

## **Leeds-Liverpool Canal Walk 9.**

### **Burnley to Barrowford Locks. August 2017**

We had a mild panic today with sixteen walkers in the car park but no minibus! A quick phone call from David calmed the nerves – the driver was on his way. Rain on the M6 dampened the spirits a bit, but it didn't last and we arrived at our starting point at the "Weavers' Triangle" with dry but cloudy weather.

Shortly after the start we reached the "Straight Mile" stretch on a high embankment built between 1796 and 1801 and regarded as one of the wonders of canal engineering – built entirely by pick and shovel! Here we met a group of nervous novice cyclists going the other way – possibly from Burnley U3A!

On the north side of the embankment was the "Ropewalk Community Garden" built with Lottery and other community funds on the site of a rope works. The canal then almost doubled back on itself as it skirted Townley Park with its fine Hall which is now the borough's museum and art gallery. This was once home to a family of the same name. We passed the suburbs of the Burnley Lane district, with former coaling wharf and mills, sharing the "transport corridor" with the railway, M65 and Pendle Water. We soon came across the Bank Hall Dry Dock on the far bank, with two canal boats under repair. This dock was once owned by the nearby colliery of the same name and was one of the most important working docks in the North West at the height of the coal and textile era. It closed in 1971 but was restored in 2014 by two semi-retired couples who have launched their own business painting and repairing canal boats to bring the derelict site back to life.

A spell of rain brought out a few ponchos while we sheltered under a bridge but we strode on and the rain soon gave way to a little sunshine. On the far bank of the canal we saw Reedley Marina and a fine display of canal boats. Soon we reached Brierfield with its canal side spinning and weaving mills, the most impressive being "Brierfield Mills" rebuilt

incrementally between 1868 and 1901 in Italianate and simpler styles, It is an enormous complex in rock faced stone.

At our lunch stop on Clogger Bridge, we saw the only moving canal boat of the day and lost a hat to the wind. No volunteers to go in the brambles after it!

Passing under the motorway junction we began to enter the outskirts of Nelson which has managed to retain some cotton spinning and weaving traditions while developing light industry. The former being evident in the large weaving sheds and mills along the canal with names like Spring Bank, Valley and Whitefield to name a few. The town was originally a collection of villages, particularly Great and Little Marsden, but to avoid confusion with the West Riding town of the same name, the Lancs and Yorks railway renamed it Nelson (presumably after some community consultation!) after the Lord Nelson Hotel which predated the arrival of the railway in 1849.

As we left the town, the M65 became more evident and the towpath changed sides. After crossing Colne Water on the Swinden Aqueduct, we met the first of the Barrowford flight of seven locks which raises the canal to its summit level. Here just after passing under the motorway we left the canal at bridge 143 and walked ten minutes to the Pendle Heritage Centre at Barrowford for a welcome cup of tea and a toasted teacake. As usual, the walk was longer (according to several phone GPS apps) than the seven miles the map suggested – eight miles to bridge 143 and a little more to our cuppas. Another good walk completed. Next time, after the remaining six locks, we reach the summit and the Foulridge Tunnel.



