

Rickmansworth Waterways Trust

Strolls from the Lock Number 11 – To Chorleywood Station via Springwell Lock

Time approximately 2 hr 20 minutes
Distance 5.5 miles (plus train journey to return)

Turn right from the lock centre onto the towpath. Walk along this for about 1.5 miles to Springwell Lock, passing Stockers Lock on the way.

The area around Stockers Lock is remarkable as the lock, its bridge, the lock cottage, house (note the house martin nests in the eaves), a coal post and the farm on the other side of the canal, are all listed nationally as being of architectural and historic interest. I have described this stretch of the Grand Union Canal in ‘Strolls from the Lock’ #1 and 5. William Jessop, the engineer responsible for building the canal, completed this section by 1797, although the entire route was not opened until 1805. The original name of Grand Junction Canal refers to the fact that it joins the Oxford Canal at Braunston (Nottinghamshire), giving a direct connection between Brentford and Birmingham. The canal is termed ‘wide’ as each lock can accommodate two narrow boats of around 7 feet wide.

Leave the towpath just before Springwell Lock, turning right onto Springwell Lane (caution - no footpath). This passes in-between Stockers Lake (right) and Springwell Lake (left), both of which are nature reserves, and crosses over the River Colne four times, to reach a main road (A412). Turn left and cross over to Long Lane. This road was superseded by the access road to the M25, and is now quiet. In about ½ mile, leave this by a path on the left which passes under the access road and take the left fork immediately after the tunnel. Soon after, follow a track to the right which ascends towards the M25. Here, whilst pausing only to insert ear plugs, bear left to reach a motorway bridge. It is thought that there is a Roman villa under this road hereabouts.

Go over a stile on the far side of the motorway. This path (FP#11) runs along a hedge to the right, on the other side of which is Heronsgate, a conservation area with several listed buildings. Heronsgate was founded as ‘O’Connorville: Land of Peace and Plenty’ in the late 1840’s by Feargus O’Connor, leader of the Chartist Movement. He wanted to resettle people who were living in poor conditions in the industrial north onto subsistence plots. However, many knew nothing about farming and each plot was small. The idea was abandoned in less than 10 years. The settlement had no churches or public houses, but a beer shop outside the boundary is now the ‘Land of Liberty, Peace and Plenty’ public house, serving real ales.

There are 3 further stiles along this path, which ends at The Swillett. After the third, roughly a mile from the M25, a cluster of farm buildings can be seen across the field on the L. This is Bullsland farm, reached a little further on via a gate and footpath across the field. Several of its buildings are listed. The barn, dating from the 17th century, has a timber frame on brick base, and a wonderful wavy roof. The house is a little older, and has an attractive wooden horse and foal in the garden.

Turn right onto the road here, and after about 5 minutes, at a corner where a track leads off to the left, follow a footpath on the left of this (FP#23 to Old Shire Lane). Turn right at Old Shire Lane, the ancient boundary separating the Saxon Kingdoms of Mercia and Wessex. This now is the county boundary between Hertfordshire (on the right) and Buckinghamshire, and also part of the Chiltern Way.

