

Wiltshire Wayfarer

The Rights of Way Newsletter for Wiltshire County Council

Winter 2008/09

As we started to put this edition of the Wiltshire Wayfarer together, Christmas and the New Year were rapidly approaching. By the time you get to read this they will have started to fade from memory.

The end of the year is always a time for taking stock and assessing the successes and failures of the past twelve months, so that we can seek to improve on our delivery of the Rights of Way Service. One of our most popular new initiatives has been this newsletter. This is the fourth and final one for 2008/09, and will be the last we publish as Wiltshire County Council. We hope and expect that it will continue as a quarterly publication when the new unitary Wiltshire Council comes into being in April. In 2009, we get to experience two different types of New Year in Wiltshire.



Photo by Tim Chinnick

View from footpath 14 Wootton Bassett

What else have we achieved over the last year? It has been a challenging time for our Wardens and Inspectors and their contractors, who have struggled to combat the effects of the wet and generally mild weather. During the Spring and Summer our routine maintenance programme was interrupted by an unprecedented number of requests for us to cut back the rapid growth of natural vegetation that caused even some of the most popular paths to become overgrown. *Cont. on page 2*

Once we had strimmed our way through the countryside, we found ourselves unable to gain ready access across the fields to many of our planned works because the land has been so wet. This means that progress has not been made as quickly as we would have liked, but we will carry on to the best of our abilities and hope for the late winter to bring drier weather.

The Definitive Map team has succeeded in reducing the backlog of applications for Modification Orders by concentrating on those based primarily on the evidence of people who have been using unrecorded paths for a long enough time that they have become public rights of way. It will now be easier to keep on top of this side of the work, whilst making better progress with the applications based on documentary evidence.

During the summer, we produced the Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Wiltshire, meeting the date agreed with Natural England for publication. We are now implementing a number of the actions we proposed for this year (one of which is this newsletter) and are starting to feed data into our newly acquired computerised Rights of Way Management System, which will provide us with much needed ready at hand information about the path network and enable a more co-ordinated and efficient approach to our work.

As we look towards the creation of the new Wiltshire Council, we will be seeking to work more closely with local people through their parish councils and the new Area Boards, so that you will have more of say in our decision making and a greater opportunity to be involved.

We wish you only the best for 2009 and hope that you enjoy this edition of the Wiltshire Wayfarer.

Note: The Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Wiltshire County Council can be viewed on our website www.wiltshire.gov.uk and is available in printed form from the Public Rights of Way team at County Hall in Trowbridge.

Wiltshire and Swindon Countryside Access Forum News

If PIGS could fly – but hurry and they can!

In the last issue of the Wiltshire Wayfarer we announced the coming of a new grant scheme (Parish Improvement Grant Scheme – PIGS) designed to encourage improvements to the footpaths and bridleways in Wiltshire (sorry, but the scheme does not cover Swindon at this time).

The scheme is now in operation and details have been sent to all parish and town councils in Wiltshire. Details are also on the Countryside Access Forum, the CAF website – go to www.wiltshirelaf.org.uk and click on Grants for Improvements.

The closing date for bids is the end of February 2009. This is a tight schedule, we know, but is determined by funding factors

outside the control of the CAF. However, it has not deterred a number of parishes who have already indicated that they plan to submit bids – amongst them bids for access to riverside, extending footpaths to reach nearby bus stops, and for bridging a local river so children can reach school without having to use any roads. These are all the sorts of project that PIGS wants to support.

So this is the time to dust off that project you have wanted to do for some time but just didn't have that last bit of funding for. You may just be lucky.

Mike Johnson

Wiltshire and Swindon Countryside Access
Forum

A Day in the Life of a Rights of Way Inspector

Paul Millard is the Rights of Way Inspector for the North Wiltshire and Kennet areas of the County. On the day I met up with him he was carrying out a routine survey of the Rights of Way in Marston Parish. Parish surveys are carried out on a rolling basis and Parishes are usually surveyed every 5 years.

The day starts in the Melksham Area Office, where I meet up with Paul and he collects everything we need for the day (maps and a camera). Then we set out for Marston, fortunately Marston is quite close to the Melksham Depot so we don't lose too much time travelling.

