

Rickmansworth Waterways Trust

Strolls from the Lock Number 5 – To Springwell Lane

Time approximately 150 minutes

Distance 4 miles

From the lock centre, turn right onto the towpath. Walk for about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile until you reach the next lock – ‘Stockers’. Cross the bridge over the canal here, and follow the track which bears to the left past the buildings of Stockers Farm. These date back to the 16th century but more recently featured in the 1970’s TV series ‘Black Beauty’. In the hedge on the right, just past the farm, and almost opposite a WW2 pillbox, are footpath signs for the Colne Valley Park Walk. Follow this, keeping to the right in the field. Pass through the gate at the top and turn left onto the track, and then right through the next gate into a field. Keeping the hedge to your right, exit through the gate on the far side of the field into a small wood. On the left, immediately past this gate, is a cast iron coal post. This used to be unloved and unpainted, but has been recently rescued. Posts were erected around 1851, to show the point at which tax was payable on coal entering London. This would suggest that either this track was a reasonably busy thoroughfare at that time – or that the authorities got wise to a short cut bypassing tax points at Stockers and Harefield Road.

Continue on the path, and approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from Stockers, you will emerge onto a track between two houses where you can go through a gate onto Springwell Lane. Turn L onto this road, and walk past the children’s playground to turn first left into Plough Lane. At the end of this is a sign for ‘Hillingdon Northern Link’ footpath (FP#U2), over a stile to the right of the gate of the last house. The path here goes straight from the stile through a field, then over an extended stile. Keep the hedge to your left through the next two fields. The path goes over a small bridge and continues on up the hill to a gap in the hedge from where it eventually joins a track to Fieldways Farm, passed on your left.

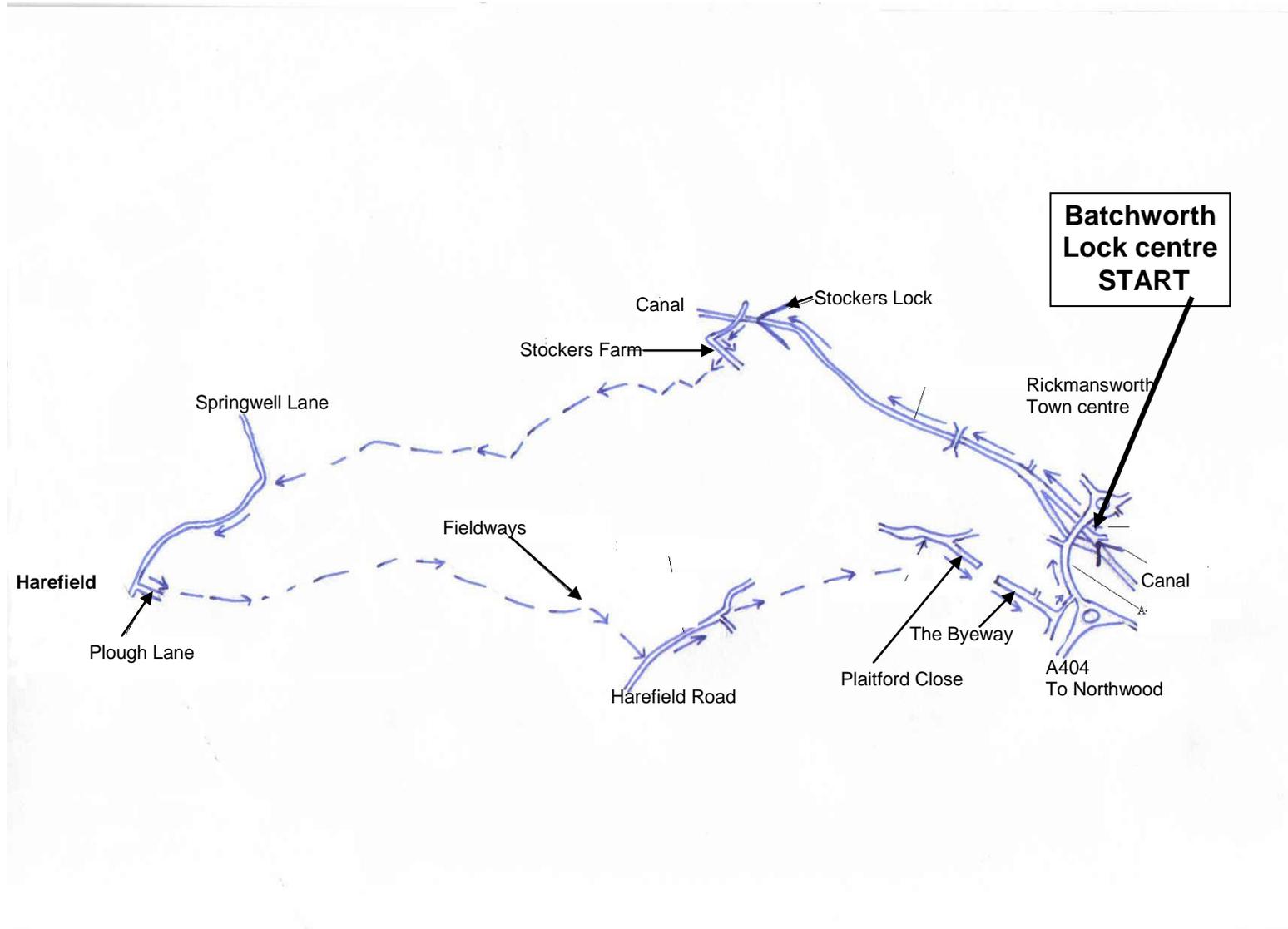
Turn left onto Harefield Road at the end, and walk down the hill until you reach a track on the right at the bend in the road. Take the footpath on the immediate left of this track. Bear left, pass through a small gate, turn left and go up the hill to a golf course. Keep on the track to the left of this, following a footpath sign at the bottom of a slope, where after about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile there is a gate on the left leading down between houses to join a road. Turn right at the road, and then go straight via Plaitford Close, through the path at the end, and onto The Byeway. Turn left at the end of this onto Batchworth Hill. This used to be the main road to Northwood until the mid 1970’s. The last house on the right before the present main road was originally one of Batchworth’s many public houses. The buildings on the far side of the main road are those of Three Valleys Water Company. Mills have occupied this site for hundreds of years, using waterpower from the River Colne. The mill race still passes through the site and joins the rest of the river at the bridge. House martins nest in spring under the gable of the building immediately opposite.

Turn left on the main road and go past the White Bear pub to reach the canal bridge and return to the lock centre. The bridge takes traffic over the River Colne, the Grand Union Canal and the River Chess, in that order. The piece of land between the Colne and the Canal, on the right of the road, used to have a small shop (Jon’s Stores) and some houses, before these were demolished for the new bridge in the 1970’s. More recently, it was the site where the narrow boat ‘Roger’ was rebuilt for the Rickmansworth Waterways Trust. ‘Roger’ was built in 1936 by Bushell Brothers of Tring, and is the last surviving example of a ‘5 planker’ wooden boat. Originally used to carry coal, it is now used for the ‘Learning at the Lock’ school visits run by the Trust, and occasionally for an educational scheme for young people. It can usually be seen on the canal here. There is now a miniature canal system and garden on the site, opened at the Canal Festival in May 2006, again intended for the educational programme.

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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