



Top of the world 'The views at the top are stunning. Especially on a snowy winter's day when I first went up, that was truly magical!' - Credit: Rob Duckworth

county_people

To the edge and back

Yorkshire's dramatic landscapes have played a huge part in Rob Duckworth's recovery after suffering a life-changing head injury. He shares his remarkable story – and some of places that inspire him every day

Kathryn Armstrong

Today Rob Duckworth is a fit and active 32-year-old living in Bingley, West Yorkshire. He's cycled the length of the UK and scaling huge peaks is pretty much a walk in the park.

Currently a seasonal lock keeper on the canal at Bank Newton in Gargrave, he's still figuring out what the rest of his life will bring, but at one point such choices seemed impossible.

As a teenager, fourteen years ago Rob was involved in a car accident which nearly killed him.

He takes up the story...



A new outlook on life -Rob Duckworth - Credit: Rob Duckworth 'Life, it's a funny old thing at times, it can change at any point, either for the better or the worse. In the summer of 2007, on July 29 to be exact, my life unfortunately was completely turned upside down for the worse.

I was involved in a life threatening car accident, where I had suffered a serious head injury and was admitted to the Neuro Intensive Care Unit at Leeds General Infirmary. I was in an induced coma for four weeks, fighting for my life. I had multiple organ failures, a fractured skull, dislocated right arm, broken pelvis, fractured right rib. A maximum amount of oxygen and drugs were needed to keep me stable. I was highly unlikely to survive. There was a point when I was in hospital, the doctors said to my family that if I were to recover, I wouldn't be me, I would in a wheelchair in a vegetative state; never the same person.

However, despite the odds of me surviving being very low, I made a very successful recovery. I have had two operations to block off one of my main carotid arteries in my head.

The carotid artery is the main vein leading from your heart to your head, which in my case had a hole caused by the impact of the crash which leaked blood slowly into my head.

The artery could have exploded at any point; it was a ticking time bomb. A very rare operation was performed on me called an embolization where coiling of 14 meters of platinum was placed to stop the artery leaking further in my head.

Following my recovery, I've had to learn to walk and regain my speech to get me back to normal. This has been a massive challenge for me and has given me a different perspective on life.

Now, even 14 years on from my accident, I am still coming to terms with what has happened. I think for the first ten years I didn't understand, it was almost like I didn't want to understand.

It's only until the last four years or so that I've begun to learn and accept, find out what works and what doesn't work for me.

For me, it is surrounding myself in the great outdoors, keeping fit and healthy, exploring new places and challenging myself. It's almost like medicine. The quiet places and natural sounds have healed me in so many ways. It clears my head, keeps me grounded and it's what makes life worth living. There is so much out there to be explored, why wouldn't you explore it?

I've been given a new opportunity, a new life, I have to make the most of it.

As my surgeon said, 'Go out there and embrace life!'

I have tried to do just that - I am now a seasonal lock keeping on the canal at Bank Newton in Gargrave and will be helping out backstage on the pantomime at the Alhambra theatre.

For now, I am just trying to dip my toes in as many things as possible until I find a career I will be happy pursuing for the rest of my life.

Outside of work, I tend to ride my bike a lot, averaging 150 miles a week. Keeping fit and healthy is very important to me. If I am not riding my bike, I am writing on my website and taking photographs to document the latest challenges/walks I have been on.

Combining both my love for photography, the outdoors, and challenging myself physically is what makes me tick. Me and my girlfriend also love finding new walks in and around Yorkshire, there is no better feeling than being high up in the Yorkshire dales someone remote, and having a cup of coffee whilst looking out into the rolling landscape.'

You can follow Rob's adventures at lifeandtimesofayorkshirelad.com

Easy walks:

[Oxenhope Nab](#)



Oxenhope Nab - Credit: Rob Duckworth Oxenhope Nab, in Bronte Country is intended simply to visit the site of one of the poems by Simon Armitage carved on a slab of rock. At the top of the nab you are rewarded by views over Oxenhope and can see as far as the Yorkshire Three Peaks on a clear day. There are large cairns to help lead the way with extended views over the moors. These can be used as shelter if the wind is howling on the tops too. If you do visit, make sure to have a drink at the Dog and Gun pub! A great place to admire the landscape and switch off from the world.