We started surveying in one corner of the parish, and had covered the majority of the longer paths by lunchtime. Although the Rights of Way network is less than 5 miles long in Marston it takes longer than you might think to complete the surveying as many of the paths do not connect with each other and therefore have to be walked twice – once in each direction. In some cases this is made even more difficult by paths that do not exist on the ground; a lot of time and



Survey photo: Marston

Photo by Paul Millard

effort can be spent simply trying to work out where to go. As well as this all the items of furniture (stiles, gates, signposts, bridges etc) on the paths have to be checked, photographed and the details noted down. As Paul discovered this can be a painful process – it is always best to check for stinging nettles before sitting on a stile to write your notes...

We took our lunch break in the local pub in Worton where we had a very refreshing cold drink (soft of course).

The afternoon was spent finishing the last few paths in the centre of Marston, which formed a series of connecting routes making surveying a much quicker task. Once we had finished these we returned to the Melksham Depot to type up the survey, this was not helped by the computer gremlins that were conspiring to stop one keyboard from working and to make the other computer run very slowly. In total 77 items were surveyed generating a total of 51 jobs to resolve, these will be scheduled into the program of works for the contractor in the Kennet area and hopefully they will all be resolved soon. *Mary Noyce*

National Trails ~ or Local Treasures?

National Trails are highly valued as long distance routes for walking, cycling and horse riding through the finest landscapes in England and Wales. Here in Wiltshire, we are fortunate to be able to lay claim to parts of two of these Trails; The Ridgeway and the Thames Path.



The Ridgeway, near Avebury

However, although these two National Trails are perhaps the best known of the many long distance paths that lie within Wiltshire, who is to say that they necessarily offer the opportunity to enjoy the finest landscapes in our county? Fans of the Kennet and Avon Canal Towpath, the Mid Wilts Way, the White Horse Trail, the Imber Range Perimeter Path or any of the other 15 long distance routes, identified in the County's Rights of Way Improvement Plan, may have good cause to champion their own particular favourites.

In the context of its full length each National Trail can live up to its reputation as one of the finest routes available, but when considered on a more local scale they may have trouble competing with other regional paths and trails. This is becoming a challenge for Natural England, the governing body of National Trails.

Research by Natural England has shown that whilst National Trails are greatly valued as high quality long distance paths by the people who use them, few actually walk or ride the full distance. Many people use only relatively short sections of the Trails, often within their local area or when on holiday, and frequently include only a small part of a Trail within a circular walk.

This is the basis on which Natural England has embarked on a review of the future of National Trails and Regional Routes, to ensure that the £3.5 million that it currently provides each year for them is money well spent. The review is extensive, ranging from consideration of whether there is sufficient justification for spending this much money on just 15 "flagship" routes to the individual arrangements for the management of each National Trail.

In general, each National Trail has its own dedicated National Trail Officer and Assistant, funded by Natural

England, who also provides grants to the highway authorities through whose areas the Trails pass. The grants enable the highway authorities to maintain and improve the Trails to designated quality standards which are higher than is expected of other paths, and are intended to ensure as far as possible that there is a consistent standard along the full length of a National Trail.

Most of the National Trails are managed separately from one another, and have to compete for their grant. However, whilst The Ridgeway and the Thames Path share in the competition, they are managed jointly from a single budget and have significantly different management arrangements. Instead of a single National Trail Officer for each, there are two part-time officers, one of whom is responsible for route maintenance/management and the other looking after publicity and promotional requirements. These two officers are supported by a small team, including a Project Co-ordinator, a Volunteer Co-ordinator and administrative support. Their work is overseen by The Ridgeway and Thames Path Management Group, comprised of senior officers from the highway authorities, Natural England, and the Environment Agency. The majority of the routine maintenance work is carried out by the volunteers, to whom much credit is due for the high standards achieved, while the major maintenance and improvement work is carried out by the individual highway authorities.



Bank erosion repairs, on the Thames Path at Ashton Keynes

Natural England's review may change these arrangements. Initial indications are that the financial value of National Trails to regional economies may have more of an influence on the future provision of centralised funding, with a greater emphasis placed on upon highway authority management of the Trails. We await the results of the review with great interest, mixed with more than a little concern for the future of these much loved recreational paths.

More information about National Trails can be found on: www.nationaltrail.co.uk.

Richard Broadhead, Public Rights of Way Manager 

➔ Finding Your Way...

