

## Walk Across England

### Day 8

### Keld to Reeth

The eighth day of our walk across England took Cynthia and I into the heart of the legendary Yorkshire Dales and within a half mile of leaving our bed and breakfast at the tiny village of Keld, we could see why the familiar gorgeous scenery of this famous region was synonymous for so many of us, when we think of a classic British countryside.

No guide book needed to tell us where we were, for there was no mistaking the stunning Dales scenery that surrounded us as we turned off the village lane and quickly picked up the grass path alongside the mighty River Swale. I felt like we were now deep in the heart of England, for what lay before us were miles and miles of rolling hills bordered by stone walls, lining a patchwork of different shaded green pastures filled with grazing sheep and dotted with towering ancient oaks.

And to enhance this visual feast even more, our path meandered along the banks of the beautiful rushing River Swale, that sparkled under the sun drenched blue skies. What a marvelous day for a walk through this famous National park and for the next thirteen miles our eyes soaked in what felt like an endless background of a beautiful British BBC period film set in the 18th century.

Cynthia and I could hardly contain our excitement of being immersed in the land of James Herriot, one of our favorite British authors. And, because of our passion for the legendary Yorkshire country veterinarian, we decided to take a slight detour to Muker, one of his favorite villages. So, we left the main path and crossed a long swinging bridge that spanned the Swale, and walked through several gated sheep and cow pastures, past stone barns and into the wool knitting village. By the time we had toured this picturesque village and its beautiful old church we had strayed almost two miles off the designated C2C path. So, rather than retracing our steps back to where we left off, something that works against the code of "through hiking", we forged onward alongside the Swale, which was still running parallel, but now on our left, in search of a safe way back across. What a mistake that proved to be, for what looked like a cross-over route in our map booklet, turned out to be an old farm road that simply led to the rushing river's banks. As we stared at the wide and deep river, we were faced with the dilemma of either retracing our steps, which would take over an hour, or taking just a few minutes to simply cross the river and pick up our main path on the other side. We looked at each other and Cynthia said "let's go for it!". After just two slippery steps, we knew that our trusty poles and ankle high waterproof boots were no match for the knee high water. The concept of "waterproof" only applies to when your boots are actually below the water level and so the river immediately poured into our boots, filling them up in the process. I found myself laughing out loud at the absurdity of us wading our way across a river as wide as the Rivanna.

Our stubbornness led to several miles of squishy walking in our soaked boots and, for me, a huge blister on my left foot. But, whether you believe in the hand of fate or not, in spite of our water filled boots, maybe our mishap was meant to happen. For just a few miles after rejoining the C2C path we heard a harrowing cry up ahead. As we drew closer to the tortured sound we realized it was coming from a bellowing sheep in distress. Seems she had somehow managed to get her neck caught in a small square section of barbed wire fencing and was now slowly choking herself to death, as she frantically tried to wriggle free. I immediately beat a path, with my walking poles, through a thicket of nettles to the noose-like section of fence and upon reaching the terrified sheep, quickly worked on setting her free. With the sheep still wailing and Cynthia jumping up and down shouting “hurry, hurry”, I finally wriggled her head out. Upon release, she immediately ran away into the pasture but then suddenly stopped and turned to give me a long stare. It was as if the furry creature was trying to find a way to say “thanks!”.

Despite our Muker mishap, one of our favorite aspects of our eighth day was the number of beautiful old villages that our thirteen mile route meandered through. Up to this point, no other stage of our walk had taken us through so many neat old villages, as today’s walk through the Dales was a string of village gems full of ancient stone houses, churches and barns. And the most picturesque village of our amazing tour was saved for last, as we ended our sunny day with a walk along a narrow stone walled lane into the wide open village green of Reeth. The green was bustling with villagers coming and going. And this classic old market square was surrounded by beautiful old stone buildings with the rolling green hills of the Dales as its backdrop. As we sat down on an old stone bench to take in this peaceful and gorgeous 360 degree panoramic view, our Somerset friends Sue, Graham and Neo, came into the square after just finishing up their walk from Keld.

After changing into dry socks and shoes and attending to my blister, we had a wonderful dinner, together with them, at a neat old pub on the green, called The Buck and talked about the miles we had just covered, the lessons learned and the journey that lay ahead. Tomorrow promised to be yet another beautiful walk through the Dales, this time enroute to Richmond, the largest village of our journey. But, this time, with no more river crossings unless they were to be over dry bridges! We could hardly wait...

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**WALKING TIP of the WEEK:** We covered 15 miles a day throughout our thirteen day walk across England but if you can get in 2-3 miles each and every day, you’ll be logging more than 15 miles/week. Do this to the point of sweating but not panting and you’ll enjoy a longer and healthier lifetime. Period! I try to average about 16-17 minutes/mile on my daily early morning walk for three miles and, in doing so, I’ve found that I’m getting the same cardiovascular benefits I used to get when I ran that far.

**HIDDEN LOCAL WALKING GEM of the WEEK:** The long drive down 29 South to the Blue Ridge Railway Trail at Piney River, in Nelson County, is totally worth it. This very flat cinder surfaced path, formerly a railroad bed, runs seven miles in one direction as it follows the beautiful Piney and Tye rivers and serene farm pastures along the way. Text me at 434-962-1694 for directions and a map of this hidden walking gem of a path.

*Mark and Cynthia Lorenzoni covered the 200 miles of the stunning Walk Across England last September and now enjoy their daily early morning walks along the beautiful and peaceful gravel roads and dirt paths of Central Virginia.*