

# Rickmansworth Waterways Trust

## Strolls from the Lock Number 7 – To Hampermill

Time approximately 3 hrs

Distance 7 miles approx.

From the Lock Centre turn right and go up steps to the main road. Go left to pass over the canal, continue to the roundabout and on to Moor Lane. Cross to a road on the right close to the roundabout, signposted to Rickmansworth and Moor Park golf clubs. A footpath crosses the fairways, marked by posts and arrows at intervals. It begins on the left of the road just after the golf shop, through a gap in the hedge. Walk up the hill with the hedge on your right, pass through the hedge then walk diagonally to cross over the road at the brow of the hill. Go along a small track, where a sign on the right indicates the path passing to the left of a small copse. Further on, there is a footpath sign on the far side of the fairway on your right, approximately level with a small hut on your left and the mansion.

Moor Park Mansion was built in 1678 for James, Duke of Monmouth (executed for his rebellion against James 2nd), and reconstructed by James Thornhill in 1720 for Benjamin Styles, who had made a fortune in the 'South Sea Bubble' affair. Lancelot 'Capability' Brown re-modelled the gardens in the mid-18th century for the next owner. There are some beautiful trees – look for the cedar next to the Mansion, and the Sweet Chestnuts alongside the road. Later, several generations of the Grosvenor family lived there, until it was sold by Lord Ebury in 1919. Apparently, his new American wife did not like it. Bought by Lord Leverhulme, the soap magnate, it was converted partly to a golf course, and partly to housing. Houses in the new Moor Park estate featured in posters advertising the advantages of living in 'Metroland', selling for over £2000. As average wages were about £100/year then, now about £25000, it would suggest that the houses should now be £500,000 – much less than the current cost. More housing was proposed just before WW2, but this was stopped by the district council, who acquired much of the land. Moor Park Mansion itself was requisitioned during the war, and Operation Market Garden, resulting in the Battle of Arnhem, was planned there. The house is the Clubhouse of Moor Park Golf Club, but guided tours take place at various times throughout the year. The frescos inside are exceptional.

The footpath continues through the trees, left past a tee, across another couple of fairways and past a lake to your left, towards the right of a white house. Go between the rhododendrons here, to a small road, leading to the main road. Turn left, past 'Ye Olde Greene Manne' public house – here since at least 1728 and rumoured visited by Dick Turpin - and across Batchworth Heath. On the left is an arch designed by Robert Adam, one of the three entrances to the Moor Park estate. It featured in the film 'Genevieve' (1953), about the annual London-to-Brighton vintage car run.

Cross over Batchworth Lane and turn right. There is a footpath (#R1) on the left opposite 'The Prince of Wales' pub sign and an old coal post. Follow this for about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile to a road and turn left. Cross Batchworth Lane again and go between white posts into Moor Park. Just before the third lamp post on the right, a sign indicates footpath #051. This passes between houses, and across a road. Go under the railway on the opposite side of the next road, where the footpath continues immediately on the left. Keep to the right hand side of the field, with the pylon also on your right, and follow the footpath across more golf fairways. This is Sandy Lodge golf club, whose founder, attracted by the sandy nature of the land, leased 145 acres from Lord Ebury in 1909. He persuaded the Metropolitan Railway to open a station nearby. The footpath signs are easier to see here.

The path emerges at a road. Go through the kissing gate opposite and shortly afterwards through another, then turn left. You will reach a gate after about  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile. The path then turns left, along a fence and down some steps to a bridge across the River Colne. This is the site of Hamper Mill, probably one of only four mills mentioned in the Domesday Book. There were two corn mills here in 1597, and later, a paper mill. A branch of the river passes under the mill, and returns to the main stream a little further on.

Go through a gate into a field, and along the right side of Hampermill Lake towards Brightwell Farm, through a gate then onto a track. Turn left after the last pylon onto 'Ebury Way,' marked by white posts. This was a railway from 1862 to 1952, originally transporting goods between the canal at Rickmansworth and London. Later, it transported locally grown watercress. There is an industrial estate on the left about a mile further on, where the Ebury Way runs next to a road. Go through a kissing gate on the right labelled 'Croxley Common Moor SSSI' (opposite the space between two large white units on the left). Take the track alongside the hedge on the right, forking left when the track bifurcates. Keep straight on until you see houses ahead – aim to the left of these. There is a gate in the fence, leading to a bridge over the canal, where you should turn left onto the towpath. The lock centre is at the second lock along, about  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour away.

**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!**

**Batchworth  
Lock Centre  
START**

