

A Short History of the Chevin

Discovery of pre-historic artefacts suggests hunter-gatherers travelled across the Chevin ridge from around 8000 BC. The ridge was a trading and migration route for thousands of years.

The area of the Chevin Forest Park described in this leaflet is now commonly known as Danefield. Until the late 1780s it was common land where local people could harvest bracken, collect stone, turf and peat, and graze their animals. Following the 1783 Enclosure Act, the land was allotted to the Fawkes family of nearby Farnley Hall and remained in their private ownership until 1946. During this time permission had to be obtained to pass through the woods and at one time there was a small summerhouse at the entrance where the 2d admission fee was collected.

The Fawkes family began large-scale tree planting in the late 1780s on what was previously open moorland. During the Second World War over 1000 mature trees were felled for the war effort. They were used for railway sleepers, rifle butts and coffins.

In 1946 Major Le Gendre George William Horton Fawkes gave Danefield back to the people of Otley to be used as a public open space for all to enjoy. It was intended that part of the land should be productive and a 30-year plan of re-forestation began in 1952 under the direction of Reginald Rawling, the first Head Forester.



One of a number of abandoned partially-cut millstones in the Caley Craggs area

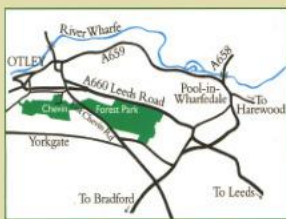
Dana, one of the last working horses used by the Foresters for the extraction of timber from areas where vehicle access was deemed unsuitable.



How to find Chevin Forest park

By car: Follow the signs from Otley town to car parks on East Chevin Road.

By bus: The X84 bus runs between Leeds City Bus Station, Ilkley and Skipton. Telephone 0113 245 7676 for details, or go to www.wymetro.com.





The landscape has changed profoundly over the years on Danefield from open moorland to well established woodland plantations. The photograph on the left, taken in 1960, shows bracken control in Stag Wood amongst the rows of young conifers.

Almscliff Crag can be clearly seen on the horizon. In contrast, the photograph below, shot in 2019, reveals tall maturing conifers and beech trees that now make up Stag Wood. Changes in the weather can be more noticeable and profound on open moorland, but in the woods this tends to be moderated as the trees buffer the extremes. Thus woods are milder in the winter and cooler in the summer.



Chevin Forest Park (East) Historical Trail



In 1977 Major Le Gendre George William Horton Fawkes (with walking stick) attends the presentation of the memorial stone dedicating the Danefield Estate to the people of Otley.

A 2.7 mile (maximum) circular walk through the Danefield part of the Chevin Forest Park from either the Lower or Upper Shawfield car parks. The route visits key historical features in and around the east part of the Chevin Forest Park.

Although the walk description starts from either of the two Shawfield car parks, an optional route from Otley is also shown.

The walk has been produced by the Friends of Chevin Forest Park (www.chevinforest.co.uk) in partnership with Walkers are Welcome Otley (www.waw-otley.org.uk), and with financial assistance from Otley Town Council.



Memorial stone commemorating the establishment of a plantation of hardwood trees, and the contributions made by three senior members of the Otley community.

KEY:

- 1 Route information
- A Site of interest
- Buildings and gardens and hard standing
- Trees
- Private woodlands
- Countryside
- Public park
- P Car park
- P Bridge
- P R1 - Quarry Farm Road
- P R2 - Quarry Farm Road
- P Field boundaries
- P Becks
- P Roads
- P Vehicle access (private)
- P Trail
- P Trail (optional route)
- P Public Access Path
- P Public footpaths
- P Public bridleways
- P View Point

Horse drinking trough on the former Coach road to Caley Hall, now a bridleway running through the east section of Chevin Forest Park.

The Walk

The route description starts from either the Upper or Lower Shawfield car parks GR Lower Shawfield: SE 216442

Walking from Otley to Danefield: from All Saints Church follow Bondgate, Gay Lane and up East Chevin Road - 1 Kilometre/0.6 miles. Enter Danefield wood at the millstone on the left marking the entrance to the bridleway (Marked as "Lower Danefield entrance" on the map). At the bottom of the slope either - continue along the track until a path comes down from the right, and pick up the route at 2 below (straight ahead from there), or - turn left downhill, see 3 below.

This is a circular route which can be started at any point.

1 From Upper Shawfield Car Park take the path through the fence, turn immediately left to Lower Shawfield car park. 7 There take the Permissive bridge path straight ahead, following the fence downhill. By the sign for Cleaver Wood turn left and continue to follow the path downhill.

This path probably follows the route of a former packhorse trail. Near the bottom, look for an old holloway on the right. A holloway is a sunken lane, significantly lower than the land either side of the track. Traditionally, if the lane became very sunken a new track would develop alongside. The path ends at the old coaching road that once led to Caley Hall, A which was situated north of the present A660. The hall dated from the 1500s and was owned by the Fawkes family from the mid 18th century. It was demolished in 1964.



KEY: i Information Board

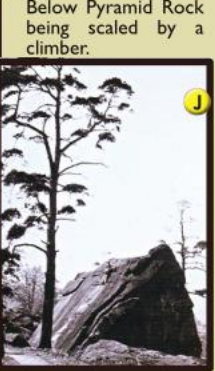
6 Continue along the bridleway, up the incline.

Further along are Caley Crags, one of several exposed rock faces on the Chevin, J previously used for quarrying and now a popular spot for rock climbing and bouldering. In the past, millstones were produced here for local corn mills and some semi-cut ones can still be found amongst the rocks.

