

Walking & Cycling The Grand Union Canal Towpath

from Rickmansworth to Watford

The Grand Union Canal wends its way from London to Birmingham through city, town and country. The towpath from Bridge 167 at Cassiobury Park to Abbots Langley was resurfaced in 2013/2014. Enjoy the peace and tranquility of the canal or use the route as a traffic free journey to work away from busy roads. It's an easy bike ride along 5 miles of towpath between Leavesden and the Aquadrome in Rickmansworth.

There is so much to see and do along the way. Explore ancient woodland and roam between the trees in Whippendell Wood. Take the kids to Cassiobury Park and ride the miniature railway or get back to nature at the Aquadrome.

For those wanting to explore further, walk or cycle through history looking for the clues of the old railway line along the Ebury Way. Alternatively follow the towpath south towards London and Uxbridge or north towards Hemel Hempstead.

This guide will show you many places of interest en route, as well as all the access points including links into West Watford and Rickmansworth town centre. Leaflets in this series covering the Ebury Way and cycling in Watford are also available from local outlets.

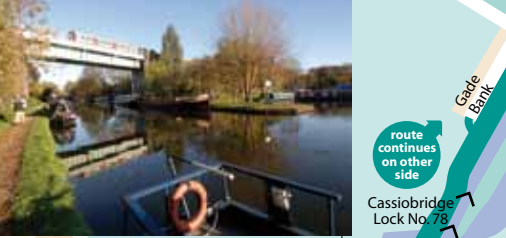


Rickmansworth dates back to Saxon times and with its prominent position at the confluence of the 3 rivers Chess, Gade & Colne. It grew to a sizeable town gaining its royal charter in 1542.

The canal was built in 1797, and many businesses sprang up in the vicinity including 5 paper mills and a brewery. Later came the railway to Watford built by Lord Ebury in 1862 becoming the Ebury Way after the line finally closed in 1981. The state of Pennsylvania USA is named after a famous former resident William Penn who lived in Basing House - now Three Rivers Museum.

The annual Canal & Environment Festival in May promoted by Three Rivers District Council and Rickmansworth Waterways Trust brings together the local community and canal folk in a showcase of old working boats and traditionally painted canal wares, together with a variety of environmentally friendly goods, ideas, and events.

Rickmansworth



Stocker's Lock

This lock with its picturesque white cottage, shares its name with the 16th century farm nearby used for filming tv series Black Beauty. The old Coal Post London Boundary marker still stands outside the Toll House where tolls were levied on goods going into London. Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust manages the Nature reserve at Stocker's Lake which is home to a wide variety of wildfowl or birds, insects and mammals.



The Aquadrome

The Aquadrome lakes, Bury and Batchworth just south of Rickmansworth Town were once gravel pits that provided roadstone for Wembley Stadium and the M1 and now provide opportunity for a variety of water based activities from fishing to sailing or just walking and watching the wildlife.

Batchworth Lock Canal Centre

The lockside Canal Centre gives an insight into the past when the River Chess Lock and the Canal Lock here was an important point on the London to Birmingham route with overnight refreshment facilities for boatmen and their horses. Canal narrowboats were made at the Walkers Boatyard nearby.



Batchworth Circular Walk or Cycle

From the Canal Centre at Batchworth there is a pleasant short circular walk or cycle of about 2 miles proceeding north up the towpath to the Ebury Way Ramp just before Lot Mead Lock. The ramp links to the Ebury Way traffic free route back southwards to Rickmansworth. Just over the Chess Bridge the circle is completed by the short cut south on the River Chess towpath back to the Canal Centre at Batchworth.

Croxley Common Moor

This Local Nature Reserve provides a great habitat for meadowland wildflowers and many birds including green woodpeckers. Walking over the common shows how the damp moorland provides habitat for a variety of insects including ants which is a sign the land has never been ploughed. The banks of the River Gade and the canal are home to a variety of wildfowl and kingfishers are a common sight.



