

The Buckingham Canal Society



The Buckingham Canal Society (BCS) was founded in January 1992. It is a Registered Charity number 1156662 and is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). It is affiliated to the Inland Waterways Association and has members all over the UK.

The Society's aims are as follows:

- 1 To promote the restoration of the Old Stratford and Buckingham Arms of the Grand Union Canal to good and navigable order and to promote the maintenance and improvement of the Waterway for the benefit of the public.
- 2 To promote the fullest use of the Waterway by all forms of water borne traffic and for all forms of water-related commercial, local amenity, tourist and recreational activity for the public benefit.
- 3 To promote the education of the public in the history and use of the canals and waterways and Buckingham Canal in particular.

Restoration work has commenced at a number of sections of the canal. Bourton Meadow and Hyde Lane Lock are described in this leaflet. A stone bridge has been restored at Little Hill Farm. At Cosgrove, Bridge 1 has been rebuilt, re-watering to the A5 is in progress and further restoration work is planned. Regular maintenance work parties take place along all sections ensure the paths are clear of vegetation re-growth providing free access for visitors.



The Society believes that the restorations taking place will enrich the accessible green infrastructure, linking habitats and increasing biodiversity. Activities such as walking, fishing and boating will also benefit the local community and will increase tourism as a result. The Society knows that none of this would be possible without its volunteer team. Regular friendly work parties are held each month, where you can learn many new skills, such as hedge-laying or bricklaying. If you'd like to support us, please contact us using the details overleaf.



This is a relatively easy walk of 2 miles along flat footpaths. If not continuing along further sections of the Ouse Valley Way you will need to retrace your steps to return to the starting point – 4 miles in total.

The walk will take you along the course of the Buckingham canal, where you can see a section that has been restored and re-watered, and a section that is in a nature reserve where restoration has commenced.

Car parking is available in the layby at the southern end of Burleigh Piece, opposite Bourton Meadow Academy. The start of the walk is signposted on the Eastern side of the A413 opposite Burleigh Piece.

Buckingham Canal Society is a registered charity: No. 1156662

Contact Details

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We are Social



Original leaflet production grant funded by
MILTON KEYNES
HERITAGE ASSOCIATION

Leaflet design by www.black-dog-design.co.uk
Based on an idea by Ian Matson

THE OUSE VALLEY WAY

from Bourton Meadow to the
Buckingham Canal Nature Reserve

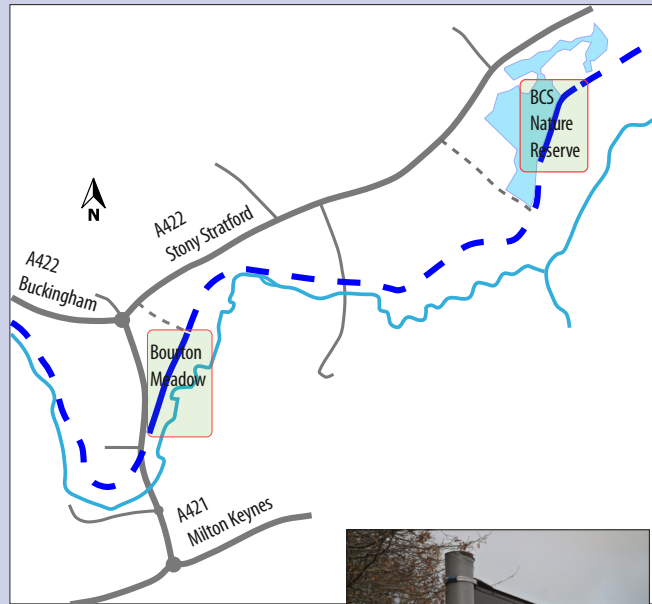
A short walk of about 2 miles (4 for the round trip) along part
of the Ouse Valley Way, following the course of the
Buckingham Canal



Buckingham Canal Society

**Restoring Canal Heritage
for Future Generations**

From the past . . . to the present



The Bourton Meadow and Buckingham Canal Nature Reserve sections form part of the 9.5 mile Buckingham Arm, which joins the Old Stratford Arm which in turn joins the Grand Union Canal at Cosgrove: a total length of 10.75 miles.

Originally surveyed in 1793, plans were authorised in 1794 and cutting of the Buckingham Arm started in September 1800 with its opening taking place on the 1st of May 1801. This revolutionised trade between Buckingham and London with coal, stone and bricks, amongst other bulk goods, being transported. Hay and Straw could now be readily taken to London for the city's horse drawn transport. Buckingham saw improvements, such as street lighting coming into use for the first time, as a result of importing coal. Trade reached 20,000 tons a year and this was more-or-less sustained for nearly 50 years, with coal making up around 80% of the volume.

1850 brought with it a change in fortune as the Bletchley to Banbury branch railway opened. This inevitably took trade away from the canal which, by 1890, had dropped to around 3,000 tons per year.

To make things worse, the Buckingham end of the arm became silted up, not only from the River Great Ouse feeder, but mainly from disposal of sewage by the Buckingham Corporation. By 1900 trade beyond Maids Moreton was impossible due to the silt build up. 1932 saw the last boat travel only as far as

Leckhampstead. The Buckingham Arm was officially abandoned in 1964, whilst retaining the Old Stratford Arm.

