

Get away for... **THE WEEKEND!**

Get a buzz bumbling around idyllic Yorkshire where walkers are welcome and the views surprising. You'll soon see why it's so marvellously 'moor-ish'

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: Carol Kubicki

Walkers are Welcome' in the Yorkshire town of Otley. Hiking, strolling and bumbling are some of my favourite things to do as I aim for that perfect walk/dessert life balance, where the calories spent during the day at least equals the calories consumed in ice cream and cake. It seemed that Otley might be my sort of place...

We soon got to Yorkshire from our Lancashire home, only breaking our drive when we reached nearby Ilkley. The town was eerily sleepy.

Sauntering down to the park on the banks of the River Wharfe, we found the crowds. A small beach was packed with sunbathers and people were frolicking in the water. It was deliciously cool by the river and we lingered before wandering back

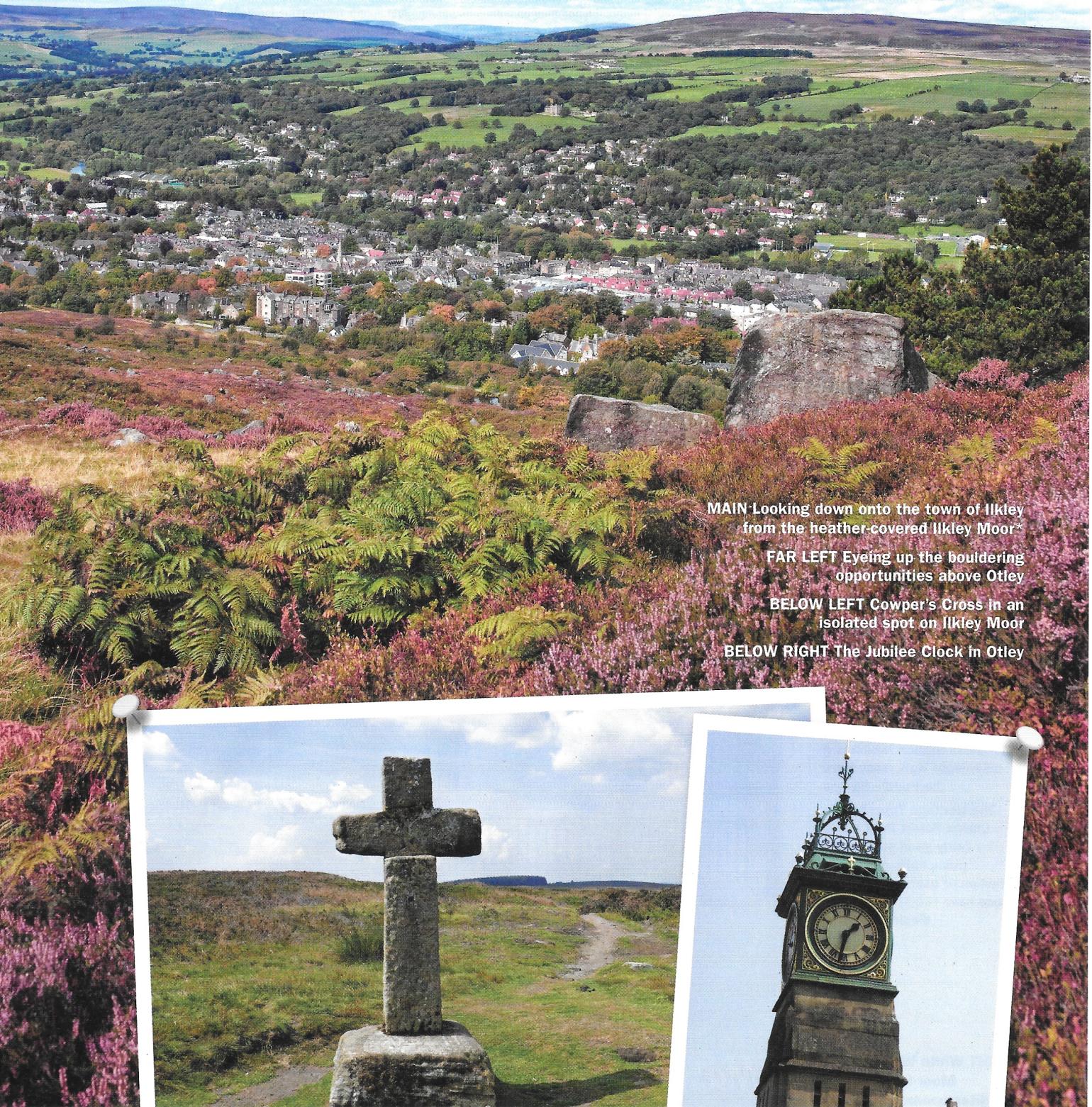
around the lovely medieval stone manor house. We peered into Ilkley's sophisticated shops, buying a cake for later in the charming Bettys Café Tea Room and sat in the gardens opposite with good ice cream.

