



Black Banks

A circular walk with fabulous views of Wolsingham, Weardale and beyond.



This leaflet was prepared by the Wolsingham Wayfarers, an independent voluntary group, dedicated to monitoring, looking after and promoting the 140 miles of designated footpaths in the Wolsingham Parish.

 wolsinghamwayfarers.co.uk

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Walk information

DISTANCE - 5.5 miles (9 km).

MINIMUM TIME - 3 hours.

ELEVATION GAIN - 175m (574ft).

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY - Moderate.

PATHS - Farm tracks and fields. Open access moorland, plantation and riverside tracks.

STILES - 7 stiles and 3 ladder stiles.

PARKING - Demesne Mill Picnic Area.
Nearest postcode DL13 3DB.

PUBLIC TOILETS - At the junction of Market Place and Angate Street.

 **Please follow the Countryside Code**

Prepared on behalf of the people of Wolsingham by the Wolsingham Wayfarers.

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5.5 miles
DISTANCE

●●○
DIFFICULTY

3 hours
MIN. TIME

FREE

About the walk

Black Banks

There truly is something for everyone on this circular walk, perfectly summing up why Wolsingham is such a wonderful place to roam.

The early climb uphill towards High Wislerley Farm is quickly rewarded with a beautiful view back towards the village. The traverse to Crowsfield paints a picture of the disappearing past of the area, followed by a breathtaking view at the trig point on Knitsley Fell.

The journey home takes us through the woodland of the Black Banks Plantation and along the banks of the River Wear.



Welcome to wonderful Wolsingham



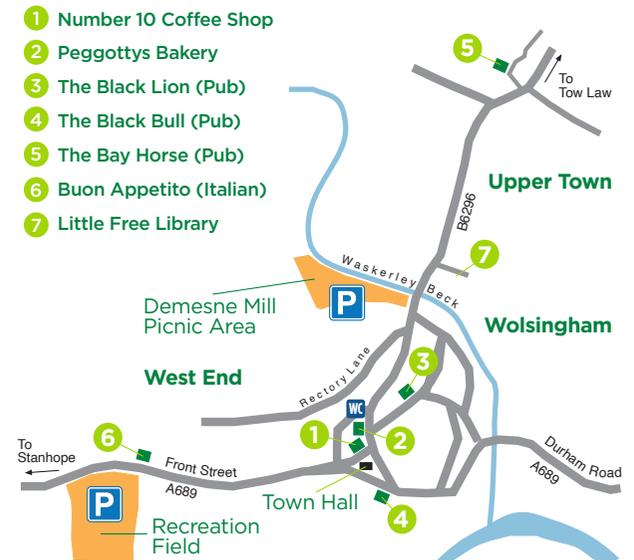
This is one of a series of walk leaflets produced by the Wolsingham Wayfarers, created to showcase Wolsingham's extensive public footpath network. With more than 140 miles of designated footpaths, most of them interlinked, there are plenty of opportunities for creating your own circular walks. A map showing all the footpaths in Wolsingham Parish can be found on the wall of the Town Hall in Wolsingham Market Place. Walks from Wolsingham are covered by OS Explorer maps 307 and OL31.

Ample parking for walkers is provided at Demesne Mill Picnic Site (off the B6296 Tow Law road) and at the Recreation Field (off the A689 Stanhope road). Visitors are asked to keep the market place in Wolsingham clear for local shoppers and library users. The amount of time you can park in the market place is also restricted. For information on public transport ring Traveline on 0871 200 22 33.

Several tea shops, cafes and pubs are shown on the map below. They offer good food and a very welcome drink at the end of a long walk. A few also offer accommodation.

The Wolsingham Wayfarers run regular free guided walks, a great way to discover new paths and routes. Check out our website and social media pages for up-to-date information on walks and activities (information on back page).

Wolsingham's parking and facilities



If you have parked at Demesne Mill off the B6296 (Wolsingham to Tow Law road), start your walk by heading back out of the car park through the main entrance and turn right down Angate Street until you reach Wolsingham Town Hall in the market place.

A From the market place turn right and head down Front Street (A689) in the direction of Stanhope (right if you are facing the Black Bull pub).

You will pass Whitfield House on your left. This rather grand house was built in 1700 by Matthew Whitfield of Whitfield Hall, Northumberland. At present it is a private house, but in times past it has been a school, a hotel, and also used as a convalescent home during the war. The trees in front of the house are evergreen Holm Oaks, a species imported from the Mediterranean. Whitfield cottages, beside the house, are some of the finest old buildings in the village, dating back to 1677.

