

Buckingham

and the Great Ouse

Buckingham, the original county town of Buckinghamshire, is a busy traditional market town with many independent shops, a fascinating history and fine buildings. It is home to Britain's first modern independent University.

The Great Ouse, the second longest river in England, rises near the village of Whitfield, some 10 miles from Buckingham. The river has been central to Buckingham's existence since Saxon times when the first settlement is recorded. The Anglo-Saxon name for the town, *Buccingahamme*, means 'the land in the river's bend occupied by Bucca's people'. As can be seen from the map, the old town is largely contained within the loop of the river with Castle Hill protecting the north-east end. Buckingham Church is now built on Castle Hill.

Of defensive importance throughout the town's early history, the river Great Ouse later played a vital role in Buckingham's economy. The transport benefits it brought to the area culminated in the opening of an arm of the Grand Junction Canal in 1801, linking the town to the national canal network.

Today, as a focus for leisure and recreation, the Ouse's quiet beauty has never been more appreciated. It remains the central feature of Buckingham. As the river slowly meanders through the heart of the old town and new town, it offers residents and visitors glimpses into the past and the future.



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Buckingham

riverside walk



*a combined circular
and riverside walk around
Buckingham's parks, paths and the
River Great Ouse including the scenic route
along the disused old railway line.*

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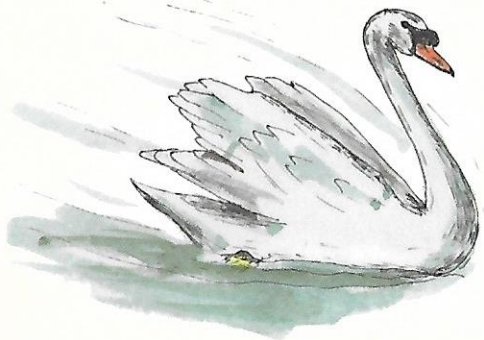
Buckingham's riverside walk



The Riverside Walk was initiated by Aylesbury Vale District Council following proposals in the local plan for Buckingham and Maids Moreton. In 1985 the first stretches of the Walk were opened. Over the ensuing years additional sections have been added to provide a walk that captures the changing mood of the river as it passes from pasture to park through the historic centre of this ancient town. Along the way there are opportunities to leave the river path and explore the old town or to follow other paths that lead into the countryside. Of particular note is the Railway Embankment Walk which runs along the line of the former LNWR railway.



Along the Riverside Walk there are benches where you can sit and enjoy the tranquility of the stream. In Bourton Park there are picnic tables providing the opportunity to enjoy a meal in the open air. Children are not forgotten, and there are play areas in Chandos Park and in Bourton Park.



the walk and its Wildlife . . .



Throughout the walk there are many points of interest, including abundant wildlife. There are dragonflies and a profusion of different flowering plants. Wildlife is the inspiration for the playful wood sculpture of otters in Bourton Park and the stone swan at Cornwall's Meadow.

Look out for wildfowl ~ a swan is the emblem of Buckingham and swans have nested on the river since time immemorial. Other birds which can be seen either on or near the river include ducks, moorhens, kingfishers, herons, and grey and pied wagtails.

On the banks and meadows along the walk different species of smaller birds can be seen at different times of the year. Common species such as blackbirds, thrushes, chaffinches, wrens, blue tits and great tits are occasionally joined by rarer types such as goldfinches, long-tailed tits, blackcaps, chiff-chaff, goldcrests, siskins and redpolls.

In winter the fieldfare and redwing may be seen feeding on the many hawthorn bushes whilst twite and linnets may be found enjoying the grass seeds of the wetland along the river's banks.

The river contains a variety of fish from very small minnows to large chub. The river sustains roach, perch and dace, and even the odd trout and pike have been seen.

Wild flowers growing along the walk include snowdrops, bluebells, primroses and marsh marigolds. You will find a variety of willow trees en route as well as alders, sycamores, chestnuts and firs. Native shrubs such as hawthorn, dogwood, buckthorn, guelder rose, snowberry and elder contribute to the natural riverside habitat.



taking a riverside walk around

Our descriptive journey follows the river up-stream
from Cornwall's Meadow in the centre of the town.

