

Temporary Internet Leaflet

(Please note that all our leaflets are currently undergoing redesign for Internet use)

THE OUSE VALLEY WALK

Discover the beauty and history of the North Buckinghamshire Countryside and its once thriving industrial heritage.

The walk is approximately 13 miles long and follows the River Great Ouse between Buckingham and Milton Keynes.

Discover the beauty, history and industrial heritage of the North Buckinghamshire Countryside. This leaflet describes the first section of the Ouse Valley Walk, beginning in Buckingham town centre and ending at the Grand Union Canal at Cosgrove. The route can be walked in either direction.

The walk is approximately 13 miles long. It follows the original towpath of the now disused Buckingham Canal out to Thornton, a distance of approximately 4 miles. It then follows footpaths through the attractive villages of Beachampton and Calverton before reaching the Milton Keynes riverside walk, the Grand Union Canal and the North Bucks Way.

Also linked to this route are the Thornborough and Calverton Circular Walks. Further information on these routes and many others throughout the county can be obtained from Buckingham and Milton Keynes Tourist Information Centres and from the Rights of Way Section (see information section).

History of the Buckingham Arm

The canal arms to Old Stratford and Buckingham were built as part of the Grand Junction scheme. They were promoted and funded in the 1870's by a group of businessmen and financiers, including the Marquis of Buckingham.

An arm from Cosgrove on the Grand Junction Canal, (now known as the Grand Union), led to Old Stratford where goods could be transported to and from the main north/south highway, Watling Street. The arm from Old Stratford to Buckingham was opened with much ceremony on May 1st 1801.

The original Buckingham Wharf was some way to the east of the town centre where the ruined canal cottages still remain (in 1996). Later the canal wharf was extended nearer the centre of Buckingham. The canal transported fuel, stone and manufacturing products into the area. This enabled the turnpike trustees who managed the old toll roads in and out of Buckingham to import better quality stone for road surfacing. Welsh slate also began to replace the local tiles as the normal roofing material, the larger welsh slates enabled builders to construct roofs with a shallower pitch. In turn the canal was used to transport agricultural produce to London. This high level of trade on the canal was maintained for almost 50 years.

The development of the Bletchley to Banbury railway, which passed through Buckingham (opened in 1850), resulted in a gradual loss of trade. This was increased with the silting up of the canal. The last full load was carried down the canal in 1888 and by 1900 all trade to and from Buckingham by canal had ceased. Trade continued to Maids Moreton Mill until the 1930s.

The River Great Ouse

The river begins its journey north west of Buckingham and then travels approximately 200 miles before reaching the sea at The Wash.

Rivers have always been a focus of life and industry, providing power for mills, a source of food and a water supply for animals and people.

The Ouse was also the water supply for the Buckingham Canal keeping it at a constant level. Unfortunately as the faster moving river water entered

the slow moving canal all the sediment held in the river was dropped, causing the canal to gradually silt up and eventually to become blocked.

