Walking the *Cuckoo Way*

A walk from the coffee shop: the River Rother Loop

Nona's Coffee Shop, located at the Canal Trust's headquarters at Hollingwood Hub, is a popular stopping off point on the towpath between Chesterfield and Staveley. Most visitors will be doing a linear walk and not venturing off the towpath. Although there are not many other footpaths in this post- industrial landscape, there is a little used path that links with the towpath to give a circular route. This walk uses that path and provides a pleasant circular walk.

Start at Hollingwood Hub, the Lock House, Works Road Hollingwood,Chesterfield,S43 2PF

(Use S43 2JP for SatNav). There is a large free car park and a regular bus service (Stagecoach / TM Travel 90, Chesterfield to Staveley), passes close by

Please note – Both the car park and Coffee Shop are open Wednesday to Sunday and Bank Holidays, from 9.30am to 4pm in winter, 4.30pm in summer

The walk is 2½ miles, with an option of extending to 4½ miles. The surface is mainly flat, but sections away from the towpath can be rough underfoot and muddy after rain. Walking boots are recommended.

Directions

From the Coffee Shop go on to the road and turn left. Cross the road and follow it towards Barrow Hill, passing large buildings that are all that remains of a once huge industrial complex. After about a quarter of a mile, as you approach a railway bridge, look for the public footpath sign on the opposite side of the road. Cross and take the path.

You will see a number of options. The official path follows the fence, but the informal options going in a similar direction all end at the same point. It's pleasant walking through the trees, though the path is a little clearer if you keep alongside the fence. This was once an industrial site, with many railway sidings. You see some reminders, but it's generally green and pleasant, with a remote feel.

The path eventually veers left and down through a grassy area (it can get rather long in summer), and your route simply follows the River Rother on your left. The path eventually goes up and through the gap in the fence out onto the lane. Turn left and follow the lane over the bridge crossing the River Rother. When you reach Cow Lane canal bridge, turn left along the towpath and back to the Coffee Shop for some well-earned refreshment.

The longer option

Start as above but when you reach the canal at Cow Lane Bridge, turn right along the towpath. When you come to Blue Bank Lock leave the towpath and follow broad track slightly right, then ahead. This was once the Great Central Railway and is now very popular with cyclists and walkers. Keep on this easy pleasant track until you reach a bridge. Go under this and then turn left to Wheeldon Mill Lock, a nice spot for a picnic. Then go left on the towpath back to the starting point.

I shall be leading a group around the longer option on Friday morning, 17 May, as part the Chesterfield Area Walking Festival. We shall start off with bacon butty. Booking is essential (cost £3.50, including sandwich and drink) 01246 345777 or go to www.chesterfieldwalkingfestival.co.uk

David Blackburn

