

Walking & Cycling The Grand Union Canal Towpath

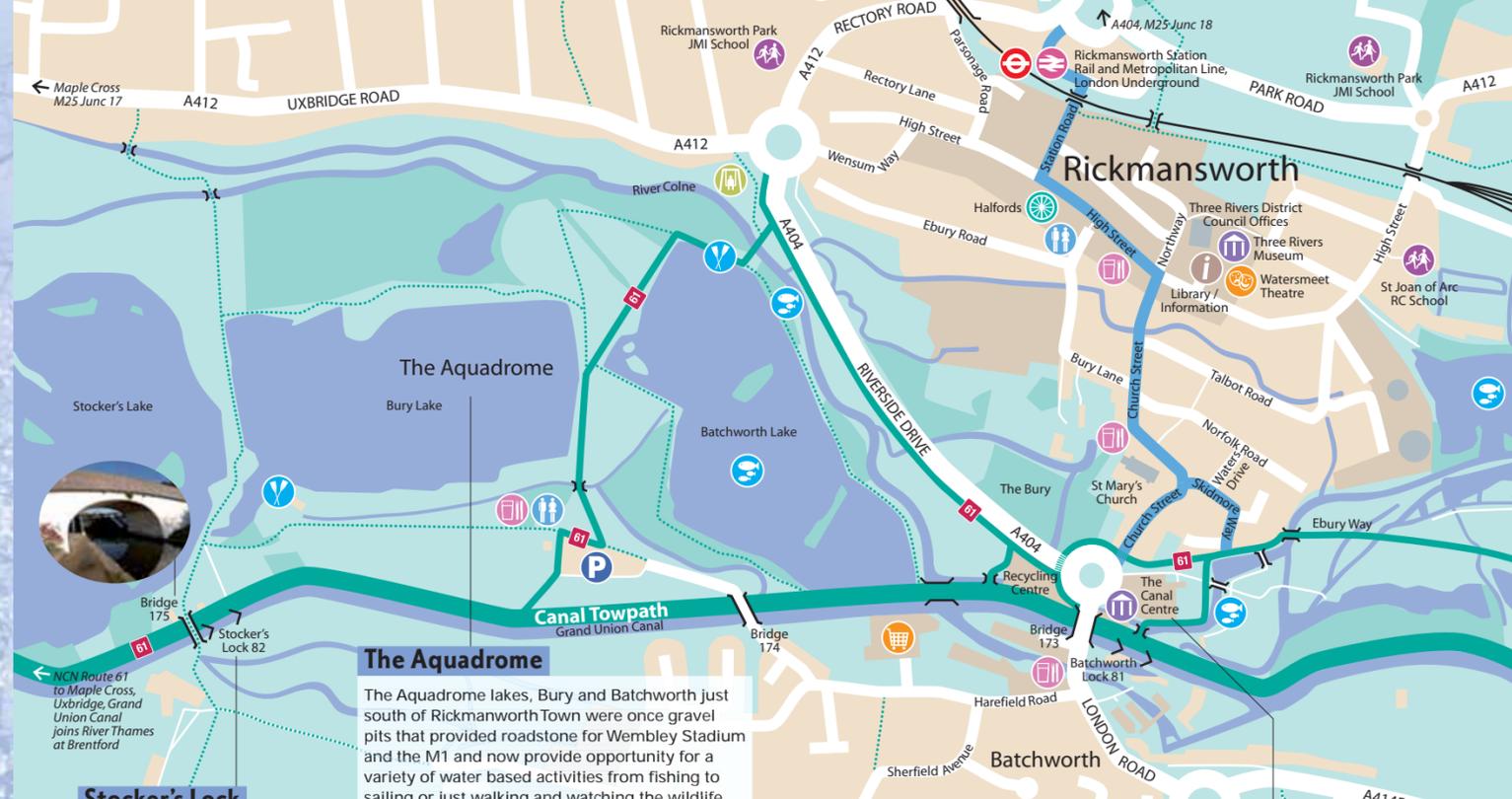
from Rickmansworth to Watford

The Grand Union Canal wends its way from London to Birmingham through city, town and country. Improvements to the towpath between Watford and Rickmansworth provide a good, flat surface for walkers, cyclists and wheelchair users. Enjoy the peace and tranquility of the canal or use the route as a traffic free journey to work away from busy roads. Between Leavesden and the Aquadrome in Rickmansworth it is about a 45 minute easy bike ride over 5 miles of towpath.

There is so much to see and do along the way. Explore ancient woodland and roam between the trees in Whippendell Wood. Take the kids to Cassiobury Park and ride the miniature railway or get back to nature at the Aquadrome.

