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Pool in Wharfedale to Leathley

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Pool in Wharfedale – Road parking by the garage (SE243454)
Ordnance Survey map	OS Explorer 297 – Lower Wharfedale and Washburn Valley
Distance	5.7 miles
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: This Wharfedale walk from Pool-in-Wharfedale is all in North Yorkshire but as the start point is just in West Yorkshire, it is listed there. It is an easy ramble around some of the gentle countryside of lower Wharfedale. There are attractive views here and there, not least incorporating Almscliffe Crag, the impressive Arthington Railway Viaduct and across and along lower Wharfedale.

Riffa Wood, through which you pass, provides a spectacular bluebell display in season.

The walk starts from Pool in Wharfedale which is on the A659 between Otley and the A61 at Harewood. In the centre of Pool, there is a garage set in a large triangle of roads between the A659 and the A658. The northern leg of this triangle (the left fork if you approach from Otley) is wide with plenty of room for parking. The directions start from there.

There are pubs in Pool to revive you at the end of the walk! If you intend to patronise them, they may well allow you to park in their car parks for the walk but please ask first.

Start: Cross the river bridge heading north and take the footpath on the right immediately you have crossed it (SE 244456), indicated by an old style metal footpath post. Turn right again to the river and then left to follow the path along its left hand bank.

You follow the riverbank for just over $\frac{3}{4}$ mile until reaching a road (SE 257458) Turn right.

Walk along the road for $\frac{1}{3}$ mile then turn left at Ings Farm (SE 242461) to follow the farm drive. When you get close to the farm, do not follow the drive as it bends right but instead, keep straight ahead to the left of the barns. You will see a waymarked gate on the right and then turn left.

Follow the left hand boundary of the field and keep on this line through a small field where farm machinery is stored. When you reach a broad track with a large barn

ahead of you, turn left through a metal gate then immediately right to follow the broad track.

When you get to the main road (the A658) turn left (SE 263467). This is a fast busy road so take care and walk along the footpath for about a ¼ mile until you get to the drive to Riffa Manor (SE 258466). Turn right along the drive.

When you get to the main gateway to Riffa Manor, do not go through the gate but take the tarmac drive to the left (SE 258469). As it bends left into Riffa Wood Cottage, keep straight ahead (effectively turning right off the drive) along a grassy track and through a gate marked with a yellow arrow.

When the track splits at a 'Y' junction, turn right. At the next junction, turn right to go over a stile into a field and follow the left boundary of the field. You only follow it for about 130 yards then go through a metal gate back into the woods (SE 256463). (Note there looks to be a clear track through the woods which avoids the detour via the field but I followed the official footpath route).

Once through the metal gate there is clear evidence of an old packhorse route in the shape of old stone flagstones. Follow these as they descend and keep a look out for the Indian Stone on the right. This stone (roughly) in the shape of an American Indian's head. The stone is more impressive looking back after you have passed it – well a bit! The commonly held belief is that it was carved by an Italian prisoner of war during WWII – there was a POW camp in the area. However why a POW would carve an Indian is a good question and a more plausible explanation supplied to me by a local historian is that it was carved by one Edmund Bogg and/or his bohemian friends. Now Edmund Bogg is quite an interesting character and worth "a Google". He was head of the Leeds Savage Club in the early 20th century, which, in the days before political correctness, used to dress up with feathered headdresses and hold "pow-wows" (no pun with POW intended!) in the woods. He also wrote extensively about rambling, especially in Wharfedale.

Cross a stream at the end of the woods, bearing right. As you climb the slope from the stream, there is a large flat stone on the right handy for a lunch stop.

Follow the fence/wall line and turn right through a gate at the top of the field (SE 251471).

On meeting another broad track, turn right.

Keep straight ahead through the next gate and follow the track to the road where you turn left (SE 241476). Just along here is a footpath on the left which will cut something like a mile off the walk but it is worth sticking with the described route to see the 12th century Church of St Oswald at Leathley and the views from the drive to Leathley Hall.

Follow the road for half a mile to the entrance to Leathley Hall. You turn left along the drive but before doing so, you might like to visit St Oswald.'s Church ahead of you. This is has a Grade I listing and dates originally from Norman times though was enlarged in 1472 and restored in the 19th century.

Pass Leathley Hall and the remnants of the old walled garden on the left and when the track forks, go right indicated by a public bridleway sign (SE 238469).

After going through a couple of gates, follow the left hand field boundary. To the left in the distance are the arches of Arthington railway viaduct, built in 1846 and which still carries the Leeds/Harrogate (and beyond) rail line.

At the end of this field, cross a stile and follow the right hand boundary of the next field. In the following field, stay with the right hand boundary as it curves left . There is a not too obvious crossing over a little stream. Over this then follow the right hand boundary again emerging on the road (SE 241460). Turn left and after a few yards, turn right to cross the field diagonally to the bridge. Turn right over the bridge back to Pool.

