

Water in reserve

A self guided walk around the Tring Reservoirs in Hertfordshire



Find out why a canal was built through the Chilterns
Discover the engineering challenges to supply it with water
See how industrial needs created habitats for birds and wildlife
Enjoy a tranquil landscape being restored for leisure activities

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**the stories of our landscapes
discovered through walks**





Contents

Introduction	4
Route overview	5
Practical information	6
Detailed route maps	8
Directions	11
Credits	15

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Cover image: Sluice gate at Startop's End Reservoir by Mike Jackson © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

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Discover why the Grand Junction Canal was built through the Chilterns

The Chilterns are a chain of chalk hills that stretch for 40 miles through four southern counties of England. Though they aren't very high compared to other British hills and mountains the Chilterns have often been an obstacle for transport routes to and from London.

Just over two hundred years ago new canals were being built all over the country to carry the raw materials and finished goods that were driving the Industrial Revolution.



Narrowboat on the Wendover Arm
Mike Jackson © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

London couldn't afford to be left out. So engineers built the Grand Junction Canal through a gap in the Chiltern Hills near Tring. This canal changed the area for ever.



Depth gauges in Startop's End Reservoir
Mike Jackson © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Discover how the canal was constructed and the engineering challenges to supply it with water. Watch boats navigate specially designed locks and anglers hoping for a bite in one of four reservoirs. Look out for 250 kinds of birds attracted to the watery habitats.

Also see where the canal was abandoned when it sprang a leak and the valiant efforts to restore it for leisure use. Enjoy a beautiful and tranquil landscape that has its roots in the Industrial Revolution.

