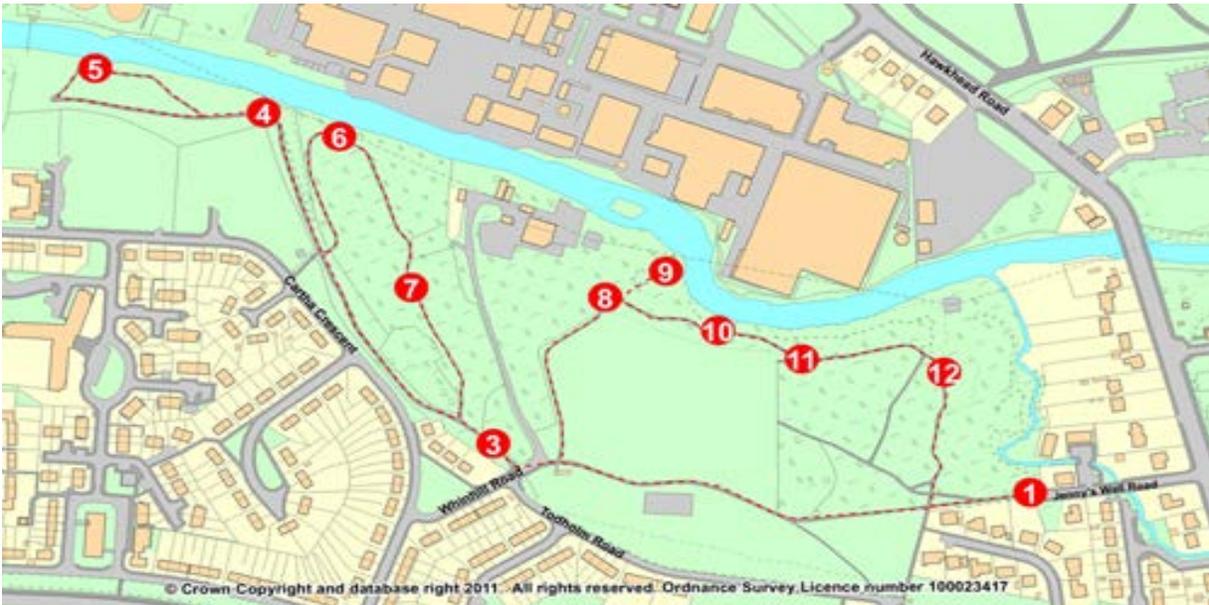


Discovery Trail - Jennys Well



The route of the walk is shown on the plan. The route is less than 2 miles long, and should take about an hour. The numbers on the plan correspond to numbered posts on the nature reserve, and to the text to follow on this web page. Apart from the short steep section down to the river at Stop 9, the route uses surfaced paths with a small number of steps. The section down to stop 9 can be wet and muddy, but all other paths can be managed in ordinary shoes.

Stop 1

The Discovery Trail starts at the end of Jennys Well Road and follows the cycle route. The nature reserve is on your right. See if you can spot the young oak trees which were planted in the mid 1990s. In the gaps between these young trees, there are plenty of clumps of garlic mustard and Jack-by-the-Hedge - plants which are food for the orange-tip butterfly's caterpillars.

Stop 2

Even the close cut grass on the football pitch attracts wildlife! In spring, starlings scamper about looking for tasty 'leatherjackets' - the grubs of daddylonglegs or crane flies) to take back to their nests in the large ash trees nearby. In winter, the starlings are joined by flocks of thrushes on their winter holidays from Siberia - redwings and fieldfares.

Stop 3

The Trail follows the route of the former railway line, which used to be in a deep cutting. The path crossed the cutting on a bridge. The cutting has now been filled in, and new trees have been planted. These are native species to encourage local wildlife. They have become the haunt of goldfinches, linnets and siskins which pick seeds from the thistles that grow between the young trees in the summer.

Stop 4

A viewpoint has been constructed here, on the parapet where a railway bridge used to cross the river. Although this bridge has been demolished, the bridge you can see to your left was originally built as a canal aqueduct between 1806 and 1809 by the world famous engineer, Thomas Telford. It now carries railway trains from Paisley Canal station to Glasgow.

Stop 5

In the summer, the common whitethroat can frequently be seen in this part of the nature reserve. These small bird arrive in April from Africa to nest here. They hide in the undergrowth for much of the time, but occasionally the males sit on high perches and sing loudly.

The nature reserve's most spectacular insect, the elephant hawk-moth, can also be found around here. When still a caterpillar, it is ornately patterned - and has two large false eyes to frighten predators away ! When the caterpillar has become a moth and is fully grown, it is vivid pink. The caterpillar's food plant is rosebay willowherb, which is dense here in the summer with its pink flowers.

Stop 6

In late winter the soil here is bare, but by April bizarre pinkish candelabras appear out of the ground. These are butterbur flowers, and provide one of the first food sources for early spring bees. The strange flowers soon disappear, but the leaves that follow grow into enormous rhubarb-like leaves which create a mini-jungle by the river. Butterbur gained its name because the giant leaves were used to wrap butter and keep it fresh before fridges became common.

Stop 7

This area was used for allotments in the past. A few rhubarb plants and blackcurrant bushes still remain to tell the tale ! Now, this area is a grassy area divided by clumps of hawthorn and willow trees. The grassy areas are sheltered sun-traps which are particularly attractive to flying insects and the birds that eat them. Blackbirds and song thrushes particularly like to nest in this area in the spring.

Stop 8

Away from the football pitch, which is on top of the former landfill site, there are small remnants of the original ground. This ground has thin, well-drained soils where gorse, broom and scrub thrive, along with grassland and wild flowers like harebells and lady's bedstraw. There are also a few bluebells beneath some of the gorse bushes in the spring. You can see rocky outcrops of the whinstone which was quarried here in the nineteenth century.

Stop 9

On calm afternoons in the spring, the shingle island in the river has swarms of mayflies. Grey wagtails with bright yellow bellies and long bobbing tails come to forage on these insects. By the summer, the island disappears under a jungle of giant hogweed - tall green plants with spiky looking leaves, hairy stems and huge clusters of small white flowers like parasols.

Do not touch these plants. Their sap is dangerous and can cause severe blistering of the skin.

The deeper water around the bend is reputed to be an important holding pool for Atlantic salmon, on their way upstream to spawn in the river's upper reaches.

Stop 10

The sheltered terrace beneath you is being colonised by woodland, particularly wild cherry (Jean) trees. This section of path can give good close views of usually shy birds such as long-tailed tits and gold crests, which flit through the trees looking for food.

Stop 11

There has been more new woodland planting here. Again, all of the new trees are of native species. Eventually the oak and ash trees will grow up to form bigger trees, with smaller rowan, hazel and holly trees underneath.

Stop 12

Although the path is dry, the surrounding ground is very wet here. Water collects in shallow ponds and marshes, ideal conditions for sedges, rushes and wild orchids. In July, the pale pink spikes of the Common Spotted Orchid dominate the scene. Here and there you might also see the much darker purple flowers of the rarer Northern Marsh Orchid.

Further information

Jennys Well is owned by Renfrewshire Council and CBI Speciality Chemicals. The site was declared a local nature reserve by us in 1996. The reserve is now managed by a partnership between Ciba Speciality Chemicals, Renfrewshire Council, Carts Greenspace and Scottish Natural Heritage. Sustrans, who maintain the cycle track which runs through the site, and Strathclyde Police are also involved in the management of the reserve.