



Nature Discovery Centre

Kingfisher

Bluebells

Kennet and Avon Canal

Lapwing

Sulphur knight

Directions

Leaving the Nature Discovery Centre, head south with the lake on your left. At the corner of the lake, head west across the junction of tracks, signed Reedbeds. When the track bears left, continue straight ahead along a small path under the electricity wires.

1 Excavation of this area uncovered many flint tools from 10,000 years ago: tools for cutting vegetables, scraping animal skins, making holes and sawing.

Follow the path through the reedbeds, crossing two small streams, until you reach the river and canal.

2 Approximately 40 species of insect feed only on reeds. Look out for the bloody-nosed beetle that gets its name from emitting a blood-like substance from its mouth when it feels threatened.

At the canal towpath, turn right to go over a bridge. Pass Bull's Lock and cross the canal on the swing-bridge. Turn left onto the road and walk under the railway. Keep to the right along a track following the footpath sign until you come to a lake created from a disused gravel pit on the right.

3 This lake attracts a wide range of birds, such as the little ringed plover, a summer visitor from Africa.

Continue on the track up the hill.

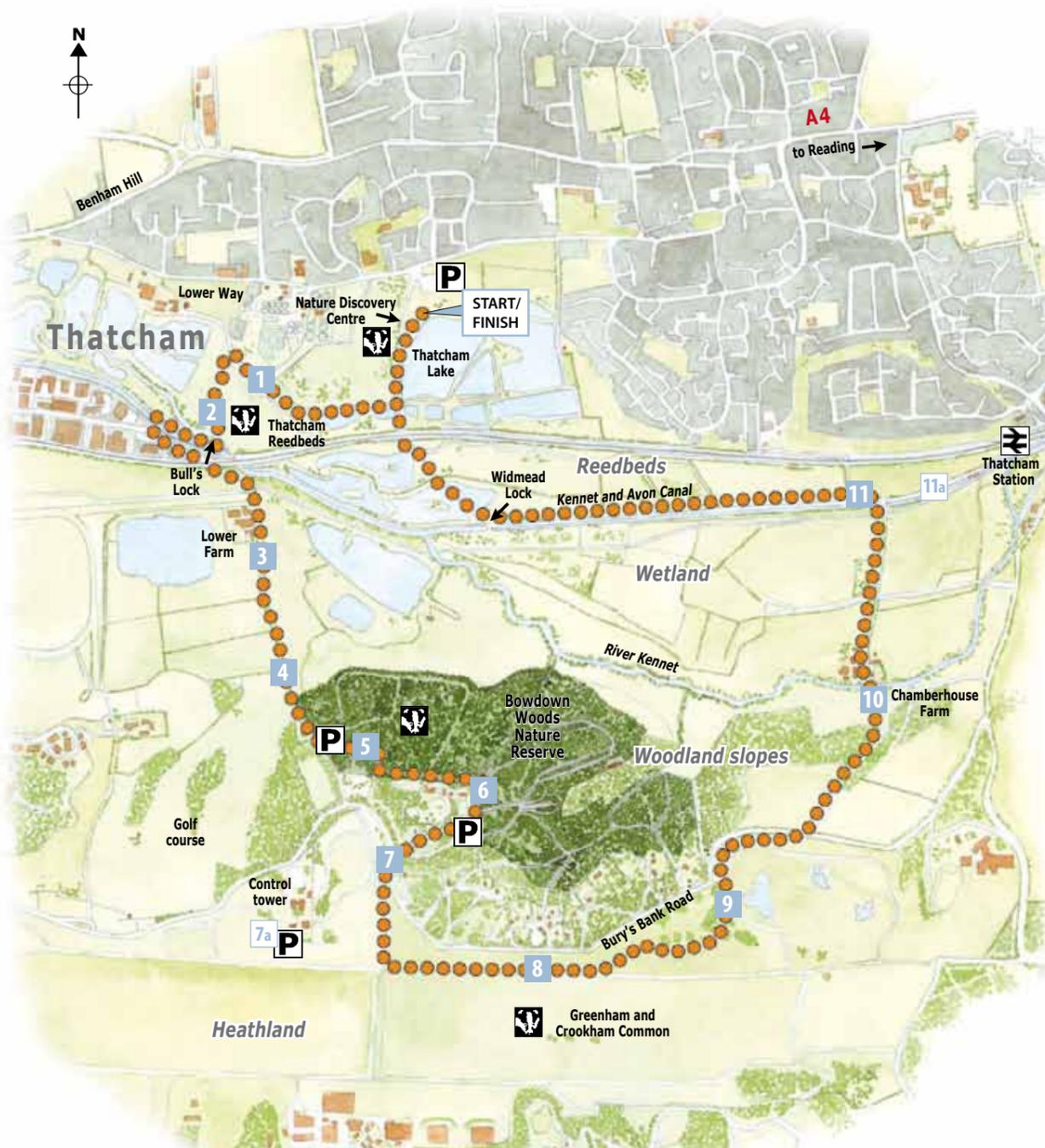
4 Moving away from the river valley up a wooded escarpment, you might notice the ground is wet. This water seeps out of the ground at the junction of the London Clay and the overlying sands.

