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## Crayke and Oulston Walk

<b>Starting point and OS Grid reference</b>	Roadside rough lay-by half a mile beyond Crayke village (SE 567714)
<b>Ordnance Survey map</b>	OS Explorer 299 – Ripon and Boroughbridge
<b>Distance</b>	7.4 miles
<b>Traffic light rating</b>	

**Introduction:** This walk is on the edge of the Howardian Hills, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. As the name suggests, they are near the stately home Castle Howard, between the North York Moors National Park, the Yorkshire Wolds and the Vale of York. The overall area is some 79 square miles. Being at the edge of the area, this walk provides extensive views across the Vales of York and Mowbray.

The first part of the walk, from the start to Oulston, follows the Foss Walk, a Long Distance Footpath of some 28 miles, running from York to Easingwold.

Crayke and Oulston are pretty villages built on hilltops. Oulston has an attractive village green with a circular seat under a tree, which provides a convenient sandwich stop. Crayke has the Durham Ox pub which does food – the main entrance seems to be at the back so it can be open when it appears closed. Crayke also boasts a castle, or at least the remains of it, the main part now being a private house (walk up Church Hill in the village if you want a look).

On the walk, you get one of the best views of the Kilburn White Horse.

As the roads are quite narrow in the villages and there is little parking room, I started this walk from a rough but good sized, roadside parking area about half a mile north east of Crayke - basically the continuation of the main street through the village. However, as this is a circular walk, you could start at any convenient spot.

Crayke is most easily found by going east from Easingwold, just off the A19. Crayke is signposted from Easingwold. Just keep going, through Crayke for half a mile to find the parking on the right, just after a “double bends” road warning sign.

**Start:** Turn right at the parking (SE 567714) and walk along the road for no more than about 200 yards and turn left on the no through road (SE 567716). There is a public footpath fingerpost indicating the way.

When the road forks after about 100m yards, go right.

On a bend, where paths go off at both sides, take the left path and follow the right hand field boundary. At the end of the field, go through the kissing gate and turn right and at the tarmac track, turn left (SE 567724). To be honest, you could probably just

stay on the road/track and not do this field section but the description is as per the Right of Way (Foss Walk).

On reaching the farm (Woodfield Farm), do not be seduced by the inviting track by the barns, as I initially was. There is a grassy area in front of the farmhouse, almost like a village green. At the end of that, the footpath forks off to the right. At the hedge, keep straight ahead following the slightly raised banking.

At the end of the field, go through a narrow gap in the hedge over a stile and again, keep straight ahead.

Over the next stile, head towards the left of the next farmhouse (Beckfield House). You will soon see the fingerpost. Follow the fingerpost direction for "Foss Walk - Pond Head 1 mile". After a few yards, the path forks off left across the field, to the next stile which is visible, as is the next one and the footpath takes you to a gate leading on to a road (SE 567736).

Cross straight over the road, following the "Foss Walk" fingerpost. As you rise up the field, you will soon see Burton House and its outbuildings. Head for the left of them. A yellow waymarker close to the last stone barn guides you to a walkers' gate, which you go through and turn right.

A track leads you down to a stream which you can cross via some square stepping stones. The path then curves to the right to a gate with another waymarker. Through that gate, follow the line of the trees to a second gate. There are two waymarkers here and you go straight on, again following the trees.

Through the next gate, come to Oulston Reservoir on the right. Follow the obvious path ahead through the trees and eventually past Pond Head Farm. Turn left along the drive to the farm to the road and turn left along it (SE 565748).

Walk along the road for half a mile (ignore the fingerpost on the left after about a quarter of a mile), to just past the end of the woods on the right. There are far reaching views to the south from this road. Look out for a public footpath fingerpost on the left (SE 556749). You turn off the road here but before doing so, if you look north, there is one of the best views you are likely to get of the White Horse at Kilburn.

Follow the broad track to Whincover Farm and at the gate, without going through it, turn right following the fingerpost.

The path which will continue your walk is off to the left at the end of the second field but it is worth having a look at the village and perhaps pausing at the picturesque village green for your picnic. On this assumption, follow the path in a straight line to the impressive building Oulston Hall. The footpath runs between the house itself and the barn. At the road, turn left.

.After visiting the village, retrace your steps past Oulston Hall and as the track dips down, turn right to follow the broad track (SE 550745), off the one on which you arrived. It curves left to a gate. Go through this and cross the field to the stile opposite.

The route is now clear, being marked with yellow waymarkers and prominent stiles. There are fine views to the south west.

You crest the brow of a hill (SE 553739), where there are newly planted trees (as at 2014). There are views over the Vale of York. Look out for two stiles close together just over the brow. Cross these and head for about the centre of the left hand side of the field. The church tower of Crayke is visible on the hilltop to the right, as you cross the field.

Go through a gate, across the drive to the farm ((Adams Hall) and through another gate over the next field. Bear slightly right to a stile in the hedge, which may not be easy to spot. Over this, head for the diagonally opposite corner of the field.

Go through a small gate and cross the road (SE 561733) to follow the next fingerpost for "Crayke", along the left hand field boundary. At Close House Farm, cross between the house and the barns and through the gate opposite. Go through a double set of gates and bear slightly right. As you get further along the field, there is a slightly raised area and you should be on top of this following the right hand side of a row of trees. Go through two stiles and over a small wooden bridge, at the end of the field.

Follow the right hand boundary of the next field and at a three way post of waymarkers, keep straight ahead. About two thirds of the way along the field, the route branches off left at about 30° to a post with a yellow waymarker. Follow its direction to a broad track (SE 563716) and turn right and quickly left to follow a yellow waymarker.

You will probably notice the clear path climbing the hill to Crayke, via a walkers' gate on the left, across a grassy slope. There are good views here. Follow the path past the houses to the road. Here, turn right to see the village or left to return to the parking place.

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