

# Get Walking Wichelstowe

## Walk for Health:

Get active, eat well, feel better

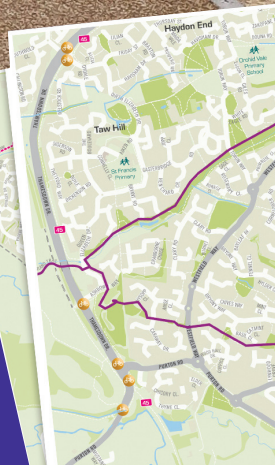
## Have feet, will travel:

And save money too!

## You'll never walk alone

A guide to Swindon's walking community

These **routes** are  
made for walking!





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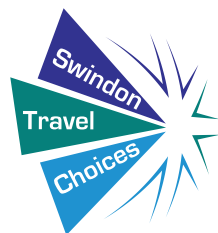
This magazine has been compiled with the help of the local community. We launched the "Wichelstowe Walking Competition" in the summer of 2022, asking residents to nominate their favourite walks around the area.

The walks in this magazine are the winning walks, which we hope will get you out and about exploring new places.

You can save time and money by making short journeys on foot. And because walking is ideal natural exercise, if you tweak your habits and fit walking into your daily routine, you'll soon reap the health benefits too.

It's free, enjoyable, easy to do and good for your health and your wallet!

What could be better than walking?



# Why Walk?

Walking is an easy way to achieve the recommended two and a half hours of moderate exercise a week.

You can do it in your own time, at a pace to suit you, and you don't need special equipment or gym membership. Just put on a pair of comfortable shoes, and you're good to go!

## 5 BIG benefits

1

### It can help you lose weight.

Walking burns calories which helps you manage your weight. This will vary from person to person, depending on a person's weight and the pace and distance they walk. As a general guide: a 180-pound (12.8 stone) person will burn 100 calories per mile and a 120-pound (8.5 stone) person will burn 65 calories per mile, walking at a fairly leisurely 3 mph (covering a mile in 20 mins). Brisk walking will use more calories.

2

### It's good exercise.

You can reduce your risk of developing serious conditions, like heart disease, strokes, Type 2 diabetes, some cancers and Alzheimer's disease.

3

### It will lift your mood.

Walking will reduce anxiety and help you to sleep.

4

### You'll get stronger.

Walking can improve your flexibility, the strength of your muscles, joints and bones, and reduce the risk of osteoporosis for women.

5

### Walking is enjoyable!

Don't take our word for it, go outside and give it a try!



Find out how to join a local walking group. Turn to page 4



# You'll Never Walk Alone

## Weekly Walks Diary - what, when and where

Step out Swindon is a self-funding volunteer led scheme with 9 wellbeing walks in the Swindon area. There are currently over 650 walkers registered with the scheme and this is growing every week as people become aware of the health and wellbeing benefits of walking and socialising with a group.

New members are always made welcome and the ability to walk for about an hour is the only qualification required. The volunteers take care of those who start off slowly and ensure that they always get back for the all-important refreshments and social chat at the end of every walk.

The walks in the table below are correct as of spring 2022, but we advise you check on the website or contact the organiser before turning up.

If you require any further information then please contact Grahame Lee, Scheme Co-ordinator on 07932 109209 or <https://beta.ramblers.org.uk/go-walking/wellbeing-walks-groups/ramblers-wellbeing-walks-step-out-swindon>

## All group walks are free.

When?	What?	Where?	How far?
Mondays at 10am	Penhill Wellbeing Walk	John Moulton Hall Community Centre	2-3 mile walk, up to 1 hour.
Mondays at 10.30am	Christ Church Old Town Wellbeing Walk	Christ Church Community Centre	2-3 mile walk, up to 1 hour.
Mondays at 2pm	Covingham Wellbeing Walk	St Pauls Church Hall	2-3 mile walk, up to 1 hour.
Thursdays at 10.30am	Haydon Wick Gentle Mobility Walk	Haydon Centre	Very short distance, slow pace. Up to 30 minutes
Mondays at 2pm	Lower Shaw Farm Wellbeing Walk	Lower Shaw Farm	2-3 mile walk, up to 1 hour.
Thursdays at 10am	Haydon Wick Wellbeing Walk	Haydon Centre	2-3 mile walk, up to 1 hour.
Thursdays at 10am	Wroughton Wellbeing Walk	Ellendune Centre	2-3 mile walk, up to 1 hour.
Thursdays at 2pm	Mannington Health Walk	Mannington Retail Park (TK Maxx)	2-3 mile walk, up to 1 hour.
Fridays at 10.30am	Croft Old Town Wellbeing walk	Croft Sports Centre	2-3 mile walk, up to 1 hour.

# These routes are made for walking!

Step out and spot the wildlife for yourself...

Why not walk to a local green space?

Wichelstowe

Wroughton

Old Town

Rushey Platt

Mannington

Old Town Railway Path

Our handy 'pull-out & keep' route maps are also available as interactive maps on your smartphone. Scan the QR codes on the walk pages to follow them. >>

Discover some easy circular walks in Wichelstowe





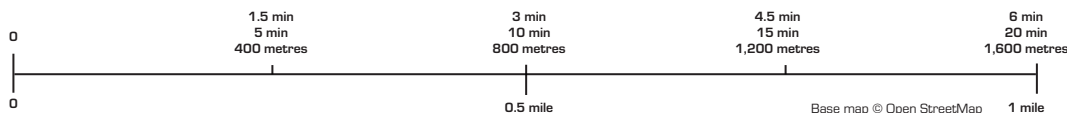
## Dawn's Loop



40 minutes

1.95 miles

Scan me to follow the route on a smartphone



# Dawns Loop

## About this walk

**This walk was submitted by Dawn Manser, who is joined by dog Bella on her frequent walks around Wichelstowe.**

"Dawn's Loop is a walk with a mixture of scenery and very little mud. "There's the opportunity to pick up some snacks for the walk at Waitrose," says Dawn, "or have a quick drink at the Hall & Woodhouse pub afterwards."

