



**Laverstock & Ford Parish Council**  
www.laverstockford-pc.gov.uk

**River Bourne Community Farm**  
www.riverbournecommunityfarm.org.uk

**The Devenish Bradshaw Charitable Trust**  
www.dbct.org  
contact info@dbct.org

**Salisbury City Council** (manages the allotments)  
www.salisburycitycouncil.gov.uk/our-community/allotments/

**Wiltshire Council** (manages footpath LAF019)  
www.wiltshire.gov.uk/recreation-rights-of-way

## THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR

**Cow Lane** Cow Lane is an ancient right of way, reflected in its diverse range of species. Ivy covered trees make perfect nesting sites for small birds and a late season source of nectar for bees. Hedge plants attract a wide range of specialist insects and butterflies.

**Railway Embankment** The victorian railway embankment provides a mature woodland and scrub habitat for a diverse range of fauna. The trees provide food and shade whilst the scrub underneath provides shelter and homes. This habitat is an important corridor for bats and other species and includes a walnut tree and a whitebeam.

**Water Meadows** The water meadows have provided rich farmland for centuries, and were traditionally grazed by a cycle of sheep, then cows, then harvested for hay. This succession made good use of the lush grass, aided by annual, deliberate, controlled flooding. If you look carefully you can see the ditches and banks that were used to control this process. Look out for abundant butterflies and bees as well as the spectacular yellow flag iris, and herons. There have also been otter sightings!

**Damp Woodland** Whitebridge Spinney is a mature damp woodland running along the River Bourne. Look out for dragonflies and, if you are very lucky, kingfishers.

**River** The diversity of plants, insects and fish in the River Bourne is typical of a chalk stream. Water birds regularly spotted include moorhens, swans, little egrets, grey wagtails and herons. There have also been otter sightings!

**There is plenty more to discover, we hope you enjoy your walk!**

\*Campaign to Protect Rural England

**Discover the River Bourne Community Farm, the Devenish Bradshaw Charitable Trust Water Meadows and Whitebridge Spinney**

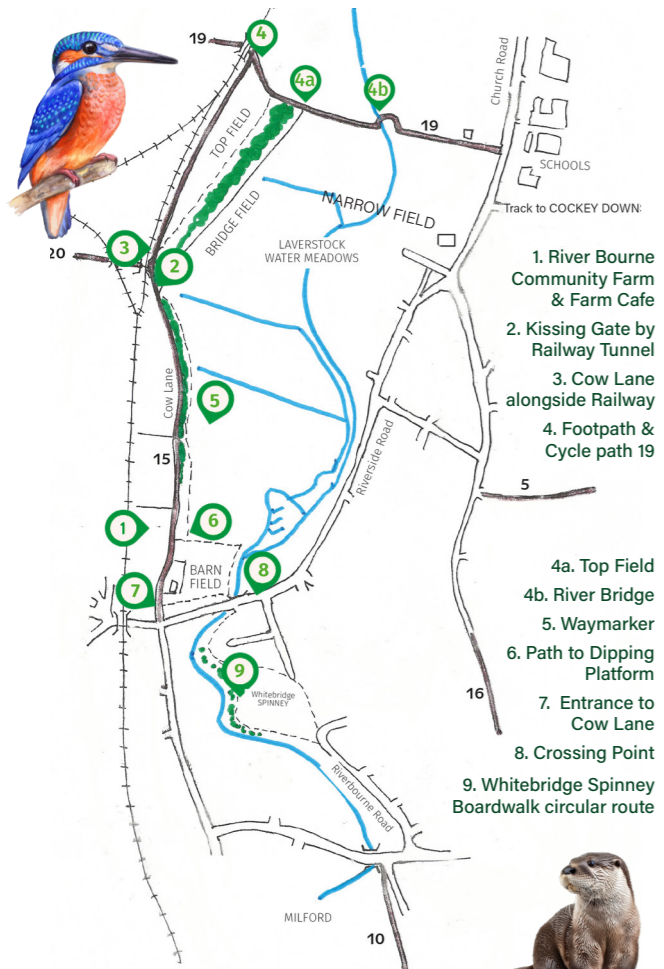
This trail explores the meadows and damp woodland of Laverstock water meadows and Whitebridge Spinney. It starts and ends at the River Bourne Community Farm, which is worth a visit. You can enjoy refreshments at the Community Farm Café. Benches have been installed around the trail on the sections owned and managed by Devenish Bradshaw Charitable Trust (DBCT) as permissive paths and those owned and managed by Laverstock and Ford Parish Council as public open space. There are four easy-to-access trails across Laverstock and Ford Parish enabling you to enjoy meadow and downland wildlife.

