



Banbury Fringe Walk Challenge

An epic circular challenge walk around the edge of Banbury, featuring gorgeous canal and countryside paths.

Distance 16.1 kilometers / 10 miles

Duration 5 hours and 30 minutes



Wildlife



Water feature



Great views



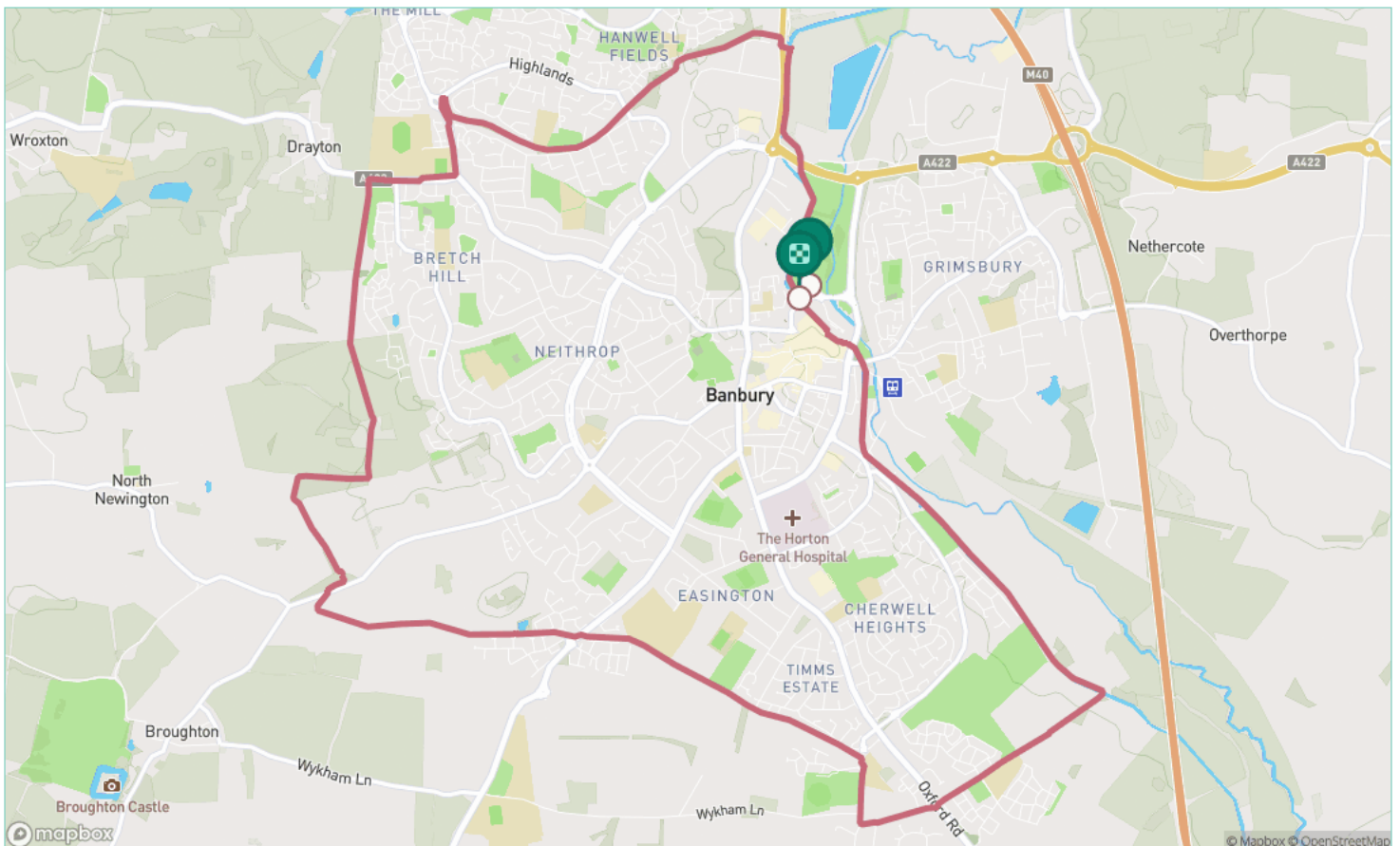
Public transport



Parking

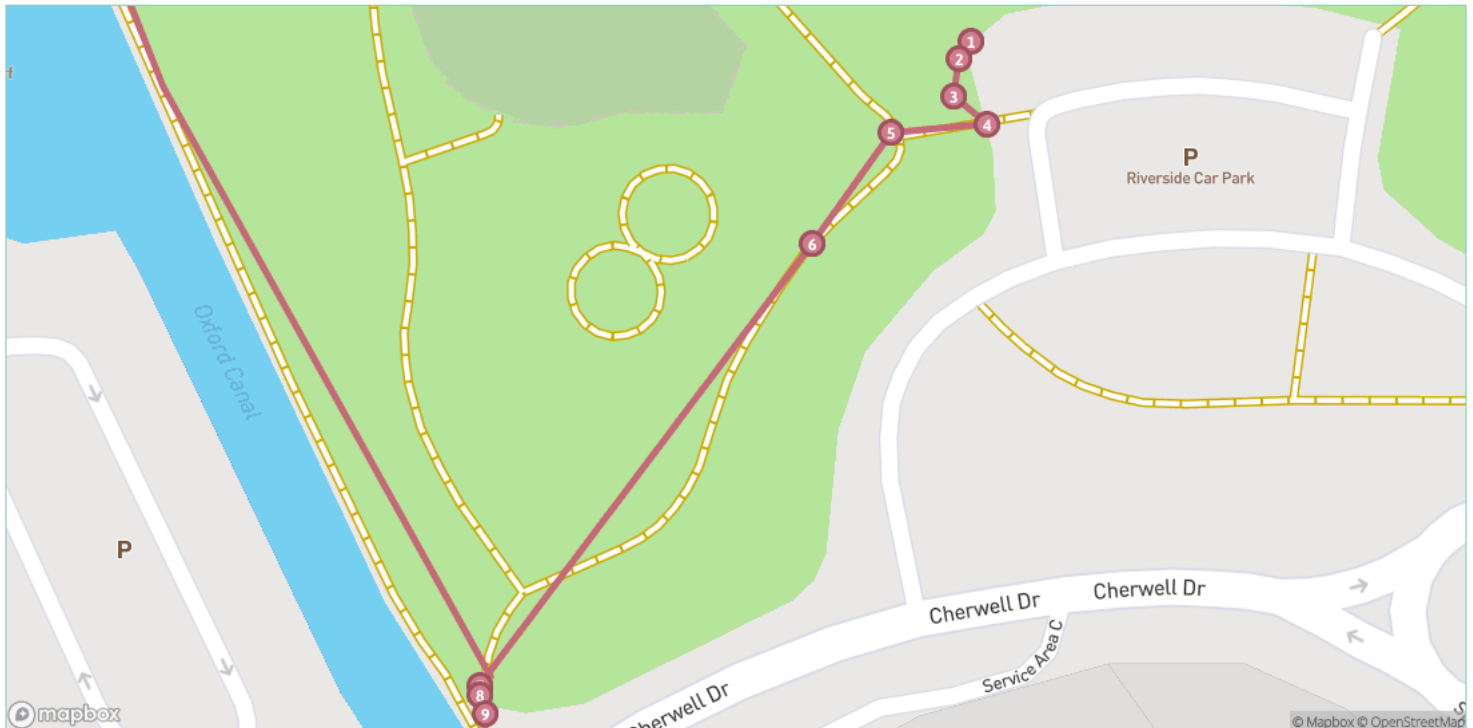


Botanics



Disclaimer: Directions are provided as guidance only. Weather, construction, closures or other factors may affect routes. Please take care when crossing roads and avoid private land. Always follow local signage and use common sense.

Created by Go Jauntly Ltd © 2023. Last Updated: 27 October 2023.