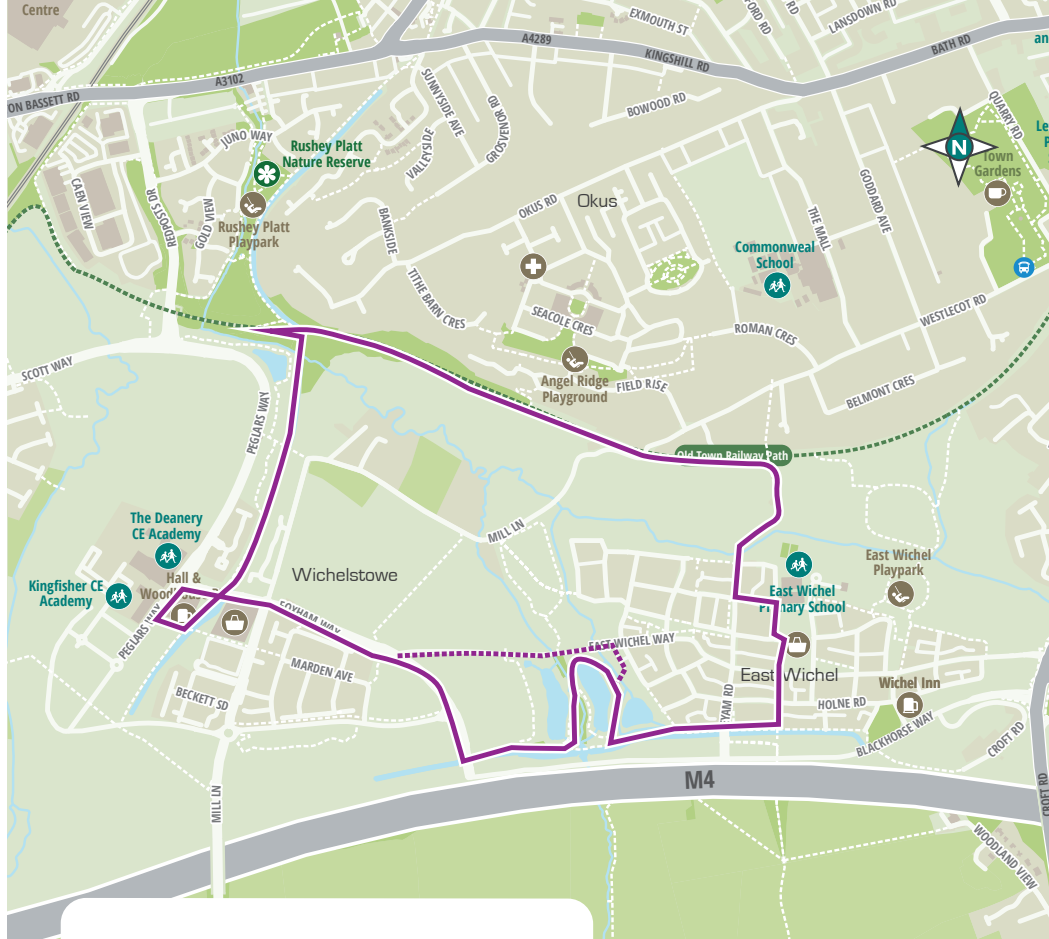
**To spot on the walk: Stone sculptures on the Old Town Railway Path.**

There are five stone sculptures along the path. Some think they are wheels, some dials or discs. They start at the Old Town end and heading towards the west, they represent Earth, Air, Fire, Water and Conceive. They were commissioned by the Swindon Bike Group in 1995 and created by artist Alec Peever, who specialises in sculpture and carving. Each sculpture was made from Portland stone and has two parts, a small wheel showing the Element, and a large

wheel with a short piece of poetry. In addition, there is a length of wood crossing the path between each of the wheel pairs. Each of these lengths of wood has two words written on them. Poet Fiona Sampson was responsible for the words.







## Heritage and nature ramble



60 minutes

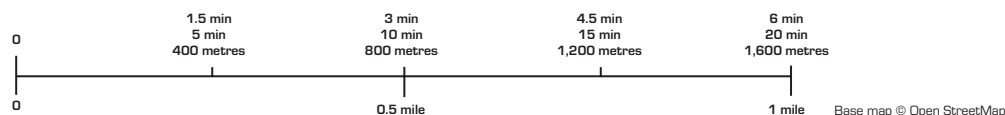


2.8 miles

Scan me to follow the route on a smartphone



--- Suggested alternative when route is closed for canal works



## Heritage and nature ramble About this walk

**This walk was submitted by Chris Barry, who volunteers with the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust.**

He is very familiar with the area, driving the Dragonfly boat trips along the canal. "I walk parts of this walk almost every day," says Chris.

"It's varied, relaxing, and good exercise - and it puts a smile on my face!"

**To spot on the walk: The mouse and the snail**

On some metal railings by the canal under Skew Bridge, near Rushey Platt, is a mouse and three snails, welded to the railings. Most towpath

