

Beamers Trail



WITTON
WEAVERS
WAY

Walk
No. 1



BLACKBURN
with
DARWEN
BOROUGH COUNCIL



6 miles

(easy with some moderate
ascents and descents)



BEAMERS TRAIL 6 miles (easy with some)

The Warpers Trail forms part of the long distance Witton Weavers Way.

This is a beautiful walk covering both hill and valley, so some sections are fairly steep. This is particularly true at the start of the walk, but it should present no problems to the average walker. Stout shoes or boots plus waterproofs are recommended.

You are strongly advised to use these walk details in conjunction with OS Explorer map No. 287, West Pennine Moors.

START: Witton Country Park main car park, off Preston Old Road GR 662271

PUBLIC TRANSPORT: 1/2 mile from Cherry Tree railway station. A frequent bus service operates along Preston Old Road

PARKING: Main car park of Witton Country Park



1-2

The Witton Weavers Way begins in the picturesque Witton Country Park, a legacy from the Feilden family, wealthy landowners. The 480 acres of mixed woodland, parkland and farmland surrounded the now demolished Witton House (built in 1800). The estate was bought by Blackburn Corporation in 1946 and opened up to the public.



1. Witton Country Park & Visitor Centre

From the main car park of Witton Country Park follow the main drive up towards the wooden sports pavilion. Just before you turn right along the drive behind the pavilion it is well worth a detour up to the Visitor Centre & Tea rooms¹.

This is set in the old 19th century stable block and now houses a British small mammal collection, tearooms and information point. For opening times, information and maps contact Countryside Services (01254) 55423/691239.

Follow the road behind the Pavilion until you reach a small car park. Turn immediately left along the fence and a path soon emerges that leads into Big Cover Wood. Cross the footbridge on the left over the brook and follow the path up through the wood, with open fields visible on your left. Go through the kissing gate out of the wood and follow the path across two fields, passing Higher Gardens Plantation on your right. Climb the stile through the wall onto Under Billinge Lane. Witton Country Park is especially good for bird life. Along this section of the

walk look out particularly for woodland species such as nuthatch and greater spotted woodpecker, at any time of the year.

2-3

Turn left and immediately right through a gateway and follow the path that climbs left into Billinge Wood. Continue straight on at the first junction and on emerging from the wood climb the stile on the left-hand corner of the car park. Cross the field, making for the small 'hump' and continue along the path. On going through a fence into a field, go over the brow of the hill and drop down the field, keeping to the fence on the left. Behind this fence is the deep disused Butler's Delph quarry. It is named after the Butler family of Pleasington Hall and was one of the last working freestone quarries in the area. Climb the stile at the bottom of the field. These fields are still known locally as the Yellow Hills² because of the covering of gorse in the springtime. Out of sight to

the moderate ascents and descents)



2. Spring Gorse on Yellow Hills

your right is the Clog and Billycock public house. Its name came from the unusual dress of its one-time landlord, as billycock is the old name for a bowler hat. Opposite the pub is one of two fine 18th century rows of handloom weavers' cottages. In the distance you may be able to see the ruins of Woodfold Hall, which was besieged in 1818 by 6,000 handloom weavers demanding an advance of wages.

3-4

Turn left along the lane and almost immediately, just in front of a telegraph pole, turn right down the path into the wood. 50 yards into the wood take an indistinct right fork and climb the stile into the field, heading for the gate straight-ahead. Go through the gate and continue ahead, keeping close to the trees on the right. Climb the stile at the gate and continue along the track, emerging onto the road which links Billinge End with the village of Pleasington.

