

A Walk Round Foxton Locks and Canal

I don't think any visit to Leicestershire is complete without going to see Foxton Locks. They are part of the canal network of the country, all of which is looked after by British Waterways. The locks are one the top three attractions under their control. Foxton is the longest flight of locks in the country, consisting of ten locks, in two blocks of five.

The locks were built over a four year period between 1810 and 1814. Later an incline plane method of lifting narrow boats to the upper level was built, and the locks fell into disuse. Then their fortunes changed and the incline fell into disuse and the locks were renovated. At one time a group of enthusiasts are raising money to restore the plane, however it has now been decided to leave it at it is.



The locks are situated a short way off the A6, between Leicester and Market Harborough, not far North of Market Harborough. You will see the brown signs directing you on to a side road; the road passes Gartree Prison. Follow these brown signs to the car park. Use the long stay car park which is on the left. There is a small charge for the car park.

Make your way back to the car park entrance and turn left just before the road, onto the pathway which runs alongside the road. This will take you to the canal. When you reach the canal, turn right and go under the bridge, and turn right immediately afterwards and walk up to the pedestrian bridge. Cross the bridge and walk along the canal with the water on your right hand side. The first lock (Foxton Top Lock) is about 300 yds along. From about March to October, what used to be the lock keepers cottage is open as a coffee stop. Carry on walking down the hill.

Don't bother crossing to the museum as you will be coming back to it later. At the bottom, cross over the bridge to your right. Follow the path round to the left at the other side of the bridge. If you look back, you will see it is number 62 Rainbow Bridge.





Walk alongside the canal with the water on your right. After about half a mile you will reach a bridge. Just before it, is a yellow direction post. Bear to your left at this post. You are now in North Lane, in the village of Foxton. Within a few paces is the road which goes over the bridge. Turn Right and go over the bridge, and follow the right hand fork at the church.

(It is worth while taking a detour and make a visit to the church, it is usually open. There are a couple of interesting plaques to see, and a Millennium window. One of the plaques is near the bell tower which is to the right of the entrance. It concerns who you may not marry. The other is on the wall opposite the entrance. To me there were two questions concerning this particular panel. Is the money still distributed, and just what was the mistake? The answer is the charity is still in existence, it is now combined with a number of other local charities. Nobody seems to know what exactly the mistake was though; it is suspected it was a miscalculation on the size of the estate. If you do visit, it is as well to remember that the f's found on the panels, are pronounced as s's).



Carry on walking up the hill out of the village. Rather than going back along the road, just before the de-restriction sign is a signpost indicating Gumley 1 mile via Foxton Locks. Turn Right at this sign and go through the wooden gate. Follow the very wide path down the slope and through the gate at the other end. You are now back on the opposite side of the canal to which you were earlier. Follow the path past the lower car park; there are toilets here if you have need of them. Go over the bridge, and just before the second bridge turn Left onto the path which goes up the hill. It will bring you to the museum. When you reach the top lock, cross back onto the other side of the canal.

You can now walk back to the car park.

The walk is just slightly over 3 miles long.