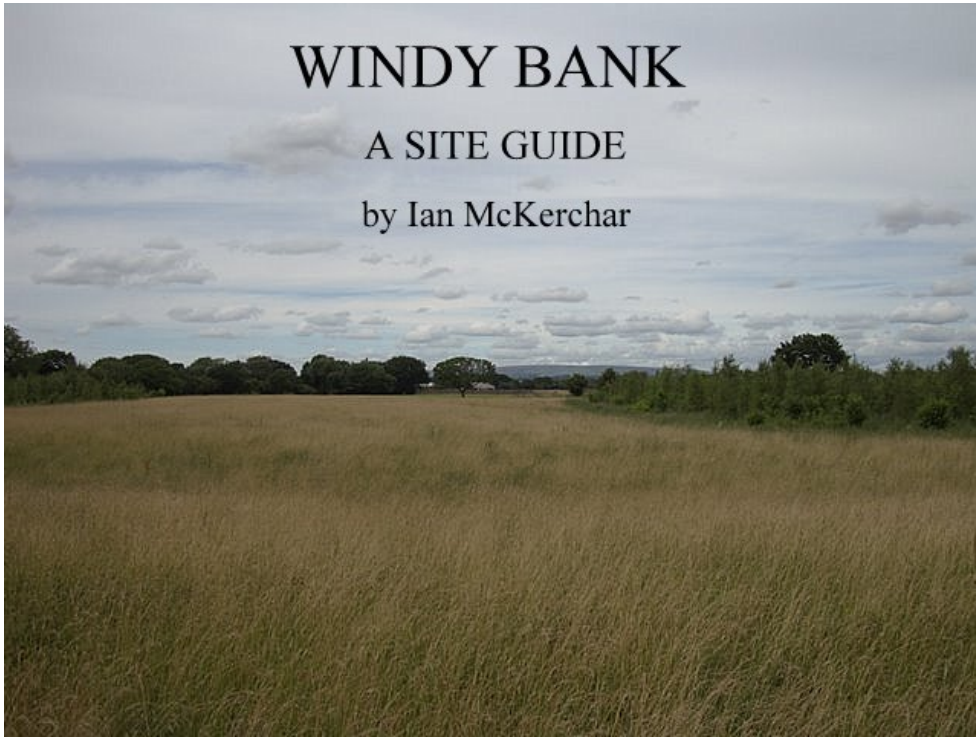


WINDY BANK

A SITE GUIDE

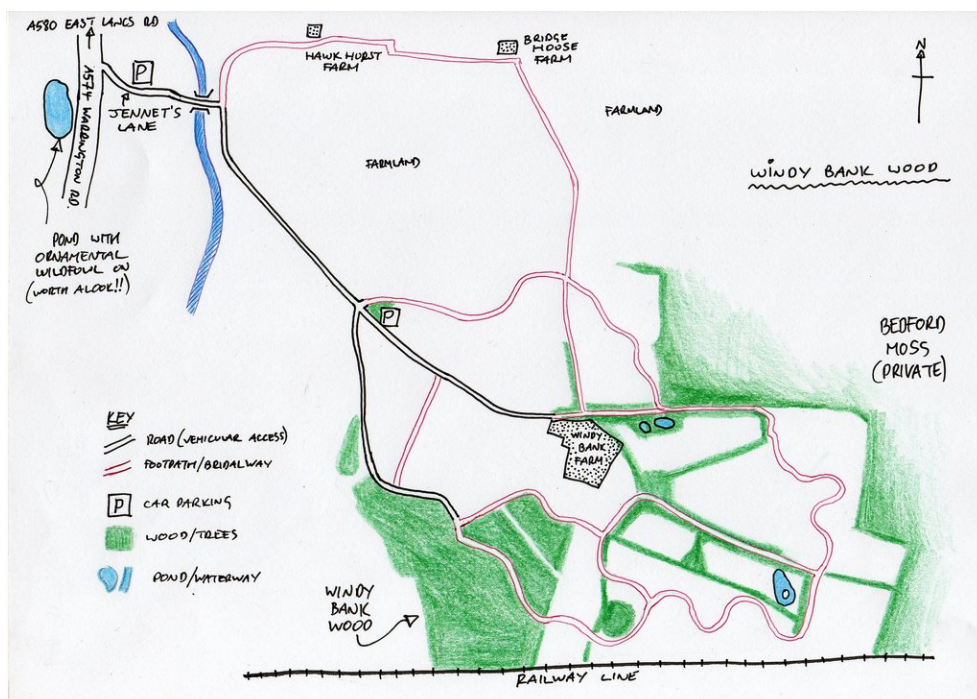
by Ian McKerchar



At the heart of Windy Bank lies 47 hectares of former farmland which has been transformed by the Forestry Commission into a community woodland with working farmland to the north and ancient peat moss to the east. The area is very peaceful and visitors can often have practically the whole site to themselves. Much of the mature, deciduous Windy Bank Wood remains inaccessible (though this is not necessarily a bad thing) but there are many tranquil walks along the border of the wood, the edges of ancient peat land, open meadows and newly planted woodland which can all be accessed by wheelchair users.

Access to the site is via the A574 Warrington Road, just off the A580 East Lancs Road by the Greyhound Motel roundabout. Two hundred yards south of the Greyhound roundabout along the A574 lies Jennets Lane which is the access point to Windy Bank.

There is NO parking along Jennets Lane and or along the track to Windy Bank Farm itself as this is a private road. Therefore, parking must be made along Warrington Road and better still in the Foresters Arms pub just south of the small ornamental duck pond opposite Jennets Lane on Warrington Road and then access to Windy Bank made of foot. Overall the site has been poorly covered so far, due to only a small number of infrequent visiting birders and the site's fairly recent creation. Greater coverage would undoubtedly produce more surprising discoveries but either way it remains well worth a visit any time of the year





Above: The River Glaze, here along Jennets Lane just before you come to the T junction and turn right (south) to head towards Windy Bank. The Glaze here often has Kingfisher, Teal and Green Sandpiper plus Tufted Duck broods, all at the expected times of the year. **Note that the track from across the bridge at this point and down to Windy Bank Farm is private and there is no access or parking for Windy Bank.** The farmland from this point to Windy Bank itself should not be missed though in any case and the short walk can produce some excellent birding. (Photo Ian McKerchar)



Above: Access to the walks can be made by following any of the paths at this point but the one off to the right here takes you towards Windy Bank Wood and is probably the best starting point. Little Owl can often be found on the telephone poles in this area. (Photo Ian McKerchar)



