



5 kilometres / 1 to 2 hours depending on how often you stop to admire the views.

Accessibility – Mostly unmade paths with a number of slopes and a couple of stiles. Bikes are not allowed on riverside paths. Unsuitable for wheelchairs, etc.

Canal boats and Crayfish Claws at Kildwick

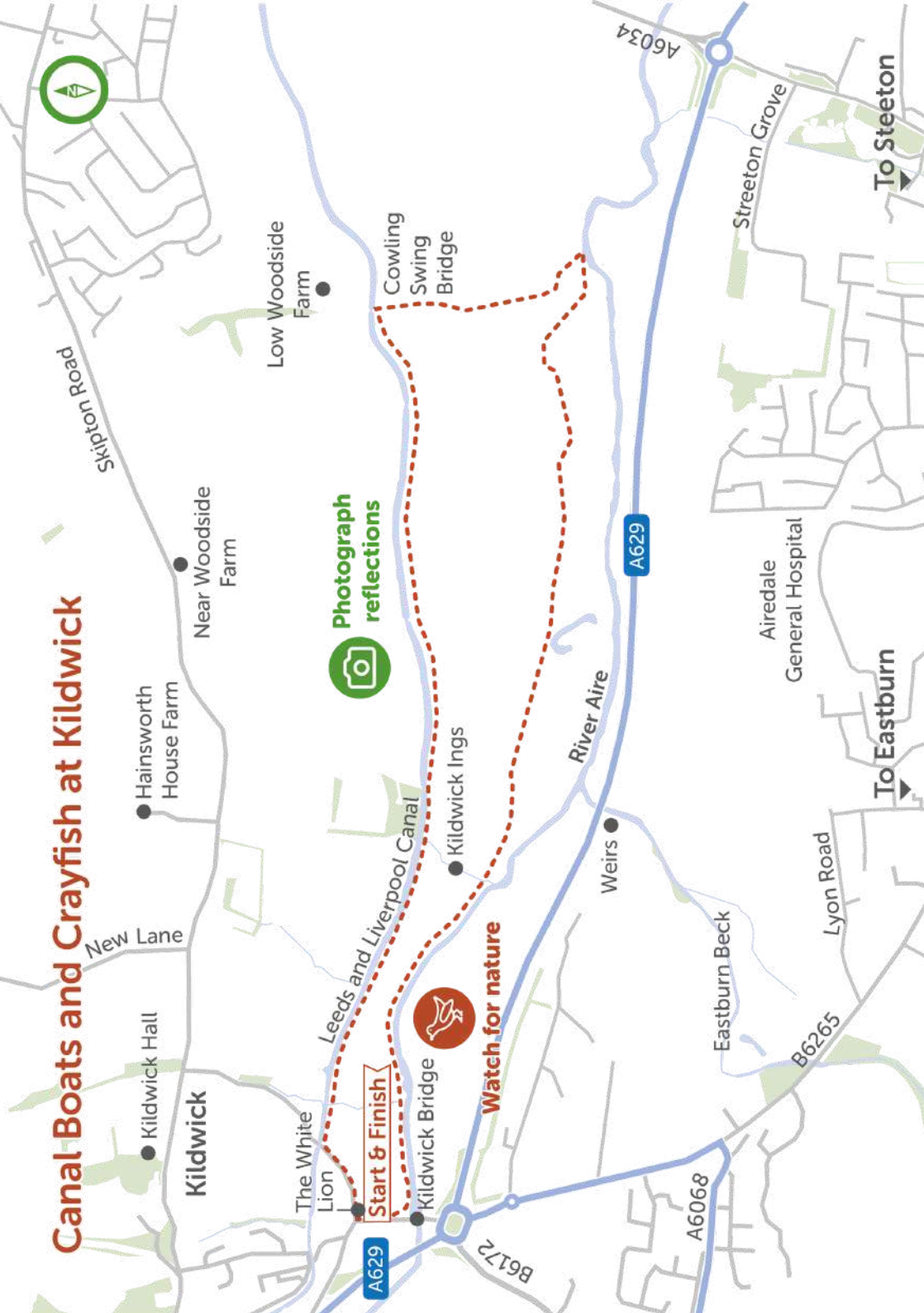
Start this walk at the White Lion Pub. Turn right and head up the hill towards Kildwick Church.

The building you are approaching has been standing since the 1300's. However there has been a church here since the 1000's.

