

# 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. Improvements to the towpath between Watford and Rickmansworth provide a good, flat surface for walkers, cyclists and wheelchair users. Enjoy the peace and tranquility of the canal or use the route as a traffic free journey to work away from busy roads. Between Leavesden and the Aquadrome in Rickmansworth it is about a 45 minute easy bike ride over 5 miles of towpath.

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.



### 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.



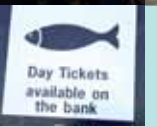
### The Aquadrome

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.



### 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.



### Batchworth Lock Canal Centre

The lockside Canal Centre gives an insight into the past when the River Chesh 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 2miles 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 Chesh Bridge the circle is completed by the short cut south on the River Chesh towpath back to the Canal Centre at Batchworth.

### Rickmansworth

Rickmansworth dates back to Saxon times and with its prominent position at the confluence of the 3 rivers Chesh, 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.



### 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.



### Croxley Common Moor Nature Reserve Site of Special Scientific Interest



**Key**

Grand Union Canal Towpath	Track	Canal Lock	London Underground Station	Fishing Public / Private
Cycle Routes (traffic free)	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	Fields Open Land
Cycle Routes (signed on quiet road)	Railway	Cycle Shop	Museum	Woodland
Shared Cycle Route / Bus Lane	Railway disused	Tourist Information	Arts Centre	Residential area
Footpath	Bridge	Railway Station	Miniature Railway	Commercial area

1 kilometre  
1/2 mile

scale 1:8,150



**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](http://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.

**The Towpath**

A permit is required to cycle on the towpath from British Waterways and is downloadable from: [www.waterscape.com/cycling/permit.html](http://www.waterscape.com/cycling/permit.html) or from British Waterways, Willow Grange Church Road, Watford, Herts WD17 4QA

**Places to Visit**

**Batchworth Lock Canal Centre** - Tel: 01923 778382 [www.rwt.org.uk](http://www.rwt.org.uk)

**Cassiobury Park** - Tel: 01923 226400 [www.watford.gov.uk](http://www.watford.gov.uk) & type in 'Cassiobury Park' in the search box

**Colne Valley Park** - Tel: 01895 833375 email: [colnevalley@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:colnevalley@groundwork.org.uk) [www.colnevalleypark.org.uk](http://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk)

**The Towns**

**Watford**  
Watford Information - Tel: 01923 226400 [www.watford.gov.uk](http://www.watford.gov.uk)

**Rickmansworth**  
Rickmansworth Information Point - Tel: 01923 776611 email: [enquiries@threerivers.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@threerivers.co.uk) [www.threerivers.co.uk](http://www.threerivers.co.uk)

**Walking and Cycling further afield**

Other free leaflets available in this series include:  
*Cycling in Watford & The Ebury Way*  
For free copies telephone 01923 226400



**Walking & cycling**

**The Grand Union Canal Towpath**

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

Hertfordshire  
Environment Agency  
British Waterways  
Hertfordshire Rural Transport Partnership  
CDA  
GROUNDWORK HERTFORDSHIRE  
SPOKES CYCLING GROUP

The Ordnance Survey mapping included within this publication is provided by Hertfordshire County Council under licence from the Ordnance Survey in order to fulfill its public function to provide information relating to its activities, services and plans. Persons viewing this mapping should contact Ordnance Survey copyright for advice should they wish to licence Ordnance Survey mapping for their own use. This mapping is based upon Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Hertfordshire County Council 100019606 2007.

Cartography, photography, leaflet design and cycling by Stephen Wragg - Wrapp Art House: [www.wah.co.uk](http://www.wah.co.uk)  
Bluebell photograph by Tim Woolridge.

Design © WAH 2007 Printed on environmentally friendly paper