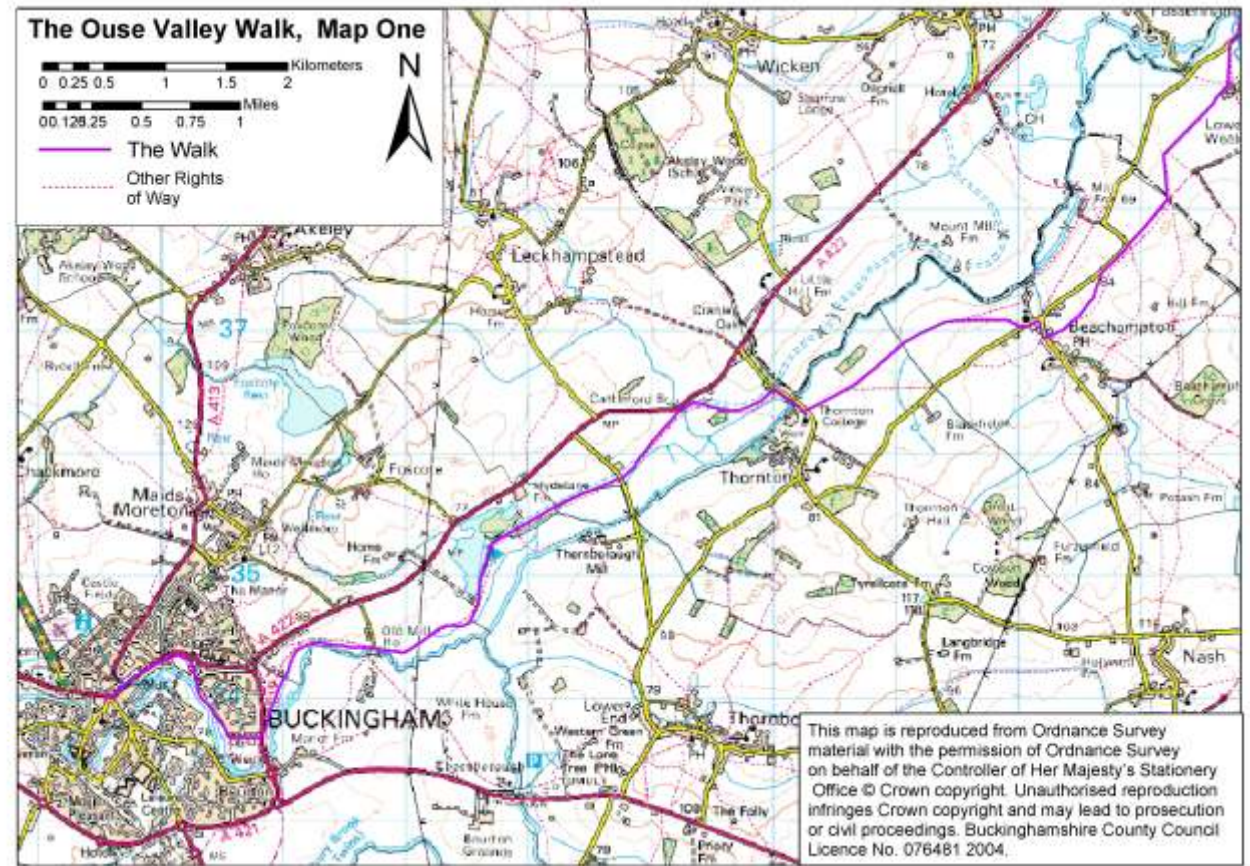
Waymarking

The route can be walked from either direction. The route is waymarked at every gate and major change in direction with “Ouse Valley Walk” disks. You may see other waymarkers on the walk:

- Yellow arrows for footpaths
- Blue arrows for bridleways
- Red arrows for byways

The Route

1. The walk begins in the centre of Buckingham and leads out along the High Street.
2. The Grand Junction pub off the High Street is named after the Grand Junction Canal, the original name for the Grand Union Canal which the Buckingham Arm joins.
3. As you follow the road out of the town you will see Wharf House and the entrance to the later Wharf. Very little still remains of the wharf except one or two of the original buildings.
4. On the hill side it is possible to see the ruins of the old wharf cottages. This was the original wharf before it later was moved in to the town.
5. Cross the Buckingham Ring Road and follow the waymarkers down the canal. **The traffic on this road can be fast moving so take care.** In the 1970s British Waterways sold the canal to its neighbouring farmers. This has resulted in some sections of the canal being filled in or ploughed up and used for growing crops.



6. Lock Cottage: This is one of the original lock keepers' cottages. Until relatively recently the lock was still in the front garden, but when the building was extended it was filled in.
7. Maids Moreton Mill was located in front of the now named Old Mill House, taking power from the river and then transporting produce down the Buckingham Arm to the Grand Union Canal.
8. BBOWT Nature Reserve: On this site you will find the last remaining lock on the canal in Buckinghamshire. If you keep your eyes open you will see a mile marker on the side of the towpath. This shows the distance away from Stony Stratford Wharf where the Buckingham Arm begins.

