

Two Counties Walk

We start at Bentham Bridge; where Station Road crosses the Wenning. If you are visiting, and are using Satnav then the address Station Road, or the postcode LA2 7LT should work. If you are using a map, then the grid reference is SD66766879, whilst the what-3-words tag is **swung.tricky.upward**. Parking at the roadside is obvious and always available.

A word of warning about this walk: there are a great many paths in and around Bentham, and although we have tried to describe them as carefully as possible, it only takes one mis-step for the rest of the instructions to make no sense. We recommend therefore that you follow the route on a GPS device in addition to following these notes.

We start by heading across the bridge, and to the entrance to the caravan park – the public footpath coincides with the access road. Continue until you see a group of houses on the left – just after the road crosses a small stream (Moulter Beck). We head up between the houses to find a stile onto moorland at the rear of Moulterbeck House, and having crossed the stile we head left, hugging the rear boundary wall of the property.

This brings us to the corner of the field where we enter dense woodland through which the beck that we crossed a few minutes earlier runs. The path is clear, and heads uphill through the woodland to cross a wooden footbridge, and then when we exit the woodland, we head slightly to the right to cross an open field where we see evidence of spoil tips around long disused bell pits, where coal was once mined.

Moving on from the bell pits, we head west across the fields toward the farm at High Bottom, crossing a somewhat fragile stile as we go – care is needed here until a repair can be completed. After the stile, we meet another path which also comes up from Moulterbeck House. We take this path round to the left, so although we see it clearly in the distance we do not go as far as the farm at High Bottom.

The path we are now on follows the tree line at the edge of the field for a while, and then turns right – we are now heading East as if going back to the Slaidburn Road. We then arrive at a point where again a number of paths meet. We need to head right (South) using the large modern farm building at Bowker House as a landmark – we are heading for Mewith Lane now.

As we approach Bowker House, head to the left of the sheds and then pick up the farm access road which goes up to Mewith Lane, where we cross to find a gate which gives us access to a choice of two paths. We take the one heading right which takes us southbound with a barn conversion at Scarfes as our target. The path crosses the front of the house and then round the right hand side of the house to a stile onto open moorland.

We now cross a small stream and head left following the drystone wall uphill – this area has the potential to be hard going after wet weather, and although the best route was along the side of the wall when we completed the walk, conditions may require you to improvise. At the end of the wall, we head slightly to the right heading toward the farm at Moorlands.

As we approach the farm buildings at Moorlands, the path branches again – we need the right hand route which passes the right of the farm, before veering further right and heading toward a barn conversion at Fleet House. This is where we enter Lancashire.

Our onward path goes across the front of Fleet House and then down the access lane to meet a minor road. This is Whitepits Lane, and we head right along the lane for a short while looking for the footpath sign on the right which takes us through a gate and down to the farm at Fleet Green. Here we divert from the official path a little – the owners of the farm have created an alternate route that avoids the farmyard, farm dogs and any machinery, and in doing so take a pleasant path through flower meadows and very friendly sheep. Although there is a legal right to use the “official” path, the alternative is highly recommended.

We are now heading North. We are on the return journey and are just a few metres from the County Beck – still on the Lancashire side. We follow the path until we reach a stile onto a track, with the path continuing opposite. We follow the path through the field – the county beck still over to our right – heading for a short section of drystone wall and a gate that is generally open. From here, the path forks yet again – we head slightly to the left beyond the wall such that we go downhill toward a flat bottom to the valley. There are so many paths here that the wrong route could easily be taken, so the advice is to spot the two farms ahead. The one on the right is Oakhead, whilst the one further to the left is Oakhead Bank. We need to aim directly between the two, where in the corner of a field we see a stone trough and a stile which leads us onto a path along a field boundary. We follow this path for a while now, passing through several fields – our next landmark is a junction with another path crossing ours.

At this point we take that other path to the right, crossing the field toward Oak Bank Farm. This is another location where a slight deviation from the “official” route is warranted. The OS map shows the path heading through farm buildings via the left hand side of the farm. In fact, the easier route is to the right of the barn and then through a gate into the farmyard. We pass a barn housing livestock and then head down the access road to meet Mewith Lane again.

At the road, we head briefly right, and then see a footpath sign taking us back into the fields opposite where we see a stile accessing woodland. We enter that woodland and follow the path down to a wooden footbridge over the County Beck – here we re-enter Yorkshire and follow the path up to the farm at Kirkbeck, where we have another example of the better path deviating from the OS Map. The official right of way is through the farmyard, but there is a clear and preferable route around the left hand boundary of the farm which we recommend.

This brings us to the farm access road and here we turn right for just a few metres finding a footpath on the left which takes us around the edge of the field heading Northeast back toward Bentham. We stay on this path crossing three fields until we arrive at a road – this is Birkwith Lane.

Almost opposite is a track down to a cluster of buildings at Low Bottom. We take this route and as we approach the housing take the path between the houses and out into a field via a gate. We keep to the left hand side of that field as we continue and soon see the wooden gate onto the path at the back of the caravan park. We follow this down and navigate our way through the caravan park back to the start.

- **Total distance 9.2 km (5.7 miles)**
- **Total ascent 181 m**
- **Easy walk**