

Walking the Chesterfield Canal

THE CUCKOO WAY FROM CHESTERFIELD TO WEST STOCKWITH AND THE RIVER TRENT

INTRODUCTION



The Chesterfield Canal towpath is known as the Cuckoo Way and shown as a long distance path on 1:25,000 scale Ordnance Survey maps published since 1999. It runs for 46 miles, starting from Holbeck Way, off Brimington Road (B6543), Grid Ref SK 386716, not far from Chesterfield Railway Station. It's a very varied

and rewarding walk, with parts - particularly from the summit pound beyond Kiveton down to Turnerwood and Shireoaks - being regarded by some as among the finest canal walks in the country.

The path is generally easy to follow throughout, though a little care is needed on the presently unrestored section between Staveley and Killamarsh, through the village of Killamarsh and over the top of Norwood Tunnel. The route is waymarked.



These notes provide general information about the whole walk and additional details about the Killamarsh and Norwood Tunnel areas.

CHESTERFIELD TO STAVELEY

At Holbeck Way there are display boards showing the proposed Waterside development. This major project will incorporate homes, shops, bars/restaurants and businesses and there will be a new section of canal to the small basin that has already been constructed. For the present, the Cuckoo Way follows the River Rother until the start of the canal proper.



From here it's simply a case of following the towpath along the fully restored canal to Staveley, about 5 miles away - but do stop off at the Tapton Lock Visitor Centre (toilets, snacks and a lot of info about the canal). (SK 368729).

Further on you will also pass Hollingwood Lock House, where



the Canal Trust is currently leading an extensive redevelopment of the former lock house to form offices, café and community meeting rooms (due to open mid 2011).

STAVELEY TO KILLAMARSH

From Mill Green Bridge at Staveley (SK 430747) - just a few yards from Staveley town centre and Morrisons supermarket - the water soon runs out, but the towpath is clear and there are very obvious signs of restoration work in progress. Watch out in case there are signposted diversions. First half of 2011 should see completion of the new Staveley Town Basin. As you cross the railway bridge, there are several routes and a good number of signs for the Trans Pennine Trail (TPT). Cuckoo Way is waymarked and you should take the steps down on the right and then right on the track. As the houses end, take the waymarked green track veering left. There's no sign of a canal here, but the route follows the Staveley puddle bank, which once carried the canal high above the surrounding fields. At Milepost 6, the former Norbriggs Arm goes off right, so make sure you keep straight ahead. Cross the River Doe Lea and path becomes rather less distinct. Simply follow the hedge and path soon becomes clear again. Renishaw (SK 444781) comes next, with half a mile or so of newly restored canal. Over the road bridge, the shape of the dry canal bed is clear and you soon come to



another junction with the TPT. Do not take the clear track, but keep right and the canal follows alongside the route of the former Great Central Railway. Although the towpath is a right of way, it can get rather overgrown in summer, so if you opt for the wide TPT route alongside, watch that you don't carry on too far and miss the watery section of the canal. This is a length restored for fishing and is a welcome change from the dry section you have followed for some distance. At end of the water keep ahead over stile and through a sometimes muddy section, coming out at a track on the edge of Killamarsh.



THROUGH KILLAMARSH VILLAGE

Although much of the route of the canal can be followed, there is a length lost forever with a number of houses built on it. The canal will be diverted and the intended new line will drop down

by the Sports Centre you will pass behind shortly. Your route is clear, thanks to the recent creation of the Killamarsh Greenway which follows the canal line for much of its length and provides a safe off road route to local schools.

At Bridge Street (SK 456808), it's a short distance down the hill to shops, a café, bus routes and car park. Continue on the Greenway until you get to just beyond the Sports Centre on your left. You now have two options. You can drop down the path to the main road and turn right up the hill to the former canal bridge (remains of Belk Lane lock can be seen in the garden) and go left to rejoin the towpath. Alternatively, carry straight on along the approximate original canal route, joining Kirkcroft Avenue but still following the Greenway signs on paths and roads winding between the houses. At the second hammerhead at the end of the street, leave the Greenway signs as they bear right and turn left down the road (Pingle Rd) for a few yards, until a small car parking area on the right. Go through this and join the path behind the houses - the original canal line - and carry on to the main road. Cross over and rejoin towpath at the Cuckoo Way sign.



KILLAMARSH TO NORWOOD

From the bridge the line of the canal, still dry but easily recognised, is followed. As some industrial units are reached you can follow the road if the towpath is overgrown. You emerge at Mansfield Road, close by the Angel Inn. Cross busy road with care and rejoin the towpath, where canal is unrestored but full of water. Pass under the ancient arched bridge and join the tarmac track alongside Norwood Locks (SK 468819).

NORWOOD LOCKS AND THE TUNNEL



The buildings in this area were once an important part of the canal. The first building is the former Boatman's Inn and then you pass sawmill, workshops and lock keepers house. Workboats and lock gates were once made here. Please respect the privacy of the owners as you pass through the area - the locks are on private

land. The remains of the 13 locks are clearly visible and once lifted the canal 76' in about ¾ of a mile. At the top of the flight, the western portal of the Norwood Tunnel is visible below (SK 472820). Restoration plans are to build more locks and take

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the canal along the surface, rather than re-use most of the tunnel.