Step 1: This walk was created in partnership with Cherwell District Council. Enjoy over 30 walks across North Oxfordshire and experience the sights and sounds of nature as you go.

Step 2: Welcome to the Banbury Fringe Walk! This is an epic 16km route around the edge of Banbury. This walk has also been divided into four shorter circular sections, all starting in the town centre.

Step 3: There are also four linear routes that follow stretches of the Fringe Walk and suggest ways of returning to the start using public transport if possible. All these options are available in this app.

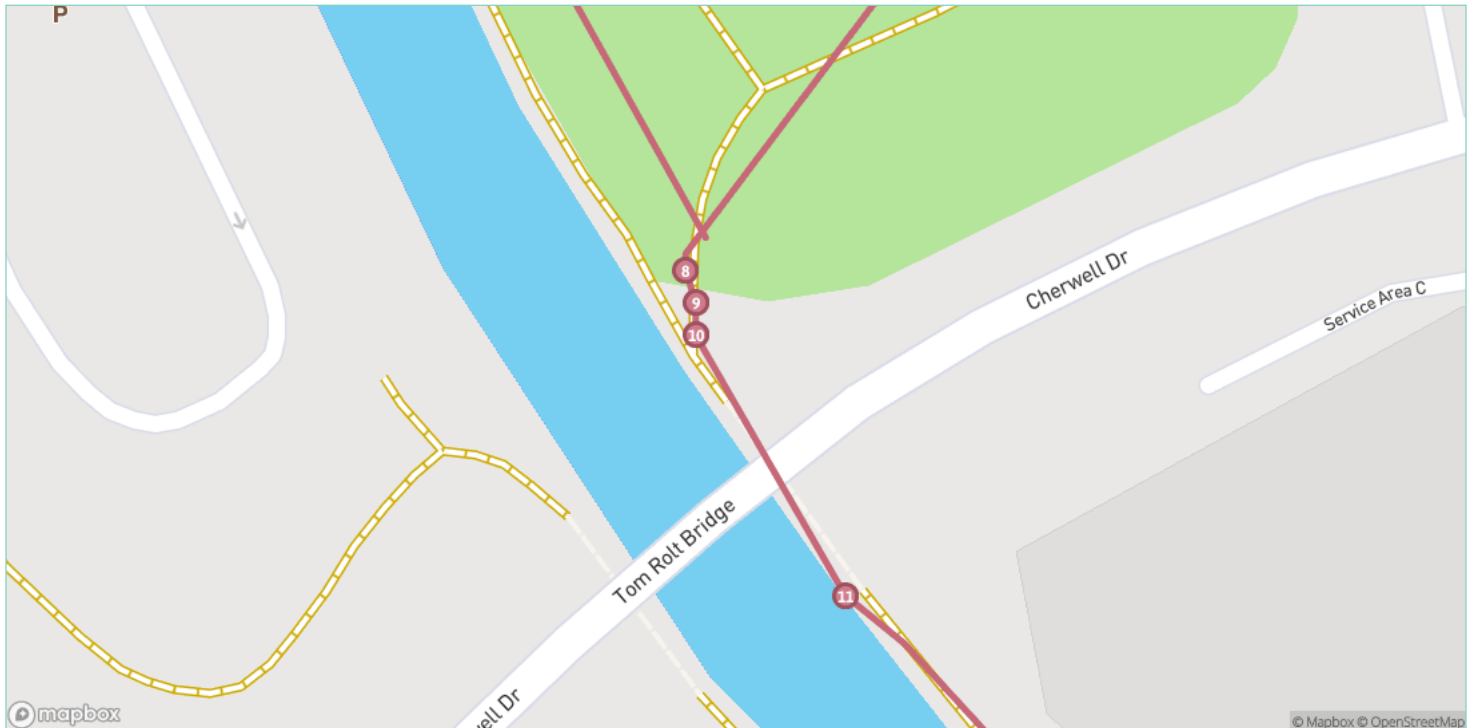
Step 4: Lets begin! From the Riverside Car Park (OX16 2AY), head towards the play area and white Spiceball Park sign.

