

SUGGESTED START: The Continental
(South Meadow Lane, Preston, PR1 8JP, SD 535 285)

DISTANCE: 7.8 km / 5 miles


TIME: 3hrs (plus sightseeing)

TERRAIN: Mainly good, most of the route on tarmac surfaces, short stretch along grassy path. Access onto bridges involves moderate inclines.

DIFFICULTY: Easy

OS MAP: It is advisable to use OS Explorer 286 with this guide.

 The route begins in Avenham Park which has bus stops on South Meadow Lane to the west, the Boulevard to the east and Preston Station.

 South Meadow Lane, informal all day on-road parking. The Boulevard, informal all day on-road parking. Alternative starting point: Ribble Siding car park off Margaret Road, PR1 9RU (SD 353 428).

 Avenham Pavilion; Waitrose at the Capitol Centre.

 Waitrose at the Capitol Centre; McDonald's fast food at the Capitol Centre; Soups and snacks at Avenham Pavilion.

 The Continental at the end of South Meadow Lane.

 Avenham Pavilion; Waitrose at the Capitol Centre.

WHAT TO EXPECT: Starting at The Continental the route runs alongside the river, passes through formal parkland and under the Old Tram Road Bridge. Leaving the park via Frenchwood the route follows The Boulevard until it reaches the A6 where the road crosses London Road Bridge.

Doubling back, passing an old slipway to the river, the route follows the bund surrounding and protecting an industrial area and park and ride. Briefly following Winery Lane the route rejoins the river corridor to the Old Tram Road, a detour leading to the Old Railway Line which takes the route back to the river, passing under the West Coast Mainline viaduct.

The next bridge is the cobbled Penwortham Bridge which carries the route back to the north bank of the river before returning to Miller and Avenham Parks and the starting point at The Continental.

LOOK OUT FOR:

1. Built in 1837-38 and widened in 1879-80, the **North Union Railway Bridge** carries the West Coast Main Line into Preston Station.

2. The English Heritage Grade II listed **Avenham and Miller Parks** were designed by Edward Milner in the 1860s. They were built to provide work for the cotton workers during the cotton shortage brought about by the American Civil War. Miller Park was built on land donated by local businessman Thomas Miller, and 25,000 people are said to have attended its official opening.



Avenham Park

Work to restore the parks was completed in 2014 following a successful £7 million bid from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

3. The **East Lancashire Railway Bridge** was built in 1846. The railway previously approached the river over 52 arches. Most of these have been filled in to make the embankment stronger, but two survive. On the north side of the river, the line of the railway intersects Miller and Avenham Parks.



remaining arches

4. A shortage of money prevented the Lancaster Canal from being carried across the River Ribble on an aqueduct. In 1803, a tramway was opened. It led from Walton Summit, across the river, and into the centre of Preston to meet the canal at the Coal Warf, near where Corporation Street runs today, just across Fishergate. Wagons pulled by horses would be kept on the track by rails that were L-shaped. They transported agricultural produce, coal and limestone. The current **Old Tram Road Bridge** was built in 1966. It was designed to look like the original old timber trestle bridge that crossed the River Ribble at the same point.



Old Tram Road Bridge

5. The earliest records of the Frenchwood area describe it as pasture and willow fields, mostly owned by the Walton family. Anne Walton married Edward French in 1657, and the surname is thought to be the source of the area's name.

6. The **London Road Bridge** was built between 1779 and 1791 and was later widened in the 1930s. It replaced an ancient five arch bridge.



London Road Bridge

7. **Flats Mill** was located off Winery Lane where part of the Capitol Centre now stands. It originally spun cotton and in 1901, it was running over 3,000 looms. The mill was later used to manufacture paper. The bridge that crosses the River Darwen on Winery Lane is recorded on a map from the mid 19th century as **Flats Bridge**.

8. The **Whitehouse Triangle** was formed by junctions connecting the West Lancashire Railway Line to the East Lancashire Line between 1883 and 1900. Since the closure of the lines, the triangle has been managed for wildlife within Preston Junction Local Nature Reserve.

9. Before the Old Penwortham Bridge was constructed, a **ferry** carried passengers across the River Ribble. At the time, this was the only way to cross when the tides were too high to pass on foot at the fords.

10. The **remains of a bridge** that carried the West Lancashire Railway until 1964 can be seen supporting a waste pipe across the river.



Old Penwortham Bridge

11. Built in 1759 to replace a bridge that collapsed three years earlier (one year after completion), the cobbled **Old Penwortham Bridge** is the oldest still standing on this route. It carried the main road from Preston through Leyland and on to Southport, but it is now closed to vehicles.

