GARDENING

Easter gardens to inspire

Hannah Stephenson talks to the NGS chief executive George Plumptre on garden visits

W hen school’s out for Easter, it’s time for the family to venture outdoors - and there are some great gardens to visit over the holidays, with the added bonus of raising money for charity while you do it.

With the National Gardens Scheme Yellow Book 2015 in hand, you can leaf through a plethora of privately-owned gardens which open their doors at certain times of the year and give visitors a chance to view garden owners’ individual creations, with proceeds going towards nursing, caring and gardening charities.

More than 70 gardens in England and Wales will open during Easter in aid of the NGS, as well as some Scottish gardens during the Easter weekend, with proceeds going towards Scotland’s Gardens on Easter Sunday, April 5.

Earlier this year we published a walk connecting two bus routes from Preston between Bilsborrow and Longridge.

It was an interesting route but for many readers access to Preston Bus Station is not convenient. With this in mind, we offer this route, starting close to Barton Grange Garden Centre on the A6 north of Bilsborrow. It has two aspects. First a delightful walk along the River Brock, one of Lancashire’s hidden gems. Second, after a relatively short climb, a traverse of fields with a marvellous open aspect, giving a wonderful panorama of the Fylde and Preston.

Directions: From the entrance to Barton Grange cross the A6, turn right and walk down to the Landrover dealers. Turn left on a footpath that crosses the car park to a footbridge crossing the railway. Continue on a footpath which follows the River Brock under the M6 motorway. 300yds beyond the motorway cross a footbridge on the right and continue on a path leading up to a lane by New Bridge. Keep ahead, crossing to a stone squeeze stile and follow the path that edges alongside a property at the far side of which cross a stile into a large field. Still with the river to the left though obscured by trees, keep ahead until you arrive at Walmley Bridge.

Cross the bridge and turn right onto a footpath taking you back alongside the river. After ½ mile, the path enters a large long field and bears left to meet a track on the edge of woodland. Turn right on the track and follow it through woods. After passing a signpost for Brock Bottoms Mill pointing right, the river bends northwards while the path enters a less wooded space after a coin studded log. 300yds further along turn right onto a footpath leading up through trees. This steep slope is marked as Nanny’s Breast on the OS 25,000 map. As the path levels off cross a stile to enter a field. Keep ahead for a short distance and then bear right, in a northerly direction, towards a metal gate and stile noting a fine view of Beacon Fell to the right. Cross the stile which puts you onto Brock Mill Lane. Turn left. Keep on the lane past the next junction to the left where it becomes Gonder Lane. Pass the junction with Bleasdale Lane on the right. ¼ mile further on turn left onto the farm drive of what you will soon discover is the well named High House Farm. As the track bends to the left, take a footpath on the right through a metal gate. Cross the field to a stile by a metal gate on the far side. Once over the stile turn left alongside the hedge to an other gate and stile. By now you will be experiencing a remarkable sense of elevation, all the more surprising because apart from the short ascent of Nanny’s Breast you have not done any noticeable climbing. Continuing in a southerly direction confirmed by the dreaming spires of Preston in dreaming spires of Preston in the distance begin a gentle descent.

Soon after left onto Walmley Bridge Lane. When you arrive at the bridge cross it and turn right onto a footpath to retrace your outward steps.

Points of Interest: Barton Grange Garden Centre. For many people a visit to a garden centre is the equivalent of going for a walk and here is an opportunity of combining the two. In 2014 Barton Grange won the prestigious Destination Garden Centre of the Year Award from the Garden Centres Association for the fourth year running. Pleasantly situated between the River Brock and the Lancaster Canal, its extensive range and friendly staff.no doubt contribute to its prize winning formula. However I particularly commend a visit to the (male) toilets where an imaginative, witty and colourfull design will make the experience memorable (sorry I cannot possibly comment on the female toilets!)

Walk devised by Lynda Battarbee and described by Bob Clare of www.lancashirewalks.com.

Bob’s book “100 Walks in Lancashire” published by Crowood Press is now on sale.

Start/Finish: Bilsborrow – close to Barton Grange Garden Centre PR3 0BT
Distance: 7½ miles
Time: 3-4 hours
Summary: Mainly easy
Map: OS OL41 The Forest of Bowland

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