

## **Bridgwater and Taunton Canal – Maunsell Lock to Creech St Michael (& return) Easy to Moderate Trail Grading**

### **Route Summary**

Canoe along one of England's best kept secrets. The Bridgwater and Taunton Canal opened in 1827 and linking the River Tone to the River Parrett. It is a well-kept secret but a well-managed one! Local people, have set up a volunteer wardens scheme to look after their canal and their success can be shown in its beauty and peacefulness.

This canal might be cut off from the rest of the system, but it has well-maintained towpaths and fascinating lock structures which make for idyllic walking and peaceful boating.

Because the canal is so quiet, it is very good for wildlife – fantastic dragonflies, kingfishers, etc – so if you are able do take your binoculars with you!

**Nearest Town** - Bridgwater/Taunton

**O.S. Sheets** - OS Map 182 Weston-Super-Mare  
OS Map 193 Taunton and Lyme Regis

### **Start -**

There are many possibilities for journeys on this canal. This particular trail starts from Maunsell Lock, where one can easily park and travels south. It is possible to go north too.

Postcode: TA7 0DH  
Grid ref: ST316294  
Lat: 51:03:37N (51.06041)  
Lon: 2:58:35W (-2.97631)

Maunsell Lock is mid-way along the beautiful Bridgwater & Taunton Canal. It is along the edge of the picturesque Somerset Levels, and as well as a lock there is a Canal Centre and Tea Shop. Whether you arrive by boat, bike, car or on foot, Maunsell Lock is a beautiful starting or rest point for walkers, cyclists, canoeists and boaters of all ages. <http://www.maunsellock.co.uk/>

**Finish** - As above

**Waterways Travelled** – Bridgwater and Taunton Canal

**Type of Water** - Rural canal

**Distance** – 8 miles

**Canoe Trail Grading** - Moderate

### **License Information-**

A licence to paddle the river is included in the [Canoe England membership](#) fee. Otherwise licenses can be obtained from [Canal & River Trust](#)

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(Take your Canoe England membership card with you as it is your licence as well)

**Local Facilities** - At the start and part way down the canal

**Vehicle Shuttle Required** – No

**Portages and Locks** - 2

### Description

To commence your journey carry your canoe over the bridge and launch at the other end of the lock, and this will point you in a southerly direction. Not long after you start you will encounter Higher Lock. Portage on the towpath side. Don't forget to find out where the Sun model is!

After just over a mile you come in to the outskirts of Durston. The parish lies on undulating ground between the lowest slopes of the Quantock Hills and the valley of the River Tone at the Curry and Hay Moors.

The Bridgwater and Taunton Canal runs through the village. It is crossed by two bridges, Headworthy and Swan's Neck.

You reach Creech St Michael after another one and a half miles. The name derives from a creech, or creek, on the River Tone, which creates an island in the river to the south of the village, and the parish church of St. Michael, which dates from the 12th century. On the canal at Creech St. Michael is the site of the former junction with the Chard Canal which was opened in 1842 (the last "small" canal to be built in Britain) but was closed just 26 years later.

### Cutting in Bridgwater

The Bridgwater & Taunton Canal provides a picturesque route through the village for pleasure boats, and the tow path is open to pedestrians and cyclists. There are also dramatic remains of the Chard Canal, including the (filled) junction with the Bridgwater & Taunton Canal, a raised embankment leading south from the village, a ruined aqueduct that would have carried the canal over the River Tone, and the abutments of a second aqueduct across a local road.

<http://www.creechstmichael.net/>

This is the end of your journey before you turn to head back to Maunsel. It is possible to picnic on the bank here and the village has some good amenities including a variety of public houses. To extend your journey you could paddle on for another mile to Bathpool and then from there another two miles to Firepool Lock and the junction with the River Tone in Taunton. You may wish to turn here as portaging this lock can be quite challenging.



If you chose to go on keep right away from the weir and paddle through Taunton where you will find several landing places. There is a park (French Weir Park) after Priory Bridge and the castle which has amenities and a place to picnic.

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### Alternative routes:-

You can start at Maunsel and head north. From here you can paddle all the way up to the River Parrett in Bridgwater docks where there is no access. This is a distance of just over seven miles with 3 portages (6 for a round trip) This route takes you up through North Newton, Kings Lock (No. 4), Standards Lock (No. 5), Fordgate, Huntworth and Mead before you reach Lock No, 6 Bridgwater Dock which is the end of the canal.

### Bridgwater and Taunton Canal Mileage

Firepool Lock No, 1 Taunton Junction with the River Tone. (ST230253)

	Miles	Grid Ref
• Bathpool	1.8	
• Creech St Michael	3.0	
• Charlton	4.1	
• Durston	5.5	
• Higher Maunsel Lock No. 2	6.8	ST307293
• Lower Maunsel Lock No. 3	7.0	ST307297
• North Newton,	8.1	
• Kings Lock (No. 4),	8.3	ST305313
• Standards Lock (No. 5),	9.0	ST316317
• Fordgate	9.8	
• Huntworth	10.9	ST309355
• Mead	12.8	
• Lock No, 6 Bridgwater Dock which is the end of the canal.	14.0	ST297375

### Useful Information

The towpath is part of Route 3 of the National Cycle Network.

There were several schemes to join the Bristol and English Channels but the only sections built were the Bridgwater and Taunton canal and the Grand Western Canal.

The Canal is part of the Taunton Stop Line – a World War Two fortification – there are pill boxes and dragons' teeth along the canal. Many people find this interesting and anyone in a canoe would be sure to notice the pill boxes.

The Cutting in Bridgwater is unusual and it's lovely to go through in a canoe! This lead to the docks, where there is some unusual poetry carved on the beams.

The Somerset Space Walk is on the canal walk between Bridgwater and Taunton. Along the canal are scaled models of the planets which are placed at accurate intervals along the canal in both directions from the sun at Higher Maunsel Lock. The scale model (530 million:1) of the Solar System is centred around the 'Sun' at Maunsel lock.

### Recommended Next Trail

If you have enjoyed this trail why not try out one of the many trails available.

### Safety Information

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Spending an afternoon canoeing can be a fun way to experience nature, get a great work out and spend time with friends and family. It can also be a dangerous journey, if appropriate safety guidelines are overlooked. Always follow these basic rules.

### ***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.

### **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 other 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.

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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.

Canal & River Trust - Emergencies- Telephone 0800 47 999 47

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

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

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