This area of the canal is a haven for wildlife of all descriptions. The ponds provide a sheltered aquatic home for frogs, toads and colourful dragon and damselflies. These ponds may look shallow, but the sediment which has built up in the canal bed is very deep so **do not attempt to enter the water**.

9. Cattleford Bridge: Take care at this point. Unlike when the canal was originally built, the traffic now using this road moves much faster. Alongside the road is a small aqueduct which originally allowed the canal to pass over Cattleford Brook.

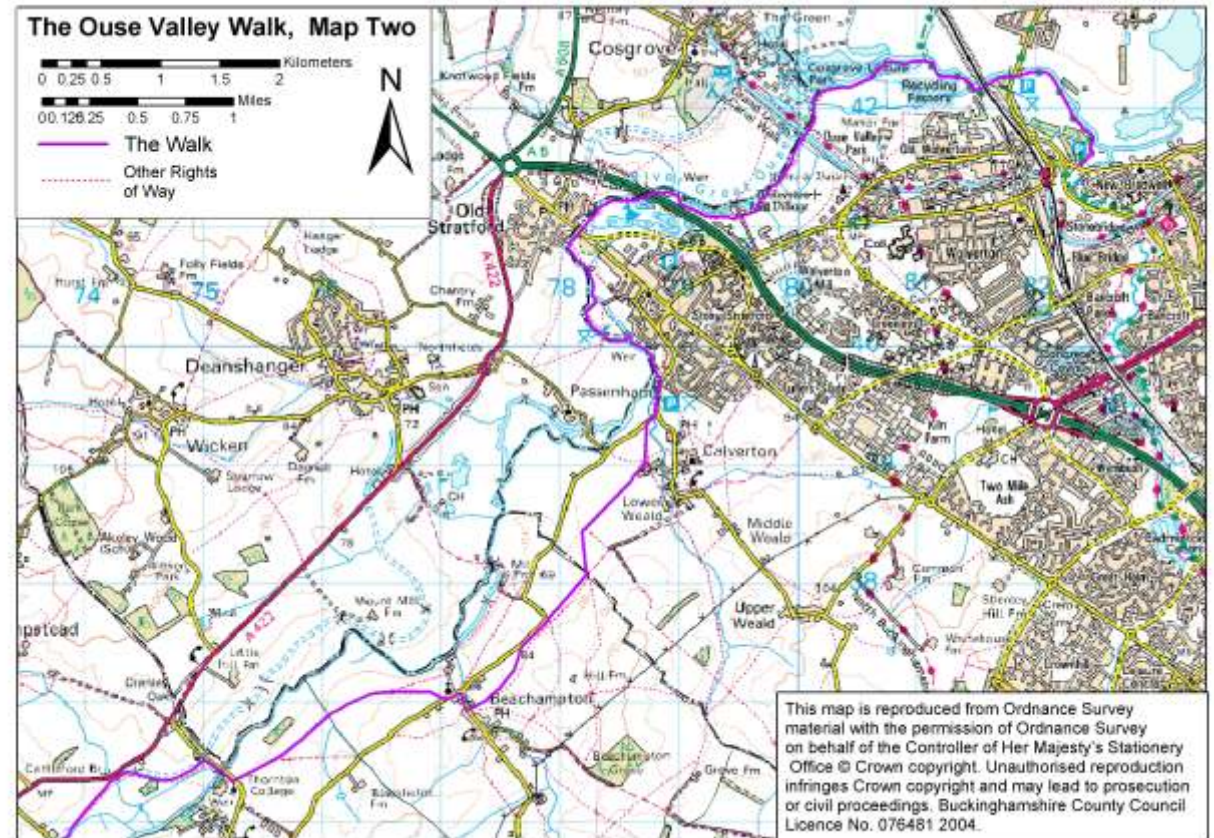
10. Bridge 18: this is the only stone canal bridge left in Buckinghamshire and it is located on the Bucks/Northants Border. The maintenance of this Bridge has been coordinated by the “Buckingham Canal Society” with assistance from the “WaterWay Recovery Group”

11. Thornton College can be seen on the banks of the river. It is a catholic convent, and quite regularly the enchanting sounds of the choir can be heard along the valley.