We were joining a friend who had chosen a small campsite near Otley. Arriving at the top of the steep drive to the site, I was amazed by the spectacular view that unfolded.

The pitches are arranged to give everyone a panorama over the patchwork of fields around the Wharfe valley. We could see the Arthington railway viaduct and, on the horizon, was the distinctive lump of Almscliffe Crag near Harrogate.

As well as the stunning view, this rural idyll had rabbits and squirrels, a hen clucked around our 'van and red kites flew ▶

Why?... To stretch your legs in the wonderful Yorkshire countryside

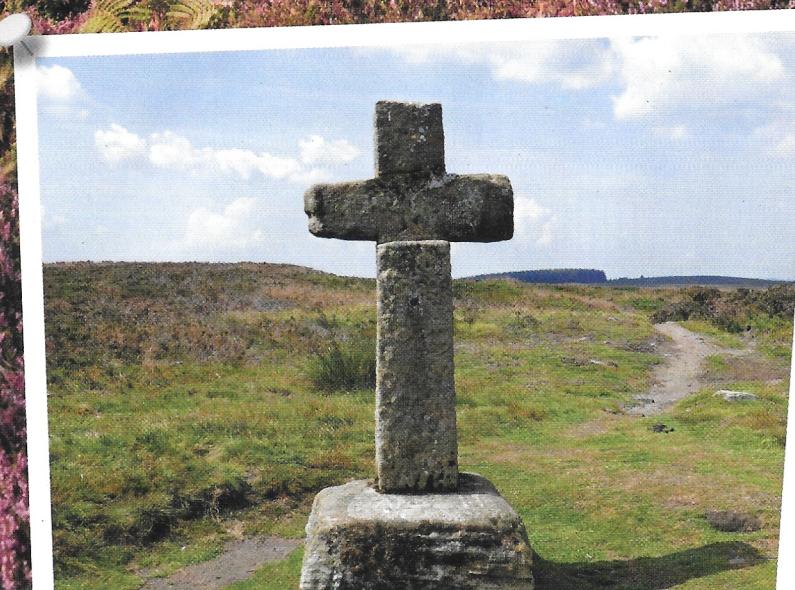


MAIN Looking down onto the town of Ilkley from the heather-covered Ilkley Moor*

FAR LEFT Eyeing up the bouldering opportunities above Otley

BELOW LEFT Cowper's Cross in an isolated spot on Ilkley Moor

BELOW RIGHT The Jubilee Clock in Otley



US AND OUR 'VAN



Carol Kubicki...

and her husband, Anthony, use their Devon Tempest to pursue their hobbies of walking and cycling while exploring the historical and natural environments



2015 Devon Tempest on a Renault Master MWB 2.3-litre. This is our third blue campervan and we have called them all the 'Blue Bus'

TOP TIPS

If you just want to walk around Harewood House, rather than visit the property and gardens, there is parking on Wike Lane on the left off the A61 south of Harewood village and limited parking at Muddy Boots Café in Harewood village for a small charge

On Ilkley Moor there is some parking at Whetstone Gate Wireless Station, which is a 15-minute walk away from the Puddle Stones

The Heritage Time Trail in Chevin Forest Park has a fairly good surface for pushchairs and some wheelchair users, although it does have two short steeply sloping sections

overhead. In the balmy evening the outdoors was our living area and we talked until dusk over a bottle of wine.

