

## **Basingstoke Canal**

### **Ash Lock to Reading Road Wharf, Fleet**

Easy Trail Grading

#### **Route Summary**

This trail provides the option for a one way or a longer out and back paddle with no need to arrange a vehicle shuttle, and there is always the option to turn around at a point of your choosing. Whatever your choice, you can have a peaceful day out enjoying the natural environment on this mostly rural and attractive lock free section of canal. For cyclists and walkers there is a continuous tow path.

**Nearest Towns** – Aldershot and Fleet

**O.S. Sheets** - Landranger 186 Aldershot and Guildford

**Start & Finish for a return journey-** Ash Lock – Map Ref 186 - 881517, Aldershot, Hampshire  
Ash Lock is on the fringe of Aldershot, on the north-east of the town, and north of the railway; near to much of the army buildings and accommodation. Parking is limited, but all facilities are available in Aldershot.

**Finish for a way one journey-** Reading Road Wharf, Fleet –Map Ref 186 - 808537

This wharf is situated in a green cutting, but very near to services, being only 300m from the shops in Fleet High St. It is reached by its own set of traffic lights off the main road.

Fleet is west of both Aldershot and Farnborough, situated just south of junction 4A of the M3.

**Waterways Travelled** – Basingstoke Canal

**Type of Water** - mostly rural canal

**Distance** – 5.75 miles or 11.5 miles for a return journey

**Licence Information** - Canoe England Membership covers a licence for this waterway. You need to take your membership card with you as it is your licence too. Licence and navigation information (stoppages and events) can also be obtained from Basingstoke Canal Authority, Canal Centre, Mychett Place Road, Mychett, Surrey, GU1 6DD. - Tel. 01252 370073

**Local Facilities** – There *are* facilities at both the start and the finish but you will need to walk in to both of the towns (only a few hundred metres) to use them.

**Vehicle Shuttle Required** – Yes, unless you want to do an out and back trip

**Portages and Locks** - none

#### **Description**

Launching at Ash Lock is easy from a low bank above the lock. Before getting afloat have a look at the visitor information notice board on site showing a map of your route towards the town of

---

*We have taken great care to ensure the currency, accuracy and reliability of this information. We cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions but where such are brought to our attention, the information will be amended accordingly. Users should be aware that environmental conditions outside of our control can change the nature of the Trail within a short space of time. It is recommended that weather and water conditions are checked beforehand, and tide timetables where applicable.*

Fleet. Keeping track of the number of bridge crossings you pass is a handy guide to your progress.

The scenery is wooded heathland, and a prime habitat, especially the wider parts and side ponds of the waterway on the off side (opposite the tow path). These are known as Flashes and designated as nature reserves where boats are requested to keep out.

The third road crossing (A325) is Wharf Bridge where there is a slipway and you have travelled 1.5 miles. A further 1.5 miles and two bridges further on brings you to Eelmoor Bridge and a good place for a break. Land by the tow path and going up to the roadway will provide a fine view to overlook Farnborough airfield, home of the famous Air Show. Eelmoor Flash is adjacent on the off side and beyond that the army ranges, so don't be surprised if you hear heavy gunfire.

Just under a further mile is Norris Bridge that is a high concrete structure, and to the right is the National Gas Turbine Establishment, one that is attached quite closely to Farnborough.

After Norris Bridge the canal veers in a westerly direction for 3/4 mile before passing under Pondtail Bridge. Here the outskirts of Fleet are evident by the gardens of properties backing onto the canal. A further mile brings the end or turn round point of Reading Road Bridge at Fleet into view with a quiet wharf and car park that belies the urban environment around it.

### ***More about the canal***

The Basingstoke Canal runs westward from its junction with the Wey navigation, only 3 miles from the Thames, to Basingstoke. It was conceived in 1769 as an economical means of transport to develop agriculture in central Hampshire, and transport goods to market. The canal was never profitable, and by the 1960s was neglected and no longer navigable. In the 1970s, Surrey and Hampshire County Councils took the canal into public ownership, and funded a programme of restoration supported by volunteer work parties. In 1990, the work was completed, and the canal formally reopened in 1991.

An attractive waterway, the Basingstoke Canal is also a notable wildlife habitat. It has one of the largest varieties of aquatic plants and invertebrates in the U.K. 25 of Britain's 39 species of dragonflies and damselflies inhabit the canal. The entire length, except for a part through Woking, is a SSSI. Greywell Tunnel, which marks the end of the navigable section is an internationally important haven for bats.

It is a delightful canal to canoe on, as it feels quite remote, especially in the more western sections. It is an ideal way to combine cycling and canoeing.....one part on the water, the other on the bank.

There are many more pubs at or near the waterside than mentioned in the text.

