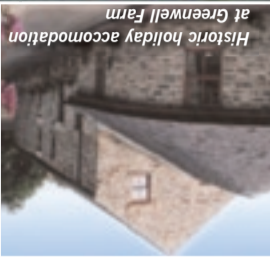


Greenwell Farm has its own Nature Trail and Conservation areas with opportunities for bird watching and seeing a variety of wildlife, particularly owls, Hedgerows

Greenwell Farm is just outside the boundary of the walk but you pass through some of the fields farmed in an environmentally friendly fashion through the LEAF scheme (Linking Environment And Farming). Linda Vickers who owns and manages the farm saw Integrated Farm Management (IFM) as the way forward and this allows the farm to be looked at as a whole and in the context of the environment.



As you walk through the meadows and farmland of this "Countryside Gateway" walk, you will be exploring countryside that has been sculpted by generations of families working the landscape to provide food and employment for many years. These are businesses that are working in a very challenging environment with pressures of changing rules and times. People have been wandering the paths of this wonderful countryside and enjoying the nature often oblivious of the careful management taking place all around them. Working with Defra, the Countryside Agency, English Nature and other interested bodies these businesses have been ploughing a careful furrow through the changing times of the countryside.

Not just crops...



Bradley Hall. This work has revealed much about the building and its surrounding landscape (designated a scheduled ancient monument). It is believed now that the original building was built around a quadrangle, within the boundary of the surrounding moat. In addition from the medieval era large fishponds, pillow mounds (for rearing rabbits) and a tunnel can be found

Ancient history to modern business...

have been replanted and traditionally maintained using craftsmen and there has been much rebuilding of dry stone walls. The Greenwell family have been owners since the 12th Century. Mike's ancestors have worked it for the last 350 years. Today it is sensitively farmed and self supporting which means that sufficient crops are grown to feed back to the cattle and sheep enterprises. The farm uses a traditional mixed rotation of autumn and spring sown crops. Autumn sown barley is better suited to the soil type and is earlier to harvest than wheat, an important consideration in the North Pennines area.

As you walk up the track towards Bowles Farm you cannot help but notice the pigs foraging in the nearby fields! Bowles Farm has dedicated itself to producing top quality organic meat, coupled with a determination that animal welfare will

limited use of chemicals. Bradley Burn Hall runs a Countryside Stewardship Scheme which allows the Stephensons to manage their land in an environmentally sensitive manner. In practice this means that the land is managed as permanent grass with no artificial fertilisers allowed with only

Quality time for pigs...

outside. Within the ruined vaulted chambers there are fireplaces, archways, doorways and cupboards. It has been established that the surviving fabric is early 14th Century, from when the Hall belonged to the Eue family of Witton. Licence to crenellate the Hall was granted to the Eures by Archbishop Langley in 1431. Today Bradley Hall and Bradley Burn are a modern 360 acre farm where the Stephensons family have lived and worked for 60 years. Currently they grow wheat, barley, potatoes, and oil seed rape, and raise beef cattle and lambs.

"I hope that Bowles Organic Farm will provide a wonderful environment for people to buy quality organic food, sourced locally wherever possible. The expansion is due to commence in April 2003, and I look forward to meeting many new and existing customers, this year and in the years to come."

"This year will see a huge development taking place, with an extension of the farm shop to include a tea room/cafe, proper parking facilities, a picnic area and a Tarmac drive!"

products: looking to improve and develop his organic farmer with a deep interest in the countryside around him and is constantly The owner, Mr Pike is a fully committed Durham's first Registered Organic Farm. organic, and in 1997, it became County with a shared enthusiasm for all things

free access to an open field. a warm byre to sleep in whilst still having down for the winter to have the comfort of the summer in the woodland, and coming in one great big family group; spending from approximately six weeks to old age, the use of crates; living together aged farrowing without

always be one of its major concerns. This way of farming aims to give the animals as natural a life as possible, which includes natural weaning; farrowing without



Opening doors to a forever changing countryside



How to get there
Wolsingham is situated approximately 8 miles from Durham, 25 miles from Newcastle and 25 miles from Hexham.