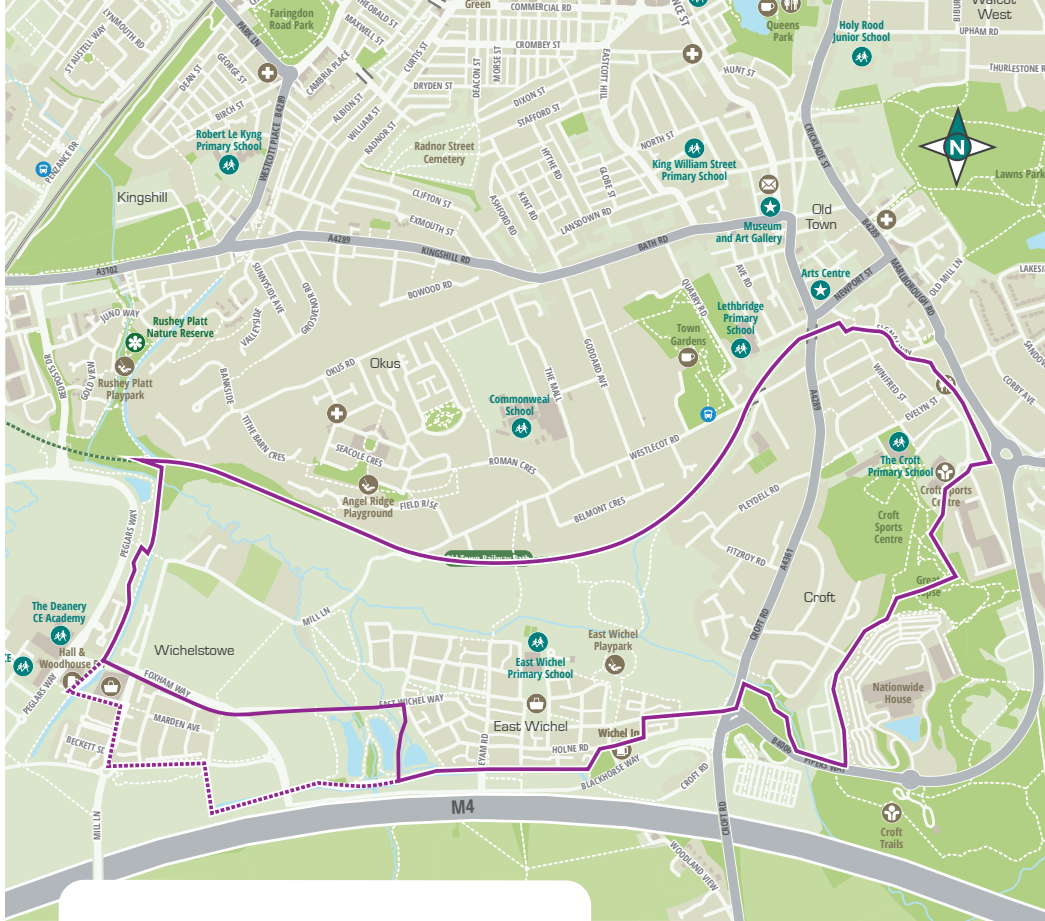
walkers don't know they're there nor have any idea how or when they were put there. However, the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust posted some pictures of them on their Facebook page, and were delighted to have tracked down the man who did them, thanks to his daughter Debbie and grand-daughter Lynne, who had seen the post and got in contact.

His name was Michael (Mick) Couling - he'd been a blacksmith and spring maker at the Swindon Rail Works. When they closed in 1986 he worked at the Forge in Wroughton (now also

closed) and was a volunteer at the Didcot Railway Centre.

Soon after the towpath was repaired in 1986, Mick was engaged to make the railings, both at Skew Bridge and a little further on towards Kingshill where there is a spill weir - those railings sport another mouse! He was a creative person, as evidenced by these delightful decorative ornaments.

Sadly, he died early in 2017, aged 80; it's so nice to be able to remember him in this way.



## Canals, copse and railway lines About this walk

### Canals, copse and railway lines



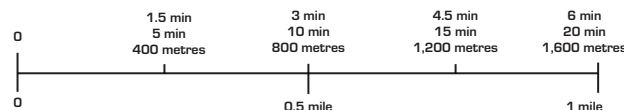
1hr 30minutes

4.7 miles

Scan me to follow the route  
on a smartphone



--- Future route, once canal works  
are completed



(Be aware that there may be  
restrictions around the Wichel  
Fields site as building continues)

Base map © Open StreetMap

#### Did you know? Signal Way - Swindon's first railway station

What is now home to  
several industrial units  
used to be the site of the  
Swindon Town Station, a  
railway station that served  
fare-paying passengers for  
80 years.

The station nearly didn't  
get built - the original plan  
in 1870 was to tunnel 700  
yards through the Old Town  
Hill and have the first station

at Chisledon. However, the  
tunnel did not succeed and  
the line came from Rushey  
Platt, and a station was  
created. It opened in 1881.

As well as two signal boxes  
and a turntable, the station  
had a goods shed and a  
loco shed located just to the  
east of where the Marriott  
roundabout is today, three  
platforms (the longest over  
500 feet long), waiting  
rooms and a main station  
building, including a very fine  
refreshment room.

Swindon Town station  
was used by thousands of  
Swindon residents during the  
annual Great Western Works  
Trip fortnight break  
to travel to the coast and  
other holiday destinations.

It was also used for  
letting off homing pigeons  
from the north, including  
Manchester. The line  
closed to passengers in  
September 1961. For more  
information, visit [www.swindonsotherailway.co.uk](http://www.swindonsotherailway.co.uk)





## Scott Way Saunter

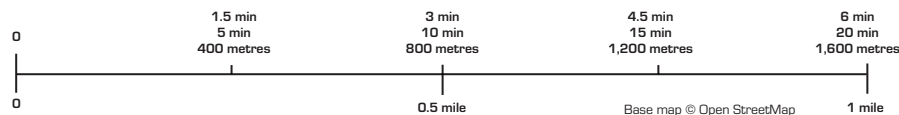


**30 minutes (plus stopping time for coffee)**



**1.2 miles**

Scan me to follow the route on a smartphone



## Public art to spot around Wichelstowe



### The Water Vole and the Waders

Artist Lucy Casson was inspired by the water birds which have made the canals and lakes at Wichelstowe home as well as stories of the more elusive water voles. The animals were modelled in clay to get the expressions just right before the models were sent to the foundry and turned into these fantastic bronzes. Full of character, these small creatures welcome the children who attend the school nursery every day.



