

Reservoir birds

Since they were constructed, Tring Reservoirs have taken on many of the features of natural lakes and are renowned for their birdlife. Great Crested Grebes, swans and herons are usually on view and in winter there are many kinds of ducks and a huge gull roost. In autumn the mud banks provide a 'bed and breakfast' stop for waders migrating southwards.



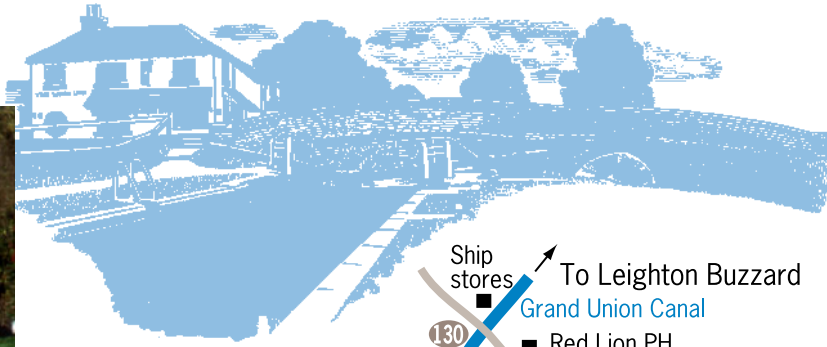
Aylesbury Arm

Opened in 1815, the Aylesbury Arm stretches for 6 1/4 miles and links Aylesbury with the main canal at Marsworth by means of 16 locks. The arm was used for trade in grain, timber, coal and building materials until the 1960's but today offers a tranquil setting for boating, walking and fishing.



Grand Union Canal

The present tranquility of Tring Reservoirs belies their past importance to the success of the Canal Age. Opened in stages between 1793 and 1805 the Grand Union Canal helped the Industrial Revolution to transform Britain. Even today, it is the water supplied from the reservoirs which keeps the canal open for navigation.



Marsworth Locks

Marsworth's flight of six locks lies between the upper and lower courses of the prehistoric Icknield Way which connected East Anglia with Salisbury Plain. The White Lion pub provided refreshments and stabling for the bargees, and continues to cater for thirsty travellers.



Tring Summit

Tring Summit stretches for three miles between Bulbourne and Cowroast. It is the highest point on the Grand Union Canal, having risen nearly 400 ft. from its junction with the Thames at Brentford by means of 57 locks. Every time a boat passes through a lock at either end of the summit approximately 56,000 gallons of water are used. Hence the need for constant topping up from Tring Reservoirs.

Reservoir plants and insects

The marshy surroundings and muddy margins of the reservoirs have resulted in some unusual plants including Bog Pimpernel. Thousands of small animals feed on the rich organic materials, and over 20 species of butterfly have been recorded.



Key

- ① Bridge number
- Lock
- Woodland
- Reedbed
- Walk routes**
- 2 1/2 miles
- 3 miles
- 5 3/4 miles



Wilstone Reservoir

Wilstone Reservoir has the second largest reed bed in Hertfordshire as well as one of the county's few heronries. Each summer many pairs of migrant Reed and Sedge Warblers return to breed in the reeds. The summer also sees the return of Hobbies, small falcons which spend the long summer days hunting dragonflies over the reed beds.



Wilstone

Moulded stones found under the inglenook fire-place of the Half Moon pub at Wilstone may once have been part of the twelfth century village chapel. The chapel was demolished in Cromwell's time and the fabric given to the villagers to repair their homes.



The Wendover Arm

The six-mile branch canal to Wendover was once a popular trade route to London markets for local produce, including cattle. The arm was prone to leak, however, and was eventually abandoned in 1904. Today, it is only navigable for 1 1/4 miles to Tringford but the Wendover Arm Trust campaigns for its full restoration.