The Colne Valley Regional Park

Established in 1965, the park covers 43 square miles of varied countryside on the edge of London stretching from Rickmansworth down to Staines. It is a mosaic of farmland, woodland and water with many hidden treasures ranging from popular recreation areas such as Rickmansworth Aquadrome and Black Park to tranquil nature reserves such as Stockers Lake and Maple Lodge.



Key

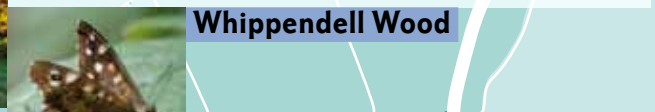
Grand Union Canal Towpath	Track	Canal Lock	London Underground Station	Fishing Public / Private
Cycle Routes (traffic free) - proposed	Street / Minor Road	River / Canal / Lake	Car Park	Watersports
Cycle Route part of the National Cycle Network	Main Road	Pub / Restaurant / Refreshments	Toilet	School / College
Cycle / Pedestrian Crossing	Motorway	Supermarket / Shop	Children's Play Area	Museum
Cycle Routes signed on quiet road - proposed	Railway	Cycle Shop	Arts Centre	Fields Open Land
Shared Cycle Route / Bus Lane	Railway disused	Tourist Information	Railway Station	Woodland
Footpath	Bridge	Miniature Railway	Residential area	Commercial area

scale 1:8,150
1 kilometre
1/2 mile

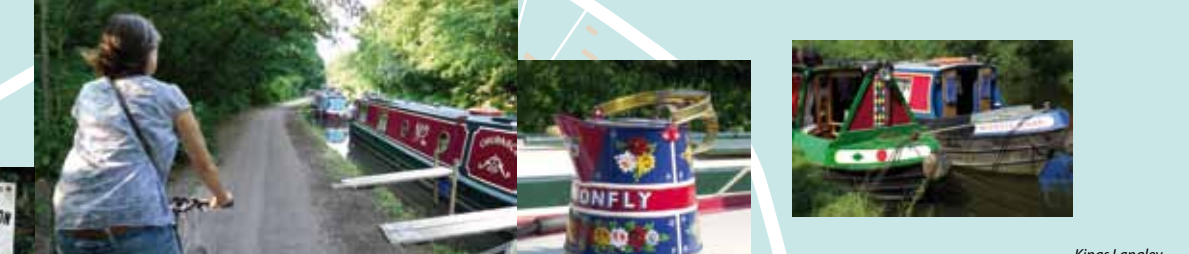


Whippendell Wood
Site of Special Scientific Interest

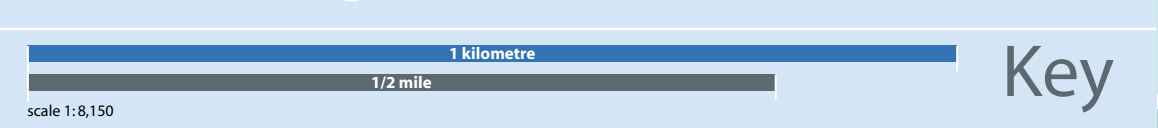
What links West Watford and the Star Wars Episode 1? Well, it was this woodland that was used as the environmental backdrop for the sacred temple ruins in the forest of Naboo. Historically managed for timber, firewood and game, the woodland is now a site of special scientific interest. During the hurricane of 1987 and gales of 1990 more than 2,500 trees were blown down or damaged creating glades that are now the home of many butterflies such as speckled wood, ringlet and holly blue. The wood is also home to over 270 species of plants. The recently improved path between the towpath and the wood provides improved access for all including the disabled and cyclists.



