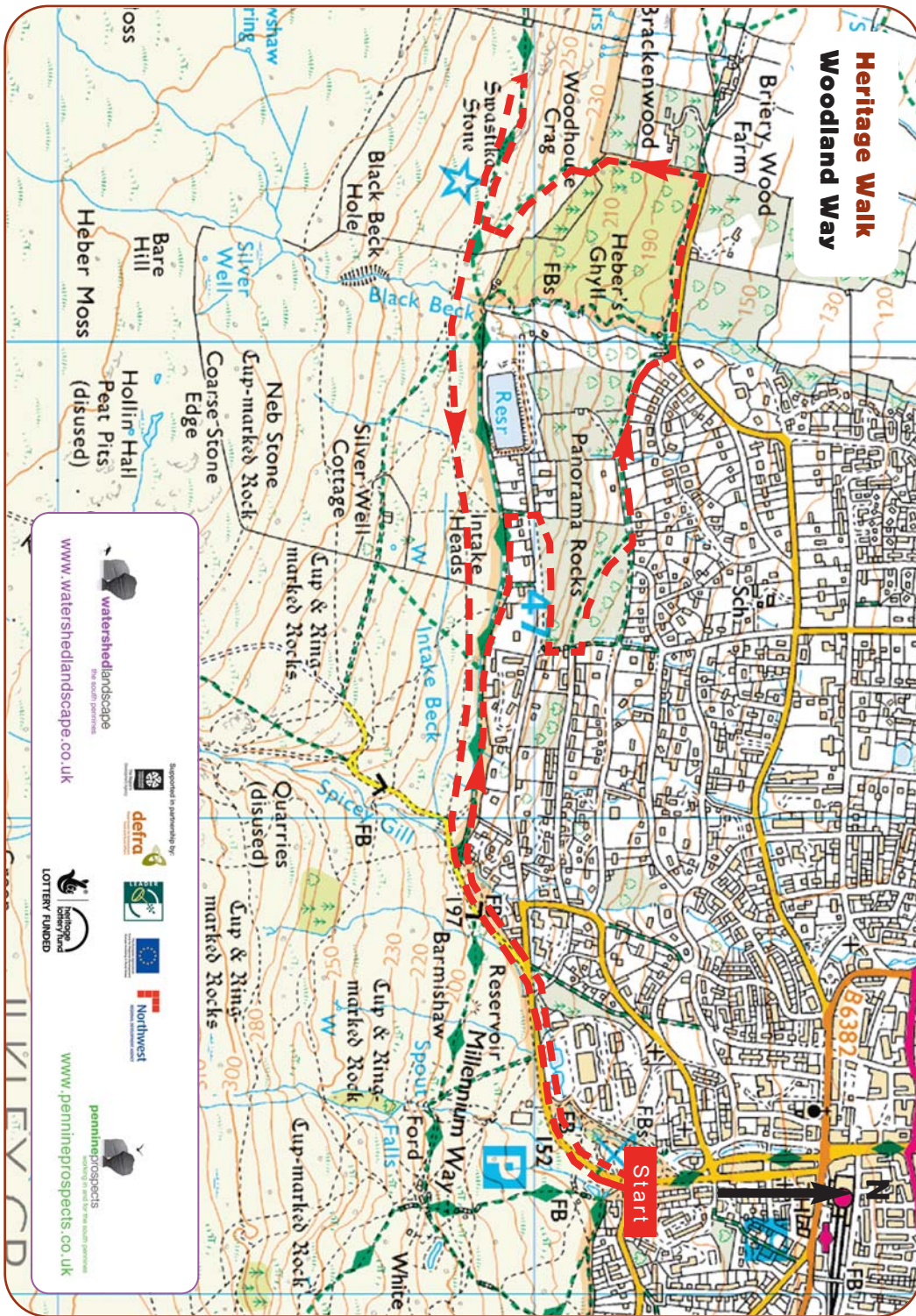


# Heritage Walk Woodland Way



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Original artwork by Angie Rogers, 2010

explore and conserve



# Heritage Walk

## Woodland Way

This walk winds in and out of the woods that form the lowest slopes of Ilkley Moor. There are two steep ascents and one steep descent. It can be completed in about two hours.

