



Downham is one of the prettiest villages in Lancashire, with its stone cottages running down the hill from the church to the bridge over the beck.



Swanside Bridge is a fine example of a packhorse bridge. Such bridges are typically narrow and lack parapets, which would have fouled on the panniers of the ponies. The Grade-II-listed bridge dates from the 17th century if not earlier, and is likely to have been built by the monks of Sawley.



Three medieval crosses are encountered in the vicinity of Bolton-by-Bowland. The most complete is on the village green, alongside the village stocks.

The River Ribble rises in the Yorkshire Dales near the famous Ribbleshead Viaduct on the Settle–Carlisle railway, and flows through Clitheroe and Preston before entering the Irish Sea between Lytham and Southport.



Pendle Hill (557 m/1,827 ft) is a peat-topped gritstone hill which is isolated from the rest of the Bowland fells by the Ribble valley. Its association with the Pendle Witch Trials makes it a popular destination for Hallowe'en walks.

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three circular walks from the



SAWLEY, LANCASHIRE



Swanside Bridge and Sawley Abbey

2½ miles: Fairly easy

A medieval packhorse bridge, a pretty stream, and a stroll through the village past the abbey ruins.

Bolton-by-Bowland

4¾ miles: Fairly easy

Explore the Ribble and its tributaries, find three medieval crosses, and visit a pretty village.

Downham and Pendle Hill

10½ miles: Strenuous/4 miles: Easy

Over the hill to pretty Downham and onwards to the top of the iconic Lancashire landmark.

Swanside Bridge and Sawley Abbey

2½ miles: Fairly easy

Allow 1½ hours. Wet grass after rain, several stiles and occasional uneven sections and overgrowth in high summer. A short section follows the pavement alongside the busy A59 road. Livestock likely.

1 Walk to the rear of the Spread Eagle car park opposite the pub, and in the far left-hand corner, behind the trees, climb a concealed stile into a field. **2** Cross the field behind Sawley Abbey, keeping well to the left of the abbey grounds. **3** Go through a gap in a broken wall and cross the next field to a kissing gate into a farm track. **4** Cross straight over through another gate and follow a tree-lined path alongside a small stream, which it shortly fords. **5** Continue uphill to a kissing gate into a field. **6** Cross the field to another kissing gate (next to a farm gate) which leads out to the A59. **7** Cross with care and join the farm drive opposite. **8** The drive bends left but the path crosses a stile in the fence and continues straight ahead to a gateway, and then to a stile at the far side of the next field. **9** Climb the stile and walk down the left-hand side of the field with views ahead of Pendle Hill. **10** In the far corner, climb another stile and cross the next field diagonally, still heading directly towards Pendle. **11** A further stile leads to a steep valley side; bear left then right down to Swanside Bridge, before which is another stile. **12** Beyond the bridge bear left and climb a stone step-stile in the wall. **13** Climb the bank then turn right across the field to a footbridge over a side-stream. **14** Follow the right-hand field edge uphill, above a wooded bank. **15** Cross a stile in a fence and continue along the top of the bank. By a tree in the field, turn right over a stile into the wood. **16** Follow a narrow path down through the wood, which may be overgrown, and ford a small side-stream. Bear left with the main stream on your immediate right. **17** Cross another stile and follow the narrow fenced path with the stream still on your right. **18** Continue through pastureland, keeping between fence (left) and stream (right) wherever possible, erosion permitting. **19** As you approach the A59, you go through a kissing gate and pass a farm bridge; ignore the underbridge below the main road, instead going through another kissing gate on the right and climbing a few steps up to the road. **20** Cross with care and turn right along the pavement, crossing the stream and passing a farm. **21** After 550 metres, turn left at the turning for Sawley. **22** Follow the road through the village for half a mile, passing the abbey ruins, to return to the Spread Eagle.

Bolton-by-Bowland

4¾ miles: Fairly easy

Allow 2–3 hours. Mostly gentle valley walking, but with a couple of moderate climbs. Livestock are likely to be encountered, and there are a couple of stiles. Some road walking.

