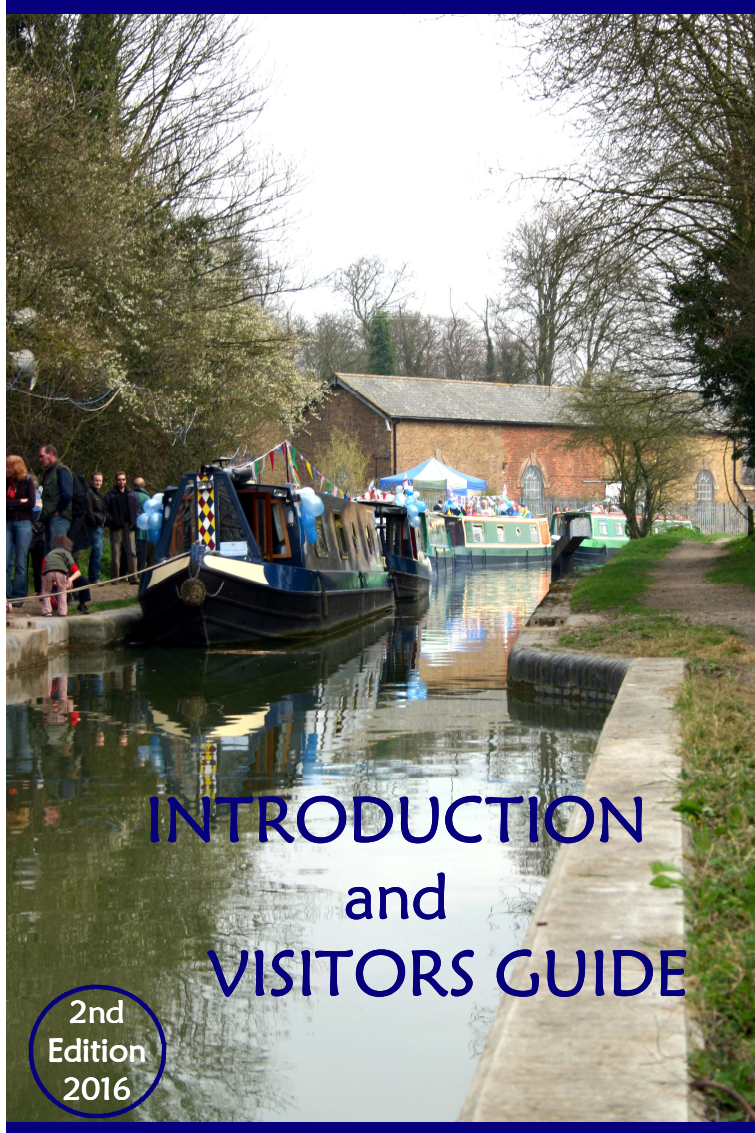
The Wendover Arm Canal



INTRODUCTION and VISITORS GUIDE

2nd Edition 2016

Wendover Arm Trust

Wendover Arm Trust

The Trust was formed in 1989 as a registered charity to promote and implement the restoration of the Wendover Arm Canal. Exactly 200 years after the Arm first opened, reconstruction work started in 1997 after several years of preparation, the first stage being to rebuild Little Tring Bridge demolished less than 25-years previously and to construct a ¼ mile section of canal from the stop-lock at Little Tring to a new winding hole (for turning boats) beyond the new bridge. In 1990 the Trust was involved in the public enquiry into the proposed A41 Aston Clinton bypass that resulted in the construction of Saxonway bridge over the canal and restoration of a short section of canal from there to Drayton Beauchamp bridge.

Current restoration work is focussed on re-profiling and lining the dry section of the canal from Drayton Beauchamp to Little Tring. See *Restoration* section in this leaflet.

A fuller guide to the past, current and planned restoration work can be found in our booklet:

Restoration – the Rebirth of the Wendover Arm Canal

The Trust is run by a dedicated team of volunteers and is a membership organisation. There is no local or national government subsidy and although the Canal & River Trust owns the canal, it is only permitted by legal constraints to carry out essential maintenance to keep the towpath clear and to ensure the supply of water from Wendover reaches the Tring summit at Bulbourne Junction. All monies are raised through grants, donations and fund-raising activities. For more details visit our website

www.wendoverarmtrust.co.uk

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Facilities

The letters or figures in this section relate to points on the map inside.

Toilets:

None on the canal itself. There are public toilets in Wendover and Tring and most public houses and cafés have toilets for customers.