4-5

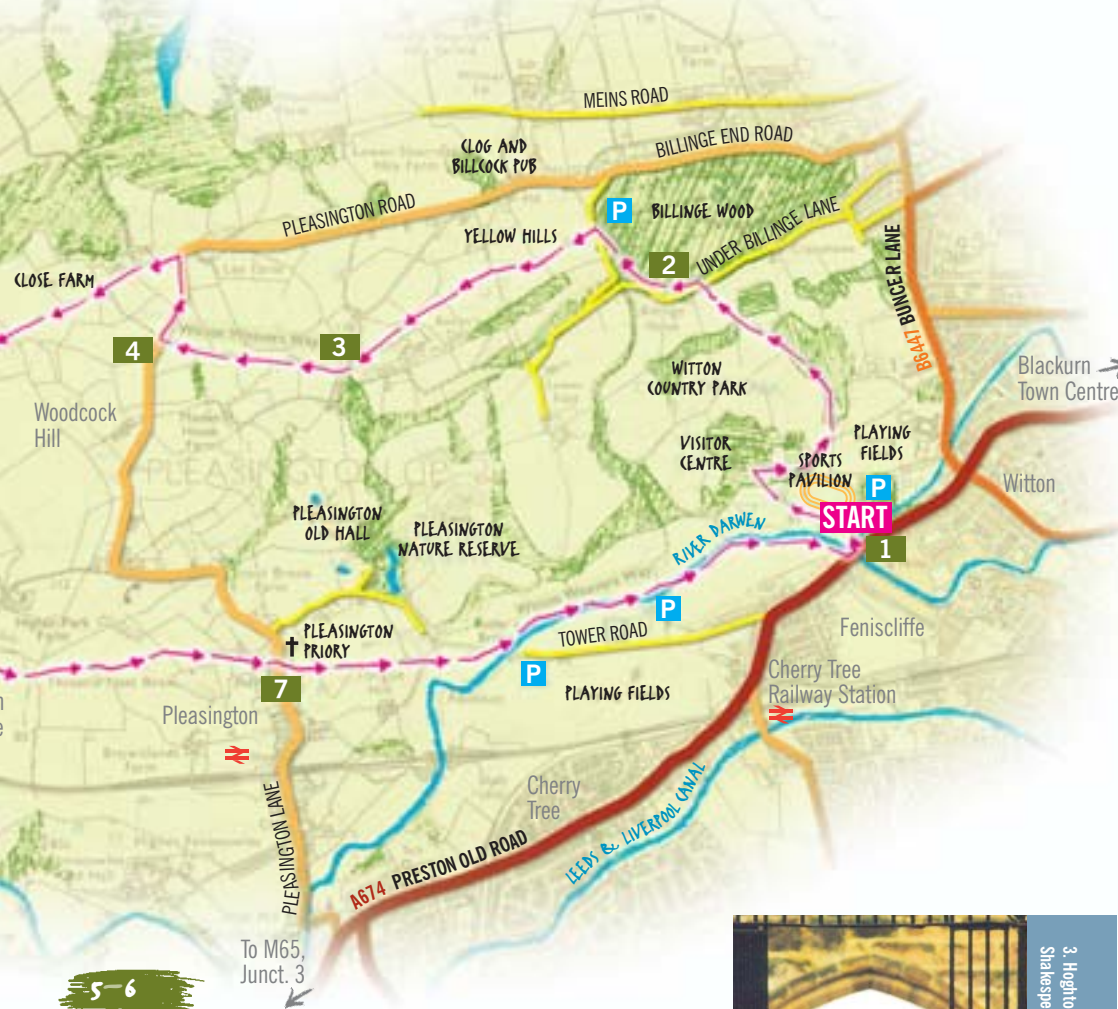
Turn right along this road and continue until you reach a sharp bend with a track going off to the left. Follow the track along past Close Farm. In woodland behind Close Farm are the remains of a medieval alum mine. The workings extracted aluminous shale for Sir Richard Hoghton during the 17th and 18th centuries. Continue down the field straight ahead, following the line of the hedge on your right. Head for the gully that appears ahead and slightly to the left. Climb the stile on the right hand side of the gully. Continue ahead, taking the path that crosses the gully, bearing right. Follow the wide track on the far side of the gully. On emerging into the open field take the track that appears on the edge of the tree-lined valley on your right. Follow the track down as it broadens out alongside the River Darwen. As the path meets the river it veers to the left, heading for Lower Park Farm. Climb the stile at the

corner of the buildings, going past the farmhouse and through the gate.



