

The Masham Leaves Project

In the early 1990s Rural Arts North Yorkshire offered funding to Harrogate Borough Council for "community arts" promotions. Masham Parish Council was asked to devise a project for the town. The sculptor Alain Ayers was commissioned to design and create what quickly became known as "The Masham Leaves" using huge paving slabs of locally quarried limestone reclaimed from the former railway station platform. The project quickly became a partnership of local organisations and Masham residents and businesses who helped by providing materials, skills, time or other assistance.

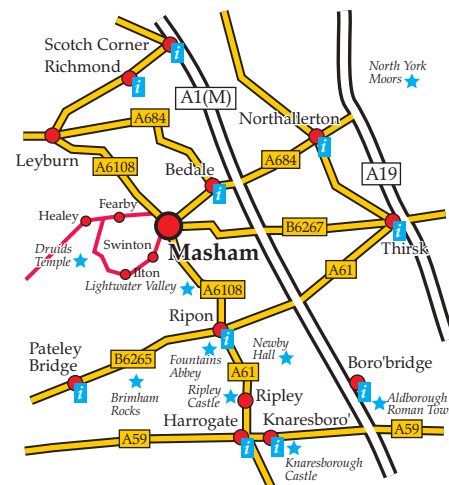


(cover photo) E. Mess

About Masham

Masham is a peaceful town in Lower Wensleydale. It is perfect for a day visit or for a longer stay in one of the many Guest Houses and Hotels in the town. Its extensive Market Place, fringed by beautiful Georgian houses, still hosts an annual Sheep Fair in September.

Masham boasts two breweries, both with visitor centres, where you can watch the beer being made and then try it for yourself. Masham has a full range of shops, pubs and cafés selling local produce and other fine goods.



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Masham Leaves



NIDDERDALE
Area of
Outstanding Natural
Beauty



Trail information

The Masham leaves walk is approximately 5km (3 miles) in length and you should allow around 2 full hours to enjoy the walk and the sculptures along the way. The route follows public footpaths on level or gently sloping ground through open land, woods and along 2 river banks (there are stiles along the route and the going can sometimes get a bit muddy). The paths cross working agricultural land so please respect the needs of others by taking your litter home and keeping dogs on leads or under close control.

The Route

Leave the Mashamshire Community Office (situated in Little Market Place) passing the Town Hall on your left. Follow the road round to the left until you reach Masham Primary School at the top of Millgate. Here you will find the 'Acorn', the first of the 'Masham Leaves', near to the school hall door.



Masham Primary School

Turn back into the main Market Place and head left making for St Mary's Church in the nearest corner. Pass the war memorial in the churchyard and a fine Norman doorway and continue on the path in front of the South Door. You'll pass the base of a Saxon Cross then, on the North side of the church, you'll find the grave of Julius Caesar Ibbetson, a seventeenth century local artist. Go through the kissing gate at the rear of the graveyard, turn left and continue to Leaf 2 (known as the 'Standing Tree') in this field where sheep racing takes place at the annual Masham Sheep Fair.

Continue past the Standing Tree, through a nearby gate and downhill to a track and turn right onto it. This track leads to the sewage works, notice the road to the Old Mill to the left and one up to Glebe House on the right. Follow the short lane, along the bank of the River Ure, which soon becomes a path. Continue along the riverbank to Leaf 3 (the 'Floating leaf').



Low Burn Bridge

Still on this path head towards the woods where the River Burn joins the Ure in 'Van Dieman's Plantation'. Bear left down the steps into the wood and follow the Burn upstream through trees to Low Burn Bridge on the Grewelthorpe - Masham road. Cross over the bridge and continue upstream on the opposite bank. Upon reaching the golf course climb the stile into the playing area, keeping well away from the fairway (better still, continue along the riverbank until you arrive at Leaf 4 (the 'Shrine').



The River Burn



Masham Golf Club entrance

From here keep close to the riverbank (as the golf course is quite extensive) until you reach Swinton Bridge. Cross the bridge and continue until you get to the Golf Club entrance. Turn left, follow the track across the golf course, mount the stile (farm buildings on your left) and cross the field to Leaf 5 (the 'Enclosure').



Sheep grazing on pasture to the west of the town

Follow the path uphill making for a small industrial estate (Jameson's Agricultural Seed Merchants, Danby's Food and Ritchey Tagg Animal Needs). Turn right down the track until you reach a humpback bridge over Swinney Beck (to end the walk here, turn right and head back to the Market Place). To continue turn left and then right at Fearby Road and right again when you reach the A6108 (Leyburn - Ripon Road).

Walk past the Wensleydale Garage, pass the site of the White Bear pub and the memorial to civilians killed in bombing in the Second World War and head downhill to the Avenue of lime trees which leads to Masham Bridge. Just before the Bridge head left, cross a stile and walk along the riverbank until you reach Leaf 6 (the 'Footbridge'). From here retrace your steps to Masham Bridge, back along the Lime Avenue and then branch left along Silver Street which leads back to the Market Place.

the Masham Leaves



1. The Acorn

This symbolises new growth as the children develop in school. Note how the base of the acorn forms a birdbath. This school building, now the local primary school, used to be the Grammar School founded by Sir William Danby in 1760.

2. The Standing Tree

This sculpture reflects the Saxon Cross shaft, stone fragments inside the church and the many memorial stones in the graveyard. The circular carving on one side depicts barley seeds and a sun-like pattern based on a mill wheel and furrowed like ploughed land. The barley seeds recall Masham's important brewing heritage. The reverse of the Leaf is incised with a linear pattern of a bell ringing score and is reminiscent of tree roots and branches.

3. The Floating Leaf

This is situated by 'Boat Close' where a ferry once plied the river to Aldburgh Hall. This sculpture symbolises windblown oak leaves which alight on and float down the river. It is placed here as a reminder of the time when domestic servants and supplies from Masham would make their regular journey to Aldburgh.

4. The Shrine

A Roman road probably crossed through Masham on a north-south route. Where the road crosses the River Burn this 'offertory' has been erected for travellers by to leave offerings as they pass.

There is a story that if you were to see the ghosts of Romans here they would only be visible from the knees up as the road was at a much lower level than today.

5. The Enclosure

This sculpture is made from five slabs forming an enclosure to symbolise the importance of sheep to Masham. When viewed from different angles varying silhouettes of oak leaves can be made out. The design echoes that of hill and moorland sheep pens and links to the Enclosure Acts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when common land was fenced off and transferred into the ownership of farms and estates.

From this point you can see Swinton Castle at the heart of the Swinton Estate which played a major role in the development of the landscape and economy of Mashamshire.

6. The Footbridge

In the form of 2 connected oak leaves, this piece crosses a small beck and replaced a haphazard collection of stepping stones. The centre of the bridge is exactly 2 feet wide - the gauge of the Colsterdale Light Railway which crossed the River Ure on a wooden bridge at this point.