### **Useful Information**

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/museum/aldershot-museum.htm>

(Aldershot Military Museum)

<http://www.airborneassault.org.uk/home/html/museum.html>

---

*We have taken great care to ensure the currency, accuracy and reliability of this information. We cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions but where such are brought to our attention, the information will be amended accordingly. Users should be aware that environmental conditions outside of our control can change the nature of the Trail within a short space of time. It is recommended that weather and water conditions are checked beforehand, and tide timetables where applicable.*

Airborne Forces Museum

<http://www.airsciences.org.uk/museum.html>

Farnborough Air Sciences Museum

<http://www.castlexplorer.co.uk/england/odiham/odiham.php>

### **Recommended Next Trail**

If you have enjoyed this trail why not try out one of the many trails available in this area. We have more 'Out-and-Back' routes, to give the less experienced a variety of experiences, which involve no shuttles, and no portages. Of course the fitter can combine routes – and the whole of the canal is 31.1 miles long.

### **Safety Information**

Spending an afternoon canoeing can be a fun way to experience nature, get a great workout and spend time with family and friends.. However, it can also be a dangerous journey, if safety guidelines are overlooked. Always follow these basic rules and comply with navigation rules- keep to the right of on-coming boats. Please be careful at points along the trail where there are sharp bends on the waterway and keep a look out at these points for oncoming traffic.

### ***Wear appropriate clothing***

Always wear shoes. Rocks, rough terrain and river beds present serious hazards to boaters without the proper attire. Nearly 90per cent of all boating injuries are attributed to lack of proper footwear. Other canoe safe clothing includes hats, additional dry clothing towels, and layered items which can easily be removed.

### **Be sure to**

- Know the weather forecast before you set out canoeing.
  - Familiarise yourself with the local area, it's sensitive places and protected areas.
  - Leave the environment as you found it. Please read [You, Your Canoe and the environment](#)
  - Take your litter home with you.
  - Follow the navigation rules for the waterway you are on.
  - Keep noise to a minimum.
  - Do not damage bank side vegetation when launching or landing. (No Seal Launching)
  - Where possible keep to any designated paths or launching points.
  - Canoe a safe distance away from wildlife.
  - Check your equipment.
  - Observe the navigation rules for this waterway.
  - Check to see if there are any events on the waterways when you wish to travel.
- Use the checklist below to make sure you have everything you need.

---

*We have taken great care to ensure the currency, accuracy and reliability of this information. We cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions but where such are brought to our attention, the information will be amended accordingly. Users should be aware that environmental conditions outside of our control can change the nature of the Trail within a short space of time. It is recommended that weather and water conditions are checked beforehand, and tide timetables where applicable.*

Checklist:

1. Boat
2. Paddle
3. Buoyancy Aid
4. Bailer/sponge
5. Small First Aid Kit
6. Penknife
7. Mobile telephone (in a waterproof bag....Please note that in some areas due to the location mobile telephone reception might be nonexistent)
8. Fresh drinking water
9. Sun cream, hat and sunglasses
10. Light waterproof jacket
11. Footwear
12. Licence

ALWAYS be certain to let others know where you're going and when you're expected to return.

**Specific Environmental Information:**

Please ensure you don't remove or damage any plants or animals from the waterway as they may be protected or harmful if transferred to other catchments.

Canoeists and kayakers take very seriously environmental concerns and already follow existing voluntary environmental codes of conduct, including Canoe England's own guidance notes outlined in the "You your canoe and the environment" publication.

By following the simple steps below you can ensure your presence is not detrimental to the freshwater environment, minimize and avoid accidentally disturbing wildlife and their habitats.

- Find out about the area before you go, noting its sensitive places, species and breeding seasons.
- Leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home with you.
- When clearing litter left by others, handle it with care.
- Leave the environment as you find it
- Keep noise to a minimum.
- Do not "seal" launch or drag boats to avoid wearing away natural banks. Float your canoe for launching, lift out when landing and carry it to and from the water.
- Do not damage bank side vegetation when launching or landing.
- Where possible keep to any designated paths or launching points.
- On rivers, avoid paddling over gravel banks in low water conditions – they may contain fish spawn.
- Constantly assess wildlife. If you see signs of disturbance move away quietly.

Be the eyes and ears on the water. Report pollution, wildlife problems, damage, incidents etc to the relevant authorities.

---

*We have taken great care to ensure the currency, accuracy and reliability of this information. We cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions but where such are brought to our attention, the information will be amended accordingly. Users should be aware that environmental conditions outside of our control can change the nature of the Trail within a short space of time. It is recommended that weather and water conditions are checked beforehand, and tide timetables where applicable.*



Canal Emergencies - Basingstoke Canal Authority, Canal Centre, Mychett Place Road,  
Mychett, Surrey, GU1 6DD. - Tel. 01252 370073

RSPCA for wildlife and animals in distress – Telephone 0990 55 59 99 (24 hours)

Environment Agency - Telephone 0800 80 70 60 (24 hours)

(KE Jan 2013)

(KE further revised may 2013)

---

*We have taken great care to ensure the currency, accuracy and reliability of this information. We cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions but where such are brought to our attention, the information will be amended accordingly. Users should be aware that environmental conditions outside of our control can change the nature of the Trail within a short space of time. It is recommended that weather and water conditions are checked beforehand, and tide timetables where applicable.*

© BCU copyright 2013

*This material may be freely reproduced except for sale or advertising purposes provided it is reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as BCU copyright and the title of the publication specified.*