### Hall & Woodhouse Lock Gates and Lady Rose Canal Boat

The pub's designers took inspiration from its surroundings, looking at creative ways to incorporate the canal and reflect industrial Swindon's architectural heritage into the pub's interior and exterior. Large wooden lock gates set the canal tone at the pedestrian entrance to the pub. An innovative, purpose-built canal boat named Lady Rose protrudes from the front entrance of the building. It contains self-serve beer pumps in sectioned booths that can seat up to 20 people.

### Wichelstowe Tree of Life

Sebastien Boyesen's second piece of art at Wichelstowe provides the Gateway into Wichelstowe from the south. The Tree of Life is formed from two different types of metal with stainless steel flora and fauna placed on top of the Corten Steel base. The animals depicted include water voles, dragonfly, kingfishers and otters. The heron, voted on social media as Wichelstowe's favourite wildlife, takes pride of place.

### Birds in Flight

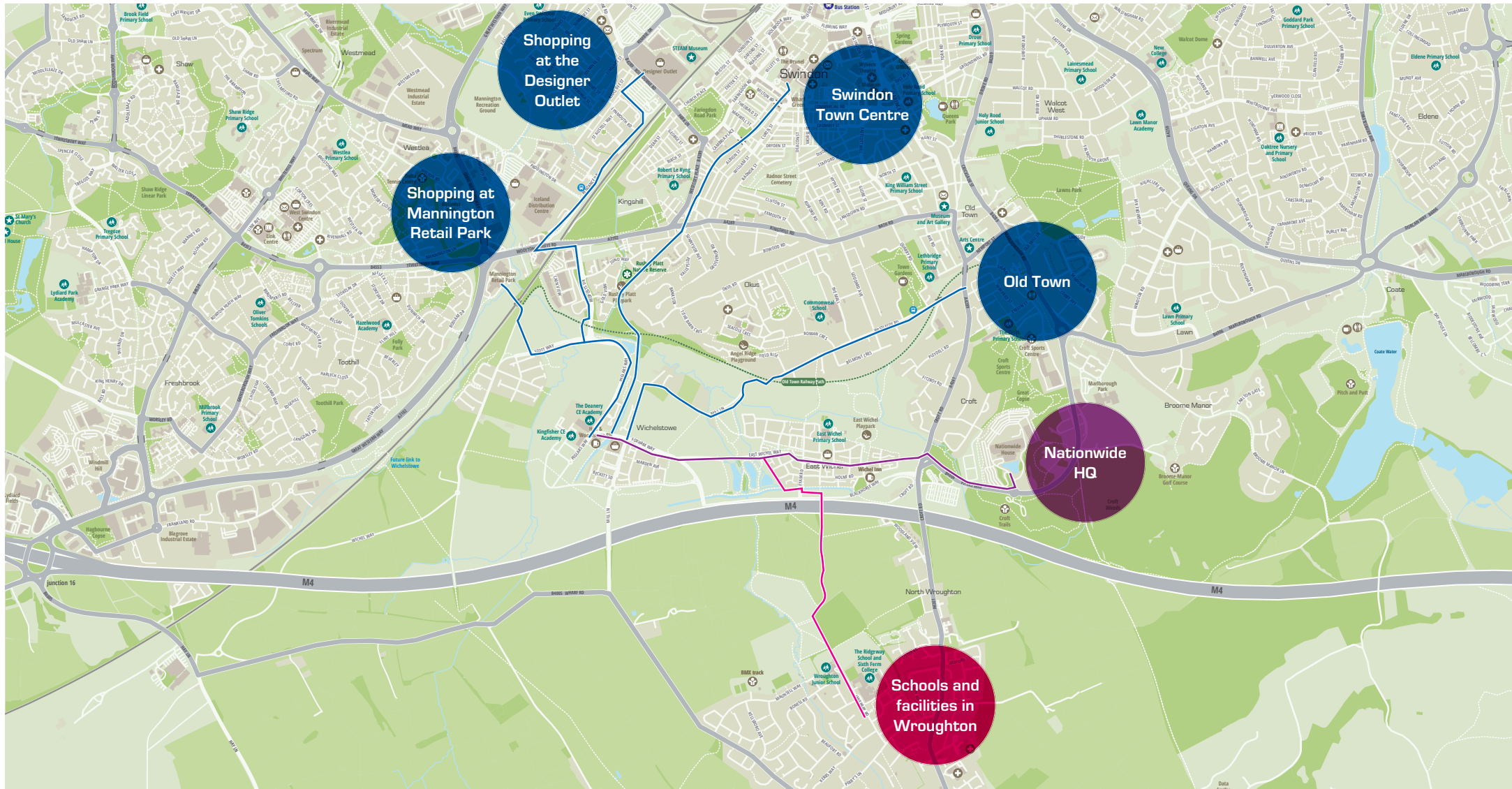
Designed by artist Duncan Kitson, the Birds in Flight were installed in 2023. Wichelstowe is home to wide range of birds with the majority of new homes including built in swift bricks, with nesting boxes also installed on mature trees integrated into the sites green spaces. The birds not only form a feature gateway but along with the bird shaped benches below them form a perfect place to sit and reflect.

### Boyesen Bridge

The landmark footbridge over the canal was designed by architect Sebastien Boyesen in 2017. The brief was to connect the new retail amenities and housing with the supermarket located on the other side of the canal, creating an accessible and aesthetically pleasing route. Working closely with the Stantec engineering team the 35m long, 28 tonne bridge balances functional elements with a stunning design. The bridge is formed of laser cut steel panels interspersed with coloured resin which reflect the sunlight during the day and are illuminated at night by lights set within the handrail. The design was developed by looking at the local flora, creating images based on the distinctive quality of such plants as the Horseshoe Vetch and Bath Asparagus that are found locally.

