

Plough Walks



WALK No: 5

VALE ROYAL LOCKS & ABBEY VIA WHITEGATE WAY & THE WEAVER NAVIGATION.

- **START/FINISH: THE PLOUGH**
- **MAPS: OS EXPLORER 267**
- **DISTANCE: 9.8KM / 6MILES ALLOW 2HRS 15MINS**
- ***FIRM SURFACE WITH SOME ELEVATED PARTS, SOME SECTIONS CAN BE WET/MUDDY IN WINTER.***

About the Walk.

The walk is approximately 6 miles and effectively takes you on a journey back in time. Firstly to the industrial revolution via Whitegate way and the Weaver Navigation, both built to transport salt from the mine at Winsford to Runcorn and its developing industries there. Whilst the salt mine is still a viable operation at Winsford, both Whitegate way & the Navigation, has long since finished been used for transportation purposes. Both are now areas of conservation & popular with ramblers & the public in general.



After reaching the locks at Vale Royal the walk then gives a glimpse of life in the Middle Ages as you enter the grounds of what remains of the Ancient Vale Royal Abbey and its rich history. The abbey was founded in 1270 by Edward I for monks of the austere Cistercian order. The king intended the abbey to be on the grandest scale, however, financial difficulties meant that these ambitions could not be fulfilled and the final building was considerably smaller than planned. The project ran into problems in other ways too; the abbey was frequently grossly mismanaged, relations with the local population were so poor as to result in large scale violence on a number of occasions and internal discipline was frequently bad.

Vale Royal was closed in 1538 by Henry VIII as part of the Dissolution of the Monasteries. Much of the abbey, including the church, was demolished but some of the cloister buildings were incorporated into a mansion by Thomas Holcroft, an important government official, during the 1540s

The abbey has had many owners; it was the home of the Cholmondeley family from 1615 -1907. In more recent times, ICI purchased the site in 1947 as its headquarters for its Alkali Division; however since 1998 the abbey has been home to a private golf club.

1. Beauty Bank - Catsclough

Turns left out of the Plough car park and walk to the bottom of the lane and take the track to the left of Haresclough. Descend along Gooseberry Hollow and across the footbridge and then turn left. Follow the track to the right and continue around and upwards, past the pond on the right & then cross the stile also on the right (opposite Gale Green Farm) Cross over the next stile on the left both kissing gates ahead of you & continue across the field and then left down the steps that lead to Whitegate way. **(1.6km)**

Turn left and walk along Whitegate way, past the broken bridge (Grange Lane) and continue along the path until you come to a barrier and signpost for Catsclough crossing.

Turn left at the crossing and walk along the narrow track until you reach a T-Junction. At the junction go straight across and through the gap in the field (next to path marker, which was lying in the hedge last time the route was walked, so may or may not be visible!). Continue along with the trees and hedge to the right and descend for some distance and take a right just before you reach the bottom of field, where you can see a gap in the trees. **(The grass can be a little high in this area) (3.2km)**. Cross over the wooden sleeper and bear right & up to the stile ahead. Turn left over the stile walking to the left of the 3 telegraph poles. *(Up until the 70s there used to be a working mill here and the field to the left would have been completely flooded!)* Cross the stile ahead and turn left before crossing the footbridge and then through the gate and on to the road ahead.

2. The Weaver Navigation.

At the road turn right and walk a short distance past Meadow Park Homes, then over the Road Bridge and then turn left down to the river. (Weaver navigation) **(4.5km)** Cross the river via two bridges and turn left and continue along the river bank

This is a particular pleasing and scenic part of the walk with narrow boats moored along side the river bank as the walk continues for about a mile through both open and shaded areas. Keep a look out also, for the herons & kingfishers that frequent this particular stretch of water.

3. Vale Royal Locks & Abbey

After passing thru the 3rd kissing gate you will come to a location known as Vale Royal Locks. **(5.5km)**

There has been a lock at Vale Royal for over 250 years, starting with a single timber construction which opened to traffic in 1732.

Cross over the locks, turn right down the track for about 100 yards and turn left through a metal gate. Continue along the track through the kissing gate and on to the grounds of Vale Royal Abbey Golf Course.

Walk past the Abbey which is on the left hand side and continue on to the residential area which was built in the late 80's. When you reach a property called Rowan house, cross over to the left hand side of the road and through a gate with a yellow warning sign on it. Continue on through the woods until you reach a gate and beyond the gate, a road with Whitegate church directly opposite. Take a left at the road and after a short distance left again (Grange Lane) Walk a short distance and just as the road bends round and up to the left, cross the road to the right and over the stile & then across the footbridge.

4. Whitegate Village – Foxwist Green.

Walk up the field towards two telegraph poles ahead on the left, go through the gap & walk up the field with the hedge to your right. Cross over a stile between some trees and then on to the next stile and through a small field to yet another stile, bringing you to the road at Foxwist Green. Turn right at the road and after a short distance go thru the kissing gate on the left hand side (opposite Chadwick Foxwist Green) walk down along the hedge to your right and turn right through the small metal gate. Turn left and go through the next gate and then over the footbridge.

Continue upwards through two kissing gates and on through the field to the road at beauty bank. Turn right and walk the short distance back to the Plough (start & finish)

- **Why not complete your walk with refreshments in our welcoming hostelry.**

Hidden in a quiet corner of beautiful Cheshire countryside that is popular with walkers and steeped in history, the Plough Inn offers traditional beers, fine wines, and quality home cooked food served in a comfortable and friendly atmosphere.

We have one of the most varied menus in the area. Favourites such as steak pie and chips are served alongside starters, salads and a continually changing specials board. A wide variety of fish and seafood is also available. All our dishes are prepared on the premises using fresh sustainable produce from local meat and fish suppliers.

We would appreciate any feedback regarding our walks, please forward them to Nigel Durose at the following email address. Nigedurose05@googlemail.com

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Further walks are available from the Plough or by visiting the above website.