1 From the front door of the pub, bear left along the riverside road to Sawley Bridge. **2** Cross the river and take the footpath through a gate on the right. **3** Follow the obvious path along the field boundary to a

metal kissing gate then continue in similar fashion. Sawley Hall, prominent on the opposite side of the river, belies its traditional appearance, having been built in the 2010s. **4** Cross a side-stream, then cross the next field diagonally until you reach the main river in the far corner. **5** Go through another kissing gate and follow the bank upstream for a short distance, before leaving the river and crossing the field on your left to a kissing gate. **6** Cross the next field to another kissing gate by an old hawthorn. Cross a track and bear half-right to a narrow footbridge over Holden Beck. **7** Bear left along the top of the far bank, following fences to left then right as far as a kissing gate. Continue along a field edge parallel to the stream, then bear right to a track. **8** Turn right along the track to a farm gate, then descend to another stream, Skirden Beck. A long footbridge crosses the beck next to the ford. **9** Rejoin the track and follow it up the valley side alongside a wood full of rhododendrons. **10** Beyond a kissing gate, when you reach a tarmac drive by a cattle grid, turn left and climb to the brow of the hill, where you pass a cross base in the field on your right. **11** Continue along the drive to the gate leading out to Bolton village. **12** Turn left past the church and pass between the Coach and Horses and the war memorial, old cross and village stocks on the green. **13** At the end of the village, cross Skirden Bridge and turn left into a metalled farm drive to the right of a sports pitch. **14** When the driveway bends left towards Bolton Mill, take the path over a stile straight ahead. Ignoring a path to the right, climb the hill ahead, passing to the right of another ancient cross base. **15** At the end of the field, go through a wooden kissing gate in a hedge, then bear slightly left across the next field. Cross a stile in the corner and follow the field edge above the wooded bank of Skirden Beck, then cross a field to a kissing gate into a track (at which point you meet the outward route). **16** This time, turn right, and follow the track down to a footbridge next to a ford. Rejoin the track and follow it up the valley side to a road. **17** Turn left and follow the road for half a mile, passing Bow Laithe Farm on the left about halfway. **18** Turn right up a metalled farm track, with a public bridleway fingerpost and signs for Hague Farm and Rodhill Gate Farm. **19** At a junction before a cattle grid, turn left and walk up to Colder House. **20** Beyond the house, turn left onto a footpath that runs alongside the property to a footbridge. **21** Bear right (uphill) to the top of the field, then turn left along the fence towards Lawson House Farm. **22** In the corner, go through a farm gate on the right and follow the signposted footpath along the left-hand field edge, diverting to the right of and above the farm. **23** Go through another farm gate, and turn left, back down to the farm. Go through a gate to a barn, then turn right through another. **24** Follow a track along the top of the field, passing through another gate. At the end of the next field, a wooden kissing gate leads into woodland. **25** On meeting another path, turn left to a gate and descend between buildings (the house on the right is the former Friends' Meeting House). **26** Follow the drive out to the road. **27** Turn left, and then right over Sawley Bridge. Follow the road round to the left and back to the Spread Eagle.

Downham and Pendle Hill

10½ miles: Strenuous/4 miles: Easy

Allow 5–6 hours. Significant ascent and descent over bare moorland – avoid in bad weather. Walking boots recommended. Sheep and cattle are likely to be encountered and there are several stiles to be negotiated, and some road walking at the end.

(For a much easier 4-mile walk to Downham and back, follow the instructions below as far as step 18, then turn right and skip to step 46.)

Follow steps **1–12** of the **Swanside Bridge and Sawley Abbey** walk, left, as far as Swanside Bridge.