Step 5: Bear left at the path junction which takes you to the canal towpath.

Step 6: Spiceball Park features open fields with a fitness trail, children's play and activity areas and picnic site. Woodland and wild flora areas have been established as well as a nature trail. Fishing is available by permit, too.

Step 7: You can easily get here from town centre on foot. If you're at the central bus station, you can start the route at step 21. If you're at the train station, swipe straight to step 26 and start from there.

Step 8: As its name suggests, the Banbury Fringe Circular Walk will take you on a ramble right around the urban fringe, where town meets countryside.



Step 9: You are advised to wear stout, waterproof footwear as walking in the countryside can be muddy and wet, even in the summer months. For advice on best ways to walk in the countryside check out the read more panel below.

North Oxfordshire

Best Ways to Walk

We want you to have fun outdoors, whilst looking after yourself, those around you and the natural environment. So here's some guidance to help you prepare for and enjoy your walk.

Check the weather. Wear appropriate clothing and footwear as walking can be wet and muddy.

Trousers are recommended as parts of the route can be overgrown with vegetation and nettles. Charge your phone. Take a mobile phone battery pack if you have one. Bear in mind that coverage can be patchy in rural areas so download this walk for offline mode in advance if you can.

Take water. If you're walking alone it's sensible, as a simple precaution, to let someone know where you are and when you expect to return.

Respect landowners. Remember that the countryside is a working place so leave crops, buildings, machinery and livestock well alone. Leave gates as you find them and please keep to the line of the path.

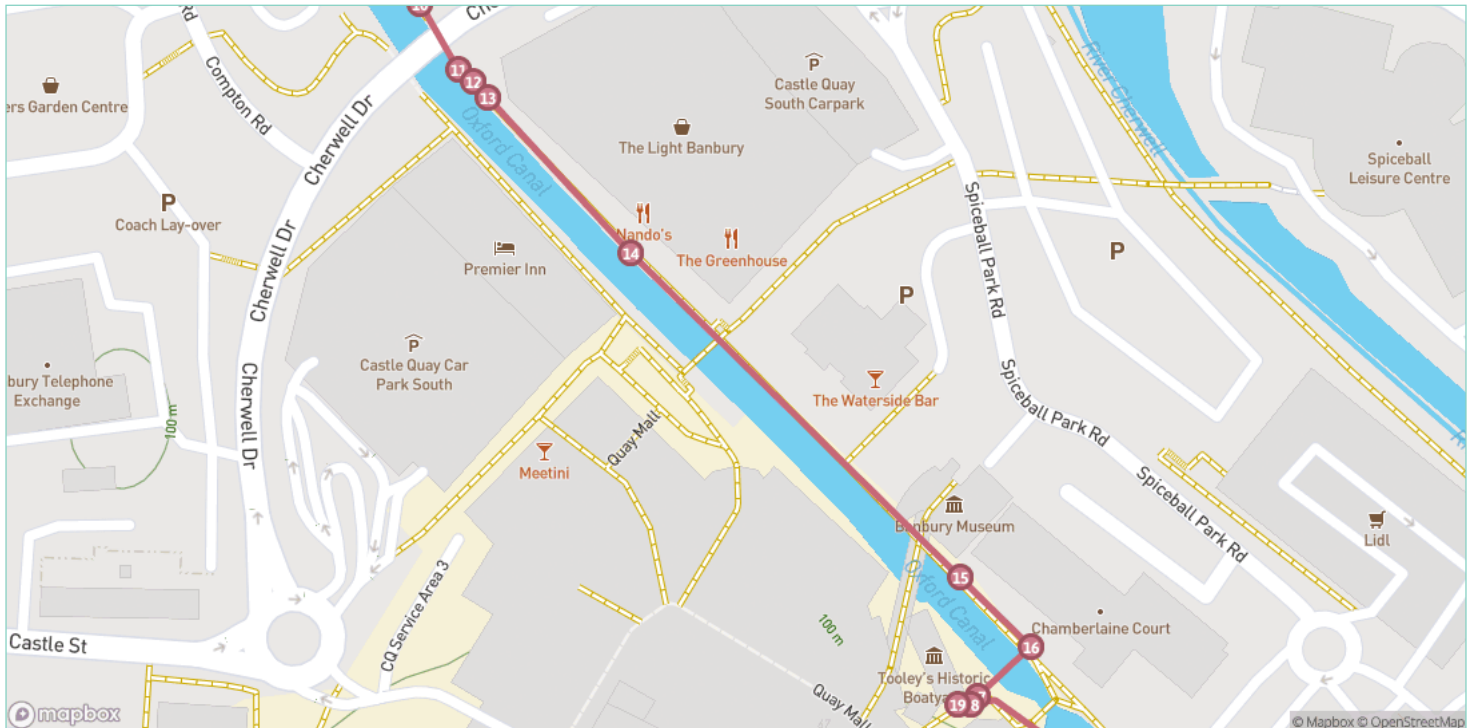
Respect local people. Park your car responsibly. Do not obstruct gateways, narrow lanes and village facilities. Consider leaving valuables at home.

