

# Bowlees Picnic Area

## What is special?

There are four small waterfalls and a riverside footpath leading to Summerhill Force and Gibson's Cave; Gibson was a 16th century outlaw who lived behind the waterfall to stay hidden from the law. There are plenty of places to sit in quiet contemplation surrounded by the sound of cascading water. Look for the white breast of the dipper bobbing in and out of the water searching for food or the buzzard soaring above your head.

The old limestone quarry contains many limestone-loving wildflowers, including seven species of orchids, knapweed and wild thyme. These plants attract butterflies and other insects, which are prey for magnificent dragonflies.

No journey to Bowlees is complete without going to the Visitor Centre. The centre, run by Durham Wildlife Trust, is a former Methodist Chapel and now displays information about the unique wildlife, history and geology of the North Pennines AONB as well as local attractions. It's the perfect place to relax and get refreshments before the next stage of your journey around Teesdale.

Telephone: [0191 584 3112](tel:01915843112) for opening hours



Buzzard



Common Darter

[more info...](#)

**Area:** 7 acres  
(2.9 hectares)

**Grid Reference:**  
NY 907 282

**Map:**  
Ordnance Survey  
Explorer OL31

**Directions:**  
Approx 34 miles southwest of Durham City centre. Situated in Upper Teesdale, 5km (3 miles) north-west of Middleton-in-Teesdale on the B6277. Signposted. Nearest postcode DL12 0XE

**Parking:** There is a large car park. Disabled parking bays in front of Visitor Centre. No coach parking

**Public transport:**  
Service 73 (Alston Road Garage, tel:01833 640213). No Sunday service. This service can be extended or diverted if pre-booked. Bus stop adjacent to site

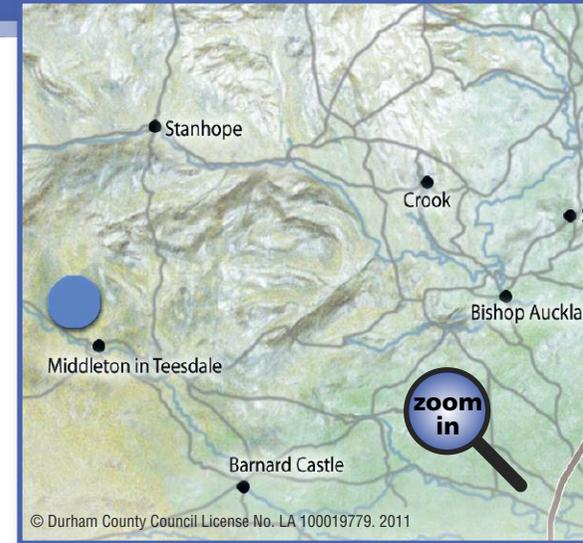
**Toilets:** Yes, accessible

**Dogs:** Allowed under control. Please clean up after your dog

**Designation:**  
Picnic Area, the quarry is a Local Wildlife Site, UK Woodland Assurance Scheme certified, within the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

**Suitable for:** Walkers

**Habitats:** Wetland, meadows, woodland



**Contact the Countryside Service**  
telephone: 0191 372 9100  
email: [countryside@durham.gov.uk](mailto:countryside@durham.gov.uk)  
[www.durham.gov.uk/countryside](http://www.durham.gov.uk/countryside)



*Whilst every effort has been made by Durham County Council to ensure accuracy of information, the Council cannot accept any liability resulting from omissions or inaccuracies.*

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## What else is nearby?

Low Force, an impressive series of waterfalls, is a 15 minutes walk away (0.4 miles) and High Force, the largest waterfall in England, can be reached within an hour on foot (2 miles). An attractive section of the Pennine Way, following the River Tees between Middleton-in-Teesdale and Cauldron Snout, can be reached by crossing the Wynch Bridge near Low Force. Newbiggin Chapel, established in 1759, is the oldest Methodist chapel in the world still in continuous use and is a 25 minutes (0.7 miles) walk away.

## Help us keep this area special

- Please keep to the paths to avoid trampling rare plants
- Keep your dog on a lead and clean up after it
- Do not light barbeques anywhere on the site
- Follow the Countryside Code

## Accessibility statement

Paths are mainly made of a hard, unsealed surface with some stones. Path widths are an average of 1.2 metres wide. There is a path over the footbridge leading to the Visitor Centre but there are steps. An alternative route can be taken by returning along the site's access road and following the lane to the north. The steepest gradients have been marked. There are occasional seats and tables. The permissive footpath to Gibson's cave consists of smooth stones and numerous uneven steps, please take care.



