

# Map 27: Thackley - South of Esholt Sewage Works



4200



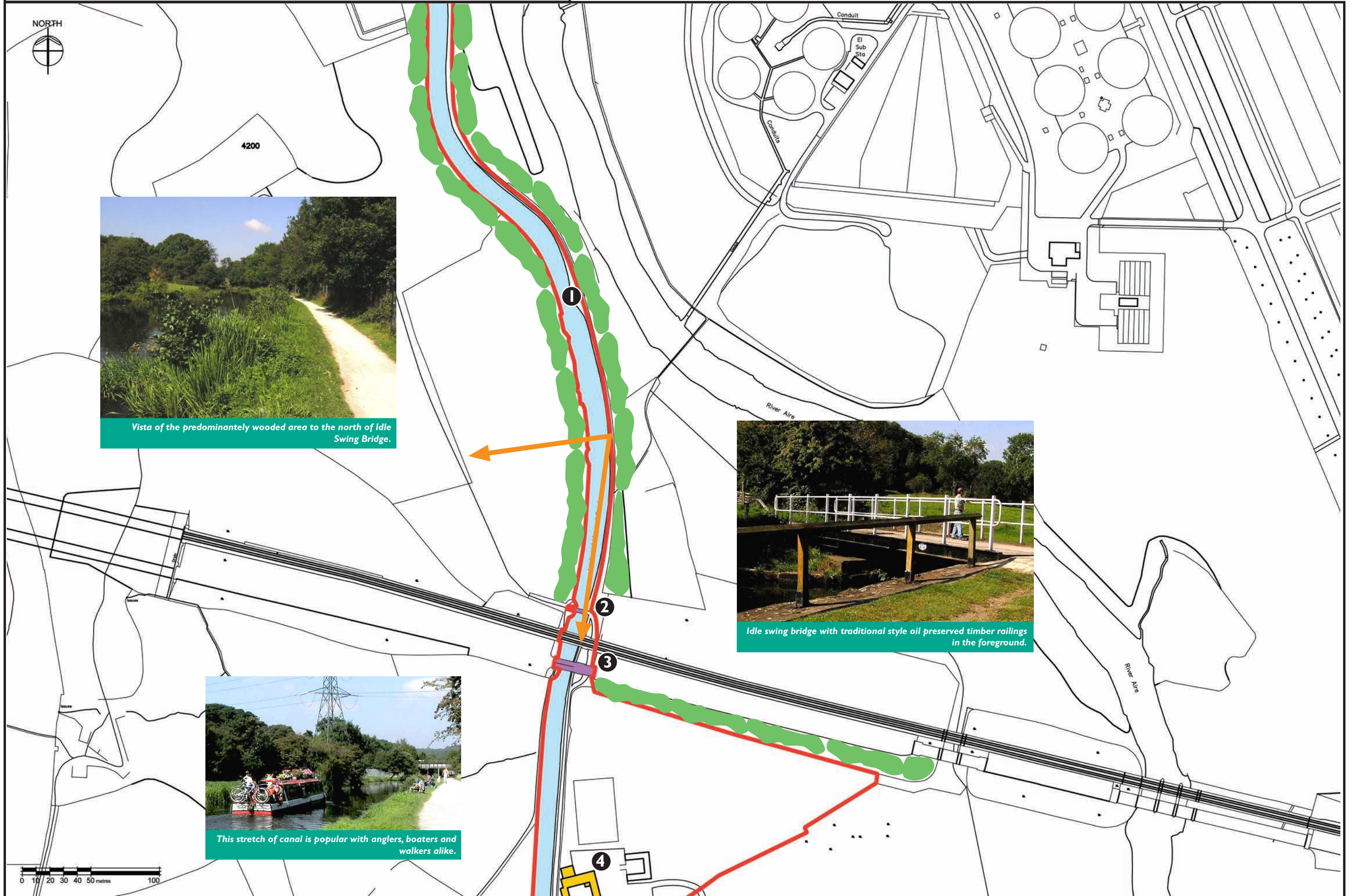
Vista of the predominantly wooded area to the north of Idle Swing Bridge.



Idle swing bridge with traditional style oil preserved timber railings in the foreground.



This stretch of canal is popular with anglers, boaters and walkers alike.



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### Character of the Area

To the south of Esholt Sewage Works, the canal continues to be dominated by the leafy immediate setting provided by the wooded valley side into which the canal is set, its gently sinuous course following the line of the contour. The fairly wide gravel towpath is flanked by rugged, clean grass verges, with that to the canal side covering the copingstones. The stench from the sewage works gradually begins to disappear further to the south.