In one of Turner's sketch books, now in the Tate Gallery, are drawings of quarrymen working here in the early 1800s. The Crags also feature in a number of his paintings.



Above a photograph taken in the 1920s, showing local residents Christina Babb and her brother viewing the Wharfe valley from Caley Crags.



Below Pyramid Rock being scaled by a climber.

Continue uphill on the track to join another track coming from the right.

7 Bear left

On the right is Keeper's Wood and just before the gate at the end of the track are the foundations of Keeper's Cottage. K i A succession of gamekeepers and farm labourers lived here from 1820 to 1914. It was demolished in 1925 and the stone taken down to build a gardener's cottage at Caley Hall.



Gamekeeper Mr. Paulson, a former tenant L at Keeper's Cottage.



2 There is a choice of route here: either turn right and follow the coaching road or take a longer loop to the left.

Left Loop: turn left on the coaching road

As the path goes downhill, look out for a distinctive oak tree on the left with angular, misshapen branches. B This is one of a few remaining trees that were planted in the 18th and 19th centuries. The trees were pollarded to produce shaped timber suitable for use in building ships, houses and barns. The stone trough at the side of the C path probably dates from coaching days. Some fifty metres further on, on the left, is a memorial to Reginald Rawling, the first Head Forester. D responsible for the re-forestation of the Danefield area of the Chevin Forest Park after the war. He was initially employed by Otley Urban District Council, then by Leeds City Council.



3 From the memorial stone go back a few steps and take the path downhill into Danefield Wood. Follow it around, over a stream, then keep right uphill to reach the coaching road. Turn left to 2.



This stream was one of several flowing from the Chevin supplying fresh water to Otley. In the late 18th century a reservoir was established at the foot of East Chevin Road and from there water flowed through tree trunk pipes to the town. It also helped to drive the water wheel at nearby Silver Mill which was originally a woollen mill and later turned to metal working.

8 Carry on through the gate to the 'Turner' viewpoint on the left.

Enjoy the view of Wharfedale and Farnley Hall M, the seat of the Fawkes family. The artist JMW Turner (1775 - 1851) was a family friend and frequently visited the hall in the early 1800s to draw and paint watercolours and this area features in a number of his works. This is also part of the Welcome to Yorkshire Turner Trail. i



9 Return to the gate by the Keeper's Cottage foundations. Turn left uphill.

10 At the top there is a choice of route: either turn right and follow the track back to the car park (approximately 1 1/2 miles).

Alternatively turn left for an optional loop around Quarry Wood, Cold Flatts and Flint Wood.

On the right hand side is Quarry Wood named after the nearby Pool Bank Quarry which ceased working about 1939.

11 At the junction of paths by a gate turn right and take a path uphill. Ignore a right turn by a telegraph pole and continue to the wall at the top.

12 Turn right and follow the path round, with the wall on your left. Keep to the main path. At the junction by the notice board 13 turn right and follow the main path.

On the left is Flint Wood which was planted in 1966. When the land was being ploughed prior to planting, a significant number of flints, including knives, N scrapers N and arrow points O were found, dating back more than 5,000 years. They were possibly brought by travellers from East Yorkshire as flint is not naturally occurring in this area.



4 Continue along the old coaching road (now a bridleway).

Further along on the left is the site of one of the two Iron Age settlements to be found in Danefield. E The large stones formed the foundations of huts and enclosures.

The cobbled area ahead used to house the foresters' cabins F 7 and for a time Dana, G their working horse, was stabled here.

Near here was the western boundary of the former Deer Park which was surrounded by six-foot-high walls. It was established by the Fawkes family around 1820 and contained fallow, red and axis deer, H and also zebra, wild boar and goats. The last stag was said to have been killed in 1844. The Park went into decline when the new Leeds Road was built in the 1840s, splitting it in two.



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5 Cross the bridge over Holbeck.

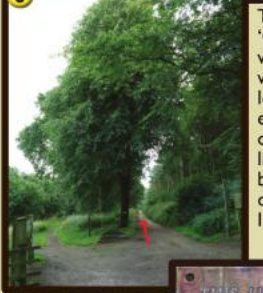
Look back at the rocks on the side of the stream by the bridge to spot an upturned "Giant's Boot". I (The legend is that two giants were having a fight on the top of the Chevin, one kicked the other's boot off and this is where it landed!)



On the left of the path is Poolscar Wood where the site of another Iron Age settlement is situated. (Not visible)

14 At the next junction turn left. Continue to follow the track to a T junction after 0.5 miles 15; Turn left to rejoin the track which leads back to the car park.

After the bridge the track is called 'Chippendale Ride'. S It was named after the famous furniture maker, Thomas Chippendale, who was born in Otley in 1718. In 1968 trees and cypresses were planted here to commemorate the 250th anniversary of his birth. The trees chosen were the species he would have used in his work. Queen Elizabeth II donated the first tree from her Sandringham Estate.



The above photograph shows 'Chippendale Ride' when it was first planted in 1968, whilst the photograph on the left, taken in 2019, reveals the extensive tree growth that has occurred over 51 years. The lime tree in the foreground, in both photographs, is the one donated by Queen Elizabeth II.



Walking back to the car park, the open area to the right is called Shawfield T. There were a number of searchlights and gun emplacements here in WW2 to help defend the nearby RAF base (now Leeds/Bradford Airport). The sites can still be seen today as shallow depressions in the ground.

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