The trails are maintained by partner agencies and their volunteers. If you'd like to volunteer to be a part of their work - see their websites for more info.

**P** Parking is limited so please consider walking, cycling or hopping on a bus to the Trail. There is a small car park owned and managed by Devenish Bradshaw Charitable Trust and more parking available at the River Bourne Community Farm when the farm is open to visitors.

**♿** A RADAR accessible gate opposite the farm café gives access to a path leading to the dipping platform (from Autumn 2024). Paths around the farm are wheelchair & pushchair friendly. The café has a wheelchair friendly toilet and Mother & Baby area. Disabled access toilets are planned within the DBCT barn from 2025.

**Countryside Code Please follow the Country Code - Respect, Protect, Enjoy.** www.countryside-code.org.uk



1. River Bourne Community Farm & Farm Cafe
2. Kissing Gate by Railway Tunnel
3. Cow Lane alongside Railway
4. Footpath & Cycle path 19
- 4a. Top Field
- 4b. River Bridge
5. Waymarker
6. Path to Dipping Platform
7. Entrance to Cow Lane
8. Crossing Point
9. Whitebridge Spinney Boardwalk circular route

### PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

- 5 Duck Lane to Cockey Down
- 10 Queen Manor Road to Piggy Lane via boardwalk
- 15 Riverside Road to Footpath 19
- 16 Duck Lane to Petersfinger
- 19 London Road to Laverstock
- 20 London Road to Cow Lane



# FARM & SPINNEY TRAIL





**1.** The trail starts at River Bourne Community Farm, started by Ben Parker MBE, who turned a wasteland site into a working farm with a thriving educational programme. The Community Farm café is a good place to take refreshments before setting out by turning left into Cow Lane. Along Cow Lane there are views out across the meadows. Walk past the allotments and follow the path alongside Woodstock Therapeutic Centre for adult education.

**2.** Where Cow Lane bends to the left under the railway arch go through the kissing gate onto Laverstock Water Meadows. A vista of the water meadows, backed up by the distinctive copse atop of Cockey Down opens up. A wooden circular sign in Bridge Field welcomes visitors to Laverstock Water Meadows. Here you can choose to double-back on yourself and take the grassy ride along the water meadows via point 5. to the farm café, or continue along the embankment below the railway line, bearing left after 70 metres where a slight incline leads to Top Field. This triangular field is higher than most of Laverstock Water Meadows.

**3.** Top Field is being restored to wildflower rich meadow habitat, the land is being carefully farmed with a rotation of grazing and cutting for hay and silage by DBCT. Watch out for butterflies and wildflowers of dry grassland. Top Field was formed by covering the original meadows with rubble in an effort to gain planning permission for housing by a previous owner.

*The water meadows are now safe from development as they are owned by DBCT for the benefit of the community thanks to the generosity of Mr Peter Bradshaw and the hard work of local DBCT volunteers.*

**4.** Here you have a choice. The main trail continues round Top Field (back to marker 3). The field boundary runs along the remains of a carrier ditch used to feed water into the meadows, engineered to form a series of parallel grass ridges and ditches to drain the water back into the river. This allowed the meadows to be watered in a controlled manner, producing an early crop of grass in spring and a good crop of hay to keep livestock over winter. Meadows were deliberately flooded in the early years of farming.

