

North Kyme to South Kyme (The long way round)

A stroll down the Kyme Eau

The riverside walk from Chapel Hill South to Kyme gives an opportunity to view a fine fenland farmscape, and see a variety of waterfowl (Duck, Moorhen, Swan and Coot) lowland birds (Kestrel, Sparrow Hawk, Skylark, Yellowhammer, Goldfinch and Heron to name but a few) and wildlife.

Standing on the bridge at Chapel Hill you will see the gate way to the Eau, that up until early last century was a busy navigation between the ports of Sleaford and Boston.

Walk on the left-hand bank, (south bank) not on the restricted bridal way.



The river Kyme, or Kyme Eau, was originally navigable via the Sleaford Navigation up to Sleaford, but this is awaiting restoration. Being privately owned, the navigation of the Kyme is a matter of chance, and is generally possible only for a few weeks in April or May, when the water level is right and the weed hasn't yet had time to grow.

Keep walking for approximately 3 miles along the river's bank and you will reach "Bottom Lock". (or North Kyme, as people in North kyme prefer to call it). This is a guillotine lock restored as part of the ongoing restoration of the river. This was reopened in 1987, by the Slea Navigation Society. The opening of this lock connected a further 3 miles of navigable waterway allowing flat bottomed boats to navigate to south Kyme and beyond.



It takes 600 turns of the wheel to raise or lower the gate, so passage up and back would take 2400 rotations.

In the middle of the lock island can be seen the ruins of the lock keepers cottage. This small house was inhabited until just after the second world war. The house was home to many children who used to walk miles up to North Kyme school every morning.

This picture shows the extensive restoration project undertaken by the Slea Navigation. The final aim is to restore the whole navigation from Sleaford to the Witham.



Carrying on, looking to your right you will see the South Kyme Golf Course. The club was founded in 1990 by the farmer, Mr Ted Maplethorpe, when he turned 160 acres of his family held farm into what is now the 18 hole golf course.



As you approach South Kyme village you meet a road bridge (New Bridge) whose height above the water is indicated by a hanging metal bar just beforehand. This bar is just a little warning. If you hit the bar “you aint gonna get under”.

There have been many close shaves in the past. This height is so critical that boats realistically can only travel down the Eau at certain times of the year.

One time that boats do make an effort to get under the bridge is the late spring bank holiday weekend. Narrowboat enthusiasts make the journey upstream from the River Witham to meet at the village for an annual festival.



Once you reach the bridge you have a choice. You can either take a walk down South Kyme main street or stay to the left bank of the river.

The village has as its emblem, the Kingfisher. A fine wooden sculpture of a Kingfisher by Simon Todd stands at the centre of the village on the riverbank near the blacksmiths yard.

Walking along the bank, running through the centre of the village there are carved wooden mooring posts placed at intervals along the bank. Along the bank you will come to a foot bridge – known to the village as the “wooden bridge” or “little bridge”.



Nearing the end of the Kyme to Kyme walk we approach the town bridge. If you look to your right you will see The Hume, (the village pub) where you can stop off for a drink and some fine home cooked food. Also on your right, the white house was once the village bakery, post office and petrol station.

Continue down the river bank and look across the river to your right, you will be looking at the old manor house. The house is constructed from the stone from a 14 century castle which once stood on the site. Continue walking and into view will emerge South Kyme tower.



This is what remains of a mediaeval castle which is believed to have been built between 1339 and 1381 by Gilbert de Umfraville third earl of Angus and lord of Kyme.

Most of the building was demolished around 1720 – 1725 leaving only the single ashlar tower that exists today. It was surrounded by a moat which still survives as an earthwork bank. Standing 77ft high it once formed one of the four corners of the castle.

To get closer to the tower make your way to the farm bridge that is straight ahead of you and cross the river onto Church Lane. Proceeding along Church Lane you will see the tower to your right and the Church of St Mary and All Saints on your left.

Stop for a moment and soak up the history from where you are standing. The Church of St Mary and All Saints is situated at the site of an Anglo Saxon priory c.1140. The only remnant of the priory is its original Norman



arched doorway which can be seen inside the entrance porch. It is a small fragment of the Priory founded for Augustinian Canons by Philip de Kyme.

The tower built on a Saxon site between 1310 and 1380 was commissioned for Sir Gilbert De Umfraville who was descended from William the Conqueror. The castle was once home to Elizabeth

Blount, a former mistress of Henry VIII and mother to one of his illegitimate sons. The other stonework of the castle has been removed over the years, as a trip around the area will reveal, farm buildings, houses and a large manor house built are from the stone. The moat and ancient fishponds are still visible today.

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Craig Midgley

And so ends our walk of just a small part of the Lincolnshire waterways.

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Compiled by Glynn Pout