Local Snippets

The canal at Stoke Bruerne was built under an Act of Parliament of 1793 as the Grand Junction Canal to shorten, by about 60 miles, the route from the Midlands to London. Previously, traffic used the narrow, winding Oxford Canal and River Thames.

When the canal was built Stoke Bruerne’s village street had to be diverted from its old line along what is now Chapel Lane and re-routed over the then new canal bridge below top lock.

The opening of the Blisworth Tunnel, in 1805, completed the link making it possible to travel throughout the inland waterway system.

The Grand Union Canal was formed between 1929 and 1932 by the amalgamation of nine separate canals.

Stoke Bruerne’s canal museum provides a glimpse of the colourful life of yesteryears canal people and their traditions. Inside is a reconstruction of the cabin of a ‘butty-boat’ and many examples of the local roses and castles painting. Outside, exhibited in the boat weighing machine is L.M.S. No.55, a type of open boat from the Birmingham and Wolverhampton area. Boat trips are also available up to the Blisworth Tunnel. The Museum shop has an extensive range of books and leaflets.

Opening hours are 10a.m. to 6p.m. daily during Summer Season and 10a.m. to 4p.m., Tuesday to Sunday in the Winter Season.

A Walkers’ Code

1. Always keep to the path to avoid trespass. If the path is obstructed you are allowed to seek a reasonable way round the obstruction, taking care to avoid causing damage. Please report the obstruction to the highway authority.

2. Remember to close gates behind you. Straying stock can cause damage or spread disease and carelessness may lead to tragedy.

3. To avoid harm or distress to farm animals and wildlife it is best to leave dogs at home. If you have to bring them they should be kept on a leash.

4. If your route takes you onto a road keep to the right, facing oncoming traffic and use the verge if one exists.

5. Always wear suitable clothing and footwear for the season and remember to allow plenty of time to complete your chosen walk.

6. Remember that every piece of land in the country belongs to someone, so please treat it with respect so that other walkers will be made welcome.

7. Remember that Scheduled Ancient Monuments are protected by law in order to ensure their survival. Please respect them and other archaeological sites.

8. Take extra care near locks and don’t be tempted to assist boat crews unless you are certain of what to do. Remember, because boats cannot stop immediately if someone falls into the water, the risk of injury is great.

If you experience any difficulty on your walk such as broken wire, locked gates or damaged stiles and footbridges, please report them to the Principal Rights of Way Officer, West Office, Arnex House, London Road, Daventry. Tel. Daventry 706081.


Drawn and compiled by Sue Payne. 1991.

Countryside Walks Leaflet No. 3.

Northamptonshire Countryside Services is a branch of Northamptonshire Planning and Transportation Department

Countryside and Canal Walks
Stoke Bruerne
Although 1½ miles long, the Tunnel is perfectly straight, and wide enough for boats 80' pass; a tribute to the engineers Jessop and Borens. Opened after some initial problems in 1805, it was extensively modified by the addition of ashshafts in 1811. The reason for this was the change from legging boats through to the use of steam tugs which caused fatalities due to asphyxiation. The original form of the tunnel distanced over a period of time and the central 1,000 metres were re-lined with concrete sections in 1984.

STOKE BRUERNE

From the 1840’s to 1920 a Brickworks provided local building materials and was served by a busy wharf on the Brickworks Arm leading off the Grand Union Canal. Its site is now a Nature Reserve which can be seen from the Towpath.

The bridge probably dates from 1835 when this stretch of canal was widened and had double locks built to speed the flow of traffic.

River Tove
Just below Bottom Lock the River Tove enters the waterways system. In times of surplus water the excess flows away over weirs which can be seen on the east bank stepped over by low arched brick bridges supporting the Towpath.

A navigable connecting arm of the River Tove provides moorings nowadays and in by yore was used for loading hay and straw horse fodder for London.

There is a flight of seven locks at Stoke Bruerne and each contains roughly 60,000 gallons of water. When a boat passes through the system the complete contents of one lock is lost to the lower levels and for this reason a pump by Bottom Lock returns the water to the top in times of drought. This prevents problems associated with low water above the locks. The pump outlet can be seen by the museum.