

## Aire Valley Woodland and Water

**A 4½ mile (7.5km) level walk through beautiful countryside, taking in the Leeds and Liverpool canal, the River Aire, Bingley and Hirst Wood.**

**An ideal family walk with plenty of industrial heritage and natural history, as well as some close up views of the magnificent structures along the Bingley bypass road.**

**Comfortable strong walking shoes are recommended along with outdoor clothing to suit the season. A light snack/picnic is advisable especially when walking with children. Please take care when walking along the river and canal banks and keep children under close supervision at all times. This walk is not suitable for pushchairs or wheelchairs and people who have walking difficulties.**

### Walk start points

Being a circular walk there are several places from where you can start this walk, we have selected two, which we consider to be the most convenient and accessible.

For the benefit of the route information we have started our walk at Hirst Wood car park at the bottom of Hirst Lane, which is accessed via Clarence Lane at Saltaire roundabout, on the A650 Bradford/Bingley road.

Here you will find good, free parking and a regular bus service from Bradford/Shipley to Hirst Wood (service 679/810) pass close by. The nearest railway station is Saltaire on the Airedale Line, which is approximately ½ mile from the start point at Hirst Wood Lock, accessed by walking along the Leeds and Liverpool canal towpath.

An alternative start point, marked with ⊕ on the map and in the route information is the top end of Bingley Main Street near to the Bradford and Bingley bank. Car parking in Bingley is mainly pay and display; public transport is excellent, with regular buses to and from Bradford/Keighley No. 662 and Leeds/Keighley No. 760. Frequent train services along the Airedale Line serve Bingley station, which is a 5-minute walk from the start point.

### The Route

From the bottom of Hirst Lane cross over Hirst Lock canal swing bridge and turn right down the tow path of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal, after a short distance turn left through a gap in the stone wall on the left opposite Hirst Wood lock.

Follow the path straight forward and over the metal footbridge spanning the River Aire, once across turn immediately left off the path to walk across the grassy area, passing on the left the two other bridge structures. Continue straight forward and cross the small metal footbridge ahead onto a narrow dirt track adjacent to the weir.

Here the footpath follows the riverbank bearing to the left to walk between the river and the side of a building and along in front of the Bradford Amateur Rowing Club. Continue along this well-worn path following the riverbank through woodland, eventually emerging onto the Leeds and Liverpool canal towpath near Dowley Gap locks.



Dowley Gap lock

Turn right at the canal towpath and follow the path up and over the canal at bridge 206, turning right again on the opposite side of the canal passing the Dowley Gap locks. Continue by following the towpath under bridge 205 for quite some distance until you reach the metal suspension bridge spanning both the canal and the Bingley bypass road at Bingley. Here turn left off the canal towpath and up the steps onto the suspension bridge; walk across the bridge and across the slip road via the pelican crossing onto the pavement opposite. Turn left and follow the pavement as it bears right up Ferncliffe Road to the traffic lights at the junction with the main Bradford Road on Bingley Main Street.

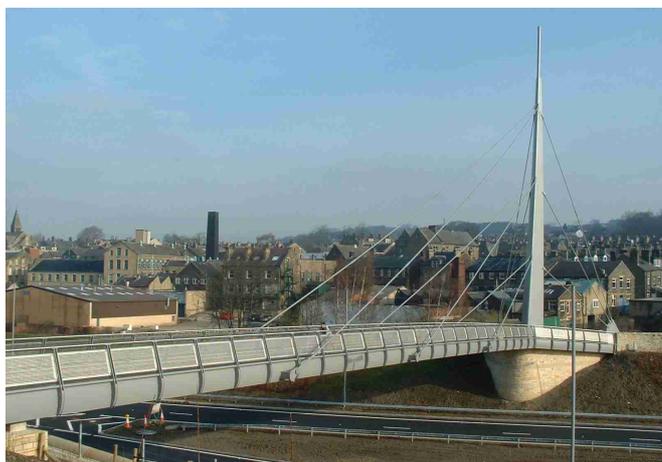
Cross over the main road turn left ⊕ then first right between the flats/houses in Myrtle Court to walk straight ahead through the gateway into Myrtle Park. Once in the park follow the narrow surfaced path, which runs parallel to the stonewall on your left, passing the children's play area on your right. At the junction with several other paths continue straight forward downhill on the now much wider path, still following the stone wall on the left. Nearing the bottom of the incline, just before the large grassed area turn left off the wide path onto a narrow, surfaced path, which leads down to a metal bridge over the River Aire.

