

Explore the restored section of the Wilts & Berks Canal, Chaddington Lock and Spillway and the flower meadows of Morningside Farm.



The Town Hall **1** is a good landmark from which to start. It is where the first meeting to discuss the promotion of the canal took place on 30th January 1793. Walk or drive down Station Road, past the Town Local pub on the right. The Canal car park **2** (grid ref SU071816) is opposite Templars Firs industrial estate (postcode SN4 7SR). Starting here the walk described is about 6 km and might take about 2 hours.

Go through the kissing gate, follow the track and this takes you to the slipway **3**

Follow the towpath along about three quarters of a mile of restored canal. Wootton Bassett Angling Club stock and fish the Canal. Noremarsch Bridge, **4** the first bridge, carries a footpath which also goes over a bridge over the railway. This footpath is an alternative access to the canal, from Noredown Way and the town centre. After the next bridge, Buxton Bridge, is a spillweir **5** on the right and a seat. The loop of this P shaped walk returns to this point. This last stretch in water is owned by Wootton Bassett Town Council, and it was because the Council claimed this piece of unregistered land, that restoration started here in 1988.

At the end of the water **6** the towpath follows a public right of way through private land. Ignoring the yellow arrow for the footpath going right, carry straight on over the track and down onto the towpath. After some trees the towpath rises beside the buried remains of a lock. The path continues close to the towpath hedge. The canal is filled in and planted here. Then the path bears up to the right onto the old towpath.



The path continues over a horse crossing. The stile marks the boundary of Morningside Farm, where purchase by North Wilts District Council has allowed restoration of Chaddington Lock **7**. As the bushes end there is a good view of the lock, restored by volunteers, largely with a landfill tax grant from Biffaward completed in 2005. Follow the restored

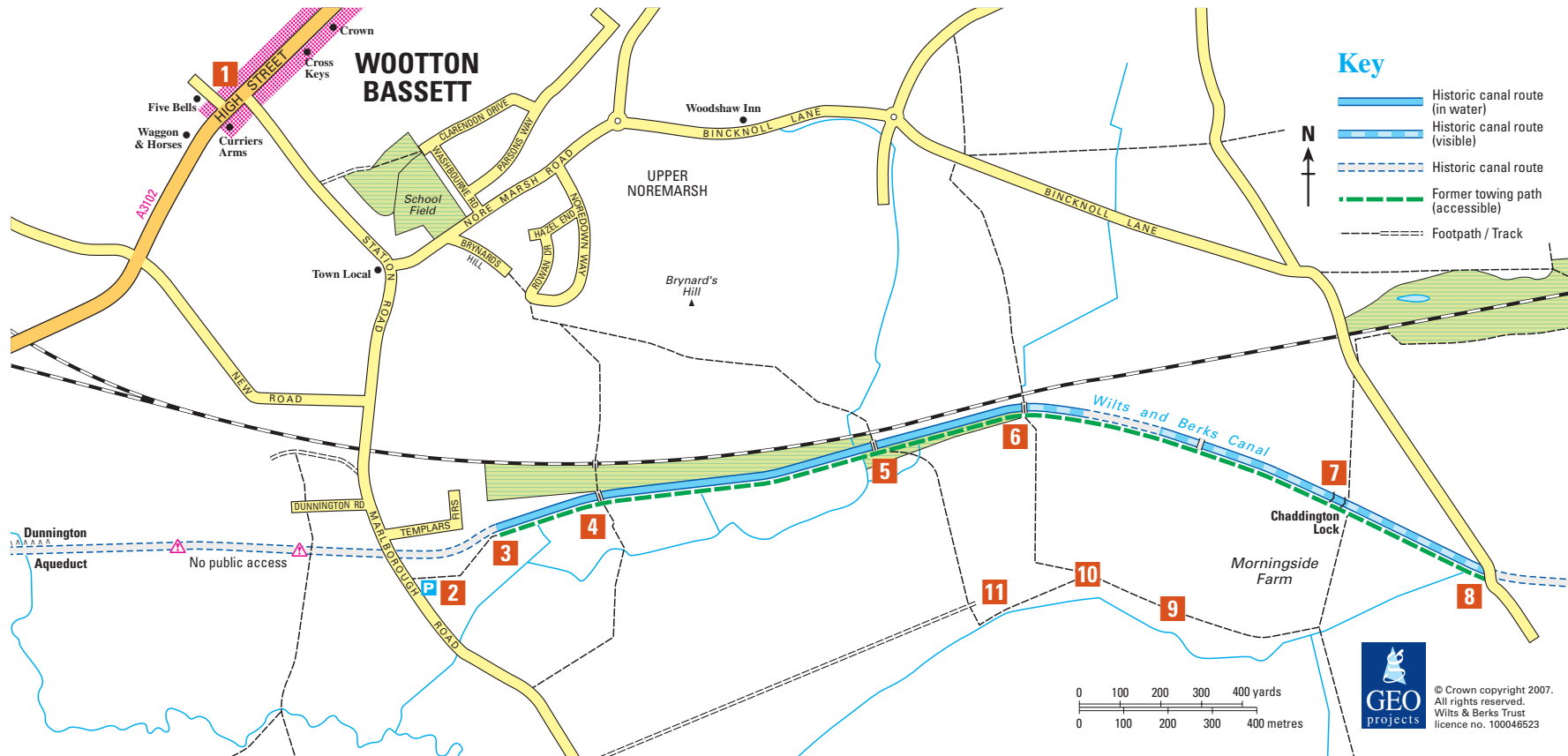
towpath to the replacement spillweir **8** just before Chaddington Lane.

