**Mindfulness Walk around Gloucester Docks – Script**

**Introduction**

Hello, my friend and welcome to Gloucester - my name’s Shaun Donaghy, host of the Mindfulness for Beginners podcast and I’ll be guiding you around a mindful walk of Gloucester’s historic docks.

The aim for this recording is to help you to experience the area in a full and present way. Frequently when we go on holiday or for a day out, we can try to pack in as much as we can, rushing from one place to another, physically being there but not being present - not really experiencing the world in front of us. Mindfulness is sometimes called the art of stopping and that’s what we’re going to do today - we’re going to stop; we’re going to let go of our plans and our anxieties and enjoy being in the here and now.

For those new to the practice, mindfulness is about giving 100% of our awareness to our present experience without judgement. That can be internally focused on our breath, our body, or our thoughts - or it can be on the outside world, what we can see, hear, smell, and feel. As we’re focusing our awareness, its normal for thoughts to arise - we’re not trying to clear our mind, we can just notice those thoughts come up, smile to them, and watch them leave our awareness. We can then return our attention to what we’re focusing on.

It’s through this practice that we can gradually let go of our worries about the future and regrets from the past and live a calmer, happier life and take joy from the world around us. Today we’re going to do just that with a mindful walk along Gloucester’s historic docks.

Gloucester Docks are the most inland port in the country - just a stone’s throw from Gloucester’s historic Gate Streets, it’s the perfect place for a day out and I’ll be pointing out some of the highlights for you to appreciate as we walk around.

As we begin our mindful walk, we are situated by North Warehouse facing the docks and to your right there is a 7 and a half tonne steam crane on the railway lines. It was built in 1944 by Joseph Booth and Brothers in Leeds. After a moment here we will start walk anticlockwise around the docks. Let’s take a few moments to stop here and focus on our breath:

Focusing your attention on inbreath and outbreath - noticing the column of air.

You might notice how your inbreath feels cooler on the way in, warmer on the way out.

Notice how your shoulders rise, stomach falls.

Noticing the rhythm - not trying to breathe in a particular way.

Next let’s focus on what we can feel as we walk - When we walk mindfully, we walk slowly - as you’re walking now, slowing down the pace to a couple of steps for your inbreath, a couple of steps for your outbreath. And we’re going to focus our awareness on different things as we go, beginning with the contact our feet have with the floor, how our body moves when we walk, noticing our breath, our thoughts. Then we’re going to focus externally and spend time fully experiencing the different sights and sounds of Gloucester docks.

But we’ll begin with the contact our feet have with the floor. As you’re slowing down you can begin to notice the pressure of your feet on the ground. As you take each step you can feel the pressure begin at the heel of your foot and flow through the sole to toes, then lifting from the heel again. Really focusing on that feeling, noticing the connection with the ground. As we do this, we can notice thoughts arrive and leave, not being swept away by those thoughts but smiling to them, accepting them, and letting them go, returning our attention to the feeling of walking on the earth. We might feel some gratitude for our feet, being aware of how important they are for getting around. Now continuing to breathe while we focus our attention on the feeling of our feet on the earth.

Next, we can notice the rest of our body, the feeling in our leg muscles, the movement of your knees. How your arms move. Whether you’re feeling warm or cold. Any areas of tension, maybe in your back or brow. We can choose to release some of that tension, or we can simply notice that it’s there. Bring the spotlight of awareness to your whole body as you walk.

So, lets apply that mindful awareness as we reach the first awareness point…

Gloucester Lock

**From here we can see to the right the lock keeper’s house; Ahead is Gloucester Lock Lift Bridge**

Let’s take a moment to stop, look out on the water and use our awareness to be fully present with our experience. We can notice [Note - pause after each]:

* The rushing sound of water / sound of seagulls
* The light reflecting off the water
* Noticing what you can smell
* The feel of the metal rail
* To your left, the tall ship off in the distance - that’s where we’re headed next…

As you walk towards the next stop, I invite you to focus on your thoughts - our mind can be very busy, especially on a day out. We’re not going to try to block out our thoughts; instead, we’re going to watch our mind as we walk, allowing thoughts to arise and watch them pass through our awareness, like clouds passing overhead.

**Next Stop T Nielsen’s Boat Yard**

This is T Nielsen’s Boat Yard, one of the world's leading specialists in repairing, restoring, and building traditional ships and rigging. Making historic ships strong again to withstand tough weather and troubled waters - just like how we can return to focusing on our breathing when we hit stormy weather.

The boat yard opened in 1970. They have extensive dry and wet docks here, but the boat builders and craftspeople work all over the world on different vessels. They worked on the re-planking of HMS Victory down in Portsmouth. The yard has also been used as a backdrop for many maritime scenes in TV and films.

