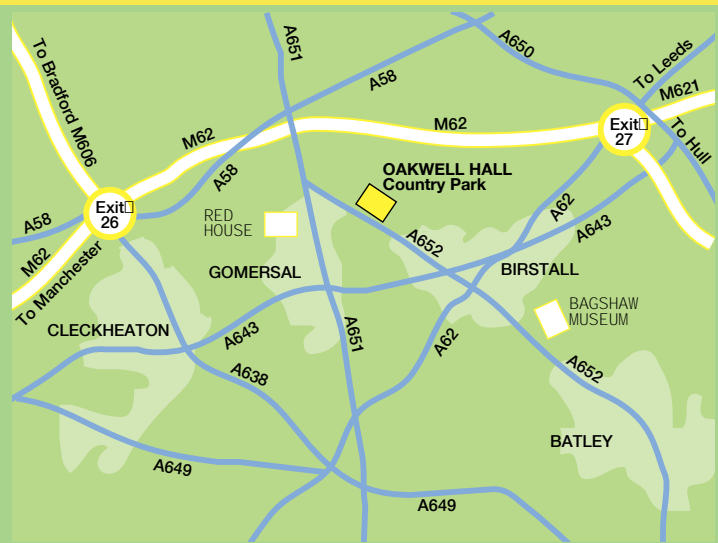




## How to find us



**By car:** From M62 Junction 27 follow A62 towards Huddersfield. At Birstall, follow tourist signs. Oakwell is on the A652 in Birstall. You can park by the Countryside Centre and walk up to the Hall, or follow Nutter Lane for 1/2 of a mile to park by the Hall itself.

**For accurate and up-to-date information on bus and train times, call Metroline on 0113 245 7676 between 8am and 8pm.**

### Opening Times

The Country Park is open daily and admission to the Park is free although there is a small admission charge into the Hall.

The Park is partly accessible to people using wheelchairs. Please telephone for access information.

**Please telephone for event details.**



Nature Trail

Photographs by Richard Aspinall

Oakwell Hall Country Park, Nutter Lane, Birstall, Batley,  
West Yorkshire WF17 9LG

Tel: 01924 326240 email: oakwell.hall@kirklees.gov.uk  
www.kirklees.gov.uk/museums





Borage



Common Knapweed



Common Tussock Grass



Feverfew



Foxglove



Hogweed



Honeysuckle



Golden Hop



# The Nature Trail

The Nature Trail follows a figure of eight route and is just under two miles long. It is possible to walk either loop on its own in about 45 minutes, or do the complete circuit taking roughly an hour and a half. Follow the distinctive yellow oakleaf waymarkers and numbered posts.

Please follow the Countryside Code at all times. Please keep your dog on a lead and use the dog waste bins provided.

The west loop goes around an attractive area which, believe it or not, used to be a colliery. The footpaths are NOT surfaced and can be muddy. The east loop goes through a more wooded landscape on mainly surfaced paths, though **STOUT FOOTWEAR IS RECOMMENDED THROUGHOUT.**

The east loop starts at Post 1 from the Hall car park. You can start the west loop at post 15 from the Countryside Centre car park.

If you are doing the west loop only bear slightly left just before reaching the stone steps which lead to the front lawn of the Hall. Then head for Post 11 down the hill. If doing the whole route cross the front lawn and go through the car park into the picnic area to find Post 1.



Lavender



Lesser Stitchwort



Ragwort



Rosebay Willowherb



Rowan Berries



Thyme



Tufted Vetch



Wild Strawberries



Birch and Sweet Chestnut in Nova Woods

## 1 Picnic Area

This former field has been planted with a mix of trees and shrubs to encourage wildlife. The Blackthorn attracts Bullfinches in winter which eat the nutritious buds and the larger trees such as Sycamore and Norway Maple host a large population of aphids and caterpillars. Also look out for Blackbirds and Songthrushes singing from the taller trees.