**4a.** The alternative route runs along a tarmac path to a foot bridge over the River Bourne. Immediately to the right of the tarmac path DBCT volunteers have planted over one thousand trees to form a new hedgerow thanks to a donation from the CPRE\*. Unusually most of the trees for the hedge are alder, which would have once flourished along the River Bourne but are now confined to a few damp woodlands including Whitebridge Spinney.

**4b.** At the bridge across the River Bourne chalk stream, look into the crystal clear waters for trout, grayling and other fish species patrolling the banks of water weed. You can now either continue along the tarmac path to join the Downs Trail (path running alongside St Andrew's Primary School) or retrace your steps to 4.

At 4a you can take a shortcut to 3 along a path that runs to the right of the old water meadows carrier ditch. The water meadows become water-logged throughout the year, especially in the winter so waterproof boots are recommended for this stretch. A few metres along the short cut to the left there is a permissive path through Narrow Field which ends at a peaceful section of riverbank with views back toward Salisbury Cathedral. When livestock are not present, this pleasant walk through River Meadow and Bridge Field re-joins the trail at waymarker 2.

*\*Campaign for the Protection of Rural England*

**5.** From 3. follow the permissive path along the water meadow fence through the lower gate back towards the farm buildings. Bird life thrives across the meadows: kestrels, buzzards, red kites, and in summer, hobbies can be seen hunting their prey. Herons and little egrets are also a common sight. From April to November local farmers graze their sheep and cattle on the water meadows. The majority of willow trees growing here are crack willows, so called because when branches become heavy they crack from the crown and the branches re-grow. They make wonderful nest sites for birds.

**6.** There are a number of seats here on the water meadows from which you can admire the view. Continue along the fence line towards the DBCT Barn and Orchard which sit in Barn Field. Go through the small hedgerow planted by 1st Laverstock Beavers with tree species beginning with "H" and into the community orchard in Barn Field. Like Top Field, Barn Field was built up with rubble for development by a previous owner.

Turn left along the path between the Nature Discovery Area bank to the left and the paddock of Barn Field to the right where dogs often can be seen exercising with their owners. At the end of the path you arrive at the river dipping platform having passed an interpretive sign about the water meadows. Here you can look for minnows, trout and a myriad of bird life in the willows over the river. Fallen trees act as river engineers creating rapids and slow backwaters, sculpting the river bed and banks into homes for river life both above and below the water. When the river is in full spate it forms braided channels across the wet meadow opposite the dipping platform.

Upstream of the dipping platform a section of river once diverted to take water to a mill waterwheel (no longer present) joins the main river. Continue along the river and around the field to the gate back onto Cow Lane. Here you can continue on the trail to Whitebridge Spinney or turn right back to the farm café.

*For café opening times see the Community Farm noticeboard or visit their website.*

**7.** To continue the trail follow Cow Lane to the main road The copse over the road forms part of Laverstock Water Meadows owned and managed by DBCT. Of particular note are the cricket bat willows which are harvested every few years to make cricket bat handles. Turn left and walk over the bridge, carefully cross the road at the crossing point.

**8.** Walk across Whitebridge road, and turn left before the bridge, entering Whitebridge Spinney which is owned and managed by Laverstock and Ford Parish Council. Follow the path close to the river by mixed woodland until the path opens up into amenity grassland and a play park. The river here is wide and shallow and may be suitable for a paddle when not in flood.

**9.** A boardwalk follows the river from this point through damp alder woodland. Across the river, a small water meadow is being restored to a wildflower-rich grassland. In springtime you may be rewarded with the sight of opposite-leaved golden saxifrage and amongst these, snowdrops and monkey flowers have established as naturalised species. Recent garden escapees compete with bright native species such as lesser celandine, purple loosestrife, comfrey and yellow flag. Less showy, but important flowering species for pollinating insects include nettles which predominate under the woodland and ivy which flourishes on the trunks and branches of more mature trees. An ephemeral pond to the left of the boardwalk plays host to dragonflies and frogs in season. Continue along the board walk until you are on Riverbourne Road. Turn left here and then left onto the amenity land, pass a children's playground and return to the trail at 9.

**Follow the path back to Cow Lane and the River Bourne Community Farm.**