

Map 25: Buck Wood, Field Wood and Field Locks



Section of canal and towpath adjacent to Buck Wood.



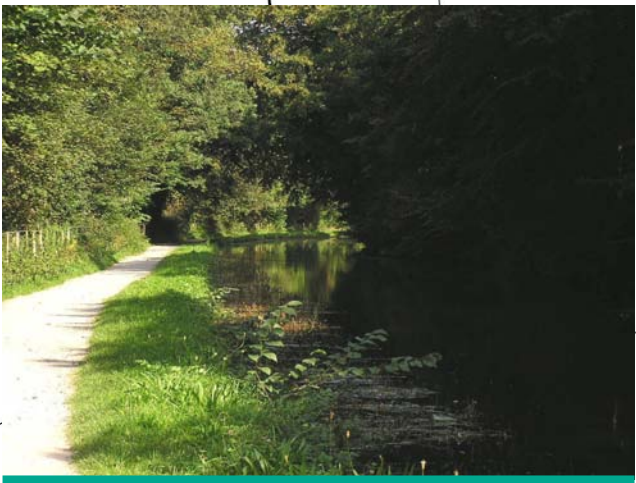
Western approach to the former railway bridge.



Field Locks (Grade II Listed).



Field Locks from foot of the locks.



Canal and towpath adjacent to Field Wood.

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Character of the Area

The canal follows the long arc of the contour along 'the Nosegay', a local name for Buck Wood and Field Wood. The long bend means the canal takes an indirect route from west to east, but this is a typical feature of the earlier canals of Britain which were built along contour lines to minimise the amount of tunnelling or embankments needed. This section to Leeds was completed by 1777, but by the time the digging of the canal restarted in 1790, advances in engineering made tunnels and embankments more viable propositions and this is evident in sections of the Leeds-Liverpool Canal built after this date.

This section of the conservation area is dominated by nature, with the canal running through the slope of the valley side which terminates at the River Aire to the north, which cannot be seen due to the density of the woodland. The canal feels almost like a river at this point, with there being a natural edge between Buck Wood and the water. Further along there are two grazed fields set in the woodland alongside the canal which also have a natural edge along the water.

At the end of the fields, the rusted steel structure of the former railway bridge appears quite alien given its context, while the stone and timber built Field Locks feel much more like a permanent fixture in the landscape. The density of the woodland limits views from the top of the locks to vistas along the arcing towpath.

The towpath itself is surfaced with packed white gravel as far as Field Locks where it becomes surfaced with a visually better packed earth surface. The towpath is flanked by clean, rugged grass verges, but the adjacent bank is for the most part lined with metallic piling.

Field Locks are Grade II Listed and were built c.1774-7 to the designs of engineers Brindley and Longbotham.

Features of the Area

1. Site of swing bridge (unnumbered). To the west of bridge 211a the canal narrows at the point where there was once a swing bridge. All the remains are the masonry walls which are overgrown and lack copings. This bridge was presumably for agricultural access only, but probably became redundant when bridge 211a was pedestrianised.

2. Former railway bridge (211a). This 20th century railway bridge is of a modern design with a prominent rusted steel frame. The railway line is no longer in existence and the bridge is now used by pedestrians walking through Field Wood/Buck Wood and vehicles accessing an outlying part of Esholt Sewage Works.

3. Field Locks (16, 17 & 18). These 3 rise locks were built c.1774-7 and are Grade II Listed for their architectural and historic interest. The engineers were James Brindley and John Longbotham. Each lock is of wrought sandstone construction with large block copings which are frequently held together by iron staples. Shaped iron mooring posts are attached to some of the copings. The lower lock (16) has vertical masonry to which the sides of the canal are linked via coped sloped walls which are topped with setted surfaces. The upper locks (17 & 18) have curved masonry. Set against the masonry to either side of each lock are stone stairways with painted timber diamond railings attached to square posts with iron 'feet'. The same railings can be found along the top of the masonry to either side of the gates. The painted timber and iron gates and balance beams have iron rack and pinion gears attached to them. Below each balance beam is a quadrant of stone setts with heel grips to allow a better purchase. Over the tail of each lock is a timber plank bridge with painted timber railings, uprights and guardrails. To the west of the locks is a stone lined overflow channel which drains the pound above and between the locks. To the east is an ugly rolled metal container which is used as the lock keeper's hut.



Issues

- ▶ The poor appearance of the lock keeper's hut at Field Locks.
- ▶ The appearance and lack of maintenance to bridge 211a (former railway bridge).
- ▶ Overgrowth and missing copings at the former bridge point.