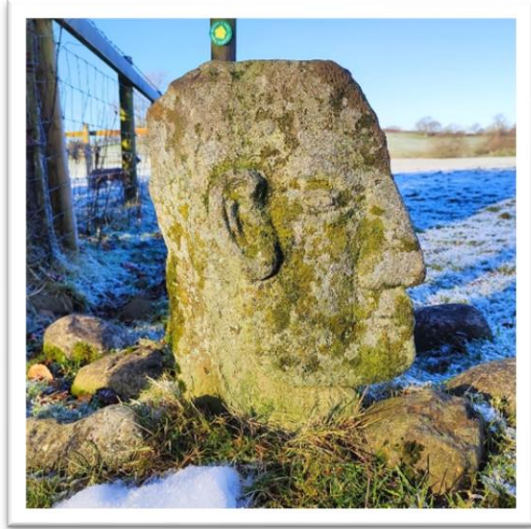


Local Walk January 2025

Introduction



The walk for January 9th was scheduled to be at Winster. However, prolonged freezing conditions made the minor roads in that area a significant black ice risk.

We therefore postponed that walk and substituted a local stroll in and around Bentham.

This is the second week in a row that icy conditions have triggered a change of plan, and just as last week, we see this as an opportunity rather than a problem: Bentham is a great place to live, and a great place to walk. The route we present here stands comparison with any of our more distant routes and reminds us how lucky we are to live here.

- **Total distance 8.4 km (5.2 miles)**
- **Total Ascent 171 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 downhill 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. So far, our route has been the same as our Bentham Heritage Trails Walk, but once we arrive at the next stile the routes differ:

Rather than taking the green lane up to Fowgill, this time we go through the gate on the left and then head downhill, following the field edge down to the railway line. There is a pedestrian crossing over the line – we take this with care and note an interpretation board on the far side of the tracks detailing interesting information about the impact of the railway on the town – this route is also part of the

heritage trails. Also worth noting just to our left just after the tracks is a footpath up the north bank of the Wenning to Shaky Bridge – that creates a good opportunity to mix last week’s walk with this week’s to create a more challenging route.

Beyond the railway crossing the path veers to the right and on toward the old St Margaret’s church. We saw this from a distance on last week’s walk, but get a closer look today, and we note that it’s a very attractive building – nothing less would be expected from our favourite - architects Austin and Paley.

Over to our left at this point are the community allotments – a relatively recent addition to the town, and one that has proved very successful.

We take the path round the left of the church and then stroll down the access drive to the cattle grid at the bottom. Once at Station Road we go left and cross the river to take the path along the access road to the caravan park.



Just 100m down that

road we have a choice – the “official” right of way is along the road until after we cross a small beck, but we prefer the permissive path through the woodland next to the river – this takes us over the beck on a wooden footbridge and then to a stile into the caravan park itself.



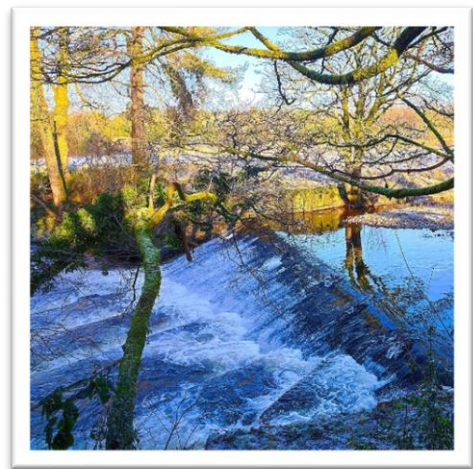
We continue through the caravans until we get to the reception building, then head straight on toward the utilities block: The path goes left about 50m after this and through woodland to a gate and then stile, which we recognise from our Christmas walk – the route for this section is shared with that walk.



We follow the fence line across a broad field, and then a second stone stile to bring us to the waterfalls where the Wenning Oak stands.

The next section of the walk is along the bank of the Wenning as we head down to Low Bentham. One of the key landmarks along this section is the memorial bench to BFG stalwart Dorothy Stubbs – we visited here on our Bentham to Low Bentham circular walk to remember Dorothy, and we walk through woodland planted in her memory later in this walk.