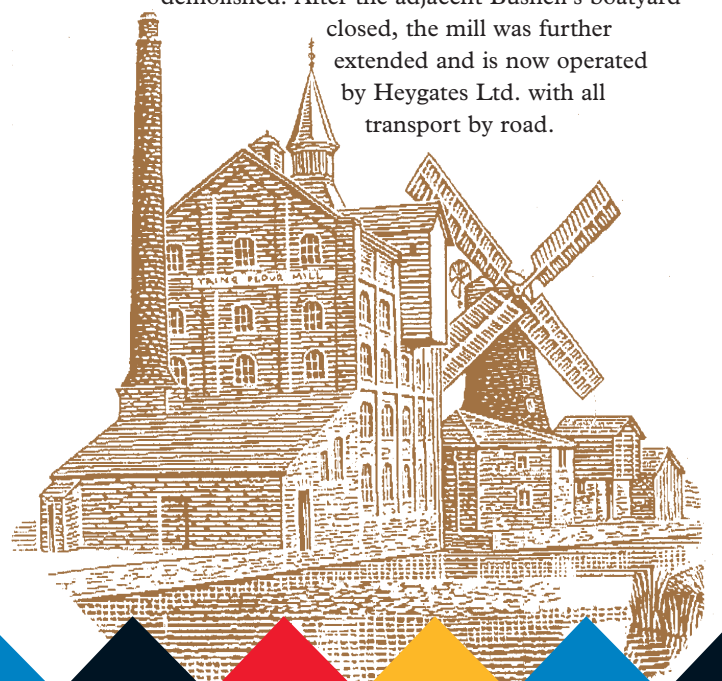
Tringford pumping station

Built in 1818, Tringford pumping station is connected to the reservoirs by underground culverts. When Whitehouses pumping station was closed in 1836, an underground passage was dug to connect Wilstone Reservoir to Tringford and the pumping for the reservoirs became concentrated here.



New Mill

The 'New Mill', housing a flour milling plant, was built in 1875 alongside a windmill which was later demolished. After the adjacent Bushell's boatyard closed, the mill was further extended and is now operated by Heygates Ltd. with all transport by road.



Reservoir Bats

Bats feed on the insects which breed in the reservoir reed beds and foliage. Most rely completely on ultrasound echoes to locate insects but the Long-eared Bat often hunts by using its huge ears to pick up the sounds of moths vibrating their wings prior to take-off.



WALKS AT TRING RESERVOIRS

Explore the beautiful wildlife haven of Tring Reservoirs and enjoy the tranquillity of a walk along the Grand Union Canal through picturesque countryside.

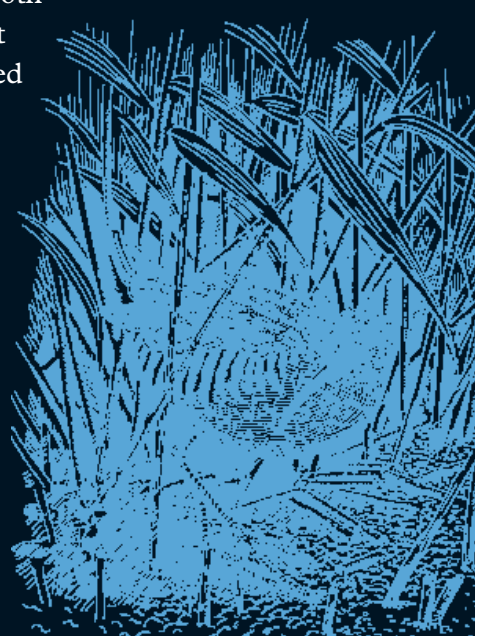
Shortest walk: - 2 1/2 miles
Longest walk: - 5 3/4 miles

Discover Tring Reservoirs, a Site of Special Scientific Interest famous for its wildlife. Explore the towpaths of the Wendover and Aylesbury canal arms and visit the pretty villages of Marsworth and Wilstone.

Walks at Tring Reservoirs offer a choice of colour waymarked routes designed to guide you around this special area and increase the enjoyment of your visit. The routes vary in length from a short stroll lasting about an hour to a half day ramble including the Wendover and Aylesbury arms of the Grand Union Canal, Wilstone Reservoir and the surrounding countryside.

A map of the walk routes and points of interest are shown overleaf, and you may start wherever you wish. The routes are waymarked with distinctive colour symbols. The yellow route is waymarked in both directions whilst the green and red routes are waymarked in one direction only.

The reservoirs are famous for their birds so don't forget your binoculars!



Tring Reservoirs

Brief history

Wilstone Reservoir was built in 1802 to feed the Wendover Arm (with extensions added in 1836 and 1839), then Marsworth in 1806 to supply the Marsworth flight of locks followed by Tringford (1816) and Startop's End (1817) to feed the Aylesbury Arm. Although commercial traffic on the canal ended in the 1960s the growth of pleasure craft has ensured little change in the reservoirs' water supply role. Today, an estimated 6000 boat movements are recorded on the summit every year and an average two million gallons of water are pumped into the canal every day!