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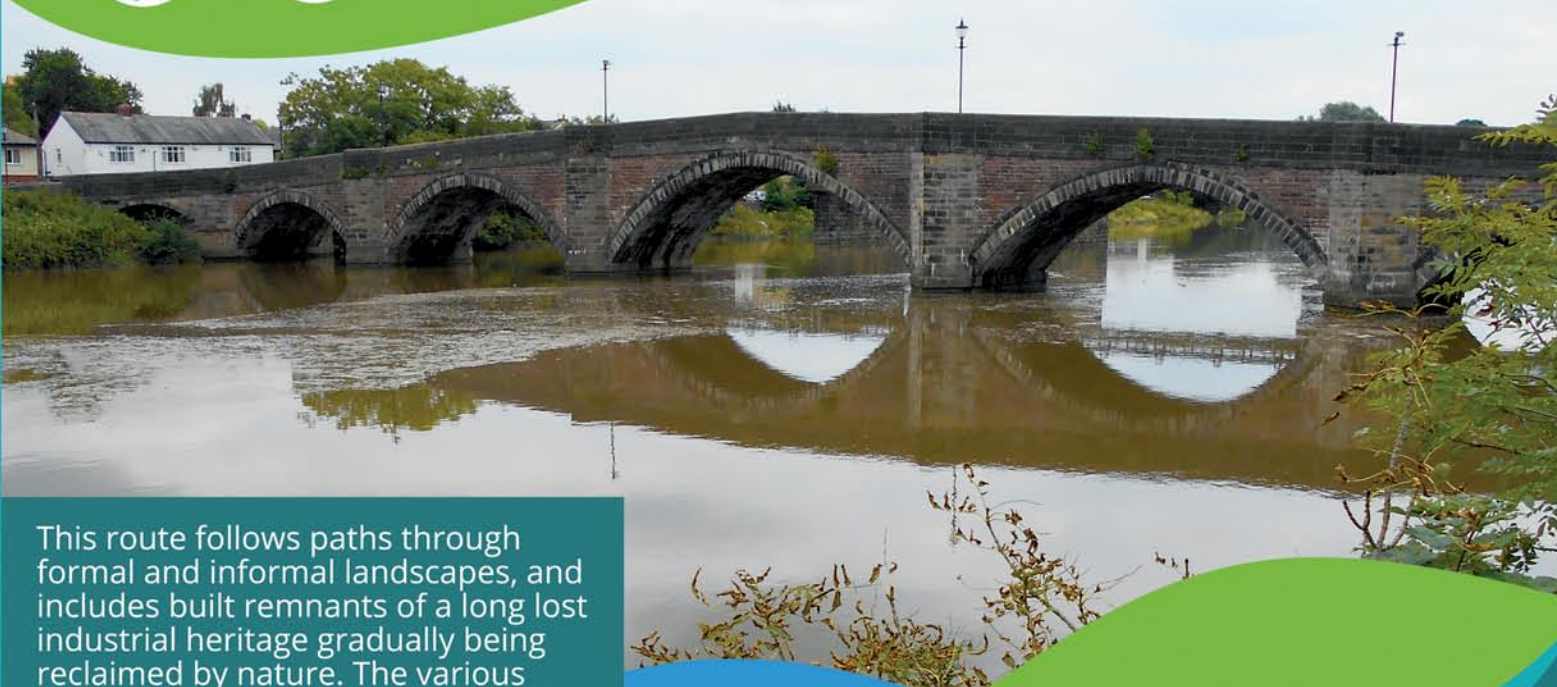
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FOLLOW US:



River Walks Rivers and Bridges



This route follows paths through formal and informal landscapes, and includes built remnants of a long lost industrial heritage gradually being reclaimed by nature. The various bridges allow views along the Ribble and provide dramatic backdrops to the start of the river's tidal character.

Distance: 7.8 km / 5 miles
Difficulty: Easy

Thank you!
To South Ribble Borough Council and Lancashire Wildlife Trust for support in developing and trialling the route, and the Friends of Avenham and Miller Parks for planning and information. Photograph: South Ribble Borough Council, David Higgins, Jean Francois Gaffard.

This walk has been created by Ribble Rivers Trust as part of a series of circular routes for the Ribble Life Together project. Scan the QR code to find out more or visit www.ribbonliffelife.org

- Follow the Countryside Code: consider wildlife and other users
- Carry spare food and drinks
- Take a charged mobile phone, first aid kit, map and compass
- Wear sturdy boots and clothing suitable for forecast conditions

- Enjoy safely**
- Penwortham Heritage Trail
 - Preston Guild Wheel
 - Ribble Way
 - Sustans route 62

Nearby trails

Ribble Life Together is working to create a healthier river system by 2020 for people and wildlife. The project celebrates the heritage of the rivers, improving access and using the river to inspire and educate. Through practical environmental action, based on science, we aim to leave a positive legacy for future generations.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS NEARBY



1 Penwortham Heritage Trails (Leaflets available from southribble.gov.uk)

2 The Preston Guild Wheel starts and ends at Avenham Pavilion

3 Hurst Grange Park (right), 20 hectares of woodland walks and open space, is a short walk or cycle ride from Penwortham Bridge.