Respect nature. Pick up any litter you see and never leave your own. Ground nesting birds can be disturbed by dogs, particularly in the Spring. Their poo can be bad for the environment so please keep them close by and clean up after them. Look after your dogs. Dogs should be kept under your control and on a lead if animals are in the fields. Current advice recommends you should not walk between a cow and her calf and, if you are threatened by cattle, you should let the dog off the lead.

Stay safe. Take great care when crossing or walking along roads and narrow paths.

More guidance for users of the countryside - follow the Countryside Code using the link below.

Step 10: Join the Oxford Canal towpath from Spiceball Park. Start by heading left. Notice the new development on both sides of the canal.



Step 11: Running from Coventry to Oxford, the Oxford Canal was a thriving commercial success from its completion in 1790 until the rise of competition from the railways in the late 19th century.

Step 12: It continued to carry commercial traffic up until the 1930s and now has a new lease of life as a recreational waterway.

Step 13: Notice your first sign for the Banbury Fringe Walk. Keep your eyes out for others as you continue on. They can help guide you too.

Step 14: The canal is lined by houseboats, and in this stretch they have easy access to the town centre.

Step 15: On your left is the Banbury Museum, a family-friendly museum telling the story of Banbury. There's a café and shop, too, if you'd like to pop in.

Step 16: Stay left at the bridge to continue along the towpath.

Step 17: Across the bridge is Tooley's historic boatyard, said to be the oldest continuously working dry docks in Britain.

Step 18: Today boats are still repaired at the boatyard as they have been for over 200 years.



Step 19: You can also access the Castle Quay shopping centre, which has shops of all different types. Feel free to explore if you'd like.

Step 20: The Castle Quay shopping centre was opened in 2000. The ground on which it is built includes the site of Banbury Castle, which was the subject of two intense and bloody sieges during the English civil war.

Step 21: When you're ready, return to the side of the canal (opposite to the shops) and continue on with the canal to your right.

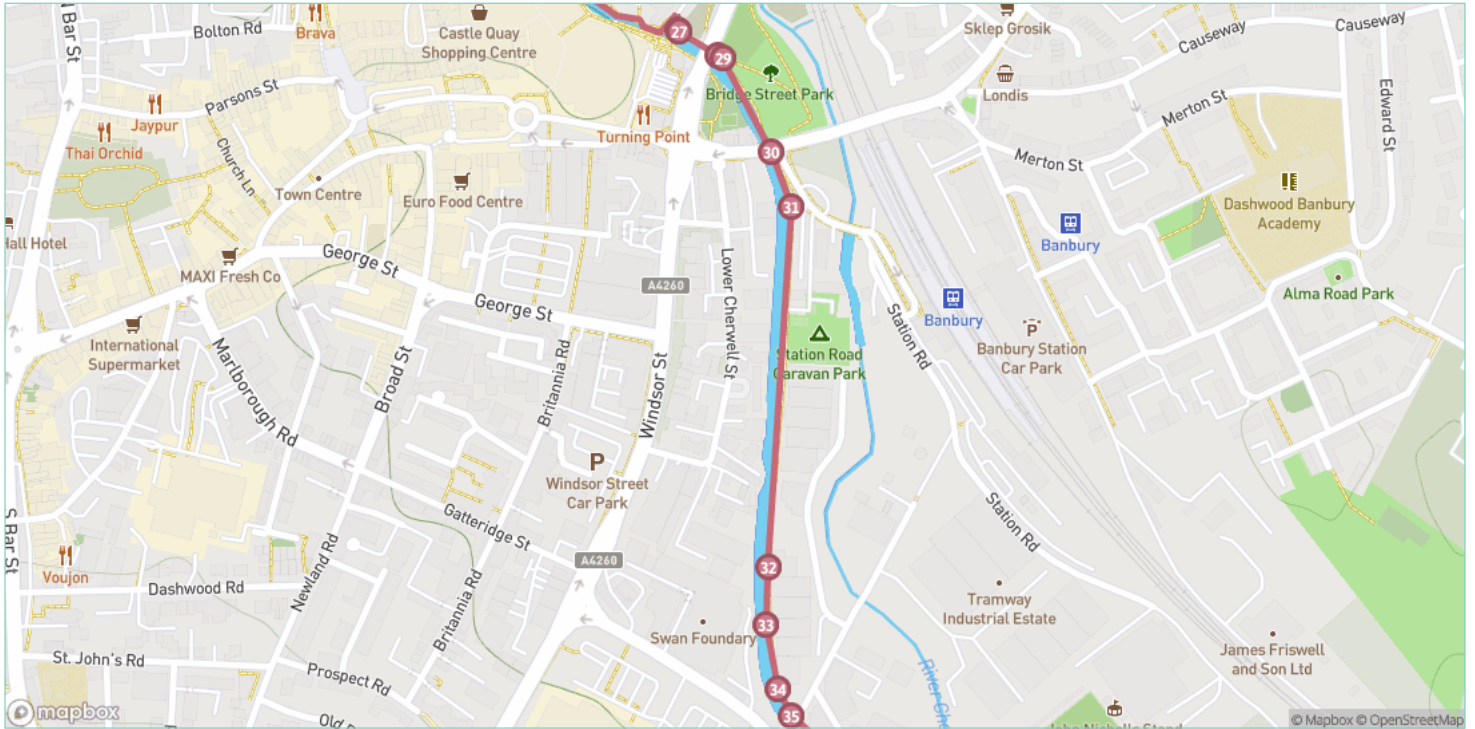
Step 22: On your left is the Mill Arts Centre. This sculpture is "The Dancers," by students from learning disability arts classes from July 2005.