Route overview

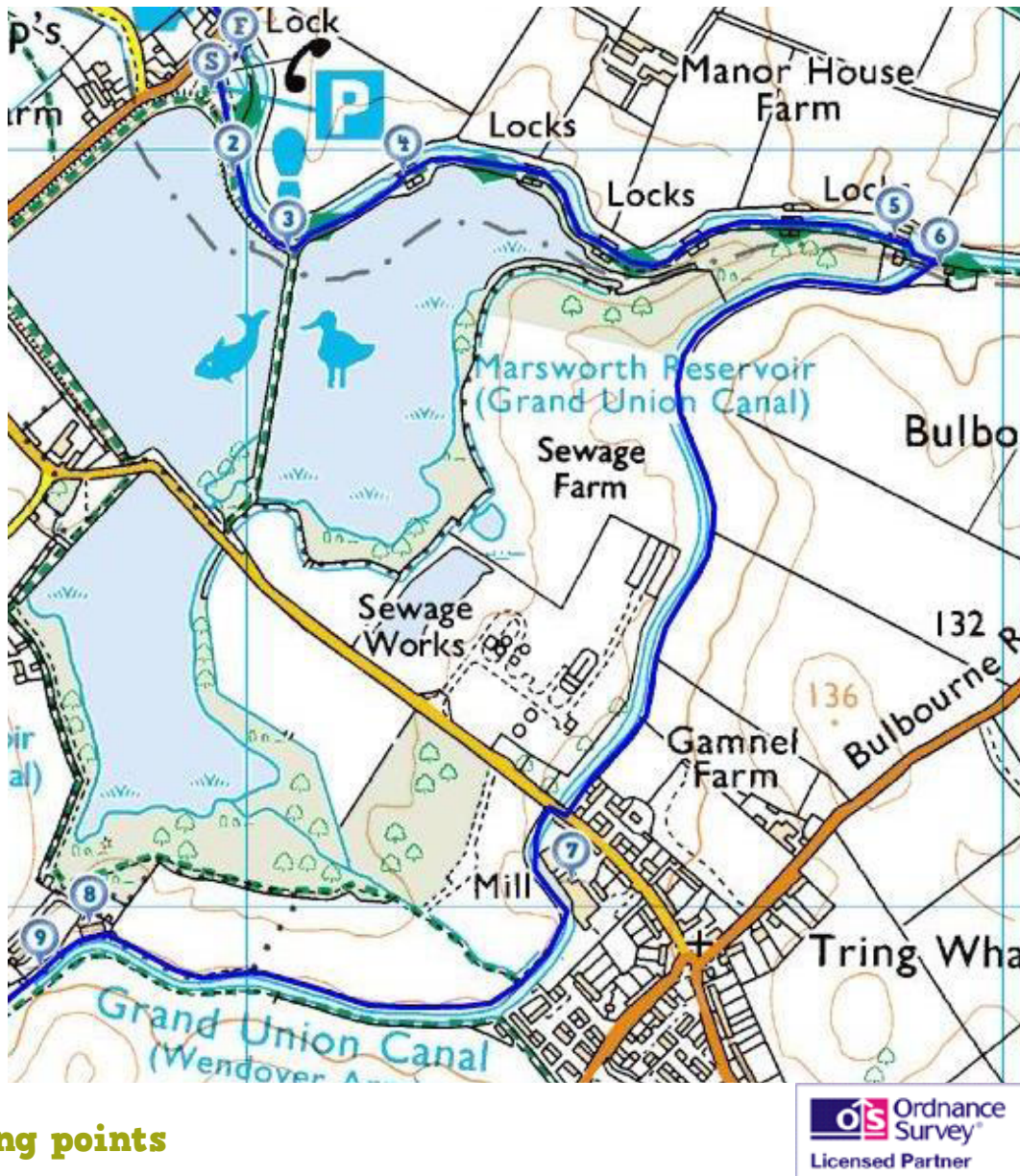


Practical information

Location	Near Tring, Hertfordshire
Getting there	<p>Train - The nearest stations are Tring (3 miles) and Wendover (6 miles). Rail services from Tring go to London Marylebone, London Euston, Watford Junction, Luton and Milton Keynes.</p> <p>Bus - Served by local routes from Tring town centre, Aylesbury and Leighton Buzzard. The nearest stop to the start of the walk is outside The Angler's Retreat pub on Lower Icknield Way (opposite Startop's End car park).</p> <p>Car - Tring is on the A41 between London and Aylesbury; there is also access from the M25 (J20). The reservoirs are 3 miles from Tring town centre via Tringford Road. Parking at the start of the walk, charges apply.</p> <p>Bicycle - Tring and Wendover are near to National Cycle Route Number 57 (Oxford to Chesham)</p>
Start & finish point	Startop's End Reservoir car park, Lower Icknield Way HP23 4LJ
Distance	5 ¾ miles
Directions from railway station to start	<p>You are advised to take a local bus from Tring railway station to Startop's End (routes 61, 387, 500, 501).</p> <p>Alternatively, to walk the 3 miles from Tring station, turn left past the Posting House and follow the signpost along Station Road. Take care as the pavement is shared with a cycle path. At the end of Station Road turn right into Brook Street which becomes Wingrave Road. At the roundabout continue ahead into Tringford Road.</p> <p>Note there are stretches without pavements. Cross the bridge over the canal and pass Tringford Reservoir on the left. At the next roundabout turn right into Lower Icknield Way. Pass The Angler's Retreat pub and turn right into Startop's End car park.</p>