Turn into the car park for BBOWT's Bowdown Woods Nature Reserve on your left. Take the path in the top corner of the car park and follow it up a slope between two banks until you reach a fence on your right. Follow the path along the fence.

5 Notice the majestic, ancient oak trees. The bark of oak was once used in the tanning of leather and acorns were fed to pigs. There are over 300 species of fungi in Bowdown Woods; spot the yellow sulphur knight with its unpleasant gas-like smell. On a sunny summer's day look out for the distinctive gatekeeper butterfly.

When you reach a T-junction, turn right on a Tarmac path.

Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust 6-mile circular walk through the Living Landscape Wild Walk One



When you reach the car park, walk along the Tarmac drive to Bury's

6 The Old Bomb Site on the left of the path was used as a wartime munitions site. A military structure was demolished and the bricks left provide shelter for lizards, snakes and small mammals.

When you reach the car park, walk along the Tarmac drive to Bury's

Bank Road. Cross the road onto Greenham Common. Turn left onto a small path through the gorse, heading for a flagpole.

7 Look underfoot here, most of the pebbles are smooth rounded flints showing that they have been transported a distance in the great river

systems that once covered the area.

Before going left, you might detour ahead to the old Airfield Control Tower.

7a Near the control tower is a map and information about the Common. The

present tower was built in 1951 and updated in the 1980s. The tower is now a refurbished Grade II listed building.

Re-join the walk at the flagpole, walking east along the Common on a wide gravel track.

8 You are parallel to the old runway: 3,660 m in length. In 1995 the 1.25 million tonnes of concrete was removed, and some reused for Newbury by-pass. You may see the Exmoor ponies grazing on the common; helping to manage the heathland habitat and conserve this rare breed of ponies too.

After some distance, take the left fork and follow this path as it goes through the trees.

9 The area of lakes on your right was re-landscaped to create 'micro-climates'; different facing slopes and drier or damper areas to give varied conditions for wildlife. Look out for black and white lapwings circling over the pools. The name describes their wavering flight.

Keep the lakes on your right until you come to a gate on your left. Cross the road and head down the gravel bridleway. Turn left at the metallated track and cross the River Kennet to Chamberhouse Farm.

10 The American signal crayfish, an escapee from crayfish farms, is now very common in the river; unfortunately, it carries a disease that has almost wiped out the native white-clawed crayfish. Evidence of late Bronze Age activity has been found at Chamberhouse Farm; it is also reputed to have been the site of a late medieval castle.

Continue ahead between the hedges to the canal.

11 The swing bridge crosses a mile-long straight of the canal built to by-pass the winding River Kennet. In June notice the tall, prolific hemlock water dropwort and look out for the bright blue kingfisher as it flies low over the canal.

Our walk turns left on the towpath, but you might detour right along the towpath to Monkey Marsh lock.

11a This has been restored as an old traditional 'turf-sided' lock using modern materials. South of the lock, there is a 'pillbox', a Second World War defence structure.

Head back along the towpath to the next lock, Widmead. Just after, turn away from the canal through a gate. Cross the railway being extremely careful and walk straight ahead back to the Centre where our walk ends.

Please note the walk is to be followed in an anti-clockwise direction

The numbers on the map indicate points of interest along the way.

Remember you can help look after wildlife by keeping your dog on a lead.

Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Oxfordshire



KEY

Railway Station

Parking

BBOWT nature reserve

The Nature Discovery Centre,
Thatcham Reedbeds and
Greenham & Crookham Commons

Restored by the Berks,
Bucks & Oxon Wildlife
Trust on behalf of:



Gatekeeper butterfly

Control Tower and Exmoor pony

Bell heather

Autumn lady's-tresses

Bloody-nosed beetle

Hemlock water dropwort

