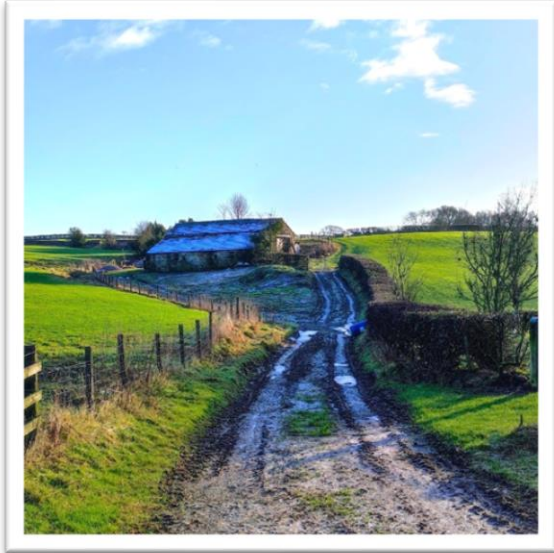


Bentham Heritage Walk

Introduction



This walk took place on January 3rd 2025, and is not the route originally scheduled - icy conditions on the morning meant that the drive to Dunsop Bridge over the Slaidburn Road was considered too dangerous. We therefore substituted a local walk largely based on the Bentham Heritage Trails: The Under Totridge from Dunsop Bridge walk will be re-scheduled.

The walk may have been planned at short notice, but it still has much to offer: Easy access from Bentham, Great views along the Wenning Valley, information boards detailing local history, crisp crunchy ice, riverside sections, and numerous benches to take a break. What a great place to live.

- **Total distance 8 km (4.9 miles)**
- **Total Ascent 166 m**
- **Easy walk**

The walk

We start at the car park on Butts Lane in Bentham – the usual meeting point for the group walks. For group members this needs no introduction, but for those from elsewhere accessing our walks, Bentham is on the B6480, and Butts Lane is to the left as you head out of Bentham toward Clapham.

The OS grid reference for the start is SD67086935, the address for your Satnav is Butts Lane, High Bentham, North Yorkshire, LA2 7LA. If you prefer What-3-Words, the tag is **marbles.surface.majors**. Parking here is free and there are always spaces - there are of course other places to park in Bentham – if you pick one of them, just stroll up to Butts Lane to pick up the directions.



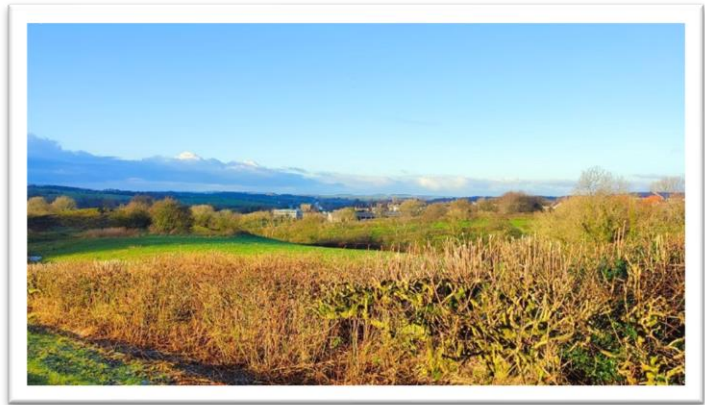
We start out by heading back down to the B6480 and turning left at the bottom of Butts Lane – as if heading east toward Clapham. We cross the road and take a footpath down a lane no more than



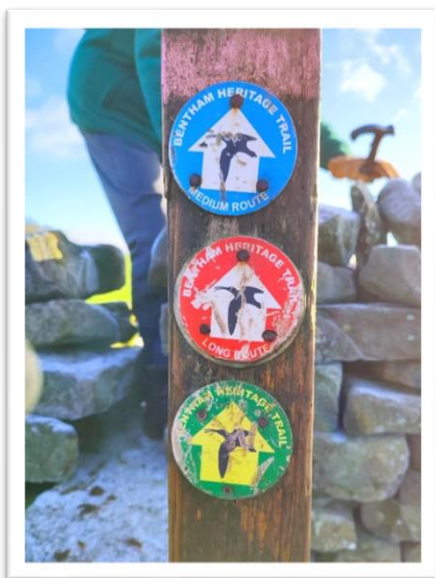
100m ahead on the right. After just 50m, we find a stile on the left which takes us over to a gate, and from there a narrow path between dwellings. At the end of this is a large metal gate, with a stone step stile next to it – beyond this we are in open fields.

Our path now heads down hill toward a concrete slab bridge over a small beck, then up to a stile where we head east climbing up Cowslip Hill where we start to gain great views over the town to the moors beyond.

The large factory we see in Bentham is the Angus Fire site – a longstanding part of the working life of Bentham. The company can be traced back to 1788, but its presence in Bentham dates to 1904 when George Angus & Company Limited purchased the hose and belting operations of the Bentham Spinning & Weaving Company and started to manufacture hoses at Bentham. Since then, the company has diversified and manufactures a wide range of firefighting products. This has generally been good for employment in Bentham, but there are inevitably downsides: Bentham has been in the news during 2024, due to concerns about pollution with PFAs, a class of chemicals used entirely legally and appropriately in products at the Angus site. Investigation intended to lead to remedial works is underway.



Also in view is Bentham Auction Mart – an important livestock market and a key part of the farming economy. To the left of this, on a small hill is St Margaret’s church. Until 2012 this was the C of E parish church for Bentham – it’s now been repurposed as dwellings and includes holiday accommodation. As you would expect for a town with a Lancaster postcode, the architects for this rather fine building were Austin and Paley.