Level	Gentle – An easy rural route mostly on the flat but with some steps and stiles.
Terrain	The walk follows canal towpaths, field paths and roads.
Conditions	The fields can be muddy after rain. Take care on the way to Wilstone village (after Stop 15) as there are no footpaths along the road for half a mile. The reservoirs can be breezy so take warm clothing.
Suitable for	<p>Families – Plenty of sights for all ages. Take care of children by the canal edge.</p> <p>Dogs - Must be kept on a lead</p>
Refreshments	<p>The Bluebells Tearooms and The Angler's Retreat pub (both near the walk start/finish) serve food. Places further on include P.E. Mead Farm Shop and tearooms (after Stop 15) and the Half Moon pub in Wilstone (Stop 16).</p> <p>There are benches along the Grand Union towpath and picnic tables before the Aylesbury Arm of the canal (Stop 17).</p>
Toilets	There are no public toilets along the route. Customers can use facilities in the tearooms and pubs.
Other information	We recommend bringing binoculars for bird spotting.
Places to visit	Natural History Museum at Tring is a unique historic collection of stuffed animals. Open Mondays to Saturdays 10am-5pm, Sundays 2pm-5pm. Free entry. Tel: 020 7942 6171
Visitor information	<p>Tring Information Centre, 99 Akeman Street HP23 6AA</p> <p>Tel: 01422 823347 email: info@tring.gov.uk</p>

