road, you are now very near your start point. The first building in Ropery Road where the Information Centre, was the first Pickering gas works, built by the railway company, and housed the retort and purifying equipment. Ropery Road is on the line of the railway to Malton, closed in 1965 by Dr. Beeching. Now walk up the blocked off street, Train Lane. At the end of the lane the street opens out into the wide Potter Hill. The Methodist Chapel is on the South side and the Catholic Church at the top of the hill on the right.

Walk along the bottom and the next large building is the Memorial Hall. This was converted from a disused mill as a memorial to the fallen of the First World War. It has been recently been modernized and now also houses the offices of Pickering Town Council. Cross the road and walk down the sloping side road to Beck Isle Museum. In times of heavy rain the Beck overflows and effectively makes this building an island. The museum was originally built in --- by William Marshal as an agricultural college, but he died before it could be used. He was a pioneer in agriculture and wrote books which reformed agricultural practices. A visit to the museum is a must as it is much larger than it looks! Walk up the steps and sloping path to return to the main road, turn left and right at the end of the road to return to your start.