

FLOWERS AND FERNS  
WYNCH BRIDGE TO  
SCORBERRY BRIDGE



Gemander Speedwell

This 0.9km (1/2 mile) walk beside the River Tees has a wealth of wildlife, including over 200 plant species. Many are common British species and twelve belong to the 'Teesdale Assemblage' — a uniquely rich association of plants for which Teesdale is famous. The plants included here are the larger flowering ones, trees and ferns that can be seen, at the appropriate time of the year (when they are flowering), from this well-used path. Not all will be in flower on one visit. The flowering times indicated are for the peak period.

*To prevent trampling on inconspicuous and perhaps rare plants it is advisable to keep to the path and already-trampled areas; please do not extend them.*



The North Pennines is one of England's most special places – a remote, unspoilt landscape with a rich history and vibrant natural beauty. It was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1988. The North Pennines AONB is also Britain's first European Geopark and a founding member of the UNESCO Global Geoparks Network.

Produced and part-funded by  
**Upper Teesdale Botany Group**

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Further information

*Plants of Upper Teesdale* (1997) and  
*Wild Flower Walks of Upper Teesdale* (2005) by  
Christopher and Gayle Lowe

*The Natural History of Upper Teesdale* (2003)  
Ed. Margaret E Bradshaw

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reddish-purple to bluish large flowers and deeply, coarsely-cut rounded (palmate) leaves. **Meadow Cranesbill** also occurs along this stretch, though less commonly, and has larger, paler blue flowers and more divided palmate leaves with longer, more slender, lobes. Cranesbills are named from the seed cases, which are shaped like a bird's bill.

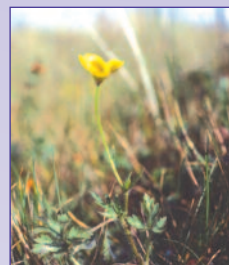
**Tufted Vetch** (June-August), **Bush Vetch** (May-August)  
Vetches are scrambling plants with leaves divided into leaflets and tendrils and with pea-family shaped flowers grouped in loose 'spikes' (racemes). **Tufted Vetch** has narrow leaflets (8 to 12 opposite



Tufted Vetch

pairs) with tendrils. It may attain 200cm. The brilliant blue-violet flowers are each about 1cm long, in dense one-sided racemes, 4-5cms long. It occurs in hedges and bushy places beside the path. **Bush Vetch** has fewer, broader leaflets and larger, dull, pale-purple flowers.

**Goldilocks Buttercup** (April-May)  
This 'buttercup' of woods and hedgerbanks usually has some petals distorted or absent. The fruits are downy, in a rounded head on stems to 40cm tall. The lowest stalked leaves are roundish and hardly lobed; the rest are 3-lobed and the stem leaves are deeply divided into narrow lobes. The **Bulbous Buttercup** (March-June) with bent/turned back sepals, prefers drier grassland; **Meadow Buttercup** (May-June) taller, with erect sepals and palmately lobed leaves, prefers meadows and damp grassland; and **Creeping Buttercup** (May-September), a creeping perennial with rooting runners, has a stalked end-lobe to the leaf. It is common in damp grassy places and waysides.



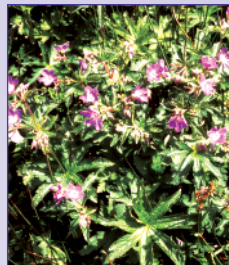
Bulbous Buttercup

**Ramsons or Wild Garlic** (April-June)  
The white, starry flowers form quite a dense, rounded head on a 2-3 angled stalk, to 45cm. Stalked, elliptical leaves arise from the base. It forms extensive colonies in damp woodland and on shady banks, as here, and its presence may be detected by the garlic smell. It often grows with bluebells.

**Wood Sanicle** (May-September)  
A hairless woodland perennial with shiny-green palmate (palm-like) leaves with 3-5 toothed lobes, and pink-white clusters of small flowers typical of the carrot family. It thrives in the shade of deciduous woodland and only grows to about 60cm tall, contrasting with the related **Cow Parsley** and **Sweet Cicely** (both to 100cm) also found on this walk. They have the much more noticeable 'umbrellas' of white/creamy flowers in May and June, and more feathery, divided leaves.

**Water Avens** (April-September), **Wood Avens** (May-September)

**Water Avens** has nodding flowers, dull pink/pale orange in crimson cups of fused sepals, in loose clusters reaching to about 60cm high. The leaf-segments are rounded. It prefers damper soils and is very common along this walk. **Wood Avens**, or **Herb Bennet**, is a closely related plant of hedgerows and woodland; the leaves are more yellow-green with pointed segments. It has erect, small 5-petalled yellow flowers. The root has an aromatic clove-like smell and was once used to flavour beer. Both species have hooked prickles on the fruits which catch easily on clothing or fur. They interbreed freely and produce plants with intermediate characters.



Wood Cranesbill

**Wood Cranesbill** (June-July), **Meadow Cranesbill** (June-September)  
**Wood Cranesbill** is the 'herbie-meadows' plant with



This path winds through an area with woodland, wetland and drier grassland plants. **The river is lined with trees**, favouring plants that like shade and dampness. In spring, note the catkin-bearing trees, three with dangling male pollen producing catkins: **Alder** with little dark-red cone-like females; **Downy Birch** with upright, green, scaly female spikes; and **Hazel** with bud-like females with red styles (later maturing into the familiar



Alder flowers

nuts); and various willow species with the male and female catkins on different trees – the erect male catkins later covered with yellow stamens ('pussy willow') and the grey-green female developing seeds with long, silky hairs. Later in the year, the white flowered, berry-bearing **Bird Cherry**, **Hawthorn** and **Rowan** will

be conspicuous. **Beech**, **Ash** and **Sycamore** occur along the way and towards the Scorberrry Bridge end are conifers – **Scots Pine**, with long needles; and the alien **Norway Spruce** with shorter evergreen needle-leaves ('Christmas tree') and the deciduous **Larch** (with pink female cones in spring, maturing into tight-scaled brown cones and clusters of needle-leaves).