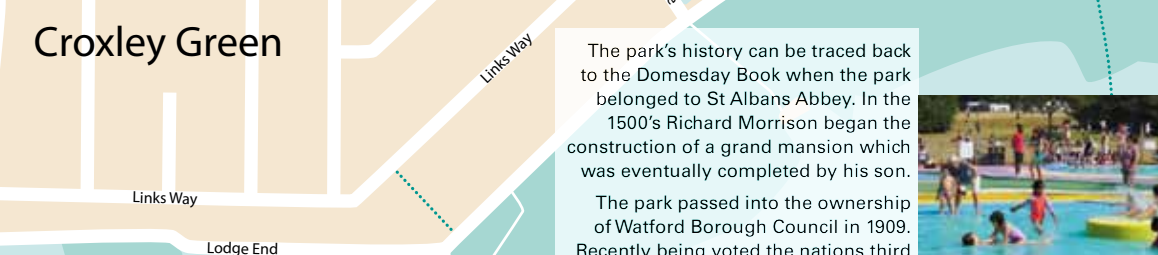
The Grove
The first substantial house on the site was thought to be Elizabethan. The fashion for a 'weekend in the country' was more or less invented here, with regular visitors such as Queen Victoria, Edward VII, Horace Walpole and Lord Palmerston. Now it is a leading hotel, hospitality and recreational centre, with a championship golf course set in 300 acres. For more details see www.thegrove.co.uk.



The Grand Union Canal
Previously goods from the Midlands had to travel south to Oxford, then transfer onto the River Thames to reach London. Built over 200 years ago, this new canal provided a far more convenient route cutting 60 miles off the journey. In addition, many side branches were added to link towns along the way. Last used in earnest for goods transportation during the 2nd World War, it is now a haven of tranquility for boating, cycling or walking.



Croxley Green
The park's history can be traced back to the Domesday Book when the park belonged to St Albans Abbey. In the 1500's Richard Morrison began the construction of a grand mansion which was eventually completed by his son. The park passed into the ownership of Watford Borough Council in 1909. Recently being voted the nation's third favourite park it is now a mecca for recreation and leisure. You can take a stroll through the park or use pedal power. For children there is a miniature railway running at weekends. Sporting facilities include football, cricket, basketball, tennis and croquet.



Cassiobury Park
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West Watford
A map section showing the area around West Watford, including Gade Avenue, Spinnage Avenue, and A412 Watford.



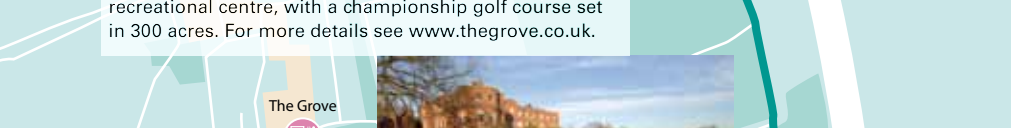
The Grove Park
Golf Course



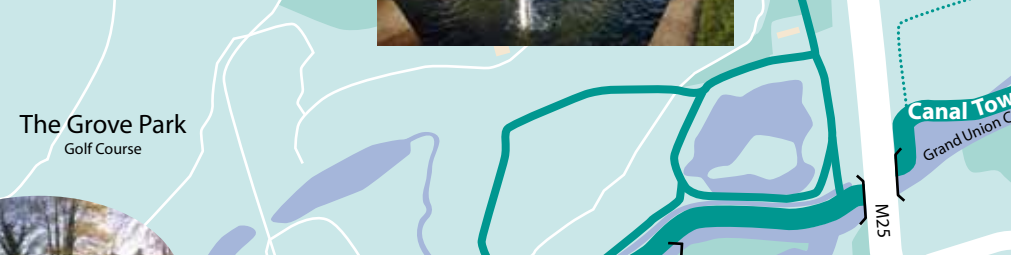
Abbots Langley
A map section showing the area around Abbots Langley, including Hunton Bridge Hill, Upper Highway, and Long Elms.



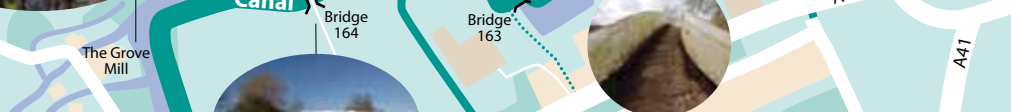
Leavesden
A map section showing the area around Leavesden, including Leavesden Aerodrome (disused) and Warner Bros. Film Studios.