I was surprised to open the blinds next morning and see mist obscuring the valley. Hoping it would burn off, we set out on foot for the nearby Chevin Forest Park. Spread across a north-facing escarpment above Otley, Chevin Forest is a scenic mixture of woodland, heath and rocky outcrops of millstone grit, divided by a road into the easterly Danefield and the westerly White House side.

Danefield was owned by one family and managed for game and forestry with a sideline in producing millstones for local corn mills. During WWII it was cleared and was subsequently given to the people of Otley as a memorial for those who lost their lives in the war.

Today, Danefield is plantations of woodland with open rides and narrow paths dotted with a collection of wooden sculptures on the Heritage Time Trail. These represent a timeline from fossils to chairs and mountain bikers. Chippendale, the famous cabinetmaker, was born in Otley in 1718 and a tree-lined ride is named after him, planted to celebrate the 250 years since his birth.

The mist was clearing as we crossed the

road into the westerly side of Chevin Forest and climbed through woodland and open heath. Tourists flocked here for teas at Jenny's Cottage, overlooking what is known as 'Surprise View', in the nineteenth and twentieth century. The café was demolished in the 1970s and only foundations remain, but we sat on one of the many welcoming benches for walkers nearby, enjoying the stunning panorama of Otley and the Wharfe valley over the trees.

Continuing along the ridge, we reached an area of dense beech trees penetrated by little light. The big trees and the slope made it perfect for rope swings and we tried out a couple before descending steeply into Otley and its main shopping street.

Otley is delightful with pretty courtyards where cafés spill their tables out into the sunshine. It has cobbled alleys with independent shops and an indoor arcade that has fascinating curio shops for collectors.

We found ourselves by the River Wharfe and in Tittybottle Park. Not the only Tittybottle Park in the north, these are generally small parks with benches that are near large upmarket houses. The nursemaids from these swanky houses would bring the babies to the park and sit chatting together while feeding the children with 'tittybottles'.



Must do... Walk under the big skies of Ilkley Moor

RIGHT White Wells on Ilkley Moor looked almost Mediterranean on a hot day

On the opposite bank, boats bobbed below pretty stone cottages and we stopped to see an unusual stone memorial to Wharfedale printing presses that were developed and manufactured in Otley and which revolutionised newspaper printing in the nineteenth century.

Walking back into the town centre, we stumbled upon a colourful display of scarecrows in the churchyard before enjoying tea and cake in a charming courtyard café and antique shop.

We admired the fine china we had been given and complimented the owner on these when he came to clear away. He looked over our table sternly, "I'm just checking everything is here," he said, only breaking into a grin when we looked anxious.

Over 100 UK towns and villages are now 'Walkers are Welcome' accredited. They sign up to having good local walk information and well-maintained footpaths and signposts.

After the easy-to-follow paths and signs of Chevin Forest, we felt less welcome as we wound our way around Otley's new housing to pick up the paths from the edge of town. Luck and online maps eventually led us onto the disused railway line towards Pool in Wharfedale. By now it was sweltering and we were glad of the shade when we reached

the woodland and old quarry on Pool Bank.

In the evening the sky changed to a deep stormy orange and we expected rain, but the fine weather held. Settling down for the night, an owl hooted across the fields.

It was already hot as we walked down the hill to Pool next morning for the bus to Ilkley, another 'Walkers are Welcome' town. In Ilkley, we followed the signs for the famous moors and were soon climbing up to White Wells, a whitewashed building that was dazzling against the blue sky. Unfortunately, the eighteenth century baths were closed; a dip in the cold plunge pool would have been heavenly in the heat.

The path took us steeply up to Ilkley Crags where the view is an excuse to stop and catch your breath. There was no morning mist and we were high enough to see the white golf-ball radomes of RAF Menwith Hill. There are over 30 radomes at this electronic monitoring station. From this distance they shimmered on the horizon like mystical white mushrooms.

