

Around Mouldon Hill

In the second walk you can explore the restored part of the canal around Mouldon Hill. The second of the walks starts at the car park (due to open early 2010) at Mouldon Hill Country Park although there is a good public transport service to Taw Hill.

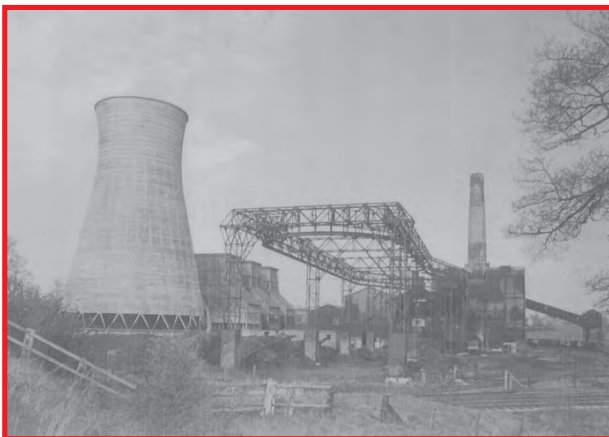
Adjacent to the start point **9** you will see the track bed of the Swindon & Cricklade Railway's new route to the station site for the Country Park.

Take the footpath to the south of the lake, **10** built as part of the landscaping for the park, and follow the contour around the hill until you reach the canal.

At this point you will walk across the temporary bund to reach the towpath side to the south. Take a moment to have a look to the right and the restored aqueduct **11** over the River Ray.

The walk now follows the towpath alongside the canal passing one of the early restoration projects for the Wilts & Berks Canal, the lock is the lowest of the flight of 3 Moredon Locks **12**.

The lock chamber is complete and now awaits gates when the canal is operational.



The canal approaches the Purton Road where you will see evidence of the commitment to the canal restoration in Swindon with a new culvert **13** being included in the road reconstruction project of Thamesdown Drive.

As you emerge from the underpass you might wonder where the restored canal route is going to be, as the historic line is now occupied by houses (The houses are built on the site of Moredon Power Station which was demolished in the 1970's) A slight diversion is required here **7** to re-connect to the original route.

Also at this point as you walk back towards you start the start point you will see a red brick arched bridge next to the dual carriageway **14**.

This was a bridge over the route of the Midland and South West Junction railway which if you turn south now forms the cycleway into Barnfield and Shaw.

Connections:

The map shows a number of interlinking footpaths, bridleways and cycleways which you may choose to explore other areas.

Your Health and Safety:

This walk leaflet is published by the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust. While care has been taken in assessing the routes, walkers are responsible for their own health and safety, and well-being when following the routes. The Trust accepts no responsibility for any loss or damage.

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Canal Walks in Swindon



North Wilts Canal Moredon and Mouldon Hill



Explore the route of the North Wilts Branch of the Wilts & Berks Canal in the River Ray Valley Swindon

The River Ray Valley Moredon

There are many ways to arrive at the start of the first walk with regular bus services to Akers Way and Cheney Manor but if you are coming by car you are advised to use the playing fields car park in the Cheney Manor Trading Estate (Darby Close) opposite Manor Garden Centre **1**.

Either walking from the car park or along the footpath from the Trading Estate (Darby Close) you will cross the line of the canal at the boundary of the playing field and Nova Hreod school grounds **2**. You might note the wall to the east, and if you can find a suitable vantage point, you can see one of the few preserved sections of the canal now within the boundary of Swindon Borough Council's Waste Recycling Centre. The canal was used as an emergency water supply for fire fighting by a factory that was on the site and of course now just waits for the other 10 miles of the North Wilts canal to be restored!

The walk now joins the canal towpath skirting the school boundary fence where you will see a drainage lagoon that now occupies the canal bed. You may wish to take advantage of the various break out points along the towpath which give you access to the banks of the nearby River Ray.

You will note the dark colour of the infill in the canal bed. This was considered to be an ideal location to dispose of thousands of tons of ash from the Moredon electricity power station that stood adjacent to the canal **6** from 1929 to 1979. The walk deviates away from the towpath at a couple of locations.

At **3** is the location of an accommodation bridge (thought to be a lift bridge) taking a footpath over the canal. While this walk will take you back to your start point, you might consider here exploring some more of the green spaces of this part of Swindon.

Turn away south and soon you will join the route of another abandoned transport route-the Midland and South Western Junction Railway **4**. In the 21st century the track bed is used for Route 45 of the National Cycleway network and if followed to the south you will find yourself in Shaw Community Forest, planted on the site of the town's former rubbish tip.

Continuing on the towpath you will see the first signs of the canal restoration where a short length of the canal has been dredged just before the site of Moredon Locks **5**. The top of the offside wall of the top lock in this flight has been exposed and you can see the location for the top gate and paddles. These locks continued the canal's descent towards Cricklade.

At this point the walk leaves the towpath and takes you back to Akers way where you can view the River Valley as you return towards your start point. The canal from here to Mouldon Hill **8** will use a new route **7** as the original alignment past the former power station **6** has now been built on.