Step 23: Bear left to follow the ramp down. Hold the handrail if you need to.

Step 24: Walkers can join the route from the central bus station here. Cross the canal bridge (No 165) from the back of the bus station and turn right along the canal towpath.

Step 25: The entrance to the centre is here, and there's a small cafe inside where you can learn more about all they have going on every week.

Step 26: This sculpture, by Michael Fairfax, features the poem "Flow," by Jamie McKendrick. The two worked together on the beautiful canalside piece.



Step 27: The tops represent hump backed bridges, immediately below are lock gate cogs, and under the inscriptions are ripples on the surface of the water.

Step 28: Bear right to stick along the canal.

Step 29: Walkers can join the route from the train station here. Walk out of the station to Bridge Street, cross over, follow the signs to the towpath and on reaching the canal, turn left.

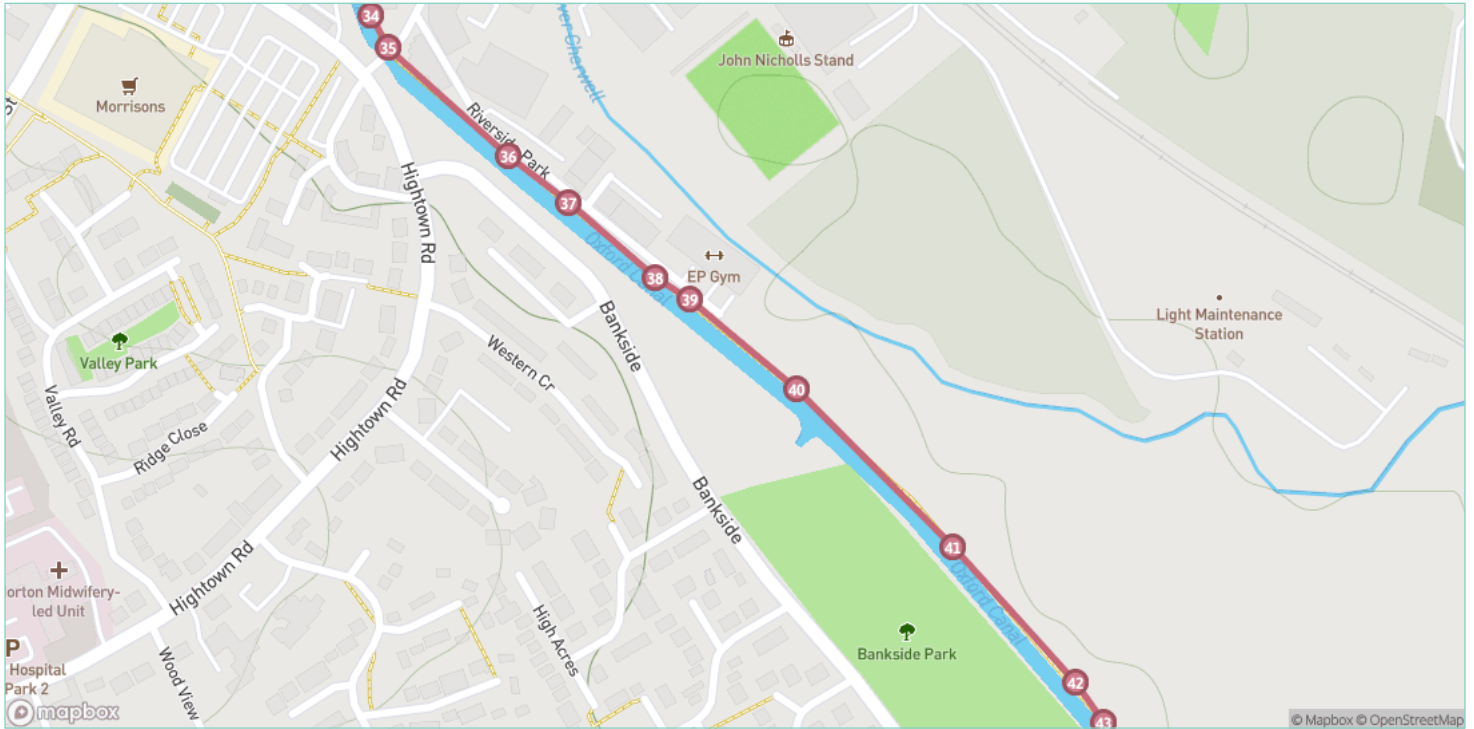
Step 30: Pass under the bridge's brick arch.