B Turn left down The Causeway, signposted to Hamsterley. Continue down The Causeway and over the Wolsingham Bridge. Once over the River Wear follow the path up the hill. The pavement stops suddenly, at this point take care on the road but continue up hill for a short way and then onto a path that leads you into the trees on your left, following the road up the hill. Continue up the bank for 100m and pass through the kissing gate into the field on your left.

C Head diagonally right across the field and up the hill towards the fence at the top (ignore the stile you can see up the hill on your right). You should pass between the two double masted pylons ahead of you and on to a stile halfway along the fence, which takes you into the field above.

Take a moment to catch your breath and look back at the excellent views of Wolsingham.

D Continue heading diagonally left up the hill, through the gates and then diagonally right heading towards a gate on the right of High Wiserley Farm. Passing through the gate, go on, keeping the buildings on your left and once you have passed the entrance

to High Wiserley Farmhouse take the next left.

Keep right and head down a narrow path to a stone slab footbridge crossing the beck and through the kissing gate in the direction of Friarside Farm.

E Walk the length of the farm keeping the buildings on your right. Head towards the corrugated iron cattle shed on your left and over the stile to the right of the shed. Go through the next iron gate and bear slightly diagonally left across the field towards a gate, and then across the next field to the derelict buildings of Wigside Farm.

F Go through the gate into the farmyard (now used for sheep pens), turn right and through two more gates. Follow the cart track up the hill keeping the fence on your left. Go over the ladder stile and continue straight ahead (ignoring the gate on your left) along a rough track keeping the field boundary and eventually the stone wall on your left. Continue to a further waymarked gate and keep straight ahead, whilst trying to avoid the boggy patches.

G Continue on to a wooden field gate, and then go down into the dip on your left to a stile taking you over the fence and into the old farmyard of Crowsfield (long disused, but an excellent viewing and resting point).

In the 1850s Crowsfield housed a large family and was the centre of a small 50-acre farm, but it ceased being economically viable many years ago.

H Pass to the left of the farm building, turn immediately right and head across the field to a gate. Through the gate, follow the track most of the way up the hill, but as it turns right towards a field gate, leave the track and continue straight up the hill to a stile in the wire fence. Over the stile continue straight on up the hill to a ladder stile over a stone wall. (After you have been to the trig point, you will rejoin this wall further down to enter the plantation).

I Follow the waymaked track up through the heather until you reach the trig point at the top of Knitsley Fell.

Here, you can enjoy truly breathtaking 360° views of Weardale and beyond. Once you have enjoyed the view, and facing Wolsingham in the distance, take the waymarked track to your right (in the direction of the phone mast), back down towards the wall boundary of the plantation. At the end of the track, you'll find a stile in the boundary wall ahead of you, go over the stile and into Black Banks Plantation.

J Follow the path downhill through the trees and, once you meet the grassy track, turn left for a short distance before turning right and downhill again at a waymarked post.

K Follow the track downhill, keeping right towards the large house of Bradley Cottage. Once above the house, ignore the gate on your left which would take you into a field, and also ignore the left turn that would take you down the private drive to the house. Instead take the next left as it turns sharply downhill passing the front of the house and taking you down towards the river. Continue down the forest road and straight on, leaving the road as it turns sharply right.

L Follow the river path for about a mile, until you reach the kissing gate at the end (ignore the stile over a fence halfway down the path). Once through the kissing gate, follow field paths keeping the fence on your right.

M Head over two more stiles and fields, finally going over a ladder stile to join the road of Wisereley Hall. Turn right on the road, head downhill and across the railway line. Keep to the road as it swings left and continue on past Wolsingham Railway Station.

N At the end of the road turn right and back over the bridge where we first crossed the River Wear. Turn sharp right immediately after the bridge and head down to the river.

Take the path to the left and follow the riverside path to a large kissing gate that takes you into the caravan park. Follow the path through the caravan park and eventually out to the A689 (East End). Turn left and return to the market place and the end of our walk.

VIEW MAP
THIS WAY



Looking back at Wolsingham and High Wiserley.



A view of the River Wear.



The disused farm house at Crowfield.



The trig point at the highest point of our walk.



This plantation of 400 acres was purchased by the Forestry Commission in 1937 from Fred Brown, timber merchant, for £1450. It was more extensively planted in the late 1930s.