4 Walton Park (left), 4 hectares of woodland and wetland, features a 'willow walk, dipping platforms and lake.



Both parks have active Friends of groups if you're interested in becoming a volunteer.

Ribble Rivers Trust Projects

The Trust's work in the tidal zone is primarily focussed on improving water quality by working with farmers, landowners, industry and schools to reduce faecal matter and other pollution.

One project has been determining the sources of faecal matter through extensive monitoring of local water courses. Another has carried out a study to identify further key issues to target in future projects.

THE RIVERS: The River Ribble was known in Roman times as the Belisama, but the origin of the name Ribble is unknown. The source lies north of the iconic Ribblehead viaduct and flows west - unique for a large Yorkshire river. It is fed by four main tributaries: the **Hodder, Calder, Darwen and Douglas**. The estuary is a major wetland area, and the river is tidal for 11 miles inland as far as Walton-le-Dale. Flood alleviation measures have been introduced in recent years, but the river has long been noted for breaking its banks along this stretch.



Ribble

The confluence of the Ribble and **River Darwen** lies between the Old Tram Road Bridge and the Ribble Bridge. Its source is Jacks Key Clough, to the south of Darwen. Heavily polluted until the 1970s, the Ribble Rivers Trust's main focus for improving the River Darwen is now re-connecting stretches of river. Historic weirs, like those at Hoghton Bottoms and Lower Darwen, were constructed along the River Darwen's course to supply power and water to cotton and paper mills. These have created barriers to migrating fish and in many cases, the weirs no longer serve the purpose that they once did.

WILDLIFE: The walk passes through **Preston Junction Local Nature Reserve**, rich in birds, butterflies and wild flower species. Look out for blue tits, herons and willow warblers. The LNR is also a great place to spot



butterflies, like gatekeepers and small coppers. Plants, like great burnet, yellow rattle and hoary ragwort are also regular sights.



gatekeeper

As the tides from the Irish Sea still affect this area, this stretch of river accommodates fish that you would expect to find in saltwater, like flounders, as well as those adapted to freshwater, such as chub and roach. Others, like salmon, eels and sea trout pass though this area to spend parts of their life cycle in both the rivers upstream and the sea downstream.

ROUTE DIRECTIONS

A. Miller and Avenham Parks

From The Continental on South Meadow Lane, follow the Ribble Way and Guild Wheel beneath the North Union Railway Bridge (1). Continue on the tree-lined riverside avenue through Miller and Avenham Parks (2). Along the way, you'll pass the East Lancashire Railway Bridge (3), Avenham Pavilion, the Old Tram Road Bridge (4) and Frenchwood (5) before reaching the London Road Bridge (6). You can detour around the parks along this stretch, or leave them to explore when you have completed the route.



Avenham Park

B. Across to South Ribble

Cross the River Ribble using London Road Bridge. *[At Ashbridge on Ribble Nursery, turn right to head through the carpark avoiding the cobbled slipway to the river bank and bear left. Follow the sign for a concessionary footpath leading to a set of stone steps to the right of a brick wall. Follow the unsurfaced path along the riverbank until it turns left (at the confluence of the River Darwen and River Ribble) and head along the River Darwen to Winery lane.]



look out for the steps

*The stretch of the route between the brackets is largely unsurfaced. If you have difficulty negotiating it, return to London Road and continue towards Winery Lane. Follow the Public footpath and cycleway, signed to Penwortham, down Winery Lane, passing the former site of Flats Mill (7). This will lead you to Flats Bridge where you will meet the other route.

C. Ribble Bridleway

Cross Flats Bridge over the River Darwen and turn right at the farm track junction. The track leads you back to the River Ribble. When the track veers left into fields, take the stile or gate on your right to remain on the bridleway. This stretch offers lovely views of the river, its bridges and across to the parks. Pass under the bridge and take a sharp left up to the Old Tram Road.

D. Old Tram Road



Old Tram Road

Where four tracks meet, by a caravan park, take a sharp right onto the Old Railway Line following a sign to Preston. Head along the former route of the East Lancashire Line (which opened in 1846 to link Blackburn and Preston by rail.) This stretch offers wide views across the Preston skyline. A brief detour to the left leads you around the Whitehouse Triangle (8).

