

## Glasson Dock and Lancaster Canal spur

We start at Conder Green, which is easily found – it's on the A588 south of Lancaster with good links to the M6. If you are using Satnav to get there the address for the parking is Corricks Lane, Conder Green, Lancaster LA2 0AN. The OS Grid reference is SD45695614, whilst the What-3-Words tag is **dinosaur.celebrate.dodges**.

From the car park – which is chargeable but good value – we head back the way we drove in and walk through Conder Green back to the main road at the Stork Hotel. As we walk along Corrick lane, look to the right and notice the River Conder meandering down to the Lune Estuary – the river is important to the working of the canal in the sense that it provides most of the water to replace that lost as boats traverse the locks between the main line of the canal and Glasson Dock. The name Conder can be traced back to at least the 13<sup>th</sup> century and is derived from old Celtic words meaning ***crooked waters***.

Once back at the A588, we turn left as if heading toward Lancaster, and look for a junction with a minor road 50m ahead of us. At that junction, we take a sharp right turn onto a minor road walking no more than 150m until we find a footpath on our left taking us east through farmland and up to the main line of the canal.

We walk to the left of Websters farm, and then to the right of a patch of woodland – this is Crow Wood. As we do so, don't be tempted to take the path which crosses ours – keep heading east.

200m after Crow Wood we approach Parkside farm – that path goes right through the cluster of farm buildings, and is well signed so navigation should not be an issue, then once past the farm we climb gently toward another woodland – this one is Forerigg Wood.

The path goes through the wood – at a narrow point so we leave the trees behind almost as soon as we have entered them - and walk a further 100m southeast to meet the Lancaster Canal towpath, where we go right, until we come to the junction with the Glasson Arm.

We follow the Glasson Arm all the way down to the dock at Glasson – navigation is obviously not a problem, just make sure there's a canal on your left all the way.

There is much to see on the way – the low usage and lack of industrial activity means that the waterway is something of a haven for wildlife, and we have a number of landmarks on the gentle stroll down to the docks.

To the left of the canal between the third Lock and Bailey Bridge is Thurnham Hall, a 12<sup>th</sup> century country house that stands in a stunning estate of nearly 30 acres. Boasting an elegant Jacobean Great Hall, Thurnham Hall is now home to 60 luxury self-catering apartments, both in the hall itself and in purpose built accommodation designed to blend in with their surroundings.

300m further on we find the Mill Hotel – and a quick glance at the building suggests that it was once a working mill. It was built in around 1740 as a corn mill, and used water drawn from the Conder to power grinding stones. The placement of the canal next to the mill was initially something of a coincidence, but the need for improved water supplies for the lower locks and the basin at Glasson soon brought the mill and the canal into close partnership: The canal company purchased the Mill in 1824 for £1,100 in order to obtain its right to take water from the River Conder and divert it into the canal, then from there to the mill wheel, with a tail race returning the water to the canal below the

lock. In other words, the canal used the mill's existing right to extract, but allowed a route for the water such that the mill could still operate.

Beyond the Mill, we pass under the busy A588, then over to the right notice a marshy area known as Conder Pool – this is a Nature Reserve, and an important breeding ground for Common Terns – which despite the name are under significant threat.

There were once large colonies of terns up the Lancashire coast but a collapse in numbers in 2008 (which is still poorly understood) means that Conder Pool is one of the few remaining strongholds. A nesting Platform designed to protect the birds from land based predators has been built and numbers have stabilised.

One kilometre further on, we arrive at Glasson Marina, and then Glasson Dock, the presence of masts and sea going vessels seeming significantly out of character with what so far has been a very traditional canal.

Until 1779, Glasson was a small agricultural and fishing village – the heart of it is in what we now know as Old Glasson - and residents would have been familiar with ocean going vessels passing by as they navigated up the Lune to the port of Lancaster. That journey was becoming increasingly difficult though as ships became larger, and the river silted up and shifted course.

A simple plan was born – build a big new port further down the Lune – what we now know as Glasson Dock.

The harbour at Glasson originally opened in 1787 and was at its height the largest port in the northwest, importing cotton, sugar, spices and slaves from Africa and the West Indies. Lancaster Canal was important in affording swift distribution of cargo landed at the port into the heart of industrial Lancashire. Glasson is still a thriving port handling over 150,000 tonnes of cargo annually, although failure of one of the Sea Lock gates has recently reduced the availability of the port.

Our route goes as far as the large open Marina, the turns right to pick up the railway path heading back to Conder Green, but feel free to wander round the marina, the dock beyond it, and Old Glasson – all are worth seeing, and if you like smoked foods, then the Lancaster Smokehouse is well worth a visit.

At the railway path, we turn right and head northwest with great views across the estuary. We soon cross the blue painted bridge over the Conder – which we saw at the start of the walk - to arrive back at our starting point.

- **Total distance 9.6 km (6.0 miles)**
- **Total Ascent 67 m**
- **Easy walk**