

# Walk the Way in a Day

## Walk 33 Pen-y-ghent from Horton

A challenging hill-walk following pack-horse routes and difficult paths around Pen-y-Ghent, with an exhilarating clamber up onto the summit, where the views are spoiled only by nearby quarries. Deep limestone fissures passed along the way include the country's largest natural hole (Hull Pot).



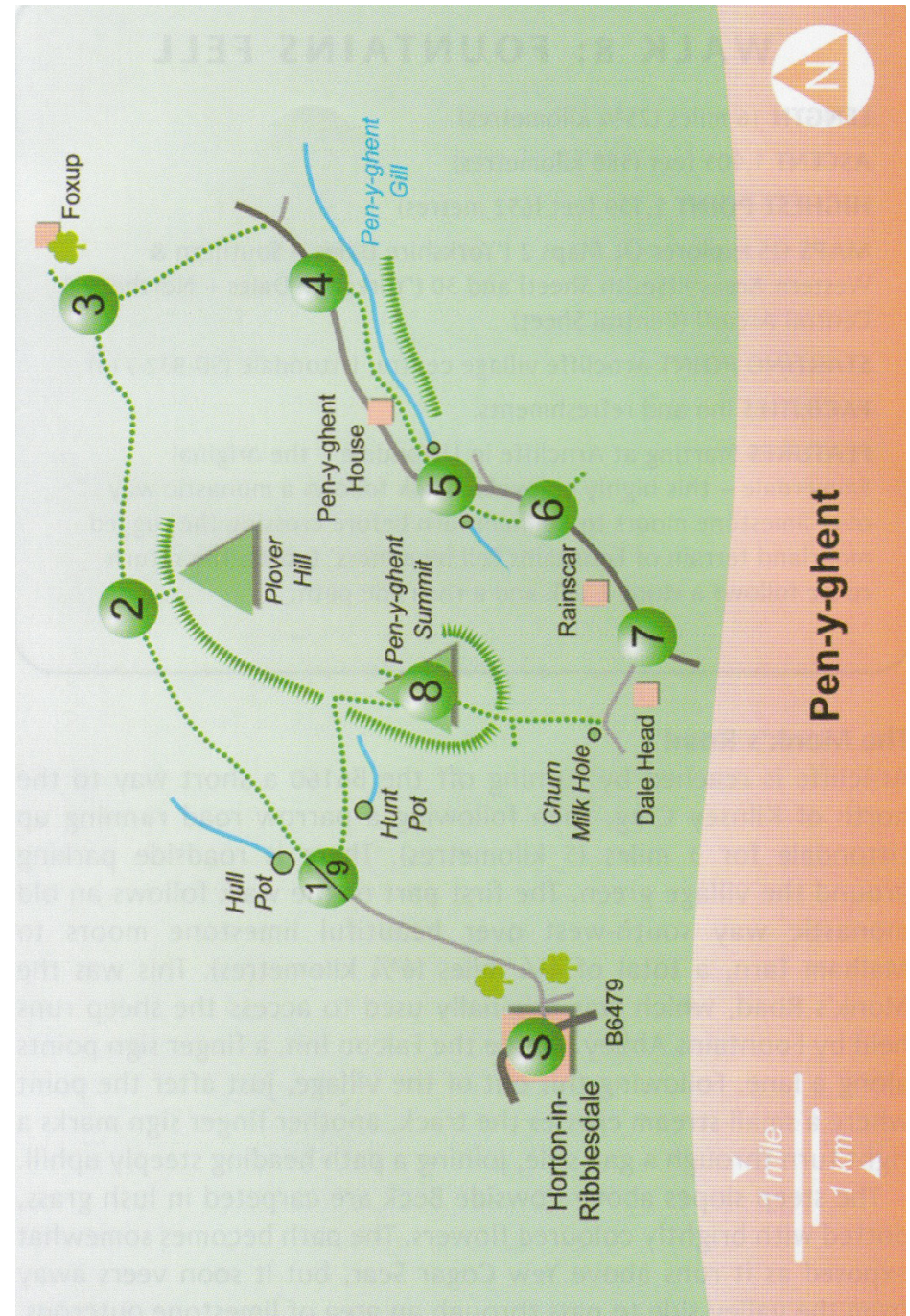
- Length: 15¼ miles (24½ kilometres)
- Ascent: 2,051 feet (625 metres)
- Highest Point: 2,277 feet (694 metres)
- Map(s): OS Explorer OL Map 2 ('Yorkshire Dales - Southern & Western Areas') (West Sheet)
- Starting Point: Horton-in-Ribblesdale car park (SD 808 726)
- Facilities: Full range of services.
- Website: <http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/pennine-way/route/walk-way-day-walk-33-pen-y-ghent-horton>

