

Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Chelmsford to Maldon Moderate Trail Grading

Route Summary

This waterway was engineered by John Rennie between 1793 and 1797, and is the only English waterway owned and operated by the original company, although it is currently managed by Essex Waterways Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Inland Waterways Association. It was a barge canal with wide locks, and carried freight well into the 1970s. It is now a canal with many narrow boats, and also attracting many canoeists, being a very rural waterway, but also near to London.



The route starts within Chelmsford, and ends at the sea at Maldon.

There can be an extension to this trail by exploring the upper waters of the Chelmer, Can and Wid where they join the head of the navigation, and paddling through Chelmsford itself is easy.

Nearest Town - Chelmsford

O.S. Sheets - Landranger Nos. 167 – Chelmsford, and 168 – Colchester, or use OS Explorer map No. 183

Start - Springfield lock, Chelmsford – TL 717063

Finish – Heybridge Basin, Maldon – TL 871059

Finish at the trip boat landing stage by Daisy Meadow car park, Heybridge Basin (Grid Reference TL 871059)

Waterways Travelled – Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation

Type of Water - Canalised river – this does have some flow in high water



Distance – 14 miles – takes about 6 hours. Springfield to Heybridge Basin approximately 4 – 6 hours of gentle paddling you can return the same way so a car shuttle need not be required. However return by bus possible as there are bus links also available (Chelmsford – Maldon; Maldon – Heybridge Basin)

Canoe Trail Grade – Moderate. The water is easy in standard summer conditions but leading to difficult in increased flow conditions

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.

Licence Information – This trail is currently not part of the Canoe England licence scheme and licences are required.

Licence Navigation Authority:
Essex Waterways Ltd
Island House, Moor Road, Chesham, HP5 1WA
T: 01494 783453
E: essex@waterways.org.uk
www.essexwaterways.com

Freeholder ownership of the Navigation remains with the original Company of Proprietors of the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation, but management was taken over by Essex Waterways Ltd in 2005 when the Navigation Company went into administration.

Local Facilities – At Chelmsford, Paper Mill and Heybridge
– little in between

Vehicle Shuttle Required - Yes

Portages and Locks – 11 lock.

The locks on the trail are large, so canoes / kayaks are not permitted to use them for safety reasons but portaging around them is reasonably easy.

Description

Most of the first 12 miles or so on an 'improved river' navigation, with locks every mile or so. The river meanders through water meadows with an increasingly hilly and wooded backdrop, and is remarkably quiet and rural despite being in the much-maligned landscape of Essex. After a couple of miles, Sandford provides a typical canalscape in its 'cut' between two beautiful mellow brick bridges. Paper Mill, halfway along the trail, has many moored boats, and fascinating old canal buildings, including the barges' bothy and the old stables, now a tea room.

There are quieter moorings at tranquil Hoe Mill, and true Constable Country between there and Rickett's Lock (the artists' family milled here, as well as in Dedham Vale). At Beeleigh, there is a wonderful confluence of waters, as the navigation meets the River Blackwater, the derelict Langford Cut, and the top of the tideway. After this, the Long Pond, a true canal now, carries the C&BN the last couple of miles to its own little salty seaport at Heybridge basin, part of Maldon, where waterside pubs await the canoeist.

Useful Information

Ease of access to the water

Public car parking close to the waterway at Wharf Road, Chelmsford and Daisy Meadow, Heybridge Basin. Otherwise roadside parking usually possible where roads are in close proximity



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.



to the waterway. Launching is easy at Springfield, Sandford, Paper Mill, Hoe Mill and Heybridge Basin. Other access points may require launching from banks without stages. (not seal launching)

The upper waters of the Chelmer, Can and Wid join the top end of the Navigation and can be canoed (no licence required) for a few miles above Chelmsford when water levels permit. The rivers through Chelmsford town centre are easy to paddle.

There is the possibility of doing the trail over a couple of days or starting from Paper Mill Lock ... the choice is yours. There are many places to stay in the area

www.chelmercanaltrust.co.uk/cct.htm

www.maldon.co.uk

www.chelmsford.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=8390

www.papermilllock.co.uk/

Two pubs near to Barnes Lock; Paper Mill has a teasop, and there are pubs and cafes at Heybridge Basin.

Recommended Next Trail

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

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- keeping 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.

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.

- 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 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.

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.



- 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)

(Jan 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.