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## Barwick-in-Elmet Circular

Starting point and OS Grid reference	The maypole in Barwick-in-Elmet (SE 340375) – on street car parking.
Ordnance Survey map	Explorer Map 289 – Leeds, Harrogate, Wetherby & Pontefract
Distance	9.8 miles
Traffic light rating	

**Introduction:** This is an ideal walk for anyone wanting something of respectable length but almost wholly flat, as it follows well defined bridle paths and course of old railway tracks. It starts at Barwick-in-Elmet, a village which survives from the ancient Celtic kingdom of Elmet. It dates back to several hundred years BC and there are ancient earthworks in the area, some of which are passed on this walk. Its main claim to fame nowadays is its huge maypole standing some at 86 feet which is the subject of a Spring Bank Holiday festival every three years to re-erect it, after routine maintenance.

The walk passes through Aberford where there are a couple of pubs, notably the Arabian Horse, for refreshments.

Parking is a case of finding an on street spot. As a common reference point, the walk starts at the maypole which is by the Gascoigne Arms in the centre of the village.

To get to Barwick-in-Elmet (pronounced “Barrick”), turn off the A64 where signposted, about 1¼ miles north east of the Leeds Ring Road (A6120).

**Start:** With your back to the maypole (SE 340375) and the Gascoigne Arms on your right, proceed along Main Street. Turn right on Carrfield Road. Cross over Elmwood Lane staying on Carrfield Road which eventually continues as a broad rough track, the public right of way being indicated by a fingerpost.

At a metal kissing gate, turn right to follow the hedge line. At the next gateway, turn left to follow the direction of the yellow footpath arrow. On reaching the road on the outskirts of Scholes (SE 383365), turn left and first right on to Leeds Road. Immediately after turning, take the track on the left signposted Public Bridleway and bearing an owl motif, indicating this section is part of the Leeds Country Way.

When the track splits at a four way fingerpost, turn left remaining on the public bridleway. The track follows the outside of a small wood. Ignore a broad track on the left and pass the barrier which says “Authorised Vehicles Only”.

Ignore a footpath on the left.

When the path splits, bear left.

At a crossroad of tracks (SE 388350), turn left. Stay on the main track straight ahead through the golf course, ignoring any turns off and come out past a farm. Stay on the farm track to the road and cross over heading for Throstle Nest Farm. As you get to the farm (SE 409357), branch off to the right where you enter the Parlington Estate (Parlington Hall now demolished).

Keep straight ahead at two cottages.

Pass a fishing lake on the right (SE 421358) and shortly after this, when the track forks take the right fork indicated by a metal bridleway sign. At the old railway tunnel, you have the option to go through it or divert round the track to the right hand side. The tunnel can be very muddy and at the time of my visit, there was great danger of treading on frogs! There is a second small tunnel too. Parlington's Triumphal Arch appears on the horizon after the tunnels.

You will also come across a tree with an unusual configuration, known as Nellie's Tree. This was a deliberate cultivation by a man called Vic Stead a hundred years or so ago. He grafted a sapling between two others, to form the shape of a letter 'N', to woo his love! Locals also know it as the Love Tree. It won England's Tree of the Year in 2018, in a competition organised by the Woodland Trust.

Pass the old lodge house to Parlington Hall which is Grade II listed.

On reaching the road (SE 433369) on the outskirts of Aberford, turn left, and walk into the village. Just past the Arabian Horse pub, turn left on Becca Lane (SE 434375). It is along here where you might make out the ancient earthworks, Becca Banks, amongst the trees. When the track forks, the right hand arm heading to a house, keep left.

As you approach Becca Hall, take a left turn (SE 422385) and shortly afterwards, is a three way fingerpost. Take the direction of "Public Bridleway Leading to York Road". Follow it alongside a wood then a section of field to a gate and then a hawthorn hedge on the left.

Just past Becca Home Farm, look out for the left turn across a field (SE 416389). There is a finger post but the angles of the arms were a little deceptive when I visited. Part way across the field is a post with a yellow diamond confirming the route and when I visited (2012) there was a tree in the middle of the field which makes a good point to aim for. From the tree head turn right and head for the right hand corner of the copse of trees (SE 412390).

A post with a yellow top confirms the route.

Follow the edge of the trees on your left and as they finish, follow the hedge on the left to another footpath indicator post. Follow the field edge. The path exits the field and turns left round another field.

As you pass the next copse of trees, cross a plank bridge over a stream then a stile (SE 407393) and follow the path across the field to the marker post at the road. Turn left and walk along the road back to Barwick-in-Elmet, going left at the 'T' junction.