Access:

Except at Little Tring there is a **towpath** all the way along the Arm but it is narrow and uneven in places and can become muddy in wet weather. Walking boots are advisable. (see the *Walking* section in this leaflet for details of the Little Tring footpath diversion.)

Disabled access:

There is step-free access at Wharf Road, Wendover(A), Halton Village (D), Buckland Wharf (F), Drayton Beauchamp (G) and Bulbourne Junction (K) and some lengths of the towpath can be accessed by those with a disability.

Road Crossings:

The towpath meets a road in three place along the Arm and continues on the opposite side of the canal.

Halton Village (D)
Buckland Wharf (F)
Gamnel Bridge, New Mill, Tring (J)

There are traffic hazards at all three places and you should take due care in making your crossings.

Benches:

There are numerous benches situated along the Arm so sit down, rest your legs and enjoy the scenery!

Refreshments:

There are no shops, pubs or cafés along the Arm itself but you will find a variety of establishments a short walk from the towpath.

Wendover:
Plenty of shops, pubs and cafes in the town centre, a short walk from Wharf Road.

Halton Village:
Limited availability Halton Tennis Centre,
St Michael and All Angels Church.

Aston Clinton: (a short walk from Wellonhead bridge)
Crows Nest, hotel pub and restaurant (11)
Café in the Park (12)
The Bell, Gastro pub and hotel (13)

Tring:
Plenty of shops, pubs and cafes in the town centre.

Bulbourne:
The Grand Junction Arms, Gastro Pub (2)
Tring Garden Centre, Café (3)

Wilstone: (a short walk from footbridge 4)
P.E. Mead & Sons, Farm Shop and Café (7)
The Half Moon public house (8)

Marsworth:
Bluebells Tea Rooms (4)
The Anglers Retreat public house (5)
The Red Lion public house (6)

How to get there

By Bus

There are several services serving locations along the Wendover Arm. As services can change, please check your route before setting out.

Route 500 (Aylesbury – Watford) for Buckland Wharf, Aston Clinton
Route 50/55 (Aylesbury – RAF Halton) for Wharf Road, Wendover and Halton

Route 61 (Luton Airport – Aylesbury) for Buckland Wharf, Aston Clinton and New Mill, Tring
Route 164 (Aylesbury – Leighton Buzzard) for Gamnel Bridge, near New Mill, Tring

For more information contact Arriva Buses www.arrivabus.co.uk/South-East or Intalink (Herts Transport Service) www.intalink.org.uk.

By Train

The Wendover Arm is served by two train lines:

The Chiltern Line (www.chilternrailways.com) from London Marylebone to Aylesbury via Wendover

Wendover Station is a half-mile walk from Wharf Road. From the station walk downhill into Wendover town centre to the Clock Tower, bear left and along Aylesbury Road. Wharf Road is the turning on the right at the first mini-roundabout. The canal starts a short distance along Wharf Road on the left hand side before the school.

London Midland (www.londonmidland.com) from London Euston to Birmingham via Tring.

Tring Station is a short distance from the main Grand Union Canal. Turn left out of the station to the canal bridge then follow the towpath for almost two miles northwards to Bulbourne Junction where the Wendover Arm leaves the main line.

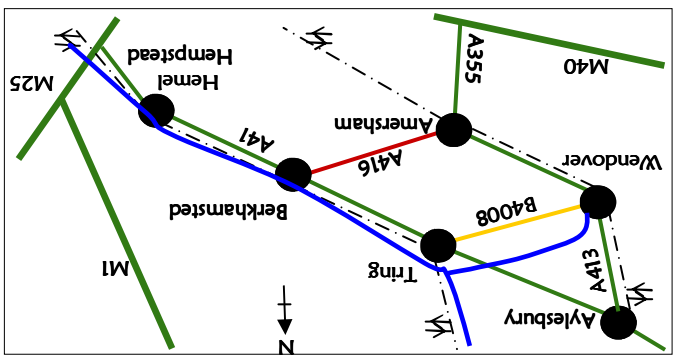
By Car

Stablebridge Road, Aston Clinton, HP22 5ND. This is a small free public car park up the hill from Stable Bridge

Wilstone Reservoir. HP23 4DA Free public car park on the Marsworth to Aston Clinton road below the reservoir

Startops End, Marsworth, HP23 4LJ A large public car park next to the main Grand Union and Tring Reservoirs. Charges apply.

There are car parks in the towns of Wendover and Tring but at some distance from the canal.



Navigation

Powered boats

The first 1½ miles of the Wendover Arm from Bulbourne Junction are open to navigation. There are no locks and there is a winding hole for full-length boats at the current limit of navigation beyond Little Tring Bridge with good moorings nearby.