Today a short section of the 150-mile Ouse Valley Way follows the course of the westerly end of the canal from Buckingham to Thornton. From this you can view areas where the Buckingham Canal Society have started the long task of restoring the canal to its former glory.



Restoring the Bourton Meadow section

Restoring the Bourton Meadow section at Buckingham began in 2004 with the landowner giving permission to access the whole section allowing for clearance of undergrowth to begin and the rebuilding of the spill-weir (photo 3 overleaf).

A grant funded Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey, in May 2011, revealed that the area is rich in flora and fauna, with birds and butterflies being well represented. This survey was required for the subsequent and successful planning application that was granted approval in April 2012 to re-profile, re-line and re-water the canal.



and with strong continued support of many local groups.



Final preparations began in September 2012, including surveying the new waterline. Patrons Rt. Hon. John Bercow MP and Lord Boswell of Aynho cut the first sod in January 2013. WREN (Waste Recycling Environmental Ltd) issued a grant for nearly £70,000 soon after, unlocked by seed funding of over £7,000 from Aylesbury Vale Community Chest

In July 2013, top soil was removed from the bed and banks with re-profiling to allow for water for a depth of 4ft (1.2m). This was then lined with Bentoline Geosynthetic Clay Liner and the top soil replaced. The towpath was levelled and gravelled over.



The canal was re-watered for the first time in about 100 years, from the 23rd of August 2013, and now holds approximately 5 million litres! The section was officially re-opened by the Rt. Hon. John Bercow MP on the 26th October 2013.



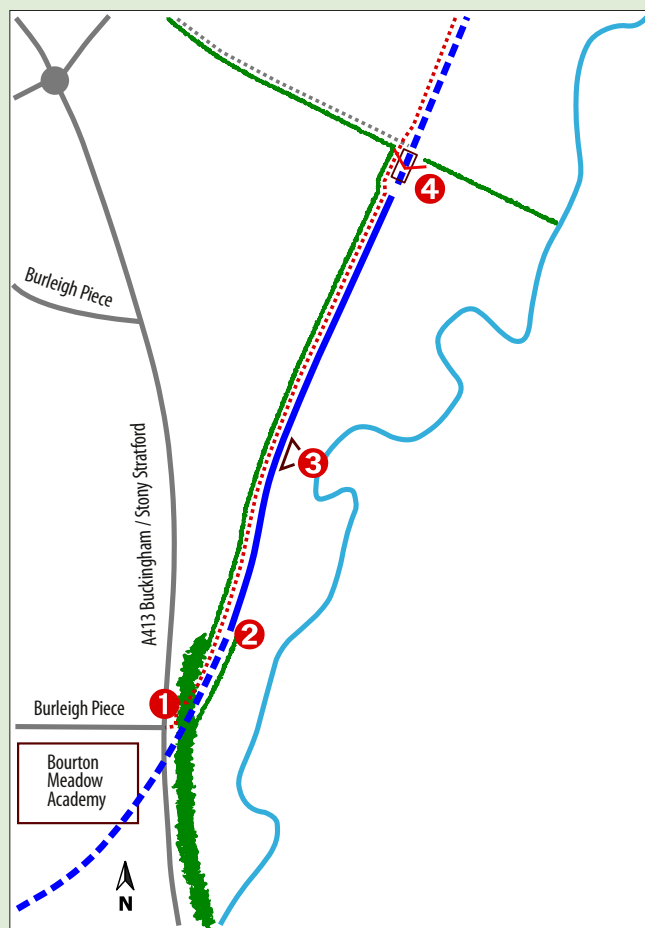
Remedial action to the liner was required, during 2014-2015, to add a polyethylene layer as a chemical reaction between the soil and the clay was causing seepage. Finally, thousands of native species water plants were inserted into coir matting and the far bank seeded. This short 386 metre section of the canal is now a haven for water fowl and insect life.



For more detailed maps and description of the walk please fully open this leaflet and refold to access the inner pages.

A. Bourton Meadow

The rebirth of the Buckingham Canal and your journey along it begins here



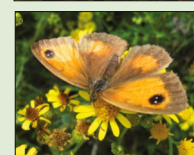
Your journey starts opposite the southern end of Burleigh Piece, off the A413, Buckingham. Follow the sign posts of the Ouse Valley Way and Buckingham Canal on the eastern side of the A413. As the path leads you away from the road, pass through a pedestrian gate. You are now walking along the old canal towpath, and the canal itself would have been to your right, as becomes clear in a few yards.



The hedgerow bordering the towpath provides a haven for wildlife including flora such as Cuckoo Pint, Sorrel, Blackthorn and Cherry, along with Fauna such as Coal Tits, Peacock and Red Admiral Butterflies.



As you approach the cottage, the restored section comes to an end (for the time being). Many years ago Lock Meadow Cottage was extended and the garden now covers the lock. It is hoped that an alternative watercourse can connect this section with the next.



