

Main Walk

- From The Greyhound go over the large arched bridge, go left of building ahead (WMP "Coventry Canal Corridor"), **fwd** under f/b. **Fwd** canal left to the first bridge over the canal (Bedworth Hill Bridge, do not go under or over).
- Before bridge exit up to track. **T/R** & follow main wide track. After first OPL (now concrete road), x-stile on left. **T/R** up to corner. **T/L** & shortly **T/R** thro' k/g into copse. **Fwd** (pool right) thro' another k/g. **T/R** then **T/L**, hg-right, bank left to reach field. **V/R** to reach track. **Fwd** on track fishing pools on right, and thro' k/g by gate to reach road.
- Cross road with care**. **T/L** & after about 20m x-stile on right. **Fwd** hg-right to outward corner, **T/R** and then after gap **T/L**, f/c-right along track to field gate. **T/L** & shortly cross large f/b on right. **Fwd** cross-field to pick up hg-left at outward hedge corner, thro' two k/g's into road. (**Route A** see below).
- T/L** (**fwd**) down road to junction. On opposite side of road thro' k/g on right, **V/L** to pick up hg-left to outward hedge corner, **H/L** to go thro' k/g in righthand fence and **fwd** fc-right to "green". **T/R** at road and shortly **T/L** at WMP along narrow walkway between houses. Enter field & continue hg-left to field corner. Thro' k/g.
- Continue **fwd** hg-left to its end, **fwd** cross-field to go thro' k/g into drive close to road. **T/R** to road, **T/L** down road for 130m to go over s/b on right & thro' k/g.
- Hg-left to field corner, x-stile and pick up hg-left down to M69 boundary. **T/R**, M69 left to go thro' k/g down to canal, thro' k/g on left, **fwd** under M69, thro' k/g and with canal right thro' another k/g. Shortly **H/L** cross-field away from canal via 2 stiles aiming up left of white pub (Rose & Castle) & thro' k/g to road.
- With Rose & Castle opposite **T/R** & follow road until it has crossed the canal. Then **T/R** down steps, & **V/R** to join towpath. Continue canal right, under M69 to third bridge over canal (No 9) (Sowe Common & junction with Route A).

8. Continue **fwd**, canal right until you get to Hawkesbury Junction.

Route A.

At the end of Note 3, **Fwd** over road into "sunken" path. On reaching tarmac lane **fwd** & thro' k/g into field. Hg-right for 200m & thro' large gap. **Fwd** hg-right until next gap. **Do not go through**. Keeping in same field, **H/L** hg-right to go thro' gap in field corner. Hg-right to go thro' **small** gap in field corner. Hg-right to pass small copse on right, **T/L** & shortly **T/R** to go thro' small gap in field corner. **Fwd**, hg-right to reach and go along enclosed path (Allotments on left). Thro' k/g & follow path to road. **T/L** to junction with main road. Cross over, **T/R** & shortly **V/L** into Woodway Lane. **Fwd** across Sowe Common to go over canal bridge. **T/R** at end of bridge to pick up towpath and main route at Note 8.



