

Kidsgrove Canal Nature Recovery Walk One Guide

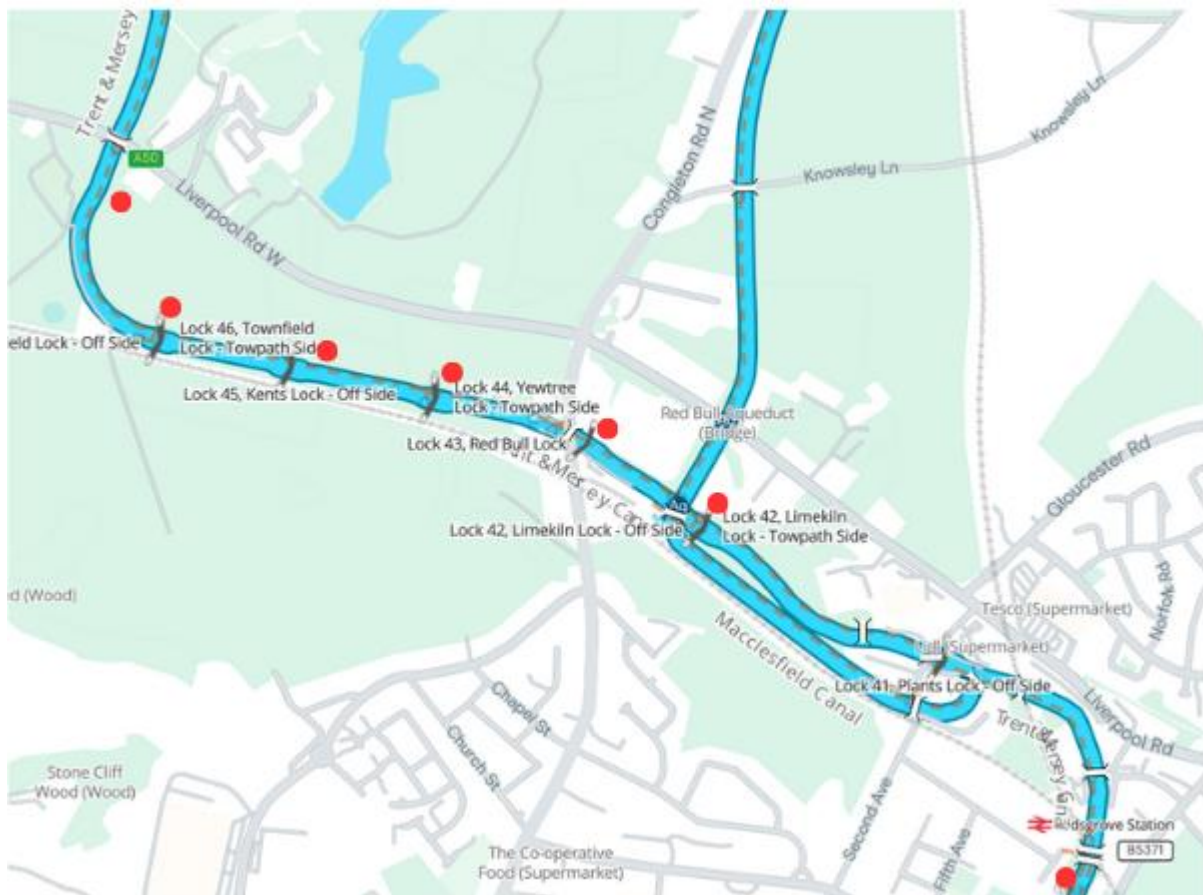
The route

- Starting from the lodge at the northern entrance to the Harecastle Tunnel
- Walk north towards Kidsgrove train station along the Trent and Mersey Canal
- The walk ends at the point where you meet the oak at Church Lawton, where you will turn around and retrace your steps

Here are the points where you can meet each plant:

- Lock 42, Limekiln Lock: burdock
- Lock 43, Red Bull Lock: stinging nettle
- Lock 44, Yewtree Lock: elder
- Lock 45, Kents Lock: fern
- Lock 46, Townfield Lock: comfrey
- Just before bridge 135, Church Lawton: oak

In total the walk is just under a mile long in one direction.



