

Lancashire Walks



By Royal Appointment

A few years ago, in what must have been a rare interview, Her Majesty, the Queen, was asked where she would like to retire to, if that hypothetical could be arranged. And guess what county she chose? Got it in one - Lancashire! Well who are we to quibble with the Queen? This walk, from the heart of her realm, explores this lovely area from riverside to felltop, visiting the ancient settlement of Whitewell on route.

Start: Car park at Dunsop Bridge.

From junction 31a on the M6 follow signs for Longridge (B6243) From Longridge follow signs for Trough of Bowland and Whitewell. Dunsop Bridge is two miles after Whitewell. The car park is through the village on the left.

Distance: 11 Km or 7 miles

Time: 2½ - 3 hours

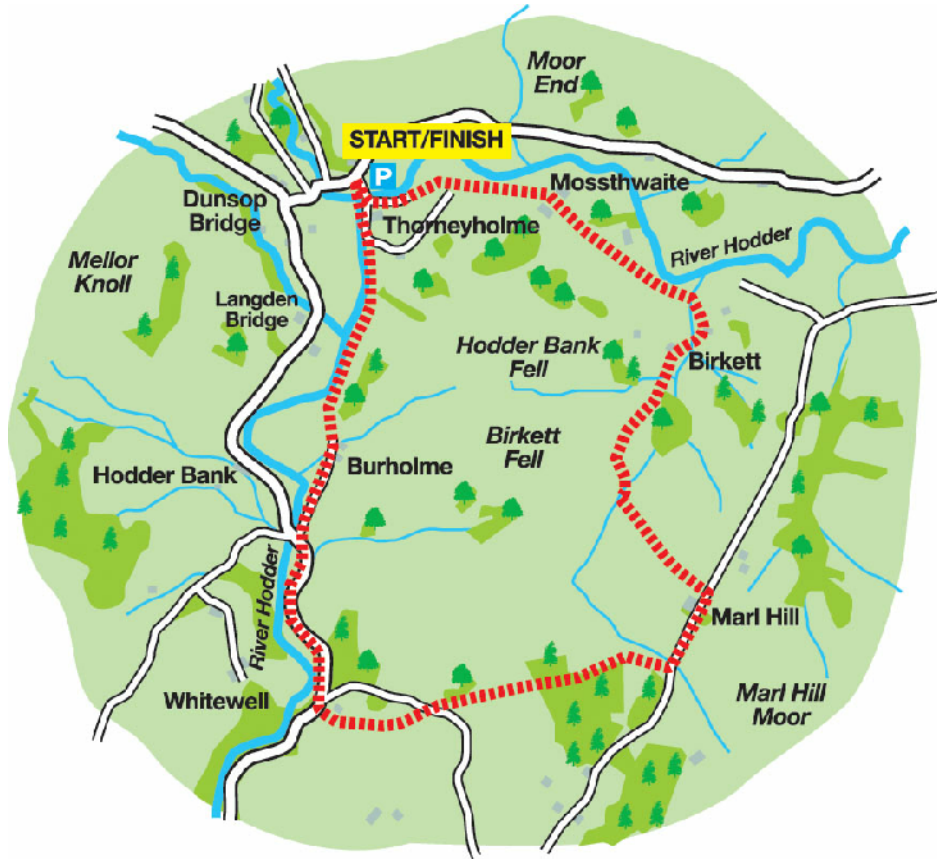
Terrain: Half the walk is by the river and is easy. The rest is devoted to crossing Birkett Fell, of modest height but with a particularly steep final descent into Whitewell.

1. Dunsop Bridge to Marl Hill (5 Km or 3 miles: 1¼ – 1½ hours)

The telephone box opposite the car park is BT's acknowledgement that Dunsop Bridge is close to the geographical centre of Great Britain as defined by the Ordnance Survey. You'd better have your photo beside it before you start. From the telephone box, walk away from the village to turn right into the handsome tree lined drive of Thorneyholme Hall. Crossing the bridge over the Hodder turn left through a metal gate. With the wall of the hall on your right and the river on your left walk to a gate at the end of the wall. After passing through this cross a stile on the right and following the direction of a waymarker cross two fields bearing right to reach a grassy track. This track will bring you to Mossthwaite. Keep ahead and on a substantial track pass the impressive Knowlmere Manor on your left to come to Giddy Bridge about 40mins after setting out. Cross the bridge and after a slight incline swing to the right to reach the farmsteads of Lower and Higher Birkett. Keep ahead at Higher Birkett crossing a farmyard and through a pair of metal gates onto a worn track. After dipping to a brook, the way begins to climb up the fellside. As it gains elevation it will come closer to a wall on the right. Beyond a ladder stile you will find yourself on moorland where keeping on track is trickier. Look for an isolated waymarker post some way ahead to the left. This will direct you to a stream 150m below the shell of a stone ruin. After fording the stream climb up the fellside on a more definite track. The path turns towards a wall and after crossing it leads up through pasture to reach a lane close by Marl Hill.

2. Marl Hill to Dunsop Bridge (6 Km or 4 miles: 1½ - 2 hours)

Turn right and at about 500m (8mins) turn right onto farm track. This leads down to Crimpton. A diversionary path now skirts the farm to the right. Beyond the farm complex the track takes you through a conifer plantation. A ladder stile will put you onto the open fellside beyond it. The path is far from clear here, but keep the first clump of trees to your left and the next enclosed plantation on your right to reach a wooden stile. The path leads down to a lane. Cross the lane and enter a large pasture that drops away towards a wall and a metal gate. Below the property of Seed Hill will be seen. Aim to the left of this. Cross the track beyond it aiming towards of a row of handsome red beech trees. A little way further on will place you on a lane by Whitewell. At Whitewell turn right and locate concessionary path on left of road. (This will necessitate shimmying over the roadside wall.) After a wooded section, the path crosses a footbridge into meadows. Keep to the fence until a stile is reached that puts you onto the road. Before you reach Burholme Bridge take the track on the right leading to Burholme. Pass through the farm and cross a brook by a footbridge. Keep ahead to reach a field and follow the path with Hodder on your left all the way back to Dunsop Bridge.



Map by Chris Wyatt at The Blackpool Gazette

