

**Footpath FP23: Diversion via Zan –
and a potted history of the canal side
industries**



Sandbach Woodland and Wildlife Group are restoring Footpath FP23 alongside the canal, so we suggest this diversionary route, (red dashed line), which takes you through Zan Industrial Park (with the permission of the landowner - please take care), which has a long and interesting history.

In the 1700's it was the site of a sawmill that made lock gates for the new canal system being cut through Wheelock. In the early 1800's a textile mill was built to work first with silk and later with Fustian (similar to velvet). Following a general decline in the local textile industry the buildings were used by Mr Lowther for chemical processing. In 1919 the site was bought by two brothers who formed the company Hovey & Lowther, which would later become Zan Limited. The Hovey brothers R.B. & E.L. had returned from World War 1 (both being awarded the Military Cross). E.L. Hovey would later train troops in preparation for World War 2.

One of the products they produced was phosphoric acid, much of which was shipped to the USA during prohibition as it was used to make soft fizzy drinks (it is still on the ingredients listed on cans of Coca-Cola). Other products included soap, disinfectants, polish and various other cleaning products, brushes, aluminium pans and paint.

Zan Industrial Park is currently home to a wide variety of successful businesses and is still owned by the Hovey family, Richard Hovey a grandson of R.B. Hovey is the present owner, a former mayor of Sandbach.

The many canalside industries in Wheelock, including H.J. Lea's, the foundry and soap works off Forge Fields and the Salt Works, were ideally placed for transporting goods by road - The Wheelock to Nantwich Turnpike, The Trent and Mersey Canal and the North Staffordshire Railway. What is now the Wheelock Rail Trail was originally built to transport salt and other materials to and from The Potteries. The Wheelock Rail Trail follows FP23 beside Arclid Brook.

The abandoned Wheelock Salt works located between the canal and railway line was known locally as The Salties. It was covered in mounds of rubble and tracks used by motorbike scramblers until the current owner Wilf Wakefield cleared the land to create the current grazing field.

Further along the canal towards Malkins Bank were the Brunner Mond chemical works. The pastoral scene you see now is a far cry from the industrial landscape of 100 years ago. In 1934 when the Brunner Mond (ICI) Works closed and was later demolished, the Hovey family acquired the clock that can now be seen installed on the Zan Mill.