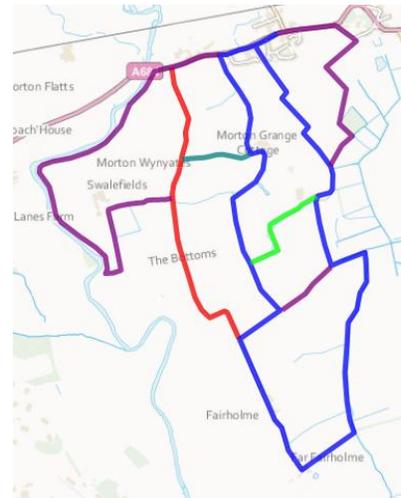


Morton on Swale is a linear village situated on a busy main road. As you drive through, you might think there is nothing much there but if you get out of your car and investigate the footpaths which lead offer both North and South, you will find it is a very pretty area.

Today we are looking at the footpaths to the south of the village with three walks of between 3 1/2 km and 7 km. They share much of the route, so they are suitable for mixed groups where the slower walkers can take the shorter path and those feeling most energetic go the whole way. Even the slowest walkers should be able to manage the shortest route in about an hour, while the longer ones will take between one and a half and two hours.

Anybody looking at the maps will realise these are just a few of the walks possible - the GetAMap snippet shows all the paths in this area, and apart from the farthest South section, we have walked them all.

All have the advantage of starting and finishing at a bus stop which is very conveniently located right beside the village pub, with a half hourly service to Northallerton and Bedale meaning you can take your time over your coffee and still catch the bus home. If you are going by car, the pub car park is quite small and on the other side of the road (which can be quite difficult to cross), but as usual you are welcome to use it as long as you call in for a coffee (or a pint) afterwards. They do very nice food as well!



Right, let's start the walk.

From the pub head west, away from Northallerton for about 100 yards then turn left down Back Lane and follow this as it zigzags south-easterly to arrive at Langlands. Follow the track till you see the footpath leading off on the left, over a bridge and along the edge of the field. This path has a couple of stiles, so for the shorter, obstacle free route go straight on here and follows the track across another two fields before joining up with the second walk and returning to Morton.

The longer walks both cross the stream and follow the footpath south across three fields before arriving at a cross path. Here the second path turns right to follow the field edge before turning right and rejoining the shortest route. From here both routes head north past Morton Grange to return to the main road, turning right to get back to the pub. This route has a couple of stiles between Morton Grange and the road (see further on for longer options and a stile free return).

For those wanting the full 4 heart experience, after crossing the stream and the fields turn left at the T-junction and follow the path as it bends south beside How Beck. After following the beck for about a quarter of a mile, there is a footpath heading off to the left which will take you to Ainderby Steeple or Warlaby, but the map does not show a way to cross the stream here; instead there is a footpath both sides of the stream down to the next bridge.

Carry on south beside the beck as far as this bridge before bending right to head for Far Fairholme, the southernmost point on this walk; then turn right and head north up Fairholme Lane. This is a metalled road, very quiet but you do need to watch out for the occasional vehicle and horses. If you are glad to get onto a solid surface after crossing the fields, follow the Lane till you rejoin the main road then turn right and head back to the

pub. If you prefer the feel of grass underfoot, watch out for the first path on your right (the bridlepath) and rejoin the other two walks.

Other Options

Stile-free options: There are two choices for a stile-free walk, both setting out along Back Lane and going straight on at Langlands on the bridlepath. As you go through the gate and have the choice of turning right or left, make your mind up. Left is the official bridlepath, up and across the field and out onto Potter Lane, the field can be quite rough but is short and Potter Lane is tarmac, so this is the better route for pushchairs, bikes, etc.

Turn right at the gate instead, and follow the field edge towards Morton Grange, and you will be on a good grassy walking surface till you approach the chicken runs, then farm track right round past the Grange and out to Potter Lane. This slightly shorter route is great for walking but the grass is not so good for wheels.

There are a couple of add-ons you can use to extend the short walks, or to create new variations. The Ainderby loop starts behind Ainderby Hall and climbs and falls and then has a short steep climb with a rather high stile before joining Back Lane near Langlands. Although only a quarter of a mile longer than Back Lane, the climbs and the stiles make it seem a lot further.

The other extension is along the river bank, a very pleasant walk which adds a mile and a quarter to the distance. Again there are a couple of stiles, one quite an interesting affair beside the bridge at Morton, involving two stiles in a drop down into the field. The other two stiles are just beside gates – which are usually unlocked, and certainly the one nearer Swalefields is a very high stile so just check the gate first – and don't forget to close it behind you.

Combine these two with a route via Langlands and Morton Grange and you will have a two hour walk to keep anybody happy.

Maps:

Walk4Life:

<http://www.walk4life.info/walk/morton-south-the-shorter-one> and
<http://www.walk4life.info/walk/morton-south-the-long-one>

OS GetAMap:

<http://www.getamap.ordnancesurveyleisure.co.uk/?key=4OQ1oFxKOEXOfbm1UuEbJg2>

We hope you enjoy your walk and have no problems following these instructions. If you do encounter any problems, please let us know and we will correct them, and don't forget to add your comments on the walk 4 life site.

All main loops walked during 2011 except loop past Far Fairholme (not yet walked)

Northallerton Striders
April 2012