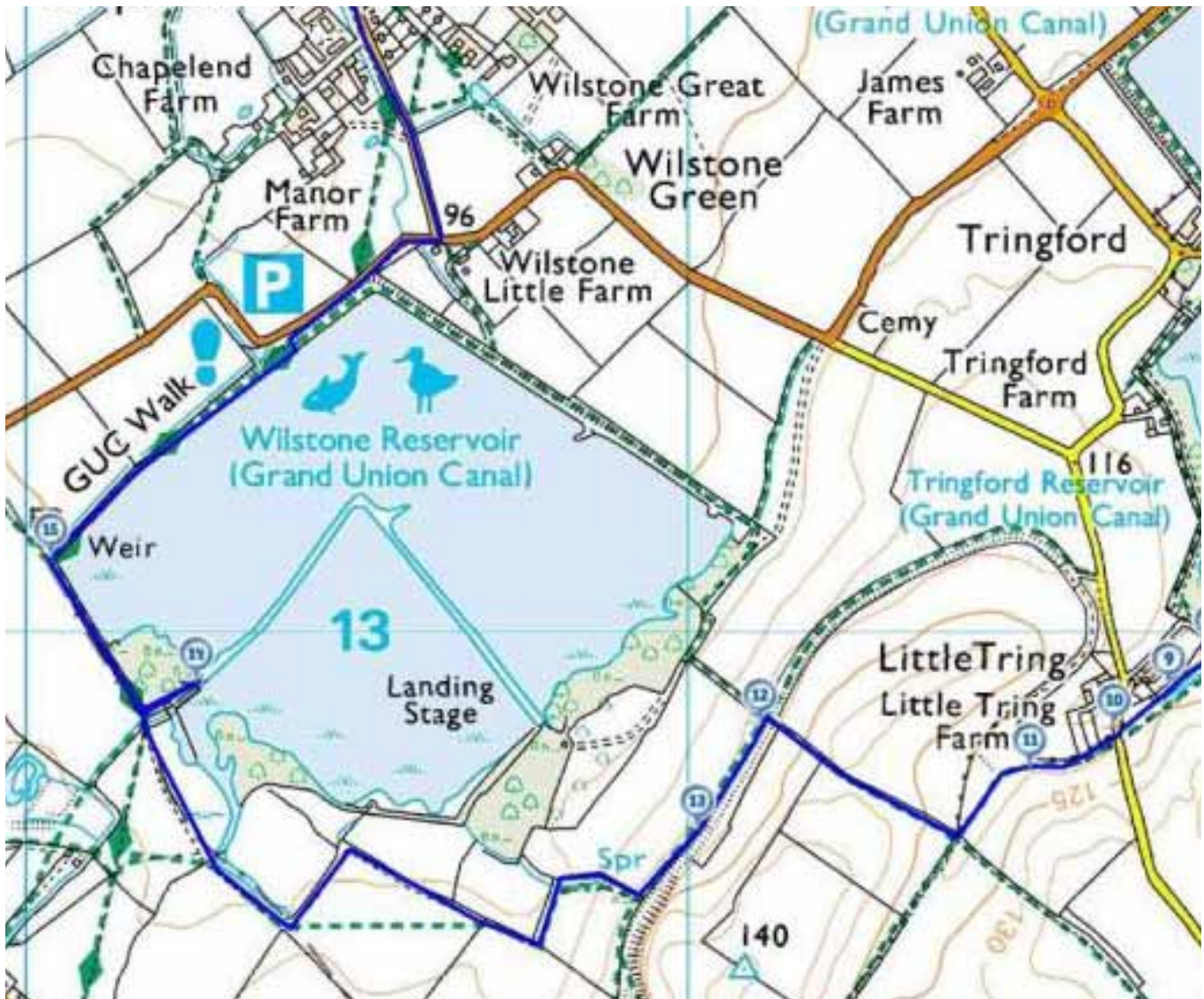
First part of the route



Stopping points

1. Information board, Startop's End car park
2. Towpath beside the Grand Union Canal
3. View of Startop's End and Marsworth reservoirs
4. Lock 40, Grand Union Canal
5. Lock 45, Grand Union Canal
6. Bridge over Bulbourne Junction
7. Heygates Flour Mill, Gamnel Wharf
8. Tringford pumping station
9. Stop lock past Tringford pumping station

