

Buckden to Yockenthwaite

We start from the Yorkshire Dales National Park car park in the centre of Buckden, this is clearly signposted from the B6106. If you are using a paper map to get to Buckden, the OS Grid reference is SD94127740, whilst satnav users will find the address Buckden Wood Lane BD23 5JA works well. If What-3-Words is your tool of choice, then the tag is **bonnet.samplers.lentil**. From the car park, we start out by heading toward a wooden gate at the top end of the car park – our direction of travel here is to the north, and we are heading away from the village centre on the Pennine Journey path.

As the path rises, we enter woodland – this is Rakes Wood, and we walk within that woodland for about 400m, gradually gaining height and distance from the road below, before the track bears right to head northeast. After crossing a field, we meet a fingerpost indicating the steep route up to Buckden Pike. This is a great walk, but not our destination today so we continue on the flatter path heading toward Cray High Bridge.

After this we head through a series of fields – generally speaking we are walking along the contours and need to keep the drystone wall on our left as we follow a clear and obvious path.

400m or so after the Buckden Pike fingerpost, we meet a second which offers us a route down to Cray. Given that we go through Cray later in the walk this is a viable shortcut should you need to save time or shorten the route for any reason. If you do take the path downhill on the left to Cray though, you need to be aware that it crosses the Cray Gill at a set of stepping stones, and that when the beck is in spate these are not safe. You will also miss the waterfalls further up the valley which we think are well worth seeing.

So, we continue north through three more field boundaries, and after 250m, we see the waterfalls to our right where Cow Close Gill tumbles down from the fells. The falls are not next to the right of way, but you can take the official right of way for a short while and wander further north to get a good view before returning to the path. We noticed whilst in this area that works for new fencing are in progress, so whether this option will remain useable is a moot point. If this viewpoint is made inaccessible, then we have an alternative . . . Back at the main path (still The Pennine Journey) we see a clear and obvious route toward a road crossing over top end of Cray Gill. This is Cray High Bridge, and the path joins the road at the right hand side of the bridge. Here we have a second opportunity to see the falls in Cow Close Gill over the drystone wall over to our right as we head toward the bridge.

We now head up to the road and turn left to walk over the bridge and then downhill toward Cray. Regrettably there is no alternative to road walking for the next 300m as we walk down Park Lane with Cray Gill to our left more audible than visible. This is not a busy road – but as ever, take additional care. We soon see a pub on the right hand side of the road – this was the White Lion, now regrettably closed.

With our backs to the stepping stones, we see a lane leading up behind the old White Lion. After about 30m, the track forks with the route to the left heading to a number of dwellings – we keep right and head gently uphill for a little while, before levelling off to contour around the hillside. 100m beyond the location where we noted vehicle access to dwellings, there is a fork in the footpath. We need the more obvious route to the right – the path to the left would take us downhill to Stubbing Bridge.

We cross a number of field boundaries and eventually see a disused stone barn – the path goes just to the left of this before heading down into the valley carved by Crook Gill – which we cross on a

wooden footbridge. The bridge is about 500m after the path leaves the road at the White Lion. Once over the bridge we head left and follow the contours around the edge of Langstrothdale Chase. Note that the clear and obvious path on the ground here is just above the trees of Todd's Wood and then Hubberholme Wood, whereas the OS map shows it perhaps 20m higher.

The path follows the contours for about 100m until we arrive at a farm - this is Scar House, and this provides another opportunity for a shortcut: The farm access road leads down to Hubberholme and is a public right of way. We did not want to miss the chance to see Yockenthwaite though, so we carried on past the farm and further up the valley – largely on the contours still. We pass above two further woods – Rais Wood and Strans Wood – before our path meets a larger track where we head downhill toward farm buildings at Yockenthwaite. As we approach the farm we see a lovely packhorse bridge crossing the Wharfe ahead, and at this point the location may well start to feel familiar to fans of the TV Series “All Creatures Great and Small”

We are now at the far point of our walk and need to head back. The route is quite simple – we first follow clear signage to pick up the path at the side of the Wharfe and head downstream (east) until we get to Hubberholme, about 1.8km away. Please note that the land to your left as we follow the path downstream (now on the Dales Way) is a wildflower meadow – please walk in single file and at the field edge to help conserve this lovely area.

Our next landmark is the church of St Michael and All Angels in Hubberholme. As soon as this comes into view, we can see that it is very ancient. It dates back to the 12th century, when it was founded as a Forest Chapel of the Norman hunting forest of Langstrothdale Chase.

The building is simple from the outside, and very beautiful inside: Of particular note is the rood loft (an ornate gallery above the rood screen) which arrived in the church in 1558 and was probably situated in Coverham Abbey prior to relocation. The pews are also worth exploring – they were carved by Robert “mouseman” Thompson and feature a number of his trademark church mice – the apparent explanation for his use of this motif stems from a conversation between Thompson and a colleague where they were bemoaning the fact that although they enjoyed their work, it left them as poor as church mice.

Most small rural churches would be proud to boast just one of these features, but St Michaels and All Saints offers yet more: The author, J.B. Priestley, described St Michael and All Angels Church as “one of the smallest and most pleasant places in the world”. He has a memorial at the back of the church and his ashes were scattered in the churchyard. In addition, there is a stained glass window in the church which commemorates the achievements of George Andrew Hobson, a late Victorian civil engineer who lived in the village. It shows his Victoria Falls Bridge constructed in 1905, which crosses the Zambezi River just below the Victoria Falls.

From the church we have a simple 1.2 k stroll back to Buckden – all of it on the Dales way. We start by crossing the river Wharfe then head left and walk along the road (Dubbs Lane) for about 400m, until we find a fingerpost on the left taking us across fields and back to the river. From here the path hugs the right bank of the Wharfe all the way downstream to the road bridge just outside Buckden where we rejoin the road, head left and back into the village centre, where the walk ends.

- **Total distance 13.3 km (8.3 miles)**
- **Total Ascent 262 m**
- **Moderate walk**