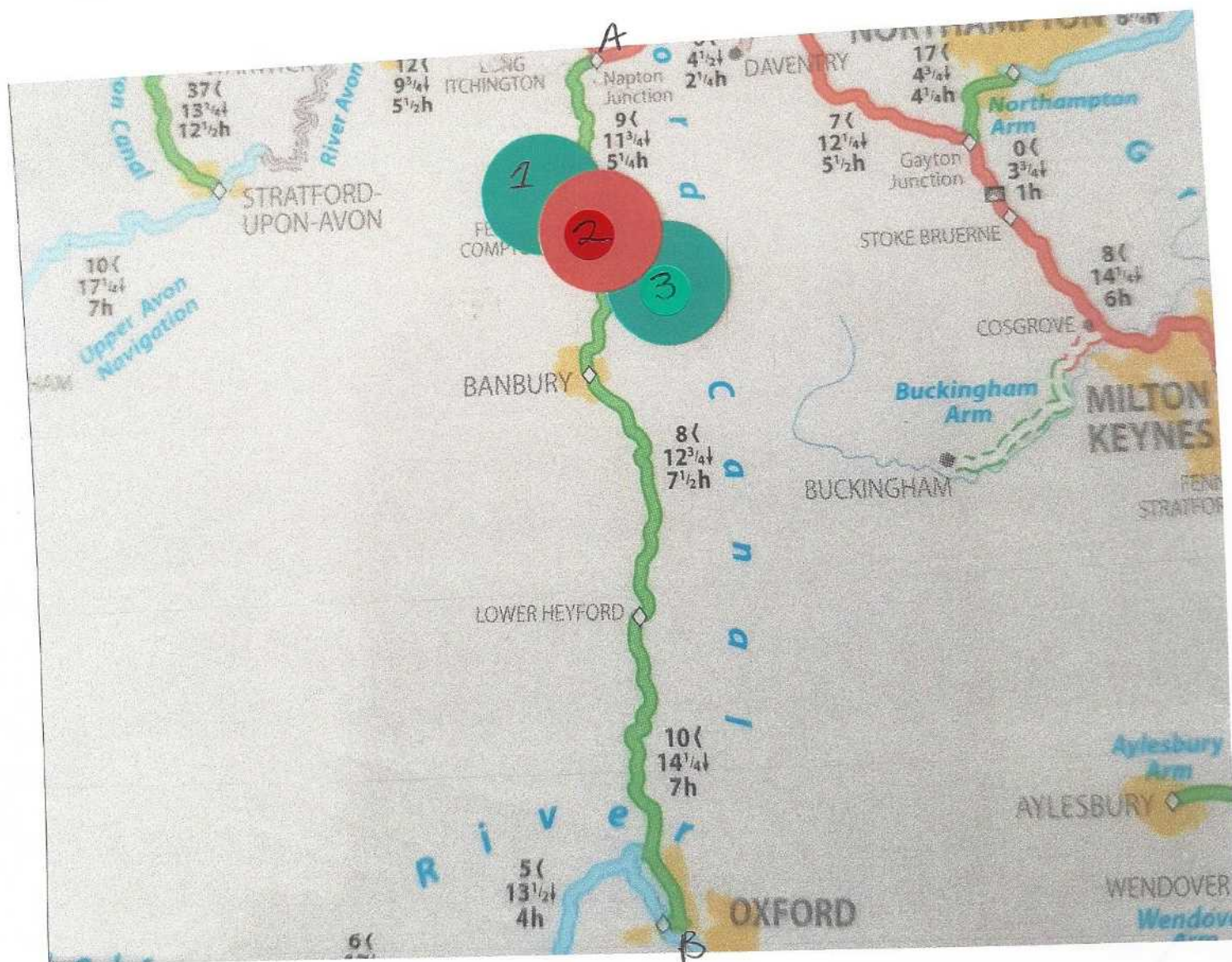


6/20/2018

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- 1 - FENNY MARINA
- 2 - GLEBE FARM SITE
- 3 - CROPPEDY MARINA
- A - START OF THE SOUTH OXFORD CANAL
- B - END OF THE SOUTH OXFORD CANAL



