

Starting point:

Sankey Valley Heritage Visitor Centre

1 (Start & finish) From the car park at the Sankey Valley Heritage Visitor Centre, proceed in a northwest direction along the tarmac footpath towards Carr Mill Dam. This footpath follows the old St. Helens Canal and Black Brook, which flows from Carr Mill Dam.

After 1.2km the footpath becomes a bridleway, before passing beneath the East Lancashire Road (A580) and then the Wigan to St. Helens railway viaduct. On approaching the Carr Mill Dam embankment, follow the track upslope to the left before meeting Garswood Old Road adjacent to the southeast corner of Carr Mill Dam.

2 (1.6km) Be aware of vehicles before turning right onto Garswood Old Road. Proceed in a northeasterly direction along this tarmac embankment road.

i Carr Mill Dam is used for boating and fishing purposes and is a good place to see an interesting variety of bird species.

These regularly include Great Crested Grebe, Grey Heron, Mute Swan and Kingfisher. Rarer species like Osprey, Great Northern Diver and Long-tailed Duck have also been seen here.

Eventually you will approach a clubhouse, which belongs to the Lancashire Powerboat Racing Club and is known locally as the 'Boathouse'. Continue following this road to



Mute Swan

the right, now becoming a stone track. Having passed the Boathouse, you will take a track off to your left through a metal gate into woodland.

i Before entering the woodland, looking straight ahead you will see a railway arch displaying the Gerard family coat of arms above it. The Gerards were a well-known landowning family in the area who lived at Garswood Hall.

Enter the woodland and proceed in a northeasterly direction. The path eventually widens following the metal railing fence at the bottom of the railway embankment.

3 (2.4km) Turn right and proceed beneath the railway arch. After approximately 180 metres, this earth track soon becomes a narrow tarmac farm access road. Continue heading east along this road, passing a vehicle access gate near to a railway bridge at Hollin Hey Farm. From this point onwards, beware of vehicles as you continue to the end of Garswood Old Road.

4 (4.5km) Watch out for vehicles before crossing over Garswood Road to reach the pavement situated on the opposite side. Continue north along the pavement towards Tithe Barn Hillock.



5 (5.1km) Having passed a short row of terraced properties on your left, look out for vehicles before carefully crossing over Garswood Road to proceed west along Arch Lane.

i The fields on either side of Arch Lane are amongst the best in the area to both see and hear farmland bird species such as Lapwing, Skylark and Yellowhammer during the spring and summer months. In winter, large flocks of Linnet, Fieldfare and Redwing can be seen.

Continue along Arch Lane, walking over a railway bridge before passing Montrey Reservoir on your right.

6 (6.3km) Just beyond Charity Farm, the tarmac road narrows and becomes a stone track with fields on both sides. Continue west along this track, passing two streams in shallow dips, the second one being situated in a wooded valley known as the Goyt. The stream in the Goyt heads south before eventually flowing into Carr Mill Dam at

Sandy Bay, an area which you will pass later on in the walk.



Speckled Wood butterfly

i The lower reaches of the Goyt are home to a strange and mainly nocturnal fish called the Bullhead. Its unusual name is derived from the broad, heavy head which also gives rise to its other name, 'Miller's Thumb', since millers were supposed to develop broad thumbs from rubbing grain between their fingers. This woodland also contains a healthy population of the Speckled Wood butterfly, which can often be observed fluttering in the dappled sunlight during the spring and summer months.

Having passed through the Goyt, continue along the stone track to the next junction.

7 (7km) At the T-junction with another stone track, turn left so you are heading in a southerly direction towards St.Helens in the distance.

i From this section of path, the Clwydian range of mountains in North Wales is visible on the horizon if the weather is suitably clear. The most prominent of these is Moel Famau, "Hill of the Mothers", which is 1,818 feet (554 metres) high. The mound at its summit (you may need binoculars to see this) is the remains of the Jubilee Tower erected to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of King George III.

Continue heading south, passing a football pitch on your right. Do not take the footpath alongside the football pitch, but keep heading south until reaching another T-junction with a field-edge footpath off to the right.

8 (7.6km) Turn right at this T-junction and head northwest along a field-edge footpath towards Chadwick Green. This field-edge footpath eventually becomes a narrow tarmac passageway between two properties before meeting Carr Mill Road.

9 (7.8km) Turn left onto Carr Mill Road and head south. The tarmac surface soon becomes a stone track. Carr Mill Road then turns off to the right and becomes a bridleway. Walk past a metal gate and follow the stone track west along a tree-lined route to Otterswift Farm.

10 (8.5km) Once at Otterswift Farm, turn left onto another vehicle access track signposted as a public footpath. After approximately 200 metres, this track turns sharply to the left. At this point, turn right through a stile onto a narrow field-edge footpath. Follow this footpath around the edge of a field towards a small wooded area. The path eventually descends several steps to arrive at the northern edge of Carr Mill Dam, close to the Nineteen Arches Bridge.

i This is one of the best birdwatching areas in St.Helens. Red-eared Terrapins can also be seen sunbathing here in the summer months. Many of these creatures have been released into the wild having grown too big to keep as pets by their owners. Most areas of freshwater in St.Helens are now home to this non-native reptile.

11 (8.9km) Do not cross the Nineteen Arches Bridge but turn left and head south along a very scenic path following the edge of Carr Mill Dam. The path eventually crosses the Goyt woodland stream at Sandy Bay over a metal bridge. Keep the water on your right until the path crosses another small stream. There are frequent opportunities to stop and admire various viewpoints of Carr Mill Dam along this path section. At 10km you will eventually rejoin the wooded path section that you took earlier in the walk, just south of Point 3. From here, simply retrace the route back to the Sankey Valley Heritage Visitor Centre, at which point the total distance will be approximately **12.2km (7.6 miles)**.

Start/Finish

The walk starts and finishes at the Sankey Valley Heritage Visitor Centre on Blackbrook Road (A58), WA11 0AB.

Map Ref: SJ 535 966

Sheet 108 1:50000 OS map

Sheet 285 1:25000 OS map

Route Distance – 12.2km (Approx. 7.6 miles)

Estimated time – 4 hours

Going – Moderate

Further Information

To find out more about walks in your local area, please contact St.Helens Ranger Service on 01744 677772, or sankeyvalleyrangers@sthelens.gov.uk



www.sthelens.gov.uk/rangers



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Welcome to Garswood Loop Trail & Map



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