



Lancashire Environmental Action Fund

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# WALKS AROUND BRETHERTON

## "Th'Edge o' Leet" on the West Lancashire Plain

Three alternative routes of 4, 5 or 2½ miles on level footpaths and country roads, starting and finishing at the Blue Anchor Inn.



From the village of Banks on the coast, shrimpers would travel with horse-drawn carts to Chorley and Wigan markets. If they had not reached Bretherton by daybreak, they knew they would be too late to secure a stall and their catch may be wasted "The Edge of Light" indeed.



Please observe the Country Code.

Field footpaths may be wet and muddy, so strong footwear is advisable.





#### Route A (4 miles)

From the Blue Anchor Inn car park turn left along South Road past the village/shop. Just after the Apiary, climb the stile at a footpath sign and cross two fields diagonally to reach Sarah Lane, where the stone base of an old cross is set on the left verge as you emerge. Bear left up Sarah Lane between large fields; in early summer there are wildflowers in the verges and roses in the hedge. At the T-junction with Back Lane turn right to the crossroads at Broad Meadow Lane, here turn left. After 60m, turn right along the right-hand side of a hedge to a footbridge at the end of the field. Until the nineteenth century, much of the parish was moss and marsh, and is now crossed by drainage ditches hurrying the water away into the rivers Lostock and Douglas. Across the ditch, turn right, again following the hedge, to Eyes Lane. The gate which once stood here enclosed cattle grazing the wide verges to Red Bridge over the River Douglas. Turn right along the tarmac lane beneath trees to reach the lodge at the end of gated Carriage Drive. Turn left into the Drive, flanked by century-old plantations with an understorey of rhododendron. The Drive brings you to the ruined splendour of Bank Hall. There has been a hall here since medieval times, but the present building dates from 1608 and was much enlarged in 1832. It has not been occupied since WW II, when troops were lodged here. Bank Hall Action Group is campaigning to save and restore it to use. Retrace your steps about 200m to a field footpath, the start of which is hidden among the rhododendrons on the left, just past Bank Hall Kindergarten - take care here. On your right in this field is one of the few remaining ponds in the parish. From here you can also see the three Bretherton churches to the right, and to the left the windmill, now sailless and converted to a home. Pass just to the right of the electricity pylon to a footbridge over a ditch, then across the next field and footbridge to reach a bridleway. Turning right, this emerges at the junction of Carr House Lane, South Road and North Road. Head right into the village, crossing over where the pavement ends on the right. Along South Road, once known as Bretherton Green, you pass the War Memorial, the former Methodist Chapel, the Bakery, the Congregational Church and the Parish Church to reach Chapel Yards footpath on your left between the Rectory and the Old Free Grammar School building, now

two private homes. Take a few extra steps to read the inscription over the door, which tells that the school was founded in 1653 by James Fletcher, a London merchant who married a Bretherton woman. The school moved to a larger building in 1850. Now pass through the iron kissing gate into Chapel Yards and cross between fields to North Road. Where the hedge ends on this path was a rectangular enclosure, once ringed by trees (their remains can still be seen) and it is here that the ancient chapel is said to have stood which gives the path its name. Turn right along North Road and some 100m past Finches Farm on the right, turn into a field footpath, following the hedge to reach Marl Cop (marl is a kind of alkaline clay once used as fertiliser). Turn left along the road for 100m to a footpath on the right which leads to the back of the cricket field. Cross a stile on the right and skirt the eastern side of the cricket field to a footbridge which leads to South Road, with the Blue Anchor just across to the right.

#### Route B (5 miles)

Follow Route A to the War Memorial, then turn right into Eyes Lane and continue ahead into Back Lane, which curves left to bring you back to the Broad Meadow crossroads. Here, turn left, and at the end of the tarmac lane, turn right onto a footpath under trees. Here you are passing behind former farms, each with its own orchard including large Hazel pear trees, a few of which survive to give the village a bridal veil of blossom in spring. The broad path emerges into fields, but keep roughly ahead across several stiles to reach the corner of Sarah Lane and South View. Turn left to curve back to South Road. Another left turn brings you past the village school and the old school building to Chapel Yards on your right. Finish the walk as for Route A.

#### Route C (2½ miles)

Follow Route A to Broad Meadow Lane crossroads, then continue straight ahead along the length of Back Lane to the War Memorial. Turn right here and complete the walk as for Route A.