See our leaflet ***Cruising Guide*** for more information.

Canoes

Passage by canoe from Bulbourne Junction to Little Tring is straightforward. Other sections of the Arm can be explored subject to water conditions and weed growth. There are several local canoe clubs that use the Arm for training.

Fishing

The fishing rights on all the navigable section of the Arm from Bulbourne to Little Tring are licensed by Canal & River Trust to The Tring Anglers (www.tringanglers.org.uk) An Environment Agency licence is needed to fish, available online and from most Post Offices.

The section from Little Tring to Bulbourne Junction has a good range of fish and is used by Tring Anglers, the local club, for fishing competition and tuition. Day and guest tickets are available.

See our leaflet ***Fishing*** for more details.

Walking

The entire length of the Arm is walkable along the towpath with a short diversion at Little Tring. There are also many local footpaths that can be used to make a circular route including around the Tring reservoirs.

There are many circular routes in and around Wendover, Halton, Aston Clinton, Drayton Beauchamp and Tring that include sections of the Arm, find details of walks on sites such as www.walkingtbucks.co.uk and www.walkinginherts.co.uk.

The book ***Water from Wendover*** by Shelley Savage, available from the Tring Town Council Information Centre, Tring Local History Museum and the Trust from its Webshop, contains a number of walks as well as information about points of interest along the Arm.

Little Tring towpath diversion:

The towpath at Little Tring is closed for the duration of restoration. Heading towards Bulbourne the footpath diverts left at a kissing gate and goes along a lane (50 yards) onto a road. Go across the road to the footpath opposite, turn right and the path takes you (100 yards) to Little Tring hamlet. Walk uphill on the road through the hamlet (beware of traffic) and rejoin (100 yards) at Little Tring Bridge; there are steep steps down to the towpath. On the offside there are steep steps down to a canal-side footpath that leads to Tring.

Restoration

Current work is focussed on re-profiling and lining the section of canal from Drayton Beauchamp to Little Tring. There is limited parking at Drayton Beauchamp Bridge; from there head east along the towpath past sections of canal that have already been restored and are already in water. Continue towards Little Tring, you will see completed sections of dry canal that adjoin the current working area. Restoration volunteers use heavy plant equipment to excavate earth to create sloping sides with a flat base ready for lining with the clay based liner Bentomat® that makes the canal water-tight; this is protected with concrete blocks, which will be hidden below the water level. Coir rolls line the top and spoil is backfilled to create the finished banks.

Regular work parties are held. Visitors are welcome at the work site to see the restoration volunteers at work and they are always happy to answer any questions you may have.

For work party dates and information go to:

www.wendoverarmtrust/restoration

Either side of Whitehouses two wooden footbridges were purchased and installed by the Trust so footpaths can cross the completed canal. There is a large selection of dedication plaques on the footbridges – supporters have made a donation in return for a personalised plaque on the bridge. Full details of the bridge plaques scheme are described on our website (www.wendoverarmtrust.co.uk/bridge-plaques.html)

See our booklet ***Restoration, the Rebirth of the Wendover Arm Canal*** for more information.

Cycling

It is possible to cycle the towpath along the length of the Wendover Arm but please take care and respect other users including walkers and anglers. The route is flat and mostly in good condition, but parts can become wet and muddy following heavy rain, making cycling difficult. A mountain bike and helmet are recommended.

Transport for Buckinghamshire's organisation *Cycle Aylesbury* (www.cycleaylesbury.co.uk) provides all the information necessary for cycling in the area, including maps and training sessions. The Wendover Arm towpath is part of the cycle network. In Hertfordshire, the Tring & Berkhamsted Cycling Campaign (www.tbcc.org.uk) provides similar services to Cycle Aylesbury.

Wildlife

The Arm provides a rich ecological environment to support a wide range of flora and fauna. It is home to many ducks, swans, little grebes and moorhens. It is possible to see visiting birds such as herons, kingfishers as well as insects such as dragonflies. Friends of Tring Reservoirs (www.fotr.org.uk) is a local conservation organisation that monitors the wildlife around the Tring reservoirs.

Whitehouses: The remains of a second pumping station built in 1802 to pump water from Wilstone Reservoir into the Arm. A nature trail to the site leads from bridge 4 and there are information boards there.

Drayton Beauchamp church: St Mary the Virgin is a beautiful Grade I listed church (www.s-marys.org.uk) dating from the 15th century with earlier features such as a 12th century Norman font and 13th century brasses. The church can be accessed by steep steps from the canal towpath between Saxonway Bridge and Drayton Beauchamp Bridge. It is open weekends from April to September and other times by arrangement.
There is a portaloo in the churchyard.