Cross the river and along the straight narrow footpath to its junction with a country lane (Beckfoot Lane), here turn left and follow the lane passing Bingley Cricket and Tennis Club on the left and Shipley Golf Club on the right. Continue straight forward as the lane widens to the junction with the main A650 Bradford Road. Cross over the main road and through the gap in the wall of Cottingley Bridge opposite and down the steps onto the footpath along the riverbank walking between the river and the buildings.

Where the path emerges into the Bradford and Bingley Sports Clubs' rugby ground the path continues to follow the river as it meanders towards the viaduct of the Bingley bypass road. Nearing the viaduct the footpath goes over a small wooden footbridge and then straightforward under the viaduct.

Beyond the viaduct the path bears to the right up a slight incline and through a small metal gate and along a narrow walled path. After a short distance the walled path turns sharp right, ignore this turning and go straight forward through the gap in the wall in front of you, back down onto the riverbank.

Continue along the riverbank eventually passing the bottom of Nab Wood cemetery on your right, before going over a small footbridge and under the railway bridge to emerge into Hirst Wood. Here the path divides, our route follows the path steeply uphill to the right through the trees where, on the crest of the hill it joins another path. Continue straight forward through the woodland to emerge onto the car parking area at the bottom of Hirst Lane where the walk started. ***Walkers who started their walk at Bingley should continue by following the route information on the front page.***



Bingley Relief Road

## Points of Interest Along the Way

### Leeds and Liverpool Canal

At 127 miles in length it is the longest man made waterway in Britain and forms part of a through route between the Irish and North Seas.

Work on the canal started circa 1770 and took 40 years to link Leeds and Liverpool at a cost of £1.25m. The section between Hirst Lock and Bingley, which our route follows, opened in 1774; however, the canal did not reach Leeds until 1776.

Between Leeds and Liverpool there are 53 swing bridges and 91 staircase type locks. The lock gates are made of English Oak and have to withstand the thrust of 90,000 gallons of water; they have an expected life span of 50 years.

Bradford was linked to the Leeds and Liverpool Canal via the 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> mile long Bradford Canal (closed in the 1920's). The route ran parallel with Canal Road between Shipley and the city. A small section of the canal remains and can be seen running through the Boars Well Nature Reserve, which is situated off Kings Road along the bottom of the hillside behind the Audi and VW car dealership.

For further information about the canal and other inland waterways check out the website:  
[www.britishwaterways.co.uk](http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk)  
or telephone them on: 0113 281 6800.

