

Rickmansworth Waterways Trust

Strolls from the Lock Number 2 – To Croxley Hall Farm

Time approximately 90 minutes
Distance 3.5 miles

From the lock centre, go over the bridge directly in front of you, to Batchworth Lock on the main canal. This lock has symmetrical brick steps leading down from the bottom gates and when first built in 1797, was unusual as it only had ground paddles, not gate paddles. Paddles are the means by which water is let into and out of the lock via channels in the gates or in the lock walls. At this time, a mill was on the site of the water pumping station, which can be seen on the far side of the canal. The water supply to this came from the canal. One set of paddles would cause less fluctuation in the water level of the canal, but presumably the time taken to get through the lock would be much longer.

Walk along the towpath past the cafe on your left and the lock to your right. On the left is one of the many small tributaries of the River Chess, which passes under the canal. On the opposite side of the canal is a weir, which takes overflow from the canal and eventually joins with the River Colne at the road bridge.

A little further on, the River Colne itself leaves the canal on the opposite side to run through the water pumping station. Originally a cloth and silk mill in about 1750, it was adapted as a paper mill by John Dickinson in 1811, running until 1887, until much of it was demolished in 1910 to make way for the water pumping station. In the garden of one of the houses at this point a stone obelisk can be seen. This is actually a water gauge. Inscriptions on it concern the arrangement for the control of the canal water level made between the Grand Junction Canal Company (as it was originally called) and the owner of the Moor Park estate. Mill owners had grave concerns about water abstraction from rivers, as this would affect the workings of mills dependant on an adequate water flow.

You now pass many permanent houseboats moored on the far side of the canal. At the end of these, the River Colne enters the canal. Near this junction is a mile post inscribed GJCC^o, Braunston 74 miles and a lock distance marker. Braunston, Northamptonshire, is the point on this canal from which mileages are taken and for bridge numbering. The River Gade also enters the canal on the same side a little further on. Between the two, you will walk under the bridge of a defunct railway between Watford and Rickmansworth, now a leisure route called the Ebury Way. The wide part of the canal here, just before the lock, is called a 'winding hole'. This is a place where it is possible to turn a 70 foot long narrow boat around, not easy in a system where the general width of the canal is less than this.

The next lock, number 80, is Lot Mead. The lock cottage here housed the Walker family (who had a boat building yard where Tesco stands today) when Alfred Walker was appointed as overseer on the canal in 1885.

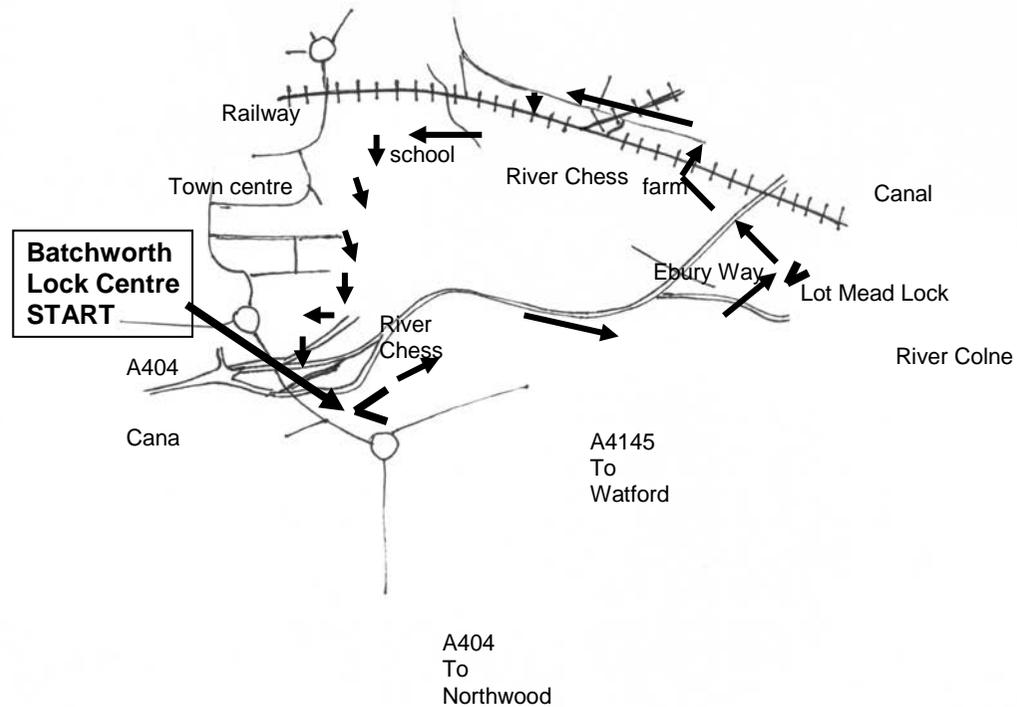
At Lot Mead lock, leave the canal on the track between the two houses, and follow this up to Croxley Hall Farm at the top. Continue on this track over the railway bridge keeping to the left around the bend at the top, (the footpath sign directs to Croxley Hall Woods) and straight on past the houses on the left hand side. The woods here on the right have a good display of bluebells in spring. After passing allotments to your left, walk down a short path on the left immediately after the entrance to the small allotment car park. Turning left onto the track at the bottom, pass under a railway bridge and then right before the gate. The path passes over the River Chess, and eventually joins the road. Turn left here, where the block of flats on the left have replaced a 1927 cinema, which in turn replaced the earlier one in the town centre. A little further on, pass school buildings to your left. One of these, with a statue of Joan of Arc in front, is 'The Elms,' built in 1720. The author George Elliot spent several summers in this house and wrote 'Daniel Deronda' here in 1876.

Turn left into Talbot Road, opposite the Coach and Horses pub, a 17th century building and one of the oldest in the town. There is usually a spectacular display of hanging baskets here in the summer. A short distance further on, the road crosses the Town Ditch, a tributary of the River Chess, then bears sharply to the right. Just after the bend, turn left past some terraced houses, crossing a parking area, through a ginnel, then right into Norfolk Road. Turn next left into Waters Drive and right at the end which brings you directly opposite St Mary's Church. Walk to the left and past the roundabout to the canal bridge. The building on the road here was previously a pub and then the Canal Supply Stores in 1910. Go down the steps to the towpath. The building on your left was originally the Boat Inn, with stables, part of which is now the lock 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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