Wiltshire County Council, as the surveying authority for Wiltshire keeps, manages and maintains the definitive map and statement of public rights of way in the County. This document, a product of an Act in 1949, is the legal record with regard to the line of all the paths shown on it and confirmation of the existence of public rights along those paths. Our operations team use the map on a daily basis to maintain and sign paths and the map team are charged in law with keeping it under continual review.

Although today we have an electronic working copy, the original definitive map itself is not really one map at all; it is a series of maps produced in the old rural district and urban district council areas at a scale of 1:25000. There are approximately 144 of these sheets, which if laid out together would cover an area of around 36 square yards!

Members of the public may view the definitive map at County Hall or a working copy of the map at any public library; however this isn't really much use to you if all you would like to do perhaps is go for a walk in the countryside; you will need to consider other alternatives.

One alternative is to follow signs. Although Wiltshire County Council, as the highway authority, has a duty to signpost all footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways where they leave a metalled road, this duty can be waived if the sign is considered unnecessary and if agreed by the parish council concerned.

Although these signs can be seen throughout the County users are warned that they can also be found to be missing, damaged by hedge flails or obscured by seasonal growth. Following a signed path is not always without problems. Although WCC has a duty to waymark a route where it considers it necessary for a person unfamiliar with the locality, these waymarks are not always easy to see and should be viewed as a guide to someone with a map rather than as a means of finding your way.

So, we are back to maps. The Ordnance Survey have been producing maps for well over 200 years and whilst their early maps carried the disclaimer that said "The representation on this map of a road, track or footpath

is no evidence of the existence of a right of way", more modern maps take their public rights of way information from local authority maps and have a changed disclaimer that says "the representation on this map of any *other* road, track or path is no evidence of the existence of a right of way". Author's italics.

Although the definitive map is a constantly changing document, and specific paths may need to be checked, it would seem that buying an up to date Ordnance Survey map is a very good way for most people to ensure that

they are in the correct place when they venture over land belonging to others.

Undoubtedly the best series of OS maps for walkers and horse riders especially is the Explorer Series produced at a scale of 1:25000. At this scale field boundaries can be seen and it is possible to follow the line of paths with much greater confidence. These maps may also show permissive routes and access land, parking places, picnic spots and public houses.

Another alternative to the trusty map (and dare I suggest compass?) is to pre-program a route into a GPS device: this can be especially useful for cyclists and again base mapping is derived from the Ordnance Survey so a reasonable degree of confidence may be had.



The Kennet and Avon Canal, Footpath 34, Bishop's Cannings

If all of the above worries you then Wiltshire has at least one simple route to follow – the Kennet and Avon Canal tow path. The Kennet and Avon Canal, built between 1797 and 1810 now provides a tow path which is a continuous public right of way from Reading to Bristol. It enters Wiltshire in the north east through the Kennet water meadows and then climbs up to the open chalk of the Marlborough downs, from here through the Bruce Tunnel, down across the Vale of Pewsey to reach Devizes. It then descends the spectacular flight of 29 locks at Caen Hill, down more locks at Seend and Semington to cross the Avon near Bradford on Avon from there it continues through the steep sided wooded valleys to Limpley Stoke and out of Wiltshire to Bath. Go on, give parts of it a try – we have never known anyone to get lost!

Sally Madgwick

Works in Progress and Completed

Definitive Map Team

- Orders adding paths in the Westwells area of Corsham and off the Bristol Road in Luckington have been sent to the Planning Inspectorate. It is anticipated that public inquiries will be held to determine if these paths are public.
- An order has been confirmed upgrading Bishops Cannings 4 to bridleway, and no objections have been received to the order diverting Bishops Cannings 4 at Horton Mill.
- An order has been made diverting West Lavington 43 and Tilshead 29 away from the range boundary.
- An order has been made upgrading Bulford 7 to byway and adding restricted byway on the historic line of the Bulford Old Marlborough Road.
- An order has been made adding a footpath, the Row de Dow in Wootton Bassett.

Operations West

During the last quarter the following works have been undertaken. The parishes of:- Westbury, 98 tasks completed & Wingfield, 103 tasks completed.

The next parishes to be surveyed and maintained are Bishopstrow, Norton Bavant, Chitterne, Codford and Corsley.

