

Walk for September 2023

Ampleforth Moor

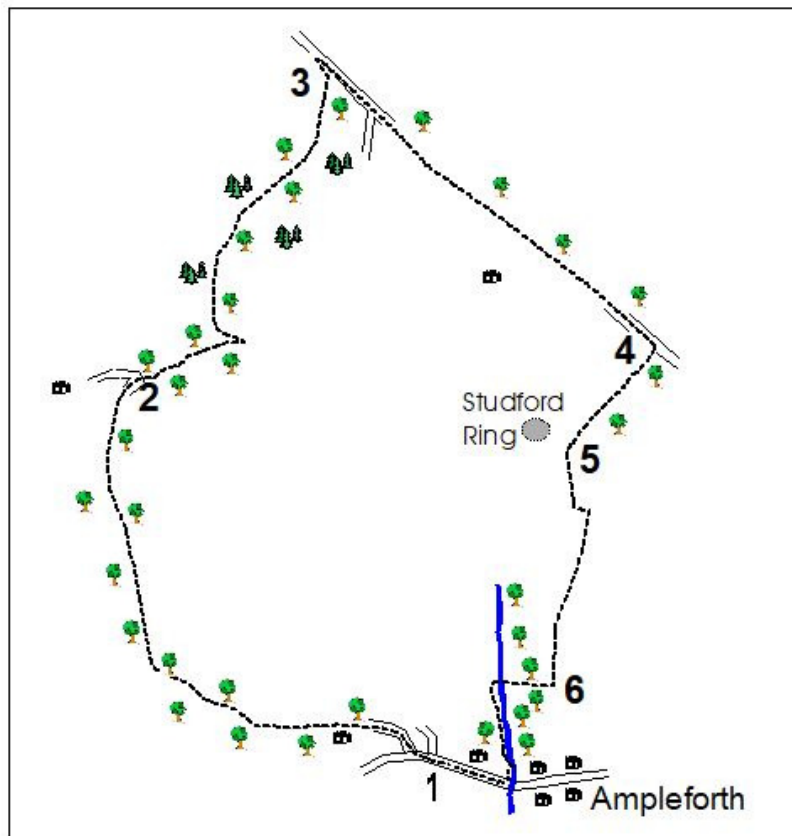
A strenuous walk combining paths and tracks through peaceful deciduous and coniferous woodland with some stretches of open countryside with panoramic views.

The first two miles include sustained uphill sections and a little steep climb up a woodland path. The middle section involves a little road walking where care is needed then the descent into the village ending in thick woodland which can be a little boggy. There are around a dozen stiles, some without a gated alternative.

Reach Ampleforth by heading towards Helmsley on the B1257. After passing the junction to Oswaldkirk, half a mile further on take the next road left. At the top of the hill turn left and stay on that road and follow the signs into Ampleforth village. Drive right through and climb the hill out the other side. Just before reaching the summit turn left into the wide newly fenced area and park on the grass, leaving clear access to the gate.

Start — Top of hill at western end of Ampleforth

Distance – 4½ miles **Duration** – 2¼ to 2¾ hours



1. From your car walk over the brow of the hill, cross the road and take the second road on the right, Westwood Lane. The climb begins there along the tarmaced lane but the quality of surface worsens after passing the ominously named West Snake Villa and stays that way as it

winds its way through the woods. Soon after passing an old rubbish tip on the left the lane descends and finally bends sharply to the left towards the farmhouse and buildings.

2. Go over the stile by the waymark post and follow the sign to Royalty Slack. Start the steady climb with the fence on your left, pass the water pipe and head steeply uphill on the clear path. When the path emerges on meeting a green forest track turn left. The track bends to the right and continues climbing until reaching a partly stoned track. Bear right and carry on uphill.
3. The track reaches a road at a barrier. Just before the barrier head right on a short path through the bracken to reach the road, otherwise you will need to duck under the barrier. Turn right and walk along the roadside for around $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile, passing by the entrance to Studford Farm. This road is not a main road but vehicles do travel at some speed along it so care is needed. Take time to appreciate the panoramic views to the right where on a clear day the distant towers of Drax power station are visible.
4. Turn right into the lane at the entrance to Studford lodges. The route from here is well waymarked after passing through the small gate at the far side of the barrier to the lodges but you first need to duck under the barrier to reach it. Once in the field beyond, turn left and walk with the fence and woods on your left. To the right at the end of that large field is a circle of trees and raised mound known as the Studford Ring. * (See notes below.)
5. Bear left at the waymark arrow and begin your descent into Ampleforth village. The walk is far from over though and as you pass through the gates and stiles of a series of fields there are impressive views of the Howardian Hills opposite.
6. On reaching a small wooded area on the right, leave the track and pass over the stile and enter the wood. The path is steep at times and quite damp underfoot but is easy to follow thanks to the yellow waymark arrows as it weaves its way through the woods and crosses the beck at some stepping stones. Eventually the path emerges through the garden of a private house and arrive at the side of the road that runs through the village. Turn right and climb the hill to return to your vehicle.

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Acknowledgment. I based the general route of this walk on a walk I found in a book “Walks North of York” by Geoffrey White and Geoffrey Green published by Dalesman Books in 1978. Since then the landscape has obviously changed and in places some rights of way have been diverted. This is most noticeable at the mysterious Studford Ring which was at that time to the left of the footpath but is now some distance to the right. It is still able to be reached though by making a slight diversion*. There is little on the internet about the Ring so I am reproducing below the information about it given in the book and the map in it.

“ Studford Ring

Situated one mile north of Ampleforth on Ampleforth Moor, it is almost certainly associated with the many tumuli around it and the double dikes nearby. Some 180ft at its widest, covering about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre.....there is one entry only and a causeway across.

Differing as it does from all other British tumuli of this type it is held to be neither a military nor a natural defence; several theories are propounded as to its purpose, viz:-

1. Burial place for dike guards
2. Cattle fold or watering trough
3. Tribal assembly point
4. Sepulchral burial place, possibly with stones over originally.

There is no traceable date of origin, but historical comparison seems to place it around our Bronze Age.