# 10 OXFORD CANAL

Barbury 4.5mils/4hrs/2.5hrs

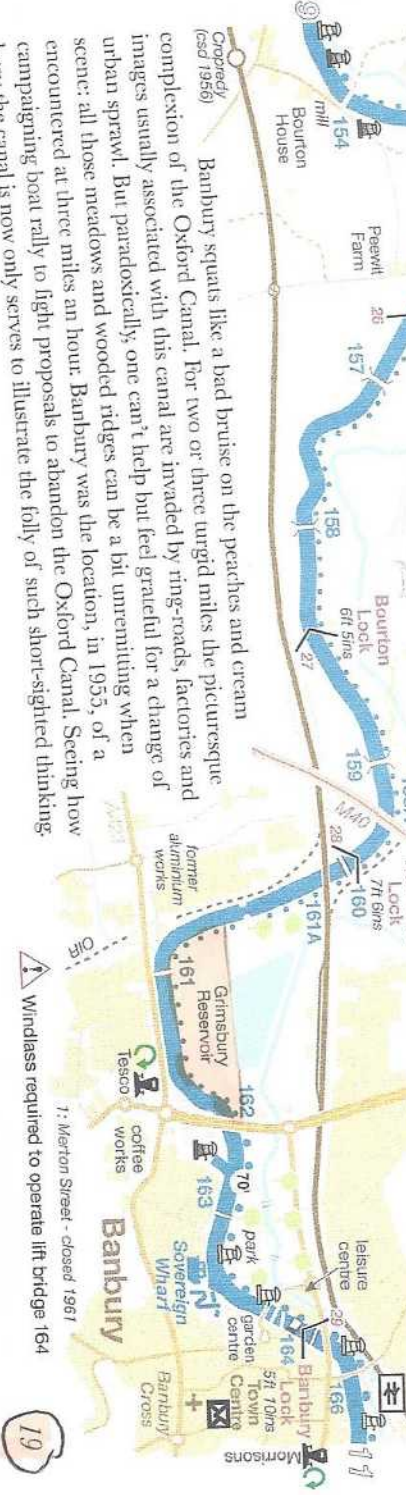
**A**T Croppredy the Oxford Canal makes eye contact with the River Cherwell, but like all good bodice-rippers, the affair takes many twists and turns before consummation takes place. The canal company purchased Croppredy Mill and adapted the mill stream to provide the canal with water. Pass through the hole in the wall, and the water doing a disappointing trick beneath an old archway.

A new flood prevention scheme is evident in the vicinity of Bridge 159. By Hardwick Lock the canal parallels the course of the Oxfordshire Ironstone Railway built by German prisoners of the First World War with several miles of towpath. Part of its trackbed, along with several miles of towpath, is included in the "Banbury Fringe Circular Walk".

Barbury squats like a bad bruise on the peaches and cream complexion of the Oxford Canal. For two or three turgid miles the picturesque images usually associated with this canal are invaded by ring-roads, factories and urban sprawl. But paradoxically, one can't help but feel grateful for a change of scene: all those meadows and wooded ridges can be a bit unreminting when encountered at three miles an hour. Banbury was the location, in 1955, of a campaigning boat rally to fight proposals to abandon the Oxford Canal. Seeing how busy the canal is now only serves to illustrate the folly of such short-sighted thinking.

Trade on the Oxford Canal petered out towards the end of the 1950s. Amongst the last regular cargoes were timber and tar. Up until this time Banbury supported its own canal community who were wont to congregate at a spit and sawdust pub called 'The Struggler'. L. T. C. Rolt immortalised it in his *Inland Waterways of England*. The pub and the canal wharf were demolished in 1962 by the local council, who added insult to injury by building a bus station on the site. Now the whole area has been redeveloped into the Castle Quay Shopping Centre and Rolt may well be looking down from heaven and chuckling - with irony.

At least Tooley's drydock, also made famous by Rolt as the scene of *Greys' Docking* and re-fitting prior to the cruise of *Greys' Boat*, is preserved as part of the excellent Banbury Museum whose inland waterways gallery imaginatively and appropriately spans the canal.