The walk starts at the Wells Road Car Park in Ilkley (117472)

*Walk along the road uphill past Wells House. To avoid walking by the road, one can take any of the uphill paths through Darwin Gardens, joining the road by Wells House.*

*Darwin Gardens has been laid out by a group of volunteers and has a children's maze and many other lovely features. It commemorates the six weeks that Darwin spent in Ilkley 'taking the waters' just before the publication of 'On The Origin of Species' in 1859.*

*Wells House was built as one of the most important hydrotherapy establishments in Ilkley, where people came to take a variety of water cures. It was later converted into a teacher training college and has now been converted into flats.*

To the left, half way up the moor White Wells can be seen. The original therapeutic spring that was the source of Ilkley's prosperity. It is well worth a visit. In the old bath house there is a brief history of White Wells and of Ilkley's importance as a spa.

In about 400 yards there is a fork in the road. Take the left fork which climbs steeply up hill. Take care for cars on this stretch, there is no pavement.

Just before Spicy Gill there is a finger post on the right pointing to the footpath over the footbridge over the stream.



From Willy Hall's Spout there is a well made track down to the road just above Darwin Gardens alternatively another very short detour will take you up the same track to White Wells.

*White Wells was constructed to allow bathers to experience the therapeutic benefits of the spring there. Victorian visitors would either walk to White Wells or take a donkey from Donkey Jackson's stable. Once there they would bathe in the very cold water. There was a gentlemen's and a ladies bath at opposite ends of the building.*

*Originally these were open to the elements with only a surrounding wall for privacy. Both baths still exist, but only the one at the Eastern end of the building can be seen. The other has been covered over with floorboards. There is another building (now a public lavatory) separated from the main building. The cost of the baths was sixpence a time, so Squire Middleton built this building as a free paupers' bath.*

*At weekends and public holidays, refreshments are available at White Wells. Behind White Wells you can fill containers with the spring water, which is very drinkable. The rate of flow varies and is not always sufficient to fill containers.*



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[www.ilkleymoor.org](http://www.ilkleymoor.org)



From here there are a variety of paths heading in the right direction. It does not matter which one you take, but your aim is to reach the furthest south east corner of the wood, where there is a gate out onto the moor immediately beside the stream that is Heber's Ghyll. Some of the way may be muddy and you will have one steep but short ascent.

On the way you will go through stands of Sweet Chestnut and European Larch among other trees. Towards the top, just before you get to the gate out onto the moor, there is a lovely stand of Larch with some convenient stones where you can rest. A little further on is the remains of a shelter installed when the path beside the stream was laid out. It has no roof, but the seats have been restored. Just beside this shelter there was a chalybeate well that was probably believed to be therapeutic. Some water still dribbles into a stone basin, but the main flow has disappeared.

Take the gate out of the wood and cross the bridge over the stream. Immediately after scramble up on the path beside the stream until you get to a small footbridge on your right. Take this and follow the path straight on, through a gate in the wall and on to the Swastika Stone.

*Ilkley Moor is very rich in prehistoric carved stones. They are usually dated to about 2000BC. On stylistic grounds the swastika stone has sometimes been said to be Celtic and therefore only about 2000 years old. This is debatable and it seems more likely that this stone is the same age as all the other carved stones on the moor. Many theories have been put forward as to the significance of these stones, but in reality we have no idea why they were carved. The rock is relatively soft and modern experiments have shown that the carvings can be undertaken quite quickly. Do not be deceived; the very clear carving immediately inside the railings is a modern reproduction. The actual carving is much more indistinct and is on the large rock just behind. Once again, examples of Victorian vandalism can be seen.*

From the Swastika Stone, return to Ilkley by the path that is just above the one by which you came. This is a very well made track (paid for by the Friends of Ilkley Moor) and goes through a gate, over a bridge and back to the path along by the edge of the Moor by which you started. If you wanted the route can be slightly extended by taking the footpath signed on the right just as the road slopes down from Spicy Gill. This path takes you along to Willy Hall's Spout (after heavy rain the waterfall descending over the path can be very impressive, at other times it is just a trickle).

*This stream, like many streams in Ilkley has a variety of names. On the Moor it is Spicy Gill. Further down in the town it becomes Parish Gill (or Ghyll), presumably as it marks the boundary between Ilkley's two parishes.*

Take the path along side the long wall that marks the edge of the Moor, keep on this path until you reach a five bar gate, go through the gate. There is a gate off to the right, but ignore this and go through the next gate on the right.

