

## THE WALK

**D**ownham is celebrated as one of England's loveliest villages so that any walk that starts from it must be by definition a good walk. This one will take you along a delightful stretch of the Ribble Way before returning by way of Sawley Abbey – a circuit full of interest and charm.

**Start:** Downham Village car park. From junction 31 M6 follow the A59 to Clitheroe. After passing the town on the left turn onto Saley Road towards Chatburn. In the village centre turn left towards Downham which will be reached after a mile. The car park is at the bottom of the village on the right.

**Directions:** From the main car walk back towards the village turning right onto a footpath leading across pasture towards Worston. Worsaw Hill becomes an attractive aiming point as the route edges around its base. After passing Longsands Wood on your right the path crosses a large field to a squeeze stile and kissing gate. Crossing the next field to a similar arrangement.

The path follows a wall as it edges around Worsaw Hill and then begins to climb a modest rise between Worsaw and Warren Hill. After a small wooden gate, the path drops steeply to a large field.

Keep ahead to cross to a ladder stile. The next field leads onto the busy A59. Cross with care to a footpath directly opposite.

This takes you behind gardens on the edge of Chatburn. Take a stone stile on the left and follow the path to a bridge across a brook. Bear right to a narrow path that will bring you out into a residential area. At the road turn left, cross the railway line and walk down to the junction.

Turn left and then in front of the Brown Cow pub turn right onto a footpath. Keep on the past a large playing field on the right and then bear right and follow the path down to the River Ribble. You will find yourself on a particularly attractive reach. Turn left. After 500m the Ribble Way will come in from the left leading down to the Ribble Lane road bridge.

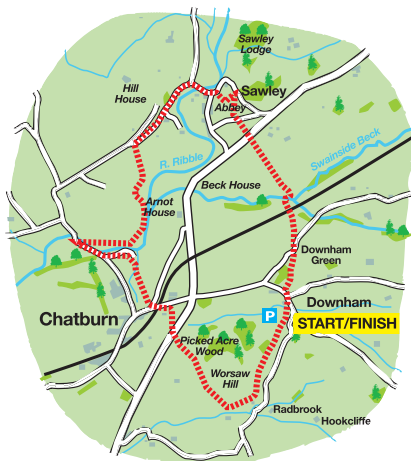
Cross the bridge. Turn right onto the riverside path – still on the Ribble Way. [Note: Owing to erosion of the bank this section of the Ribble Way has been closed in the past. If this is still the case continue towards Grindleton and turn right onto the Sawley Road. After a mile you'll rejoin the Ribble Way at Foxley Bank.] With the river on your right follow the Ribble Way as it curves through a large meander. Below Fields House the way turns left and then climbs through pasture to reach Sawley Road at Foxley Bank. Turn right and walk past Bowland High School and down towards Sawley. A footpath on the right cuts across a meadow to the bridge.

Cross the bridge and walk down to the Spread Eagle. Opposite the Spread Eagle and before you come



The River Ribble near Chatburn

# Stroll full of charm



to the impressive ruins of Sawley Abbey, turn left into a tree shaded car park and then bear right to cross a stile leading into pasture behind the abbey. Keep ahead and after crossing a drive enter woodland by a stile. After crossing a small stream the path continues up emerging into an overgrown pasture next to the A59.

Cross the road to a farm track opposite. After crossing a stile, keep ahead to reach a metal gate. From here bear left, cutting the corner of a field to reach a stile.

Keep ahead with the hedge on your left. At the far side of the next field follow

## FACTFILE

**Distance:** 10k (six miles)

**Time:** 2.5 to 3.5 hours

**Summary:** Mainly easy walking across farmland. Note there is a footpath diversion in force along the Ribble Way.

**Map:** OS Outdoor Leisure 41 Forest of Bowland

the footpath as it drops down to a very attractive packhorse bridge. Cross the bridge and turn left and then after climbing over a stone stile turn left to follow a path that will bring you to the (seldom used) railway. Passing below it bear right on the far side aiming diagonally for a hedge. At a gate cross into the adjoining field and keep ahead with a wall on your right. This footpath will bring you onto Rimington Lane. Turn right. After 200m look for a footpath sign on your left. Pass through a squeeze stile and follow the path as it crosses the ridge into Downham.

■ Walk devised by John Griffiths and Bob Clare. Hit [www.lancashirewalks.com](http://www.lancashirewalks.com) for more walks exploring the diversity of the Lancashire countryside.



## NATUREWATCH

with Liam Creedon

**T**he cuckoo, emblem of the British countryside, is in real danger of becoming extinct in the UK, scientists have warned. The population of this most disreputable parent in the birding world has plummeted in the past quarter of a century and experts are at a loss to find out why this has happened and how they can stop the problem.

Some estimate that if numbers continue to fall at their current rate, the sound of the cuckoo impudently announcing its presence will become absent from our countryside forever.

If the bird was to disappear it would represent a huge tragedy as the cuckoo is deeply embedded into both our natural heritage and our culture.

Its importance reveals itself in surprising ways: the cuckoo, a summer visitor from West Africa, has traditionally been seen as a harbinger of spring and each year the Times newspaper still prints letters announcing the arrival of the first bird.

In an age in which we have become increasingly separated from the natural world it is heartening to consider that most people, even if they claim to know nothing about birds, can name the cuckoo and therefore its call.

The cuckoo would never win an award for attentive parenting, and when looked at in human terms its behaviour is as horrific as it is fascinating. It is a brood parasite. Rather than wasting time and energy diligently raising its young, the bird just gets someone else to do all the hard work for it. The sneaky cuckoo secretly waits for them to lay a clutch of eggs. The female cuckoo then races over to the nest, gets rid of a host bird's egg and quick as a flash replaces it with one of her own. Here the bird gets really devious.

The cuckoo's egg is far smaller than would be expected for a bird of its size. This imposter egg even looks like the host's egg, who, none the wiser, incubates it as if it were their own.

If this was not bad enough, once hatched the fat cuckoo chick wastes no time at all in using its specially adapted back to push other eggs and chicks out of the nest - ensuring the undivided attention of its foster parents.