The Ramblers working group have been improving the access on the footpath from Melksham to Lacock with kissing gates, this has had to stop due to weather conditions, but work will start again when conditions improve. The group have also installed 4 kissing gates in Edington with the assistance of the Parish Council and the Landowner.

A gravel path in Bradford on Avon from Uplands Rise to St Margaret's Lane is to be surfaced with tarmac; this path is a very well used link and will be a great improvement to the residents and visitors in the area. Clearance of vegetation and overgrowth on a bridleway with the compact tractor at Westbury Hangings

We are undertaking hedge cutting works in Heywood/Edington and Warminster

Various paths in South Wraxall have been improved, and sleeper bridges replaced and repaired

A causeway has been constructed from railway sleepers on the Macmillan Way in South Wraxall. Access was very difficult almost all year, though with the assistance from the landowner this project was completed within a few days. A kissing gate was also installed to make access easier.

Operations North

The Parish Programme visited both Ashton Keynes and Leigh this quarter. Full inspections of rights of way and an asset survey were conducted and any works required have been completed. Ashton Keynes provided a very helpful volunteer working group to assist with the repair and installation of stiles in the parish. Due to their assistance there was an opportunity to complete resurfacing and bank reinstatement work on the Thames Path around Ashton Keynes. Volunteer working groups such as the Cotswold Wardens, the Purton Footpath Team and individual parish working groups across the north of the county have provided vital assistance throughout 2008 with rights of way maintenance work, which we are most grateful for. We are hoping to continue to work closely with local communities in 2009. A number of parishes have already shown interest in providing volunteers to assist with the maintenance of the rights of way network in their parish; these include Sherston, Corsham and Calne. Projects completed in this quarter include paths at Rowden Lane, Chippenham, a bridge has been installed at Little Somerford and extensive repair work has been completed on stone steps in Box, these steps provide an essential link in the village. The next parishes to be visited on the parish programme are Oaksey and Crudwell.

Operations Salisbury

A lot of surfacing work with road planings to the Ox Drove has made a previously seriously damaged section south of Bishopstone passable to all users and now provides a useful link to adjoining and connecting bridleways that run from the Ox Drove.

There was not enough material to finish the section up to Knighton and so there are still severe surface problems as you continue westwards, hence the Voluntary closure to motorised vehicles this winter.

Drainage works have been undertaken on Whitesheet Hill, Donhead St Andrew to help preserve the surface. Similar works are being undertaken on tracks in Steeple Langford, Barford St Martin and Kilmington.

Surfacing work with road planings has been carried out on a Restricted Byway in Hindon as the chalk surface had become very slippery to all users.

Work is starting on drainage and surfacing works on a section of Laverstock and Ford Restricted Byway no 17 between Pearce Way and Ford village to make this accessible to all legitimate users.

The South Wilts Ramblers have been busy; as well as a number of clearance projects, an extension to a footbridge on Stapleford footpath 12 has been created which is a great improvement. Also 2 kissing gates have been erected in Britford, many thanks to all concerned.

Maiden Bradley has been surveyed and all highlighted works completed. A waymarking programme has begun in Semley along with a survey by a volunteer. More missing signs will be erected and works to these routes will be undertaken in the summer, weather permitting. Work on rights of way in Semley and Sedgemoor is long overdue so hopefully some improvements there!

A long-term inaccessible path has been opened up in Bowerchalke with clearance and signage. This footpath now offers a useful link to Access Land.



The Apple Track, Amesbury bridleway

Photo by Nick Cowen

Numerous smaller access/ clearance/ signing projects have been undertaken and the new mini tractor and flail is proving to be invaluable; the photo shows an example of this, the Apple Track at Amesbury.

Operations Kennet

Continuing wet weather during the autumn months has meant that work in the Kennet area is still hampered by unsuitable ground conditions. This means that some sites are inaccessible and has slowed progress in Potterne. However, progress is being made and the works should mostly be completed by the end of January.

The North East Wilts Ramblers Group has been depleted due to the retirement of four of the volunteers. The retiring members were: Malcolm Tillotson, Mike Anderson, Joe Maisey and Allan Hurst. The County Council is so grateful for their many hours of hard work over the years and they will be much missed. The remaining three volunteers really do need some extra pairs of hands to make the group a viable proposition. In recent weeks, the group have been working on

clearance of paths in the Mildenhall area.