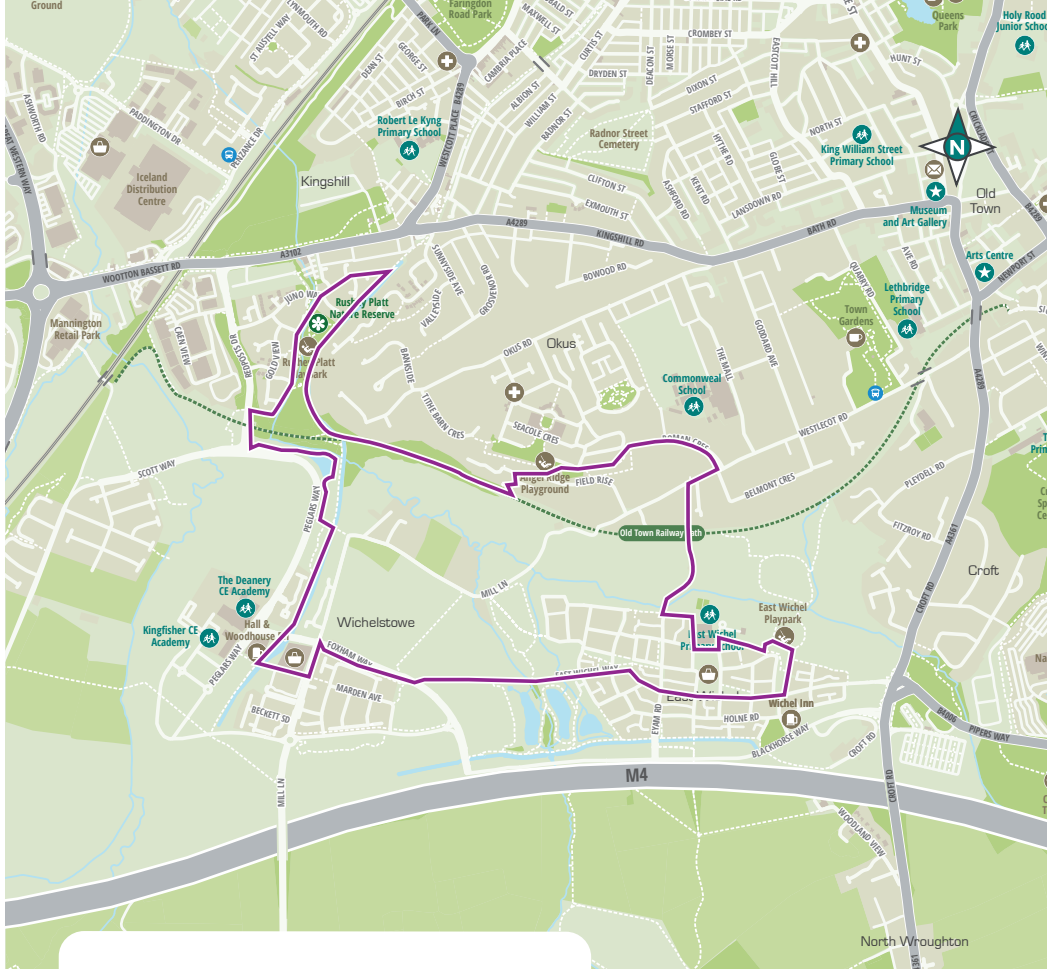
For more details of public art in the area, see  
<https://www.wichelstowe.co.uk/discover/public-art>

# Getting around.. To work, shop and school



Base map © Open StreetMap





## Play Park Crawl

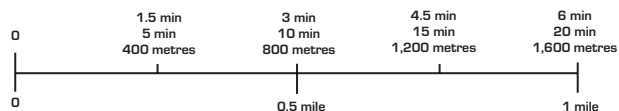


**1hr 15minutes (plus  
stopping time for play!)**



**3.8 miles**

Scan me to follow the route  
on a smartphone



Base map © Open StreetMap



# Play Park Crawl About this walk

**This walk was submitted by Becky Cox, who cycles the paths of Swindon with her co-pilot as part of Swindon's "Let's Ride" programme of free guided rides. Therefore she knows the routes well, but also the location of every playpark!**

"This walk visits 3 great local play parks in the area (Rushy Platt, Angel Ridge and East Wichel)," she explains. "A park crawl is a great free, fun activity for families and bringing a picnic along can make a day of it."

## Did you know?

The Angel Ridge Playground is a popular sand pit park. The bones of an Ichthyosaurus (marine dinosaur) were once discovered nearby, and this pre-historic relic inspired the use of fossils throughout the play site, with hidden replica fossils secreted in the sand area and a giant ammonite heralding the start of the play site.

