

# Yorkshire Dales Mountain Biking

Classic Pennine Trails



**Nick Cotton**



# **Yorkshire Dales** Mountain **Biking**

Classic Pennine Trails



**Nick Cotton**

# Yorkshire Dales Mountain Biking

Classic Pennine Trails

**VP** First published in 2020 by Vertebrate Publishing.

Vertebrate Publishing, Omega Court, 352 Cemetery Road,  
Sheffield S11 8FT, United Kingdom.

[www.v-publishing.co.uk](http://www.v-publishing.co.uk)

Copyright © 2020 Nick Cotton and Vertebrate Publishing Ltd.

Nick Cotton has asserted his rights under the Copyright, Designs  
and Patents Act 1988 to be identified as author of this work.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-912560-06-6

All rights reserved. No part of this work covered by the copyright herein may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means – graphic, electronic, or mechanised, including photocopying, recording, taping, or information storage and retrieval systems – without the written permission of the publisher.

Front cover: Stu Price on the climb from Low Houses in Swaledale (route 10).

Back cover: John Horscroft near Malham Lings (route 26).

Photography by John Coefield.



All maps reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of  
The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

© Crown Copyright. 100025218.

Design by Nathan Ryder, production by Cameron Bonser

[www.v-publishing.co.uk](http://www.v-publishing.co.uk)

Printed and bound in Europe by Pulsio.

Vertebrate Publishing is committed to printing on paper from sustainable sources.

Every effort has been made to achieve accuracy of the information in this guidebook. The authors, publishers and copyright owners can take no responsibility for: loss or injury (including fatal) to persons; loss or damage to property or equipment; trespass, irresponsible behaviour or any other mishap that may be suffered as a result of following the route descriptions or advice offered in this guidebook. The inclusion of a track or path as part of a route, or otherwise recommended, in this guidebook does not guarantee that the track or path will remain a right of way. If conflict with landowners arises we advise that you act politely and leave by the shortest route available. If the matter needs to be taken further then please take it up with the relevant authority.

**PLEASE GIVE WAY TO HORSES AND PEDESTRIANS.**

# Contents



Introduction .....	vii
Acknowledgements .....	viii
How to Use this Book .....	viii
Rights of Way .....	x
The Bike .....	xii
Essential Kit .....	xii
General Safety .....	xiii
Rules of the (Off) Road .....	xiv
Planning Your Ride .....	xiv
Maps & Symbols .....	xv
Yorkshire Dales Mountain Biking – Area Map & Route Finder .....	xvi

## SECTION 1 – CLASSICS

1 ▲ Over Great Pinseat from Langthwaite – 12km .....	5
2 ▲ Two Short Rides from Hardraw – 10+12km .....	9
3 ▲ Gunnerside & Melbecks Moor – 12km .....	15
4 ▲ Muker to Keld via Swinner Gill – 13km .....	19
5 ▲ Easy Tracks Around Austwick – 16km .....	23
6 ▲ East from Langthwaite on to Hurst Moor – 15km .....	27

## SECTION 2 – EPICS

7 ▲ West of Marske to Fremington & Marrick Moor – 18km .....	35
8 ▲ Clapham, Feizor & Thwaite Scars – 19km .....	41
9 ▲ Reeth & Reeth High Moor – 20km .....	47
10 ▲ Swale Trail & Harkerside Moor – 19km .....	51
11 ▲ Greets Hill, Apedale & the Swale Trail – 20km .....	57
12 ▲ Kilnsey, Mastiles Lane & Arncliffe Cote – 22km .....	63
13 ▲ Settle, Malham Cove & Gorgebeck – 22km .....	67
14 ▲ Castle Bolton & Apedale – 25km .....	71
15 ▲ Bainbridge, Raydale & Stake Allotments – 26km .....	77

16 ▲ West of Kirkby Malzeard – 30km .....	83
17 ▲ Hawes, Newby Head & the Pennine Bridleway – 24km .....	89

## SECTION 3 – ENDUROS

18 ▲ Gargrave to Mastiles Lane & Hetton – 32km .....	99
19 ▲ Horton, Langstrothdale, Horse Head & Foxup – 32km .....	105
20 ▲ Ribbleshead, Dentedale & Great Knoutberry Hill – 33km .....	111
21 ▲ Grassington, Mastiles Lane & Hetton – 32km .....	117
22 ▲ Bainbridge, Langstrothdale & Cam High Road – 36km .....	123

## SECTION 4 – KILLERS

23 ▲ Pateley Bridge & Appletreewick – 38km .....	133
24 ▲ Tour d'Ingleborough – 40km .....	139
25 ▲ Pateley Bridge North-West – 40km .....	147
26 ▲ Stainforth to Littondale – 43km .....	153

## SECTION 5 – BONUS SECTION

The Howgills .....	162
Swale Trail .....	163
Pennine Bridleway .....	163
Gisburn Forest .....	164
Stainburn Forest .....	165
Top Ten Classic Dales Climbs .....	166
Top Ten Classic Dales Downhills .....	168