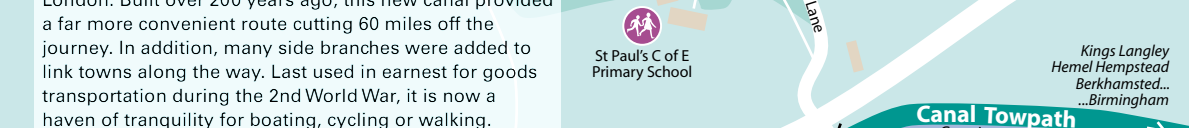
Cycling in Watford
Many attractive cycle routes have been created in Watford including access to the main shopping area along the part-pedestrianised High Street. A circular ride incorporating the canal towpath, and the town centre can be made by following The Ebury Way (NCN 6/61) to Lower High Street, along the High Street to the Town Hall and then rejoining the canal at Bridges 165, 167 or 168 - see the leaflet/map *Cycling in Watford* for more information.



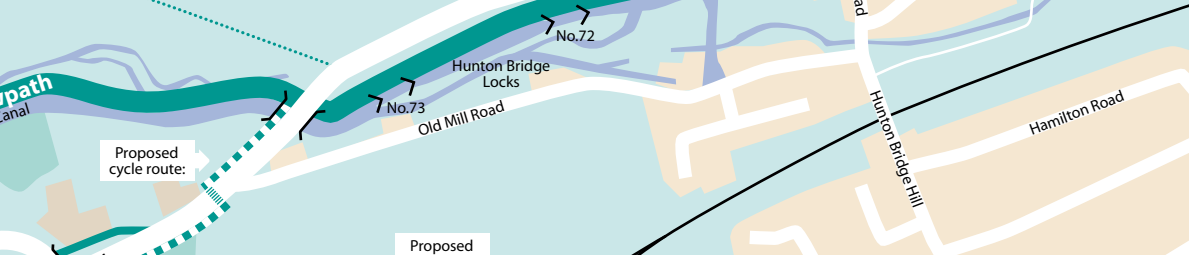
Walking and Cycling
Watford Cycle Hub is a non-profit community bike centre situated in the Pavilion at the Holywell Community Centre. It offers bike repair services, maintenance courses and cycle training, and accepts your old rusty old bikes for recycling, and sells affordable reconditioned bikes and bike parts. www.watfordcyclehub.org.uk



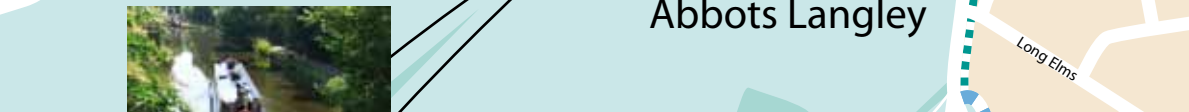
Spokes
Spokes campaign for better conditions for local cyclists and organise regular rides. www.spokesgroup.org.uk



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Places to Visit
Batchworth Lock Canal Centre - Tel: 01923 778382 www.rwt.org.uk
Cassiobury Park - Tel: 01923 226400
Web: www.watford.gov.uk/cassioburypark
Colne Valley Park - Tel: 01895 833375
Email: colnevalley@groundwork.org.uk
www.colnevalleypark.org.uk

The Grand Union Canal - The canal and towpath are looked after by the Canal & River Trust: www.canalrivertrust.org.uk

The Towns
Watford www.watford.gov.uk
Watford Information - Tel: 01923 226400
Email: enquiries@watford.gov.uk
Rickmansworth www.threerivers.co.uk
Rickmansworth Info. Point - Tel: 01923 776611
Email: enquiries@threerivers.co.uk

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Other free leaflets available in this series include:
The Ebury Way. For free copies Tel: 01923 226400.



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walking & cycling

The Grand Union Canal Towpath



5 mile green route between Rickmansworth, Croxley Green, Watford & Leavesden