

The Valley Heads Walk

A Leader's Guide

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The Valley Heads describes an area roughly triangular in shape, the boundaries marked by the villages of **Buckden** in the south, **Cray** in the north and **Hubberholme** in the west. The Valley Heads Walk is not necessarily a single route traversed in a single direction, rather a set of circular walks, beginning and ending in Buckden. The precise paths used will depend upon the group, weather conditions, time available and so on. The precise paths used will depend upon the group, weather conditions, time available and so on.

The route is not remote; never more than 500 metres direct line from a road, the greatest altitude gained is 360 metres. Nonetheless, the weather can be harsh and the path in places not entirely obvious, especially in winter when grass is short in the higher pastures. For this reason **non – NGB qualified leaders are required to have walked the route previously** before taking a group out. If you cannot manage this, you must choose a different, easier walk.

It is recommended that the group leader talks to a member of Buckden House staff *before* walking the route. Contact the centre to arrange this.

The valley heads walk will generally take half a day, the distance being between five and ten kilometers. It provides ample opportunities for navigation practice, education, drawing, or simply exercise and conversation. Some points of educational value will be provided later in these notes.

Equipment for Group and Leader

See the **risk assessment**. An instructor will be happy to advise what clothing is appropriate for the conditions on the day – this will probably be covered at the *09.00 meeting*.

- Safety sack (down by the signing out board). Know what is in it!
- Appropriate clothing and footwear. Check what children are wearing under waterproofs!
- Drink. A flask in the cold (ask an instructor or take your own), water bottles in summer.
- “Extras” such as suncream, tissues, camera...
- This booklet and extra maps / compasses if wanted
- **Medication** required by any group members

Routes

This walk can be taken in reverse order equally well, depending upon wind direction and weather.

- Leave the main car park in Buckden and head north, uphill, using the big path (Roman road). Follow the large path until Cray.
- This tiny hamlet - two farms and a pub - can be reached directly by a slope down to stepping stones, or by carrying on to the waterfall at Cray High Bridge and back down the road.
- To the right of the pub, a slightly rising path round the back of the farm then runs level through fields high above the valley base. The route is marked by the stiles in the stone walls.
- Crook Gill is crossed at a footbridge, just beyond a barn. The path remains level, just above the tree line which is to the left.

- Scar House, an old building slightly below the path on the left, is 1,5km beyond. Follow the path carefully down to this house and the large track next to it.
- The track is then followed down to Hubberholme, most notable for its church and pub.
- Pass the church, cross the river towards the pub, and turn left along the road.
- Go past Grange Farm on the right. Turn left off the road at a gate (signed), follow the riverside footpath.
- The River Wharfe is on the left. Follow the raised path through gates and stiles until the road is reached again. A left turn over the Election Bridge and Buckden is re-entered.

An **easier** valley heads walk can be made by taking a diversion at Cray. This is much shorter and less exposed to bad weather, although one section can be slippery in the rain.

- Pass behind the first farmhouse, and then look for a footpath down to the left after a short distance.
- There is normally a signpost for 'Stubbing Bridge'. The path heads downhill and passes through a gate in front of a second farmhouse.
- The path slopes diagonally down to the left, crossing a pasture. The path is generally well defined but narrow.
- The path, more obvious now, runs parallel with a stream on its left. Stiles mark the way where walls are met.
- Stubbing Bridge is met at the road. A right turn here leads to Hubberholme and rejoins the main route.

A **harder** valley heads walk can be made by keeping on the high level beyond Scar House. This presents no greater difficulty but will add another two miles to the walk, some at high level.

- At Scar House, keep up on the right for about 50 metres to a sign post by a stone wall, stile, and gate. Locate the route to 'Yockenthwaite'.
- The path keeps level, with trees and steep slopes down to the left. A stile enters a wood and the footbridge at Strans Gill is crossed.
- The path gradually descends to the left through meadows. It is easily followed and stiles and gates mark the way.
- The buildings at Yockenthwaite are reached by an obvious path. Locate a signpost to 'Hubberholme' in the field *below* the main farmhouse, but *above* the cottage just above the river level.
- Turn left to follow the Langstroth Beck downstream. The route runs just above the level of the river through fields, marked by stiles and gates. *There should always be a wall or fence between you and the water.*
- The footbridge at the base of Strans Gill is easily recognised. When you reach the left wall, the stile into the next field is slightly uphill on the left.
- The route passes along a narrow, muddy path above the river – **care here, no fence** – and rejoins the main route by Hubberholme church.

Safety

There is no mobile phone coverage in this area. Farms and pubs will have telephones to use in an emergency.

The best form of accident procedure is avoidance – know the route, look at it in conjunction with the risk assessment, and get into the habit of wondering “what if”. It is generally considered that first aid knowledge, rather than a full qualification, is an appropriate standard to reach as a leader. If you are unsure whether you have sufficient knowledge, consider:

- i) treatment of a broken arm, following a slip
- ii) recognizing symptoms of hypothermia
- iii) treatment of an unconscious casualty (banged head, faint)
- iv) choking
- v) cuts from barbed wire, broken glass

If in doubt, the school nurse should be able to help – or why not consider a first aid course? It is generally considered that a ratio of one leader to a maximum of twelve young people is observed; a single leader will generally be very confident in their knowledge of their chosen route, and their ability to cope with any situations that might arise. However, it is not recommended that groups combine to give the security of two leaders – experience shows that it is harder for two to keep track of twenty four than for one to look after half that number.