For those wanting to explore further, walk or cycle through history looking for the clues of the old railway line along the Ebury Way. Alternatively follow the towpath south towards London and Uxbridge or north towards Hemel Hempstead

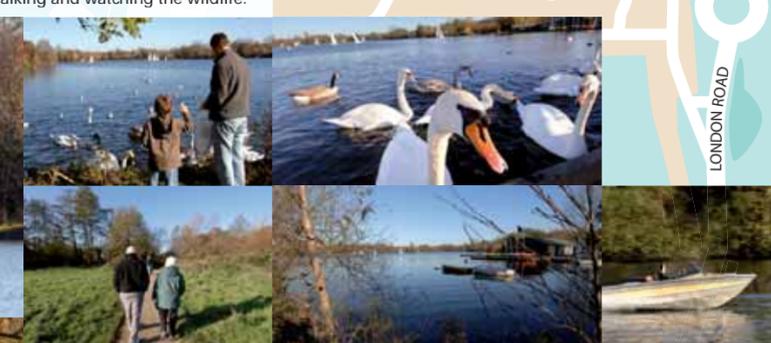
This guide will show you many places of interest en route, as well as all the access points including links into West Watford and Rickmansworth town centre. Leaflets in this series covering the Ebury Way and cycling in Watford are also available from local outlets.



Rickmansworth dates back to Saxon times and with its prominent position at the confluence of the 3 rivers Chesh, Gade & Colne. It grew to a sizeable town gaining its royal charter in 1542. The canal was built in 1797, and many businesses sprang up in the vicinity including 5 paper mills and a brewery. Later came the railway to Watford built by Lord Ebury in 1862 becoming the Ebury Way after the line finally closed in 1981. The state of Pennsylvania USA is named after a famous former resident William Penn who lived in Basing House - now Three Rivers Museum. The annual Canal & Environment Festival in May promoted by Three Rivers District Council and Rickmansworth Waterways Trust brings together the local community and canal folk in a showcase of old working boats and traditionally painted canal wares, together with a variety of environmentally friendly goods, ideas, and events.

Rickmansworth

Stocker's Lock
This lock with its picturesque white cottage, shares its name with the 16th century farm nearby used for filming tv series Black Beauty. The old Coal Post London Boundary marker still stands outside the Toll House where tolls were levied on goods going into London. Herts and Middlesex wildlife Trust manages the Nature reserve at Stocker's Lake which is home to a wide variety of wildfowl or birds, insects and mammals.



The Colne Valley Regional Park
Established in 1965, the park covers 43 square miles of varied countryside on the edge of London stretching from Rickmansworth down to Staines. It is a mosaic of farmland, woodland and water with many hidden treasures ranging from popular recreation areas such as Rickmansworth Aquadrome and Black Park to tranquil nature reserves such as Stockers Lake and Maple Lodge.

Batchworth Lock Canal Centre
The lockside Canal Centre gives an insight into the past when the River Chesh Lock and the Canal Lock here was an important point on the London to Birmingham route with overnight refreshment facilities for boatmen and their horses. Canal narrowboats were made at the Walkers Boatyard nearby.

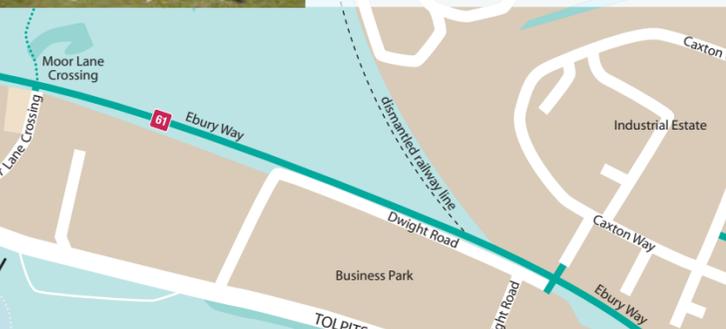


Batchworth Circular Walk or Cycle
From the Canal Centre at Batchworth there is a pleasant short circular walk or cycle of about 2miles proceeding north up the towpath to the Ebury Way Ramp just before Lot Mead Lock. The ramp links to the Ebury Way traffic free route back southwards to Rickmansworth. Just over the Chesh Bridge the circle is completed by the short cut south on the River Chesh towpath back to the Canal Centre at Batchworth.