Cast Iron Bridge at Hawkesbury



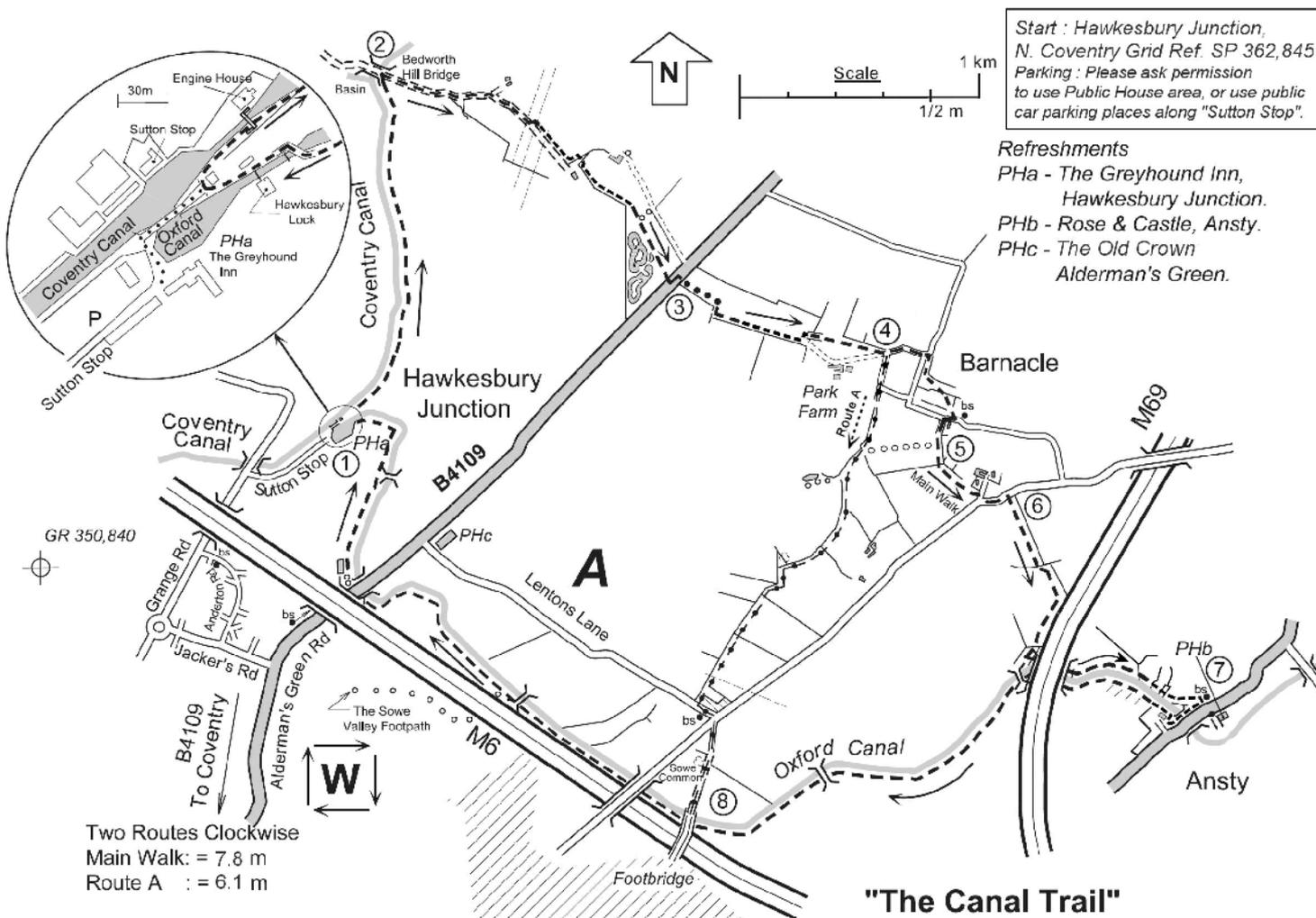
Engine or Pump House at Hawkesbury

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A Coventry Way 21 Walks

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"The Canal Trail"

WALK 15 "THE CANAL TRAIL"

Start: Hawkesbury Junction, north Coventry
Grid Ref: SP 362,845
Direction: Clockwise
Main Walk: 8.0 miles
Route A: 6 miles
OS Maps: Landranger 140
Pathfinder 935
Explorer 221
Parking: As you enter Hawkesbury Junction park in the public spaces on your left before reaching public house. Ask permission to use public house area.

An extension to this walk for a good canal 'day' is to start at the Canal Basin in Coventry at the top of Bishop Street. Walk out to Hawkesbury Junction, complete 'The Canal Trail' and return back to the Basin.

Alternatively, use public transport back to Coventry from Hawkesbury. Car parking, refreshments and toilets are all available at the Canal Basin.

Leaflets giving more information on the Sculpture Trail, Old Weavers Cottages and Courtaulds can be obtained from Coventry Information Centre. The mileage for this route would be increased by 11 miles.

This walk starts at the same place as The Sowe Valley footpath, a 8.5 mile walk through a ribbon park. Although mainly urban across Coventry (north-south) it has plenty of interest and wildlife. The walk can be used to shorten the 40 mile "A Coventry Way" by using the footpath to connect Walks 15 to 5 or vice versa. Canal trips are available, enquire at Coventry Canal Basin.