12. The Riverside Walk is managed by the Milton Keynes Parks Trust. As you walk, keep your eyes open for the many birds, mammals and insects which thrive in this riverside corridor.

13. Stony Stratford is built on the Roman Road of “Watling Street”. The village is steeped with history and is well worth a closer visit.

Stony Stratford was once an important coaching stop on the main road to and from London. It is told that the two oldest coaching inns, “The Cock” and “The Bull”, were where local people would gather to hear all the gossip from London, but unfortunately by the time the story reached the other inn it had been elaborated so much that the story was



unrecognisable, this is the origin of the “Cock and Bull Story”!

Calverton

Here you have a choice, you can either follow the river to join the Grand Union Canal at the Iron Trunk or you can rejoin the route of the Buckingham Canal and follow it to its origin on the Grand Union Canal at Cosgrove, Northamptonshire.

14. The Buckingham Arm originally used a tunnel under Watling Street at the crossroads in Stony Stratford. It joined the Stratford Arm at the Old Wharf and then continued to Cosgrove.

15. The Grand union canal was opened in stages between 1793 and 1805.

The canal provided an important link between London and Birmingham which helped the industrial revolution transform Britain. In 1994 the Grand Union Canal Walk was launched providing a 145 mile long distance walk. For further information contact: British Waterways on 01442 825938.

16. The Canal crosses the River Great Ouse on the Iron Trunk, a fine example of Victorian engineering. The aqueduct was opened in 1811 to replace a stone built structure which was built in 1803 and collapsed two years later.

17. The North Bucks Way was set up in 1972 by the Ramblers' Association. The route is 35 miles long and links the Chilterns to north Milton Keynes. A leaflet on this route is available from Bucks County Council (see information section).

Footwear: Paths can be muddy at just about any time of the year, so waterproof footwear is recommended.

Maps: This leaflet can be used in conjunction with OS Explorer sheet 192 and Pathfinder sheet 1023 (Pathfinder to be replaced by Explorer sheet 207 late 1999).

Refreshments: Buckingham is well supplied with public houses, hotels, restaurants and local shops offering refreshments throughout the week. "The Bell" at Beachampton serves food at lunchtime and Stony Stratford also has public houses, restaurants and shops.

Parking: There is car parking available in Buckingham behind the shopping centre; off the A422 near Thornton; on the riverside at Calverton; and near the Galleon Pub in Wolverton. In addition there is limited parking in Stony Stratford and in Cosgrove.

Public Transport: There are regular buses between Milton Keynes Train and Bus Station and Buckingham. Trains link Wolverton Station to Milton Keynes Station. For Bus line enquiries Te: 0345 382000. For

train times Tel: North London Railways 01908 370883.

For further information please contact:

Environmental Services, Rights of Way, Bucks County Council, County Hall, Aylesbury, HP20 1UY
Tel: 01296

Milton Keynes Council, Civic Offices, 1 Saxon Gate, Milton Keynes, MK9 3HG
Tel: 01908 691691

Milton Keynes Parks Trust, Campbell Park Pavilion, 1300 Silbury Boulevard, Campbell Park, Milton Keynes. MK9 4AD
Tel: 01908 233600

BBOWT, 3 Church Cowley Road, Rose Hill, Oxford. OX4 3JR
Tel: 01865 775476

Buckingham Canal Society is actively campaigning for restoration of the Canal between Buckingham and Cosgrove. It is also compiling an archive containing photographs, documents etc. and is recording the history from people who remember the canal in its working days. Further information about the Society's activities can be obtained from Steve Morley Tel: 01908 520090.

PLEASE FOLLOW THE COUNTRY CODE

