

Britain & Ireland's Walling Treasures:

The stiles of Askrigg



Askrigg Church entrance two pillar type squeeze stiles. © Sean Adcock

Askrigg in the Yorkshire Dales is a village awash with stiles, the church grounds alone have seven.

There are a wide range of 'styles of stile' in and around the village but what makes it stand apart from other areas are those found in a field South-east of the village on a path to Worton. The four sides of the field have stiles of varying degrees of finish and design, and which do not necessarily seem to be associated with public footpaths.

I first came across these stiles in Geoff Lund's "*Yorkshire Stonewaller*" (reviewed by Tim Roberts way back in "Stonechat 10": Summer 1996). Armed with the book I went in search of these stiles following a talk to the Otley & Yorkshire Dales Branch back in 2004. My epic search became a two part article in "*Waller & Dyker*" which you can now find tucked away in the books/articles part of my website www.dry-stone.co.uk.



One of the ornate squeeze styles featured in Lund's "*Yorkshire Stonewaller*", situated on the northern boundary to the field. © Sean Adcock

This type of squeeze style, with platforms either side of gap formed by two bull-nosed/round ends is quite common in Wensleydale and especially immediately around Askrigg. Michael Roberts in "*Gates & Stiles*" (Gold Cockerel Books, 2002. p91) suggests "*There are flat stones either side so that any load such as a basket or sack could be rested on the top while the bearer negotiated the gap. Stiles were great meeting places in the old days and one can imagine people to gossip and exchange news as they rested their bundles on the slabs before continuing on their way*". In terms of their eligibility for this series their inclusion might be a slight cheat as well hidden mortar is involved, but striking none-the-less.

To my mind the overwhelming question remains 'why in the middle of nowhere?' This is still unresolved but the following information has been offered by John Heselgrave...

There is a book entitled Yorkshire Village by Marie Hartley (a prolific and well regarded Dales Author who died recently aged 100) and Joan Inglby. There was a long standing family called Winn (Wyn) who lived in Askrigg. Thomas Wyn in 1474 was described as a Yeoman of Askrigg. Geroge Winn was a tenant of Nappa Hall in 1804 and had a son also named George who built a 3 storey house (Winnville with stone lions on gateposts and now a pub) on Askrigg Main St in 1841. He was a significant land-owner mainly to the East of the Town and it is presumed that he ordered the walling to be done to a high standard with a distinctive style. George (Jnr) drowned in 1876 whilst fording the river near Aysgarth - a window at the east end of Askrigg Church is to his memory.

Meanwhile you can now look up more about Britain and Ireland's Walling Treasures at <http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/wallingwonderland>

Sean Adcock



The Most ornate of the stiles, butting up to a barn on the south side of the field
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