13 Walk up the side of the field with woodland on the left then bear left through a gateway and continue to a bridge under the railway. **14** Keep following the woodland edge through a gate and out to a road. **15** Take the driveway opposite, then turn right through a kissing gate into a field with limestone outcrops. **16** There is no obvious path on the ground here: aim to the right of the largest, tree-covered knoll, then follow the bottom of the slope on the left, heading towards the wood at the far end of the field. **17** Bear left over the ridge as you approach the trees and follow the wall along the edge of the wood. Descend past a shallow, disused quarry to a kissing gate, then continue to another. **18** Turn right and follow the lane in front of a bungalow on the right and out to the village by the church. **19** Turn left past the Assheton Arms and walk down the main village street, keeping right past the stocks and phone-box and passing the old school on the left and a small car park on the right. **20** Just before the bridge over the beck at the bottom, take the road on the left, with the stream on your right. Stay alongside the stream past some cottages then cross a small stone footbridge. **21** Turn left past more houses and walk to the end of the metalled road, and go through a kissing into fields with the stream on your left. **22** Leave the stream temporarily to cross a field to a kissing gate, then continue with the stream on your left. After another kissing gate, ignore a bridge over the stream, continuing gently uphill along the right-hand bank. **23** Cross a footbridge over a side-stream and proceed between fence and stream to the track to Clay House Farm. **24** Take a few steps towards the farm then turn right, uphill through a gate. After a couple of fields divided by stone wall stiles, you will reach a stone barn with a couple of benches. **25** Turn left and then right over a stile, up steps through trees to a road. **26** Take the path onto access land opposite, with the dividing stream valley now on your right. **27** The path ascends fairly steeply to a stile, then levels off a little to a gate, before continuing to the foot of the final steep slope. **28** A couple of zig-zags leads breathlessly to the top, where you continue to a kissing gate in a wall, near a cross-shaped shelter. An obvious winding, stony path leads there and back to the trig point at the summit. **29** Returning to the kissing gate, turn left (indicated on a stone waymark to 'Nick of Pendle') past the shelter. **30** This path, damp in places, runs along a broad ridge and past a small moorland tarn on the right, before bearing right by a second rushy pool as you approach a wall, to reach a ladder stile.

31 Continue along the edge beyond the wall to a circular stone shelter and beyond it descend gradually to a large domed cairn commemorating the local Scout movement. **32** Here turn right onto a less prominent path that descends gently at first towards a large combe, then swings right to descend the steep slope on a diagonal path below screes. **33** This path bends left, dropping steeply, then bears right over a couple of small boggy cloughs to meet a wall by a corner. **34** Follow the wall round the corner and downhill over rushy ground, before swinging right as the clough deepens. **35** Follow the path down to cross a small stream then climb the other side to a stone with a waymark. **36** Again the path plunges directly down the slope, with a steep little clough on the right. **37** At the bottom, bear right across the foot of the clough and then left to a wooden kissing gate. A tree-lined path – sometimes muddy and overgrown in places – leads down in the company of a small stream to meet a metalled farm lane at a corner. **38** Go straight on down the lane to a road junction, where you continue straight ahead (signposted 'Downham'). **39** At a bend, go through a gate onto a path ahead, and walk down the field to a gate on the left into a farm track below a barn. Turn right to cross a stream, through another gate, then bear left of the stone farm buildings to a third gate. **40** Pass a corrugated iron barn on the left and, ignoring a footpath on the left, climb to a farm gate in the wall. **41** Beyond this gate, turn right and follow the wall, below the limestone slopes of Worsaw Hill. **42** The path climbs slightly to a wooden kissing gate then follows the right-hand field edge before switching to the left-hand edge of the next field, then striking out past the end of a wooded bank. **43** Follow the left-hand side of a series of fields back to Downham village. **44** By way of variation, turn left down a driveway before the village green, then go through a couple of hand-gates across the top of a field. Follow the lane beyond over the stream and bear right by a house dated 1824 to emerge by the old school. **45** Turn left and climb past the phone-box, this time bearing left along the main village street by the church. **46** Pass some ancillary buildings of Downham Hall on the left, then take a permitted path on the right that cuts the corner to Rimington Lane. **47** Turn right along the lane for 300 metres then, beyond a wood on the right, turn left through a hand-gate onto a signposted footpath. **48** Walk down towards New Field Farm and go through a gate on the left. Pass to the left of the farm buildings and pick up a farm track that leads downhill to the railway. **49** Beyond the railway bridge, go through the farm-gate ahead and climb to a stone barn. **50** Go through the gate to the right of the barn and walk down the slope. A little to the right of the bottom corner, a stile gives access to a path into the wood.

Now follow steps **16–22** of the **Swanside Bridge and Sawley Abbey** walk, left, to return to Sawley and the Spread Eagle.



Text, mapping and photography
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