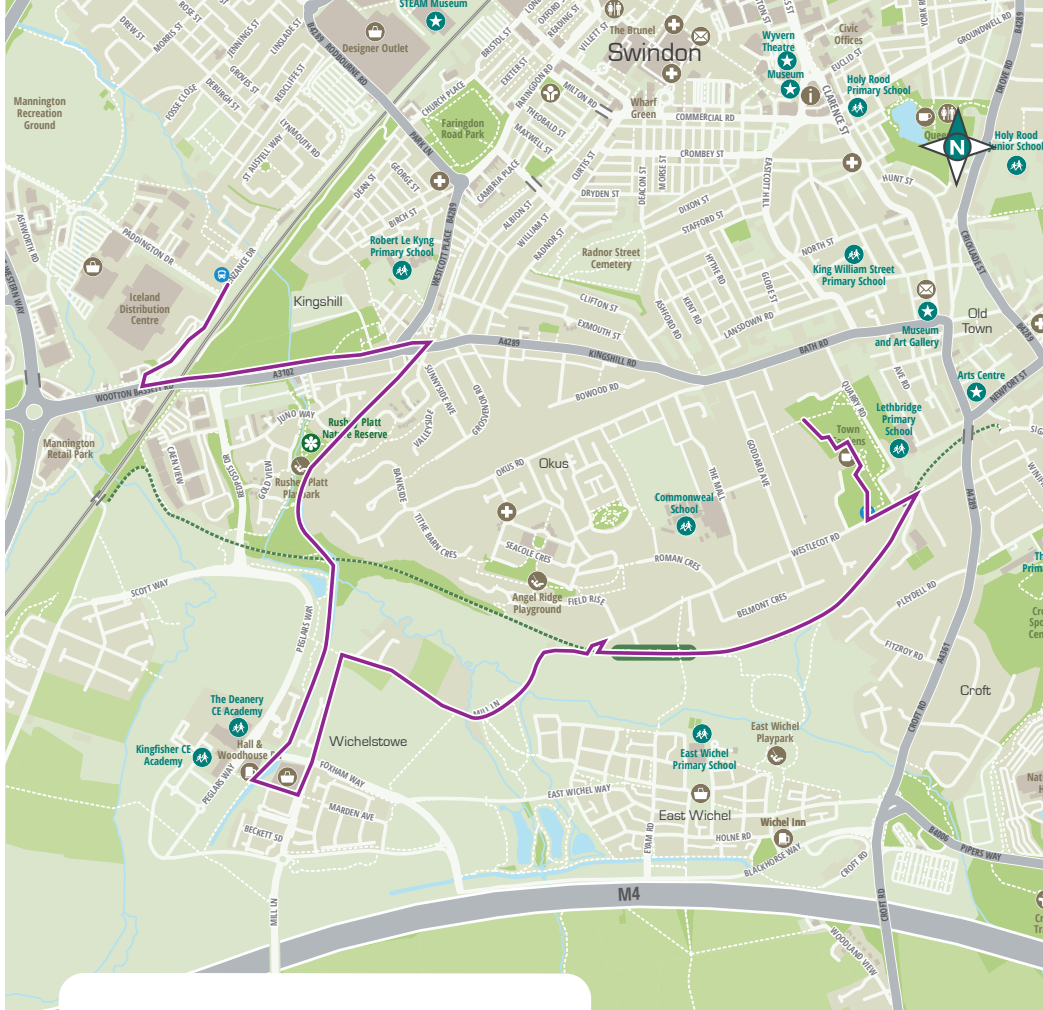
One of the key features of the site is the weighty Turning Stone, a huge 5 tonne boulder which even

small children can easily rotate. This is personalised with an inscription, a poem by Jane Evans.

Engraved elements along the pathway of the site chart the history of Angel Ridge, from dinosaurs through to the current day.







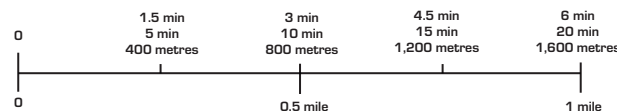
## The Old and the New



1hr 15minutes

3.8 miles

Scan me to follow the route  
on a smartphone



Base map © Open StreetMap

# The Old and the New About this walk

**This is a linear (one way route) so you can catch the bus back if you don't want to walk back again.**

Bus route 22 connects the start and end of this route every half hour Monday to Saturday. If starting the walk from the Town

Gardens, the bus stop back is on Penzance Drive (just after the Padstow Road

junction). Alternatively if you walk the opposite way, there is a bus stop at the south end of the Town Gardens on Westlecot Road.

### About the Old Town Gardens

The Town Gardens are a superb, Grade II listed Victorian pleasure garden. Music events are often held in the gardens in either the Grade II listed bandstand or

the Art Deco music bowl, set in a natural amphitheatre. There is also an aviary, bowling green, rose garden and cafe. Today the Gardens still retain the feeling of their original Victorian splendour. Spanning over six hectares, they have been laid out to create an environment where visitors can stroll and relax.





# Canal and Rushey Platt Nature Walk

## Can you spot?

The canal around Rushey Platt is home to a vast array of wildlife.  
How many of the following can you spot?



