

THE RIPON ROWEL ULTRA

ROUTE DESCRIPTION

The Ripon Rowel Ultra is a beautiful, yet challenging 49 mile route that begins and ends on the steps of Ripon Cathedral. The route follows well recognised and documented public rights of way and permissive footpaths and is, for the most part, very well signposted. The Ripon Rowel is marked by variations of the Public Footpath sign shown below, and most points of deviation or change in direction are well marked. Please take care to note the directional tilt of the arrowed signs as these provide very useful guidance on your bearing.



LEG ONE – RIPON TO SOUTH STAINLEY

Starting from the main steps, make your way around to the right hand side of the Cathedral past the public information sign and take the pathway down through the churchyard to an arch on your right. Turn left onto High St Agnesgate, continue for 150m and then turn right onto Low St Agnesgate. This takes you to a footbridge across the River Skell. Cross the bridge, turn sharp right and follow the riverside path for 300m, and then turn right onto Firs Avenue to join the B6265 which runs alongside the Ripon Canal. Turn left onto the B6265 Bondgate Green and join the canal towpath on the opposite side of the road at the first opportunity, so that you may use the pedestrian underpass of the Ripon Bypass. Continuing to follow the canal as it veers right, away from the main road. Follow the canal for 2 miles until the River Ure is reached at Oxclose Lock. Follow the Ure for half a mile following the same line as the departed towpath, and eventually take the path turning right away from the river after passing through two gates, both of which feature the Ripon Rowel footpath sign. Boroughbridge Road is soon reached where you turn left. After 200m take the waymarked path across open fields, keeping to the left of the hedgerow. The path now follows a stream, passing through a wooded section, to the Ings Lane track which should be taken to the right. In wet weather the footpath through the wood can be rather difficult to pass, so one may alternatively choose to pass through the field to the right hand side. The gate in the far right corner of the field drops you onto Ings Lane, which you should follow all of the way into Bishop Monkton. Cross the main road and follow the footpath as it bears loosely left through buildings and the camp ground. From here a track goes straight on and this soon becomes a reasonably well-defined footpath. Follow this,

crossing the occasional stile until you are faced with electricity pylons, when you should hang to the hedgerow line and pass through the steel gate. Follow the trail past farm buildings and turn right onto Straight Lane, following this until you reach St Leonard's Church. Turn right at the Church and follow the road up the hill to the village green. Turn left onto Scarah Lane and follow this onto Limekiln Lane. Follow the lane until you reach a footbridge crossing a stream and then continue for another 200m and then turn right here onto Rakes Lane for half a mile. When a T junction is reached, turn right onto Stanley Lane. Follow this lane for one mile to reach the outskirts of South Stainley at St. Wilfrid's Church.

LEG TWO – SOUTH STAINLEY TO SAWLEY

Starting from St. Wilfrid's Church, follow the road over the footbridge and take the road to the right towards The Inn at South Stainley. Take a footpath to the right off the lane at SE304633, sign-posted Ripon Rowel. The footpath will take you past an Alpaca farm, and its hairy residents are often keen to see whether passers-by have any spare food! Cross the A61 at the end of this path to reach Markington Crossing and follow the trail ahead. Markington Village is some distance along the track. When the village is reached cross the main road onto Westerns Lane, and then bear right at the sign-posted track 200m on your right before the church (SE 2868 6500). This track takes you across the village sports field - keep left here to find the path taking you to Waterloo Farm at SE292657.

Immediately after the gate and stile by Waterloo Farm (@ Farnley Grange), turn sharp left to follow an ancient footpath uphill through a copse. A Ripon Rowel sign is conveniently positioned on a fence post on your right as you pass. At the end of this uphill trail, turn right here to follow the tarmac road down to the T junction, turn left onto Thwaites Lanes, and then immediately turn left again onto another track, leading to Strait Lane. After 250m take the sign-posted Ripon Rowel footpath to your right, crossing a stile and head towards Markenfield Hall in the distance. Turn right onto the access road to the Hall for 100m before passing through a field gate on your left to pass close by the Hall.

Head past the Hall on your left hand side, following the trail and over a stile, you will now cross into a farmer's field where a faint track can be followed. Bear towards the far right corner of the field, cross a stile, turn left along the edge of the field and head for the gate in the distance. Pass the gate, keep left, and then join the tarmac road of Whitcliffe Lane downhill as if heading back towards Ripon (the Cathedral temptingly looms clearly on the horizon from here). Head towards SE297688 and turn hairpin left through a gate into a farmer's field. Follow the path uphill until you reach another gate, pass through and bear left with the track. In the woodland at SE292686 you turn sharp right and drop downhill to the first of the bridges in the valley of the Seven Bridges. After crossing the first bridge bear left following the footpath over a number of footbridges, ultimately reaching the weir feeding the river from the lake at SE282692. Cross the weir and follow the estate road uphill to SE280695, where we turn left onto the straight driveway to the Anglican St Mary's Church and the Obelisk. Re-join the private road, which has a footpath alongside it, down to SE269683 where we briefly join the public road before turning right to cross a stile and join a path through Skell Bank Wood. At SE262680 a footbridge takes you left across the River Skell. Follow the trail as it bears to your right and climb uphill until you join a country lane at SE261681. Continue uphill after the stile, following Low Gate Lane all the way into Sawley.