Where the path forks off to the right, take the route bearing right to lead back down to the bridleway. Bear left to pick up the bridleway, pass under the bridge and continue along the river bank.

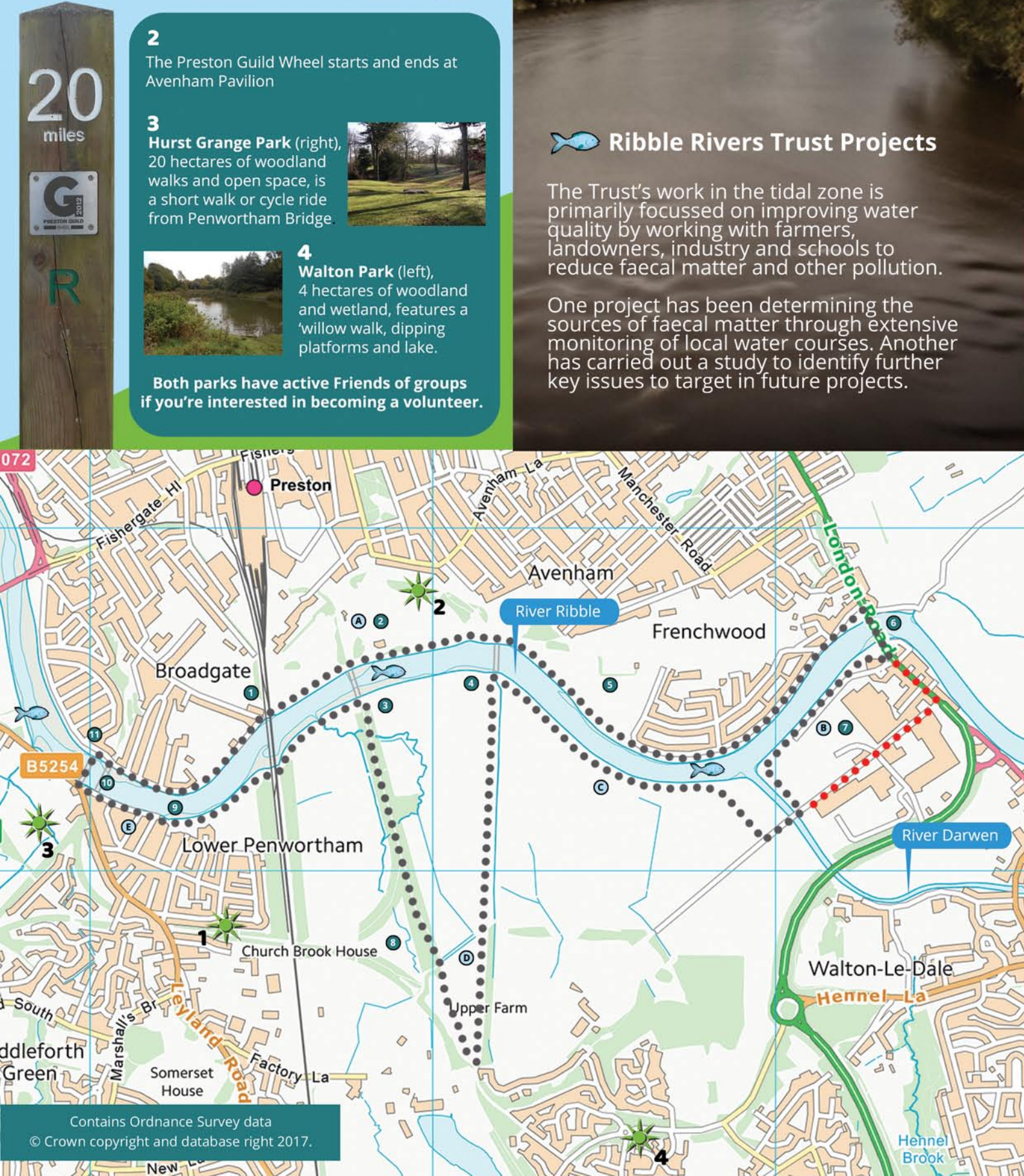
E. Lower Penwortham

Pass under the West Coast Rail Line Bridge and keep the houses on your left as you remain by the River Ribble (passing the historical site of the Penwortham Ferry (9)). Once past the remains of the West Lancashire Railway Bridge (10), turn right onto the cobbled Old Penwortham Bridge (11). When you reach the northern end of the bridge, turn right down a flight of steps and follow the road back upstream to the North Union Railway Bridge where the route began.



Ribble crossings

This is a great place to explore the parks more fully and pop into the Avenham Pavilion (which is the official start and end of the Preston Guild Wheel) for a welcome drink and bite to eat.



20 miles



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