You can, of course, start your walk at any convenient point.

Buckingham



1 Cornwall's Meadow

This is the ideal starting point for the walk if you are a visitor to the town. There is parking for cars and easy access to the town centre.

2 London Road Bridge

The Marquis of Buckingham paid for the London Road Bridge which opened in 1805. The Temple Arms of Stowe in Coade Stone can be seen on the bridge, a reminder of the great country house of Stowe only 3 miles from Buckingham. Since 1923 Stowe has been a public school but the famous landscape gardens are now owned by the National Trust.

You then pass the New Inn built mainly for the benefit of employees of the local gasworks, long since disappeared. A few metres upstream a footbridge and the remains of a ford mark the old entrance into the town. Nearby is the Woolpack



mallard duck



3 Chandos Park

The views from Chandos Park are dominated by the Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul. This church, built in 1780-81, stands on the hill first occupied by a Saxon fort and then by a Norman castle. Facilities in or adjacent to Chandos Park include tennis courts, bowling greens, and a children's play area as well as the Buckingham Town Football Club ground.

4 The University of Buckingham

As you leave Chandos Park you will notice the buildings of the University of Buckingham on your right hand side. It opened in 1976 and was the first independent University to be established in recent years. Many of the town buildings in this area have been restored by the University and now make for a varied student campus. On the opposite side of the footbridge over the mill stream lies the Old Town Mill dating from 1782.

old town mill



moorhen

5 Tingewick Road Bridge

The Riverside Walk crosses Lord's Bridge and meets Bath Lane, emerging at Tingewick Road. To the right is Tingewick Road Bridge, also known as Castle Bridge. The original hump-back bridge saw the entry of Charles I and his army into Buckingham in June 1644. Two centuries later the same hump proved too much for the arrival of Buckingham's first steam engine. Drawn by horses, the load became jammed on the bridge: the parapet gave way and the machine itself narrowly escaped a watery grave.

At the bridge the path turns left into Fisher's Field, close to the site of Castle Mill, one of a number of mills within the town. After passing through Fisher's Field a narrower path continues across the old Yeomanry Firing Range (long disused) until it meets another path leading across open fields to the village of Radclive. At this point, the return route turns back towards Buckingham to cross the Tingewick Road and then join the Railway Embankment Walk.

6 The Railway Embankment Walk

The railway opened in 1850 to link Banbury, Buckingham and Bletchley. It

closed eventually in 1964. The embankment provides scenic vantage points over much of the town, and the railway path continues past the site of the old station alongside a wildlife nature area until it meets the Ring Road.

kingfisher



7 St Rumbold's Well

Just off the Railway Embankment Walk, a defined side path to the right leads towards the site of St Rumbold's Well. St Rumbold was born in about 662AD, was reputed to have been baptised, preached a sermon and died all within three days. In the Middle Ages pilgrimages were made to St Rumbold's Well and to Buckingham Church, and several inns were founded in Buckingham to provide lodgings and good cheer to early pilgrims. One of these, near Lord's Bridge, is the Mitre Inn.

8 Bourton Park

A link path leads from the Railway Walk to Bourton Park, a fine recreational area with bridleways, playgrounds, picnic areas and sports areas. Note the attractive pieces of animal sculpture. Another mill on the edge of the park, Bourton Mill, is now a health club.

bourton mill



mute swan



9 Buckingham Canal

The line of Buckingham Canal, first opened in 1802 as a branch of the Grand Junction Canal, can still be traced through Bourton Park. With the arrival of the railway, business on the canal declined and it closed at the end of the 19th century. At the exit to Bourton Park close to the Ring Road a public path follows the route of the Canal along the Ouse Valley towards Stony Stratford.

As you return to the town centre, walking back along the river through Bourton Park, look out for the Grand Junction Inn. This hostelry was built in 1802 for use by barges and replaced an earlier inn called, appropriately enough, The Ship.