As we get to the top of the hill, we see buildings to our left – this is Fowgill, and we note a path coming up from a pedestrian crossing over the railway line. Where the two paths meet, we find one of the interpretation boards that detail the heritage of Bentham and the surrounding areas – this is located just over the stile on a green lane.

We press on up the green lane and as it curves round to the left to go to Fowgill, we take the gate on the right and cross the field – we are now following the roundels for the Heritage Trails.

The footpath now follows round the contours and then heads gently downhill crossing a couple of fields as it heads toward a collection of sheds that make up a large dairy farm at Ridding Lane. The path goes to the left of the biggest shed and then dips down into the yard where we have a choice of routes:



We could head sharp left and up the metalled lane toward the B6480 and one of the many paths off that lane. We could head sharp right between the farm buildings to take a path down to the footbridge over the Wenning referred to locally as Shaky Bridge. We will see this bridge - which is not at all shaky - later in the walk, so instead, we carry straight on and up the lane passing the farmhouse which is dated 1664.

From here we head toward the dilapidated barn ahead and then take the gate on the right across fields using a series of stiles as we head steadily

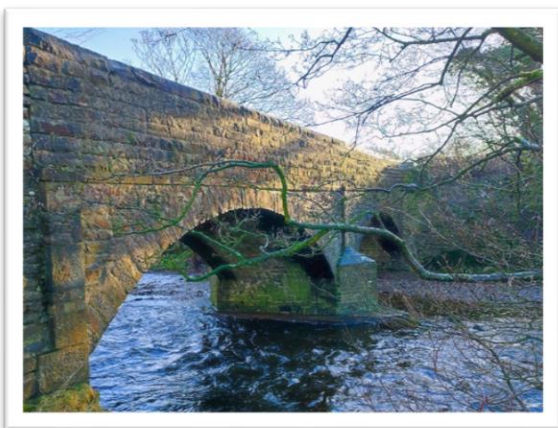
southeast toward the river Wenning. The going along this section of the walk can be quite wet – so walking this route on an icy day can actually be advantageous.

We soon see woodland to our right and follow the path down to the bottom of the fields, following the woodland as we follow the course of the river upstream. As we do this, we walk round the top of a disused quarry – although we may not recognise it as a quarry as it has in the intervening years filled with run off from the fields.

We carry on with the path just above the tree line for a further 200m to arrive at a gate where we drop down onto a flat flood meadow at the riverside – this has a rather attractive barn over to the right, but we head slightly left to find a stile mid-way along the drystone wall to the left of this field.



From here, we are in a broad meadow next to the river Wenning, and 200m ahead we see a road bridge over the river. We are heading for that bridge, and the path shown on the OS Map is more or less straight across the middle of the field. A more interesting view can be



found by walking along the riverbank – and we suspect the farmer would prefer us to use this route.

The bridge is Greystonegill bridge, a grade II listed structure dating from the 18th century but with 19th century modifications. We are looking for a stile onto the metalled road here, but before that it's worth noting another interpretation board in the field giving information about the local environment.



Once at the road we note a fingerpost for a path continuing directly across. That leads up to Waterscale, and from there paths to Clapham Station. These are interesting, but not for us today – instead we head right and cross the bridge over the river, then a second bridge over the railway line before climbing up the lane (called Brow Lane) to meet Mewith Lane. As we head up here take a moment to peer into the fields to the left. They often house attractive highland cattle who are quite photogenic.

On the day of our walk, this section was quiet and peaceful, but in summer, you may hear music coming from one of the

buildings on the right halfway up Brow Lane – that's because there is a recording studio here.

Once at the junction with Mewith Lane we go right passing New House on our right; despite the name these attractive buildings appear to be anything but new. Just beyond the houses we look for a way marker on the right and take the stile into the field to head along the opposite wall and toward trees. We are now on the return leg of the walk.



As we arrive at the trees we see a gate – and might assume that this is the path – it's not there is a stile to the left of this which we need to take. Care is required here as the stile is quite high and somewhat insecure.



Once over it we look for a wooden footbridge over a small beck which takes the path along the side of the beck and then up to a stile into a field at a higher level – take care on the far side of this stile – its notoriously wet - at all times of the year.

Our path continues in much the same direction for a while now – i.e. northwest – aiming for a ramshackle building slightly downhill and about 300m away.



As we arrive at this disused farmhouse we find another interpretation board – although curiously it has nothing to say about the farm building which boasts rather fine mullioned windows, which would once have been quite impressive.

The path continues along what would have been the front of this dwelling, and then to a stile into the next field where we find a memorial bench to Joan Atkinson – this is a great place to pause and enjoy the views.

From here we head slightly downhill toward the woodland to our right – this is Bowtham Wood, and it sits on a meander in the Wenning which soon comes into view. As we follow the path downhill toward the river we find another bench – this one made of stone and decorated with a carving of a Curlew. The bench is sited in a perfect place to give us a great view up the Wenning valley toward Clapham.



We now look for a gate with another interpretation board, and then take the path down through the field ahead initially toward the farm buildings at Staggarth. This is another point in the walk where we have a number of routes we could choose from: There is a



path to the left which goes up through woodland to Branstone Beck, or we could walk through the yard at Staggarth and then take a path through fields back to the Wenning. We opted to go right and down to Shaky Bridge – to pick up the riverside path again.

Once at the riverside, we head left and follow the path downstream until we get to Lanefoot Road, where we head right, walking on the road for a while as we head back into Bentham. We soon arrive at Station Road, where we turn right to climb up to the town centre, passing the station, St Margarets, the Angus Factory, and a number of local shops. A right turn at the B6480 takes us back to Butts Lane where we collect the cars.

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