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Litton to Pen-y-ghent Gill and Giants Grave

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Litton village – roadside parking (SD 907741)
Ordnance Survey map	OL 30 Yorkshire Dales – Northern and Central Areas
Distance	7.4 miles
Date of Walk	8 December 2014
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: This walk from Litton takes you along the valley down which run Hesleden Beck and the dramatic gorge of Pen-y-ghent Gill. In various places you can hear rushing water hidden beneath the ground as it rushes through the underground caves and fissures. The area is dotted with pot holes.

The route is straightforward but can be muddy.

Litton is a remote Dales village with little traffic and so retains its old world sense of tranquillity, although at one time was notorious for cockfighting!

The far point of the walk is at Giants Grave. This is an ancient round barrow. It has long been excavated and robbed of stone for walls etc so little remains but you can still make it out and there is a fairly clear cist (stone built coffin). However its drama is less than the identity on the map suggests. The sound of underground water is very prevalent at this spot and there is a dramatic view down the valley.

For me, the most interesting part of the walk was the fantastic view of Pen-y-ghent, shrouded in cloud as I approached then launched into sunlit vista as the clouds receded. From this angle, the profile of the mountain stands out and the open aspects of the landscape make it probably one of the best sides from which to see it.

The views of Littondale as you return must be some of the best of that Dale.

The walk starts from Litton. There is no car park but there are a couple of places where you can park on the road through the village – please park considerately. I started from just by the Queens Arms pub and the walk directions start there. To get to Litton, take the B6160 from Threshfield (near Grassington) north west towards Kettlewell. Half a mile after passing the unmistakable overhang of Kilnsey Crag, take the left turn signposted for Arncliffe and Litton. Stay on this road through Arncliffe, with a right/left dogleg and keep going to Litton.

There are no refreshment stops en route but a few rocky spots where you can enjoy a picnic.

Start: Walk west through the village, past the phone box and turn left to follow the bridleway fingerpost (SD 905742). Note - avoid the first left turn which goes down to a ford.

Cross the footbridge over the River Skifare and turn right, then left, through a walkers' gate. Head diagonally across the field, to a point about half way along its far side. In the next field, the gate is just to the right of the barn.

Through another gate, join a broad track then turn right to follow the fingerpost for Nether Hesleden.

When the track splits, ignore the right hand arm going over the bridge and carry straight on. 160/170 yards beyond that bridge, turn right, again following the fingerpost for Nether Hesleden (SD 897742). Head for the right hand corner of the field where you enter a section of walled track.

Follow the track until it crosses over Hesleden Beck. There is a three way fingerpost. Turn left for Upper Hesleden.

Cross the small paddock and turn left between the farm buildings of Nether Hesleden and at the back of the farm, bear right again following a fingerpost for Upper Hesleden.

The path crosses the first field and you will come to a wall. Beyond this is a fence on the left. Having said in the introduction that the route is straightforward, I have to confess to having missed the point here, where you cross to the left of the fence (well, I never said I was perfect!). I began on the right then realised the path was at the other side. I ended up stepping over the electric fence (after gingerly confirming it was not switched on!) but look out for the relevant access point.

The path follows the fence line to the road where a returning direction fingerpost confirms this route is the intention. This is different to how it appears on the OS map (see sketch map).

Follow the fence line to the road and turn left.

Stay on the road for 100 yards then turn left, just after a cattle grid, to follow the fingerpost for "Silverdale Road 1¼ miles"

The track splits just below a barn (SD 864740), just over half a mile after leaving the road. Keep left, following the fingerpost.

On arriving at a farm (Pen-y-ghent House), the footpath squeezes around the left hand corner of a wall. Do not be misled by what looks like a walkers' gate half way along the wall as you approach.

Just past Pen-y-ghent House at SD 860737, there is an interesting cave. Water was flowing freely out when I saw it and you could hear rushing water inside. For knowledgeable potholers only I suspect!

At SD 857735 you cross Lockey Beck. This was mostly a dry streambed as I passed but you could hear water rushing beneath you.

You then arrive at Giants Grave (SD 856733), just before arriving at the road. There are plenty of rocks here for a sandwich stop. If you look closely, you can see the remains of the cist and the circular barrow.

Continue to the road and turn left. The views of Pen-y-ghent along here are superb, showing its profile to advantage.

The left turn is strictly 3/400 yards along the road, marked with a fingerpost "New Bridge 3 miles", almost pointing back the way you have come (SD 856729).

However, you can see the broad track clearly across the fell and I suspect most will short cut.

Follow this wide track as it gently descends the fell back to the River Skirfare. Almost at the river, you will come to a fingerpost pointing left to Nether Hesleden, which was on your outward route. Turn right here to retrace your steps to Litton.