Croxley Common Moor
Nature Reserve
Site of Special Scientific Interest



Croxley Common Moor
This Local Nature Reserve provides a great habitat for meadowland wildflowers and many birds including green woodpeckers. Walking over the common shows how the damp moorland provides habitat for a variety of insects including ants which is a sign the land has never been ploughed. The banks of the River Gade and the canal are home to a variety of wildfowl and kingfishers are a common sight.



route continues on other side
Cassiobridge Lock No. 78

Key

| | | | | |
|--|---------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Grand Union Canal Towpath | Track | Canal Lock | London Underground Station | Fishing Public / Private |
| Cycle Routes (traffic free) | Street / Minor Road | River / Canal / Lake | Car Park | Watersports |
| Cycle Route part of the National Cycle Network | Main Road | Pub / Restaurant / Refreshments | Toilet | School / College |
| Cycle / Pedestrian Crossing | Motorway | Supermarket / Shop | Children's Play Area | Fields Open Land |
| Cycle Routes (signed on quiet road) | Railway | Cycle Shop | Museum | Woodland |
| Shared Cycle Route / Bus Lane | Railway disused | Tourist Information | Arts Centre | Residential area |
| Footpath | Bridge | Railway Station | Miniature Railway | Commercial area |

1 kilometre
1/2 mile

scale 1:8,150



Whippendell Wood
Site of Special Scientific Interest

What links West Watford and the Star Wars Episode 1!? Well, it was this woodland that was used as the environmental backdrop for the sacred temple ruins in the forest of Naboo. Historically managed for timber, firewood and game, the woodland is now a site of special scientific interest. During the hurricane of 1987 and gales of 1990 more than 2,500 trees were blown down or damaged creating glades that are now the home of many butterflies such as speckled wood, ringlet and holly blue. The wood is also home to over 270 species of plants. The recently improved path between the towpath and the wood provides improved access for all including the disabled and cyclists.



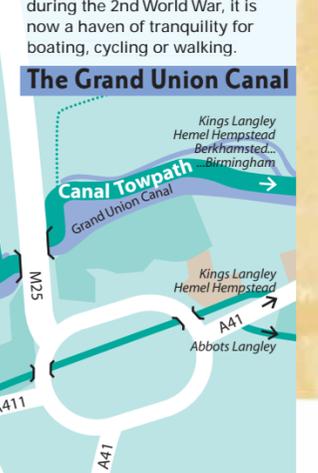
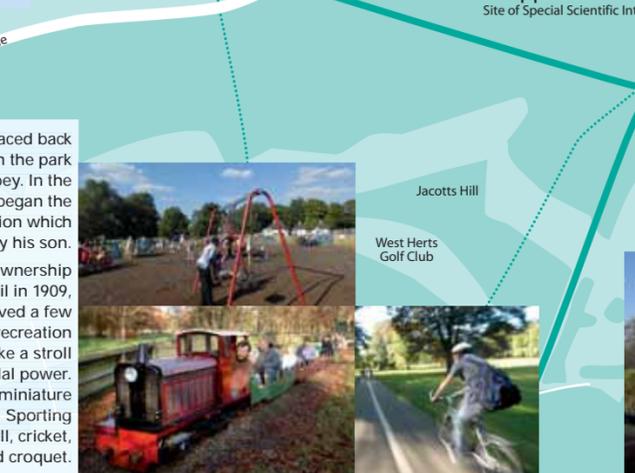
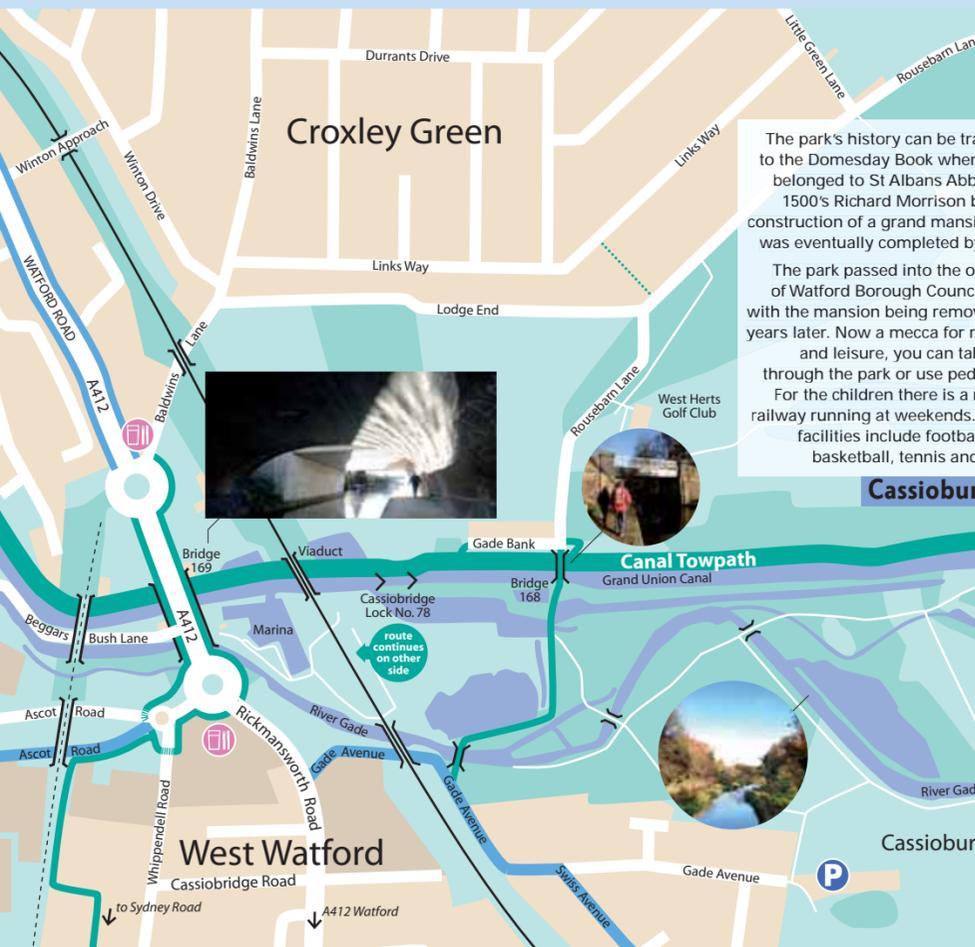
The Grove

