

**SUGGESTED START:** Sunnyhurst Wood car park (SD 6791 2240)

**DISTANCE:** 9.1 km / 5.7 miles

**TIME:** 3 hours (plus sight-seeing and wildlife watching)

**TERRAIN:** Woodland tracks and well used footpaths

**DIFFICULTY:** Moderate/Hard

**OS MAP REFERENCE:** It is advisable to use OS Explorer Map 287 with this guide.

 1 (Bolton - Blackburn)  
TA02 (Darwen - Bury)

 Sunnyhurst Wood car park

 Roddlesworth Visitor Centre

 Various in Darwen

 The Sunnyhurst (Darwen)  
Royal Arms & Rock Inn (Tockholes)

 The Olde England Kiosk (Darwen)  
Vaughns Country Café (Tockholes)

 **WILDLIFE:** Deer are occasionally spotted in the woodland sections of this route. The West Pennine Moors was designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 2016 due to its nationally important habitats. Totalling 76 km<sup>2</sup>, it is the largest site nominated since 2004. The rugged terrain is home to curlew, snipe, merlin, lapwing and redshank. Keep an eye out for great spotted woodpeckers and tree creepers in the wooded areas and dippers and kingfishers along the water's edge.



Curlew



Kingfisher

**WHAT TO EXPECT:**

This walk begins by Sunnyhurst Wood, winding through woodland, following Sunnyhurst Brook. After passing Earnsdale Reservoir, the route continues through woodland at Tockholes Plantation before heading up onto Darwen Moor to Jubilee Tower. The terrain is mainly woodland paths and well maintained footpaths. Due to the length and gradient (in places) of this walk, sturdy footwear such as boots is recommended. Livestock are present in some of the fields on this route, so please keep dogs on a lead. If cattle get too close or become excitable, let the dog off the lead.

 **LOOK OUT FOR:**



Sunnyhurst Wood

**1. Sunnyhurst Wood** - in 1800, the then arable land was planted up by the owner Henry Brock for hunting purposes. The estate was bought by Darwen Corporation in 1902 to commemorate the coronation of King Edward VII and opened as a public park the following year.

**2. Earnsdale reservoir** - built in 1863 to supply the growing population of Darwen with water. The West Pennine Moors, with high rainfall and impermeable rock, provided an ideal location for a number of reservoirs. In August 2016, a large landslide occurred in Sunnyhurst Wood, close to the reservoir, at the edge of a United Utilities pumping station.

**3. The ruins of Hollinshead Hall** lie within Tockholes Plantation. The ruins are from a house, stables and farm buildings built in 1776 by John Hollinshead. The dwelling remained in the Hollinshead family until the early Victorian times and was sold to mill owner Eccles Shorrocks in 1845. The hall and surrounding land were bought by Liverpool Corporation in the early 1900s for the construction of reservoirs in the area. The **Well House** is still visible today and features a carved lion's head spout, the water from which is claimed to cure eye ailments.



Well House

**4. Jubilee Tower** - completed in 1898 to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, the tower is also seen as a symbol of the victory of local people when public access to Darwen Moor was reinstated after an 18 year legal battle. At 85 ft high, in clear weather, the tower allows views of Morecambe Bay, Blackpool Tower, Cumbria, the Isle of Man and north Wales. In the mid-20th century, the tower fell into disrepair, was bricked up and almost demolished. In 1972, it was fully renovated at a cost of £3,000 and reopened.



Jubilee Tower

**5. Visible from Jubilee Tower is India Mill.** Completed in 1867, the mill took 14 years to build and is named after the India Cotton which ran through its looms. At the time of completion, the 303 ft high chimney was the tallest and most expensive in the country. The owners of the mill, Eccles Shorrocks, Brother & Company were left bankrupt by the cost of the mill and the impacts of the cotton famine. In 1874, the India Mills Cotton Spinning Company Ltd was formed to purchase and run the mill. The structure is still reported to be the tallest surviving chimney in the UK. *(Please note: India Mill is not visible on the map overleaf, but lies a little further east, level with Jubilee Tower on the A666).*



India Mill

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The Ribble Catchment



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Ribble Life Together



This route visits the picturesque woodlands of Sunnyhurst and Tockholes and showcases spectacular views from Darwen Moor.

The industrial history of Darwen combines with the rugged countryside of the West Pennine Moors on this scenic walk.



Distance: 9.1 km / 5.7 miles

Difficulty: Moderate/Hard

**Thank you!**  
To National Lottery Players for funding the project and Mark Sutcliffe, John & Judith Jacklin, Harold Heyes, Darwen Rotary, Friends of Sunnyhurst Wood and United Utilities for support in developing and trialling the route.  
Photography: G. Britland, M. Sutcliffe, H. Smith and Blackburn Museum & Art Galleries.



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.ribbonliferivers.org](http://www.ribbonliferivers.org)  
Download the **Ribble Life** app to accompany this route on Android and iPhone.