Let take a moment to stop and focus on our senses again, this time we’re going to do a practice of mindfulness called ten breaths - this is where we stop and spend some time noticing everything we can about the focus of our awareness. We’re going to turn our full attention to the tall ship Kathleen May that’s in the dock next to Nielson.

You might notice:

* The colour of the hull.
* Where the ship touches the water.
* The height of the masts.
* The rigging hanging off.
* The objects on the ship.
* Any people working on the ship.
* The sound of the movement of the ship in dock.

Now let’s step across the bridge and walk towards our next stop - Llanthony bridge. Remembering to focus our awareness on the contact our feet have with the ground as we do so. You might choose to say to yourself, “I have arrived, I am home, in the here and in the now.”

Next Stop Llanthony Bridge

From Llanthony Bridge you can see SULA LV14 Lightship. The impressive red boat is one of Gloucester’s most well-loved landmarks. She along with the cathedral is one of the most photographed icons in the city. She is a nationally registered historic Lightvessel commissioned by the Humber Conservancy Board in 1959. Originally named SPURN; she was stationed on the Humber Estuary to protect mariners for 26 years, until being decommissioned in 1985 and replaced by a navigational buoy. Today she houses beautiful holiday accommodation for people to hire.

Llanthony Bridge The first bridge at this site was a wooden swing bridge built to carry Llanthony Road over the new docks when they were constructed in 1794.

This was replaced in the 1860's with an iron swing bridge. in 'The Gloucester and Sharpness Canal' Hugh Conway-Jones reports that this iron bridge carried a rail line linking the Midland Railway which had a line on the east side of the docks with the Great Western Railway which ran into the west side of the docks.

Let’s stop again and for a moment, if you feel comfortable, close your eyes. It’s interesting how the experience of our other senses can intensify when we give ourselves a moment to experience them. You might feel the breeze on your hands and face. You might hear the steps of people around you. You might put your hand on the bridge’s railing. Appreciating the history of the people who have made the docks their life’s work. Opening your eyes again, you might take a moment to enjoy the view down the river - the barges and the red ship SULA.

So now we’re going to cross the bridge to the National Waterways Museum. While we’re walking there, we’re going to focus on our breath again - I have arrived, I am home, in the here and in the now.

Next Stop National Waterways Museum Gloucester

Housed in a warehouse at the heart of Gloucester’s fine Victorian docks, Gloucester Waterways Museum tells the story of our wonderful canals and rivers.

You can climb aboard historic boats, enjoy hands-on fun, watch archive films, and browse galleries rich in canal heritage and stories.

As we’re walking past the museum you might choose to either focus your awareness on the rail cart and crane in the same way we did before - so stopping and noticing everything you can about them as you breath in and out.

Or you can set your full attention on how you’re feeling now. In the practice we call this a weather report - you might be feeling a little stormy because you feel that you have a lot to get through today, or you might be feeling calm and sunny or a bit gloomy because your wonderful day in Gloucester Docks is coming to a close.

The important thing is to notice what you’re feeling and be OK with it, even if you’re not 100% OK today. We don’t have to try and change what we’re feeling, we can just be present with our experience and notice that it’s there. By doing this we reduce the impact that difficult feelings have on us.

So now we’re going to proceed to our last stop - Mariner’s Church in the centre of Mariner’s Square.

Mariners Church

Mariners Church was opened in 1849 it was used by Mariners from all over the globe who were coming to Gloucester and in its first 5 years it gave out over 2000 copies of the bible. The church also provided lessons in literacy and a coffee bar to combat drunkenness. The present church is still serving the area spiritually and practically.

The chapel in its simple beauty is a quiet, spiritual space for those visiting the docks.

This would be a lovely place to return to our breath a final time, inside the church if you choose to:

Focusing your attention on inbreath and outbreath - noticing the column of air.

You might notice how your inbreath feels cooler on the way in, warmer on the way out.

Notice how your shoulders rise, stomach falls.

Noticing the rhythm - not trying to breathe in a particular way.

Conclusion

I hope you’ve enjoyed this mindful tour of the docks, why not finish by noticing any changes in your body, any new awareness of areas of relaxation or tension, perhaps just taking a moment to sit and stretch any areas that have become uncomfortable. Noticing any changes in your mind, and if you feel a sense of calm or peace, setting the intention to carry it through the rest of your day.

If you’ve enjoyed this journey, then please do go to visitgloucester.co.uk and find out more on what the area has to offer and join me on my weekly meditation podcast: simply search for Mindfulness for Beginners podcast.

May you be happy, may you be peaceful and may you see yourself through the eyes of compassion and understanding. Slan abhuile and please do enjoy your time in Gloucester.