## OXFORD CANAL Twyford Wharf & Kings Sutton 4mils/21ks/2hrs

RAW bridges abound, their functional looks disguising the economy of construction inherent in their design. Most of them will be chained 'open' (reminding one, somewhat tangentially, of rolled-up shirtsleeves) and thus of no hindrance to boaters. Another worthwhile cost-cutting measure south of Banbury was the provision of single bottom gates for each lock chamber instead of the more usual mitred pairs: less call for acrobats at the locks!

The rocket-like spire of Kings Sutton church sears above the watermeadows, finding a photogenic mirror image in the canal from certain angles. The village boasts a railway station, but it is - along with other facilities - a bit of a hike away on the far side of the Cherwell, which forms the boundary between Oxon and Northants. Just south of Twyford Wharf the canal curves past a spill weir protected by concrete posts emblazoned with Oxford Canal Company initials.

Kings Sutton Lock is delightful. The keeper's cottage is simply built of brick with stone facing. On the opposite bank stands a former blacksmith's forge and stable block decorated by the addition of the village station's old name board. South of here the canal momentarily sheds its man-made character. The branches of pollarded willows hang caressingly over the water and poplars whisper in the breeze as a belt

of woodland is encountered.

Into this exquisite landscape the M40 intrudes like a kick in the groin. When it was being constructed in the 1980s the *Sunday Times* ran a sequence of photographs looking out over the Cherwell Valley in the vicinity of Kings Sutton. It was a sobering illustration of the assassination of the Oxfordshire landscape. As hideous in its way as the sort of photographs they show of bodies in the streets after a military coup. As the Department of Transport used to boast, road schemes such as the M40 had their viability rested on a 'cost benefit basis'. Yes, we know: for the road lobby's benefit at the country's side's cost.

But how long before the motorway is outmoded like the canal itself and the now dismantled Banbury & Cheltenham Railway? The canal can be said to have functioned commercially for over a hundred and fifty years. The railway was relatively shortlived, opening in 1887 and closing to passengers in 1951, though surviving in goods use for another thirteen years. Its most celebrated train was the *Ports to Ports Express*, a service designed to effect the transfer of merchant seamen between Tyneside and South Wales. Did they, catching a glimpse of passing 'joshers', feel momentarily at home on their ten hour, landlocked journey?



## 12 OXFORD CANAL

Aynho Wharf 4.5m/s/31ks/2hrs

# T

HE motorway bridge contrasts brutally with its neighbour, lift-bridge 183. It carries a dedication to a young civil engineering student fatally injured during construction of the road. Passing briefly into Northamptonshire, the canal shares much of its tranquillity in the process. Wharves past and present recall the canal's original purpose. The one at Aynho remains remarkably intact, its brick warehouse being home to a boatyard shop. Aynho's old railway station is of Brunellian design and dates from the inception of the original mixed gauge line between Oxford and Birmingham. When the Great Western Railway shaved twenty miles off their London to Birmingham route in 1910, Aynho marked the northern end of the 'cut off'. CART have a maintenance base at Nell Bridge. Having played coquettishly with the canal's affections since Croxhey, the Chilterwell acquires canal knowledge by Aynho Weir Lock as the channel flows directly across the canal. The lock itself is shallow and diamond-shaped, Somerton being so deep that extra capacity had to be built into Aynho.

Down Somerton way the towpath becomes more of a gated footpath, a pleasant change for walkers, but cyclists can forget it!



Somerton Deep Lock is, well, very deep. Overlooked by a rather over-shuttered cottage, it vies with Tardelbigge on the Worcester & Birmingham for the honour of being the deepest narrowbeam chamber on the canal system. Certainly the steeper's eye view of things, when the lock is empty is reminiscent of an elephant trap. Heaven knows how single-handed boat captains managed in the past. Tom Foxon hinted at his methods in *Number One*, also relating how it was his habit to swap lumps of coal with the lock-keeper in exchange for fresh laid eggs and rabbits.

