Walk 1:
Highfield, Lob Wood and The River Wharfe

Start: The Hen Pen Garden, Main Street, Addingham LS29 0NS, SE 077 498.
Alternative Start: Near Bolton Bridge SE 071 525 (see page 6).
Full walk: 4.5 miles (7.2km), height gain 584ft (190m).
Shorter walk: 4 miles (6.4km), height gain 584ft (190m).
OS Maps: Explorer 297 or Landranger 204

Summary:
This is a fairly easy walk with lots of interesting features along the way, including fine views across to Beamsley Beacon (photograph below) and up Wharfedale to Bolton Abbey and beyond, the dramatic (but almost hidden) Lob Wood railway viaduct, the ancient Farfield Friends' Meeting House, abundant wildlife and a lovely Dales Way river walk to finish. The route description includes an optional shorter link and an alternative start point near Bolton Bridge. You should carry appropriate outdoor clothing. The ground may be muddy in places so good footwear is essential.

Beamsley Beacon from the golf course
The Walk

The walk begins at the Hen Pen Garden, where Main Street bends, in the middle of Addingham village. It is usually possible to park on Old Station Way opposite. After admiring the flowers in the garden, the route goes up the adjacent Sugar Hill and left on Back Beck Lane before turning almost immediately right (north) up Long Riddings Lane. On the end of the second house it is possible to see where there was a 'taking-in' door on the first floor which indicates that the occupants were once in the domestic textile industry. Here yarn and cloth could be winched in and out of the loomshop above the living accommodation. After a short distance the path leaves the lane through a gate by a tree on the left, just after the ruin of Low Laithe (previously called New Laithe). 'Laithe' means barn or granary and this small barn had a threshing floor and mistal for six cows.

The path goes uphill across meadowland beside the overgrown Long Riddings Lane which was probably the road to the medieval open 'High Field'. The lane hedge is rich in tree species and is also a haven for wildlife. There are fine views back over Addingham and up to Addingham Moorside and Rombald's Moor.

After three fields, High Laithe (18th century) is on the left of the path (photograph previous page). This barn, like many in Addingham, was enlarged to provide extra accommodation for cattle and for hay in winter. The interesting stone gate posts nearby may be older as the square holes in them held crooks of timber which hinged the gate when iron was in short supply.

The path now crosses the golf course (Bracken Ghyll Golf Club, watch out for flying balls) and is marked by coloured posts, passing Highfield House, with its unusual large windows, which dates from about 1780. There are fine views of Beamsley Beacon across the valley (see photograph on page 1).

After leaving the golf course cross the field, keeping right in front of Highfield Farm (formally called Hag Head) to a stile in the corner of the field which is in the serpentine medieval boundary wall of Addingham parish. The boundary ditch and bank are still visible. This laithe-house farm, a house and barn joined in one long-house, dates from about 1800. The name 'Highfield' probably also refers to the medieval open field on this side of the village.

Remains of ancient field barns can be seen at this high point of the walk. The route joins a farm track but after the metal gate leave the track and follow the wall on the right to a wall stile in the
far right corner of the field.

At the stile, take time to enjoy a fine view (photograph below) of Bolton Priory and the narrow old Bolton Bridge (beyond the modern road bridge), beneath the rocky summit of Simon's Seat. Medieval plough strips can be seen in the fields below. The curious 'nicks' in the hillside at Storiths across the valley, are deep channels cut across the spur of the hill by meltwater flowing beneath the retreating ice at the end of the last ice age.

For the shorter walk turn right here, steeply down the field, passing small delfs, where Millstone Grit sandstone has been quarried, probably for wallstones. Go right again through a stile in the wall near the corner of Eller Carr Wood and keep diagonally downhill toward the buildings, across another field, through a gate and along the track towards the Farfield Livery stables, passing through a gap where the old railway line once crossed. The rear of Farfield Hall may be seen from the path, over to the right. It was enlarged about 1728 by Anthony Myers with the old 17th century house now incorporated at the west end. After walking through the stables, the route goes right, down the track closed to vehicles by large stones, to join the route of the longer walk at the metal gate (see page 6).
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The full walk continues diagonally down the pastures in the direction of Bolton Bridge to another stile near the bottom corner of the field and into Lob Wood. These upland meadows are inhabited by lapwing (peewit) and curlew in summer.

In the wood, the path initially follows the wall (right) but then turns left down steep steps (which can be slippery) before revealing the spectacular Lob Ghyll Viaduct (Bridge No.47) (photograph below) which took the Ilkley to Skipton railway (built in 1888). After going under the viaduct, the path bears right and down through the mixed deciduous woodland (woodland is a rarity around Addingham) to steps down to the road near Bolton Bridge.

This makes a good alternative start point for the walk; there is limited parking nearby and on the other side of the roundabout. If starting from here, Addingham provides ample places for refreshment at the halfway point of the walk.

The path now follows the Dales Way (See Walk 3) and leaves the road on the right about 150 metres up the hill. (Take extra care on this steep, narrow, and busy stretch of road!)

After leaving the road, follow the wall all the way to Farfield. Visible on the river bank across the road is the drab, but award winning, Lob Wood Pumping Station which pumps water from the Barden reservoirs, and the Wharfe, up to Chelker Reservoir until needed to provide water for the Bradford area. The path leaves the field and joins the farm track behind Farfield Cottages. The shorter walk re-joins the longer walk here.
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The route goes behind the Farfield Meeting House, which is usually open and is well worth visiting (see Walk 4 for details), before reaching and crossing Bolton Road (take care!) and going down steps to join the river bank. At the top of the first field is Paradise Laithe, formerly an 18th century aisled barn with its cart entrance leading to the grain threshing floor.

The path continues along this delightful stretch of river, popular with anglers, still following the Dales Way (See the Introduction for details). After about 1 ½ miles, this riverside path leads to the caravan and chalet site at High Mill (photo right), which stands on the river beyond its long weir. In medieval times, the Lord of the Manor's water-powered corn mill stood here. Cloth fulling probably also once took place since the small field, now a car park, is called 'tenterlands', indicating the place where woven and fulled woollen cloth was stretched to dry on tenter hooks. The present mill buildings date from the late 18th and early 19th century when the old 17th century corn mill was extended for worsted, and later for silk spinning.

Leaving the caravan site, turn right up High Mill Lane, past cottages and a row of houses at the top. The last house has a classical design datestone of 1812; the houses were probably built for the mill manager and workers.

Keep left onto Bolton Road, passing on the right the lofty Victorian dwellings of Springfield Mount and the Manse (c.1885) and Addingham Primary School, much acclaimed for its design when built in 1979. After the school, bear right onto the track over the cattle grid and across Manor Garth with, to the left, the Rookery (c.1805), a double row of early 19th century weavers' cottages with a hand loom shop at the end (photo below). Ahead to the right is another row of cottages, two of which were originally used for weaving but subsequently housed the Mechanics' Institute and Library. Straight ahead is the Manor House, parts of which date back to around 1500. The converted Manor House barns are on the left of the track. The walk finishes here, back on Main Street.