LEG 3 – SAWLEY TO ILTON

Turn right at the end of Low Gate Lane, passing the Sawley Arms on your left and then take the lane to the left (just before Sawley Green) towards Sawley Village Hall (grid ref. SE248677). Keep a keen eye to your left to look for a stile over a stone wall – this is rather easy to miss and can cause quite the head-scratching moment! Cross the stile into the field and follow the fence line west for 600m until a footpath/track crossroads is reached. Turn right here. At the field corner bear diagonally left (a faint track is visible through the field) aiming for a stile crossing onto the B6265. Turn left here uphill and then almost immediately turn right towards Hollin Hill Farm (via West Gowbusk Farm). Continue straight ahead, through a vehicle gate, and keep a keen eye for the footpath gate to your left just before farm buildings are reached. Turn right after the gate and pass through the dirty farmyard. The traditional Ripon Rowel footpath has you bear sharp left once in the muddy field, but it is this writer's preference to instead follow the path straight ahead toward the gate at the far side of the field. Once through that, bear generally diagonally left/WNW, keeping a keen eye for a stile at the far edge of the field that will lead you through Hollin Hill Farm. After passing through the farm buildings (and abandoned/vacant house) cross another stile to your right. Traverse a pile of rubble, heading toward a visible trail crossing the field WSW to a stile in the distance. Cross the stile and descend the woodland path to cross the footbridge to reach Eavestone Lake.

Pass the lake on your left and at its corner edge bear sharp left and follow the woodland trail, keeping as closely to the water's edge as possible. Take care when passing fallen trees. You will eventually join a tarmac road, turning right to pass through Eavestone. The lane turns into a track as you drop downhill to a wood curving around Brim Bray Pond. At the footpath junction (grid ref. SE214688) turn right to drop downhill to another of the many watercourses on this route. As you reach the bottom corner of the field keep to the right and take the waymarked stile. You will soon find the footbridge crossing the River Skell to your left. From here the Rowel actually deviates from that which is commonly shown on maps and certain GPX files. Instead follow the marked route to go via the footpath 200m to the west of the wood at its furthest point. A steep climb up the field takes you to a gate and onto a track to join a further concreted track to pass west of Skelding Grange.

Join the public road again at Drift Lane but continue forwards on the rough track section of it north at grid ref. SE215701, leaving the tarmac road as it swings left. You will cross Holborn Beck and continue to follow the path (with varying terrain and surfaces) until you reach the main road. Turn right and then immediately left into Belford Lane. Continue downhill via the rough track to again cross a footbridge. Keep following the well waymarked track (this forms part of the "Mosaic Trail") until you reach the public road at grid ref. SE204736. Bear left downhill and then right on the farm track after 150m. This is a distinctive feature.

Be careful to take the hairpin right at the farm grid ref. SE194735, although this is waymarked it is easily missed. A word of warning: there are seemingly rabid dogs at this farm, though I have been reliably informed that they are "all bark and no bite". In any event, they are usually chained, but they scare the Bejesus out of me every time I pass. Turn left at the end of the farm yard to drop down to the Carlesmoor Sighting Tower.

You will now drop into Ellershaw Gill and face a brisk climb out from its far side and over Stock Beck Moor. Continue until you reach a footbridge at grid ref. SE194746 and a boggy area afterwards. Go straight uphill from the bridge to reach a stile. This path isn't immediately visible and you may be tempted to bear right, but go straight ahead off the footbridge to reach Brown Bank Road.

Follow the road for 1km until Wreaks Lane where you turn right, then left again after 200m to head NNE on the lane for one mile. At grid ref. SE200771 bear left through a gate in the dry stone wall towards Mouscar. You will pass two gateposts featuring the by now very familiar Rowel signpost, and a solitary tree that resembles a Bonsai, its growth presumably stunted at the hands of the elements. Following the path you will reach a stile over another wall – pay close attention to the directional tilt of the Rowel marker, as you need to shift your bearing slightly diagonally right and head north, until you pick up a more prominent trail to your left. Follow this trail, passing a number of grouse butts on your left. As you reach the final grouse butt be careful to not follow the trail straight ahead, and instead take the faint track off to your left. A drystone wall runs along bottom of the bank to your right and you will soon see a stile. Take the trail down to the stile and cross, aiming for the two large trees in the field beyond the wall. Follow the trail around and between the trees and pick up the line of the boundary wall on the left. You will see a Rowel sign at the stile, after which you should turn sharp right and continue to follow the wall line. A second stile follows some 100m later, after which you should bear diagonally left, following the trail through the trees. Be careful not to deviate from this pathway as the surrounding terrain is extremely boggy in wet conditions. At the end of the trail path you will emerge just next to the Ilton bus stop, with its very characteristic signage.