Rounding the bend to the south of the Sewage Works, the canal area opens up as its western side adjoins an open grazed field (with woodland beyond it) which contrasts with the dense woodland to the east. Idle swing bridge and Thackley Canal Bridge and its embankments form the terminal features of views southward. Idle swing bridge is quite well maintained with the copings clear of vegetation and new oil preserved timber railings installed. The latter make an uneasy contrast with the modern metallic bridge and its concrete walkway. To the north of the bridge is a modern barrier which is a composite of basic railings and a more modern 'A-frame' opening. The nearby National Cycle Network signpost is a much better piece of towpath 'furniture'. It is made of iron cast into an organic shape. Leeds is 9½ miles to the east, Shipley 4 miles to the west and Bingley 7 miles to the west.

Emerging from Thackley Canal Bridge, the landscape changes from one which is predominantly wooded to one which consists mainly of open fields. Long distance views over rolling countryside can be had to both sides of the canal, with Apperley Bridge visible in the distance to the east. Bottom Farm stands on the edge of this landscape and is a good traditional vernacular style farm unit which relates to the surrounding landscape.

### Features of the Area

**1. Site of swing bridge (211c?):** North of Idle Swing Bridge the canal narrows and the towpath rises where there was formerly another swing bridge. This bridge served the long demolished Rockcliffe (or Rawcliff) Farm on the western bank and linked the farm to Apperley Bridge via a track which is no longer in existence. All that remains is the masonry and copings on either bank, which is overgrown.

**2. Idle Swing Bridge (212):** This manually operated swing bridge has been used only by pedestrian traffic since Crow Croft

Farm, which stood on the western bank of the canal, was cleared to make way for the widened railway line in the early 20th century. The bridge now links to a footpath linking the towpath to Thackley and Apperley via Dawson Wood/The Nosegay. The bridge is of iron construction with modern style iron railings and a tarmac surface. The sides of the bridge are lined with stone walls with copings held together with iron staples. At the eastern side the copings are topped by iron footed square posts with a diamond timber railing. Rather than being painted, these railings are coated with an oil based preservative, which was traditionally how timberwork along the Leeds-Liverpool Canal was treated.

**3. Thackley Canal Bridge (212a):** The railway line, which passes through Thackley Tunnel and over the canal, was built in 1846 as the Bradford-Shipley-Leeds line. In the early 20th century the railway was widened from 2 lines to 4 lines, necessitating the widening of the tunnel, embankment and the construction of the second bridge. The older pair of lines has since been closed and the rails removed and as such, the northern bridge is maintained, while the southern bridge has been allowed to deteriorate, though both of these riveted iron bridges are rusty and neglected.



**4. Bottom Farm:** The Farmhouse and its U-shaped range of barn, stables and outbuildings form an enclosed courtyard and are Grade II Listed. It is feasible that the farm was built as new in the 1820s or 1830s alongside the canal to benefit from imported manure and to take advantage of the quick link to the markets of Leeds and Bradford. The farmhouse is a rather plain vernacular style 3 bay construction with a coped stone slate roof, corniced chimney and plain stone reveals to the doorways and cills and lintels of the windows. The off centre, asymmetrical layout of the openings reflects the traditional internal layout of rooms which was typical in houses built in the 17th and 18th centuries. Unfortunately the windows are not traditional in style and all of the external joinery is stained rather than painted.

Bottom Farm appears to be used as a riding school or riding centre, as the barns and the surrounding land have been adapted

to equine use. The large 2 storey high barn has been restored within the last 10 years with the hipped stone roof re-laid and the stone walls repointed. The barn still retains its original character as its elevations are dominated by the large central arched cart entrances with quoined jambs and keyed voussoired segmental arches. The rest of the openings are much smaller and are randomly laid out, apart from the row of high up vent openings. Attached to the rear of the barn is a modern rendered flat roofed single storey building with a balcony picnic area on the roof. The lower single storey wings are used as stables and are roofed in a mixture of artificial stone slates and corrugated metal. Most of the stable openings are new, but are of a plain vernacular style.

### Issues

- ▶ Overgrown copingstones along canal and at site of former swing bridge.
- ▶ Lack of maintenance to Thackley Canal Bridge.
- ▶ The appearance of the vehicle barrier by Idle Swing Bridge.
- ▶ The non-traditional door and window details to some of the listed buildings.
- ▶ The modern appearance of Idle Swing Bridge.
- ▶ The smell from Esholt Sewage Works is a problem at the northern end of this area.