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Otley Chevin (Surprise View)

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Otley Bust Station (SE 203455) – see text regarding parking
Ordnance Survey map	OS 297 Lower Wharfedale and Washburn Valley
Distance	6.4 miles
Date of Walk	2 January 2015
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: This walk from Otley to Otley Chevin is an easy walk which would be ideally suited to anyone wanting to dip a toe into the world of walking for the first time. It is also a good walk for children as there are lots of interesting things to see along the way. The route passes through the Chevin Forest Park where there are lots of information boards about the area generally and specific points of interest. There are also a number of interesting wooden sculptures, many of which will appeal to children. These are very pleasant woodlands, through which to stroll.

There are fine vistas of Lower Wharfedale at various points.

The walk passes Caley Crag, a series of gritstone boulders popular with climbers and a spot where the famous artist J.M.W. Turner came to paint views of Farnley Hall, which was owned by his friends the Fawkes family. Some of the original tree planting on Otley Chevin was carried out by the Fawkes family in the 1780s. Descendants of the Fawkes gifted the Chevin to the people of Otley in the 1940s.

After Caley Crag, the walk circles round to visit the top of the Chevin known as Surprise View. "Chevin" comes from Celtic word(s) meaning ridge. Here, there are some more interesting rocks and great views of Lower Wharfedale over Otley and across to Almscliffe Crag. This is a popular spot for visitors and has a large car park.

Through the car park at Surprise view you can access The Royalty pub for food/drink.

The walk ends with a gentle downhill through pleasant woodland.

Being a popular area, there are many paths, both official and unofficial. This is not a problem in that you can wander where you want but it can make it easy to go wrong. I cannot claim my directions are foolproof but I have done my best! GPS receivers may not be accurate when trees are in leaf.

I have started the directions for this walk at Otley bus station for the sake of uniformity and the benefit of those arriving by bus. If coming by car, there are various car parks in Otley. Some are free but unless you arrive very early, these are certain to be full. Beware the Otley traffic wardens are red hot! You might be lucky and get a space at the very top of Station Road.

The other reason I start in Otley is that it means all the climbing is virtually done at the outset, rather than potentially at the end, depending on where else you start.

There are some car parks on the route and as this is a circular route, you could use one of these. I have marked them on the sketch map. However, with the possible exception of the one at Surprise View, which tends to self police by reason of being quite busy, others have a reputation for car break-ins and I would not leave my car in any of them, unless I expected there to be a lot of people about through the day (e.g. weekends, Bank Holidays etc.).

Start: Turn right out of the bus station and right again at the junction with Bondgate. At the corner by the church, turn left along Station Road. This becomes cobbled after 100 yards or so.

Follow Station Road to the top then cross the footbridge over the A660 (SE 203450). Once over the bridge, a short section of walled/fenced footpath brings you to a road (Birdcage Walk). Go straight across this, to take the footpath immediately opposite, following the fingerpost for "Yorkgate".

On arriving at an entrance to Chevin Forest Park, go straight on up the cobbled path. You soon arrive at the White House (on the right) (SE 203445), the HQ for Chevin Forest Park, a visitors' centre, café and toilets. Even if you do not want to make use of the facilities here, it is worth venturing on to the terrace to admire the view.

Return to the path you were on and continue up through the trees. At the next section of steps, after only a few yards, branch off left.

At the next fork in the path where there is a sculpture (see photo) and a sign warning of unsafe passage for wheelchairs, branch off on to the broad path obviously "manicured" with a base of small stones/quarry waste, to make it accessible for wheelchairs etc. You soon pass a picnic table and at the next fork, keep straight ahead, avoiding the descending path.

You start to pass some impressive crags (SE 207444).

On arriving at East Chevin Quarry Car Park (SE 212445), exit to the road and turn left. Walk along the road (there is a footpath) for less than 100 yards, then turn right by an old millstone following the bridleway for Chevin Forest Park (SE 211446).

