

MASHAM

Town Walk

WALK INFORMATION

TIME:	1 ½ hours
TOILETS:	Just off Little Market Place
START:	Masham Market Place
CAFÉ:	Several to choose from in the Town Centre; try Bordar House in the Market Place.
PUBS:	Four to choose from: the White Bear, Bay Horse, Bruce Arms and the King's Head.
PARKING:	In the main Market Place.
INFORMATION:	Leyburn Tourist Information: 01969 623069
MARKET DAYS:	Wednesday and Saturday

1. *From the Market Cross (facing the King's Head) head across the main Market Place diagonally to the right then follow Chapman Lane out of the corner of the Market Place and on to reach Park Street.*

Masham, pronounced 'Massum', is an attractive grey-stone market town set in the lower reaches of Wensleydale. It is famed for its large Market Place lined with 18th Century houses, historic annual Sheep Fair and two breweries. Masham has been an important market town since it was granted its market charter in 1393 by Richard II – weekly markets are still held as they have been for six Centuries. Masham's Market Place, one of the largest in the North of England, is lined with elegant 17th and 18th Century houses, still cobbled around the old tree-shaded market cross. Of particular note is the imposing three-storey Kings Head Hotel, a fine stone-built Georgian coaching inn with a wonderful façade. Through the archway to the side of this hotel are the old stabling blocks and outbuildings, now home to a variety of craft workshops where you can watch handthrown pottery being made at Masham Pottery or glassblowing at Uredale Glass. The monks of Fountains and Jervaulx Abbeys had grazing lands in this area and the town grew in importance as the main sheep market for the Dales. This survives today as the September Sheep Fair, which at its height in the 19th Century saw over 70,000 sheep changing hands. Chapman Lane leads out of the Market Place, once the main route out of town westwards over the moors to Wharfedale; 'chapman' is the old name for a travelling pedlar. On the corner of Chapman Lane and Park Street are a row of small almshouses. A plaque proclaims that Anne Danby and Vernon Harcourt built them in AD1853 "*in humble gratitude to God for all his mercies and blessings.*" As you emerge on Park Street across to your left is the imposing Methodist Church set back from the road behind attractive gardens.

2. *Turn right along Park Street then where the road turns sharply right at the HSBC bank head straight on passing to the left of the bank. At the gates to Park House turn left along a footpath and follow this all the way down to reach Red Lane.*

Park Street is an interesting mixture of small cottages as well as Georgian and Victorian houses, overlooked by the HSBC Bank that is housed in the former Mechanics Institute, built in 1856. These Institutes were built throughout the country

during the 19th Century to provide free education for the working classes and, hopefully, improve their lives; the Mechanics Institute was founded by Mr Birkbeck of Settle – a Yorkshireman! Park House can be glimpsed through its gates set amongst mature trees. It reputedly stands on the site of an early medieval Manor House, adjacent to which is the brewery of T & R Theakston Ltd that dates back to 1827, famed for its ‘Old Peculier’ Yorkshire ale. This classic stone-built Victorian brewery became part of Scottish and Newcastle Breweries, as it was then known, in 1987. There is a fascinating Visitor Centre, known as the Black Bull in Paradise, as well as a working cooper's shop where one of the remaining eight brewery coopers in the country is employed making wooden casks for local beer deliveries. Once a small country brewer with a handful of pubs, Theakston's ales are now available throughout the country – to cope with demand much of the production now takes place at Scottish Courage's Newcastle-upon-Tyne Brewery.

3. *Turn right along Red Lane passing Theakston's Brewery on your right then where the road bends round to the left take the lane to the right immediately after the brewery buildings. Follow this lane down passing the entrance to Theakston's Brewery Visitor Centre and on towards the 'Market Square' following it round to the right at the houses then left along College Lane to reach Silver Street.*

Just as you turn left down to reach Silver Street, take a short detour to the right along College Lane. The imposing stone and brick house ahead of you is College House, an ancient building that has been modified over the years. This was where the ‘Peculier Court of the Prebend of Masham’ met prior to Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries. This ecclesiastical Court can trace its origins back to the 12th Century when the Parish of St Mary was given to York Minster who then formed a Prebend and Canonry. The Court had jurisdiction over the local inhabitants with regard to ‘particular’ offences such as not attending church, swearing, drunkenness and fortune-telling – ‘peculier’ means ‘particular’ in Norman-French. College House has been extensively rebuilt and modified over the intervening Centuries.