Green Park and the Narrows: This was the location of Sir Anthony Nathan Rothschild's home, Aston Clinton House – demolished in the 1950s. A section of the canal adjacent to Green Park leaked so badly that it apparently flooded the dining room. To overcome this problem the canal banks were lined with concrete to form *The Narrows*, a feature that can still be seen today.

Halton: The canal passes through the village, home to RAF Halton. Halton House was a weekend retreat for Alfred Rothschild, and is now the Officers' Mess. The airfield can be seen from the canal and the ornate Rothschild Bridge links Halton House with the airfield.

The Wides: Leaving Wendover behind, the canal opens up at The Wides, originally a millpond for St John's Mill at Halton, now a reed bed and home to a variety of wildlife.

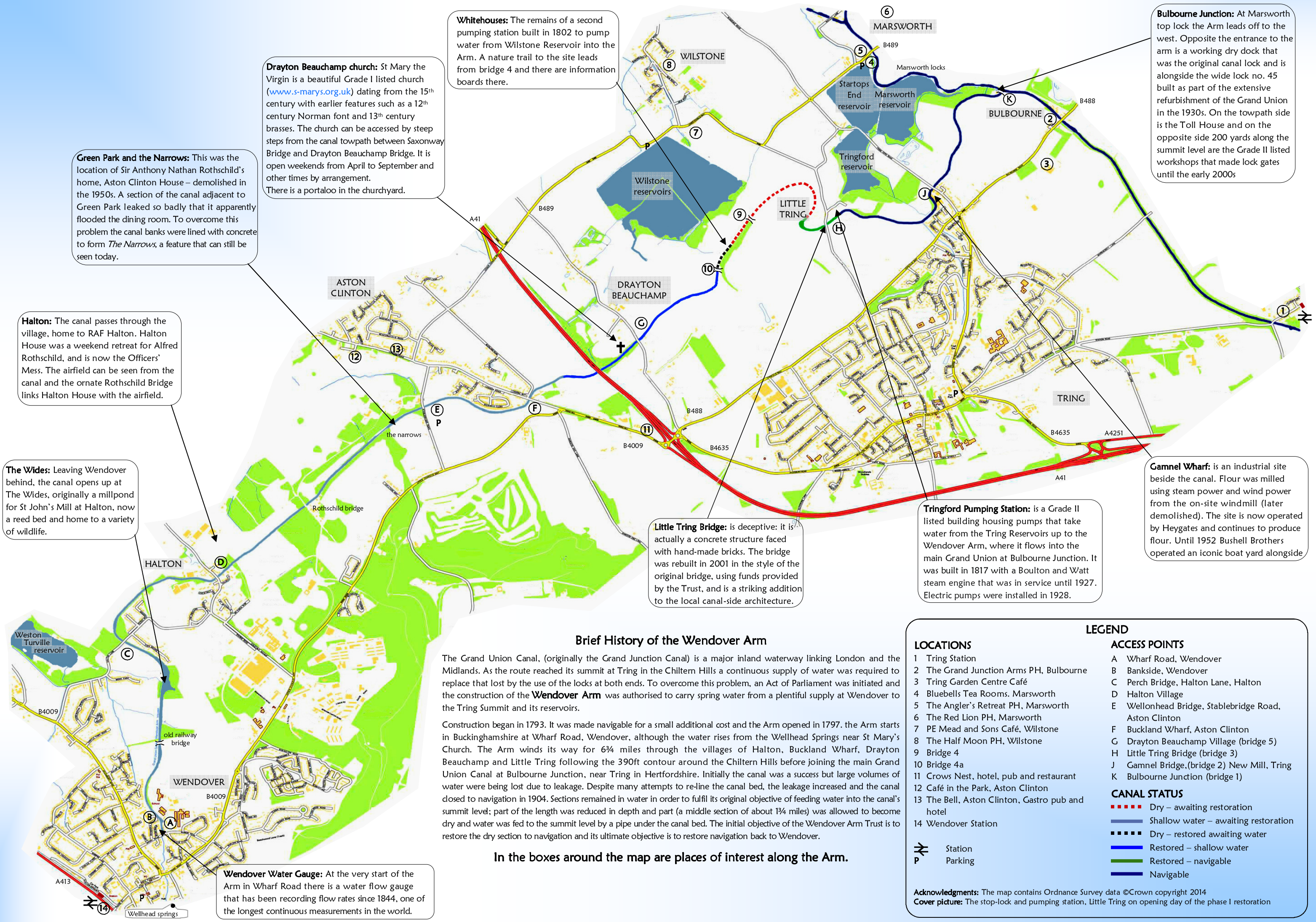
Bulbourne Junction: At Marsworth top lock the Arm leads off to the west. Opposite the entrance to the arm is a working dry dock that was the original canal lock and is alongside the wide lock no. 45 built as part of the extensive refurbishment of the Grand Union in the 1930s. On the towpath side is the Toll House and on the opposite side 200 yards along the summit level are the Grade II listed workshops that made lock gates until the early 2000s