Step 31: The towpath follows the whole canal, 80 miles! We're not going that far today.

Step 32: The towpath is compacted dirt, so it can get muddy in spots after rain.

Step 33: Canals have historically been good places for industries. Most don't need direct access anymore, but the industrial activity often remains.

Step 34: Up the stairs to your left is a sign pointing to the Banbury Station. It's a direct walk along Tramway Road.



Step 35: Pass under the bridge which is number 168. The route follows the canal until number 172. Be on the lookout for other numbers in between.

Step 36: What sorts of little signs of activity can you notice from the areas around the houseboats?

Step 37: Do remember that people live in the houseboats, so please try to be respectful as you pass by.

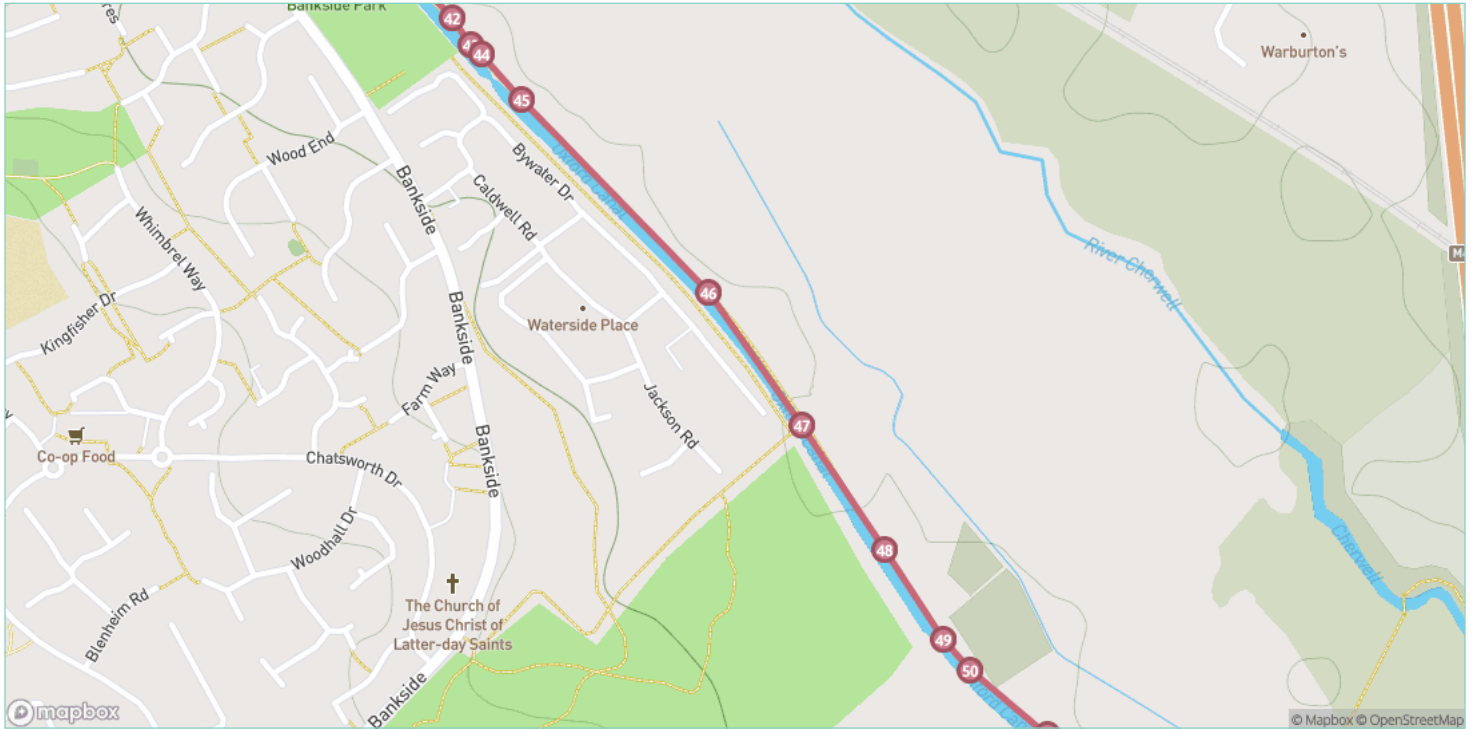
Step 38: British Waterways used to oversee most canals in Britain. Now, the Canal & River Trust manage these waterways in England and Wales.