### Foxup Road

Starting at the car park, turn right and follow the pavement beside the B6479. Crossing over the road, a finger sign shows the Pennine Way passing between cottages and heading up a stony track lined with ash and hawthorn. Arriving at a fork in the lane, take the left-hand track (that on the right is part of the three peaks challenge route). The track climbs steadily as it heads north-east, with the distinctive stepped profile of Pen-y-ghent coming into view ahead. To the right of the lane is an incised valley flanked by limestone crags. Passing through a gate, a finger sign on the left marks the start of a bridleway route running over Foxup Moor (1 = SD 823 743).

### The Three Peaks Challenge

Pen-y-ghent Café is the traditional starting point for the three peaks



*challenge. Since it began in 1887 with a pair of schoolmasters from Giggleswick undertaking the circuit of Pen-y-ghent, Whernside and Ingleborough, the walk has grown in popularity to become a national phenomenon. Despite improvements to the paths it remains a significant undertaking, with a standard route of 23 miles (37 kilometres) and around 5,000 feet (1,524 metres) of ascent. Participants can clock out and back in again at the café, which doubles as a tourist information centre.*

This is Foxup Road - an old pack-horse route - which is followed for 3¾ miles (6 kilometres) around the northern flanks of Plover Hill. Leaving the Pennine Way for now, head north-east along a shallow trough leading to Hull Pot. Over a ladder stile, follow a quad track towards an elbow in a drystone wall, where it cuts across the three-peaks challenge route. Continuing straight ahead, the track crosses a cottongrass mire as it runs beside the wall. A narrow causeway of compacted hardcore provides a safe crossing of the worst part of the bog. Ignoring a finger sign showing a path heading up onto Plover Hill, continue along the valley side (2 = SD 846 761).

### **Hull Pot**

*At 300 feet (91 metres) long, 60 feet (18 metres) wide and 60 (18 metres) feet deep, Hull Pot is the largest natural hole in the country and the most dramatic of the limestone fissures that riddle the ground hereabouts. The spectacle is completed by an intermittent waterfall, which crashes into the chasm before disappearing underground. In times of severe spate, Hull Pot has been known to fill-up and overflow!*

Following a quad track beside a broken wall, eventually this turns steeply downhill (the ground is slippery, so take care). Passing through a gate, a finger sign confirms the route as the track continues along the valley side above Foxup Beck. Eventually the hamlets of Foxup and Halton Gill come into view ahead. These were originally lodges in the Forest of Litton, before developing into agricultural settlements around the sheep-runs maintained by Fountains Abbey. Arriving at a drystone wall, the track turns downhill

again before continuing over pasture. Passing through a gate, finger signs show bridleway routes heading left and right (3 = SD 871 764).

### **Pen-y-ghent Gill**

From here the route runs 3¾ miles (6 kilometres) around the eastern flanks of Plover Hill. Heading south-east, the track runs to the right of a drystone wall. Looking ahead, there are good views down the beautiful 'U'-shaped valley of Littondale. Continuing over grassy moorland, the track eventually converges with an unclassified road. Turning right, follow the quiet road as it heads up the valley of Pen-y-ghent Gill. The deep valley is flanked by the long ridge of Fountains Fell and the more shapely form of Pen-y-ghent. Ignoring a route signed for Nether Hesleden, stay on the road until a finger sign on the left marks the start of a path to Silverdale Road (4 = SD 872 745) (it is possible to stay on the road, although this misses the best what the valley has to offer).