You pass a sign confirming you are at Danefield Wood and shortly another for Foxscar Wood. Pass and ignore a permissive bridleway on the right.

At SE 219446, you pass through the site of an Iron Age settlement. There is an extensive information board to tell you about it and it is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Ignore a path to the left for "Leeds Road" and stay on the main track.

Pass the large boulders of Caley Crag, then take the climbing path to the right when the path splits. Follow the public bridleway sign and ignore the left path signed for "Leeds Road".

On joining a broad track marked as the Ebor Way, turn left. You pass a sign for Keepers Wood and soon, an information board about Caley Woods and Keepers Cottage. A few yards after this, go through a kissing gate continuing straight ahead on the Ebor Way.

You reach a superb viewpoint (SE 231444) with a seat and an information board about the artist J.M.W. Turner coming to this spot in 1808 to paint the view. His friend Walter Fawkes owned Farnley Hall, the imposing house you can make out across the valley.

You now go a short distance ahead and turn right on to a track, **before** going under the power lines. Follow it to the kissing gate and through this, turn right following the "Dales Way Link".

You follow this clear main track for almost a mile, keeping straight ahead at a junction, continuing to follow a sign for the Dales Way Link and arriving at a car park by the road. Along the way are a series of chainsaw sculptures, which children in particular will find interesting. At SE 225444 there is a memorial stone commemorating the services of 3 individuals for their services to "God, their country, their county, this valley and township".

At the road, opposite the car park, the Cheerful Chilli & Tea Room may provide a refreshment stop. Otherwise, turn right down the road, again following the "Dales Way Link" fingerpost. Take care here as this is quite a busy road and at the start there is no footpath.

Go down the road for about 250 yards, then turn left along a broad track by Danefield House, following the fingerpost for "Miller Lane" (SE 215444). When the track splits, go right, through the gate for Chevin Forest Park – Miller Lane Gate.

Once through this gate, for the best views, follow the wall on the right for about 150 yards then bear left. At a 'T' junction, turn left then after 50 yards or so, turn right on the main track to Otley Chevin (Surprise View). The rocks at the summit (925 ft or 282 metres – SE 204442) will be in sight.

The term Surprise View arises because if you arrive at this point by car, then walk from the car park to the ridge, you cannot see the full view until you are on the ridge and it appears as a "surprise". It was a sight for a beacon and you can make out the hill of another in the chain at Beamsley Beacon across the valley. Evidently a Roman road ran along the ridge linking York (Eboracum) with Ilkley (Olicana).

At one time, there was a cottage here, known as Jenny's Cottage, which became a tea room. It has quite an interesting history and there is an extensive information board about it. Unfortunately, it had to be demolished after falling victim of

vandalism, possibly by the forebears of those who now break into cars parked hereabouts!

If you require sustenance, The Royalty pub is visible across the car park.

Continue along the ridge footpath and I would pass above, to the left of the stones, where you can get a good sight of their erosion. Follow the track as it curves right to another track where you turn left (SE 203442).

The path splits but both arms meet again a little further on. Personally, I would go for the higher path for the better views south. Avoid a sharp left turn.

The path splits again by a fishing pond on the left. Take the right hand fork and follow it down alongside the wall. There are good views here across Guiseley and Menston.

Stay parallel with the wall then fence as you curve left through the trees.

Watch out for a couple of large boulders (10/12 feet high) to the left of the path and just beyond them, find the footpath going off to the right at 90°. If you look closely, you will see a post bearing an orange with black arrow, Walkers are Welcome marker, pointing the way (SE 195442).

The path descends the hill, passing another Walkers are Welcome sign, then curves right down some crude steps.

You pass a sign for Ackroyd's Wood.

The path emerges from the woods down some stone steps to a road (SE 195448) (West Chevin Road). Turn right along the road, then first right again, along Birdcage Walk, just before going over the main A660.

Along Birdcage Walk, you will eventually come to the footbridge to retrace your steps into Otley.

