

Lagan Meadows



Route description

This route explores a Nature Reserve in the Lagan Valley on surfaced and unsurfaced paths with some steep hills.

Distance

1.75 miles 2.8 km.

Average Time

1 hr – 1 hr 10 mins.

Access

By bike - This route is adjacent to the NCN Route 9.

By bus - Metro Services 8 (A-C) to Malone Rd, get off at Bladon Drive and walk 0.4 mile (0.7 km) to Knightsbridge Park.

By car - Entrance at Knightsbridge park, accessed off Stranmillis Road at Richmond Park, and off the Malone Road at Bladon Drive.

Trail Route

Enter this Local Nature Reserve **(1)** via the kissing gate at Knightsbridge Park and follow the path to your right. After a short distance you will find a path to the left leading to Lester's dam and pond **(2)**.

Retrace your steps to the main path, and continue along for a good distance through wooded areas **(3)** and past meadows until you come to a steep set of steps. These lead down to the Lagan towpath.

Turn left along the towpath for a short distance, then take the bridge on your right over the former canal and cross the stile. Keeping the River Lagan on your right, follow the grass path that leads round Moreland's Meadow **(4)**.

At the far end of the meadow, you will cross another stile and then a small bridge. From here turn right on to a narrow path that leads to a footbridge and back over the canal onto the towpath.

Turn right and follow the river as it winds its way downstream. Pass by the first kissing gate on your left (taking this gate is a shortcut via Lester's Dam to the starting point). Continue along the towpath taking the next path on your left. Follow this path to the end, pass through another kissing gate and take the path to your left. This path leads around the edge of the meadows **(5)** and back to the car park.



Things of Interest

Local Nature Reserve (1)

In 2006 this site was designated a LNR in recognition of its important wildlife habitats and biodiversity.

Lester's Dam (2)

This spring was the source of Belfast's first piped water supply nearly 200 years ago. A reservoir, named after John Lester who leased neighbouring land, was created by the building of a dam. Today, the remains of this earthen bank can still be seen, topped by a few hawthorn trees.

Woodland (3)

Lagan Meadows has areas of mixed deciduous woodland, rich in

birdlife and woodland wild flowers such as wood anemone, lesser celandine and herb Robert.

Moreland's Meadow (4)

This eighteen acre island was formed when the canal cut was made to avoid the long curving bend in the river. It is grazed in the summer. Specimen cedar and oak trees now dominate the meadow landscape.

Lagan Meadows (5)

The low-lying central areas of the park give rise to wetland and marsh areas for which Lagan Meadows is best known. This area is managed as a wildlife reserve by the Ulster Wildlife trust in conjunction with Belfast City Council.

History

Opened in 1985, the park contains the source of Belfast's first piped water supply, a stream that still flows today. An earth wall was built to form a reservoir that became known as Lester's Dam. From here the water was fed through a system of open aqueducts to holding ponds at Botanic Gardens and Lennoxvale, and on into Belfast through a series of wooden pipes.

The ground towards the northern end of Lagan Meadows once formed part of Malone Golf Course, before the club moved to a new site beside Barnett Demesne. A number of flat tees and greens can still be identified among the gorse and recent tree plantings in Lagan Meadows.

Look out for

- herons fishing in the marshy central areas.
- frogs spawning in huge numbers in the wet areas along the boundary of Lagan Meadows and the towpath.
- snipe overwintering in the tussock grass and marshy ground.

For more information see the UWT Lagan Meadows or Lagan Valley Regional Park Towpath leaflets.