WALK 4

WIGAN PIER TO LEIGH BRIDGE

WIGAN PIER - WESTWOOD PARK - WIGAN FLASHES - BIMFURLONG - DOVER LOCK - PENNINGTON FLASH - LEIGH BRIDGE

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DOVER LOCK
At Bamfurlong Road Bridge, cross over to the other side of the canal. Three quarters of a mile on and you will come across the Dover Lock Inn. It was here in 1820 that the Leigh Branch opened, connecting it to the Bridgewater Canal.

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DOVER LOCK

Bickershaw Colliery Site
Moving further down the towpath (1 1/2 miles past Dover Lock Inn) you will see, across the canal the Bickershaw Colliery Site. The site has an obvious mining tradition going back some 155 years. This was one of the largest mines in Lancashire with over 7 miles of pit shaft. In its heyday the pit employed over 1500 miners and produced 600,000 tonnes of coal per year. Bickershaw was Wigan’s last pit, closing on the 27th March 1992. It has today been transformed into a vast expanse of beautiful woodland, green field and nature reserve.

Bickershaw Colliery Site

Pennington Flash
Look right and you will see the largest of the flashes, Pennington Flash. Pennington Flash is one of the north west’s premier sites for bird watching, with over 230 species of bird recorded including Marsh Harrier, Spoonbill, Leach’s Petrel and the very rare Siberian Black Faced Bunting. You can drop down from the canal into the park with its 70 hectare lake, bridle paths, picnic areas and even a 9-hole golf course.

Pennington Flash

Welch Hill Mill
As you leave Pennington, you quickly enter the built up town of Leigh. Welch Mill sat just beyond the first road bridge that you pass under. The mill, built in 1893 was home to Gamble and Smith, manufacturers of fine cotton.

Welch Hill Mill

Mansley’s Rope Works
Mansley’s has been replaced by a new wharf-side pub and offices. Mansley’s manufactured fine rope whilst also retailing locally brewed beer! It burned down in 1912

Mansley’s Rope Works

Leigh
The name Leigh means meadow, and reveals the town’s rural origins. Up and until the late 1800s, Leigh was noted for its dairy produce, especially local cheeses (one of which was called the Leigh Toastie).

Leigh

Industrialisation in the 18th and 19th centuries brought growth boosted by the new canal links. Leigh is the birthplace of Thomas Highs (1720), who was thought to have invented the Spinning Jenny only to have the patent taken from him by James Hargreaves in 1770.

Leigh

Wigan Tourist Information
01942 827 619 www.visitchegan.co.uk

National Rail Enquiries
08457 48 49 50 www.nationalrail.com

This walk forms part of a series of walks and trails developed by Manchester’s Countryside. For more information on Manchester’s Countryside, including downloads of the walks visit www.manchesterscountryside.com
Telephone: 0161 253 5111
email: info@manchesterscountryside.com

Welch Hill Mill
**Westwood Power Station**

Look over the canal at the new office blocks. It was here that Wigan Corporation Electricity Department managed Wigan Power Station. Westwood used 2000 tonnes of coal per week and provided 120,000 kilowatts of electricity for local consumption. The last use of the canal for commercial traffic was by the short boat ‘Roland’ taking coal to the site in August 1972. ‘Roland’ can now be seen in the car park at Trencherfield Mill.

**Scotmans and Pearsons Flashes**

A Flash is a unique industrial legacy to Wigan. There are many in and around Wigan (particularly present on this walk). Each are lakes formed as a result of mining subsidence.

Here the canal splits two flashes. Both are designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest. This is due to the abundance of rare plant species, several species of orchid, extensive reed beds and migrating birds such as Reed and Sedge Warbler. Scotmans (on the right) is the largest of the ‘Wigan Flashes’ although Pennington Flash near Leigh is the largest in the borough. Pearsons Flash is the lake on the opposite side of the canal. Pearsons provided the water for the cooling towers at Westwood.

As you reach the end of Scotmans Flash take the footbridge across the canal. (Alternatively you may decide to stay on this side of the canal and take one of the trails that cut through Scotmans or run alongside the canal eventually accessing Lightshaw, Landgate and Three Sisters Recreation Areas).

**Lightshaw Hall Flash.**

Five minutes later, the towpath bends left. On the far side is Lightshaw Hall Flash. One of the many small flashes along this stretch of the canal and another important area for birds, especially wildfowl and waders.

**Landgate, Three Sisters and Bryn Hall**

Access to these areas is by a series of worn paths on the far side of the canal. (Vehicle access is from the A49 following signs for Three Sisters). There are ponds, lakes, woodland walks, cycling trails and bridleways. At the centre is Three Sisters Recreation Area. Three Sisters takes its name from three hills which were formed from coal slag heaps.

At Three Sisters you will find a small lake and Ranger Station. Here you can follow miles of way marked routes, some of which skirt the Three Sisters Racing Circuit – an internationally accredited motor racing circuit.