

BISHOP'S STORTFORD

TOWN TRAIL 5



Historical sites and the countryside:
a walk exploring the River Stort -
a tranquil chalk stream and the
Navigation, with the town at their heart

WILDLIFE ALONG THE RIVER STORT

Waterside Stortford is a chalk stream which has a diverse and unique ecology. There are only 200 chalk streams worldwide making them a global rarity. The ecology of the Stort is one of vegetation dependent upon wet conditions and these in turn dictate the wildlife that will be within the river and upon the bankside.

Bat Willow Hurst Country Park (1)

The river banks are overgrown with reedbeds, offering nesting opportunity for birds such as reed warblers and roosting sites for other warblers and buntings. Balancing pools here offer feeding sites for mallards, moorhens and grey wagtails whilst in high summer, native plants attract a good variety of butterflies including brown argus (A) and common blue.

Grange Paddocks (2-5)

Kingfishers can be seen here through the winter months whilst in summer damselflies can be witnessed along with a range of dragonflies. Overhead, buzzards can be seen circling on thermals whilst tawny owls roost in tree holes. On the playing fields large flocks of gulls may be seen along with carrion crows and starlings. The weir offers a feeding environment for a wide variety of fish, particularly chub and roach, whilst pied and grey wagtails hawk for insects. In the alders along the bankside, flocks of siskins and occasional redpoll can be heard and seen. Common comphrey, Indian balsam and large burdock plants fill the banks where wrens and robins feed and breed.

Castle Gardens (6-7)

Mallards, moorhens (B) and occasionally coot can be found here and in the well-established trees blackbirds, song thrushes and a variety of finches can be recorded. Water voles can be seen occasionally but brown rats are much more common here.

Town Centre (8-9)

A junction in the canalised river here, Hockerill Cut, has a good stand of reeds and bulrushes, offering safe breeding sites for the local wildfowl. Mute swans glide along.

South of the Town Centre (10-19)

Here, large carp (C) laze near the surface and this quiet area offers sanctuary to little egrets (D), kingfishers and woodland birds such as green woodpecker and jay (E). Further along, Canada geese may be seen and more coots and moorhens. Trees along this stretch are mainly willow and large ash where great spotted woodpeckers search for insects. Tree creepers and nuthatches also reside in the small Herts Wildlife Trust Reserve, Rushy Mead. Damselfly and dragonfly species may be seen as well as tits, chaffinches and magpies. The next wide, canalised stretch is a good place for seeing grass snakes swimming in search of amphibians or a newly hatched duckling (F). A wide variety of fish reside in the river here. Buddleia bushes adjacent to the lock gates are a magnet for many butterfly species, including small tortoiseshell, red admiral, peacock and whites. Overhead, a good chance that a glorious red kite will be seen.

South of Twyford Locks (20-21)

Thorley Wash Reserve, the premier local reserve, is a great site for Barn owls and skulking grasshopper warblers. Reed buntings call from willows and resident water voles may be observed. Ragged robin and cuckoo flowers bloom over the marshy area where longhorn cattle are kept to enhance the habitat. In winter, the screeching of water rails is a common sound from the sedge near the path. Cetti's warbler may burst into their explosive song; frequently heard but seldom seen.

The most common insect here in late spring onwards is the spectacular metallic green or blue banded demoiselle damselfly (G). In winter, huge flocks of redpoll and siskins take up residence in the alder trees on the far bank.

This map shows the Waterside Stortford information panels; they will tell you more about your surroundings as you walk along

-  FOOTPATH
-  TOWPATH
-  PLAY AREA
-  TOILETS
-  DISABLED TOILETS
-  PARKING
-  RAILWAY STATION
-  BUS INTERCHANGE
-  BUS STOP
-  TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE



map not to scale:
covers approx.
3 miles / 4.8km

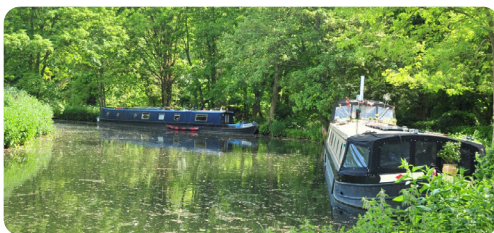
STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET

(A) Brown argus butterfly



(D) Little Egret

South Mill c.1900
on a branch of the
River Stort, seen from
the Stort Navigation.