### Summary of Facilities

**THE PIG PLACE** - Adderbury (Nell Bridge), Tel: 0789 287 9447. Peripatetic boaters, the Wherrys (appropriate name) moored-up here in 2007 and haven't looked back. Still living afloat, they run this beguiling canal-side small-holding specialising in pigs, poultry and sheep. The fruits of their labour - of love are for sale - as are an esoteric range of facilities: overnight moorings with hook up, bottled gas, a campsite, laundry room and hot tub hire! OX17 3NU  
**GREAT WESTERN ARMS** - Aynho Wharf, Tel: 01869 338288. Congenial country pub - located between the canal and the old railway station and suitably decorated with memorabilia relating to both modes of transport. Hook Norton ales, bar and restaurant food, accommodation. OX17 3BP  
**AVNHO WHARF** - Tel: 01869 338483. Small shop canal-side selling gifts and basic groceries and newspapers. OX17 3BP

1 Aynho Park Platform (closed 1963)  
 2 Aynho for Deddington (closed 1964)

# 13 OXFORD CANAL The Heyfords 5mls/21ks/2hrs

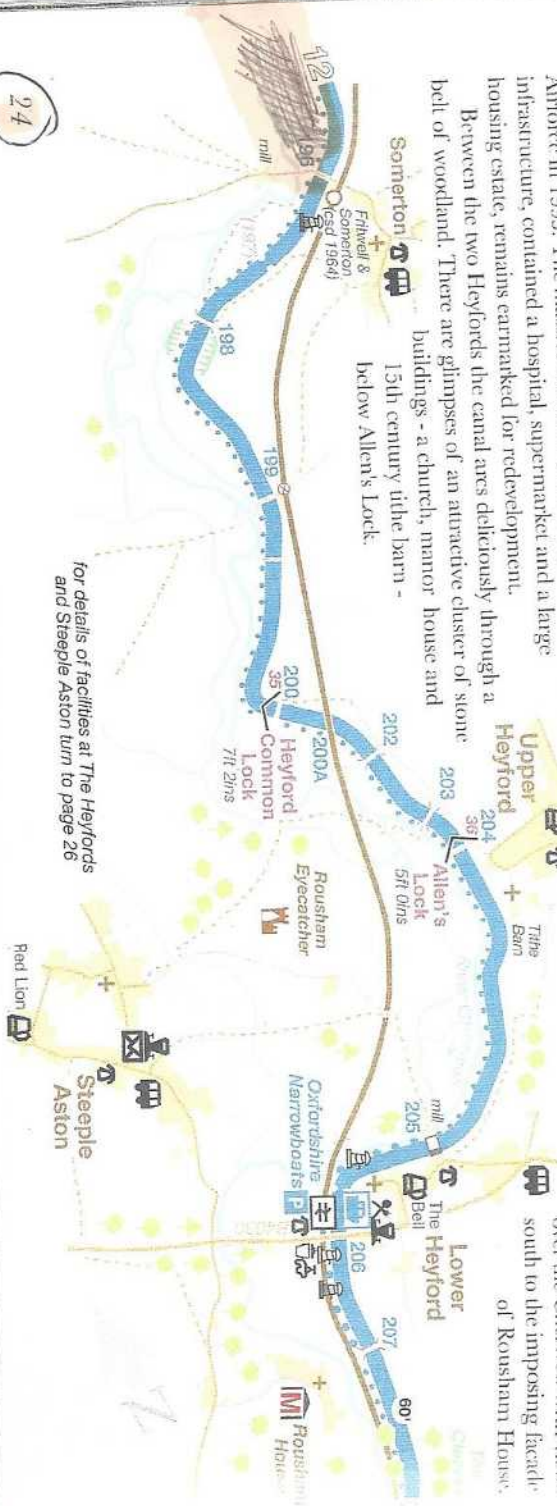
**C**ANAL, railway and river saunter companionably along the valley floor; but the roads keep cautiously to the shoulders of the hills. When the Cherwell bursts its banks, the escaping water forms an inland sea and wildfowl find this a conducive wintering ground. In spring the meadows seen full of lapwings carrying out their dizzy courtship; later, the sky is still filled with lark-song; one May morning we distinctly heard the trilling tones of a curlew.

From Somerton to Heyford the canal assumes the character of a river. The towpath loses its formality, becoming more of a track through the adjoining fields. Pollarded willows line the canal's banks, just as they do the Cherwell's, so that seen from a passing train, it is often difficult to tell the water tower, prominent on a hillside to immediately which is which. The water tower, prominent on a hillside to the east, belonged to RAF Upper Heyford, last used by the United States Airforce in 1993. The massive site which, in amongst all the military infrastructure, contained a hospital, supermarket and a large housing estate, remains earmarked for redevelopment.

