



Golden Acre and Breary Marsh

<http://www.theaa.com/walks/golden-acre-and-breary-marsh-463507>

A walk of great variety in the rolling countryside to the north of Leeds.

Distance 5 miles (8km)

Minimum time 2hrs 30min

Ascent/gradient 100ft (30m)

Level of difficulty Easy

Paths Good paths, tracks and quiet roads, 21 stiles

Landscape Parkland, woods and arable country

Suggested map aqua3 OS Explorer 297 Lower Wharfedale

Start/finish SE 266418

Dog friendliness On lead when in park, due to wildfowl

Parking Golden Acre Park car park, across road from park itself, on A660 just south of Bramhope

Public toilets Golden Acre Park, at start of walk

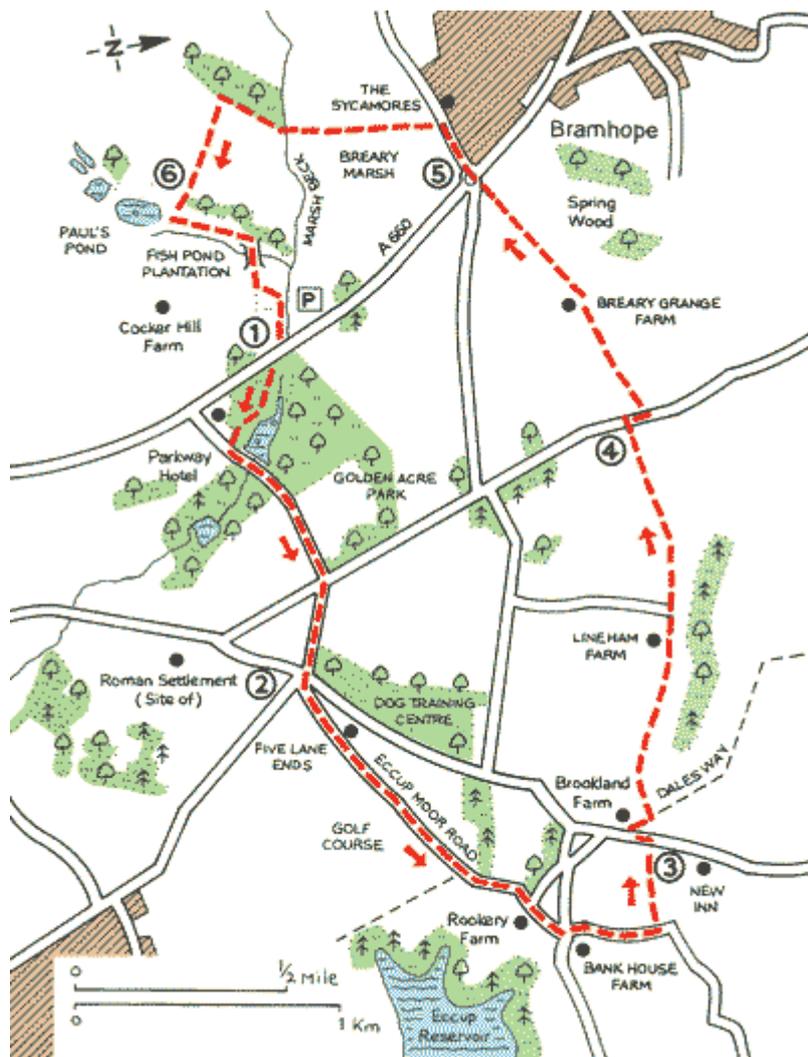
Leeds is fortunate to have so many green spaces. Some, like Roundhay Park, are long established; others, like the Kirkstall Valley nature reserve, have been created from post-industrial wasteland. But none have had a more chequered history than Golden Acre Park, 6 miles (9.7km) north of the city on the main A660.

The park originally opened in 1932 as an amusement park. The attractions included a miniature railway, nearly 2 miles (3.2km) in length, complete with dining car. The lake was the centre of much activity, with motor launches, dinghies for hire and races by the Yorkshire Hydroplane Racing Squadron. An open-air lido known, somewhat exotically, as the Blue Lagoon, offered unheated swimming and the prospect of goose-pimples. The Winter Gardens Dance Hall boasted that it had 'the largest dance floor in Yorkshire'.

Though visitors initially flocked to Golden Acre Park, the novelty soon wore off. By the end of the 1938 season the amusement park had closed down and was sold to Leeds City Council. The site was subsequently transformed into botanical gardens - a process that's continued ever since. The hillside overlooking the lake has been lovingly planted with trees and unusual plants, including rock gardens and fine displays of rhododendrons.

The boats are long gone; the lake is now a haven for wildfowl. Within these 127 acres (51ha) - the 'Golden Acre' name was as fanciful as 'the Blue Lagoon' - is a wide variety of wildlife habitats, from open heathland to an old quarry. Lovers of birds, trees and flowers will find plenty to interest them at every season of the year. One of the few echoes of the original Golden Acre Park is a café situated close to the entrance.

Reflecting the park's increasing popularity with local people, a large car park has been built on the opposite side of the main road, with pedestrian access to the park via a tunnel beneath the road. This intriguing park offers excellent walking, and wheelchair users, too, can make a circuit of the lake on a broad path.



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1 From the far left end of the car park, take steps and an underpass beneath the road, into Golden Acre Park. Take one of the paths to the left or the right around the lake; at the far left end of the lake leave the park by a gate (signed 'Meanwood Valley Trail'). Bear left, along a tree-lined path, to a T-junction of roads. Take the road ahead, up to the aptly-named Five Lane Ends.

2 Take the second road on the left (Eccup Moor Road), passing a dog training centre on the left and a golf course on the right. Ignore side turnings till you reach the outbuildings of Bank House Farm, where you take a farm track to the left. It soon narrows to become a path between hedgerows. About 50yds (46m) before the footpath bears right take a stile in the fence on your left, to join a field path to a wall stile. Cross another field to meet a road (the New Inn is just along the road to your right).

3 Go left along the road for just 20yds (18m) to take a stile on your right (signposted 'Dales Way'), leading to a field path. After another stile you join a track ahead over a further stile and uphill with a wall to your left. Veer right across pasture to a wall stile and continue towards Lineham Farm. Beyond two more wall stiles you pass the farm buildings and join a good track. When the track goes left you keep straight ahead on a path between fences. After field-edge walking, and a further three stiles, you reach a road.

4 Go right along the road for 150yds (138m) and take a waymarked stile on the left by a gate. Follow the field-edge path with a fence on your left. Through two kissing gates bear left across a field, keeping to the right of Breary Grange Farm. After a ladder stile, cross a field to the bottom right-hand corner and another stile. Head left, across the next field, to a stile, that brings you out at the A660 by a roundabout.

5 Cross the main road and take The Sycamores ahead. After 250yds (230m) take a waymarked stile on the left to join a field-edge footpath with a hedge on the left. Cross a succession of five stiles, and then tiny Marsh Beck, before skirting an area of woodland on your right. Beyond a ladder stile you join a farm track, bearing left past a farmhouse to enter Fish Pond Plantation via a gate.

6 Bear right, through the wood, soon reaching the retaining wall of a small stretch of water known locally as Paul's Pond. Bear left here on a woodland path accompanying a stream. Having crossed the stream on a footbridge, you soon join a duck-boarded walkway that keeps you dry-footed as you cross Breary Marsh. The walkway meanders back towards the underpass beneath the A660 road. Go left, in front of it, back into the car park.