Wolfe Hall to Wilsummer Wood

Starting at the Village car park, this walk takes about 1½ hours. You will need a stick and stout waterproof boots, some parts being extremely muddy or under water in wet weather.

Leaving the car park turn right and proceed in a southerly direction following the route marked on the map. The White House on your right adjoining the car park is an early 19th century listed building with rendered walls and hipped slate roof, whereas 16 The Green is a late 17th century timber framed house with a glazed pantiled roof, the gate and railings are 19th century. To the left is the Village Green, probably the site of the annual fair, granted to Sir John Heigham by the Crown in 1608 and held on May 1st. In 1787 the following sign was erected in the village:

BARROW FAIR

The smallpor being at Bury... lest any pedlars or others should bring that distemper to Barrow the FAIR but that used to be kept there annually on the FIRST day of MAY... will for this year be put off to Saturday the seventh day of July next... of which all pedlars and others are desired to take notice as the Parish Officers are determined not to suffer any stalls to be erected on the said First Day of May next.

April 14th 1787

As you continue along the road you will pass through some very attractive undulating countryside with many different wild flowers growing on the verges. After about one mile leave the road turning left at Yellow Waymarkers along track, to the right of this path is Wolfe Hall, an early 16th century manor house once belonging to the Heighams.

In the early part of this century there was an old man called Misen who lived at Prior’s Cottages Barrow, remote cottages made from an old farm house divided into two near Wolfe Hall. Misen would offer any man a pound who would come home with him at night, and men started out with him, but when they left the road and began to strike off across the fields, they began to hear chains rattling around them and hedges began to meet and close in upon them, and they lost their nerve and ran home. All these manifestations were produced by the occult powers of Misen.*

*Camb. University Library Ms 7515 extracted by R Halliday.

Continue along this path until you come to a large barn on your right. At this point bear left along uneven and often muddy ground which soon opens up with fields to the left. At the far end of the field, turn left then straight across the bottom of this and the next field past a hedge of many different species and a lovely meandering stream to the right. Bear round side of field for a few yards, turning on to a dirt track. Turn left, keeping the hedge to your left. DO NOT turn right at the sign post, but continue alongside the hedge until you come to a very small opening leading into the wood. Turn left over the bridge and you are now on the edge of Wilsummer wood.

In all but the driest of seasons a small stream winds its way along creating an almost enchanted feeling, especially when the sun casts its dappled light between the trees. In spring the bluebells carpet the wood with colour (this is private land), a few oxlips and early purple orchids, plus moss encrusted logs sprouting fungi make this peaceful area my favourite place. You leave this lovely secluded wood where jays and magpies abound and cross over another little bridge. Continue straight until waymaker, then turn right (if you turn left it will also bring you back to the road), keeping hedge to your left. In spring one clump of wood anemones can be seen in the ditch. Bear right then left keeping hedge on your right side, continue straight until you come to the road then turn right which will bring you back to the car park.

In summer knapweed, ox-eye daisies, coltsfoot, teasel, vetches, trefoils, scabious, dog roses plus the frothy heads of meadow sweet are just a few of the flowers that can be seen, enlivening meadow brooms, gatekeepers and speckled woods to name but a few. Deer, toads and maybe a fox can also be spotted if you are quiet.

Sylvia Greening

Country Code

Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work
Guard against all risk of fire
Fasten gates
Keep dogs under close control
Keep to the public paths across farmland
Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls
Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone
Take your litter home
Help to keep all water clean
Protect wildlife, plants and trees
Take special care on country roads
Make no unnecessary noise

Meadowsweet

Also known as ‘Queen of the Meadows’. A common sight in damp places, its frothy heads are made of cream flowers which are strongly scented.

In former times it was used for placing in linen, shot and drawers, thrown on floors and in pot-pourri.