The bridge at Church Kirk where the towpath changes side. Note the ramp on the right and the roller protecting the tow line from rubbing against the stonework.

Weaver, a traditional Leeds & Liverpool boat on its way to Leeds after passing through Church Bank swing bridge.

Produced for the Leeds & Liverpool Canal Society, whose details can be found on its website at http://www.llcs.org.uk or from the Secretary:
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This is a part of the 6 inch Ordnance Survey map of 1850 for the Accrington area. The New Rishton Reservoir was used to power the winding engine at the Dunkenhalgh Park Colliery. Note the basin on the opposite side of the valley close to New Barn Bridge (A). This was a former colliery site, closed even by the date of this map. The line of the canal here can easily be seen from Church Kirk Bridge and the path down to Park Colliery.

The canal opened from Burnley to Clayton opened in 1801. At Church, it was built around 1808 and the section from Clayton to the Peel Arm may have opened at this time. The official opening of this section was in June 1810, when a fleet of 27 boats sailed from Clayton to Blackburn. It was in 1816 that the canal was finally opened from Leeds to Liverpool. It continued to carry goods regularly here until 1963 when the coal traffic from Bank Hall Colliery, Burnley, to Whitebirk Power Station ended.

This is a circular walk which starts at Church Kirk Bridge (A). Walk along the towpath, passing the canal’s half-way point on the bend (B) and the mooring and picnic site built by the Church Prospects Group behind the church (C). Nearby Church Bank Mill was built by Wm. Duckworth & Son in 1881 for weaving. It closed for textile production in 1960 when Mastabar took over the site. Further along the towpath you pass the site of Church Bank Print Works (D). Textile printing by Peel, Yates & Co began here in 1772, and in the late 18th century it was one of Britain’s most important industrial sites. The organisation of the factory and its suppliers was to provide the example upon which industry was to develop across the world, making it today one of Britain’s most important industrial heritage sites. It is now used by Express Gifts, part of Joseph Arnold & Company. Beyond the swing bridge is the Peel Arm (E), now shortened, which used to serve the print works. This part of the works and the arm are now owned by Emmerson & Renwick.

An empty coal boat near Church Bank swing bridge in the 1950s on its way back to Burnley for another load of coal for Whitebirk Power Station.

The bridge at Church Kirk where the towpath changes side. Note the ramp on the right and the roller protecting the tow line from rubbing against the stonework.
Returning along the towpath and crossing the swing bridge, note the stone work on the canal bank to the right of the bridge. In the mid-19th century there was a boatyard here (F) where Richard Holdsworth and George Ward worked. Madder Mill was here as well; built as part of the Peel empire, it closed in 1887. To the left of the bridge, the remains of the tip for Coppy Clough Colliery is visible by the canal (G). Opened in 1838, it was in operation until 1873, the shaft continuing in use afterwards for mine ventilation. The limekiln, marked on the 1827 map, probably disappeared when the colliery was built. In the valley, Accrington & Church Sewage Works opened in 1888 (H). Sludge was removed by boat for many years, a short railway incline being used to raise the sludge up to the canalside tip. Note the deep valley here which the canal crosses on a high embankment similar in height to the well-known one in Burnley (I). Now follow the path away from the canal. This was formerly a tramway (J), possibly incorrectly marked as being in a tunnel on the 1850 OS map overleaf, used to bring coal up to the canal from Park Pits where a water wheel was used for winding. On returning to the canal bank continue back to Church Kirk Bridge. The towpath changes from one side to the other here. Where a canal is built on a hillside, the towpath is usually on the 'lower' side of a canal, but from Clayton to Church it is on the upper. The Peel's requested, during construction of the canal, a diversion from its original route which would have taken it on the Accrington side of their print works. Lord Petre of Dunkenhalgh was asked for permission for the canal to cross his land. He only agreed if the towpath could be on the opposite side of the canal to discourage poaching from his estate. At Church Kirk, the towpath passes across and then under the bridge so that it was unnecessary to disconnect the towing line used by horse-drawn boats. Note the iron fittings and stonework used to guide the towrope and to prevent it from wearing against the stone of the bridge, and the recesses for emergency gates across the canal under the bridge if there was a breach of the canal crossing the embankment.

The Peel Arm, seen here in the 1970s before it became a nature reserve.

Accrington & Church sewage works around 1910 looking towards the canal. Church Bank Colliery was behind the building in the centre. The embankment carrying the canal over the Hyndburn is on the left, with the incline for sewage sludge just out of sight. Part of Church Bank Printworks can be seen in the distance.