Despite the inclement weather, the following works have been completed:

Replacement bridge in Woodborough.

Helped with King Alfreds Trail (Pewsey area).

Repairs to a byway in Bromham (Roundway Downs), these works are not yet complete due to lack of available funding, but the worst section of this byway has now been greatly improved.

A project with Ham Parish Council has been completed, to install some new stiles.

The surface of 2 byways in Easterton have been made safe after flood water had washed away part of the paths. However much more work is required to stabilise the surfaces on a permanent basis.

Some badger holes have been filled in on a bridleway in Great Cheverell under licence from Natural England.

Gates have been installed on the Ridgeway National Trail at Hackpen Hill and Overton Hill. This is to try to deter motor vehicles from using the path during the winter months when the Traffic Regulation Order is in force.

Repairs have been carried out on a small section of riverbank, immediately below the bridge on the Hay Lane bridleway between Five Lanes, Potterne and Poulshot.

Emergency repairs have been carried out on Green Lane, Ogbourne Maizey, which had been badly damaged by flood water.

Finally, the next parishes to be visited on the parish programme will be Poulshot and Seend, followed in the spring by Bromham and Rowde.

Contacts

Operations Team – contact: Ali Stewart
Rights of Way Officer
Tel: 01225 756178
Email: alisonstewart@wiltshire.gov.uk

Definitive Map Team – contact: Barbara Burke
Senior Rights of Way Officer
Tel: 01225 713044
Email: barbaraburke@wiltshire.gov.uk

Countryside Access Development – contact: Paul Broadstock,
Countryside Access Development Officer
Tel: 01225 713349
Email: paulbroadstock@wiltshire.gov.uk

Newsletter – contact: Mary Noyce
Rights of Way Assistant
Tel: 01225 756183
Email: rownews@wiltshire.gov.uk

The Rights of Way teams all report to Richard Broadhead,
Public Rights of Way Manager.
Tel: 01225 713875,
Email: richardbroadhead@wiltshire.gov.uk

↔ Network Closures ↔

Including details of Permanent and Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) and Voluntary Closures

Affects vehicular users	Affects vehicular and horse drawn users	Affects all users
-------------------------	---	-------------------

Permanent TRO's

Parish	From	To
Amesbury	SU1669-4097 Boscombe Road	SU1671-4093 Imber Avenue
Ogbourne St Andrew & Ogbourne St George	SU1456-7634 Unclassified road west of Barbury Castle	SU1921-7469 Chiseldon Road, C3
Netherhampton	Paths crossing Salisbury Race Course closed on race days.	
Fovant	SU0053-2745 Fifield Bavant – Dinton Road, C64	SU0115-2739 Cross roads with byway & bridleway
Salisbury, Laverstock & Ford	SU1571-2943	SU1586-2957
Roundway	SU0119-6018 Green Lane	SU0119-6019 Green Lane
Fovant, Sutton Mandeville	ST9882-2892 Rectory Road	ST9944-2922 Moor Hill Road

Temporary/Maintenance TRO's

Parish	From	To
Easterton	SU0277-5579 High Street B3098	SU0325-5449 Range boundary
Bishops Canning	SU0227-6719 Junction with byway	SU0752-6835 A361
Bishops Canning	SU0483-6799 Wessex Ridgeway	SU0509-6714 Junction with byway
Heddington & Bromham	ST9839-6619 The Old Turnpike	SU0060-6488 Junction with byway
Ludgershall & Chute	SU2889-5576 Chute Causeway	SU2952-5188 Biddisden Park
Aldbourne	SU2308-7852 B4192	SU2499-7921 Lottage Road
Christian Malford	ST9736-7949 Friday Street	ST9817-7890 Junction with footpath
Christian Malford	ST9669-7877 Lye Common	ST9703-7860 Junction with footpath
Cherhill & Calne Without	SU0559-7019 A4	SU0587-6824 Roman Road