Knapweed



Wild Thyme



Grey Wagtail



Dipper



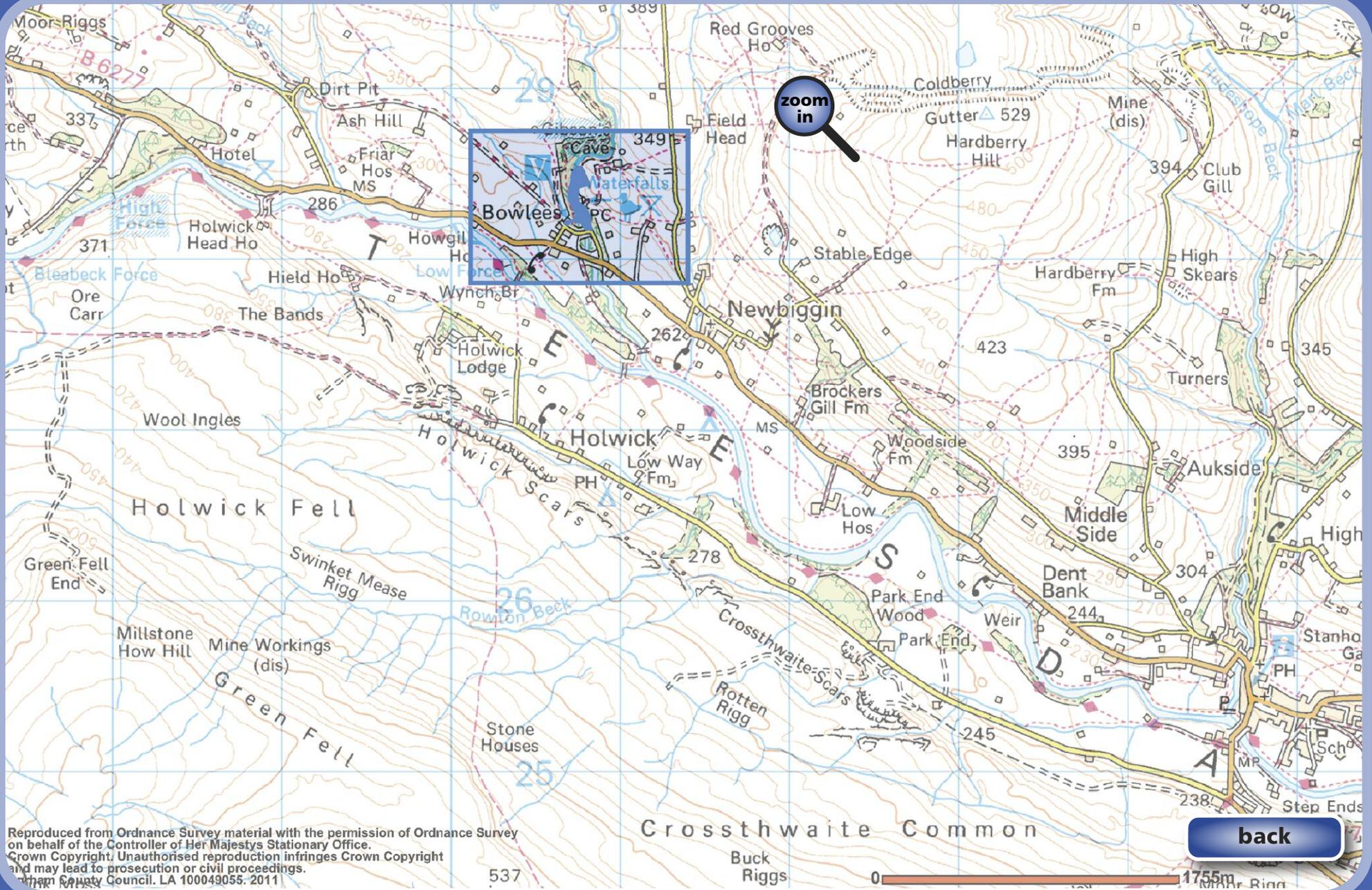
Common Spotted Orchid



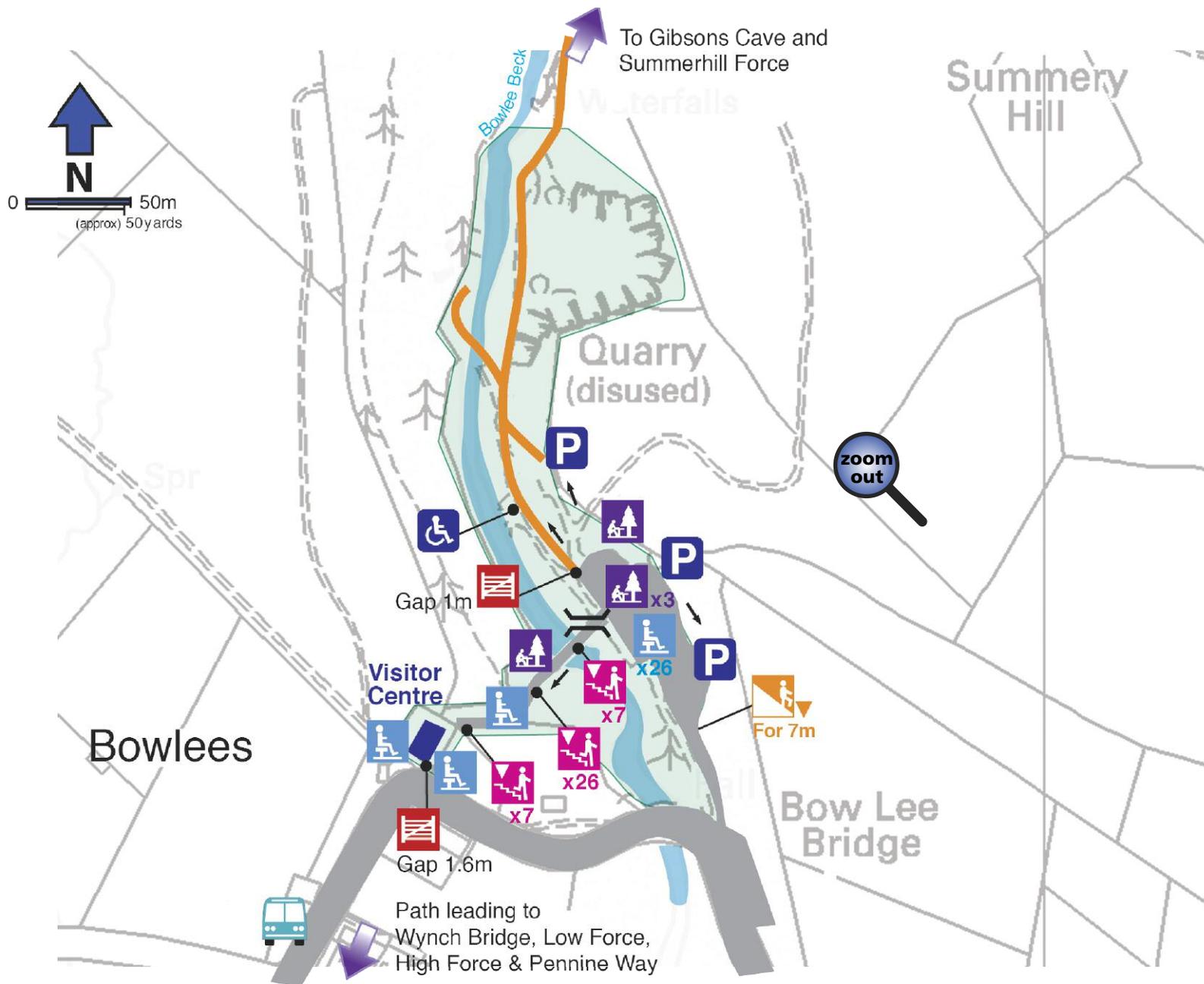
Marsh Orchid

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## KEY

-  Picnic Area
-  Seat
-  Steps Down
-  Gate
-  Steep Slope Down 1:10-1:10
-  Parking
-  Disabled Parking
-  Bus Stop
-  Road/Tarmac
-  Easy Access Route
-  Bridge

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