What are the Countryside Gateway series of walks all about?
These walks follow a trail through public rights of way, permissive paths and bridleways, over farmland and countryside throughout the north east of England. They offer an opportunity to experience the wonderful landscapes in our region and to witness, first-hand, the efforts of the people

who live and work in them. In some cases you will be walking through a landscape that has been farmed by the same family for generations and this offers unrivalled opportunities to learn about some of the methods of conservation taking place and how modern farming practices are offering new opportunities for tourism, conservation and commerce.

We hope that these walks will provide you with an insight into how Defra and its partners are working with farmers and landowners to protect the features that are important for the countryside - for its people and its wildlife. Defra has initiated schemes that create a direct link for agriculture and the environment to work in harmony protecting both jobs, countryside heritage and the environment. Other schemes are helping farmers and rural businesses diversify into areas such as providing high quality produce, recreation and tourism.

"From silent Spring to the march of the seasons, each buzzing with biodiversity. A decade of vision and action that is slowly but surely putting wildflowers and wildlife back into the countryside of England, thanks to a dynamic partnership of farmers, and government and non governmental organisations large and small. Common sense, and information and technology transfer now paves the way ahead for a farmed environment with all the benefits of soils, landscapes and rural communities once again in good heart."

David Bellamy, Bedburn, March 2002

For more information about this walk and others in the series, please contact:
Defra (RDS), Quadrant, Newburn Riverside, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE15 8NZ.
Tel: 0191 229 5500 Email: enquiries.northeast@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Our thanks go to our partners: The Countryside Agency, Durham County Council, Northumberland County Council, English Nature, English Heritage and the Ramblers Association.

Cover illustration: kingfishers may be seen along the River Wear.
Design, production and interpretation by: Differentia Ltd, 0191 2332330.
Illustration by Steve Pardue. Photography by Steve Pardue and Jim Milner.



A Countryside Gateway walk around . . .

Wolsingham

A short walk around Wolsingham district through riverside paths, open meadows and farmland.
Distance: 4 miles
Grade: Easy

1. From Wolsingham, follow the signs to Crook on the A689. After 1.5 miles you will see a signpost left to Bradley Mill Caravan Park. After a further 20 metres turn left into the layby. Park here ensuring that you do not block any access to the dwellings, field gates or caravan park. After parking, go towards the stone barn where you will find a stile over the stone wall.

2. Cross the stile and, taking care, cross the busy road (A689) heading for the track opposite. Just before you cross the cattle grid you'll notice a 'Conservation Walks' map board. These map boards are sited wherever farmers are providing permissive access. Farmers enter into ten-year agreements to provide walks and rides, in this case the route creates a circular bridleway for local riders and walkers. Today you are going down to the river so follow this leaflet and not the board.



Look out for the Conservation Walks sign.

Walk down the track, crossing the cattle grid. On your left is Bradley Burn which meanders down towards the River Wear.

Look out for pied wagtails in and around the burn. On the left, on the banks of the burn you can see buttercups, holly and ramsons. Continuing down the track you pass through a gateway of two magnificent beech trees.

Keep an eye out for heron and kingfishers. Listen out for the "peewit" of lapwing (other name is peewit!) flying around the fields either side of you.

3. Cross the stile on the left and head down the field edge towards the railway track.

4. Cross the railway track here via the ladder stile (at time of writing the railway was disused but there is talk of the line being opened up again - so take note of the sign and take care).



Meadow cranesbill



Star of Bethlehem

Once over the railway line the path turns right towards Wolsingham.

Stay on this path and lookout for the bright red of meadow cranesbill. Also among the undergrowth is heath bedstraw, water avens, red campion and vipers bugloss. Smell the garlic aroma of ramsons which cover the ground with their white flowers in spring. Continuing on the

path look out for the white star shaped petals of Star of Bethlehem. As you walk you will catch glimpses of the River Wear - listen for the piping call of an agitated oystercatcher.

Look ahead you may see a green woodpecker feeding on the railway line before flitting up to the trees to disappear among the dense leaves. At this point



Oystercatcher

the woodland aroma is joined by a new smell - look to the side of the path at what looks like cow parsley, take a leaf and crush a little and smell the distinctive aniseed smell of sweet cicely. On either side of you look for cowslips in spring and early summer. You may be lucky enough to see the deep red of early purple orchid standing proud among the butterbur which, in early summer still have quite small leaves allowing other smaller flowers to spring forth.