Brief Information and Outline of the Route

This walk starts at **Hawkesbury Junction**, but if you walk back towards Coventry for a short distance the sculpture "Wings over Water" by Walenty Pytel can be seen on the bridge. The junction is formed by the Coventry and Oxford canals and is known locally as Sutton Stop, named after the Sutton family, well known lock keepers for over half the 19th century. Richard and his son Henry are both buried in the United Reformed churchyard on Old Church Road. Since 1976 the area has been designated as a statutory Conservation Area.

By the end of 1769 the first boat loads of coal were passing through Hawkesbury between Bedworth and Coventry. The first junction between the Oxford and Coventry Canals was constructed in 1803, widened in 1836 and the connection bridged in 1837. The bridge is perhaps the most immediately striking feature in the Conservation Area. This cast iron structure is a fine example of the Victorian engineer's art, and has a span of 50 feet. The bridge was cast at the Britannia Foundry in Derby, and was erected for the Coventry Canal Company in 1837 at a cost of £630. The abutments are made of red hand-made bricks with a semicircular blue brick coping. This style of bridge, and combination of materials, was adopted between 1800-1840 on some of the Midland canals. Their use in this bridge shows a lightness of design unexpected with such heavy materials.

By 1830 the Engine House and Toll Offices and, what is now the Greyhound Inn, were all in use. After the Second World War the commercial traffic declined and the feature of the last few years has been the greatly increased interest in canals and canal cruising in particular. The engine or pump house is perhaps the most unusual and interesting of all the buildings in the Conservation Area, both historically and architecturally. The lean-to at the rear is the oldest part and housed the first engine to be installed in 1821. This was a Newcomen type engine which had already seen around

one hundred years' service at one of the local collieries. It was named "Lady Godiva" and used to raise water into the canal from a stream flowing underneath. By 1837, however, this supply proved inadequate, a 114 foot shaft was sunk and a new, more powerful engine installed alongside "Lady Godiva" in the handsome three-storey building which now fronts the canal. In 1913 this water supply failed due to the sinking of the new Coventry Colliery and the engine house fell into disuse. The newer engine was scrapped during the Second World War. "Lady Godiva" remained in place until 1963 when it was moved to Dartmouth, the birthplace of Thomas Newcomen, as the centrepiece of a memorial museum.

Waterway Network: Oxford Canal: History

1769 The first Act of Parliament allowing the construction of the Oxford Canal was passed. James Brindley was originally the engineer on the project but he died in 1772.

1790 The canal was opened. It was one of the earliest contour built canals, engineered by Brindley. The day the canal was opened into Oxford the price of coal fell by 50%.

1830 Improvement works resulted in the northern section of the canal being shortened by 14 miles.

Turn right at **Bedworth Hill Bridge** and cross the fields to Barnacle. Through **Barnacle**, cross the fields under the M69 to join the Oxford Canal at Ansty. Cross over the canal at the rear of the Rose and Castle and join the towpath to go west meeting the noisy M6 on the left and Sowe Common on the right. Keep along the canal passing a fishing tackle shop and the Elephant and Castle on the left and then back through a conglomeration of power station bits and pieces to **Hawkesbury**.

Wildlife

The presence of a variety of fresh water mussel species that live in the Oxford Canal is a testament to the high quality water in this waterway. To the casual observer the canal appears to be of poor habitat quality with little adjacent habitat either side. However, the canal contains a strong population of water vole and even supports an extensive population of the increasingly rare white clawed (or Atlantic) crayfish (which looks a bit like a small lobster). This species has suffered tremendous population losses due to the introduction of the much larger American signal crayfish.

The larger size of the signal crayfish, favoured in preference to the much smaller native breed by fish farmers, impacts upon the breeding success of white clawed crayfish. However, the real problem has been a fungal disease carried by the signal crayfish that our native species has no resistance to. This has resulted in entire river populations of white clawed crayfish being wiped out. Pollution and river engineering hasn't helped remaining populations of white clawed crayfish, which are now legally protected from capture and selling.

Possibly the most diverse area in terms of habitats occurs within and around the area known as Hawkesbury Junction. The interaction between the urban fringe, past industrial land and the countryside has resulted in a mix of agricultural land, recreational land and areas of overgrown wilderness. The presence of the canal and a complex of wetland and open water features add to the diversity of this area, which is rich in bird life. The lucky (or observant) may be rewarded on warm, sunny days by seeing grass snakes.