Meet the plants!

For each Lock between the Limekiln Lock 42 and Bridge 135 there is a chosen a plant to meet. They are listed below along with their meaning according to floriography - the 'language of flowers' used during the Victorian era. I have also used a whole host of herbal remedy and magic books to glean a bit more information about them including Granny's copy of *Culpepper's Colour Herbal*.

Burdock = Importunity

First stop was **Lock 42**, where you will first meet a burdock plant, a really interesting plant whose roots have been used for centuries as a **digestive aid and diuretic**. We probably know this plant best for its inclusion in the drink dandelion and burdock. Medicinal uses of burdock include as a blood purifier, and the leaves have been used to cool ulcers and sores. A powerful antioxidant, the root of the burdock can be very long and creamy in colour and should be harvested in autumn.

Nettle = Slander

Lock 43 brings us to the stinging nettle. The irritant substance that causes the stinging sensation when the nettle is touched is a mixture of both formic acid and histamine. Extremely **rich in vitamins and minerals** – iron, and vitamins A, C and K - the plant has a variety of **culinary uses**. It can be used in teas, soups and as an alternative to spinach in all manner of dishes as well as being dried to make nettle salt. It has been used to **treat many ailments** too including eczema, asthmas, and hay fever. It also has a number of bug and butterfly species that rely on it as an important food plant.

Elder = Zealousness

At **Lock 44** you meet a really wonderful old elder tree, growing along the old farm wall. Throughout history the elder has been regarded as quite a **magical tree**. In the Middle Ages it was believed that a goddess with the power to decide your luck, happiness and help lived inside; to cut or burn the elder was to release the goddess who would take her fortune with her.

The bark, leaves, flowers and berries all have **medicinal properties**, but of course are also known for their use in **cordials, wines and jams**. My children take a daily Sambucus Nigra supplement which is said to support the immune system. The birds have had all the berries for this year, but if you are quick next year, perhaps you could pick some and make powerful elderberry cordial to see you through the winter.

Fern = Sincerity

Lock 45 provides an opportunity to appreciate the ferns that are still looking very green and healthy. Fern is **not recommended for use by the home herbalist** as it can have some really unpleasant effects if used in the wrong way. One old folklore belief was that as the 'seeds' (spores) of the fern are invisible, they can be eaten or carried to become invisible. In medieval times the fern was used for the treatment of **dandruff, alopecia and kidney stones**. Often called 'living lace', fern can be used in **soap making**, as **fertiliser** and for **bleaching fabrics**.

Comfrey = Home Sweet Home

At **Lock 46** you carefully make our way to the other side of the canal for a moment, to meet a very healthy patch of common comfrey. A **common herb**, the plant has many uses including as a potassium-rich **fertiliser** for the garden (especially tomatoes) and as an instant compost. The roots and leaves are still recommended today as an external application for wounds as it contains a substance (allantoin) that speeds up the healing process of bruises, cuts, sprains and sores. In an emergency in the field a poultice can be chewed up and applied. Other names for it are boneset, knitbone and bruisewort and slippery-root.

Oak = Hospitality

Towards the end of the route before turning around you meet a great oak that is growing beside **Bridge 135**. One of our most recognisable trees, the oak produces flowers in the form of catkins, and seeds in the form of acorns. Acorns are a good food stuff for squirrels of course but can also be ground up to **make a coffee** of sorts. **An oak tree can be a host to a colossal 2,300 other wildlife species**, providing vital space to eat, shelter and breed for plants, fungus, animals and birds.

Regarded as the **tree of life**, the oak has been thought of as a guardian; in some parts of the UK wearing an oak leaf was thought to give protection. It is also believed that knocking on an oak tree will bring **good fortune**, which may have originated from the tradition of knocking on wood for luck.

Join us for more!

To be keep up to date with developments with the project, including dates of future walks, email us at askus@appetite.org.uk and we'll add you to the list. We can also sign up to our bi-weekly Appetite newsletter to keep you in the loop on all of our upcoming events, activities and workshops.

All upcoming walks in the series can be found to book for free on Eventbrite at <https://bit.ly/KCNRWalks>