

CUT
OUT &
KEEP



Photo: Ian Lancaster

Take a walk along the picturesque Wey & Arun Canal

Towpaths and trails

From canal to countryside, take a walk along the towpaths of the Wey & Arun Canal – ‘London’s Lost Route to the Sea’ – and in woodland around Loxwood

WORDS: Ian Lancaster, walks coordinator, Friends of The South Downs



As its name suggests, the Wey & Arun Junction Canal was created to link the two rivers, providing an inland waterway from London to the south coast. At 18 and a half miles, and with 23 locks, it took a lot of manpower to dig but was completed in only three years.

The original intention was to avoid coastal traffic that could come under attack in times of war, but by the time it opened in 1816 the wars with France were over. The coming of the railways meant it was no longer profitable and by 1871 it had fallen into disuse and was abandoned for the next 100 years.

A group of volunteers formed the Wey & Arun Canal Trust in 1970 and have been restoring it ever since. Today a significant section is navigable again and it is a popular tourist attraction. The trust raises

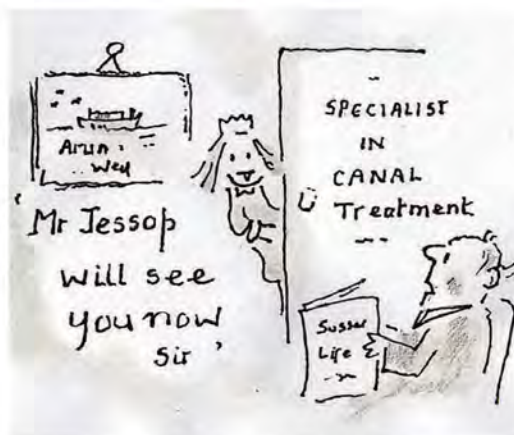


Illustration: Graham Jeffrey

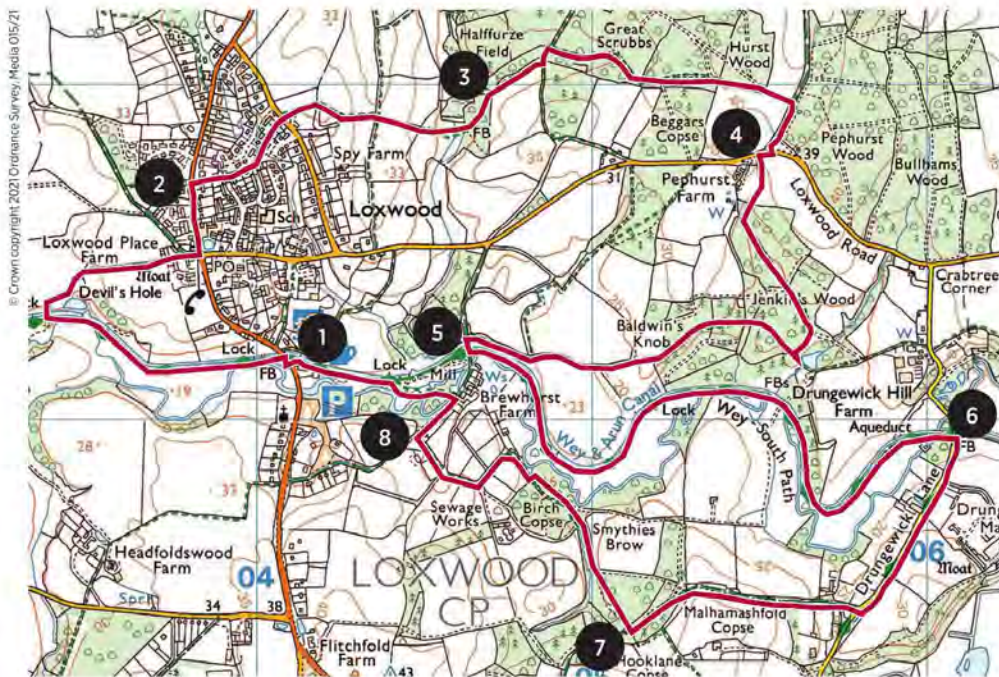
Brought to you by Friends of The South Downs

Membership starts from £2.50 per month and grants access to a comprehensive programme of guided walks and strolls. Non-members can take part in taster sessions. 01798 875073 (Monday to Wednesday 9am to 1pm). friendsofthesouthdowns.org.uk

This is not the canal treatment we meant for this weekend...

funds by offering trips in a boat named in honour of the original consulting engineer, Josias Jessop. ♦





COMPASS POINTS

- Location:** Loxwood.
- Distance:** 6.8 miles (11 km).
- Terrain:** Level ground.
- Ascent:** 388 ft.
- Where to park:** Wey & Arun Canal car park (behind Onslow Arms).
- Grid reference:** TQ 043311.
- Sat nav:** RH14 ORN.
- What3Words:** /// workflow.mincing.operation
- Map:** OS Explorer OL34, Crawley & Horsham.
- Dog-friendly:** Yes.
- Refreshments:** Onslow Arms.

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THE WALK

- 1** Facing the canal in front of the visitor centre, go left along the towpath beneath the road. The lock on the other side was built specially to allow the canal to pass underneath it. The next lock is named Devil's Hole (partially destroyed by the Canadian army who used it for target practice in 1942). Turn right here across the canal bridge and follow the path briefly through woodland and between fields to arrive back at the road by village shops. Cross over and turn left, then after 200m take the footpath on the right by Linden House.
- 2** The twitten comes out in Spy Lane. Take the footpath opposite just to the left of the Emmanuel Fellowship Chapel, an enclosed path leading to a field. At the top right-hand corner continue ahead at a crossroads with a hedge on the left. In the next field aim to pass to the right of a patch of gorse. The path swings left then shortly right to cross a plank bridge into woodland.
- 3** Where the path divides, ignore the finger post and take the left fork to

- stay in the woods, keeping on the right-hand side of a brook. Arriving at a T-junction, go left over a plank bridge, then almost immediately right. Another finger post takes you across another bridge then along a wide track. Leave the wood through a series of gates and then turn right along a bridleway to a lay-by and a road.
- 4** Look right for a signpost to a path on the other side of the road. It runs along a field edge before entering woodland. In 450m the path turns right and then right again at a T-junction in another 90m. Cross a seasonal brook. As the path narrows take care not to trip over exposed tree roots. Emerging into a field, follow the direction of the finger post. Ignore a right turn to reach the canal and then a narrow lane.
- 5** Turn left here to cross a canal bridge and then left again to walk along the towpath for 2km to reach Drungewick Aqueduct, passing Baldwin's Knob lock along the way. The road marks the present southern limit of the navigable section of the restored canal.

- 6** Turn right up the quiet lane and after 600m look out for a bridleway on the right which passes Drungewick Kennels then onto a pleasant, wooded path. In 400m at a fork, bear left, soon joining a wider forest track. After another 180m turn right where another path crosses it.
- 7** This narrower path runs by a high fence on the left before dropping down to another seasonal brook. The bluebells and beech trees are spectacular here in spring. Cross the brook via a plank bridge and then later leave the wood through a dilapidated gate, past paddocks, to a concrete lane.
- 8** Turn right here and then right again at a T-junction at a white cottage onto Brewhurst Lane and then left to pass in front of a large, restored mill, now a private residence. The path crosses the river Lox at a weir before rejoining the canal towpath by Brewhurst Lock. Turn left here to arrive back at the car park. ♦