Between the two Heyfords the canal arcs deliciously through a belt of woodland. There are glimpses of an attractive cluster of stone buildings - a church, manor house and 15th century tith barn - below Allen's Lock.

Lower Heyford Mill ceased working at the end of the Second World War. The towpath has the air of an isthmus about it with the canal on one side and the river on the other. Lift-bridge 205 is said to have been built of iron to take the weight of the miller's traction engine. Nearby a charmingly precarious tree house juts over the water.

Heyford Wharf is very similar to Avonho (Map 12), but on this occasion the warehouse is built of local stone. Nowadays it is in use as a vibrant hire base and offers useful additional facilities as well. A short walk from here lies Rousham House and its famous gardens, the work of William Kent. Kent's 'Rousham Eyecatcher' can be seen over the brow of the hill from Heyford Common lock or more closely from the paths which lead from bridges 203 or 205 towards the pretty hilltop village of Steeple Aston which makes for a pleasant walk across the river and the railway. There is an option to return via the road bridge over the Cherwell with views of Rousham House.



for details of facilities at The Heyfords and Steeple Aston turn to page 26

# Canal & River Trust looking to sell BWML

Published: Thursday 1st March 2018

The Canal & River Trust has this week announced that it is seeking a new owner for British Waterways Marinas Ltd. Outlined below is further information giving background to their decision.

## About BWML

Set up in 2004, BWML is as an arm's length subsidiary of the Canal & River Trust ('the Trust'). Originally set up with 10 marinas BWML now operates 18 marinas across England:

- 3 coastal, 15 inland (of which 4 are on river navigations, including some outside the Trust's navigations)
- 17 'Gold Anchor' accredited by The Yacht Harbour Association
- 2,520 berths in total of which 28% (699) are residential
- Statutory reported income in 2016/7 = £8.1m

## Why is the Canal & River Trust looking to sell BWML?

The Trust is looking to focus more on its core priorities and to secure long-term revenue from its investments. Having received a number of private approaches, and following an internal review, it has decided to explore options with a number of potential purchasers. The waterways have always benefitted from private sector investment and this is also a good opportunity to introduce more private sector capital and energy into the sector.

## How much does the Trust expect to earn from the sale?

The Trust would only sell for the right price and anticipates it might receive some attractive proposals given market interest in the marina sector. It has engaged BDO LLP and Vail Williams, leaders in the marina and leisure industry field, to support it with the sale, and secure the best return on its investment. BDO LLP and Vail Williams will seek to ensure that the opportunity receives exposure to relevant investors and maximise the price that the Trust receives.

## How will the proceeds of the sale be used?

All the proceeds from the sale of BWML would be invested in other income-generating assets, so as to deliver further sustainable revenue funding for maintaining the historic waterways in the Trust's care.

After a sale, the Trust would continue to receive income from network access agreements from the purchaser of the business. By reinvesting the capital from the sale, it would also generate a long-term revenue income.

### **How much does the Trust earn from BWML at present?**

In 2016/17 payments made to the Trust from BWML were:

- £1.018m in rents and access charges, and
- £1.2m\* in profit distribution by way of Gift Aid. (\*£950k paid in year, as Annual Accounts and a subsequent £250k paid during 2017/18)

### **What share of the marina market does BWML represent?**

5.8% of the inland marina market and 0.8% of the coastal marina market

### **Is the Trust still supportive of the development of new marinas?**

Yes, subject to planning and where sufficient water resources permit. The Trust provides advice to prospective developers through its new marinas process which can be found on [www.canalrivertrust.org.uk](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk) (<http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk>).

### **Will the Trust treat the new owner of BWML in the same way as the rest of the marine industry?**

Yes.

### **What will happen to BWML's 86 staff?**

All staff will remain employed by BWML under their existing terms and conditions.

### **Will the proposals involve any changes to public use and enjoyment of the waterways?**

No. BWML will, under any new ownership, largely continue to use and occupy the same properties as it did before any change. This would include, for example, some online moorings on our waterways which the company lease from the Trust in the same way as other operators up and down the system.