

Levens Bridge & Holme

In effect we have two starting points. If you are taking the bus at the beginning of the walk as we did, then the start is in Holme. The easiest way to Holme is from the A65, heading south at the roundabout with the A6070. Continue for about 5km to the second sign for Holme on the right. This is the B6384 – Burton Road. Follow this until it crosses the M6 (about 100m) then park in the layby as the road bears right. The bus stop is on the left about 100m further along the B6384. If you are using Satnav to get there then try Sheernest Lane, Holme as an address, or LA6 1QS as a postcode. If you prefer paper maps then the OS Grid reference is SD52767836, and the What-3-words tag is **haystack.meanings.clash** An alternate start is at Levens Bridge getting back by bus – or some other means. In this case Satnav users can enter the address Levens Hall, Kendal, or the postcode LA8 0PD, whilst the What-3-words tag for the bus stop is **blackbird.paramedic.claps**, which corresponds to OS grid reference SD49538529.

The bus stop is on the A6: Having disembarked, we need to cross the road and head back to the right to cross Levens Bridge - there is no footpath on the Western side of the bridge. Just beyond the bridge there is a pedestrian entrance to the deer park which takes us onto a public footpath through the private grounds. The path through the Deer Park follows the River Kent upstream – it is worth knowing that there is a public footpath on each side of the Kent, and it's important to use the one on the right bank (when heading upstream). Don't be tempted to use the left hand path – it's a good walk, but there is no connection with our route as we leave the Deer Park.

At the end of the 1km path through the park, we arrive at a gate and exit onto a minor road. From here we head right, walking along the road for a short while – the road is generally quiet, but there is no pavement, so care is needed. After 400m, we see a footpath sign on the left hand side of the road and take the path up to what was once a section of the Lancaster canal. We remain parallel to the road for another 200m and then the path takes a sharp left turn – as indeed the canal once did.

The tunnel is quite short (378 yds), and it was therefore viable to move boats through by pulling on chains attached to the side of the lining – for this reason there is no route through for either pedestrians or the horses that pulled the boats as far as the tunnel portal. The canal company provided a specific access path – which is now a public footpath. That's how we get to the other side of the tunnel – head right just before the portal and follow the path uphill, then head sharp left and follow the track over the hill, passing under a couple of bridges where a road and then the West Coast Main Line cross our route.

At the far end of the tunnel, the path continues down to a minor road where we turn left and walk under the busy A590. On the far side of that road bridge, the canal towpath continues to the right – still without water. We stay with the towpath on what would have been the right hand bank of the canal until we get to a road bridge which marks the end of the water filled section – this is a good place to take a break.

The towpath continues, and we follow it for a good while now. There is much to see, and within just 200m we find our next landmark – the Stainton Aqueduct. This is a short aqueduct that carries the canal over a beck. It is not particularly noticeable from the canal bank but became quite well known in 2015 when part of the structure collapsed due to storm flooding, requiring a £2.2 million pound repair. There is now signage at the towpath and a path down – the repair is now complete and to an excellent standard.

Back at the towpath we head right again. We pass the agricultural show ground on the right, and then approach Crooklands – a good place to stop for lunch.

Just before we get there though, we find an interpretation board that explains why the canal took this particular route – one of its main users was the gunpowder works that used to be located at nearby Gatebeck. The works belonged to C.W.H Wakefield, and a docking area referred to as Wakefield's Wharf was built on the canal: the works and the wharf were connected by a tramway using horse drawn wagons to convey the raw materials to the works and the explosive back to the canal.

The towpath continues South now, until we get to the M6, where we pass underneath, sharing a path with the A65, before returning to the towpath beyond the motorway. The canal continues and we stay with it as it goes under the A65 and enters a more rural landscape, with great views to the left of Farleton Knott. As we progress, the canal gets nearer to the busy M6 again, and in fact the motorway again crosses over the canal. In this instance however, the canal has been culverted and there is no right of way, so walkers following the canal route need to leave the towpath at bridge number 155 (Dukes Bridge) and take the minor road over the motorway. On the far side there is a well signed path through a field at the side of the motorway embankment back to the towpath.

We stay with the canal almost to the end of the walk now. Passing the housing of Holme on the right, we arrive at further signage explaining the remnants of coke ovens that we can see with the garden of a house on the far side of the canal.

We press on and our next landmark is bridge number 148 – we leave the canal here to join the minor road which we follow uphill and back to the layby where we started.

- **Total distance 14 km (8.7 miles)**
- **Total ascent 115 m**
- **Moderate walk**