Mute Swan



Moorhen



Watervole



Grey heron



Grey wagtail



Kingfisher



Blue tit



Dragonfly



Reed bunting



Red kite

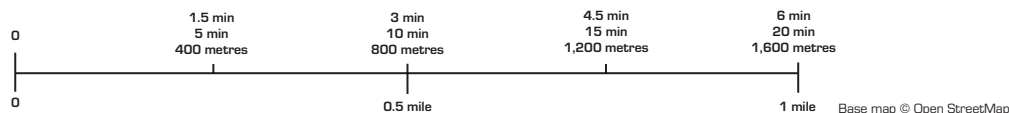
## Canal and Rushey Platt Nature

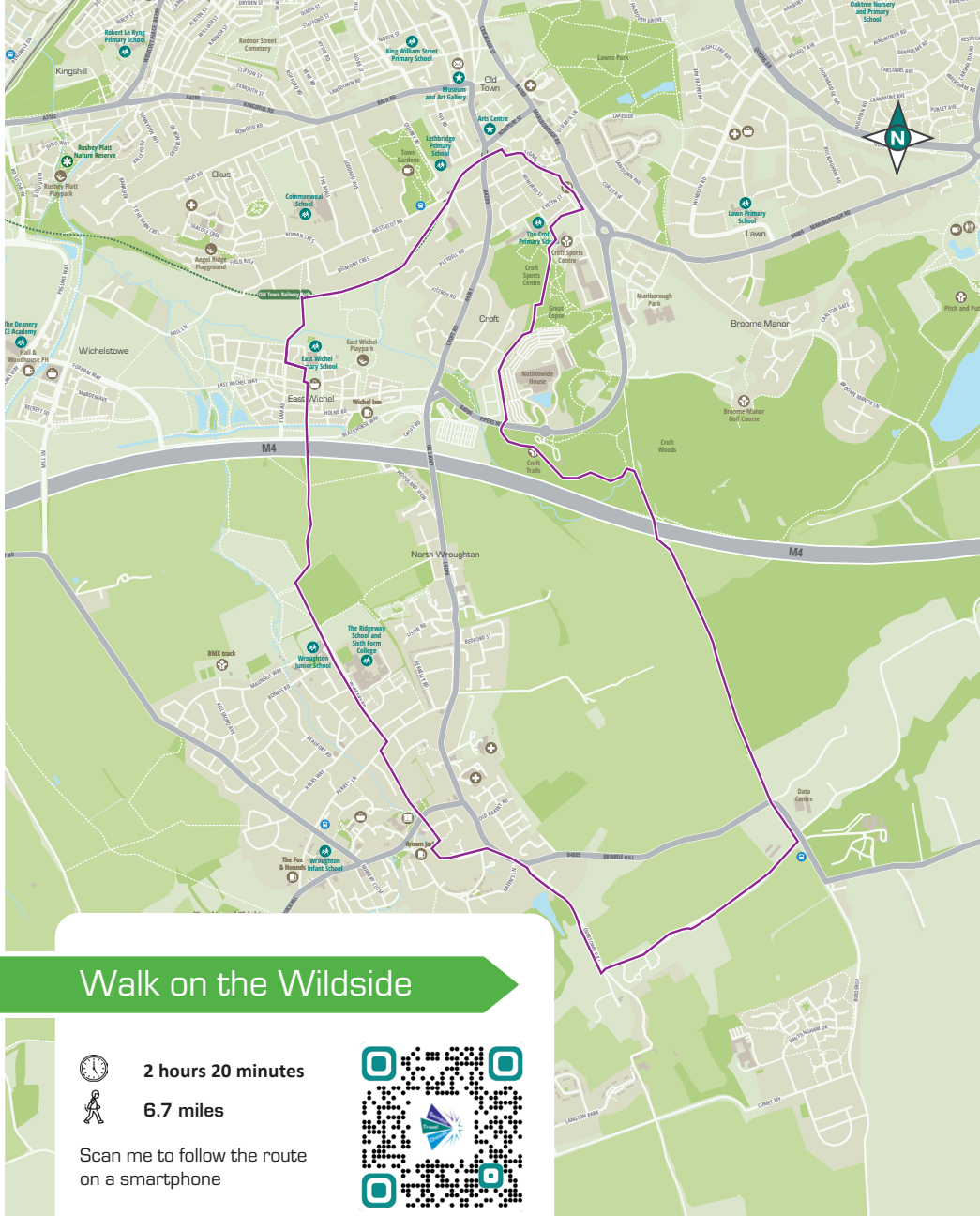


50 minutes

2.5 miles

Scan me to follow the route  
on a smartphone





## About this walk

The “Walk on the Wildside” route was submitted by Andrea Turner, who says, “This route explores the tracks and trails around south Swindon, keeping off the tarmac as much as possible. It feels a long way from the busy roads of the town and is full of wildlife as the seasons change.”

### Focus on Wroughton

Wroughton is a mile from East Wichel via a traffic free path from the canalside to Inverary Road. Wroughton has shops, several pubs, a library and community centre and an interesting history.

### Did you know?

Wroughton has a strong connection to horse racing. In 1874, the village celebrated

for two days after the horse George Frederick, which was stabled in the High Street, won The Derby. The horse and its Wroughton-born trainer, Tom Leader, were escorted from Swindon railway station by a brass band and received in the village which had declared all of its pubs to be open houses and provided free beer for the occasion.

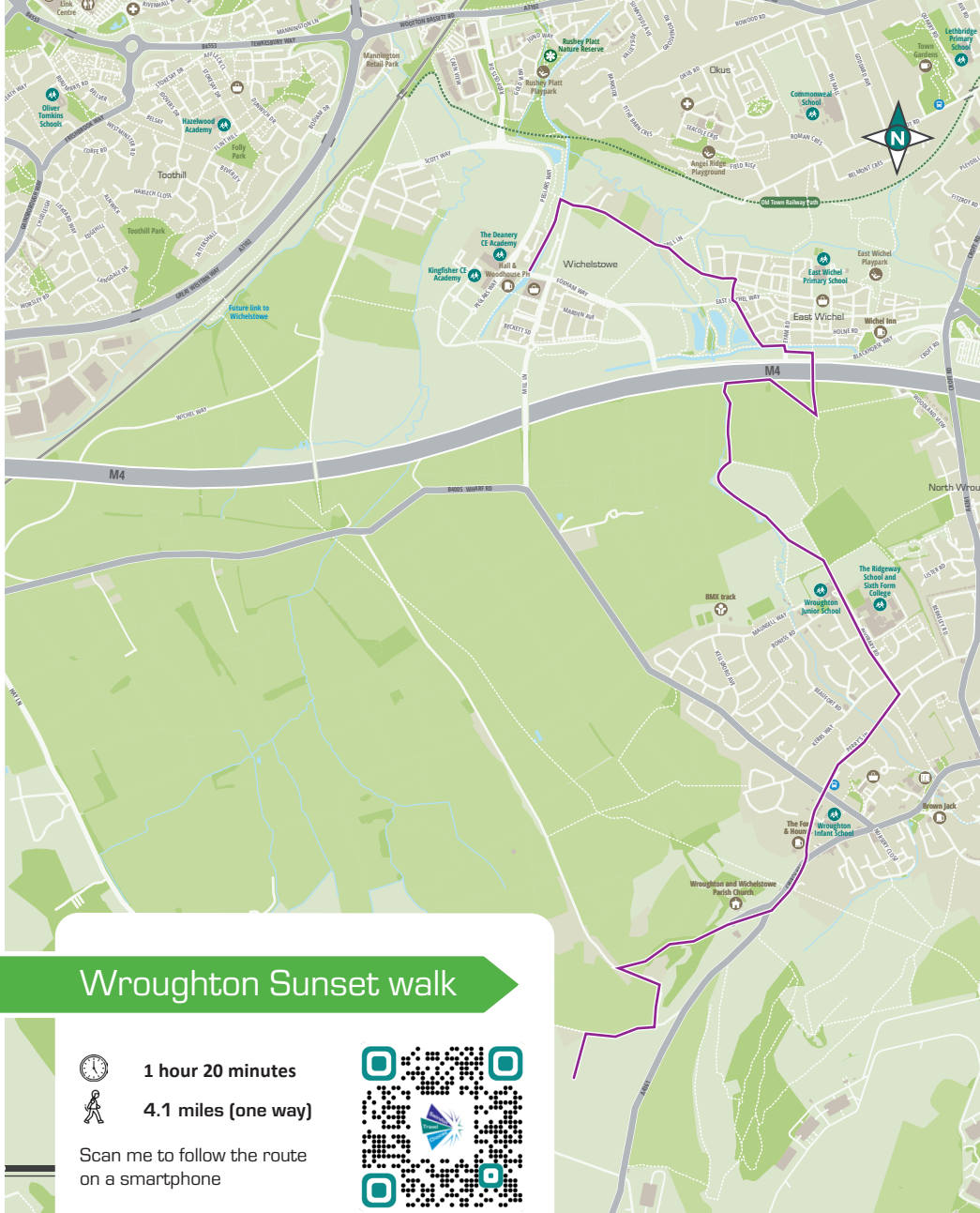
Probably Wroughton’s best loved horse was Brown Jack, who had been ill but restored to health at Barcelona stables (now The Pichens) with a diet that included whiskey and hot beer. By 1933 Brown Jack had won the Queen Alexandra Stakes at Ascot five years running and was entered there again for his last ever race. To the delight

