



# A winter walk by the Wharfe

A pleasant short stroll along a picturesque section of the river and through a Georgian village

Words and photographs: Paul Heaton (Fotocraft Images)

**T**o my mind, a winter walk should be easily accessible, attractive, not too taxing and interesting. A walk along the River Wharfe and High Street in Boston Spa has all of these attributes. It is about three miles long, with slopes but no major climbs, and has plenty of interesting features and views along the way.

The walk starts from the central car park behind the library in Boston Spa. After emerging from the car park and

turning left the first part of the walk is along the High Street itself. The core of Boston Spa is a Georgian village. There are many attractive buildings made from locally quarried pale cream limestone. After the village hall, with the war memorial outside, the route passes two pubs – first the Admiral Hawke (named after an Admiral of the Fleet from the 18th century who was successful in several battles against the French), and next the Fox and Hounds. About a

quarter of a mile after the second pub there is a rough track on the left (Gas Works Lane) which leads down to the river Wharfe.

On reaching the river turn left and follow the path which runs close to the river. The first buildings reached are the spa baths, now given a second use as houses. The spa was discovered in 1744, and prompted the development of the village of Boston Spa. The spa baths were built by 1834 to improve the comfort of visitors taking the waters. After the Spa baths take the right fork in the path to continue by the riverside. An area along this part of the river bank is currently being developed by Boston Spa Methodist church as a peace garden. The undergrowth has been cleared and paths have been created. A planting scheme will be implemented in the future. ▶

The core of Boston Spa is a Georgian village



Top left: River Wharfe weir Top right: View of the Wharfe from the riverside path above Jackdaw Crag Above: Boston Spa bridge



The walk is about three miles long, with slopes but no major climbs

Further along the path Boston Spa's attractive bridge can be seen, and then the weir. There are several information boards along this walk, one of which is situated next to the weir. There are attractive views up, down and across the river from the weir. The old mill buildings stand on the Thorp Arch side of the Wharfe at this point. A mill existed at this point as far back as Norman times. It ceased operation as a mill in 1958, and after a period as an electric blanket factory, it was sympathetically converted to residential use in the 1990s.

On the Boston Spa side of the weir there is a substantial recently constructed fish pass, and the remains of Dam House. The remains show evidence of several different uses over time, and have been excavated by Boston Spa Archaeology and Heritage Group. The fish pass is designed to allow species such as salmon, sea trout, barbel, chub and dace to move up and downstream at different times of the year.

The path continues next to the river after the weir. The water is much quieter in this section, and the trees on the opposite bank provide attractive reflections in the water of the river. This part of the riverside is where small stone quarries operated to provide building stone for the bridge and early buildings of Boston Spa. After a few minutes the path climbs steps up the river cliffs. This section of path was recently constructed by Boston Spa Parish Council, which is active in managing the riverside area. The path makes use of fallen trees to provide edging up the steps. ▶



**Above:** The River Wharfe seen from Boston Spa bridge

**Left:** View down the River Wharfe at Jackdaw Crag

**Top:** Deepdale woodlands  
**Centre:** The weir and Thorp Arch manor mill  
**Above:** Autumn colours along Boston Spa's riverside path



## Information box:

- **Car parking:** Free car parking in the centre of Boston Spa behind the library (limited to two hours)
- **Refreshments:** There are three cafes, several restaurants and a fish and chip shop along the High Street
- **Toilets:** Millennium Square, next to the library
- **Public transport:** Boston Spa is served by the 770 (Leeds to Harrogate bus service) and the 923 (Tadcaster to Otley bus service)
- **Further information:** Boston Spa parish council website ([www.bostonspapc.org.uk](http://www.bostonspapc.org.uk)) has extensive information on the village and the riverside walk.



**Top:** St Mary's church Boston Spa

**Above:** One of the information boards along the walk

The next section of the walk passes along the cliff top. There are views across the river valley at various points along the route. Eventually a short but steep descent leads to a footbridge. The route turns left at this point, but it is well worth walking the few yards to the right to take in the view of the river and Jackdaw Crag. This prospect changes markedly through the seasons – grey in winter, verdant green in summer and a combination of browns and golds in autumn. The cliffs here are designated as a Site of Ecological and Geological Importance. Two fascinating leaflets are available from the Boston Spa Parish Council website explaining the origin of the rocks some 260 million years ago and the effect of glaciations as recently as 12,000 years ago.

The route continues up Deepdale, along an attractive path through the woodlands. One of the information boards stands at the junction between this track and the metalled road. The panel indicates that Deepdale itself is a glacial meltwater channel rather than a regular stream valley. In dry periods the

small stream running down Deepdale disappears completely. Turn left at this point, to return to the High Street. A further left turn marks the start of the final leg of the walk back to the car park. After a short distance St Mary's Church can be seen on the left hand side. Boston Spa parish is much younger than many in the surrounding area. The church is celebrating its 200th anniversary in 2012. The original building from 1812 was extended, but still found to be too small for the growing population of the parish. A fundraising drive was arranged, and the current building was completed in 1884. The church is usually open, and has a number of interesting features, including some fine Victorian stained glass.

After visiting the church it is only a short stroll past the shops and restaurants of the High Street back to the car park. Boston Spa is lucky to have retained many independent small retailers, and there are several cafes and restaurants where refreshments can be obtained to round off this pleasant short stroll. ■