LEG 4 – ILTON TO MICKLEY

From Ilton, head NW and downhill on the tarmac lane passing an original red telephone box on the right. Immediately after passing a coniferous wood (Sole Beck Plantation) take the track on the left heading uphill. After 300m after passing through a gate, the path turns sharp right to climb up to High Knowle (Farm) prominent above you. Follow the footpath around the house to head up to Knowle Lane. Cross over Knowle Lane and take the white gate sign-posted Ripon Rowel, and head for some the stone gateposts 300m in the distance. Following the line of the wood to your left you look down on Low Knowle Farm. Head downhill passing through small fields, looking for signs of a field path at grid ref. SE168793. At this point turn sharply back right across the field following the Ripon Rowel signpost.

The route now follows Hall Wood passing Broadmires Farm before reaching a tarmac lane at grid ref. SE183797. Continue straight on to the bridge crossing the River Burn. Continue along the road to take the next right, Low Moor Lane, an unmade track almost a mile long. When a T junction is reached, fork left for 300m, and then at the track junction take a footpath on your right. Now head due east to Masham. The footpath ends alongside a large animal feed factory on your left. Continue through a residential area turning right at the first main road junction, to pass the Theakston Brewery. After the brewery, turn immediately left into a ginnel which will take you into the town square.

Leave the Market Place by the north eastern corner (the road left of the church looking from the square). This cul-de-sac leads onto a footpath. The well-walked path now leads to the River Ure, and you follow its course until the River Burn tributary forces you to detour west to Low Burn Bridge. You meet Thorpe Road, cross the bridge and take the footpath down the opposite side of the River Burn, forming an effective U-turn from the previous path. Follow the narrow path until the Burn meets the Ure and you are in meadowland. Follow the river for one mile and you enter Nutwith Cote Wood which eventually runs into Hackfall Wood.

Once into Hackfall continue to follow the trail closes to the river and under no circumstance should you leave the path to follow the Rowel signs to head uphill towards the follies and Grewelthorpe. Always keep to the lower path, which will eventually lead you out of the woods and onto the tarmac roadway that leads downhill Railer Bank into Mickley. After the quagmire of Hackfall you may find yourself counting your blessings for a long stretch of downhill tarmacadam through the lovely village of Mickley.

LEG 5 – MICKLEY TO RIPON

After passing through the village of Mickley, turn left off the road onto a track at grid ref. SE258770 to continue following the course of the River Ure. From grid ref. SE262771 follow the trail through Piccadilly Wood until you reach the track to lead you past Quarry House Farm. Turn right when you reach the tarmac road and continue until you reach Tanfield Bridge on the A6108. Turn right to cross the road bridge, and then immediately left to pick up the riverside footpath following the Ure again. At the Sleningford Water Mill camping park follow the Rowel straight through the grounds.

Continue to follow the marked footpath through Sleningford Grange. Emerge at the A6108 road at grid ref. SE285773 where you turn left and head for North Stainley.

After passing the village cricket pitch, turn left along the track to Manor Farm. Continue to follow the track until it merges into a gravel access road. Continue on this wide road for 300m and then head east for High Batts. Passing a car park enter the area of North Parks. Once past North Parks the track becomes a tarmac road passing Black Heath and Queen Mary's Ponds. At SE 308737 take the track sharp left to South Parks Farm. The path goes through farm buildings before turning south/right to head for Ripon through fields. Keep left on the path along the edge of the woodland until you reach the A6108 at North Bridge. Cross the road onto Magdalen's Road. After 150m take the Rowel footpath left, which takes you under the main A61 Ripon Bypass. Follow the well-trodden path as it tracks the River Ure. At SE 325709 you will reach the River Skell and should to turn west to head for the city centre and the Cathedral. You pass under the A61 and then slightly away from the Skell into a residential area (Low Mill Estate). Turn right onto Priest Lane and immediately left onto Low Mill Road which you should follow until you reach a T-junction. Turn right here and then soon left onto High St Agnesgate. You will then reach the rear entrance to the Cathedral graveyard at SE 316710. Go through the gate and around the Cathedral side to the front.

YOU HAVE NOW FINISHED THE RIPON ROWEL ULTRA!