

The Canalside Park.

This site was always too wet for agriculture. Old maps show a brook and a pond and when the canal was cut through here in 1802 a culvert was laid to carry the water beneath it. The old culvert can still be seen but is collapsed and silted up. A new concrete pipe culvert was installed in 1997. After it was abandoned, the canal here was used as the village tip, being filled with mainly domestic rubbish and fire ash (circa 1920-1940). In the 1960's a new storm water sewer was laid through Shrivenham, this produced vast quantities of waste subsoil. With a view to increasing the height of the land, this waste was dumped over the entire site including the infilled canal. However the soil was poor and contained a lot of debris, so the field remained unusable.

In early 1995 the Branch was able to purchase the field and the idea of a canal-side park emerged. Facilities planned included a small car park, boat slipway, picnic site and lots of trees and shrubs. Our proposals received wholehearted approval such that the Vale of the White Horse District Council Leisure Services offered to cover the cost of all the heavy works, which were completed in summer 1997. The planting and paths were added by the local Branch during 1998.

The boat slipway was constructed in 1998, by the Trust, as a memorial to Ron Martin, a long time stalwart of the Inland Waterways Association.

The length of canal and towpath from the Canalside Park to The Arch Bridge was the first section of canal to be restored by the local Trust Branch, in 1992.

The Arch Bridge is unique in being the only original canal structure to survive intact to the present day and still be in daily use. The bridge was constructed in the mid 1840s when Shrivenham Station was built for the GWR.

Shrivenham Wharf was not only used for the transfer of cargoes but also contained stables with fresh horses to pull the narrow boats (the largest of which were seventy feet long, seven feet wide and carried up to thirty-four tons). The stone wall by the road is the old back wall of the stable. The towpath changed sides over the Arch Bridge, so that it could pass the Longcot Branch which went to the north, without the need for a further bridge. It then crossed back at Longcot Top Lock to pass the Wantage Branch on the south side. The current way from the Arch Bridge to Steppingstone Bridge is on the non-towpath side of the canal. In time, the local Branch plan to open and resurface the original towpath.

Steppingstone Bridge originally carried the road to Bourton, it was demolished by Faringdon District Council circa 1950 because it had become dangerous. The Trust has rebuilt this bridge on the original foundations.

Branch investigations near Steppingstone Bridge revealed the remains of a small wooden wharf, this was probably a temporary structure built to unload heavy loads, possibly stone or bricks for the building of a nearby mansion.

Bourton Wharf proper and the wharf house can still be seen, at the junction of the Shrivenham bypass with the road to Bourton.

Wildlife to look out for, all seen from time to time along the canal in Shrivenham (some are seasonal) - Fox, Roe deer, Water Vole, Cuckoo, Kingfisher, Heron, Jay, Long tailed tits, Magpie, Moorhen, Woodpecker, Minnows, Newts, Sticklebacks, Tadpoles.



The Wilts & Berks Canal Trust

West Vale Branch

Walks Westwards from the Canalside Park in Shrivenham

Three circular walks exploring the Wilts & Berks Canal and footpaths around Bourton & Shrivenham.

Notes:

First Aid: Elm Tree Surgery, High Street, Shrivenham
Tel: 01793 782207

Public Telephone: Opposite The Prince of Wales PH

The canal passes through private property; access is given by kind permission of the landowners. Please keep to the designated paths.