Above: The entrance to Windy Bank Wood and the path which winds itself along its edge towards the open meadows and newly planted woodland. (Photo Ian McKerchar)



Above: Windy Bank Wood is an intriguing mature deciduous wood but the vast majority of it is inaccessible and the path cuts along its edge but provides good birding and a very pleasant walk. (Photo Ian McKerchar)



Above: The open meadows are bordered by mature hedges and smaller mature woodlands which offer good birding with Lesser Whitethroat, Garden Warbler, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler and Whitethroat all summer breeders whilst Yellowhammer, Willow Tit, Treecreeper, Kestrel, Little Owl, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Coal Tit, Reed Bunting and other commoner species are present all year round. (Photo Ian McKerchar)



Above: Buzzards breed in the area and can be found all year round, often highly conspicuous especially when the juveniles are fully fledged, out of the nest and at their noisiest! Hobby, Peregrine and Raven have also put in appearances. (Photo Ian McKerchar)



Above: The walks on the east of the site take in the edges of ancient peat land with Astley Moss SSSI being only a mile or so further east (but not accessible from Windy Bank). Here can be found the more open woodland associated with this particular habitat which often holds Willow Tit and a few small ponds, the latter of which have been visited by Kingfisher. (Photo Ian McKerchar)



Above: To the north of the site (here with Winter Hill in the distance) there are much larger, more open grasslands complete with pleasant walks and a few picnic benches. The views alone can be worth the very minimal effort it takes to explore the paths. More of the aforementioned species can be found here with the addition of Skylark and Whinchat also putting in an occasional appearance on passage. Very slightly further north still, taking the footpath through the working farmland, Corn Bunting, Yellow Wagtail and Tree Sparrow may be added during expected times of the year. (Photo Ian McKerchar)



Above: Windy Bank affords some excellent butterfly habitat too, with all the expected commoner species often present in good numbers and just occasionally something unexpected, like this White-letter Hairstreak, discovered in July 2010. (Photo Ian McKerchar)

Ian McKerchar, July 2011

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