Orcheston	SU0594-4555 Whatcombe Brow	SU0581-4550 Junction with byway
Staverton	ST8559-6007 School Lane	ST8564-5954 Tow Path
Amesbury and Wilsford Cum Lake	SU1214-4002 Junction with footpath	SU1217-4194 A303
Amesbury, Wilsford Cum Lake, Berwick St James & Woodford	SU1178-4186 A303	SU0995-3934 A360
Broad Hinton	SU1050-7677 Yew Tree Lane	SU1047-7682 Junction with footpath
Christian Malford	ST9640-7879 The Green	ST9637-7879
Lydiard Tregoze	SU0946-8332 Spittleborough Bridge	ST0965-8341 Spittleborough Bridge
Netheravon	SU1429-4937 A345	SU1388-4840 Manor Farm Road
Wilton	SU0859-3072 C325	SU0796-2937 Junction with restricted byway
West Lavington	SU0058-5391 Lavington Lane	SU0079-5367 Mill Farm
West Lavington	SU0010-5229 Strawberry Hill	ST9927-5095 Junction with bridleway

In addition there are a few temporary closures in place where the work is expected to take less than a month to complete. These should be signed on site, if you have any queries please contact the Operations Team.

Seasonal TRO's

The **Ridgeway National Trial** is subject to a seasonal closure in Wiltshire, vehicular traffic is prohibited between 1st October and 30th April.

Voluntary Closures

We request that vehicular users respect the following voluntary closures.

The **Ox Drove** will be subject to voluntary closure in the parishes of Bishopstone, Broad Chalke, Bower Chalke, Ebbesbourne Wake, Alvediston, Berwick St. John, Donhead St Andrew and Donhead St Mary.

Byways in **Downton, Odstock and Coombe Bissett** are also subject to voluntary closure.

Please look out for notices on site.

For more information contact the Operations Team.

Great Bedwyn, A History

Whilst planning the route for our walk in Great Bedwyn, our attention was caught by Hatchet Lane (was there a hatchet wielding mad man?!) and we decide to look into the history of the name. This investigation led us to find out more about the history of the area as a whole and we thought our readers might also be interested to know something about the area before they set out on the walk.

Firstly to clear up the matter of Hatchet Lane; there was no hatchet wielding mad man or anything of that type, the name means Forest Gate Lane and dates back to the medieval management of Savernake Forest. Safe, gated routes through the forest were provided and this would have been one of them.

If you start looking at a map of Great Bedwyn you may notice the Roman Road as a fairly obvious indication

of the history of the area, the road ran from Cirencester to Winchester via Mildenhall. If you follow the road up to the north west you will see that it stops quite abruptly, this happened by the mid 16th century when Tottenham Park came into existence. As well as the Roman Road there is further evidence of Roman settlement in Great Bedwyn, the remains of 2 Roman villas have been found both lying fairly close to the Roman Road. However there is also evidence of older settlement in Great Bedwyn, with evidence from both Neolithic and Bronze Age. A Neolithic enclosure has been

found south west of Crofton and there are a number of barrows on the downland in the south east of the parish. The other major feature you might notice is of course the Kennet and Avon Canal, however a lot happened between the construction of the Roman Road and the construction of the Canal. Great Bedwyn grew during the Saxon period, and by the time it was recorded in the Domesday Book it was regarded as a town with 25 burgage plots and a mint (1 of only 6 in Wiltshire). Great Bedwyn's prosperity in this period was due to the woollen industry and the 8 corn mills, all listed in the Domesday Book. The only remaining evidence of the Mills on the map of Great Bedwyn is Mill Bridge at the start of Hatchet Lane.

Further evidence of the status of Great Bedwyn is that it was excluded from the jurisdiction of Savernake Forest in the early 12th century, although it lay within its boundary.

However Great Bedwyn was unable to compete with Marlborough, Ramsbury and Hungerford and after 1066

the Normans used Marlborough as an administrative centre and relocated the Great Bedwyn mint there, and over the next few centuries Great Bedwyn grew less prosperous. Great Bedwyn reached its lowest ebb in the 14th century, and it was at this time that the Church was rebuilt. It is one of the few remaining buildings from the Middle Ages and is thought to be built on the site of an earlier Saxon Church.



Crofton Pumping Station from the Roman Road. Photo by M Noyce.

From the 14th century onwards the surrounding manorial estates continued to prosper, the most well known family was the Seymour's who came to own much of the surrounding land. Jane Seymour, the wife of Henry VII was the daughter of Sir John Seymour of Wolfhall Manor. By the 16th century the Seymour family had moved from Wolfhall Manor to Tottenham Lodge, and the descendants of the family went to develop Tottenham as we now see it on the map.