Time for a rest

WITTON WEAVERS WAY



On reaching the river turn left down the track, following the river on your right. Mallard, kingfisher and heron can all be seen on this stretch of the river. Leave the track to go through a gate on your right and follow the river as it bends to the right. Above the river is the imposing setting for historic Houghton Tower³. You will be able to catch a glimpse of the rear of the 16th century

mansion. It was here that James I is said to have knighted the loin of beef – sirloin. It is open to the public but it is best to check the opening times (01254) 852986. Continue along the river to the bridge. Upstream notice Houghton Bottoms, a good example of a water-powered mill site, with a weir, race and mill stile all clearly visible.



3. Houghton Tower, magnificent historic hall with Shakespeare connections



USEFUL INFORMATION

Blackburn Tourist Information

Centre (01254) 53277 or
www.tourism.blackburnworld.com

Travel Centre (01254) 681120

Witton Country Park Visitor Centre
(01254) 55423

Hoghton Tower (01254) 852986

Butlers Arms (01254) 201561

6-7

Turn left along the track. On your right is Pleasington Golf Club, an 18-hole course which has an excellent reputation among golfers nationally. Go through the stile in the wall on your right and follow the wall to the left to reach the next stile. Climb the stile into the open field and follow the fence up out of the valley. Over the next stile and onto a track that will lead you to Pleasington village, and the Butlers Arms⁴.

Pleasington was the manorial seat of such families as the Ainsworths and the Butler-Bowdens. As well as another fine row of handloom weavers' cottages it also boasts two public houses, both with crown green bowling greens.

7-1

Go straight across the road, continuing down the track with Pleasington Priory on your left. The Gothic Roman Catholic church has a doorway that is of special interest. The imitation Norman pointed arch features kneeling monks with an elaborate rose window above.

Continue down the sandy path to emerge at Pleasington playing fields. Turn right along the road to Butler's bridge. Once over the bridge turn immediately left along the river footpath to return to the starting point⁵.



5. Return to the starting point



Pleasington Old Hall & picturesque setting

THE COUNTRY CODE

- Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work.
- Guard against all risk of fire.
- Fasten all gates.
- Keep dogs under close control.
- Keep to paths across farmland.
- Avoid damage to fences, hedges and walls.
- Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone.
- Leave no litter.
- Help to keep all water clean.



- Protect wildlife, plants and trees.
- Go carefully on country roads.
- Make no unnecessary noise.

NOTES FOR WALKERS

ESSENTIAL KIT

The OS Explorer Map No. 287 (West Pennine Moors) provides excellent aid and information on all areas covered in this guide. (Ordnance Survey *tel:* 08456 050505 / www.ordsvy.gov.uk)



FURTHER INFORMATION

If you are travelling to the start of the walk using public transport, please contact **Blackburn Travel and Local Information Centre**. *Tel:* 01254 681120.

Blackburn Central Railway Station (Enquiries). *Tel:* 08457 484950.

For information on local attractions, events, places of interest and accommodation, please contact **Blackburn Tourist Information Centre**. *Tel:* 01254 53277. *Email:* askus@blackburn.gov.uk

Alternatively visit the **Blackburn with Darwen website** at: www.tourism.blackburnworld.com

Blackburn with Darwen Countryside Services Office. *Tel:* 01254 691239 for countryside information and events.

Please note that every effort has been taken to ensure details are correct at the time of printing. Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions, nor any consequence arising from use of the information.

Reprinted March 2004 by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Marketing & Tourism Development and Countryside Services.

Photos: Mike Tattersall, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, Hoghton Tower