

Whittle le Woods & Canals (updated).

This 6 mile walk is based partly on the historic route of the Walton Summit Branch of the Lancaster canal that is now filled in. Much of the walk follows the route of this canal though it is not usually obvious that you are on an old canal. The walk returns by the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. There is an optional variation on the outward route and an alternative return route cross country rather than a lengthy canal return. There are also a number of minor variations defined.

Most of the walk is on fields, tracks, towpath and a small amount of quiet roads. Most of the path is reasonable underfoot but some stretches can be muddy. Apart from the canal interest, there is a variety of scenery and some wide ranging views. The walk also leads through a tunnel under the motorway and optionally another tunnel, and these can be quite dark so a torch is useful. The alternative return includes more tunnels.

There is only one significant ascent (30ft over 350yds/315m 5 min?)

The walks as defined here starts at the canal bridge beside the Malthouse Farm. Dark Lane is one possible parking place as is the Farm car park. SD591204. PR6 8AE.

The walk could also be started from the quarry car park at SD591228.

Or from the Dog Inn pub Chorley Old Road, Whittle le Woods.



It is important to always be appropriately dressed for the conditions and carry, and know how to use, a suitable map for the walk.

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1: SD 591204 Whether from Dark Lane or Malthouse car park, cross over the bridge, with care as there is no pavement and lots of traffic. Immediately turn hard right onto the path leading down to the towpath. Turn left (north) and follow the towpath for about 260yds (230m) where there is a crossing bridge. DO NOT cross.



2. SD 592207 Stay on the lower towpath and go under the bridge and continue along the towpath for about 310yds(280m) to find the car park at the end of this branch of the canal. This is the extent of the navigable part of the Whittle Summit Brach.



3. SD 589209 Go through the car park and turn right on the street looking for a footpath on the left after about 200yds(180m) and just after a right hand curve.



4. SD 590210 turn left onto the path which is also a driveway. After about 220 yds(200m) and just before the entrance to the house, find a stile on the left leading into a field.

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5. SD 590213 Cross the stile into the field and in a few feet find another stile on the right. Cross this and go up the incline onto the filled in remains of a canal. Follow this along as far as it goes passing over a stile. (the right hand side of the farm is one of a number of return routes.)



6. SD 590214 With the fence close by on the left, head right down a rather slippery slope to a field. There used to be a brickworks beside here. Find and cross a stile on the left to reach the tunnel.



7. SD 589215 Even on a bright day the floor of the tunnel can be hard to see. A torch doesn't go amiss. Pass through the tunnel and cross the stile at the other side. There is now another tunnel in front of you.



8. SD 588216 The canal ran above this tunnel on an aqueduct. There are now two choices. If you want the full "canal" trip, jump to **point 12**. If prefer a drier easier route, continue here by ascending the muddy path to the left of the tunnel, and over a stile onto a level grass area, which was the canal again.





9. SD 588216 You are standing on top of the canal with the aqueduct to the right (north). There is a stile ahead and a narrow footpath running behind some houses (noisy dogs around). You exit onto a field and turn immediately right to see a stile/bridge ahead.



10. SD 588217 Cross onto the farm driveway and turn left up to a road (Hill Top Lane). Turn left and follow the road about 225yds(200m). There is an interesting house just before going around a curve. Then look for a road coming in from the left.



11. SD 585218 This is where the alternative route catches up with this one. So jump to **point 14** to continue.

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12. SD 588216 This is the alternative route from just after the motorway tunnel. You need to go around this “fence” and pass through the tunnel.

BEWARE: The roof of the tunnel is very low, the footpath may be wet. Care is needed.

13. SD 587216 On exiting the tunnel turn left up some stairs to find and cross a stile. You must turn left here and follow this path which is likely to be muddy in damp weather. After perhaps 150yds(130m) the path joins a driveway and you pass through a gate. Shortly you join a road (Hill Top Lane). The Walton canal is to your right along this path.

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14. SD 585218 This is where the two routes merge again. By this point the canal is under this bridge and in due course disappears into a tunnel. Continue along the Hill Top Lane. It bears left over a bridge (over the canal). A few feet further, find some steps down to the side of the canal near the exit from the tunnel



15. SD 583218 Looking to the right at the bottom of the stairs is the bridge you just crossed at end of a short section of the canal. . (you can explore through the tunnel if not too wet.) Continue to the left and follow the path until it exits under another tunnel.