Walk up the short stretch of road between, two walls and cross straight over the road ahead into Panorama Wood. The path goes by the side of the wood for about 30 yards till it comes to the Panorama Rocks. These rocks are very obviously named as, standing on them, there is a wonderful view over the valley beneath. Be very careful. The edge of the rocks are not well defined and there is a long fall beneath.

Just before you get to the Panorama Rocks there are some large boulders on the right with an oak tree growing out of them. These are 'cup and ring' carver stones, with 4000 year old carvings. The carvings are now very difficult to see because of the recent growth of moss and lichens. The carvings (which in this case consist of simple cups) are on the top face. The best of the carved rocks were removed by the Victorians and now stand opposite St. Margaret's Church.

Standing on the Panorama Rocks it is obvious that name carving is not a modern phenomenon. There are various sets of initials that date from the 19th century, but the most legible are the initials of 'AER' dated 1921.

Nearby, on other rocks has been carved a fleur de lys and a very elaborate coat of arms with the motto *Labor omnia vincit* (Hard work conquers everything). This was the motto of the County Borough of Bradford.

Leaving the rocks walk back eastwards on the path that runs along the top of the wood. This path rejoins the road just opposite one of the other entrances to the moor. Ignore this and continue walking along the road (Panorama Drive) until you come to a finger post on your left pointing to steps that run down the east side of the wood. Take these steps, but be careful. They are steep and in bad condition. Half way down these steps is a path off to the left that gently slopes down diagonally through the wood.





*Panorama Wood is one of the most pleasant, and least visited woods in Ilkley. In the early morning Roe Deer can sometimes be seen. There are tracks of badgers. Woodpeckers can often be heard and have nested in the dead trees that are just by the path where it leaves the steps.*

The path leads down through the wood until it joins another private road, Hollin Hall Drive. Continue along this drive in the same direction. After a few yards there is a sign pointing to the public footpath alongside the wall. But if that is muddy, carry on along the surfaced driveway until its end where there is another small entrance on the right and, a few yards further on, the path carries on with gardens of houses on the right. The path takes you through to a small open space known locally as the sledging field, as it used to be popular for tobogganing. Keep to the path which hugs the lowest side of this space and brings you to steps down onto Heber's Ghyll Drive (*below*) just at the bottom most easterly Corner of Heber's Ghyll Woods.

*When Ilkley became a popular late Victoria resort, many of the place names were tidied up and made more 'romantic'. The spelling 'Ghyll' with its ancient British connotations was substituted for 'Gill'. The stream that ran down from the Moor was renamed Heber's Ghyll, instead of its original (and unromantic) Black Beck.*



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*At the same time the village of Wheatley was renamed Ben Rhydding (another faux ancient British spelling). This respelling was done at a time when William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement had made all things ancient British fashionable. Heber's Ghyll was named after Bishop Reginald Heber, who had no connexion with Ilkley but was famed as a hymn writer ("Brightest and best are the sons of the morning", *Holy, Holy, Holy*", 'From Greenland's icy mountains'). He died in India in 1826.*

Go along Heber's Ghyll Drive over the bridge over the stream. Look over the bridge and observe an outstanding piece of Victorian engineering, where a massive stone culvert, carries a rather small stream under the road. After about 30 yards there is a path up into the wood on the left hand side. After a few yards this forks. Take the right hand fork and walk along the path parallel to the road (note in places this path can be very muddy).

*Down to the right, on the opposite side of the road can be seen Briery Wood which is a large private wood that functions as an important wildlife habitat. Nestling in Briery Wood is Briery Grange which is typical of the very large private houses that were once so characteristic of Ilkley and which demonstrate its extraordinary prosperity.*

Just before you reach the western extremity of Heber's Ghyll Wood the path slopes gently upwards and joins another path coming up from the road. Just where the two paths join, on the left can be seen a large millstone.

*Ilkley is built on, and built of, millstone grit, so named because it was used to make millstones. The stones were cut in situ and then dragged out on a cart or a sledge. Why this, and another stone further up were abandoned must be cause for conjecture. Perhaps a flaw was found whilst they were being cut, or perhaps the bottom dropped out of the market for millstones, when roller mills were introduced and these were abandoned as unsaleable.*

Go past the Mill Stone (*right*) and take the path to the left before the wall, directly uphill, following the Western edge of the wood until you come to another discarded millstone on the righthand side.



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