

Idle Valley Walk

On Sunday, 5 June, there will be a guided walk along this route. Start at 10 a.m. at Townend Bridge in Hayton (Grid ref. SK728852). Duration 4 to 5 hours. See our website for full details or visit www.nottsguidedwalks.co.uk.

Starts: Limited roadside parking next to Townend Bridge (66), Hayton (B1403) Grid ref. SK728852. Alternative starting points are Chain Bridge Lane (SK704858) or small layby at Clayworth (SK733878). Stagecoach buses nos. 96 and 97 (Gainsborough - Retford).

Distance: Just over 6 miles/9.5 kilometres.

Facilities: No public toilets and no shops. However, there are three pubs - The Boat Inn at Hayton, The Brewers Arms and The Blacksmiths, both in Clayworth.

Terrain: Completely on the level with no noticeable slopes. Paths are mainly gravel/compacted soil on the reserve with grass paths along the canal towpath and across fields. Beware of trip hazards around the canal moorings!

Walk description:

From Townend Bridge, walk down the road for 200m towards Clayworth. Where the road does a sharp right turn, take the marked by-way straight ahead (ignore the footpath sign off to the left).

Follow the by-way for approximately 1000m (ignoring a second footpath sign on your left) and carrying on to the metal bridge that spans the Idle River. Just before the bridge there are scrapes on both sides of the by-way where a variety of birds can be seen, including Greylag Geese, Tufted Duck, Oystercatcher, Moorhen and Coot.



Cross over the Idle River bridge and enter the Idle Valley Nature Reserve (Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, NWT). There is a bench at this point overlooking the river on your left. The river is quite shallow and the water very clear, so keep a look out for fish and even eels.

Continue on the by-way (Chainbridge Lane) heading towards Lound. 200m past the bridge there is a viewpoint on your left overlooking Chainbridge Pit, a large expanse of water with possible sightings of Mute Swan, Cormorants, Common Tern, Canada Geese, Lapwing and other waders.

On the opposite side of the by-way is a raised viewpoint of Chainbridge Scrape. This gives an excellent view of the northern part of the reserve. Possible bird sightings could include Little Egret, Great Crested Grebe, Gadwall and other ducks as well as waders such as Redshank. NWT refers to the Idle Valley 'Secret Seven' - Grasshopper Warbler, Garden Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Common Whitethroat, Wren, Lapwing and Skylark. Keep your eyes and ears open for both sightings and (more often) birdsong of these species. Some of these birds are quite elusive.

After another approximately 500m, turn right off Chainbridge Lane onto another wide track/unmade road. There is a metal gate across this road. As you walk up this track there are further scrapes on your left where you may spot Reed Warblers flitting about between stands of reeds.

After 800m, this track turns sharply left. At this point, go straight ahead through a small gap in the fence and turn right onto the Gadwall Trail. The lake immediately in front is the one used by the Water Ski Club. Follow the grassy Gadwall Trail for 100m. At this point there are many damselflies (Blue-tailed, Azure and Common Blue) and possible dragonflies, primarily Darters.

The Gadwall Trail does a sharp left turn. Immediately ahead is a short path to a viewpoint over Neatholme Scrape which is always worth investigating. Retrace your steps back to the Gadwall Trail and turn right to follow the Gadwall Trail alongside Neatholme Scrape. About 500m further on is another viewpoint on your right overlooking Neatholme Scrape.

After a further 200m the Gadwall Trail turns left. At this point, turn right and take the path between Neatholme Scrape and Neatholme Pit towards the Idle River and Clayworth. Along this path are several viewpoints, with benches, overlooking the water. Listen for Chiffchaff and Greenfinch.

Once you come to the wooden bridge over the river, you will be leaving the Nature Reserve. You may be fortunate to see Banded Demoiselle damselflies flying around the reeds in the river.

Having crossed over the bridge, follow the Bridleway sign to Clayworth (ignoring the footpath sign to the left). This bridleway can be a little overgrown at times. As you follow the bridleway you will pass a wooden post where the bridleway becomes a footpath. This part of the walk is rich with damselflies and butterflies.

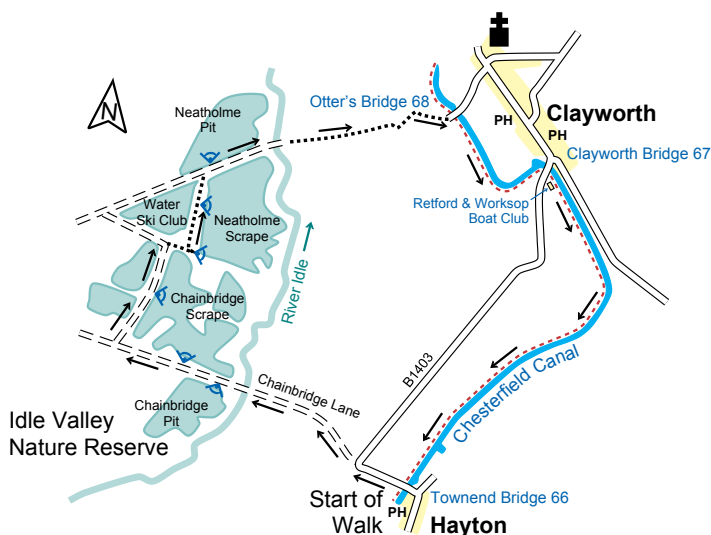
Keep following this footpath and you will come to a wooden bridge crossing over New Ea Drain. Continue following the footpath across a field towards Clayworth. Keep a good look out for Yellow Wagtails and Broad Bodied Chaser dragonflies.

As you cross the field you should be able to see the canal bridge (Bridge 68) to your left. The path veers left and crosses another drain (Meadow Drain) before taking a right turn between two large trees. There is a signpost at this point indicating where you need to go.

Just before Bridge 68, turn right onto the canal towpath and proceed right along the path around Clayworth.

(At this point if you wish to have lunch in one of the pubs in the village, go over the bridge and walk towards the church. Turn right along Town Street, where you will find both The Brewers Arms and The Blacksmiths.)

Walking along the towpath you will pass under Bridge 67 and arrive at the Retford and



Workshop Boat Club. Be careful as you pass the moored boats as many will have electrical cables hooked up. Either side of Bridge 67 there are yellow water lilies which add a splash of colour.

Continue along the towpath for 2km back to Townsend Bridge, where the walk started. This section of the canal is rich with wildlife - birds, butterflies, damselflies and dragonflies. Dependent upon the time of year, the wild flowers are also impressive. Just before you get back to Bridge 66, keep an eye out for the 'mock' stone circle on the opposite canal bank!

Wildlife (dependent upon the time of year):

Birds - Swallow, Swift, House Martin, Common Buzzard, Red Kite, Hobby, Kestrel, Greylag Goose, Canada Goose, Coot, Moorhen, Redshank, Oystercatcher, Little Ringed Plover, Lapwing, Mallard, Gadwall, Pochard, Common Tern, Greenfinch, Chiffchaff, Cormorants, Mute Swan, Great Crested Grebe, Little Grebe, Little Egret, Grey Heron, Reed Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Garden Warbler, Grasshopper Warbler, Skylark, Yellow Wagtail.

Butterflies - Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Gatekeeper, Small White, Green Veined White, Large White, Comma, Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell.

Damselflies and Dragonflies - Blue-Tailed Damselfly, Azure Damselfly, Common Blue Damselfly, Banded Demoiselle, Common Darter, Ruddy Darter, Broad Bodied Chaser, Hawkers (various).