Twyford Mill c.1901
Note the chimney:
the mill used steam-
and water-power
after 1900.



Bat Willow Hurst Country Park

Grange Paddocks Meadow

Cannons Mill Lane

Grange Paddocks

Stane Street Crossing

River Stort

Sworders Field

Hockerill Cut

Station Road Bridge

Phipp's Yard & Swan Dock

Gas Holders

The Maltings

South Mill

London Road

Railway Crossing

South Mill Weir

South Mill Lock

Rushy Mead Nature Reserve

Pig Lane

London Road

Twyford Mill Lock

Twyford Mill

Spellbrook & Sawbridgeworth

Thorley Wash Nature Reserve

Twyford Mill Lock

Twyford Mill

Twyford Mill Lock

Twyford Mill

Twyford Mill Lock

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Twyford Mill



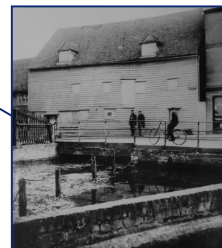
Parsonage Mill 1908,
with Parsonage Mill farm
to the left.



(B) Moorhen



(C) Carp



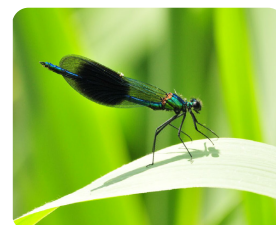
The Old Town Mill on Bridge Street c.1898.
The cyclist is on the old bridge; the water
mill was pulled down in 1899, a stone now
marking its former location



(E) Jay



(F) Newly hatched
ducklings



(G) Demoiselle damselfly

ENJOY WATERSIDE STORTFORD

Waterside Stortford is a riverside and countryside trail passing through the historic market town of Bishop's Stortford. The trail features twenty-one information boards along its length illuminating its history and ecology. You can do all of the walk or part of the walk at your leisure. The entirety of the trail takes approximately 3 hours.

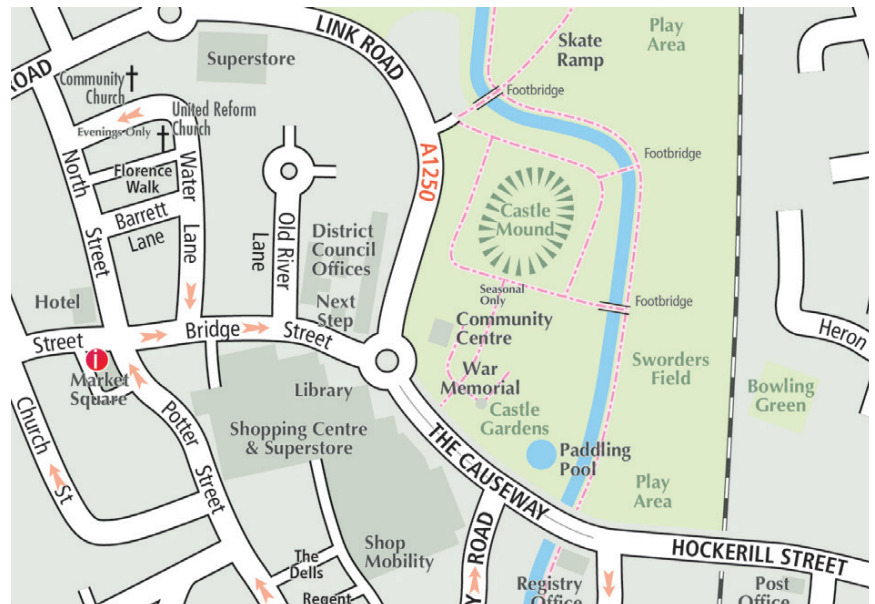
Cycle or stroll through the 3.5 miles (5.6km) trail enjoying beautiful relaxing views of the water, nature and wildlife. Waterside Stortford winds gently through the valley of a chalk stream, through to the maltings of historic Bishop's Stortford and the canal scenes of the Stort Navigation. Walk through the market town enjoying the views, whilst doing a spot of shopping. Have a bite to eat in the various restaurants, or have a drink in the many historic pubs and popular bars.

The way is flat, unfenced, has country gates but no stiles, and it may be muddy after and during wet weather. From Bat Willow Hurst southbound to Grange Paddocks the trail is partly unpaved with field boundaries, which would be unsuitable for buggies and wheelchair users. Those with buggies and wheelchairs can start the trail from Grange Paddocks heading towards the Town Centre and onwards to Twyford Mill (or vice versa).