### The River Aire

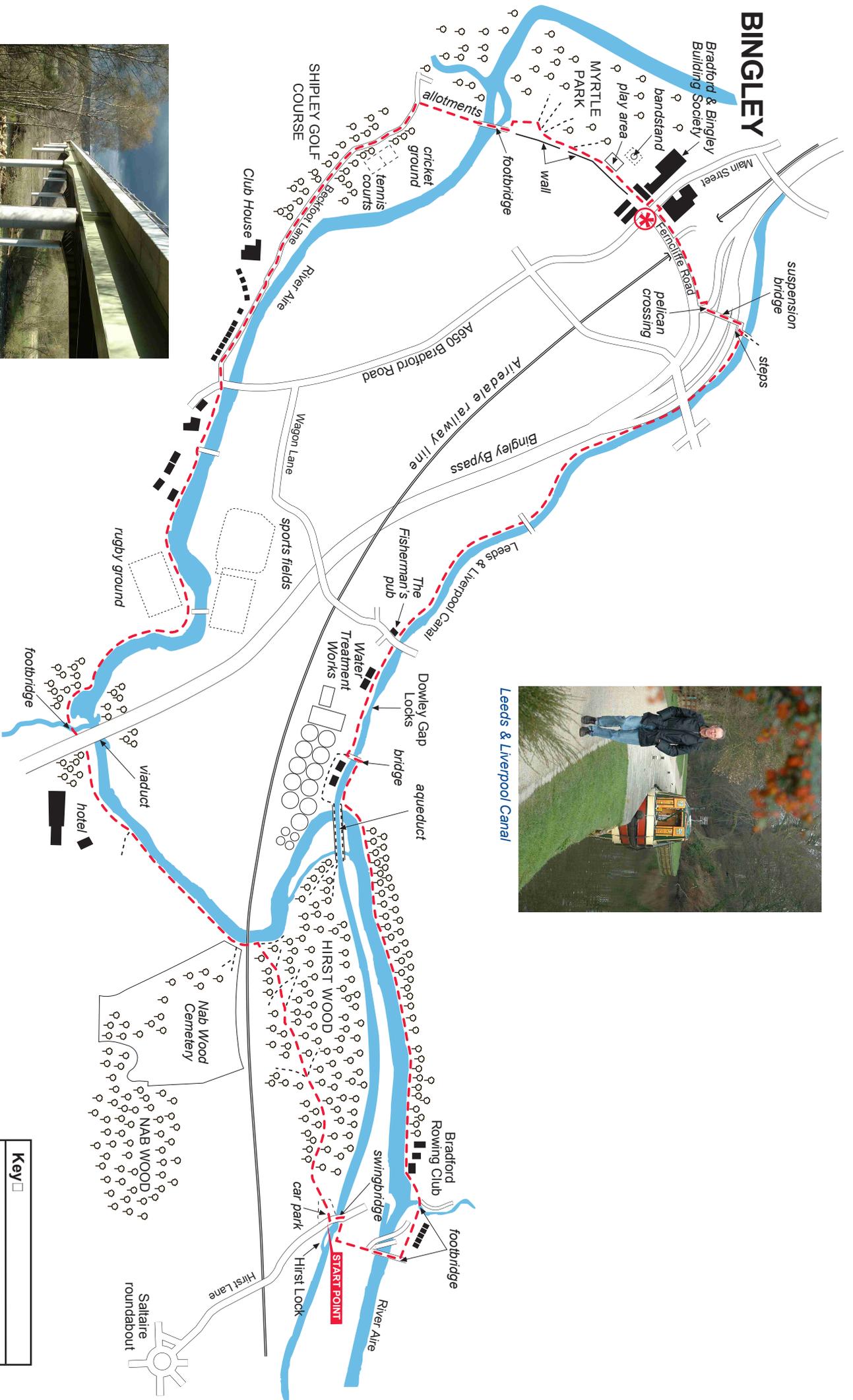
Rising above Malham in the Yorkshire Dales, the 76 mile long river, which forms the southern boundary of the dales, enters the Bradford District to the west, between Kildwick and Silsden. Its 15 mile journey through the district takes in Keighley, Bingley, Saltaire and Shipley before leaving at Apperley Bridge in the east. Continuing its journey to the North Sea via Leeds, Castleford and Ferrybridge to join the River Ouse and the Humber, near Goole.

The recent return of the otter to parts of the river indicates the continuing improvement in water quality.

### Bingley Relief Road

After many decades of planning, deliberation, procrastination and protests, the 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> mile road opened on Monday 22nd December 2003 at a cost of £47.9m. Views of the bypass can be seen along our walk route, which goes over and under two of the roads main structures. It is estimated that 30,000 vehicles will use the road each day.

# BINGLEY



Leeds & Liverpool Canal



Bingley Bypass Viaduct spanning the River Aire