

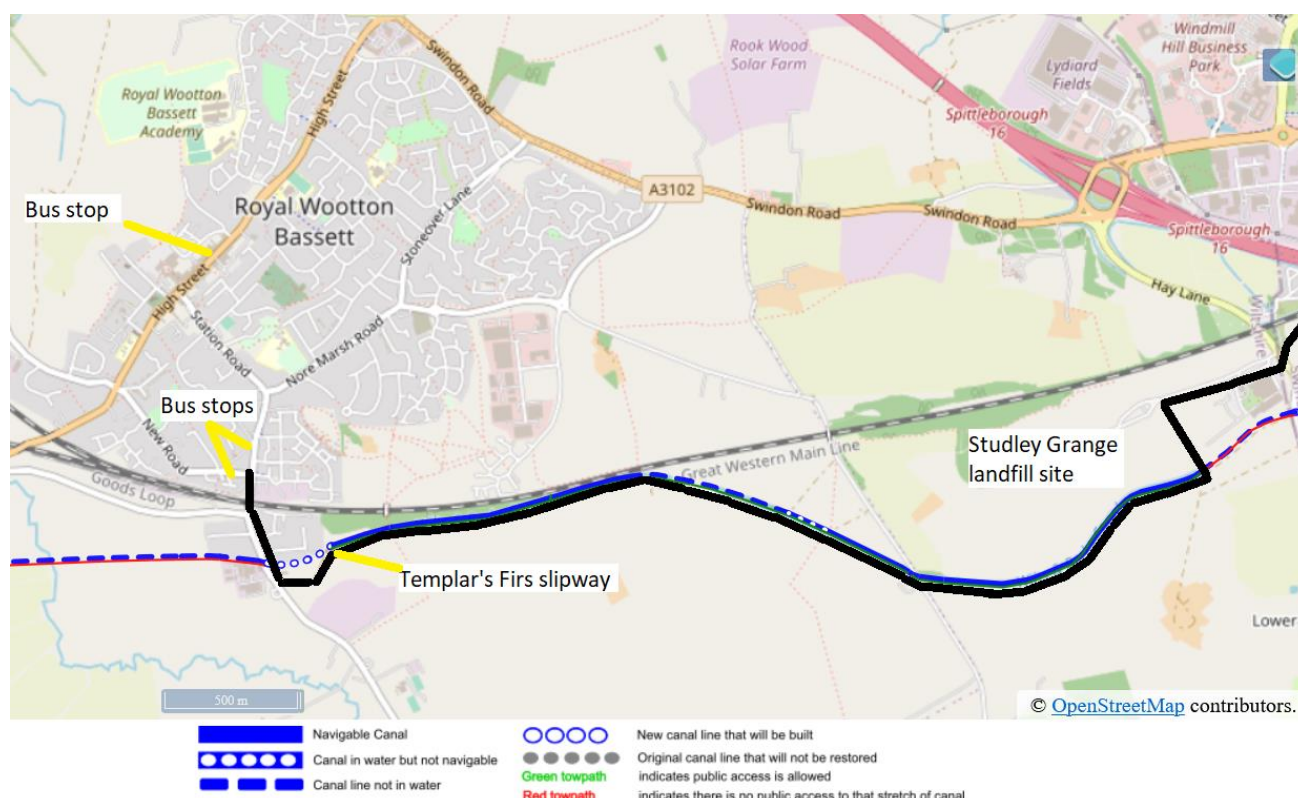


## A Safe Walking Route from Royal Wootton Bassett to Swindon

For many years, it has not been possible to walk safely between the town of Royal Wootton Bassett and the centre of Swindon without taking a very wide detour, but now there's a way to avoid the worst of the traffic. This one-way walk assumes that the return journey is made by bus.

If travelling from Swindon to start your walk, the 55 route runs daily through the Royal Wootton Bassett's High Street. However, between Monday and Saturday, the 99 route runs much closer to the restored canal. It runs from Swindon Bus Station hourly to Station Road and New Road (see map below) before heading for the High Street, at these times: 7:45, 8:45, 9:50, 10:50, 11:50, 12:50, 13:50, 14:50 16:00, 17:05, 18:00, 19:05.