APPENDIX .....	170
----------------	-----

### ROUTE GRADES

▲ = EASY ▲ = MEDIUM ▲ = HARD (see page viii)



# Introduction

The Yorkshire Dales offers the unique combination in England of an excellent network of stone-based bridleways usable all year round, drop-dead-gorgeous scenery rising to over 700 metres and, because of the spread-out nature of the trails, very little user conflict with either walkers or horse riders. Mountain biking heaven on excellent trails weaving their way through a landscape of limestone plateaus, drystone walls, field barns, sheep pasture, clumps of broadleaf woodland, streams, rivers and waterfalls with fine pubs in almost all the villages.

Other highlights, among far too many to list in full, include classic trails such as Mastiles Lane between Kilnsey and Malham, the wonderful 'new' bridleways created by the national park over Gorbeck (west of Malham) and down from Weets Top (east of Malham), teeth-rattling descents into Stainforth, the fast, straight descent along Cam High Road, an old Roman road leading down to Bainbridge, the atmospheric ruins of the old lead mining industry in Swaledale, like ghost towns left abandoned, and long charges across the heather moors on grouse shooting tracks between Langthwaite and Marske and into Nidderdale.

There are a few things worth pointing out about mountain biking in the Dales: there are no Forestry Commission holdings, so no man-made singletrack, indeed there is very little singletrack at all as most of the trails either use broad stone tracks at lower levels or broad grassy tracks higher up. Tracks to test you do not consist of a series of perfectly spaced drop-offs on a twisty woodland trail but lung-busting 250-metre climbs up steep stone tracks or loose stone descents where picking the right line has you moving left to right across the path dodging the rubble traps.

The icing on the cake consists of long, cruising plateau sections on well-drained grass which normally come as a reward for some horrendous climb; a chance to sniff the breeze and open your eyes to the stupendous scenery that lies all around, an easy breather before the gradient steepens and you need to sharpen your wits for the downhill challenges.

Good bases in the Dales with a fine selection of pubs, cafes and accommodation include Reeth with access to the trails in Swaledale and Arkengarthdale; Bainbridge, Askrigg or Hawes for the trails in Wensleydale and Langstrothdale; Settle, Malham or Austwick for the trails in the south of the park; or Pateley Bridge for those in the east, spilling over into Nidderdale.

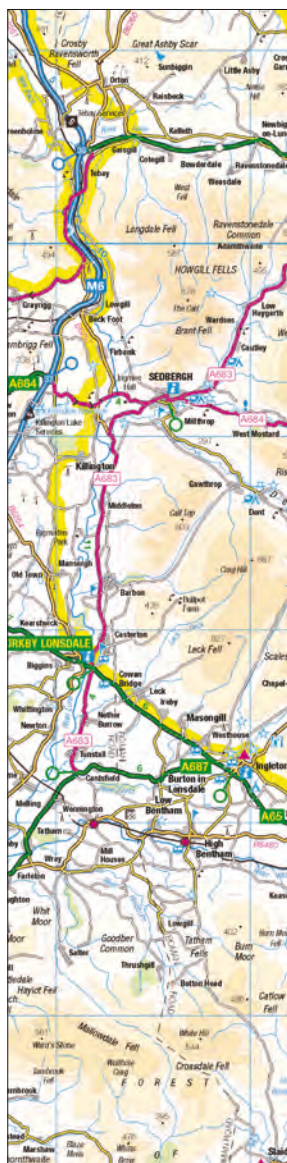
## Nick Cotton



# Yorkshire Dales area map & route finder



1	Over Great Pinseat from Langthwaite .....	5
2	Two Short Rides from Hardraw .....	9
3	Gunnerside & Melbecks Moor .....	15
4	Muker to Keld via Swinner Gill .....	19
5	Easy Tracks Around Austwick .....	23
6	East from Langthwaite on to Hurst Moor .....	27
7	West of Marske to Fremington & Marrick Moor .....	35
8	Clapham, Feizor & Thwaite Scars .....	41
9	Reeth & Reeth High Moor .....	47
10	Swale Trail & Harkerside Moor .....	51
11	Greets Hill, Apedale & the Swale Trail .....	57
12	Kilnsey, Mastiles Lane & Arncliffe Cote .....	63
13	Settle, Malham Cove & Gorbeck .....	67
14	Castle Bolton & Apedale .....	71
15	Bainbridge, Raydale & Stake Allotments .....	77
16	West of Kirkby Malzeard .....	83
17	Hawes, Newby Head & the Pennine Bridleway .....	89
18	Gargrave to Mastiles Lane & Hetton .....	99
19	Horton, Langstrothdale, Horse Head & Foxup .....	105
20	Ribblehead, Dentedale & Great Knoutberry Hill .....	111
21	Grassington, Mastiles Lane & Hetton .....	117
22	Bainbridge, Langstrothdale & Cam High Road .....	123
23	Pateley Bridge & Appletreewick .....	133
24	Tour d'Ingleborough .....	139
25	Pateley Bridge North-West .....	147
26	Stainforth to Littondale .....	153







CONTAINS ORDNANCE SURVEY DATA © CROWN COPYRIGHT AND DATABASE RIGHT.