As the path continues down river notice that the river is swifter here - this is an ideal spot to look for dippers bobbing on rocks and searching for insects.

5. Shortly, the path turns right back over the railway track to Scotch Isle Farm. Take care over the ladder stile into the field - the steps are a bit rickety here. Cut across the field edge towards a small gate and stile onto the track at the farm. Follow the track up towards the main road again.

Look left towards the steel works which at its heyday employed 400 people and made the anchor for the Titanic.

6. When you reach the main road cross the road here and turn left keeping to the grass verge. Take care as the road is very busy. Stay on the verge for a short while until you see the sign for Bowlees Organic Farm. Turn right up the track and head towards the farm and farm shop. The path is a little steep here and can be hard going.

Some of the arable fields in this area have grassy margins left around the edge by the farmer, ideal hunting for kestrels. As you near the farm note the free range pigs on the right. These pigs live to around 8 years old and have roughly 1½ litters a year. Non free range sows produce around 4-7 litters before they become exhausted and are slaughtered after about 3-4 years.

7. As you near the farm there is a kissing gate at the corner of the field. Go through and head diagonally up towards a large patch of gorse with a little snicket running through it. As you cross the field stop a while and enjoy the splendid views to the right over the valley and behind towards Wolsingham and the hills beyond. This is an ideal spot for a picnic.

As you walk through the snicket note the strong smell of coconut coming from the bright yellow flowers of the gorse. As you come through the gorse to the left is a little patch of lady's smock. Listen for the harsh chatter of a mistle thrush flying powerfully above and watch out for the orange tip butterfly flitting amongst the flowers. This is a good spot for a picnic.

8. As you go through the gate turn right following the yellow arrow of the footpath sign. This path meets a path from the left and heads towards Bradley Hall.

If you look at the wall to the left you may be able to pick out where the farmer has repaired the wall, and he's done a good job of it too. At more than £20 a metre stone walls can be an expensive item to



Note the field edges - ideal for hunting kestrels.

build and maintain and environmental grants are absolutely essential to help the farmers keep these important landscape features in good repair.

9. Cross a stile into a field. The path isn't too clear but stay more or less straight, keeping the stone wall to your left, where eventually you will see a ladder stile ahead. Cross into the next field and continue straight.

Follow the fence on the right hand side and look to the right - you will see Bradley Hall nestled in the valley. At this point look towards the left and you will see a stile, follow the fence line until you reach it and continue over. Once over, there is a ladder stile ahead.

You are now walking through fields run under the Green Leaf Scheme by Linda Vickers of Greenwell Farm. This meadow may be full of flowers and bright green grasses - or in early summer the dandelions may have turned into clocks. Each one a perfect ball of seeds waiting to parachute into the wind. This area was once crops but has been turned into meadow through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme attracting a diversity of wild meadow flowers.



Stone walls kept in good repair - an expensive business.



Bridge over precious hedgerows.

10. Cross this stile (not the one on the left) into the meadow beyond.



Biodiversity in bloom at Greenwell

As you approach this you can see a hedgerow with planted hawthorns attracting bumblebees and butterflies. The ladder stile has been built over a newly restored hedge. The wide space between the two sheep fences helps protect the new hedge plants. They also create an area undisturbed by the farmer or his animals. This creates a corridor for birds, small mammals and insects to thrive in.