Step 39: Can you spot this little fella long the way? We're not sure that this is where a frog belongs! 😊

Step 40: What's been your favourite of all the boat names you've seen so far?

Step 41: On your right, the lovely Bankside Park comes into view.

Step 42: Just walking along, this little duck didn't seem to mind at all. What signs of life can you spot whilst on your walk?



Step 43: Another Banbury Fringe sign as you continue straight along the towpath.

Step 50: Keep walking straight and admire the small woodland that appears on your left.

Step 44: The vegetation alongside the towpath provides food and shelter for a wide variety of animals.

Step 45: On your left, meanwhile, are some active fields for agriculture.

Step 46: Did you know towpaths were originally meant for animals such as horses, to physically pull barges down the canal?

Step 47: This is Bridge 170. Almost to 172.

Step 48: In the distance, you can see some new homes under construction. You'll pass through one of these sites shortly.

Step 49: Looks like the remains of an old bridge. Beneath canal bridges, there's often a submerged upside-down brick arch built for stability.



Step 51: Almost to the end of the canal segment now.

Step 52: Made it to bridge 172, also known as 'Nadkey Bridge.' Here, you'll take your leave from the Oxford Canal.

Step 53: Come up from the towpath past the remains of a stile. It's a bit steep, so tread carefully.

Step 54: Turn right to cross over the bridge. Soak in one last view of the canal.

Step 55: Continue on towards the gate. You can open it by reaching around and undoing the latch.

Step 56: Please make sure to close the gate and leave it as you found it before you continue on.

Step 57: Next, head straight up the hill with the trees on your left.

Step 58: It can be a bit muddy, so please proceed slowly and carefully. Take your time during your climb.



Step 59: Why not spend a moment admiring the views behind you as you catch your breath.

Step 60: Head for the gate straight ahead and pass through it.

Step 61: Again, please leave it as you find it and close it behind you.

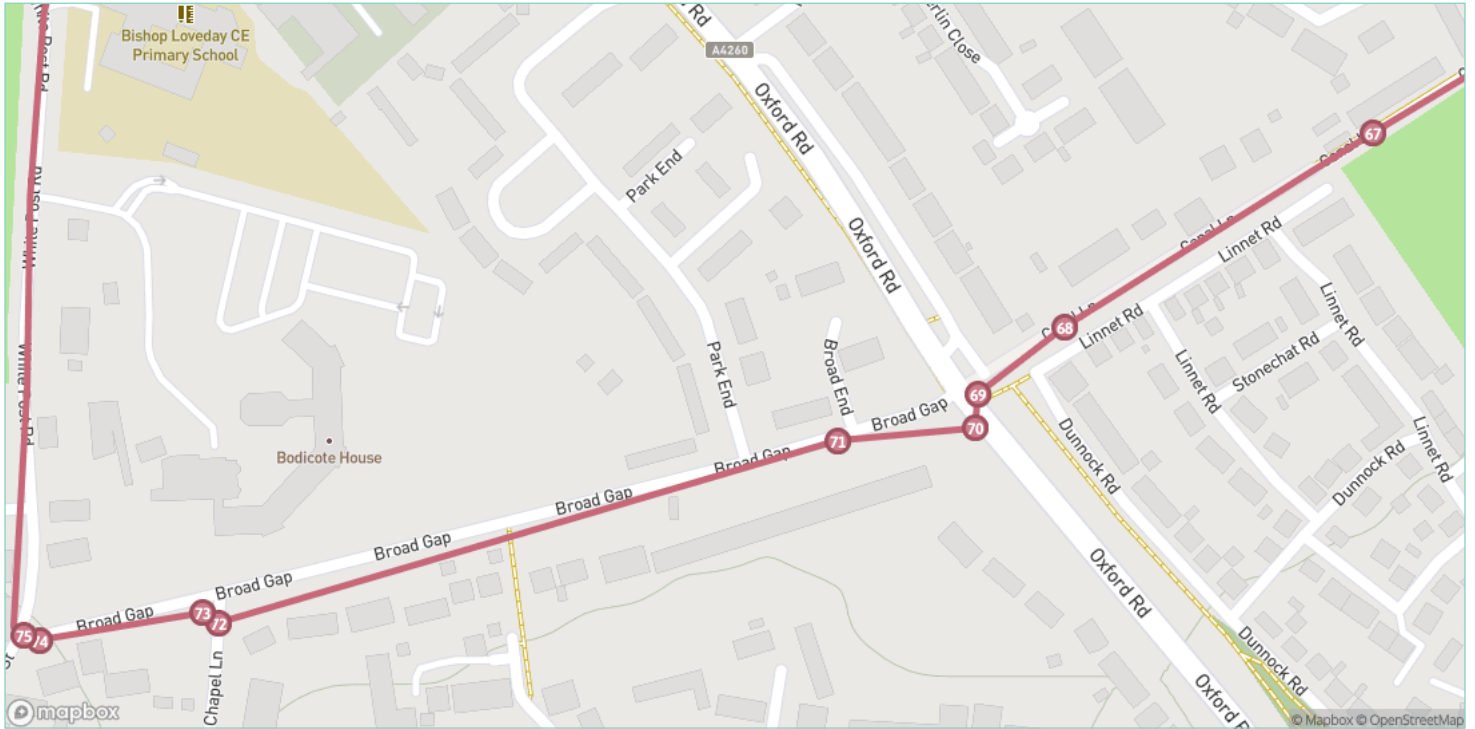
Step 62: Follow the track straight ahead through the Longford Park housing estate.