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

- Nearby trails**
- Roddlesworth Nature Trail
  - Witton Weavers Way
  - Darwen Tower Walk (Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council)

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 the future.



## ROUTE DIRECTIONS

### A. Through Sunnyhurst Wood

From the car park, go through the gap in the fence in the opposite corner to the entrance. Head downhill into the woods, taking the right hand path at the junction, then join the main path heading downhill to the valley floor. Follow the path left past the Greenway Shelter and continue along the footpath next to the brook and then over the footbridge, staying left beside the brook.



Sunnyhurst Wood

### B. To Earnsdale Reservoir

At the Ellis Gibson fishpond, fork right and climb away from the brook, following the path through the woods to the corner of the reservoir. Go through the kissing gate and continue straight ahead on the footpath, climbing steeply along a cobbled cart track for 250m. At the viewpoint, where the gradient levels, continue straight ahead on the gravel bridleway to reach the road.



Earnsdale Reservoir

### C. To Roddlesworth Reservoir

Cross the road and head left along the pavement for just less than 200m, then take the bridleway on the right into the woods. Follow the path, downhill, through the woods. When the path joins a larger footpath, turn left. Continue to follow the path over two streams, and after the second, larger stream, continue uphill. Where the path levels out after the uphill, look out for a wooden weave-style gateway BUT DO NOT TAKE THIS. Instead, with the wooden gateway to your left, head in a 2 o'clock direction, downhill, to the right (the path is not very well defined, do not take the gravel path behind you to the right). At the bottom of the slope, turn left to join another footpath and follow it round to the River Roddlesworth. Cross the stone footbridge.



River Roddlesworth

### D. Through Tockholes Plantation

Follow the footpath left along the stream and up the steps. Continue left along the track through tall stands of beech trees - a spectacular sight in autumn - before descending the steps (left) to follow the stream again. There's a lovely place to paddle here where the stream flows over flat beds of millstone grit. Creep up to the water's edge and see if you can spot one of the resident brown trout through the clear water. You'll have to be very quiet and stealthy though! Continue upstream to the gate, then left across the bridge, turning right straight after the bridge to follow the Witton Weavers Way upstream.

### E. To Jubilee Tower

After a steep climb, continue through the gate and follow the bridleway towards the ruins of Hollinshead Hall. *[A short detour here will take you to the Hollinshead Hall Well House. At the distinctive signpost, head straight on ('To Belmont') and look out for the Well House over to the left. For more information about the building see point 3, overleaf, under 'LOOK OUT FOR'. Retrace your steps to return to the original route.]* At the distinctive signpost, take the path left towards Darwen Moor. At the edge of the woods, cross the road with care, heading left, then take the first right (a track onto the moor signposted 'Lyon Den'). Stay on the gravel track as it climbs then traverses the summit plateau.



Darwen Hill

The views open out magnificently to the Ribble Estuary and Lancashire coast and across the border into Yorkshire and the Three Peaks. Follow the track as it winds its way to the tower. On the final approach, at the fork in the paths, head towards the tower. For those with a head for heights, the views from the top are outstanding - stretching as far as Snowdonia and the Isle of Man on a clear day.



Views From Darwen Hill

### F. Back to Sunnyhurst car park

From the tower, head back towards the white stone marker and turn right down the gravel path, descending north east (towards Pendle). Follow the track all the way to the road, bearing left and downhill where it forks. Turn left at the Sunnyhurst pub to return to the car park.

**THE RIVERS:** Sunnyhurst Brook winds through Sunnyhurst Wood before joining the River Darwen in Darwen town centre. Further along the walk route, we follow the course of the River Roddlesworth, which joins the River Darwen near Feniscowles.

The Industrial Revolution saw the expansion of areas such as Blackburn and Darwen as the textile industry grew locally. A number of weirs were constructed along the Darwen to harness and control the power of the river. The development of paint works and chemical factories along the riverbanks meant that it was common for the River Darwen to run 'the colours of the rainbow'.

In recent years, there have been a number of factors which have helped to improve the water quality of the River Darwen, such as a reduction in industry and stricter environmental regulation. Two weirs have been altered by Ribble Rivers Trust to improve access for migratory species such as salmon and trout (*see below for further information*).

 **Ribble Rivers Trust projects** (not visible on map, see grid references)

**Lower Darwen:** A rock ramp bypass channel was installed in 2018 to reconnect river habitat and improve access upstream for migratory fish species. A radio tagging study of brown trout carried out after the fish pass was opened confirmed that fish were using the structure to easily pass the weir. (Location: SD 6868 2519 - the weir is on private land, but is visible from the River Darwen Parkway Local Nature Reserve off Millbrook Street.)

**Hoghton Bottoms:** Of all the barriers preventing fish migration on the River Darwen, Hoghton Bottoms was the largest. A rock ramp fish easement was completed by Ribble Rivers Trust in 2018 and has helped to reconnect 22.7 km of river habitat by allowing fish to swim over the weir. (Location: SD 6277 2619 - accessible via a public footpath.)



Hoghton Bottoms