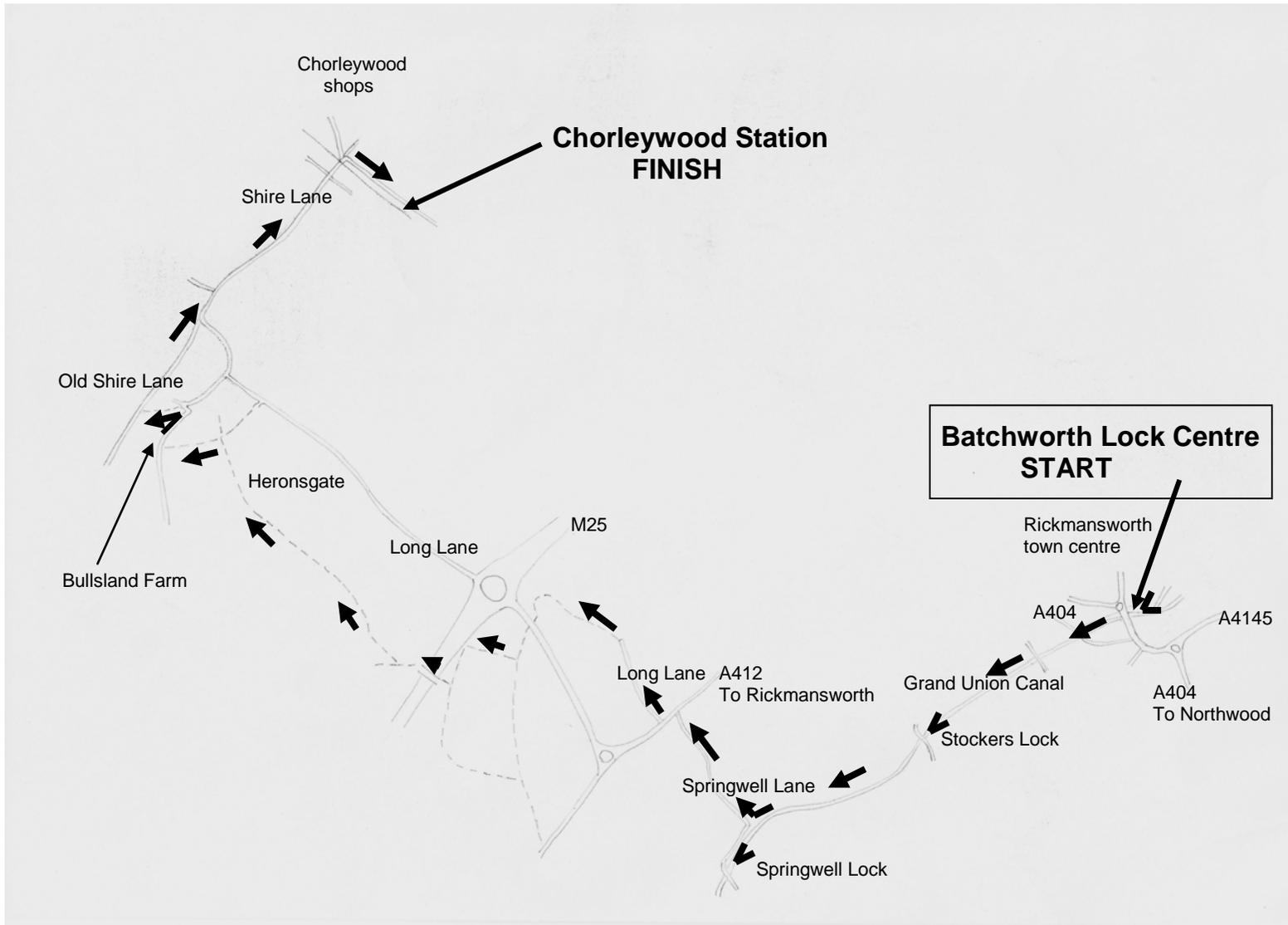
At a main road, reached in about 10 minutes, walk straight down towards Chorleywood. There is a service road on the left, just past Chalfont Lane, which is quiet and more pleasant to walk along. Some of the houses on the other side of the main road are listed buildings with parts were designed by the architect Charles Voysey in the Art and Crafts style. One example is the RC church of St John Fisher, about ³/₄ of the way down.

Go under the railway bridge and follow the road to the right, to reach Chorleywood station. Trains from here (Metropolitan and Chiltern line trains) take 5 minutes to reach Rickmansworth. There is also a bus service. The lock centre is on Church Street, the other side of Rickmansworth town centre.

These walks are written by Jillian Christensen and are provided free by The Rickmansworth Waterways Trust but a minimum donation of 20p is suggested to help support our education programme. Thank you!

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