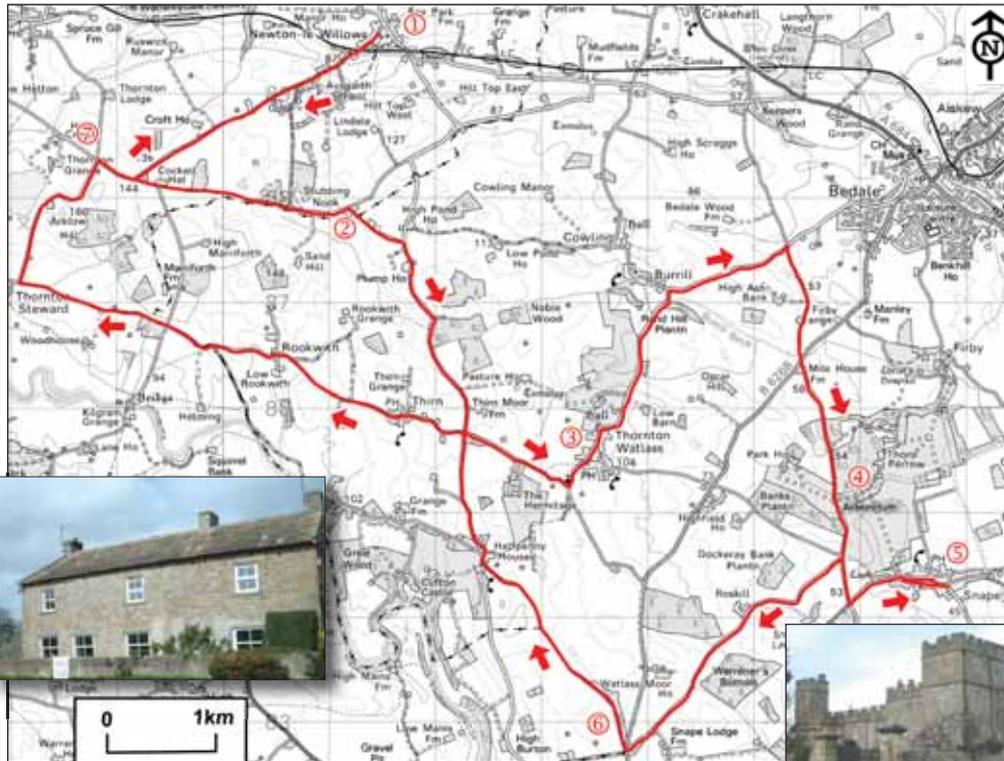


Cycle route: Newton-le-Willows to Snape



SIGHTS ALONG THE ROUTE: Snape Castle, below, and Cocked Hat Farm, left



Heritage

THIS route covers 2,000 years of history!

- Snape has Roman origins, remains of a villa have been found not far from the castle.
- Place names throw a fascinating light on the past – Thirn is thorn bush, Newton le Willows is the new farm where willows abound and Watlass means waterless!
- The route from Thirn passes Rookwith, which was a village in the medieval period and has shrunk to a couple of farms.
- Brick and tile works in the 19th century underlay the wet and woody area along Stubbing Nook Lane.
- A lot of the field patterns are small, suggesting they were enclosed from the medieval communal open fields. Some are still very long and narrow.
- Look out for ridge and furrow in a number of fields along the route.

Ecology

- Just after leaving Newton-le-Willows, there is a large hay meadow rising up from the left-hand side of the road. In the summer, this is full of buttercups, tall thistle-like lesser knapweed and the large showy purple flowers of meadow cranesbill.
- Past Cocked Hat Farm, you will see a few small wet woodlands on your left. Dominated by willows, alders and birch, well adapted to the high water level, these woodlands are an important and increasingly rare habitat, supporting wetland insects, such as damselflies, and breeding birds such as mallard and coot.
- As you cycle along the lanes, you may also catch a glimpse of a yellowhammer, with its bright yellow head, or hear its distinctive song, which sounds a bit like: "a little bit of bread and NO cheese"!

National Byway

THE National Byway, a 4,500-mile cycle route covering the length and breadth of Britain, passes through this area. National Byway routes are indicated by brown and white signs. For more details, go to www.thenationalbyway.org.

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THIS route and others we will publish this year have been supplied by NY Times readers who have found them particularly enjoyable. They are being shared in the hope that other cyclists might enjoy them. The routes have not been assessed for safety by North Yorkshire County Council, so cyclists should exercise the caution they normally would during any ride.

Distance – about 15 miles

Refreshments – pubs in Thornton Watlass and Snape; café at Thorp Perrow Arboretum.

MY route isn't the longest or most demanding, but it combines some of the quietest and safest lanes in the area with outstanding views and features of historical and environmental interest. I discovered it by exploring on my bike for fitness and pleasure and occasionally am joined by my wife on our tandem!

1. Starting from the centre of Newton-le-Willows, the route climbs south-west past Aysgarth School, with great views west to Pen Hill, to a T-junction at about 1.5 miles. Turn left and almost immediately you pass Cocked Hat Farm, formerly a public house. Over the low wall to the front are the hooks where patrons used to tether horses.

2. After 1 mile turn right at Stubbing Nook and right again 0.5 mile later. Continue for 1 mile to the crossroads where you turn left to Thornton Watlass, a picturesque village with an opportunity for refreshment at the Buck Inn on the green.

3. Keep left at the green towards Bedale with glimpses of Thornton Watlass Hall on your left and enjoy the downhill stretch past the turn to Burrill to the next crossroads; turn right and after 0.5 mile cross the B6268 in the direction of Well.

4. In about 0.75 mile you pass Thorp Perrow Arboretum. As you approach the entrance, look left over the lowered wall for a wonderful view of the house.

5. From the Arboretum keep going for about 0.5 mile to the left turn into Snape – a worthwhile detour for the spectacle of Snape Castle. Return to the main road through

the superb avenue of lime trees and turn right to retrace the route as far as the first road on the left which you take to meander uphill to the five-road junction at the B6268. Cross this road carefully.

6. Take the right fork where you will enjoy fantastic views of the distant North York Moors to the east. After 1 mile turn right and then left 0.5 mile further on at the crossroads. Pass through the village of Thirn, now sadly without its Boot and Shoe public house, and carry on for about 2.5 miles looking over to lower Wensleydale and Coverdale, as far as the crossroads just before the village of Thornton Steward. Turn right, uphill past the reservoir.

7. About 0.5 mile beyond the reservoir turn right at the crossroads and, shortly after, left downhill to Newton-le-Willows.

**Bob Sampson,
Newton-le-Willows**

Before your journey

- Make sure your bike is fit for use. If in doubt, have your bike checked at your local bike shop.
- Make yourself as visible to other road users as possible.

During your journey

- Always wear a cycle helmet. Stay alert to poor

road surface, other road users, blind bends, correct road positioning, give clear and correct hand signals, and in wet weather occasionally apply brakes to remove excess water.

- For more safety information contact the County Council's road safety and travel awareness team at roadsafety@northyorks.gov.uk.