Geology and wildlife

There is very little open water on the chalk of South and South East England, making Tring Reservoirs an important area. The waters are extremely clear and rich in minerals attracting an abundance of water plants, insects and fish. This plentiful food supply together with the open water, reed beds and surrounding woodlands in turn attracts a large population of breeding, wintering and migrating birds.

Changes in water levels arising from boat movements and the weather have a direct bearing on the reservoirs' ecology.

Recognition of the reservoirs' value for wildlife led to their being declared a national nature reserve in 1955. In 1987 they were redesignated a Site of Special Scientific Interest.



The Reservoirs today

Today, managed by British Waterways, the reservoirs attract many visitors every year to explore the network of paths or to fish, birdwatch or simply enjoy the tranquillity of this special man-made haven.

How to get to Tring Reservoirs

By boat - Visitor moorings are available on the canal above and below the Marsworth flight of locks.

By train - North London Railways operate trains between London (Euston) and Northampton stopping at Tring (an attractive 30 minute canal walk from the reservoirs). For information telephone 01923 245001

By bus - Regular bus services operate between Tring, Aylesbury and Marsworth stopping at Marsworth village. For information telephone Herts Traveline on 01992 556765

By car - Parking for the reservoirs is available at Startop's End car park, off the B489 Lower Icknield Way, Marsworth. There is a smaller car park at Wilstone Reservoir, off the same road. The reservoirs are 5 minutes drive from Tring, and less than 20 minutes drive from Berkhamsted, Aylesbury, Leighton Buzzard and Wendover.

Maps - This leaflet can be used in conjunction with the Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 Landranger sheet 165 (Aylesbury and Leighton Buzzard area) and 1:25000 Pathfinder sheet Sp81/91, No. 1094 (Aylesbury and Tring)

Birdwatching

Tring Reservoirs were made ornithologically famous by the first nesting in this country of Black-necked Grebes in 1918 and by the first British breeding of Little Ringed Plover twenty years later. The wide variety of wintering and breeding wetland birds continues to delight visitors who are invited to make use of the bird hides. Information on the 'easy-to-spot' species is available at the hides. A more detailed guide to Tring birds has been published by the Friends of Tring Reservoirs (see useful contacts).

Fishing

Tring Reservoirs provide excellent fishing and are well stocked with Tench, Bream, Carp, Roach, Perch and Pike. Fishing is available by day and season ticket for all the reservoirs excluding Tringford which is a private trout fishery. For further information contact water bailiff Bernard Double on 01442 822379.

Walk tips and safety

Please keep to the pathways to minimise disturbance to wildlife. Keep dogs under control and take your litter home. Strong comfortable footwear is recommended as paths can be muddy. Please take extra care crossing roads on the walk routes.

Walk refreshments and provisions

Marsworth Village

- White Lion and Anglers Retreat public houses, B489 Lower Icknield Way
- Red Lion pub and Ship Stores, Vicarage Road

New Mill

- Village stores, B488 Bulbourne Road
- The Pheasant pub, Wingrave Road

Bulbourne

- Grand Junction Arms pub, B488 Bulbourne Road

Wilstone Village

- Half Moon public house and village stores, Tring Road.

Canal Leisure

To celebrate the canal's bicentenary the 145-mile towpath between London and Birmingham was officially launched as the Grand Union Canal Walk in 1993. A trail guide, accommodation list and special passport make discovery of the entire route easy. Leaflets about shorter local canal walks are also available.

For a taste of life afloat you can hire a small craft for a day's outing, join a pleasure cruise or enjoy a week's narrowboat holiday. Local operators include Bridgewater Boats, Berkhamsted, Tel 01442 863615, Wyvern Shipping Co, Leighton Buzzard, Tel: 01525 372355, (both holiday boat hire), and Grebe Canal Cruises, Pitstone, Tel: 01296 661920, (day, trip and holiday boat hire).

The canal boasts a number of canoe clubs and virtually the whole length is available for fishing through membership of one of the many angling organisations.

Canal Guide



GRAND UNION CANAL WALK

by Anthony Burton and Neil Curtis.
This is the definitive walkers handbook for the London - Birmingham route. In the same format as the National Trail guidebooks, this handy A5 book gives commentary and directions, maps and colour photographs of the whole route. Published by Aurum Press, £9.99 (£10.50 incl p&g), from British Waterways Marsworth office.

The following organisations supported the production of this leaflet and information boards at Tring Reservoirs:

