

# Rickmansworth Waterways Trust

## Strolls from the Lock Number 8 – To Harefield

**Time approximately 2 hr 30 minutes**

**Distance 6.75 miles (6.0 miles alternative route)**

From the Lock Centre turn right, and walk along the canal towpath until you reach Springwell Lock. This is the next but one lock you will come to, and will take about 25 minutes. New housing at Springwell has replaced the old industrial buildings. Soya flour was produced here in the 1930's whilst there was a pottery in the 1970's. Cross over the canal at the lock. Directly opposite is a former chalk quarry. Chalk was processed into lime, used in agriculture and as a building material. Lime was made in Harefield until about 1902. Continue on the road, which bears around to the right, past the houses, until you reach a track on the right. Follow this footpath, # U4 (part of the Hillingdon Trail), passing some farm buildings. There are good views from this track across the Colne valley. Several of the lakes formed from excavations for sand and gravel can be seen along this valley. On the far side of the canal are the Maple Lodge sewage works. To the right of these are the Springwell Reed Beds, a nature reserve of 6.5 acres cared for by the Herts and Middx Wildlife Trust. This attracts a variety of wetland species of both birds and plants.

At a bend in the track, continue on up the hill (Public footpath#U6 and Hillingdon Trail), unless you wish to follow the:

**Alternative route:** Take the Public footpath #U4 to the R. In  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile, you will reach Summerhouse Lane (see below).

**Main route:** The track joins a road – turn right, and at a bend, take the footpath on the right (marked Public Footpath # 8 and Hillingdon Trail). From the stile, the path goes straight across the field, to another stile, and keeps to the left of a tall hedge. At Springwell Lane, turn right, and walk past a children's playground and the Harefield Nursing Centre, to a footpath on the right (Public Footpath # 9 and Hillingdon Trail). This passes allotments into the ancient Park Wood, part of which is a nature reserve (which can be accessed via a path to your left). Walk down the hill to a road. Continue on this until Summerhouse Lane is reached; turn left and then right at a main road. These roads skirt around Coppermill (now called Royal Quay) on your right. This was built in 1803 by the Mines Royal, and produced sheet copper (brought by canal), used to coat the bottom of Royal Navy ships to protect against weed and other marine organisms. The Copper ball on the dome of St Paul's cathedral is said to have been made here. As in the case of many other mills along the River Colne, it then became a paper mill around 1855. Later on it was an asbestos sheet factory. The buildings have now been converted to offices and light industry.