of the crowd and, of course the whole of Wroughton, he won again, beating the King’s horse into second place.

Brown Jack’s fame was such that there is a bronze statue of him at Ascot, a LNER locomotive was named after him, his skeleton is still preserved in the Natural History Museum and, of course, there’s the Brown Jack pub in Wroughton.







## Wroughton Sunset walk

### About this walk

This is a linear (one way route) so you can catch the bus back if you don't want to walk back again. Stagecoach bus number 9 runs half hourly (Monday to Saturday) and you can catch it from the High Street back to Waitrose and onto East Wichel. Make sure you check the time of the last bus back in the evenings if you are going to watch the sunset! Check <https://www.stagecoachbus.com/timetables> and search for timetable number 9. There isn't a Sunday service.



This walk was submitted by Declan Murray. He says, "This is the perfect walk from which to walk from Wichelstowe all the way through to Wroughton and watch the sun set in the summer. The final kilometre is the most rewarding up past the stunning church of St John the Baptist and St Helen before climbing the hillside up to Trig Point (208m)."



Walking to school can be quicker than driving, and it's a great way to spend quality time with your children.

## Walking to makes sense!

If you have to drive to school, why not 'Park and Stride'?

Find a safe place to park a short distance from the school and walk the last few minutes of your journey. This will give you all the benefits of walking and avoid the congestion at the school gate, so it will be safer for everyone.

For more information on walking to school, 5 minute walk zones or walking buses, email [stars@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:stars@swindon.gov.uk) or visit [www.livingstreets.org.uk](http://www.livingstreets.org.uk)



Sarah from East Wichel:

"Walking to school with the children gives me time to chat to them and I know they are getting a dose of exercise and fresh air."

Mrs Jones from Old Town:

"It's a great opportunity for my kids to learn vital road safety skills as we walk to school together. I'm confident that this will make them safer as they get older and travel more independently."

Research shows that children who walk to school arrive more alert and ready to learn at the start of the day

## Top marks for walking

✓ It saves you money

Parents could save an average of £642 each year by walking rather than driving to school.

✓ It's sociable

84% of children who walk to school meet up with their friends on the way.

✓ It's educational

Following footpaths to school helps children get to know their way around their local area and to be more independent.

✓ It's better for the planet

Walking cuts CO2 emissions, as well as exhaust fumes around the school gate.

✓ It's good for you too!

Striding to school with the kids is good exercise for you too!



## Simple Steps to be Safe

Enjoy all the benefits of walking and keep safe  
Just follow a few basic tips...

### 'Be bright, be seen'.

Wear bright or light clothing, with reflective strips on a jacket or bag so you can be seen when light levels fall.

It's best to choose routes that are **well-used** and **well-lit** if you're out and about after dark.



It sounds like basic advice, but **keep looking and listening as you cross the road** so you don't get distracted ...and look out for cyclists!



**Carry a charged mobile** and, if possible, let someone know where you're going if you're going on a long walk. Don't use the mobile phone whilst crossing the road.

Keeping Swindon **Safe**

It's a good idea to know where you're headed or to **take a map** if you don't. Go to [www.swindontravelchoices.org.uk](http://www.swindontravelchoices.org.uk)

If you're wearing headphones, just make sure you can still hear traffic and be aware of what's going on around you.

**You often hear traffic before you can see it!**

**Take some money** in case you need to use public transport.



**Use crossings where you can**, and if you're walking with young children, hold their hand or get them to hold on to pushchair handles. Make sure traffic has stopped before stepping into the road, even on a crossing.



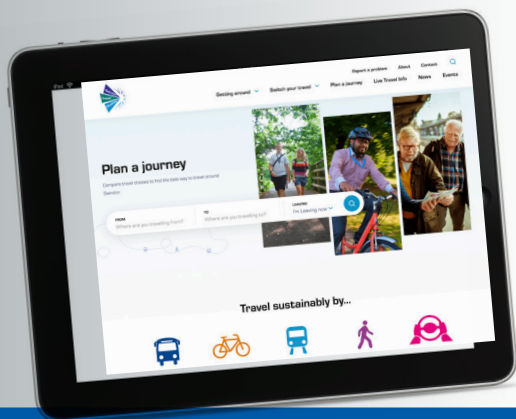
# An easier way to plan your journey



Log on for

Travel guides | Cycle maps |  
Bus information |  
News and events

[www.swindontravelchoices.co.uk](http://www.swindontravelchoices.co.uk)



## An easier way to plan your journey

- ➔ Journey planner allows people to plan and compare routes by bike, on foot or by bus, car and train
- ➔ All Swindon travel information in one easy to use website



## Visit

[www.swindontravelchoices.co.uk/plan-a-journey](http://www.swindontravelchoices.co.uk/plan-a-journey)  
to discover your travel choices