Norway Maple

## 2 Drystone Walling

Read the panel to learn about this ancient country craft. To the North the landscape is one of small, hedged fields, grazed with consideration for wildflowers. This 'patchwork' of small fields has been lost from much of our countryside as fields have become bigger and farming has become more intensive. Immediately behind the footpath is a small area of Ash woodland planted in the 1980s which is gradually becoming colonised by woodland wildflowers such as Lesser Celandine and Dog's Mercury.



Patchwork fields

## 3 Nova Meadow

This damp area contains moisture loving plants such as Lady's Smock, Common Tussock Grass, Meadowsweet, Ragged Robin and Yellow Flag Iris. The Pond, created in 2003 is already a haven for wildlife. The southern area of the field is being allowed to revert to scrubland - an ideal habitat for birds such as Yellowhammer and Linnet. In late Autumn this area is full of Thrushes, Fieldfares and Redwings which flock to the Hawthorn berries.



Meadowsweet

## 4 Nova Beck

Nova Beck is one of two streams at Oakwell, both running North to South. Nova Beck forms the western boundary to Nova Wood and flows through areas rich with wildflowers. Many of these species such as Yellow Archangel, Wood Anemone and Wild Garlic are indicators of ancient woodland, hinting that parts of the river corridor have been wooded for many centuries. Look out also for Hard Fern, Red Campion and Herb Bennet.

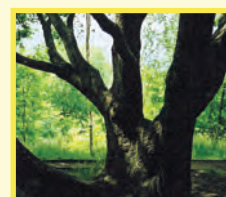


Hard Fern

## 5 Nova Wood

Much of Nova Wood was felled for pit props to service the local mines and the trees have re-grown to produce the multi-stemmed Oaks and Birch that give the wood its character today. 'Coppicing', as this technique is known, gave us

the word 'copse' and is still used today to produce woods with varied structure and which provide timber. Coppicing allows light to reach the woodland floor,



Multi-stemmed Oak

essential for the survival of woodland wildflowers and insects that feed on them. Nova Wood has a fine carpet of Bluebells in late Spring and the sunnier glades provide ideal territories for Summer migrant birds such as Chiff-chaff and Blackcap. The northern part of the Wood has a very different collection of species, the drier soils have favoured the development of a Birch wood with a carpet of Wavy-hair Grass, though the native Sessile Oak is slowly spreading into this area.

## 6 Viewpoint

From here on a fine day, there are good views of the Spen Valley and the surrounding countryside; good eyesight will find Emley Moor Mast and Castle Hill in



Laid Hedge

Huddersfield. The field below the slope with bushy trees in it was part of Asker Wood until 1947, when it was felled for firewood. Bluebells and Wood Anemone can still be seen there in Spring. Notice the hedgerows, which act as refuges for wildlife and connect the pockets of woodland. At Oakwell we have planted over a mile of new hedgerows and most are managed traditionally by 'laying' them. This technique ensures that the hedge survives potentially indefinitely and produces a thick stock-proof hedge ideal for nesting birds.

## 7 Disused Railway Cutting

The cutting to the right of the path once served the Leeds to Heckmondwike line, which was closed in 1966. Since then the cutting has developed into a valuable wildlife habitat. The sides now support a mixture of trees and the base of the cutting is excellent wetland, with plants such as Brooklime. The water flowing along the cutting floor feeds the Wildlife Access Garden pond, whilst the iron aqueduct carries water which eventually finds its way into the Duck Pond and Moat.



Brooklime

## 8 Faith Garden

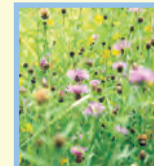
Follow the path to the left of post 8 to visit the Faith Garden, where you can find about 40 trees from around the world, including Ginkgo, Paper Birch and Medlar. Now is the ideal time to take a break from the Nature Trail to visit the Formal Gardens behind the Hall and the Working Garden with its collection of fruit trees.



