

Rawthey Bridge

We start at Rawthey Bridge on the A683 - the main road between Sedbergh and Kirkby Stephen. There is ample parking available at a lay-by at the Sedbergh side of the bridge. The OS Grid reference is SD71219789, and the what-3-words tag is **teamed.defenders.darker**. If you are using Satnav to get there, try CA17 4LN as a postcode – but bear in mind that this covers a larger area.

We initially walk up the main road to cross the bridge, and after about 50m, we see a gate and stile on the left accompanied by a public footpath sign. We take this path and follow it down a steep bank to a footbridge over a beck. From there we head left, tracking along the beck until it meets the Rawthey, then following the river west heading toward woodland.

As we arrive at the wood, we find a stile and then follow a path through the woods. After about 100m of dense woodland we exit via a stile into a meadow, and now have the trees on our right. The path stays just below the trees and then goes through a gate back into the woods and down to a ford over Wandale Beck as it heads down to join the Rawthey. If you find that the water level is too high to safely ford then an alternate route is to return to the gate and then follow the fence line round to a farm bridge, once over this you will see the path from the ford which we rejoin.

We now head uphill toward Narthwaite – from this meadow we have great views of the Rawthey valley with the fell at Bluecaster on the left with numerous gills cutting into the hillside, and Wandale Hill to our right – we get to see much more of this later in the walk.

We head for a metal gate at the far end of the field and pick up a farm track heading right, and uphill, toward Narthwaite – an isolated farm which hosts a communications mast which serves as a useful landmark. Once in the farmyard, we take the footpath uphill and to the North so that we can take a route round Wandale hill. This goes through a metal gate within the farmyard and then comes round to the right to follow an old packhorse route up the hillside above the farm – a steep climb for a short while.

We take the gate to the right and see the packhorse route heading north along the contours of Wandale hill. The quality of the route soon starts to improve, and ahead we see a derelict farmstead, which was obviously once quite impressive.

Ahead we see a gate and we press on through this and continue along the packhorse route for a while. Navigation is clear, and we carry on until - having passed a number of derelict barns - we get to Adamthwaite, another hamlet with a farm at its core. The path here is through the farmyard in front of the house, and then up a metalled road to the north – notice the waterfall to the left of the farmhouse - this is where Adamthwaite Sike tumbles down from the fells.

The road climbs steeply for a short while. Ahead we see a cattle grid, and just beyond this we see a path down on the right leading to a ford over Stonely Gill, which then leads round to the right to climb up to a clear footpath. This is generally passable, but if not – continue along the metalled road for 200m to find a way marker indicating a path coming back south – this meets our route over the ford as it contours around Harter Fell.

We follow the track around Harter Fell, heading south for a while, with views of Adamthwaite and the pack horse route to Narthwaite that we followed earlier on our right, and Harter Fell on our left. After about 1 km on this track, we meet another track coming in at an angle on the left. This is the road access to Murthwaite – technically it's a public byway. Here we head sharp left to come around the east of Harter Fell, following the by-way down to the A683.

On the way down we pass two sets of building – High and Low Sprintgill – then at the bottom we see the Fell End Wesleyan Methodist chapel, now part way through conversion into a dwelling. Opposite the chapel on the far side of the A683, we see a lane down to a ford over a small beck – if this is not passable, there is a convenient footbridge to the right. From there we head up the lane, soon crossing a second ford (also with a bridge as an alternative). We pass a house on the left, and then the track becomes a steep metalled road passing some derelict buildings.

we continue up the lane until we arrive at a minor road – this is the Fell End Road. Ahead of us as we reach the road is a field of boulders – perhaps erratics – this is a great place to take a break, and as we do so we can look over to the left noting that the boulder field continues up to the peak of Fell End and Stenerskaugh.

We now start the final third of our walk – we head back to the minor road and turn left, so we are now heading Southwest and back toward Rawthey Bridge. We pass a couple of farms, and soon arrive at a road junction where we have the option to turn left heading toward Uldale, or should we want a shortcut, straight on and back to Rawthey bridge. Going left, the road to Uldale winds through a strange landscape littered with startlingly deep sink holes.

As we continue on the metalled road – which has a surprisingly good surface – we need to remember to look back and enjoy views of Cautley Spout – the top of the waterfall is clearly visible if the weather is fine. From here we continue up the road until it forks – we take the route to the left and soon arrive at a gate with an interesting sheepdog motif on the adjacent post. Through here, we see continue along the road, passing a stone market for Uldale over to the right, before the road bends round to the right and drops to a stone bridge over Needlehouse Gill.

As we follow the road round, it starts to rise quite steeply. It soon levels off though, and as it does, we notice a bridleway on the right signed for Bluecaster. We take this and follow it down through the woods to a wooden footbridge over the upper reaches of the Rawthey with lovely waterfalls upstream of the crossing.

After the bridge, we head right and from here follow a path across the moorland. Apart from a fork just after the start (where we need to keep right), there are no navigational decisions to be made and although the path meanders around, it remains clear to see, even if it is quite boggy in places.

We are now heading along the contours of Bluecaster fell, following the route of the Rawthey down the valley – but as we go, we get further and further from the river – so don't be too concerned if you lose sight of it. We persevere with the path across Bluecaster for a while, and eventually arrive at a junction with a larger track – we head right here and zig downhill back to Rawthey bridge and the car park. Although the route is clear for this last part of the walk, the surface is quite poor, so be prepared to find a safe route a little to the side of the badly damaged track.

- **Total distance 14.49 km (9.0 miles)**
- **Total ascent 431 m**
- **Moderate walk**