

## Linking the Meadows

### Route Summary

Roads, tracks, fields and some stiles. Can get muddy/boggy in parts. Take care on unpaved road sections. Expect livestock and keep dogs under close, effective control. "Walking safely" information available at [www.forestofbowland.com](http://www.forestofbowland.com) Walkers are advised to carry OS Explorer map OL41.

### Route Overview



Category: Walking  
 Rating: Unrated  
 Surface: Undefined  
 Date Published: 18th June 2018  
 Difficulty: Easy  
 Length: 6.170 km / 3.86 mi  
 Last Modified: 19th June 2018

### Description

Since the 1950's 97% of wild flower meadows have been lost. The Bowland Hay Time project began in 2012 with the aim of restoring species richness to suitable meadows across the AONB area.

This route visits a number of sites which are important in Bowland for this habitat. The route is best walked during the mid summer months before the meadows have been cut.

### Waypoints

#### 1.

(53.99721; -2.39059)

Remember to keep a look out for cyclists using the paths and tracks in Gisburn Forest.

From the car park at Gisburn Forest Hub head along the path towards the cafe at Stephen Park and, just before you reach the buildings, follow the path for a short distance as it bears left. Stop at the wooden gate in the wall ahead to look over into Stephen Park meadow.

## 2.

(53.99972; -2.39084)

The restoration of the meadow at Stephen Park began in 2012 using green hay from the SSSI meadow at nearby Black House Farm. Wild flower-rich hay was cut, transported and then spread out onto the newly cut meadow at Stephen Park. This allowed the seed contained in the hay to drop onto the meadow and germinate the following spring. In particular, yellow rattle, meadow buttercup, red clover, eye bright, crested dog's tail and sweet vernal grass have now re-established themselves. In the summer of 2015, the first orchid was spotted. The restoration work has been continued by local schools who have grown and planted out wild flowers local to the area.

Retrace your steps back to the car park and join the main drive, turning right to follow it back towards the main road.

## 3.

(53.99449; -2.39266)

Take the first track on your right (signed to Stocks Reservoir) through the barrier and down the slope. Soon, on your left, you will see a barn and pasture.

This is Bottom Laithe, an important site for rare plants, which is being managed by volunteers.

Continue along the track and at the bottom of the slope continue to follow it as it turns sharp left.

## 4.

(53.99373; -2.39950)

When you see the road ahead, stay on the track as it turns right (signed to Stocks Reservoir), then bear left when the path divides (again, signed to Stocks).

When you reach the road (take care here), cross over and turn right then follow it to the bend. Look out for a good display of wildflowers along the verges here.

If you want to go into the grounds of St. James' Church, continue around the bend in the road and enter via the gate on the right hand side. This is a Biological Heritage Site and remains an important sanctuary for wildflower species as it has never been treated with fertilisers or herbicides and is managed as a traditional hay meadow by a local farmer. The chapel is usually open to visitors and you are welcome to look around.

### 5 5.

(53.99365; -2.40316)

To continue with the walk take the farm track which leaves the road on the bend and follow it ahead.

### 6 6.

(53.99084; -2.41337)

You are now approaching Black House Farm where the seed for the Stephen Park meadow was harvested in 2012. Cross the cattle grid (or go through the adjacent gate) and head towards the farm house. As you approach the house look out for a waymarker post on the left hand side of the track. Bear left here (watch out for a small ditch) to a wooden pedestrian gate in the corner of the wall. (Note: this route is different to the Public Right of Way shown on the OS map.)

Go through the gate and turn right (can be wet along this stretch) to follow the right hand boundary, soon bearing left to go over a stile in the wall/fence ahead.

### 7 7.

(53.98990; -2.41237)

Once over the stile cross the field to a field gate ahead and go through.

You are now in a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) from where donor hay will be taken to restore nearby grasslands.

Bearing slightly left, cross this field - keeping roughly parallel with the boundary on the left hand side (note: field may be boggy in parts after wet weather) - until you reach a small wooden gate. Go through the gate, over the stone bridge and through another wooden gate on the far side.

Keeping to the wall on the left hand side, continue ahead until you come to a field gate on the left hand side. At this point bear diagonally right across the field to enter the farm via a green field gate.

### 8 8.

(53.98509; -2.40877)

Cross the gill via the small bridge and turn left to follow the track as it climbs away from the farm. Continue along this track until you reach the next farm.

### 9 9.

(53.98683; -2.39799)

At Brook House Green turn sharp left down the track towards the farmhouse but, before you reach the house, go through the waymarked gate on your right. (Note: this is different to the Public Right of Way marked on the OS map.) Join the track ahead and follow it up the hill. Continue to follow it along the top of the small valley on your left, towards Lower Barn.

**10** 10.

(53.99128; -2.39946)

At the field boundary just beyond Lower Barn, bear slightly right across the field towards a stile in a short stretch of dry stone wall.

**11** 11.

(53.99273; -2.40059)

Climb over the stile into the forest and follow the path (indistinct in places) which leads you back to the main road. Cross the road with care and take the track opposite (point 4) to retrace your route back to Bottom Laithe and on to the car park at Gisburn Forest Hub.