Gamnel Wharf: is an industrial site beside the canal. Flour was milled using steam power and wind power from the on-site windmill (later demolished). The site is now operated by Heygates and continues to produce flour. Until 1952 Bushell Brothers operated an iconic boat yard alongside

Little Tring Bridge: is deceptive: it is actually a concrete structure faced with hand-made bricks. The bridge was rebuilt in 2001 in the style of the original bridge, using funds provided by the Trust, and is a striking addition to the local canal-side architecture.

Tringford Pumping Station: is a Grade II listed building housing pumps that take water from the Tring Reservoirs up to the Wendover Arm, where it flows into the main Grand Union at Bulbourne Junction. It was built in 1817 with a Boulton and Watt steam engine that was in service until 1927. Electric pumps were installed in 1928.

Wendover Water Gauge: At the very start of the Arm in Wharf Road there is a water flow gauge that has been recording flow rates since 1844, one of the longest continuous measurements in the world.



Brief History of the Wendover Arm

The Grand Union Canal, (originally the Grand Junction Canal) is a major inland waterway linking London and the Midlands. As the route reached its summit at Tring in the Chiltern Hills a continuous supply of water was required to replace that lost by the use of the locks at both ends. To overcome this problem, an Act of Parliament was initiated and the construction of the **Wendover Arm** was authorised to carry spring water from a plentiful supply at Wendover to the Tring Summit and its reservoirs.

Construction began in 1793. It was made navigable for a small additional cost and the Arm opened in 1797. the Arm starts in Buckinghamshire at Wharf Road, Wendover, although the water rises from the Wellhead Springs near St Mary's Church. The Arm winds its way for 6¾ miles through the villages of Halton, Buckland Wharf, Drayton Beauchamp and Little Tring following the 390ft contour around the Chiltern Hills before joining the main Grand Union Canal at Bulbourne Junction, near Tring in Hertfordshire. Initially the canal was a success but large volumes of water were being lost due to leakage. Despite many attempts to re-line the canal bed, the leakage increased and the canal closed to navigation in 1904. Sections remained in water in order to fulfil its original objective of feeding water into the canal's summit level; part of the length was reduced in depth and part (a middle section of about 1¾ miles) was allowed to become dry and water was fed to the summit level by a pipe under the canal bed. The initial objective of the Wendover Arm Trust is to restore the dry section to navigation and its ultimate objective is to restore navigation back to Wendover.

In the boxes around the map are places of interest along the Arm.

LEGEND

LOCATIONS

1 Tring Station
2 The Grand Junction Arms PH, Bulbourne
3 Tring Garden Centre Café
4 Bluebells Tea Rooms. Marsworth
5 The Angler's Retreat PH, Marsworth
6 The Red Lion PH, Marsworth
7 PE Mead and Sons Café, Wilstone
8 The Half Moon PH, Wilstone
9 Bridge 4
10 Bridge 4a
11 Crows Nest, hotel, pub and restaurant
12 Café in the Park, Aston Clinton
13 The Bell, Aston Clinton, Gastro pub and hotel
14 Wendover Station

Station
P Parking

ACCESS POINTS

A Wharf Road, Wendover
B Bankside, Wendover
C Perch Bridge, Halton Lane, Halton
D Halton Village
E Wellonhead Bridge, Stablebridge Road, Aston Clinton
F Buckland Wharf, Aston Clinton
G Drayton Beauchamp Village (bridge 5)
H Little Tring Bridge (bridge 3)
J Gamnel Bridge,(bridge 2) New Mill, Tring
K Bulbourne Junction (bridge 1)

CANAL STATUS

Dry – awaiting restoration
Shallow water – awaiting restoration
Dry – restored awaiting water
Restored – shallow water
Restored – navigable
Navigable

Acknowledgments: The map contains Ordnance Survey data ©Crown copyright 2014
Cover picture: The stop-lock and pumping station, Little Tring on opening day of the phase I restoration