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Washburn Valley

Starting point and OS Grid reference	At turn off Otley to Bluberhouses road (SE 196492)
Ordnance Survey map	OS Explorer Map 297 - Lower Wharfedale & Washburn Valley
Distance	8.4 Miles
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: Unusually for a valley in these parts and so close to the major conurbations of Leeds/Bradford, no road runs through the Washburn valley. As a result, it is a peaceful place. Apart from the reservoirs, it is easy to imagine there has been no change for hundreds of years. This is an easy walk with various interesting features and a joy particularly in spring when the gorse and spring flowers predominate. It is a good walk to initiate children into the joys of the countryside. There are probabilities of seeing herons on the river.

The Timble Inn provides a possible lunch stop but check the opening times before assuming availability.

This is one of my favourite walks.

The walk is very easy in term of gradient but can be muddy underfoot in places. There are also a couple of places where streams have to be crossed and where bridges were swept away a year or two ago by floods. As long as there have been no recent heavy rains, you should have no problems hopping across the stones. There is a plethora of footpaths in this area and the walk can be lengthened, shortened or varied quite easily. I have shown a couple of alternative paths as green dotted lines which shorten the walk.

The parking spot is found by heading north from Otley over its river bridge and up the steep hill. Pass the Roebuck pub (known by everyone locally as The Spite from previous incarnations) Pass the turn for Clifton, then the road turns sharply right then soon left. On this left bend, there is a right "dead end" turn on to Dob Park Road (unsigned) which you take. There is limited rough parking immediately on the right of this lane (SE 196492). If this parking is full, do not waste time going further down the lane as there is no more parking. Instead, return to the road from which you turned and continue for about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile where you will find parking on the right.

This walk can be combined with my Lindley Wood Reservoir walk to provide a longer walk of some $13\frac{1}{4}$ miles altogether.

Start: From the Dob Park Road junction, walk down the tarmac lane passing the old massive millstone which indicates you are entering the Dob Estates. The lane

becomes un-metalled as far as the old Dob Park packhorse bridge over the River Washburn (SE 197509). Do not cross the bridge but turn left just before it where the finger post indicates a public footpath. There are scant remains of the old mill and goit. The route follows the river so when the track forks, take the right fork.

You arrive at some woods where cup marked rocks are indicated on the OS map (SE 190510). A footpath yellow arrow left through the woods indicates where these are. **We do not want this path** but it is worth a look at the ancient cup markings. No-one knows what they were for. I have shown a photo from the gate with an arrow to show the most easily found marked rock. Shortly after the woods with the cup marked rock, go through a gate and bear right. The path across the stony/boggy ground is unclear at first but soon becomes obvious.

A brook joins the river from the left. Cross via the footbridge (SE 188518) and continue to follow the river. After crossing the next stile, the footpath meets a broad track with a wide bridge over the River Washburn (SE 191518). Cross this bridge then turn left and continue to follow the river. Eventually after crossing a stone stile the embankment of the dam forming Swinsty Reservoir appears ahead. Follow the track to the right hand side of the dam. There are some pleasant spots here for lunch. Turn right at the embankment and follow the drive from the house. There are some benches along here and along the side of the reservoir which we are to follow where again, lunch can be enjoyed.

After passing a bridge with walls at either side and a metal fenced enclosure on the left, turn left to follow the lakeshore until reaching a road. Turn left and go over the bridge and turn left again to follow the shore of the reservoir (SE 199537). There are picnic tables and car parking.

Round the side of the reservoir and at the next road, turn left and cross the embankment between Swinsty (left) and Fewston (right) reservoirs.

At the top of the rise with the car park on the left (where there are toilets and picnic tables should you want them) take the fork to the left of the "2000 monument" (SE 187538) along the narrow lane signed unsuitable for long vehicles.

As you approach the hamlet of Timble, look out for the red telephone box on the left. Turn left here (SE 188530) before the Timble Inn and walk through to the tarmac lane. Turn left again and just past Highfield Farm, look out for a narrow walled footpath on the right signed "Dob Park" (SE 182528).

Just after the first bend in the path, look out for a rough stile on the left. Cross and head down the field to the left of the two gates. Pass through the gate and walk down the field keeping the wall to your right. At the pair of gates at the bottom of the field, go through the left gate and head for the opposite corner of the next field. Cross the stile here and go over Timble Gill Beck and up the other side to the top of the bank and continue with the wall on the left.

Head down the hill. At an old stile and place where a gateway used to be, turn left and follow the path on the edge of a section of slightly raised land (SE 183521). Power lines will be to your right.

At a small group of trees, go through the gate and follow the broad track.

Through the next gate, go straight ahead up the hill keeping the wall on your right. A broad farm track awaits you through the gate at the top of the field. The next bit is tricky so concentrate! Follow the track through Washburn Farm (SE 185515) and as you come to the front of the farm house, look for another farm track to the left to another farm house. Turn left here, almost turning back on yourself, for a few yards. Turn right before a corrugated iron barn and look for a crude gateway arrangement in the right hand corner. Go through this and continue straight ahead keeping the wall on your right.

Cross a ladder stile at the top of the field and look out for another to the right of Carr Farm. Go straight across the farm lane and keeping the barn on your right pass through the sheep gates heading for the ladder stile which you should be able to see. Head towards the left corner of the next field. Ignore the gate but cross the poor condition stone stile under a tree. Aim for a gate in the centre of the wall at the end of the field and across the farm track (leading down to a ruined farm), cross a strange contraption of a stile and continue to Midge Hall farm. Over another strange precarious stile, bear right and you will see Midge Hall Farm.

The track passes to the left of the farmhouse and straight ahead over a stile and up the hill. At the top of the hill, at the field boundary (SE 185505), turn left and follow the boundary. At the next wall, the stile is collapsed but cross carefully and cross the field heading for the corner of the woods ahead (SE 187504). The route follows the edge of the woods. There are fantastic views across the Washburn Valley and the Menwith Hill "Golf Balls" (US listening station).

As you approach the end of the trees, look out for a gate part way along the wall. Pass through the gateway into a walled green lane. The ruins of Dob Park Lodge are to the left. Follow the lane to the next gateway and immediately after it, turn right over the stile and stick close to the boundary by the trees skirting Dob House Park Farm. Over the next stile and turn right down the drive. On reaching the road, turn right back to your start point.

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