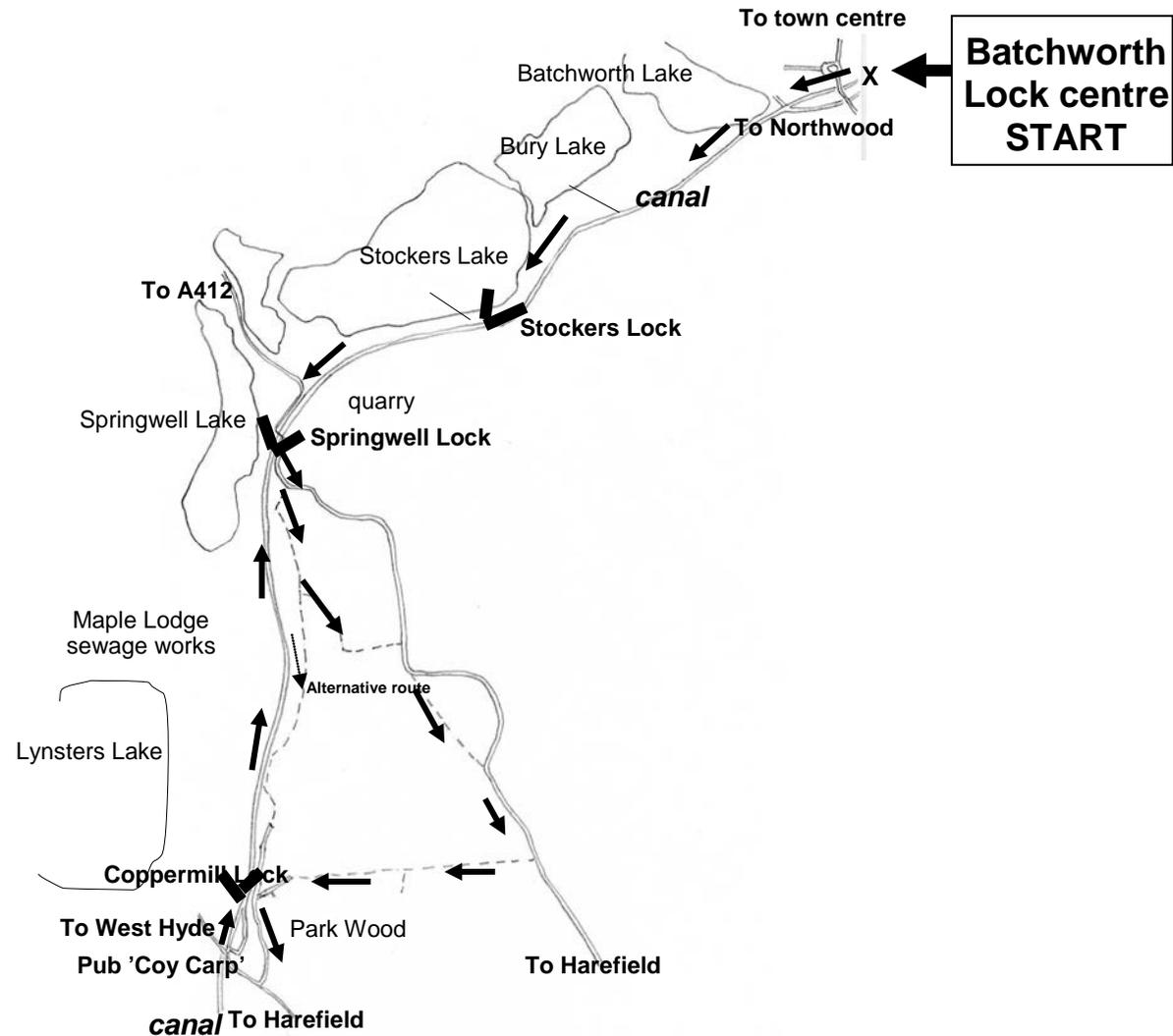
Cross the bridge over the canal, where there is a canoe slalom course constructed at the point where the mill race joins the canal. The Coy Carp pub on the far side of the canal pre-dates the canal. Turn R onto the towpath, which you can follow back to the lock centre at Batchworth (approximately 1hr). Water from the canal is diverted through the mill from just before Coppermill lock. Dates next to the lock gates are when renovations were carried out – 1884 and 1914 for the bottom gates and 1870 for the top gates. The cottages on the towpath here were originally for canal workers. Just beyond the last one is a milestone, showing that it is 77 miles to Braunston (the hub of the canal system between London and Birmingham), and also a distance marker (if a boat reaches this marker first, it is first in the queue for the lock).

A wooden bridge passes over a spillway which carries excess water from the canal to the River Colne, which passes in and out of the canal along the length of the valley. A little further on a concrete bridge goes over a drainage ditch from the sewage works, and yet another passes over the entrance to a moorings basin. Further on are two pipe bridges, the second of which has a water depth gauge on the far side to regulate water in watercress beds. There used to be many miles of beds alongside the canal, although most are now disused. The reed beds passed on the left are those which had been seen earlier. There are two more lakes on the left just before Springwell Lock, both nature reserves – Springwell and Inns Lakes. There are paths around both of them. There is also an information board on the Hillingdon Trail, part of which you have followed, just before the lock. It will take about 25mins to return to Batchworth Lock centre from here.

**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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