The first substantial house on the site was thought to be Elizabethan. The fashion for a 'weekend in the country' was more or less invented here, with regular visitors such as Queen Victoria, Edward VII, Horace Walpole and Lord Palmerston. Now it is a leading hotel, hospitality and recreational centre, with a championship golf course set in 300 acres. For more details see www.thegrove.co.uk.



The Grand Union Canal

Previously goods from the Midlands had to travel south to Oxford, then transfer onto the River Thames to reach London. Built over 200 years ago, this new canal provided a far more convenient route cutting 60 miles off the journey. In addition, many side branches were added to link towns along the way. Last used in earnest for goods transportation during the 2nd World War, it is now a haven of tranquility for boating, cycling or walking.



Croxley Green

The park's history can be traced back to the Domesday Book when the park belonged to St Albans Abbey. In the 1500's Richard Morrison began the construction of a grand mansion which was eventually completed by his son. The park passed into the ownership of Watford Borough Council in 1909, with the mansion being removed a few years later. Now a mecca for recreation and leisure, you can take a stroll through the park or use pedal power. For the children there is a miniature railway running at weekends. Sporting facilities include football, cricket, basketball, tennis and croquet.

Cassiobury Park

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The Grove Park

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Leavesden

Leavesden A405
Bricket Wood St Albans M25, M1

Cycling in Watford

Many attractive cycle routes have been created in Watford including access to the main shopping area along the part-pedestrianised High Street. A circular ride incorporating the canal towpath, and the town centre can be made by following The Ebury Way (NCN 6/61) to Lower High Street, along the High Street to the Town Hall and then rejoining the canal at Bridges 165, 167 or 168 - see the leaflet/map *Cycling in Watford* for more information.

The Towpath

A permit is required to cycle on the towpath from British Waterways and is downloadable from: www.waterscape.com/cycling/permit.html or from British Waterways, Willow Grange Church Road, Watford, Herts WD17 4QA

Places to Visit

Batchworth Lock Canal Centre - Tel: 01923 778382
www.rwt.org.uk

Cassiobury Park - Tel: 01923 226400
www.watford.gov.uk & type in 'Cassiobury Park' in the search box

Colne Valley Park - Tel: 01895 833375
email: colnevalley@groundwork.org.uk
www.colnevalleypark.org.uk

The Towns

Watford
Watford Information - Tel: 01923 226400
www.watford.gov.uk

Rickmansworth
Rickmansworth Information Point - Tel: 01923 776611
email: enquiries@threerivers.co.uk
www.threerivers.co.uk

Walking and Cycling further afield

Other free leaflets available in this series include:
Cycling in Watford & The Ebury Way
For free copies telephone 01923 226400

walking & cycling

The Grand Union Canal Towpath

Watford to Rickmansworth 45 minutes

5 mile green route between Rickmansworth, Croxley Green, Watford & Leavesden

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Cartography, photography, leaflet design and cycling by Stephen Wragg - Wragg Art House: www.wah.co.uk
Bluebell photograph by Tim Woolridge.

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