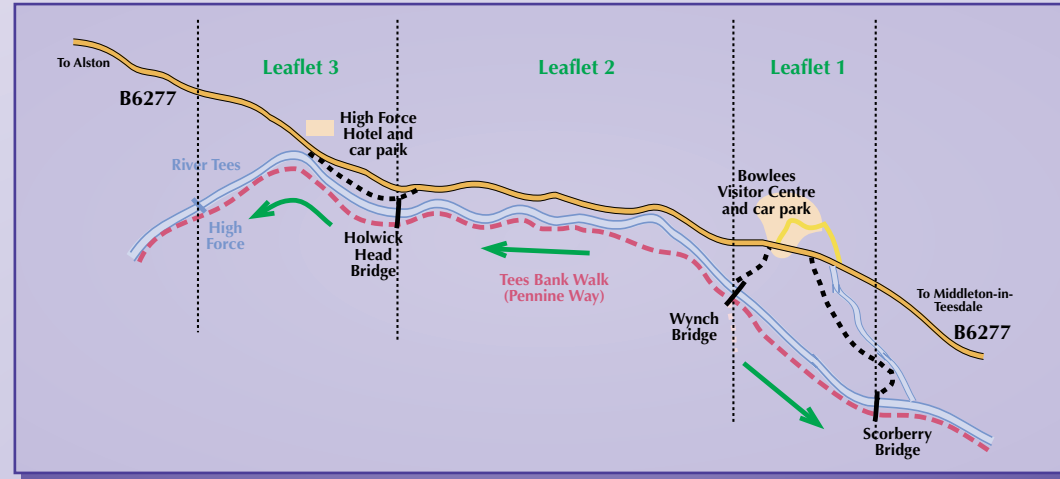
*On leaving Wynch Bridge, after climbing up to the riverside path going south-east, the open area has dense bracken and bluebell cover, birch, and a thicket of Aspen.*

#### Aspen

This is another catkin-bearing tree and can develop to 20m tall. Sucker shoots arise from the roots, resulting in thickets such as this.

#### Bracken

Each year this fern's large fronds ('leaves') grow from an underground stem (by which it spreads), reaching up to 200cm.



#### Bluebell (April-June)

Also called 'Wild Hyacinth', this fleshy plant of woods and hedge banks grows from a bulb, whilst the later-flowering, un-related, 'bluebell' of Scotland, the Harebell (July-Sept) has slender underground creeping stems (stolons) and fine upright stems (15-40 cm long) with narrow leaves and delicate, pale-blue hanging flowers.



Bluebells and garlic

#### Foxglove (June-September)

The familiar tall (to 1.5m) spikes of pinkish-purple flowers, large enough to be pollinated by bumble bees and normally produced from a basal rosette of downy leaves in this biennial (or sometimes perennial) plant's second year. Digitalin, a drug obtained from this plant, is used in the treatment of heart ailments.



Foxglove

**Greater Stitchwort** (April-June), **Lesser Stitchwort** (May-August)

Stitchworts are straggling plants, said to cure the

stitch or side pain. They have white, star-like flowers with five 2-lobed petals and narrow, pointed leaves. **Greater Stitchwort** is a woodland and hedgerow plant with large white flowers 20-30mm across; **Lesser Stitchwort** flowers a little later and prefers the drier grassland. Its flowers are only 5-12 mm across, and the leaves are green, in contrast to the greyish-green of the Greater.

*Pass a large Whin Sill Rock at the riverside, where there is a grassy, sandy area with plants of the more open ground. After the stile, the paved path runs below a rockface with many plants of shady damp areas, including many ferns and mosses, such as the Apple Moss with round green (brown when ripe) fruit bodies, 2mm across, on long thin stalks, looking like miniature toffee apples.*

#### Dog's Mercury (February-April)

Common in shade offered by trees or rocks, this hairy perennial has opposite leaves on a simple stem 15-40cm long. The small, green flowers are petalless and have upright spikes of male flowers with yellow stamens on separate plants from the female flowers, which are harder to see and are in groups of 1-3 and produce a 2-celled hairy fruit.



Dog's Mercury

#### Bugle (May-July)

Common in damp woods, meadows or pastures, the opposite leaves often have a purplish hue and it spreads by leafy, rooting runners (stolons), so

occurring in large patches. The deep blue flowers are in spikes on short, erect, four-sided stems.

#### Ferns: Male, Lady, Broad Buckler and Polypody

It is not always easy to name a fern, but the features to look for are the degree of division of the fronds and the spore covers under the leaves. **Polypody**, which occurs on the rock face beside the path, has a leaf



Bugle



Polypody



Lady Fern

to 45cm long, divided once only, almost to the rachis ('midrib'). It has small, round masses of brown spores on the underside, ripening August to March. The frond is divided twice in **Male fern**, and thrice in **Broad Buckler Fern**, both having kidney-shaped spore covers. **Lady Fern** has the leaves divided to the same extent as the **Male Fern**, but appears more delicate and has comma-shaped flap-like spore covers.

#### Greater Woodrush (April-June)

This occurs on the rock face near the Polypody as well as on the ground under trees by the river. Woodrushes are tufted plants recognised by the long white hairs that fringe the grass-like leaves. The flowers, however, are rush- rather than grass-like, having 6 scale-like 'petals' and brown, egg-shaped fruits borne in a large, branching, spreading head on a stem to 80cm tall in the Greater Woodrush.