16. SD 582219 This is your exit from the canal. This was the Duke of York canal basin. Turn right up the slope to see some millstones on display and a convenient place for a beak.



(Looking back)



17. SD 581220 Continue the walk by going past the play area following the path on a wide grass route (this was the canal). After 380 yds(350m) you come to a road. Turn left down here until you are opposite the Dog Inn Pub.



18. SD 582224. Cross the road and enter the pub car park. At the left hand side of the pub is a footpath. Take this and in a few yds turn left on the path at the fenced rear of some houses. (the canal route is literally behind the pub to the right) Follow this path for about 180yds(150m), including crossing one local road until you meet a crossing earth path.



19. SD 583227 Turn right down the earth path. In just a few yds, look out for the old Lime Kiln.



20. SD 583226 The canal is above the kiln and heading towards the motorway again. Continue on this path which ascends gently and curves right passing over where the canal had been and then arrives at a Y junction. It doesn't matter which path you take. They lead to the same place. Continue on and watch for St. Helen's Holy Well. (350yds/320m)

21. SD 585224 (approx.) This was moved when the motorway was built. It had previously been classed as the “most pure and fresh water”.

Continue to follow the path which exits the wood through a metal kissing gate onto a road.



22. SD 586223 Turn left and follow the road up to a motorway bridge. Cross the bridge to find a stile set off to the left, and leading to a grassy hill.



23. SD 588222 Cross the stile and head directly up the hill and at the top enjoy the views in two directions. (This is the only significant incline on the walk). Continue over and down the hill heading a little to the right looking for a stile at the right side of a clump of trees.



24. SD 587225 Cross the stile and turn right to follow the fence up to another stile 250yds(225m) away. (sometimes an open gate a bit to the right)





25. SD 589226 This stile leads onto a track that has often been seriously muddy though passable. It is usually possible to move left a bit and cross over to the other side. There is another stile just out of sight a little left of directly opposite.



26. SD 589226 Cross this stile and head diagonally up the field heading to a metal gate at the other side of the field. Cross the stile by the gate onto a road and turn left. Follow the road for about 130yds(110m) to find the car park at a quarry.



27. SD 591228 Go in to the quarry to find some water and some rocks to sit on for a refreshment break, **BUT** on the way in notice a narrow path on the left halfway into the quarry. That is the way ahead after a break.



28. SD 591228 You may find some rock climbers to watch while having a break. When time to continue, return halfway back to the car park and turn right on a narrow path. This is the easiest way through the quarry. After 210 yds(190m) watch for a feint path to the left going between trees. (Alternately you can return to the road and turn right to find **point 30** below.)

29. SD 592230 The path is not obvious but is just before the path you are on starts to ascend.

Note: if you continue on the same path it reaches a crossing path. A steep ascent to the right leads to a trig point with good view. You then return all the way down this steep path to meet just past point **30** below.



30. SD 592230 Having turned left, within a few yds you cross a stile onto the road you were on when entering the quarry, and at the start of a bridleway. Follow this bridleway up to the top of the incline.



31. SD 593231 There is a wide viewpoint here, though you need to look over the wall. Continue by turning right downward towards a gate.



32. SD 594230 Just before you go through this gate have a look on the wall at the left. You will find a plaque about a workhouse that used to be here.

To continue, go through the gate, cross the road and go down the farm track a bit to the left. Where the track bears right, look for a stile on the left.





33. SD 598230 NOTE: This stile will lead to the return canal path. If you prefer a cross country return, jump to Point???

OTHERWISE cross the stile and head up the incline staying near the hedge on the left. Once over the brow of the incline, formally the path goes downhill and turns right along the fence to find a stile at the diagonally opposite corner.



34. SD 601229 Cross the stile and head SE. (Diagonally, heading down into the valley). After about 320yds(290m) find and cross a stile and continue in the same direction to find a footbridge.



35. SD 602225 This footbridge and the subsequent path up to the canal are known to get very muddy in the wrong weather. There is another canal access further left. Cross the bridge and ascend the slope to a stile.