We leave the canal here – cross the stile and follow the trees round to right and at metal signpost turn left – DO NOT ENTER THE WOOD- and follow hedge up to M1 motorway. Go right at the top and then under the road (it's hoped that boats will be also using this route in a few years!) as track bends right, go ahead and slightly left



over field – the path is usually very clear. Cross broad track and follow line of the hedge to the tree covered mound that was once a colliery waste tip. At the modern houses, the large stone wall shows where the canal will be routed. Go through the motorcycle barrier to the right as you enter the Kiveton Community Woodlands country park. The proposed line of canal is followed- keep ahead at cross paths, then right for a few yards and left and over the green bridge. At this point you can see a series of fishing ponds- these have actually been designed as a marina and will be used as such when restoration is complete. Your route goes left, following the fence. At the end turn left again. You can either follow the path to the road, where there's a metal Cuckoo Way sign pointing left and follow the pavement to the crossing point further on. Alternatively, take the left path just before the road and follow it to the main entrance to the park and fishing ponds. (SK 492823) Go right and cross road carefully – traffic is very fast at times.

Once over the road there is a clear track straight ahead which soon brings you to the eastern portal of the tunnel. It is hoped to re use a section of the tunnel from here, bringing the canal to the surface just before the marina site you left a few minutes earlier.

KIVETON PARK TO THE TRENT

The canal is restored and fully navigable from here all the remaining 32 miles to the River Trent at West Stockwith, below Gainsborough. There's a good towpath throughout. At the first bridge - Dog Kennel Bridge- Kiveton Park Station is very close (SK 507824). There are trains to Sheffield and Rotherham or Worksop, Retford and Lincoln from here. There's also a pub.

Your route will bring you to Shireoaks, where the station is also next to the canal, and to the marina, built on the site of the former colliery.

Worksop is one of the main towns served by the canal. After

Town Lock, there's a substantial complex of former canal buildings, including the former Pickfords warehouse that straddles the canal. These buildings see varied use as pubs and nightclubs and may or may not be open. Under the warehouse is a gate on the towpath, which is sometimes locked – there's a simple diversion via the road.

It's 10 miles to Retford, with the village of Ranby about half way (SK649811). There's a pub/restaurant and bus stop here. The village is also just over the mid way point on the canal and is sometimes used by adventurous walkers as the break point for doing the whole Cuckoo Way in just 2 stages.

Retford is the final town of any size on the canal. It's a good base for exploring the remaining 15 miles to West Stockwith, as there's a bus service (service 96/97 to Gainsborough) that serves all the canal side villages.

There's always a long line of boats moored at Clayworth, headquarters of the Worksop and Retford boat club. There is a post office by the bridge selling ice creams and, like all the villages by the canal, a pub too. At the short Drakeholes Tunnel (SK 707903) you have to leave the canal - take care at the road crossings here – and then rejoin the track back down

to the canal. Gringley-on-the-Hill is away from the canal, but worth a visit as it's one of the highest points in Nottinghamshire and there are good views over miles of rolling farmland from Gringley Beacon (near the water tower).

Then it's on past Misterton to the large basin at West Stockwith, where the canal joins the wide and tidal River Trent (SK 748943). There are a couple of pubs, so you can celebrate as you complete the walk.



NORWOOD TUNNEL AND KILLAMARSH FROM WORKSOP DIRECTION

These notes are for walkers choosing the opposite direction and simply cover those locations where there is no clear towpath

NORWOOD TUNNEL

From the eastern tunnel portal, follow clear track to the road and enter the Kiveton Waters site. Take path off left, right at

each junction then follow fence. Right then left over bridge and head forward towards houses and stone wall. Follow track, taking right fork at junction and follow hedge then cross field to M1. Through underpass then right and left down hedge side. Right as you come to wood, then round to left, over stile and onto towpath down to Norwood

KILLAMARSH

At bridge, cross road and take signposted path along rear of houses. As you reach car parking area, go down to road, turn left then simply follow the Greenway signs taking you to the right. At end of the Greenway, by entrance to the fisheries, Cuckoo Way is to left just below the entrance

STAVELEY

As you join the TPT on outskirts of Staveley, watch out for the flight of steps on the left. Go up, over bridge, then right and rejoin towpath

MORE INFORMATION

We hope you enjoyed your walk. For a more detailed guide, it's well worth having our Guide to the Chesterfield Canal – it's written by real experts and is just £7.50. It is available from Tapton Lock Visitor Centre or from the Trust's website at – <http://www.chesterfield-canal-trust.org.uk/shop/chesterfield-canal-guide/>.

If you encounter any problems on your walks, please let the Cuckoo Way Officer know on cuckooway@chesterfield-canal-trust.org.uk.



TOP TIP! -for Ordnance Survey mapping side by side with aerial photos, try the excellent website at <http://wtp2.appspot.com>. This allows you to follow the whole route seamlessly, at 1:25,000 scale

And of course check the Canal Trust website for information about any diversions or closure – something that's bound to occur from time to time between Staveley and Kiveton Park as restoration steadily moves along the missing 9 miles