During the 17th and 18th centuries Great Bedwyn became a Rotten Borough, and due to the small population and

powerful landlords elections were not contested. This came to an end with the Reform Act in 1832.

The construction of the Kennet and Avon Canal in the late 18th century changed Great Bedwyn in many ways; including the closure of the last water mills when Wilton Water was created to provide a reservoir for the Crofton Pumping Station. The Canal was opened in 2 phases; from Hungerford to Great Bedwyn in 1799 and from Great Bedwyn to Devizes in 1809, with a wharf in Great Bedwyn itself. The Pumping Station at Crofton is on the highest point of the Kennet and Avon Canal and began pumping in 1809; the reservoir at Wilton Water was created in 1836-37 to provide water for the pumping station.

The popularity of the Canal was short lived and by the 1850's rail was more popular. The Berks and Hants Extension Railway came to Great Bedwyn in 1892 and services are still running today.

Mary Noyce

Canal Walk, Great Bedwyn

OS Explorer Map No: 157

Approximate length: 6.5 miles

Suitable for: Walkers

Type of terrain: some surfaced tracks, also some unsurfaced tracks, muddy in places, a short distance on minor roads

You will need: Wellies or stout boots

1-3 Starting from the car park at the Crofton Pumping Station (www.croftonbeamengines.org) turn right along the Crofton Road following the sign to the canal, once over the bridge at point 2 join the towpath on your left. Follow the tow path back towards Great Bedwyn, until you are opposite the pumping station at Point 3.

3 At this point those who want to shorten the walk should stay on the tow path going straight to point 6. Everyone else should cross the footbridge to the right and follow the footpath along Wilton Water, signed to Wilton Windmill.

3-5 At the end of the footpath you will come out on the road in Wilton at point 4, bear left through the village past the Swan Inn. Bear left again and continue to point 5.



Photo by Mary Noyce



Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Licence Number 100023445

5 At point 5 those who wish to go a bit further may continue up Wilton Hill to Wilton Windmill (www.wiltonwindmill.co.uk) and can return to Great Bedwyn via the rights of way through Bedwyn Brail and Castle Copse and rejoin the route at point 7.

5-8 Take the track to the left onto the Roman Road and follow it down to the canal at point 6. Turn right onto the tow path and continue to Great Bedwyn at point 7. Turn left over the canal passing the railway station to point 8.

8-10 Turn left onto the Crofton Road opposite the Cross Keys pub and continue through Great Bedwyn to point 9. Turn right onto the bridleway Hatchet Lane and continue into the woodland at point 10.

10-12 Once into the woodland follow the fence-line on your left and then follow the track that continues along the edge of the wood. Go out of a bridlegate to the left and along the field edge to point 11. Turn left onto the surfaced track and follow it past Crofton Farm to rejoin the Crofton Road at point 12.

12-1 Turn right and continue along the road until you return to the pumping station car park.

Wildlife in our Winter Wonderland

Winter walks often provide really good opportunities to observe some of our native wildlife species – if you keep your eyes and ears open and have some ideas on what you might see or hear. Some birds are here just as summer visitors and before the winter they are far away in warmer places and we will not see them again until they return the following spring. For many native species there is no escaping the winter weather and they must change their behaviour to adapt to the colder, wetter months of the year in Britain. Although some animals (reptiles, dormice, hedgehogs) hibernate during the coldest part of the year, this is a specialised ability and the majority of local wildlife species will remain awake. This in turn means they will have to forage for food whenever possible, so with a little thought we can work out where we might have a chance to see them. The key is in recognising different habitat types – not so much being able to name them but in being aware of what the different areas can provide for wildlife. The greater the number of different habitat types in one area, the greater your chances of seeing, or at least hearing some of the creatures that share our winter landscape.