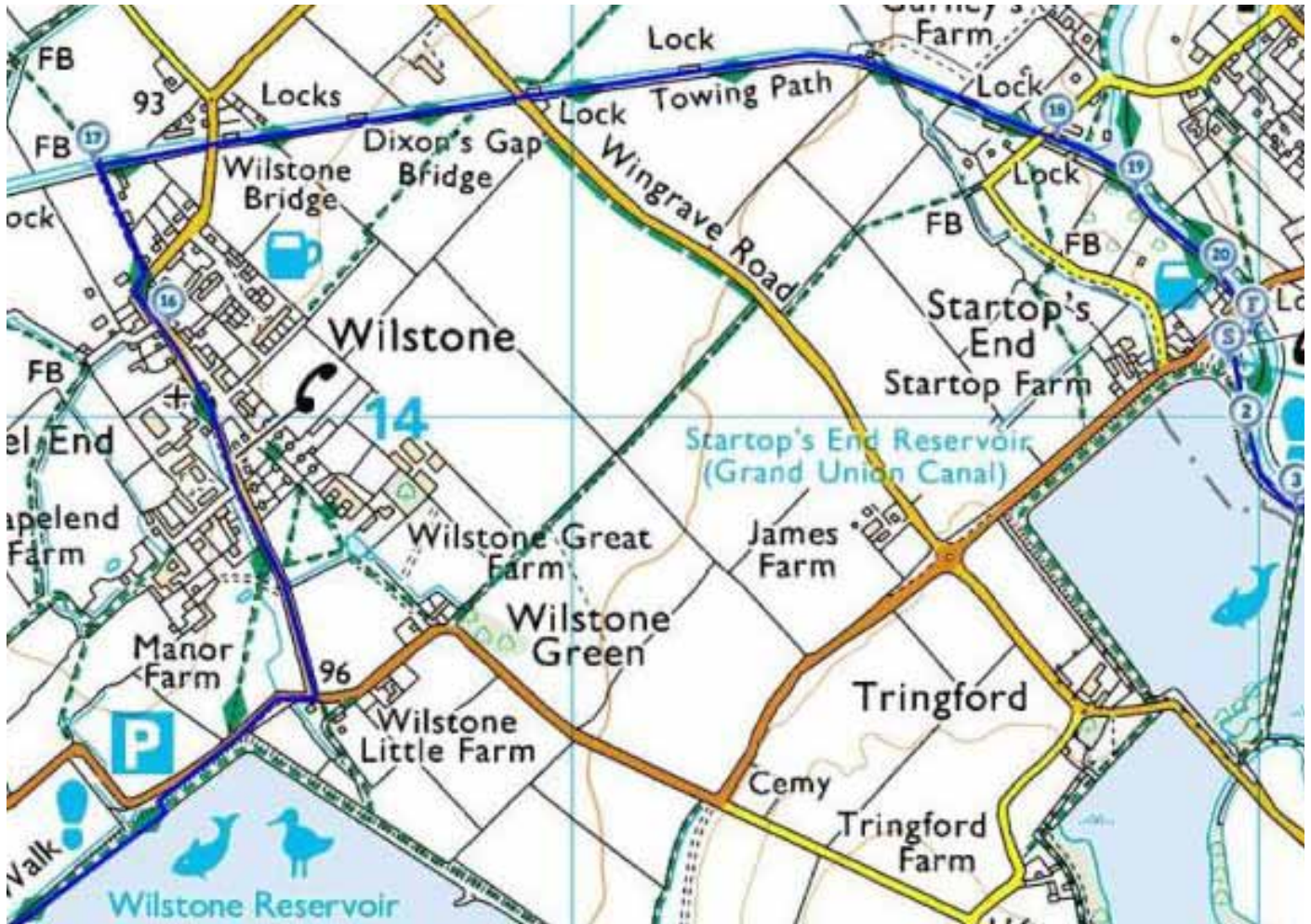
Second part of the route



Stopping points

- 10.** Little Tring Bridge
- 11.** Winding hole at the end of the Wendover Arm navigation
- 12.** Bridge 4, Wendover Arm
- 13.** Site of Whitehouses pumping station
- 14.** Wilstone Reservoir bird hide
- 15.** Bench at the corner of Wilstone Reservoir

Third part of the route



Stopping points

- 16.** Half Moon pub, Wilstone
- 17.** Bridge 4, Aylesbury Arm
- 18.** Locks 1 and 2, Aylesbury Arm
- 19.** Marsworth Long Term Mooring Site
- 20.** Startop's End double bridge
- F.** Bluebells Tearooms, Startop's End

Directions

These directions are for use with the audio commentary. Listen to each track then read the directions below to get to the next stop.

1. Welcome to Startop's End

Information board, Startop's End car park

Directions 1

From the Information Board, walk away from the road to the far end of the car park. Go through the gate and stop when you reach the canal. Listen to Track 2.

2. London's first Super Highway

Towpath beside the Grand Union Canal

Directions 2

Continue along the towpath and keep right up a small slope following the yellow arrow post. Stop after about 50 metres where the path divides again and you are standing on the edge of two reservoirs. Listen to Track 3.

3. Water in reserve

View of Startop's End and Marsworth reservoirs

Directions 3

Keep left following the yellow arrow. Keep the canal on your left and Marsworth Reservoir on your right. Stop when you reach the first lock, number 40. Listen here to Track 4.

4. Pond savers

Lock 40, Grand Union Canal

Directions 4

Continue along the towpath past four more locks. Stop when you reach Lock 45 which is Marsworth Top Lock. Listen to Track 5.

5. Taking a toll

Lock 45, Grand Union Canal

Directions 5

Continue past Lock 45 and stop almost immediately on the bridge over the Wendover Arm. Listen here to Track 6.

6. Wendover water

Bridge over Bulbourne Junction

Directions 6

Cross over the bridge then double back on yourself to walk under it. Follow the towpath of the Wendover Arm for just over half a mile until you reach a road bridge. Cross over and rejoin the canal towpath on the other side. Stop after 50 metres opposite Heygates Flour Mill. Listen to Track 7.

7. Windy miller

Heygates Flour Mill, Gammel Wharf

Directions 7

Continue along the towpath for about half a mile until you reach an iron gate just before the canal bends to the left. Stop by the large brick building which is behind a metal fence to your right. Listen to Track 8.

8. Powerful pumps

Tringford pumping station

Directions 8

Continue on the towpath for about 50 metres and stop where the canal narrows. Listen to Track 9.

9. Puddling and patching

Stop lock past Tringford pumping station

Directions 9

Continue for about 100 metres and stop by bridge number 3, Little Tring Bridge. Listen here to Track 10.