The maps shown here are based on the WBCT Interactive Map, with the walking route in black:



If you start from the High Street, walk down Station Road and over the railway bridge to Marlborough Road. The five houses called “Bridgelands” are built on the site of the former Bridge Inn beside the canal wharf; the canal bridge had long ago been flattened.

Continue along Marlborough Road until you reach the Templar's Way industrial estate on the right and the former Council Depot on the left, where there is a car park.

Follow the little blue footpath signs along the farm access track to the Templar's Firs slipway where the restored canal starts. You will find a helpful map with local information here.



Francis Templar farmed the land here for much of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and the GWR linked the canal to the farmhouse on Brynard's Hill with a bridge named the "Templar's Farm Overbridge". You won't see many fir trees, but the woodland separating the railway from the canal is a good mixture of Oaks, Willows and other deciduous trees.

Almost all the route on the first map is either canal towpath or former towpath. If you wish, you can take the permissive path on the north side of the canal past Noremarsch Footbridge and Buxstone Footbridge (named after the former landowner when the canal was built), then cross over to re-join the towpath, which passes over the Woodshaw spill-weir.

At the eastern end of the restored canal there is an un-restored stretch of half a kilometre passing through Harris Croft Farm.



Please keep to the footpath and don't trespass on to the farm access track. The first part is often in water in winter-time. At the end of the self-sown Willow trees is the site of Woodshaw Lock, now completely buried, followed by a section of filled-in canal plus the remains of the old canal either side of where the farm track crosses.

Remain on the public footpath until Morningside Farm, with its nationally important wild-flower-rich meadows south of the canal.

It's also the site of Chaddington Lock and spill-weir on the restored canal, where there is another canal map with local information.

Crossing over Bincknoll (pronounced 'Bynol') Lane, the towpath then begins the Studley Grange section with nearly a mile of restored canal looping around a landfill mound, now being restored as farmland. There are several benches along the way, plus information boards

