



Canal and Nature Reserve from Brighouse

Getting there and parking

Meet at Owlter Ings Car Park, Brighouse. HD6 1EJ. The walk starts on the towpath at the back of the carpark. Parking charges apply, currently free on a Sunday.

Other Information

Walk length 3 miles.

Easy Ability - Canal towpath and Reserve walk footpath for the majority of the walk with few steps up and down.

Toilet facilities at the Nature Reserve café but these are often closed.

Walk boots are advised as it can be muddy in the Nature Reserve.

Route Details and Reflections

The walk starts on the towpath at the back of the carpark. Exit the carpark onto the towpath to turn right. Follow the towpath to reach a cobbled incline and turn left over the bridge. Cross the bridge, turning right along the towpath. Continue to follow the towpath to reach the next bridge. Turn right and immediate left, with the angling club on your right. Signposted 'Brookfoot Lock'. Proceed to the bridge.

Reflection 1 - Brookfoot bridge



The Navigation canal reached Brighthouse in 1764 but this section was not opened until 1811. Yet that is still over 200 years ago and you will notice that this bridge is as solid as the day it was built.

- Pause for a moment and think about this solid bridge - How many people must have walked over it? How many barges have passed under it? Yet it still remains as solid as the day it was built.
- What is solid in your life? Something or someone you can trust and rely on. What is solid in your life, or as solid as it can be in this moment?
- Can you rely on this bridge being here again tomorrow? Yes, people have trusted it for over 200 years. It's past performance helps us to place reliance on its future performance.
- Spiritual reflection - Have you ever tried trusting in God? Letting go of placing reliance on temporal things.
There's a really old quote in the bible, almost 3,000 years ago, that came to mind on this canal and river walk. 'When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you'. It's a quote about God always being with us. For a moment, just think about this promise "I will be with you". A solid bridge standing for over 200 years. A solid promise since time began - "I will be with you."

JOURNEY ON

Cross the bridge and continue along the towpath to the next bridge (Bridge 5 Cromwell) and Cromwell lock. Just to the left of the lock, take the gate to enter Cromwell Bottom Local Nature reserve.

Take the immediate path to your left. Noticing the marshes on your right hand side. You soon reach some steps that go up and then down to reach the river path. Turn right to follow the river path and continue along this path until you turn left over an old steel bridge. You are now entering the wildlife area. Notice the squirrel runs and viewing area to your right. Turn right by the sign post for 'Footbridge' and stop at the bird and squirrel watching area.

Reflection 2 - Nature reserve - bird tables



We are about to approach a section which is best spent in silence. It is a viewing section of the nature reserve with bird tables. Personally I've seen far more squirrels around here than birds!

We are going to stop here for a couple of minutes, in silence. Simply admiring the wonder of nature and giving thanks to God for his creation.

JOURNEY ON

Follow the path, with the wildlife reserve on your right. The path eventually leads to another gate at which point you turn right to join a footpath that bears left to cross a steel bridge over the river.

Follow the path (ignore uphill path to your right), you will see Cromwell Nature Reserve café on your left. Then pass through a gate heading towards Crowther Bridge. Do NOT cross the bridge. Take the steps down to the right immediately before the bridge to join the canal towpath. Bear right towards Brighthouse.

Reflection 3 - Canal



Often we stop at a significant marker on a walk but we sometimes miss the journey. So let's just pause and look around.

Our canal network is quite a feat of engineering...but it is also quite beautiful. The canal walk is also popular as it is flat and can often be walked even in adverse weather conditions.

It's the start of the new year. Christmas has past and it is a time of new beginnings...and new challenges. Are you able to give thanks for the last year, even for the adverse conditions, the challenges that you have gone through? We pause to reflect, to give thanks and look forward to the year ahead.

JOURNEY ON

Continue along the towpath until you reach a secondary gated path signposted 'Cromwell Bottom Local Nature Reserve, which you join to your right in the woodland area, this runs parallel to the canal towpath. Ignore the path to the right after 75 yards. The path leads to a viewing area on your right over the marshland/lake.

Continue ahead, following the path as it bears left to pass through a gate and rejoin the canal towpath at Cromwell Lock.

Turn right to continue along the towpath towards Brighthouse, retracing your steps from the outward journey back to the carpark.

On your way back, stop before the final lock with a lock keepers cottage. Notice the canal overflow area 50 yards before the lock.

Reflection 4 - Ganny Lock and overflow wall



So a bit of history, The Navigation canal reached Brighouse in 1764 but Ganny Lock was the point where the old canal re-entered the river. The section of canal between here, Ganny Lock, and Brookfoot was constructed in 1780. It was deemed essential because of the constant flooding in the fields below.

Due to the land sloping downhill from Brookfoot to Brighouse, it was decided to keep the new canal on the same level as the river at Brookfoot. This meant hewing out the solid rock hillside below Elland Road, resulting in the canal being much higher than the river as it meandered down to Ganny Lock. In theory, it meant that the canal would never flood because any flood water could run off the canal and through this wall (Can you see the gaps in the wall?), which had been especially designed to allow the water to cascade down into the river below.

So pause, take a look around. What do you see? Take in the landscape, the design of the canal, the simple gaps in the wall to let the flood waters through.

We are used to flooding here in the Calder Valley, whether we have experienced it ourselves or indirectly from experiences of friends and family. These simple gaps in the wall let the flood waters through.

Is anything overwhelming you at the moment? Does the year ahead look challenging? Let's pause for a moment and use the image of these simple gaps in wall to let anything that is overwhelming you just flow out.

'When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall **not overwhelm** you'. Thanks be to God.

JOURNEY ON

Continue along the towpath towards Brighouse, retracing your steps from the outward journey back to the carpark.