

# Basingstoke Canal, Frimley Lock and Curzon Bridges

A delightful walk, especially in summer when the wildflowers are beautiful.

There is a choice of walks here depending on parking. The place I recommend to park is on Deepcut Bridge Road, opposite Highbridge House and before the canal bridge for a 2.8 mile walk. The alternative, for a shorter walk of 1.6 miles is on Gapemouth Road close to the railway bridge. The latter is not 'official' has space for only very few cars and you must not block access to the roadway to Curzon Bridges just up the slope.

Taking the longer walk, start by passing through the signposted gate 'Frimley Lock, Shared Use Path' on the concrete track and turn right into the woodland onto the soil path at the first corner. (NOTE: You can continue on the concrete track all the way to Frimley Lock if you wish but it's not as nice as the alternative.) Follow the obvious path in the woodland. This is a good place to set yourself a bit of tree spotting, identifying at least oak, beech, sweet chestnut, holly and rowan (mountain ash) along the path and listen for woodpeckers in the trees.

Most of the path is straight but towards the end it drops into the open on the left and goes through an overgrown but open area where butterflies and flowers can be found in summer. Follow this narrow path as it turns sharp right and left towards a building which you keep to your left. There is then a steep short bank going left, only a few steps, so the best walker amongst you might go to the bottom to slow anyone else! Walk across to the new road with barrier posts and go down towards the 'dry dock' and Lock Cottage passing them on your right-hand side and you see the lock on the right.

Stop at the foot bridge. (The short walk will join here from the other side). This is a place to see grey wagtails. They nest here and the young are often active on the lock shelves after breeding. It has also been a very good place to see Kingfishers in 2020. The Cottage has feeders so look out for more birds there.

Over the bridge turn left and follow the path all the way to Curzon Bridge. In August I found the wild flowers were spectacular here. They are common species but a great place to learn them. I saw agrimony, water mint, enchanter's nightshade, common skullcap, yellow loosestrife, fleabane, hemp agrimony, lesser stitchwort, marsh woundwort, marsh cranesbill, ragwort and meadowsweet to name just a few.

Take care not to ignore the pretty canal, the sunken barge and the locks while you walk here. You are certain to see and hear birds, nuthatch is a noisy species, goldcrests have a very thin call in the tops of the pines and may mix with coal tits, blue tits and great tits, robins and wrens are likely to pop out close to the path. On the water there are likely to be

mallard, moorhen and maybe coot. Grey herons are also often quietly standing in edge of the flashes watching for fish.

When you reach the bridge go up and turn right over the railway bridge. (The short walk will join here). Now look for a path on your right (or left if you're doing the short walk from Gapemouth Road). The path you want leads off the railway workmen's track and it runs through the woodland parallel to the railway. You will meet another tarmac roadway and another bridge across the railway where you can cross to the right, it's a public footpath. Follow the tarmac drive past the gates and in the pleasant route between the trees. You could unofficially, investigate the patch of heathland up on the left to check it for butterflies and flowers in season, that path drops down to rejoin the tarmac drive which is your official path. You pass a rather grand garden on the right and stay on the tarmac until you see another property gate facing you at which you turn right down the hill to the canal path, another few steep steps.

At the canal turn left along the straight towpath to the bridge. If you're on the short walk turn right past the lock and stop to look for the grey wagtails. The long walk ends at the Deepcut Bridge Road bridge where you go up the steps, turn right and right again and go back to your car.