The route of the canal continues beyond the road, through private land, towards Biffa Studley Grange landfill site. A man-made hill can be seen in the distance, which is part of the site.



To start the loop back across fields, return to Chaddington Lock **7**. Next to the towpath, towards the top end of the lock is a stile. This takes you south into one of two fields of Morningside Farm through which this walk goes. The farm is unusual for being

Continued overleaf:--



From overleaf:--

historically farmed without fertilisers and part of it is a County Wildlife Site. The remains of 'ridge and furrow' can be seen, which is where a series of long, raised ridges separated by ditches were used to prepare the ground for arable cultivation. So in the summer many flowers may be seen - a lot of lovely deep purple knapweed, the contrasting blue of devil's bit scabious, and betony with its bright red-purple flowers. In a good year butterflies are in profusion.

Go across the field in a right diagonal, heading to the right of the rightmost large trees in the hedge, to a gate. In the next field turn 90 degrees and follow another right diagonal across the second field of Morningside Farm to a stile **9** (line up with the farm buildings behind the hedge). This marks the boundary of Morningside Farm, there is a plank bridge over the ditch and the land is now flat.

The path continues in a straight line towards a gap in the hedge **10**. Pass through, bear left to follow a stream on your left. Now use a signed permissive path to go around Wootton Meadows farm buildings **11** until you get to a hedge running north/south. Follow the informal path down the hedge and there is a gap at the far end of the field. The official path now goes round to the right to another stile, not easy to see, but directly where the electricity cable goes over the hedge.

From the stile the path crosses a field with horse jumps towards a corrugated iron bridge with a wooden handrail, over Hancock's Water. The path slightly to your right goes into the copse and over another bridge. Continue gently through the copse and listen for the sound of splashing water. You are coming back to the spillway **5**. Turn left onto the towpath to retrace your way back to your start.

PLEASE REMEMBER THE COUNTRYSIDE CODE:

Follow the footpaths; keep dogs on leads; leave everything as you find it. The countryside changes over the seasons; sometimes fields will be ploughed or will contain livestock. Stout footwear is needed for this walk and if there has been any rain it will be wet crossing ditches and the fields with ridge and furrow.

The aim of the Wilts and Berks Canal Trust is to restore the canal to a navigable state from the Kennet & Avon Canal near Melksham to the 'Jubilee Junction' with the Thames near Abingdon via Swindon and the Vale of White Horse. Nine miles of canal will also be restored from Swindon to Cricklade as part of the proposed Cricklade Country Way.

People enjoy the canal in many different ways - working, walking and enjoying the wildlife, and getting onto the water.



Volunteers constructing wooden shuttering ready for making the concrete walls of Chaddington spillway.

A heron is often seen watching for fish. Sometimes you won't see him until he rises up out of the reeds in front of you.



Members of North Avon Canoe Club enjoyed a slalom course when they held an activity day at Templars Firs.

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The Wilts & Berks Canal

Wootton Bassett walk