4. *Turn left along Silver Street, bearing left at the fork in the road down to reach the main road opposite a garage where you cross over along the road opposite. Follow this road down towards Black Sheep Brewery then where the road bends round to the left at the houses head down along the rough lane to the right.*

Silver Street is home to a number of quality family-run shops including Beaver's Butchers which is renowned for its award-winning sausages (*Beavers the name, for sausages, meat and game*), Reah's Delicatessen Shop that sells just about everything and a general hardware shop. The ‘original’ White Bear pub once stood on the area of open ground to the right of the garage. On the 16th April 1941 a parachute mine was dropped by an enemy plane and landed on the pub killing four local people and two soldiers – the pub was rebuilt further back from the road. The large complex of stone buildings ahead of you was originally Lightfoot's Brewery which was taken over by Theakston's back in 1919 – the offices of Theakston's as well as the ‘new’ White Bear are still housed in some of the old brewery buildings. Following a takeover by Scottish and Newcastle Breweries of his family firm in 1987, Paul Theakston set up the Black Sheep Brewery in the old Lightfoot's brewery maltings literally next door to the offices of his old family company. Black Sheep Brewery produces a range of traditional Yorkshire ales using only the finest ingredients and traditional brewing plant rescued from Hartley's of Ulverston. The pronounced bitterness and characteristic flavour of the beers is reminiscent of the old West Riding brews due to the fact that traditional Yorkshire Stone Square fermenting vessels are

used. There is an excellent Visitor Centre offering brewery tours, shop, bistro and bar.

5. *Follow this lane round to the right down to reach the main road again (The Avenue). Cross the road and take the rough track opposite that leads down across The Holme, turning sharp right at the small parking area and up passing between the tennis courts and bowling green to reach the cricket pavilion. Head up the steps behind the Pavilion that lead back up into the Little Market Place adjacent to the Bruce Arms pub.*

As you emerge onto The Avenue look over to your right across the wide road junction to see the ornate Fountain built in 1887 to commemorate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. Masham Bridge is a graceful stone structure dating from 1754 which now carries motorists over the River Ure on their way up into Wensleydale. The avenue of mature trees that line the road down to the bridge (hence the name of The Avenue) were planted to commemorate the opening of the branch railway in 1875 from the Ripon to Northallerton line. Masham Station was situated across the river away from the town, which probably explains why the line closed to passengers in 1930, a full 30 years before the Beeching Axe closed virtually all of the country's other branch lines. The area of parkland between the tree-lined road and the river is known as The Holme, a favourite place for people to walk their dogs or take a Sunday stroll. The Recreation Ground with its cricket pitch, tennis courts and bowling green was given to the town by Lord Masham as a memorial to the local men who fought in the Great War.

6. *Turn left through the Little Market Place and follow the road round to the right at the Town Hall back into the main Market Place.*

Note the old stone-built Police House dated 1891, which is still in (very occasional) use. The Town Hall dates from 1913 but was used only a few years later as a convalescent home for soldiers during the First World War; infantry from Leeds were stationed nearby at Breary Banks in Colsterdale. The lane that leads off the Market Place is called Millgate and leads down to a 17th Century mill – this was the main road into Masham Centuries ago by way of a ford across the River Ure before the stone bridge was built further upstream. On the left along Millgate is the Old Grammar School that was founded in 1760 by William Danby, Lord of the Manor and owner of the Swinton Estate whose widow rebuilt the school in 1834; it is still used as a school. Further along Millgate on the left is the Old Poor House. St Mary's Church was founded in Anglo-Saxon times and has a rare example of a 9th Century Anglo-Saxon cross opposite the front door with weather-worn carvings depicting animals as well as people which are thought to represent Our Lord and the Twelve Disciples. Much of the present church dates from the 14th and 15th Centuries, although there is some Norman stonework at the base of the tower, which is crowned by a tall 15th Century spire. For Centuries this church had close connections with York Minster as it was given to York in the 12th Century to form a Prebend and Canonry, an important and wealthy Parish which was also given its own ecclesiastical court – the 'Peculier Court of the Prebend of Masham'. This came to an end following the Dissolution of the Monasteries when the powers of the court were transferred to Trinity College, Cambridge who still retain associations until this day. The 'Seal of the Official of the Peculier of Masham 1741' is used as the company logo of Theakston's, who also named their strong ale after this 'Peculier' Court.

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