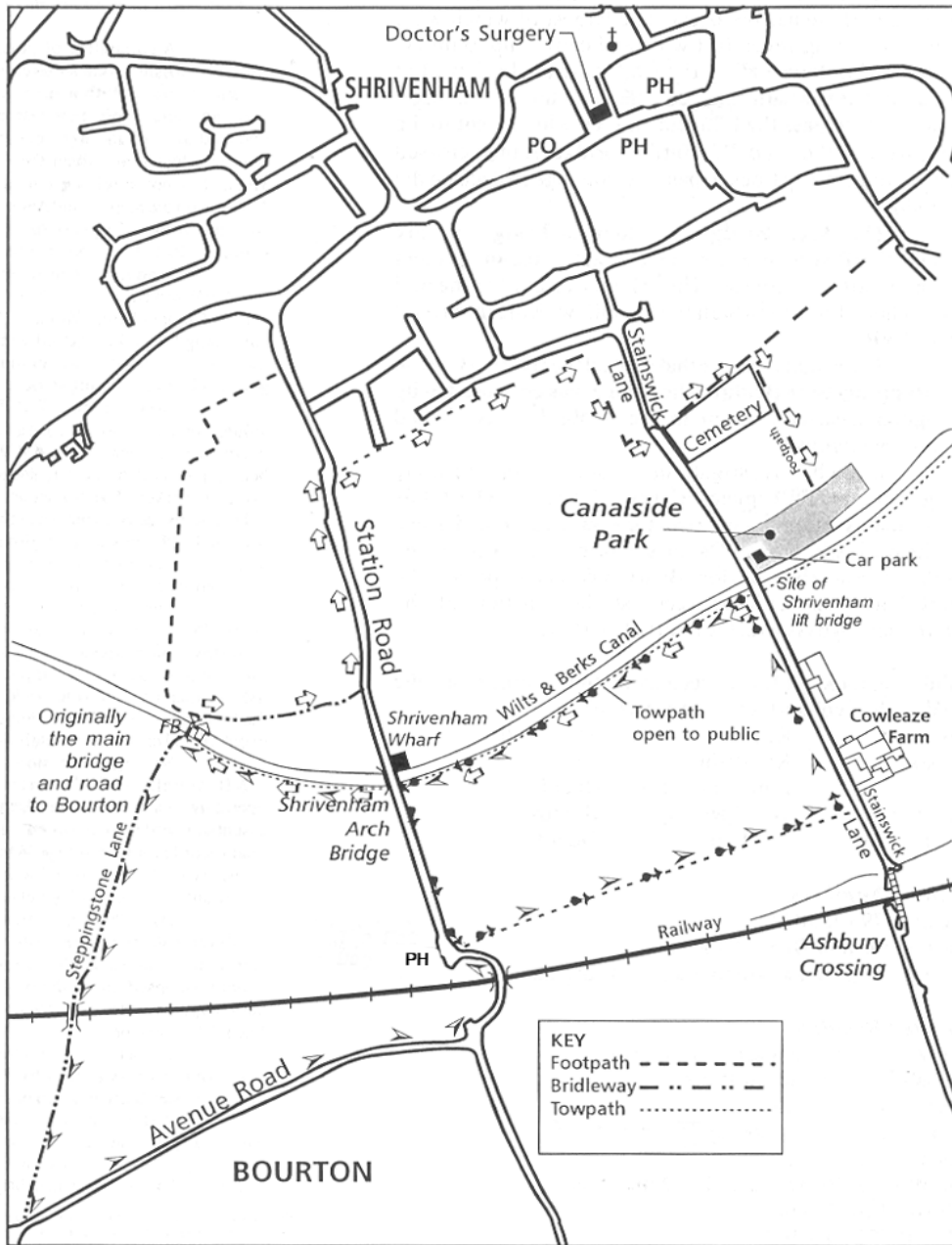
Be aware of the danger of deep water and overhead power cables, no fishing or kite flying.

Follow the Countryside Code –

- Be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals & take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control
- Consider other people

Places to eat or obtain food in Shrivenham

All on the High Street unless stated otherwise -
Barrington Arms, PH. Victoria (Fat dog), PH, Stn Rd.
Prince of Wales, PH. Crown, Bar - Restaurant
Rafus, Indian restaurant. Gulsham, Indian restaurant.
Bloomfields, Deli / take-away. Treasure, Chinese take-out.
Co-op food store. One Stop, store.



Alder



Bulrush



Crab Apple



Hawthorn

Circular Walk 1 (shown →)

Take the towpath and follow the canal westwards from the Canalside Park. At the Arch Bridge turn left down Station Road to the Fat Dog Pub. Take the bridleway opposite the pub back to Stainswick Lane, turn left to the Canalside Park.

Approx. distance 2km (1¼ miles)

Circular Walk 2 (shown →)

Take the towpath and follow the canal westwards from the Canalside Park, cross the road at the Arch Bridge follow the canal to Steppingstone Bridge (this path is not surfaced and can be very muddy in wet weather), bear left along Steppingstone Lane bridleway to Bourton. Turn left along Avenue Road, turn left over the railway bridge, take the bridleway opposite the Fat Dog pub to Stainswick Lane, turn left to the Canalside Park.

Approx. distance 3.5 km (2¼ miles)

Circular Walk 3 (shown ⇄)

Take the towpath, as walk 2, to Steppingstone Bridge, turn right across canal, bear right taking a diagonal across the field to Station Road, turn left towards Shrevenham, after 300m enter field through small gate on right. Follow boundary to Stainswick Lane, turn left to the footpath opposite, past cemetery turn right to the Canalside Park.

Approx. distance 2.5 km (1¾ miles)

The towpath from the Canalside Park to Steppingstone Lane forms part of Shrevenham's Millennium Circular Walk. Details and printable leaflets can be obtained from the Shrevenham website –

www.shrevenham.org/community/circular_walk.html



Marsh Marigold



Yellow Iris



Common Reed (Phragmites)