# SECTION

# 1

## Classics

*A quick blast after work, a night loop you can finish before your lights die, a ride to squeeze in when time is short, or a ride to build confidence as you get into mountain biking. That's a classic. They're not long, but that doesn't mean they're easy ... Good, solid rides that all riders should enjoy.*



*HANNAH COLLINGRIDGE DESCENDING INTO SEDBUSK (ROUTE 2)*







THE FINAL DESCENT

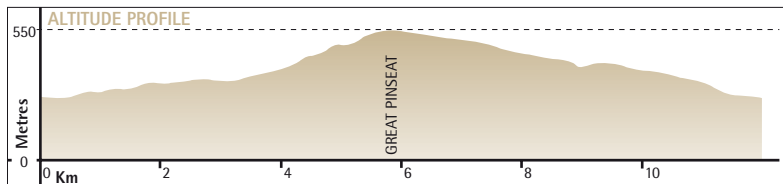
# 01 Over Great Pinseat from Langthwaite 12km

## Introduction

You are close to the border with County Durham in this part of the national park; it is a sparsely populated area, remote and very much at the edge, a long way from the popular Dales centres of Wensleydale and Wharfedale. Several tracks lead west from the Tan Hill road but unfortunately in many cases the early promise of fine stone tracks peters out and there is no network of tracks linking Langthwaite to Tan Hill and Old Gang mines. This short ride is the best of the rest and has some testing climbs and roof-of-the-world cruising. For such a small village, Langthwaite also boasts two pubs – does this have anything to do with the proximity of the hamlet of Booze?

## The Ride

Stretch your legs on the lane up to Tan Hill before turning off-road towards the mining spoils on Whaw Moor. Near the ruins of a barn there is a fine-looking track to the right – it starts full of promise but stops abruptly three kilometres later with walking and bike carrying the only onwards option. You've bought the book, so let me do the grunt work! Back to the ride: climbing over 200 metres, zigzag up the hillside above the spoil heap, at times steeply, to arrive at the plateau. Turn east and the track gets better and better as you glide through a sea of purple heather with wooded Arkengarthdale down to the left and the path stretching away into the distance. A quick shimmy right then left on the lane leads to the final grassy descent and return to Langthwaite.



### OVER GREAT PINSEAT FROM LANGTHWAITE

GRADE: ▲

TOTAL DISTANCE: 12KM » TOTAL ASCENT: 300M » TIME: 1-2 HOURS » START/FINISH: LANGTHWAITE, NORTH-WEST OF REETH » START GRID REF: NZ 005024 » SATNAV: DL11 6RD » PARKING: PAY & DISPLAY CAR PARK IN LANGTHWAITE OS MAP: LANDRANGER 92 » PUB: RED LION TEL: 01748 884 218, CB INN TEL: 01748 884 567, BOTH IN LANGTHWAITE CAFE: BRING SANDWICHES

## Directions – Over Great Pinseat from Langthwaite



- 1** From the car park in Langthwaite follow the road north-west towards Tan Hill for 3.5km, going past the church, the CB Inn and a right turn to Barnard Castle. **Ignore** the first bridleway to the left (signposted *Whaw Moor*) and go past Moor Intake Farm up to the left and several houses and barns to the right.
- 2** Take the next wide stone track to the **L** (NY 981041) signposted *Bridleway only, no vehicles* (a cluster of houses in the village of Whaw lies down in the valley to the right).
- 3** After 600m at a fork of tracks bear **L** off the main track to continue uphill on a grass and stone track, soon ignoring a track to the left. Zigzag uphill on the track passing above the spoil heap and climb steeply.
- 4** The summit is marked by grassed-over spoil heaps and small cairns of stones. Turn sharp **L** at a T-junction of tracks (NY 974030) towards a larger spoil heap, not grassed over. The track soon improves dramatically for a very fine descent.
- 5** At the T-junction with the road turn sharp **R** then, **easy to miss**: shortly after a *20% gradient* sign and before a steep right-hand bend (NY 993009) turn **L** uphill through a gate on to a broad grass and stone track signposted *Bridleway only, no vehicles*. Shortly, at a fork, bear **L** on to the wider, better defined path.
- 6** Follow this for 2.2km to a T-junction with the road and turn **L** to return to Langthwaite.



### **Making a day of it**

There is another ride starting from Langthwaite heading east over Hurst Moor (Ride 6, page 27).





**01 OVER GREAT PINSEAT FROM LANGTHWAITE**

© CROWN COPYRIGHT AND/OR DATABASE RIGHT. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. LICENCE NUMBER 100025218.