Denholme Rd, Leeming, Oxenhope BD22 9SN

Nidderdale Pateley Bridge



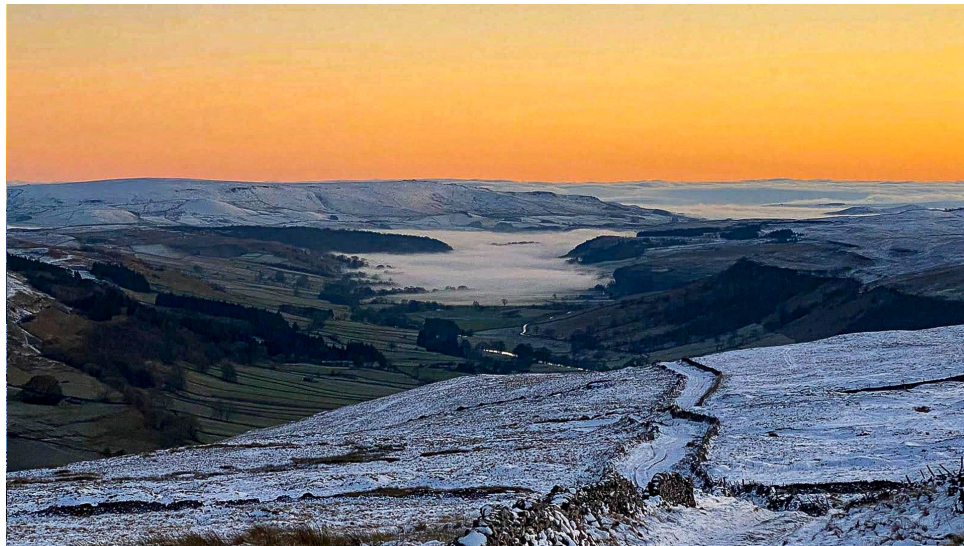
PATELEY BRIDGE 2 - Credit: Rob Duckworth Pateley Bridge, in Nidderdale is an idyllic market town and known as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), it is also home to the oldest sweet shop in the world! Also, be sure to visit Brimham Rocks if you are in the area. (A collection of geological rock formations). This is only a 10-minute drive away.

The walk is incredibly varied, taking you past roaming llamas, Shetland ponies, highland cows, and along narrow walkways, peaceful woodlands and finishing off besides the calming waters of the River Nidd. A gentle walk for anyone wanting to enjoy some of Nidderdale's finest landscapes and visit the historic town. Views are fantastic throughout.

Southlands car park, Pateley Bridge, Harrogate, HG3 5JX

Medium walks

[Great Whernside](#)



Great Whernside - Credit: Rob Duckworth Contributing to part of the Dales 30, 'Great Whernside' is one of many mountains in upper Wharfedale, starting and finishing in the modest village of Kettlewell. The route takes you up the only hill of the day to a place called 'Hag Dyke Scout Hostel', administered by the Ben Rhydding Scout and Guide Group in Ben Rhydding, Ilkley. It is one of my favourite mountains in the Dales, as it is a lot quieter than its neighbouring mountain Whernside. The views at the top are stunning! Especially on a snowy winter's day when I first went up, that was truly magical!

Southlands car park, Pateley Bridge, Harrogate, HG3 5JX

Moughton & Moughton Scar



Moughton Scar - Credit: Rob Duckworth Situated in the Yorkshire Dales lies the quaint town of Austwick. A town where visitors can explore stunning geological sites such as the Norber Erratics, a collection of carboniferous limestone and sandstone boulders that were moved by the ice age glaciers created by weather erosion. Moughton and Moughton Scar have an irresistible limestone panorama, with large cliff faces that offer a breath-taking view over the national park, and visible views of the three peaks (Ingleborough, Whernside and Pen-y-Ghent). You don't need to visit Malham cove to enjoy vast areas of limestone. Moughton and Moughton Scar offer just that.

Austwick, Settle LA2 8BY

Challenging walks

[Stainforth Force, Catrigg Foss via Jubilee, Albert and Victoria Caves](#)



Stainforth - Credit: Rob Duckworth Settle, is said to be one of Yorkshire's best

market towns, with its bustling atmosphere and easy access to both the Forest of Bowland and the Lake District. The walk starts from here and is a great location to explore the Dales' natural wonders, consisting of prehistoric caves along Langcliffe Scar and secluded waterfalls from the quaint town of Stainforth. The route takes you over to Feizor, a great place to visit the café for a coffee and some cake! From here the path takes you to Stainforth Force and then climbs steeply to Catrigg Foss (A secluded magical hidden waterfall) before continuing to Jubilee, Albert and Victoria Caves along Langcliffe Scar and back into Settle.

A superb place to roam and take in the geological wonders of the Yorkshire Dales.

Settle BD24 9EJ

Hidden Valleys of Wharfedale



Wharfedale - Credit: Rob Duckworth Planted in the heart of the Yorkshire Dales in the North of England, Upper Wharfedale is a u-shape valley that follows the River Wharfe along quiet villages such as Buckden, Yokenthwaite, Hubberholme, Littondale, Kettlewell, Starbotton and Langstrothdale to name a few. The route is quite challenging on foot, taking up you up a few long steep hills. However, you are rewarded with views looking down into Littondale and Langstrothdale which are two of the hidden valleys of Wharfedale. The area is characterised by its dry-stone walls and limestone outcrops with plenty of wildlife roaming the area. It is one of the quieter and more remote part of the Dales and a great place to get away from it all.

Buckden, Nr Skipton BD23 5JA

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