A good place to start is where broadleaf woodland borders arable fields or is planted in blocks with “rides” between the blocks. One of the sounds that I associate most with late autumn and winter is the distinctive call of pheasants in woodland. If you are walking quietly on your own they can often be seen emerging from woods, copses and even hedgerows to feed on the seed that has recently been sown in the neighbouring field, or any grain left over from the harvest, or even the new shoots of the next crop. If disturbed they will rush back to the shelter and safety of the woodland, either running clumsily along the ground or flapping furiously into a low airborne curve. Other native birds will also be out foraging at every opportunity, using trees, shrubs and hedgerows as shelter from predators, while gleaning berries, seeds and insects wherever they can. Watch for goldfinches picking the seeds out of last season’s thistle heads, yellowhammers hopping about in the top of hedgerows, blackbirds and robins hunting for worms and insects under fallen leaves. Flocks of sparrows, visiting redwings and fieldfares venture out onto last year’s stubble fields or newly ploughed and sown fields to see what they can find to eat. Large flocks of starlings are often seen at this time of year, presenting a real spectacle in the early evening sky as they join together, swooping, diving and turning in a thrilling display of aerobatics while they seek out a roosting place for the night.



Photo by Fiona Elphick

We may see lots of birds, especially on dry sunny winter days but where do all the other creatures go? We shouldn’t deliberately disturb their habitats to find them, and in most cases it would be illegal to do so. But if we are prepared to simply observe, there are clues all around that are easy to spot that will give a good idea of who else might be very close by. Trees that have dropped limbs, leaving a split in the trunk or in a thick branch may offer a sheltered and secluded crevice suitable for bats to roost in. Most bat species in Britain are known to use tree roosts in the summer but in the winter it may be confined to mainly just Noctules, Bechsteins and Barbastelles, with occasional individuals of other species. Older trees may have a large root system with lots of knobby bits above ground and it is under these that many small mammals such as shrews and voles find sheltered places to curl up and keep warm. The roots of hedgerows often provide places for dormice to hibernate, sleeping just under the surface or covered with a layer of leaves or other organic debris to shield them from both the weather and from predators. Insects, spiders, slugs and snails are just a few of the tinier creatures that retire to small tunnels underneath the leaf litter layer, where the temperature stays fairly constant and the surroundings are damp. Some will hibernate, while others will continue breeding to provide the next generation.

The winter is a surprisingly good time to study different tree species. With a good guide and a little practice you will find that trees don’t need leaves on for you to be able to recognise them. They are as individual in winter as they are in summer, with some having a distinctive bark colour or texture, or an instantly recognisable silhouette or the particular way their branches divide or their buds form. Silver birch stands out amongst the others far better without its leaves, the trunk and branches taking on an almost ghostly appearance, especially as the daylight starts to fade. If you see a tree that appears to be hanging onto its dead leaves especially those nearest the trunk and has a smooth, greyish bark it is probably a beech. It is unclear why beech, hornbeam and common oak hold onto some of their dead leaves right through the winter. *The Countryside Team*

من الممكن توفير هذه المعلومات في صيغ ولغات أخرى عند الطلب. يُرجى الاتصال بفريق رعاية الزبائن على الرقم 713000 (01225) أو إرسال بريد إلكتروني إلى: customer-care@wiltshire.gov.uk

এই তথ্যটুকু অনুরোধক্রমে বোঝার ও পড়ার উপযুক্ত অন্য কোনো নমুনায় (ফর্মেটে) এবং ভাষায় দেওয়া যাবে, অনুগ্রহ করে কাস্টমার কেয়ার টিমকে ফোন করুন। ফোন: (01225) 713000 ইমেইল: customer-care@wiltshire.gov.uk

我們可以根據您的要求使用其他形式和語言向您提供該資訊，請與顧客關懷團隊 (Customer Care Team) 聯繫，電話：(01225) 713000，電郵： customer-care@wiltshire.gov.uk

Na życzenie informacja ta może zostać udostępniona w innych formatach i wersjach językowych, prosimy skontaktować się z zespołem ds. obsługi klienta, tel. (01225) 713000, Email: customer-care@wiltshire.gov.uk

This document was published by Wiltshire County Council Environmental Services Department. You can contact us in the following ways:

By telephone

01225 756183 and ask to speak to Mary Noyce

By post

Environmental Services Department,
County Hall,
Trowbridge,
Wiltshire,
BA14 8JD

By email

marynoyce@wiltshire.gov.uk

Information in this publication can be made available in other formats and languages on request. Please contact Wiltshire County Council on 01225 713000 or by email on customer-care@wiltshire.gov.uk