

Semerwater from Bainbridge

We start in Bainbridge – roadside parking is available next to the green, with honesty boxes for donations. Sat Nav users will find that postcode DL8 3GA gets them to the green, whilst What-3-Words tag cello.leader.wimp or grid reference SD93419015 adds some precision.

From the parking, we head up the hill and follow signs for the Yorkshire Dales National Park offices – where we turn right into Scott Hill, and walk through the car park to find a stile leading onto flat fields. We are heading West and tracking the A684 in the bottom of the valley.

We continue across the top of a series of small meadows, each with a gated stile until we find ourselves in a larger and less manicured open field with a farm ahead of us on a ridge at Greensley Bank. We follow the path along the edge of a small stream (Goodman Sike) until we come to a drystone wall.

From the far side of the wall, we note that the path marked on the OS map continues over to the farm where we cross two stiles to come back into the same field, so instead of doing that, it makes sense to turn sharp left when we enter the field and follow the drystone wall uphill until we meet the Cam High Road.

We continue to follow the Roman Road until it meets the modern road into Countersett. Here we cross and continue on the other side with views down toward Burtersett on the right and Wether Fell ahead of us.

We soon see a path crossing the Cam High Road. The path on the right comes up from Burtersett, and is a well worth exploring another time, whilst on the left, signposted for Marsett, we see a steep route up to a notch in the ridge – this is where we head.

The lower lying ground can be quite boggy, and as soon as that is cleared there is something of a scramble up a steep slope to a gate at the top. Once there we carry on, following the line of the drystone wall, still climbing, until we see a four way fingerpost. The finger post shows a bridleway crossing our route – but we carry straight on and start our descent into Raydale.

We see Marsett in the valley bottom, with Stalling Busk further away on the opposite side of the valley, and before long we catch our first glimpse of Semerwater over to the left.

The track down is steep – and care is needed especially when wet - but it soon levels out to approach a stile over a drystone wall, and from there down to the corner of a meadow where we continue through a gated stile that may be hidden behind tall grass: The key is to head directly toward Marsett.

The path remains clear and soon approaches a lane which we join and head downhill to the road into Marsett. We turn right and cross the bridge at Marsett beck, turn left and take a track along the southern bank of the river. After a short while this leaves the river and heads up a track toward a gate which admits us to the Nature Reserve. We pass an independent hostel on the right and then see a footbridge ahead of us. This crosses the Longdale Sike, as does the alternate ford – take your choice.

The path now heads up a rough lane, and we soon see another footbridge on our left. We cross this and take a path through boggy ground helped by the installation of large stone flags. We cross a stile and then take a clear path to the left and head slightly uphill toward a barn.

We turn left at the barn and follow the path – which remains clear – gaining height slightly as we head toward the lake and the old church at Stalling Busk.

We leave the church by the stile and turn left to head down to the lake. The path takes us through another section of nature reserve, with good views over Semerwater and the wetlands to it's Southwest. The river entering the south side of the lake is Crooks Beck, whilst it is drained on the North by the River Bain

We follow the path, which soon moves further away from the waterside until we meet the road at a farm.

We now head North toward the bridge where the road crosses the River Bain and take the stile onto the riverside path downstream toward Bainbridge. Our route coincides with the Pennine Journey path at this point.

We cross a small footbridge and then follow the river round to the left before heading up a clear path to the peak of Bracken hill.

For the last leg of the walk, we head downhill to pick up a drystone wall that separates us from the minor road to Stalling Busk. We stay in the fields though and ignore a sign showing a path exiting onto the road – our route is down to the A684 at Bainbridge, staying within the field.

Before we head down though it's worth looking North to Brough Hill just to the right of Bainbridge. This is where the Roman fort of Virosidum was located, and in suitable light, the clear oblong outline of the Roman structure is still visible.

At the A684 we turn left and head downhill back into Bainbridge, taking care as we cross the road bridge – there is no pavement.

- **Total distance 15.8 km (9.8 miles)**
- **Total Ascent 492 m**
- **Challenging walk**