The church has been well recognised throughout history. Charlotte Bronte visited here during her time as governess for Mary Wainman from nearby Lothersdale.



Canal Boats and Crayfish at Kildwick



Pause to take a look in the church graveyard (near the car park) and you will find a tomb stone dating from 1889. It belongs to John Laycock. The beautifully carved organ is said to be a replica of the first organ he made.



If your walk is early on a Sunday morning you may hear the bells chime at Kildwick church. The tower is one of only six in the country to have "Yorkshire tail ends," a fluffy handle on the end of the pulling ropes. Bells have been rung here since it was built, over 600 years ago



Take a right past the church passing Kildwick C of E School on Priest Bank Road towards the swing bridge.

The 1848 map names this bridge as Barrett's Bridge but now it is known locally just as Kildwick bridge.

The section of Leeds and Liverpool Canal it crosses was built in 1773. Much of this canal was dug by hand and it allowed the transportation of raw materials such as coal and limestone over the Pennines. The canal linking Leeds and Skipton alone required 27 swivel and 7 arched stone bridges, 3 aqueducts over roads, 5 over brooks and "1 great aqueduct over the River Aire of seven arches."

Now most of the traffic goes over Kildwick Bridge and only boat owners have the key to move the bridge.

Turn right at the bridge and head along the tow path.



As you walk along the canal you may notice that it crosses another watercourse. Look down and you will see Grange Beck flowing under the canal. Canals are lined with clay to keep the water in. The traditional method was to drive flocks of sheep along the newly constructed canals to squash this clay down with their feet. Civil engineers still use sheepsfoot rollers today.

At Cowling Swing Bridge (the third closed crossable bridge) turn right and follow the footpath down the hill. You should find yourself on the banks of the River Aire. Turn right and head upstream following the public footpath back towards Kildwick.

The river here is in the grip of an alien invasion. Signal crayfish introduced to Europe from America in the 1960's to farms are now widespread. They carry crayfish plague. This disease that does not harm them but decimates native White-clawed crayfish. You may find broken signal crayfish claws on the footpath. They are a favourite food for otters.



This walk is part of the Developing the Natural Aire programme. This partnership programme between the Environment Agency and The Aire Rivers Trust is reconnecting sixty kilometres of your river with fish passes to enable wildlife to thrive and Atlantic salmon to return.

We are hopeful that the gravel beds found in streams and upper reaches of the main river throughout Craven will provide the ideal habitat for them to lay their eggs. Salmon will have traveled from the Atlantic Ocean around Greenland to lay their eggs.



Once hunted, the return of otters is a sign of healthy fish populations.

They can sometimes be spotted at dusk. They swim much lower in the water than mink with just the head visible and have a distinctive forward roll as they dive

Gooseanders are fish eating ducks. They have a serrated "sawbill" for grasping fish.

Planting riverside trees gives fish places to hide from predators.

Photograph by Morgan Caygill





Atlantic salmon caught and returned by the Environment Agency in the River Aire below Leeds in 2010

Lighter stones in a river bed showing where spawning salmon have cleaned away the silt to spawn



Kildwick bridge is one of the oldest bridges on the River Aire. Between 1305 to 1313 the monks from Bolton Abbey paid for it be constructed in stone as one of their main routes towards Lancashire. However wooden bridges had existed there many centuries before this.

Few people swim in the Aire now but in July 1913, 12-year-old John Greenwood used his mastery of the Australian crawl to win five trophies in the Kildwick Swimming Gala. Then held annually in the river by this bridge. John came from a renowned local family of swimmers and in later life took part in many aquatic exhibitions. One of his tricks was to escape Houdini-like from a tied sack thrown into the water.

At Kildwick Bridge turn right and head back up the hill to your starting point at the White Lion pub.

Thank you to Farnhill and Kildwick History Group for helping write this walk.



Photo used with permission of the Farnhill and Kildwick History Group

Transport links: The 66 Dalesway bus travels from Keighley to Kildwick Lane End. From here walk down Skipton Road to the White Lion Pub. Trains link Bradford and Leeds to Keighley. The nearest train station to Kildwick is Cononley, it is then approximately a 30 minute walk to the White Lion Pub. There is limited car parking in the village.

Refreshments: The White Lion is a piece of history itself. Dating from the 1600's, it is known for its traditional comfortable feel.

We have produced a number of family activity postcards to accompany our walks



Find these and lots, lots more about our project at www.dnaire.org.uk



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