You are now walking along the first fully restored section of the Buckingham Canal, with newly laid towpath, native water plants, and grassed far bank with wildflowers.

Before reaching the halfway point, you will see the reconstructed spill-weir on the opposite bank which

takes any excess rain water away into the river Great Ouse only a short distance away, where it winds through the valley, with the canal never straying far from it. At this point water can also be pumped into the canal from the river, if required, to supplement natural drainage from the land above.



The walk continues along the canal, which runs through Bourton Meadow, an area flourishing with wildlife. The first to take advantage of the canal water with Kingfishers using the River Great Ouse regularly. Butterflies are prevalent and the Meadows are ablaze with flora through the summer months.



As you pass to the left of the cottage, you will follow the Ouse Valley Way path markers through the open countryside to find another restoration project, Hyde Lane Lock, as described on the adjacent page. Enjoy the walk!



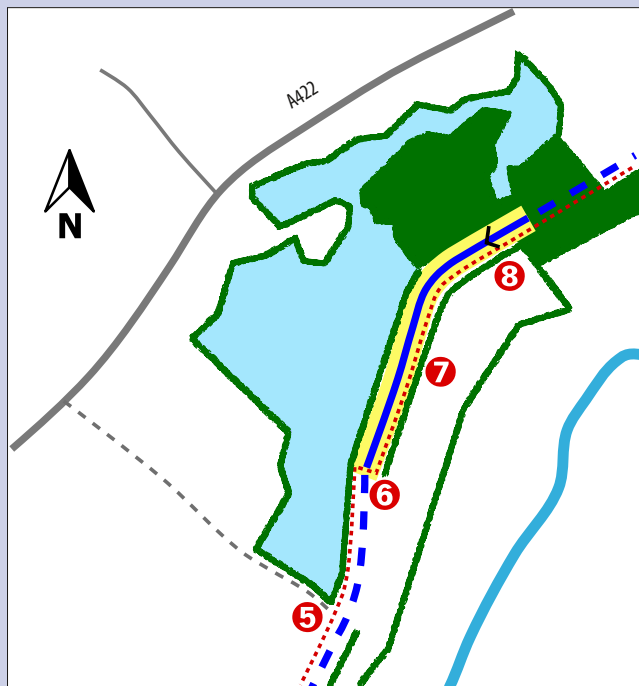
- Buckingham Canal - Unrestored
- Buckingham Canal - Under restoration
- Buckingham Canal Nature Reserve
- ... Towpath - Ouse Valley Way
- River Ouse
- Road
- ... Private Road / Track
- Hedgerow
- Woodland
- Lake
- Building

- ◀ Lock 2 - Filled in - on private land
- ◀ Spill Weir

Maps are not to scale

B. Buckingham Canal Nature Reserve

A secluded haven of tranquility and wildlife surrounding the recently restored Hyde Lane Lock



- Buckingham Canal – Unrestored
- Buckingham Canal – Under restoration
- Buckingham Canal Nature Reserve
- Towpath – Ouse Valley Way
- River Ouse
- Road
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- Hedgerow
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- Building

Maps are not to scale

Lock 1 - Partially restored

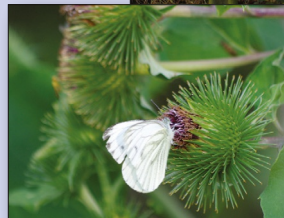
As you approach from the West, you follow a banked hedgerow with trees on your left, which once formed the northern bank of the canal. You are actually walking along the bed of the canal.

You enter the nature reserve through a kissing gate next to a large metal farm gate. This reserve is leased from the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust and BCS manages all aspects of the reserve. There are lakes to your left and these do not form part of the reserve, being managed for private fishing.

Immediately you feel as though you're in a different world! Dependent on the season, the reserve is flourishing with wildlife. Butterflies are abundant, along with

many woodland bird species and a wide variety of flora. Grass snakes have been spotted sunning themselves among the crevices.

Follow the towpath along the right hand side of the Canal. Work has been done to secure the towpath until full restoration can be carried out. On your right you can see where BCS volunteers have been undertaking the



important work of re-laying and replanting the hedgerow, which, in 2012, attracted a CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England) Mark for its contribution to 'Protecting and Enhancing the Buckinghamshire Countryside'. Small piles of tree branches have been left along the canal to act as sanctuaries for insects and reptiles.

As you round the right hand bend in the Canal, the centre-piece comes into view: Hyde Lane Lock (or Lock No. 1). Much work has been carried out here over the years to conserve this structure. In 2008, with a grant from WREN (Waste Recycling Environmental Ltd), the Society was able to rebuild in part the lock chamber in order to retain its structural integrity.



Furthermore, in 2012, lock gates (see photos below) were kindly donated by the Canal & River Trust (CRT) to augment the chamber. These gates came from the Northampton Arm and are similar to those that would have originally occupied the lock.



The benches that have been installed at the bottom end of the lock, made from old lock gate beams, provide you with a resting place where you can sit and take in the tranquillity of the surroundings.



You've now reached the end of this walk. You can, continue along the Ouse Valley Way if you wish, or retrace your steps and return to Buckingham.