10. A concrete core

Little Tring Bridge

Directions 10

Go up the steps to the right of the bridge. Carefully cross the road and follow the signpost to take the path immediately back down to the canal. Continue with the canal to your right for about 150 metres. Stop when the canal widens and turns to the right. Listen to Track 11.

11. A tight turn

Winding hole, end of the Wendover Arm navigation

Directions 11

Take the footpath to the left directly away from the canal. After about 150 metres is a kissing gate. Go through it then turn right to go through another gate by a hedge. Cross the field keeping the hedge on your right. Go through another gate at the bottom of the field and follow the track to the left. Go up onto the wooden footbridge (number 4) and stop halfway across. Listen to Track 12.

12. A new lining

Brifge 4, Wendover Arm

Directions 12

Cross the footbridge, looking out for the plaques on the steps and posts. At the end of the bridge turn left and continue along the towpath with the canal on your left. After about 200 metres is an information board on the right which is opposite some arches on the other bank. Stop here to listen to Track 13.

13. Pumps and pipes

Site of Whitehouses pumping station

Directions 13

Continue for about 100 metres then take the path on your right downhill away from the canal. Keep to the right of the fields by following the yellow arrows. Cross a stile and then follow the telegraph poles across the clearing. When you reach a hedgerow bear right and follow the path into the trees. Follow the signs to a bird hide (at one point you need to go through a gate by a stream). Stop inside the hide and listen to Track 14.

14. Hidden from view

Wilstone Reservoir bird hide

Directions 14

When you are ready leave the bird hide. Follow the path through the trees then turn right at the information board. Follow the woodland path which emerges at a small bridge at the corner of the reservoir. Stop at the bench just beyond the bridge. Listen to Track 15.

15. Extra reserves

Bench at the corner of Wilstone Reservoir

Directions 15

Continue along the edge of the reservoir until you reach a set of steps on the left. Take these down to a car park and turn right. Follow the path at the base of the reservoir for about 250 metres keeping the road on your left. Initially follow a hedgerow then where the hedge stops emerge carefully onto the pavement. Take great care for traffic and cross over into Tring Road. Take care here as well as there are no footpaths on the first ½ mile. Continue into Wilstone village and stop outside the Half Moon Pub on the right. Listen to Track 16.

16. Death by drowning

Half Moon pub, Wilstone

Directions 16

Continue past the Half Moon. After 50 metres, follow the road to the right past the Village Hall. Immediately look for a path on your left by a noticeboard. Follow the path past a small playground until you reach the Aylesbury Canal. Stop on the towpath by the wooden bridge number 4. Listen to Track 17.

17. An extra arm

Bridge 4, Aylesbury Arm

Directions 17

Turn right and walk along the towpath with the canal on your left. Continue for just under one mile past 6 locks until you reach bridge number 1. Stop by locks 1 and 2 which are just on the other side of the bridge. Listen to Track 18.

18. Climbing the stairs

Locks 1 and 2, Aylesbury Arm

Directions 18

Follow the towpath turning right along the Grand Union Canal. Stop after about 200 metres where there is a sign for Marsworth Long Term Mooring Site. Listen to Track 19.

19. Maintaining a mooring

Marsworth Long-Term Mooring Site

Directions 19

Continue along the towpath for about 100 metres and stop by the road bridge that has two arches. Listen to Track 20.

20. Doubling up

Startop's End double bridge

Directions 20

Go up the steps to the right of the bridge. Carefully cross the road and go down the steps on the other side to continue along the towpath. Stop just after the lock by the Bluebells Tearooms. Listen to Track 21.

21. Time for tea

Bluebells Tearooms, Startop's End

Directions 21

Startop's End car park, where the walk began, is just behind the tearooms. You may like to stop in the tearoom or The Angler's Retreat pub for refreshments. To return to Tring town centre or the railway station you can take a bus from Lower Icknield Way.

Credits

The RGS-IBG would like to thank the following people and organisations for their assistance in producing this Discovering Britain walk:

- **Mike Jackson** for creating the walk, providing photographs and the audio commentary
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