TRAIL ROUTES AND CAR PARKING

From the Tourist Information Centre

1. Walk down Bridge Street on the right-hand side, pass the library and on The Causeway you will come to Hockerill Cut on your right, the first part of the Navigation. From there take the trail to Twyford Mill.
2. Walk down Bridge Street, cross over The Causeway at the crossing to Castle Park. This route heading upstream passes the children's Splash Pool, Play Area and Waytemore Castle built in 1086 by the Normans.



Car Park (CM22 7PA), Grange Paddocks (2 hrs free), Cannon Mill Lane Car Park and Bat Willow Hurst Country Park (CM23 2TH).

Bishop's Stortford Train Station

From the Station, walk towards town past the *Bus Interchange*; access the Navigation via the left side of Station Bridge and follow the trail northbound or southbound.

Car Parking

www.eastherts.gov.uk/stortfordcarparks
Short-stay car parking in the town centre is at Sainsbury's (multi-storey), Apton Road, Link Road and Northgate End.

Free Long-stay car Parking is at Twyford Lock

Bus Routes

The 510 bus runs daily every 30 minutes. Bus stops are located at Whittington Way (for Twyford Mill), South Street, Bishop's Stortford Interchange (near the train station), Dane Street, The Causeway and Michaels Road (for Bat Willow Hurst).

For more information from Arriva Buses call 01279 426349/0300 123 4050

www.arrivabus.co.uk/herts-and-essex/services/508-509-510---harlow-to-stansted-airport/?direction=outbound

WATERSIDE STORTFORD HISTORY

The River Stort coursed through the town before 1970s redevelopment. The Domesday Book (a Norman tax assessment of 1086 AD) noted two mills, one probably on Bridge Street (Town Mill), an extension of the Saxon Causeway that crossed the marshy river valley. By the 18th century there were 4 mills driven by the Stort, indicating the importance of grain for the local economy. Since groundwater was often contaminated, beer, brewed from malted barley, was widely consumed.

The **Southern section** follows the towpath of the Stort Navigation to Twyford Mill. The River Lea, which the Stort meets downstream a mile beyond Roydon, was anciently navigable to London, providing a transport artery that bypassed poor roadways. The Industrial Revolution spurred entrepreneurs to improve the Lea and navigate the Stort to promote Stortford's economy. Thomas Adderley, the landlord of the Crown coaching Inn at Hockerill, and George Jackson (later Duckett), naval administrator, judge and MP, obtained the finance (perhaps £100,000) and Parliamentary approval to begin work on the Navigation in 1766.

It ran from three terminal basins in Stortford, falling 93 feet through 15 locks to reach the Lea at Feildes Weir 13 miles away. The first passage of 3 barges on 24 October 1769 occasioned a massive street party. Granaries and malting houses flourished, generating commerce with London; barges returned with timber and coal. Today the Navigation is a countryside oasis. Its towpath, along which horses once drew their cargoes, is continuous to Limehouse.

USEFUL WEBSITES:

Bishop's Stortford Town Council – 01279 715100
www.bishopsstortfordtc.gov.uk/waterside-stortford

Bishop's Stortford Tourist Information Centre – 01279 715001
www.bishopsstortfordtc.gov.uk/tourist-information-centre
www.facebook.com/BishopsStortfordTIC/

Canal and River Trust – 0303 040 4040
www.canalrivertrust.org.uk

Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust – 01727 858901
www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk

Essex Wildlife Trust – 01621 862960
www.essexwt.org.uk

The History of the Lee and Stort Navigations
www.leeandstort.co.uk/

Bishop's Stortford Civic Federation -
www.stortfordcf.org.uk
www.facebook.com/groups/CIVICFED/

Bishop's Stortford Museum – 01279 710200
www.rhodesartscomplex.co.uk/themuseum
www.facebook.com/themuseumStortford

Memories of Bishop's Stortford
www.facebook.com/groups/1685205598391757/

Bishop's Stortford History (Guide 8)
www.stortfordhistory.co.uk

Bishop's Stortford History Society
www.bishopsstortfordhistorysociety.org.uk



Waterside Stortford is a collaboration between Bishop's Stortford Town Council, Environment Agency, East Herts District Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Canal and River Trust and a number of other stakeholders including Bishop's Stortford Civic Federation.

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