Heading steeply downhill, the narrow path turns across the bracken-covered slope. Continuing along the valley side, still far below the stream hurries down its constricted gorge. Finger signs confirm the route as the path hooks around gullies. Passing a farm (Pen-y-ghent House), keep to the left of a drystone wall, following a narrow ledge. A side stream cutting across the route is usually dry, but can cause difficulties in times of flood. From here the path runs through an area littered with limestone outcrops. The location of the Giant's Grave - a communal burial mound of Neolithic age - is difficult to identify among the natural features, its stones having been plundered for building material. Crossing an area of limestone pavement, the road is rejoined, although a finger sign on the right soon indicates the continuation of the path (once again, it is possible to stay on the road) (5 = SD 856 732).

Following a drystone wall (on the far side of which the stream disappears underground), the faint path runs over springy turf and wet meadow. To the right are fine views of Pen-y-ghent. Approaching a barn (Blishmire House), the path veers somewhat to the left. Arriving at a hardcore track, this provides an easy route back to the road, avoiding a difficult section of path

(the literal route turns along the foot of a bluff, following an overgrown path beside a drystone wall). Either way, the road is met at the point where the Pennine Way comes down from Fountains Fell (6 = SD 853 723).

### **Pen-y-ghent**

Following the road past Rainscar farm, eventually a finger sign indicates a right turn along a walled lane (7 = SD 843 714). Passing the buildings of Dale Head farm, this place was originally a pack-horse inn. Continuing along the stony track as it crosses undulating terrain, Churn Milk Hole is reached. Here a finger sign shows the Pennine Way turning onto a gravel path heading towards the foot of Pen-y-ghent. Crossing a section of boardwalk, another finger sign indicates a path to Brackenbottom, offering a potential escape route for anyone unable to undertake the stiff climb ahead.

#### **Pen-y-ghent**

*At 2,277 feet (694 metres), Pen-y-ghent is the lowest of the three peaks. The addition of a secondary top, Plover Hill (2,231 feet / 680 metres), creates a long ridge. The stepped profile of the fell reveals its geology, with rocks of the Yoredale series underlying a Millstone Grit cap. The meaning of the name is uncertain, and whilst many claim Welsh origins - 'pen' being the word for a hilltop - the modern spelling is in fact fanciful (older sources have 'Pennigent'). Pen-y-ghent is famed for the rare purple saxifrage that flourishes among its limestone cliffs, flowering during early spring.*

The path becomes very steep, heading up stone steps to the right of limestone cliffs. Care is required, and in winter conditions an ice axe and crampons might be in order! A broad shelf covered in boulders from the shattered cliffs above provides a welcome break. Continuing up the made path, this soon degenerates into a scramble up limestone blocks. Cresting the rise, the path continues towards an OS pillar marking the summit, from where the views are unsurprisingly exceptional (8 = SD 838 733).

### **Horton Moor**

The final part of the walk follows the Pennine Way down paths and lanes, 3½ miles (5½ kilometres) back to the starting point. Crossing a ladder stile, a finger sign shows the route heading north-north-west down a stony path. Unfortunately, the view ahead is now blighted by the limestone quarries above Horton-in-Ribblesdale. A few cairns provide guidance as the stony path - an old miners' track - turns north and heads down through a breach in the limestone cliffs. Note the prominent needle sheering away from the rock face ahead.

Arriving at the bottom, a finger sign marks a turn onto an improved path, heading west over grassy moorland. Pausing to look back, the magnificent silhouette of Pen-y-ghent is now brought into sharp relief by the westering sun. Crossing a ladder stile, continue along the gravel path, with a short diversion to the left providing an opportunity to visit Hunt Pot (just follow the sound of the waterfall). Eventually a finger sign shows the Pennine Way turning down a walled lane - the same route that was followed earlier (9 = SD 823 743). From here simply retrace your steps back to the village.

#### **Hunt Pot**

*Whilst Hunt Pot is smaller than Hull Pot, it is deeper, reaching down 200 feet (61 metres). The streams that empty into the two fissures percolate down towards their outflow near Horton-in-Ribblesdale, their courses apparently crossing underground.*

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