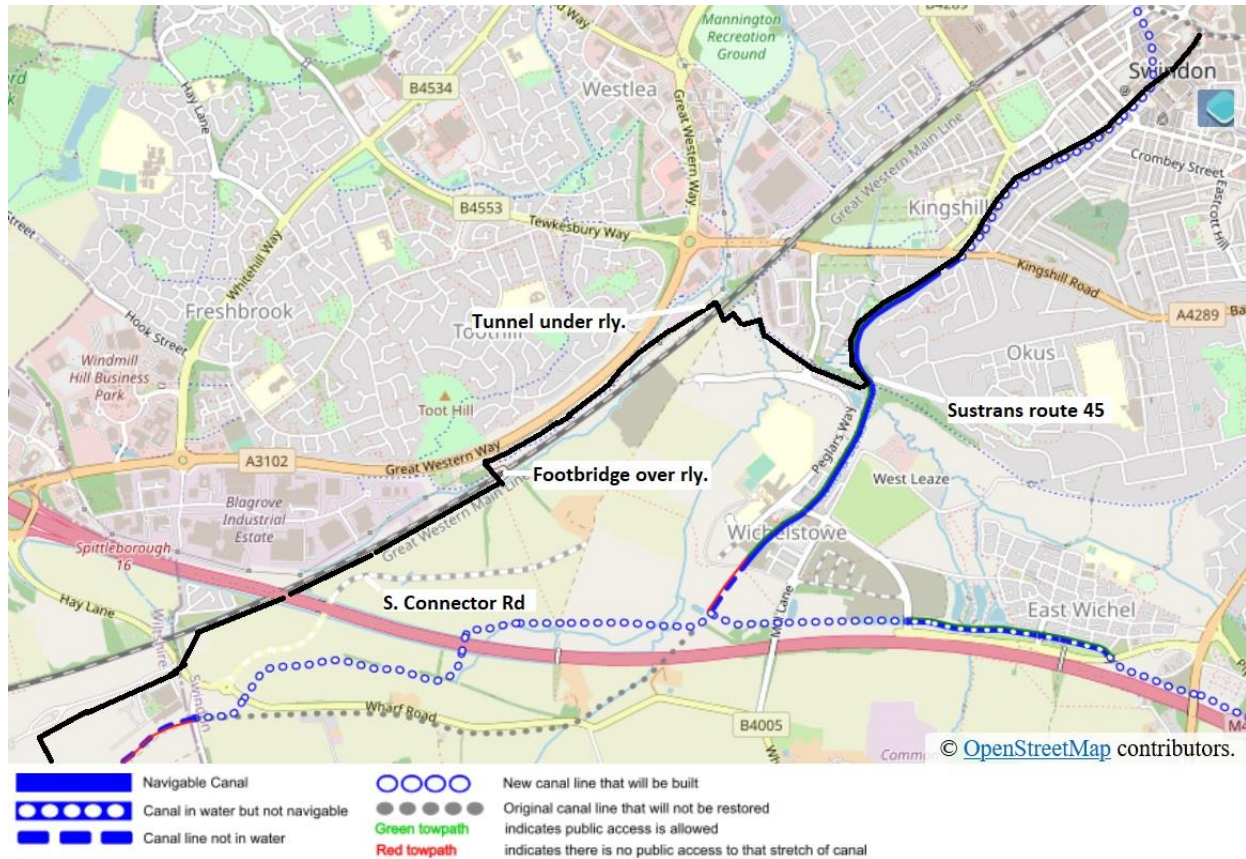


illustrating the local wildlife. If you've brought paper and crayons for children to make sketches, there's even a set of 'brass rubbings' of animals and birds to trace.

At the east end, climb the so-called 'Studley Steps' (see left) that lead to a new footpath provided by Biffa towards Hay Lane.



Follow the path, which takes you around the western end of the Garden Centre and Butterfly World. You may catch sight of pigs and sheep in the enclosure by the path. You will finally reach Hay Lane. To the right, Hay Lane has been re-aligned as part of the Wichelstowe Southern Connector Road, which has a tantalising 3-metre-wide footpath and cycleway, but it's currently blocked off. There's even a navigable culvert under Wharf Road, waiting for the canal to be connected between Wichelstowe and Studley Grange.



Be careful as you cross Hay Lane, then follow the cul-de-sac until you see a gap in the hedge, which is the beginning of a footpath that takes you under the motorway bridge, and keep close to the railway fence. Continue to follow it until you see a path to the left, which takes you over the railway by a tall footbridge with gentle slopes either side.





Turn right after the footbridge and follow the footpath/cycleway until you reach the Mannington retail park.

Turn right towards the bridge under the railway, then turn left and follow the signs towards 'Old Town'. This is Sustrans Route 45, which then takes you up a gentle slope to the old railway line on an embankment.

After a quarter of a mile, take the slope down to 'Skew Bridge' and turn left along the canal towpath towards Kingshill.



At Kingshill, cross Wootton Bassett Road and then follow the 'Southern Flyer' cycleway along the line of the old canal, passing under Cambria Road Bridge with its colourful mural. At the Brunel Centre's multi-storey car park, the underpass will take you to Wharf Green, where the canal boats used to moor.

Continue along Canal Walk until you reach the Golden Lion statue with Regent Street to the right. Did you know that Fleming Way is on the line of the old canal?

Take the tunnel under Fleming Way to the bus station where you can catch the Stagecoach 55 or Coachstyle 99 bus back to Royal Wootton Bassett.

In a few years, the restored canal will link Royal Wootton Bassett with Swindon all the way without having to cross any roads, just as it used to before it was closed in 1914. In the meantime, at least we now have a safe walking route for at least half its length beside the canal, and alongside the railway east of Hay Lane.

**Steve Bacon, Chair, Royal Wootton Bassett branch (Web-site: [wbct.org.uk](http://wbct.org.uk)).**

Restoring all 70 miles of the Wilts & Berks canal to create a public waterside park for walking, cycling, fishing and boating.  
The Wilts & Berks Canal Trust. Registered Charity No 299595, Limited Company No 2267719  
Dauntsey Lock Canal Centre, Dauntsey Lock, Chippenham SN15 4HD

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