Valley Head Walk Risk Assessment

To lead this walk unaccompanied you must have

- i) an appropriate walking qualification (BELA, ML, WGL) or
- ii) have walked the route previously, have experience with groups, and have a sound grasp of First Aid and
- iii) have the approval of the Head of Centre or designated other

Hazard

Risk

Control

Water crossing at Cray and on high level before Scar House. Slips, hypothermia, drowning.

Low probability, normally minor consequences, but potentially fatal in flood conditions

Alternative routes, as conditions dictate. To be decided by centre staff.

Steep descent to Cray and below Scar House. Slips and uncontrolled running / falls.

Medium probability, if conditions are wet or icy. Consequences moderate to serious.

Avoidance if appropriate, by taking route clockwise and so ascending rather than descending slopes in question

Slippery limestone in area of Scar House and Rakes track. Slips and falls especially in the wet.

Low probability, consequences moderate.

Maintain sensible group speed, ensure footwear has good grip for conditions. Direct

Roads and traffic , especially near Buckden and the bridge.	Low probability but potentially fatal consequences.	support for less confident.
Environmental injury , Both cold and heat related; Sunburn, heat exhaustion, hypothermia.	Moderate probability of minor effects, low probability but potentially fatal consequences.	Good group control, briefing. Reflective vests in the top of the safety sack, torches as appropriate.
		Consult centre staff as to best route, clothing and equipment options

An Accident Procedure

This document is not an excuse for not thinking. Be realistic about your own capabilities, and those of the group. There is a fine balance between admirable and effective self-sufficiency and the Hippocratic injunction, ‘first, do no harm’.

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Consider</u>	<u>Suggestions</u>
Lost	Are you off route, or merely uncertain?	Go back the way you have come, until you recognize that you are back on course. If you <i>know</i> you are in the wrong place, do not forge ahead across private land to reach your destination; <i>go back</i> .
Child too hot	What is the state of the other children?	Give fluids, rest in shade. If water nearby is not drinkable it can be used to cool the head and neck.
Child too cold	What is the state of the other children? Where is the nearest shelter? Might the child be hypothermic?	Add clothing, especially hats and waterproofs. Seek a quick way to a lower/ less exposed area.
Injured child	Is this life threatening, or is time not an issue? Is anyone else at risk? What will everyone	First aid kit in safety sack. Remove rest of group from potential hazard, also casualty if possible.

else do while you treat the casualty?

Can the casualty move, or be helped?

Get help using nearest telephone, or passerby.

Move as many of group as possible to nearest road pick up. If you get help alone, remember where the group is.

(01756 760254 – Buckden).

Protect from cold, also use the contents of the safety sack to protect the entire group, as necessary.

Points of Interest en Route

- Buckden Rake (940780, and north and south) is the remains of the Roman road which ran from Ilkley in the south to Bainbridge (Wensleydale) in the north. Near the top of the incline in Rakes Wood some original cobbles can be seen. The road generally avoids the valley base as being too marshy, wooded and prone to ambush.
- Cray Gill (938739) is a series of waterfalls and mini gorges, lined with rowan and hawthorn trees, among others. Brown trout may be seen at all times of year, while yellow primroses line the banks in spring. A gill is a rocky stream or watercourse, the word being introduced by Norse settlers in the tenth century. Cray is a derivation of a Middle Welsh word, and means fresh, or clean. It is a rare remnant of the early Celtic settlers in the area from around the time of the Roman occupation.
- The walls in the region of Crook Gill (934792) possess many sheepholes, or cripple holes. These low square openings allow sheep to move between the pastures, but prevent cows from reaching the rougher, steeper ground below the track in the Todd's Wood / Hubberholme Wood area. Most of the sheep in this area are Swaledales, with their distinctive black face and white muzzle – also seen on signposts as the symbol of the Yorkshire Dales National Park. These hardy animals are bred for their meat (although in the past their wool was the main source of wealth in the north of England) and are perhaps even more important in their role of keeping the fells clear of woodland through their grazing. The distinctive landscape of the Dales is almost entirely a result of sheep farming – it is not natural.
- From Scar House (921789) fine views can be had down the valley. The massive erosive power of the Wharfedale glacier can easily be appreciated in the U shaped valley. Roughly twelve thousand years before present, a huge mass of slowly moving ice filled the current valley, from upper Langstrothdale in the north-west and down the dale past Buckden and Kettlewell towards Skipton in the south. It scoured away uncountable tons of soil and the underlying limestone, smoothing the valley sides and flattening the base, leaving behind bare rock and scree. The soil cover is still very thin in places, as witnessed by the small crags and limestone pavements seen all along the upper course of the walk.
- Hubberholme church (926783) stands on the site of a Norman hunting chapel. The building (generally unlocked during the day) has elements of 13th century architecture still visible. There is much of interest for those with the time and inclination to browse – information sheets available in the church – especially the pews. These were hand-carved by Thompson of Kilburn and bear his trademark small mouse, cut somewhere in the wood.

Other Resources

- The National Trust barn in Buckden has many fascinating and informative displays. If it is not open, Buckden House has a key.
- The information boards near the car park (942774) and by the riverside (935779) are good for groups in a rush.
- Booklets on limestone, birds, flowers and similar are kept in the Instructors' Office.
- Photo trails and spare maps are kept in the Instructors' Office and in the Map Room. Both of these last resources rely on previous groups not having lost them, or put them back in the wrong place!
- The National Trust – sponsored displays (one in each lounge) provide further information on the local environment and the farming year. These provide an easy means of passing on information in a very controlled, warm, dry, environment.