36. SD 603224 Cross this awkward stile onto the towpath. Turn right and head along the towpath. There are a couple of pubs along the way if refreshments are needed. Look out for some metal information boards.

37. SD 591210 (approx.) There are a number of these boards. And look for the hook in the wall of the bridge!
Having followed the towpath for 1.5 miles (2.4Km) you reach a bridge.



38. SD 591207 This is the bridge you went under near the start.
Cross the bridge and follow the towpath back to the Bridge you started at.



39. SD 591207 Turn right up the path and over the bridge to get to the start.



* The End of Main Route at 25/9/17 *

See next pages for the alternative return route starting from Point 33 above.

This follows a cross country route that meets up with the canal at Top Lock Inn to then return to the start along the canal.



40: SD 598230 Instead of going over the stile, follow the farm track into the farm. Go more or less straight through the farm. Through a gate and soon over a stile, weaving around a ditch to cross another stile.

In the distance up the slope is Denham Hall farm (640yd/580m). Probably a dung heap just in front of a gate and wall stile.



41: SD 595225 Go through the gate and walk straight ahead to find a pair of gates and a stile at the other side of the farm buildings.



42: SD 594225 Exit the farm over the stile. In 710 yds(640m) this will lead to Birchin Lane. On the way it has a small kink right then left at a stile and later bears hard right down to the road through another stile.



43: SD 590219 On the map there should be a footpath on the other side of the road to the left. There is not. Instead go right a few feet to find a metal gate.

44: SD 590219 Go through the gate. In theory the formal footpath is 45yds (40m) to the left and then straight across this field to near the motorway, then left down the slope towards a tunnel. So the target is diagonally left across the field to a gate with a stile a bit hidden in the hedge to the right of the gate.



45: SD 589217 Cross the stile, turn right over another stile to go through the tunnel into a farm. Go more or less straight through the farm and just as you exit onto the road to the farm, there is a stile on the left.



46: SD 588217 This is the same as Point 10 but in reverse. On crossing this stile into the field go straight ahead to find a stile on the left in 48yds(44m). Go left over the stile along the rear of some houses (& noisy dogs), through a little gate and over a poor stile onto an open area.



47: SD 588216 This is part of the canal again with the motorway at the end of the open area. On the left in the trees is a stile. Cross this which leads down to the exist of the first tunnel you came through.
(you are coming from the right or behind here)





48: SD 589216 On passing through the tunnel you have two options.

A: of returning the way you came. i.e. turn right up onto the embankment and along and down to the farm track and later right along the road to the end of the water filled canal. (Backwards from **Point 8 above**)

B: Alternately on exiting the tunnel look left for a stile.



49: SD 589215 Cross the stile and turn right to find a path running beside the river. In 250 yds(225m) a bridge is reached.

Again there is a choice.

A: the path straight ahead will take you out at the farm in **Point 5** above. However this path will have muddy stretches and obstacles (albeit fun). Jump to **Point 53**

B: Once over the bridge look left to a stile.



50: SD 592215 Cross the stile and soon another stile to arrive at a bend in a road beside a bridge



51: SD 593215 Go straight ahead up the inclining road which gets a little steeper and in 390yds(350m) reach the Top Lock Inn.

52: SD 596213 If not stopping for refreshments, turn right down onto the canal path. You are at the top of the Johnson's Hillock Locks which take the Leeds & Liverpool canal down 60 feet to join the Lancaster canal. Follow the canal $\frac{3}{4}$ mile(1.2KM) back to the start. Notice some of the canal signs on the way. (See Points 37, 38,39 above)



**** End of Main Alternative ****

=== Variation from Point 49 (& $\frac{1}{2}$!)

53: SD 592215 On crossing the bridge, the path straight ahead follows a stream uphill. There is some mud and it's often best to walk on the stream itself. Nearer the top there are fallen trees to negotiate.



54: SD 590213 this final obstacle lead out beside the farm that was **Point 5** above. Go straight ahead to meet a road in due course (**Point 4** above.)

Turn right along the road and in about 200yds(180m) find a stile on the left.



8: SD 589210 Go over(around) the stile and follow the canal back to the start point $\frac{1}{3}$ rd mile away.

****End of this Alternative.****