Ginkgo biloba

## 9 Wildlife Access Garden

This area has been specially designed to allow easy access. There are numerous information panels describing the many habitats represented in such a small area, including wetlands and wildflower meadows.



Wildflower meadow



A peaceful spot to sit in the Faith Garden.

## 10 Oakwell Hall

Although built in 1583, the Hall is furnished in the style of the late 17th Century. Charlotte Brontë described it in her novel Shirley; 'The old latticed windows, the stone porch, the walls, the roof, the chimney stacks, were rich in crayon touches and sepia lights and shades.' Why not visit after your walk? There is a small admission charge into the Hall.



View of the Hall from the Arboretum

## 11 Step Hills

The gently sloping part of the field to your right used to be managed intensively. This included ploughing, re-seeding and applying fertilisers and herbicides. Now it is managed as a hay meadow and is rich with buttercups and grasses such as Crested Dog's Tail and Sweet Vernal Grass.

The original route of Warren Lane, now to the east of the Hall, once ran along this side of the Hall and we assume Rabbits or 'Coneys' as they were called were kept here.

The steeper part of the field has never been ploughed and the poor soil allows many wild flowers to thrive. The 'magical' Yarrow with its medicinal properties prospers well, as does



Yarrow

Horsetail, once known as 'scour weed', since its tough stems were used to clean cooking pots. A single apple tree on the slope attracts birds in winter and late summer butterflies feed on the sweet and rotting fruit.



Comma Butterfly

## 12 Colliery Field

This field was the former site of the spoil heaps of Gomersal Colliery, which closed in the 1970s. The nutrient poor soil has proved excellent for re-seeding with meadow plants such as Red Clover, Ox-eye Daisy, Self Heal and Yellow Rattle. These nectar-rich flowers benefit a wide variety of insects, especially Bumble Bees.



Red Clover

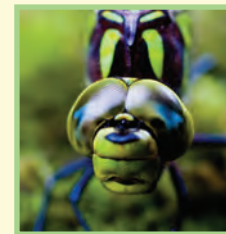


Ox-eye Daisy

## 13 Colliery Pond

Created when the Coal Board constructed a concrete road to help with tipping. The road is still under the grass and acts as a dam. The pond has been fenced off to prevent cattle trampling the vegetation. This pond is the finest pond on site and attracts a huge number of creatures from Toads to nesting Moorhens, Smooth Newts to Swan Mussels. In summer

several species of Damselfly and Dragonfly can be seen, as well as pond plants such as Water Forget-me-not, Bogbean and Purple Loosestrife.



Emperor dragonfly

## 14 New Woodland

The trees in this area were planted after the colliery closed. Initially Alder was planted to fix nitrogen into the soil and Scots and Corsican Pine used to provide quick tree cover. As native trees colonise these 'imported species' are slowly being removed with the eventual aim of creating a rich woodland similar to Nova Wood.



Pine

## 15 Countryside Centre

### Starting point from the Countryside Centre Car Park

The car park is on the site of the former buildings and one of the shafts of Gomersal Colliery. The Centre houses the "About Oakwell" exhibition, serves refreshments and has toilet facilities. Please check the notice board for opening times.



Common blue - male

## 16 Oakwell Beck

The course of Oakwell Beck winds along the edge of Colliery Field. Along its length can be found exposed coal seams and fossilized 'ripples' from ancient seas.



Bistort

Oakwell Beck does not support the same diversity of plants as Nova Beck, though in Spring and early Summer the wooded areas are thick with Wild Garlic, Lesser Celandine and Bistort. Occasional patches of Lords and Ladies survive in the shadier parts. Ash, Alder and Willow make up the majority of the tree cover and Tawny Owls are known to have nested here in the past.



Ash Tree

## 17 Toad Hole Meadow

To the left of the path are stands of Hawthorn. In Autumn the berries known as Haws attract large numbers of migratory birds such as Redwing and Fieldfare and the scrubby bushes provide nesting sites for birds such as Greenfinch.



Blackberry