Gorse in bloom

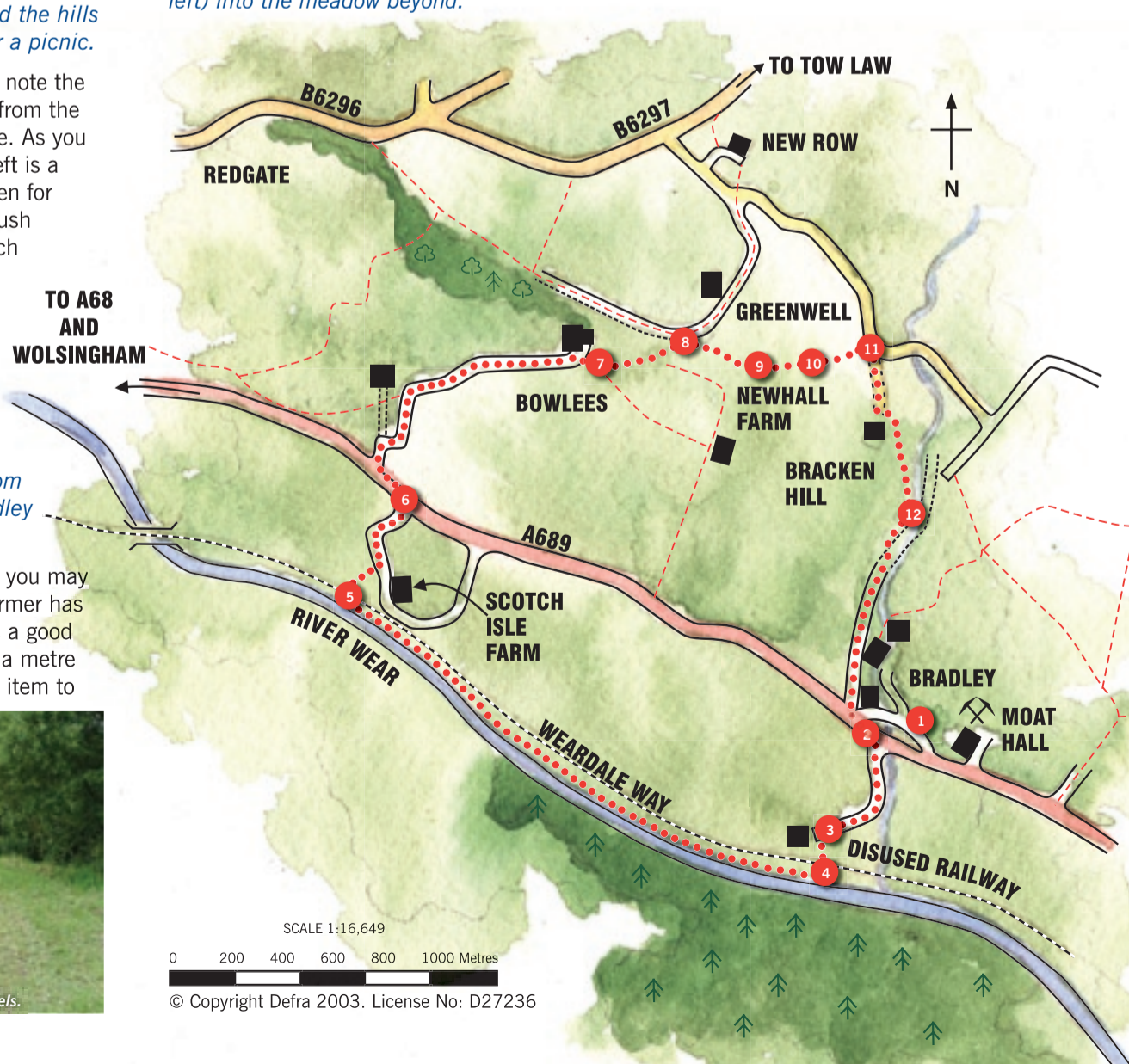


A perfect "clock"

11. At the end of the pasture there are two styles - take the one to the right and look for the track taking you to Bracken Hill. Follow the footpath sign up this track where the path skirts the building here (note this once again has been changed from current OS maps). Look to the left and you can see the caravan site. Keep going ahead until you come to a kissing gate. Go through the gate and stay on the right hand side keeping the hedge to your right. At the end of the field go through a gate in the wall and turn left immediately, following the path around the field boundary. Half way down the eastern side of the field you can see the disused millpond for the old Bradley Mill on your left.

Once again this field benefits from the Countryside Stewardship Scheme by ensuring that the field edges are not planted with crops allowing it to be colonised by wild flowers and grasses.

12. Just past the millpond, cross the stile adjacent to the gate onto the Tarmac lane and follow this until it joins the main road. Turn left onto the footpath along the road to the lay-by at the start of the walk.



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