Ahead of us were sandy paths through acres of purple heather moorland and the Twelve Apostles stone circle. Although these 12 upright stones are arranged in a circle, this is no Stonehenge. The circle is special because of its remote and high location. Sitting among the low stones, I was ➤

ESSENTIALS

HOW LONG

Three nights

WHEN

July and August, when the heather is flowering on the moors, is a special time, but it is an area for all year

HOW MUCH

Fuel Average 34mpg (Lancashire-Pool Bank Farm and Harewood House return, 172 miles)	£31
Site fees	£54
Bus fare	£13.40
TOTAL	£98.40

BELOW Wells House, a hydropathic establishment, was visited by Charles Darwin in the nineteenth century



INFORMATION

Find more information on Walkers are Welcome towns and villages

 walkersarewelcome.org.uk

Walkers are Welcome Otley
 wawotley.org.uk

For maps and trail leaflets to download
 chevinforest.co.uk

Download the Stanza Stones Trail Guide

 ilkleyliteraturefestival.org.uk

Ilkley community website has ideas for walks
 ilkley.org





Must see... The charming cobbled alleys, arcades and courtyards of Otley's town centre

surrounded by the immensity of the blue sky and fluffy clouds.

Crossing old paving stones laid across the moorland, we reached one of the six Stanza Stones. Poems describing water in different forms by Poet Laureate, Simon Armitage, have been carved onto stones sited on these moors. We encountered *Puddle*, written on two reclaimed gritstone pavers and originally quarried in Yorkshire for a mill floor in Greater Manchester. On this upland, in temperatures over 20°C, we read Simon Armitage's words; '...Some May mornings/ Atlantic storm-horses/clatter this way...

In contrast to the Stanza Stones and the Twelve Apostles, the Thimble Stones are not the work of stonemasons – the grooves on these boulders are the result of erosion.

We left the high moorland by the lonely Cowper's Cross and, on the lower slopes, encountered a bucolic picnic scene. Three young women in summer frocks sat on a blanket spread across a verdant sward while their children played happily in a shallow stream. All that was missing was an artist to capture the image.

Returning to the campsite after tackling the hill from Pool, sweat was pouring down our sun-kissed faces. We almost envied the campers who had spent the day relaxing, though we felt we had earned our cake!

The next morning it was cooler as we followed the River Wharfe in the Blue Bus to Harewood House. Rather than visit this grand eighteenth century house that has furniture from Thomas Chippendale and gardens landscaped by 'Capability' Brown, we planned to take the public footpaths around the estate on a three-hour walk.

From the rolling parkland and fields of cattle we had spectacular views of the house while red kites soared overhead. We descended into trees and passed streams, ponds and pretty estate cottages. In the North Park we spotted some of Harewood's red deer before entering the village and returning on a woodland path.

I had imagined a 'Walkers are Welcome' town where muddy boots were not frowned upon in cafés, hearty flapjack was easily available, signposting was second to none and I could download local walking routes before I arrived. The summery weather meant we never got to try out the tolerance of wet footwear in Otley and, while all the footpaths we used were well maintained, the signposting was average.

This is, nevertheless, a fantastic area for hiking. Chevin Forest Park and Ilkley go the extra mile for walkers, providing websites with free guides and the ratio of benches to walkers in Chevin Forest was world class! **MM**

ABOVE Wander along Otley's arcade of quirky shops

THE CAMPsite

Pool Bank Farm Caravan and Motorhome Club CL, Pool in Wharfedale, Otley LS21 1EU

01132 843221

poolbankfarmcl.com

All year

Two adults, pitch and electric: From £20 (Club members only and adults only), electric supplied by pre-pay £1 coins

ALTERNATIVE SITE

Clarion Lodge Campsite, West Chevin Road, Menston LS29 6BG

01943 876300

clarionlodgecampsite.co.uk

All year

Two adults, pitch and electric: From £20