Pressing on, we cross another stone stile, a concrete slab bridge, and then a final stone stile to arrive at the weir adjacent to the currently unused fish farm. Much of the infrastructure to manage water flow here was originally built to supply water to the silk mills but repurposed in later years to supply the trout farm. Flow is split between the main line of the Wenning and a series of ponds by opening and closing sluice gates – meanwhile salmon heading upstream in the autumn can use the fish pass built into the weir to make progress. To do so however they will need to dodge the otters that have been seen on the section of the Wenning just upstream of the old fish farm.



The path follows the riverbank until we divert up to Mill Lane, where we find ourselves in front of Clouds Bank. We cross here and take the stile just to the left of the gates and follow the path through the field to the left of the house.

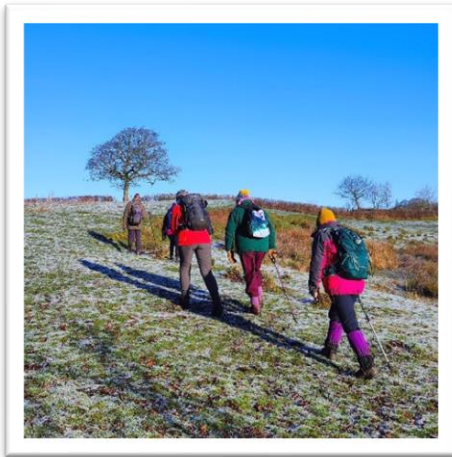
We follow this path through a number of fields now heading toward Eskew Lane, using the tower of St John the Baptist Church as a landmark – it's easily seen on a crisp winter's day, but will be less clear when the trees are in full leaf, so if in doubt follow the course of the beck, staying to the right of the stream until you find a stile onto Eskew Lane.



Once at the road we head right and stroll down to the junction with the B6480, where we find the Punch Bowl Hotel. We go left to cross the river and then immediately take a signposted footpath on the right into woodland at the side of the Wenning. As we do that, we have a good View of St John's ahead. If you have time, it might be worth adding half an hour to the walk to explore this delightful church and its interesting grounds. The Domesday Book (1086) records a church on this site, but that structure was destroyed by raiding Scots – the oldest parts

of the current building are the tower and the chancel arch which date from the rebuild after that raid – around 1340.

As for many churches in this area, a major expansion and rebuild took place in Victorian times – St John’s was no exception, the architect was Norman Shaw, with works completed between 1876 and 1878.



We now follow the riverside path up to the railway viaduct 100m ahead and then see a stairway climbing the bank ahead – some care is needed here especially when icy. Once at the top we cross a stile and look for our next landmark – a gate diagonally across the fields to our right. The right of way marked on the OS map is directly north, and there are clear marker posts to show this route. However it involves crossing a boggy area with a wooden plank bridge, which we anticipated would be heavily iced so we took a wider route round the same field to the gate – this avoids the bridge.

Once through the gate we head sharp left and on to another metal gate. There is a path directly ahead as well though, and if you accidentally take the wrong option here or want to see more of Low Bentham, don’t worry too much – both lead to Greenfoot Lane in Low Bentham.

The route we opted for now runs along the side of an agricultural building and down to Greenhead Lane – where we turn right to walk down to the end and the junction with Greenfoot Lane – so if you took the other route, head left up Greenfoot Lane to catch up.

From here we head uphill along Cross Lane to the top where we meet Burton Road. We are going left here and under normal circumstances would take the pedestrian path to the left at the top of Cross Lane. This was heavily iced though, so the GPX trace shows us walking on the road up to our next landmark – a lane on the right less than 100m up Burton Road. We are on the home stretch now and have great views of Ingleborough most of the way back.



We find a gate at the end of this track and continue onward staying to the left of the hedge line through a large field. This takes us to a metal gate, and beyond that we see a stile to our right.



Once over this we head left along the hedge line – we have great views across the Wenning Valley along this part of the walk. We pass a curious stile, that is of no use since the boundary it once crossed has long since disappeared, and then head downhill to an area recently planted with trees – this is part of the memorial Woodland for Dorothy Stubbs.

We cross a stile over the field fence, then a second stile over a stone wall, and finally a

wooden footbridge to enter the woodland. From here, the path rises to enter a field at a stile with a dog gate.

Ahead of us at this point we see a group of houses – we aim just to the left of the last of these to pass the curious stone statue shown at the top of the notes. Bentham’s answer to the Easter Island statues. From here we continue across the field to the main road and head left walking along the pavement back to High Bentham and Butts Lane.

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