Step 63: Stick to the dirt road and continue straight across the paved crossing.

Step 64: Hopefully your day is as glorious as this one looks in the pictures.

Step 65: Walk around this wide gate and carefully cross the road.

Step 66: Walk around the other gate on the other side and continue straight on.



Step 67: Another gate to walk around.

Step 68: As you approach Oxford Road, the path becomes more and more like a road, but it stays quiet and largely traffic free.

Step 69: Cross the road using the light controlled crossing to your left.

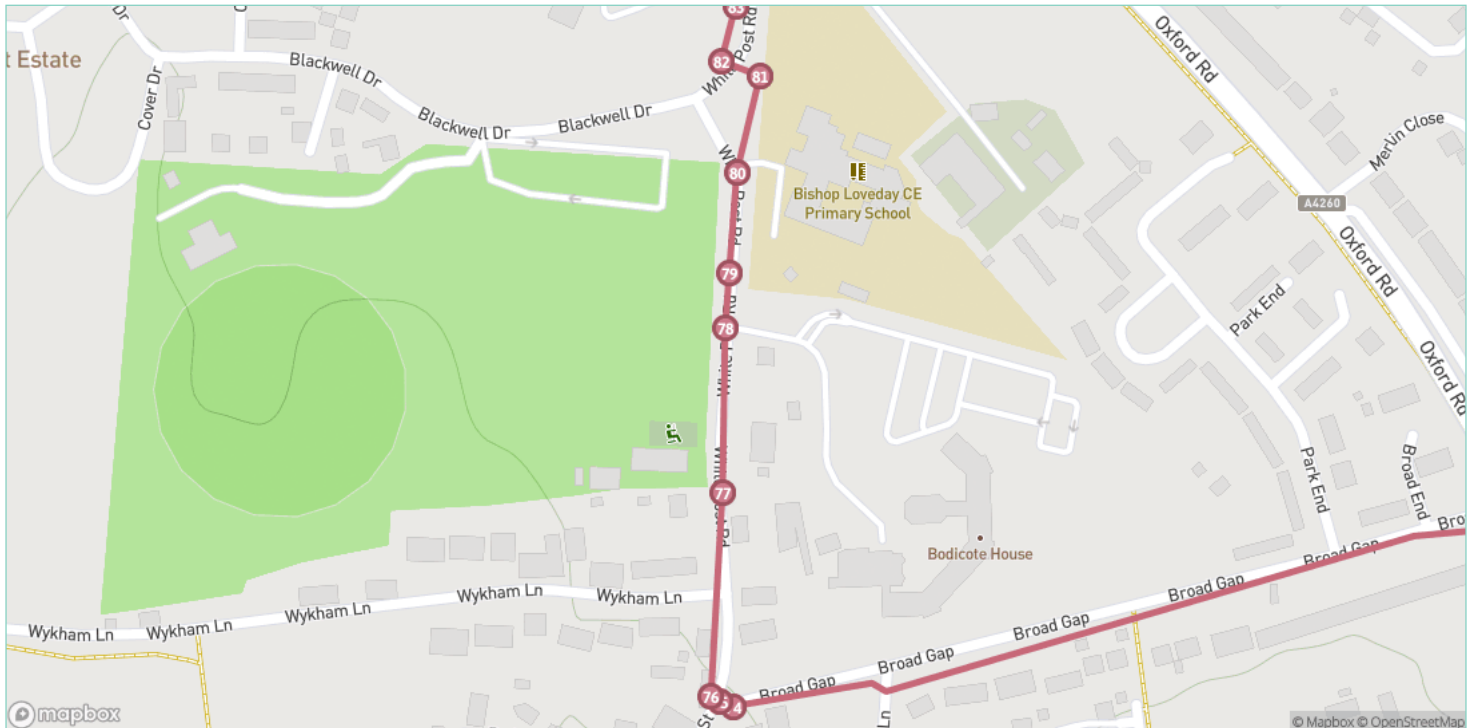
Step 70: Continue straight on along Broad Gap towards Bodicote village.

Step 71: The pavement here is fairly consistent, flat and easy to follow.

Step 72: Continue straight across Chapel Lane and follow the pavement along the stone wall.

Step 73: The pavement here is a bit narrow, especially if there are people walking towards you, too.

Step 74: At the end turn right, crossing over Broad Gap and continuing along High Street, which becomes White Post Road.



Step 75: Bodicote is a large village with the original centre (now a conservation area) set amidst more recent development.

Step 76: If you feel thirsty or want to see some of the historical buildings of the village and the two pubs, you could turn left here rather than right.

Step 77: Pass the playing field on your left and the Council Offices and School on the right.

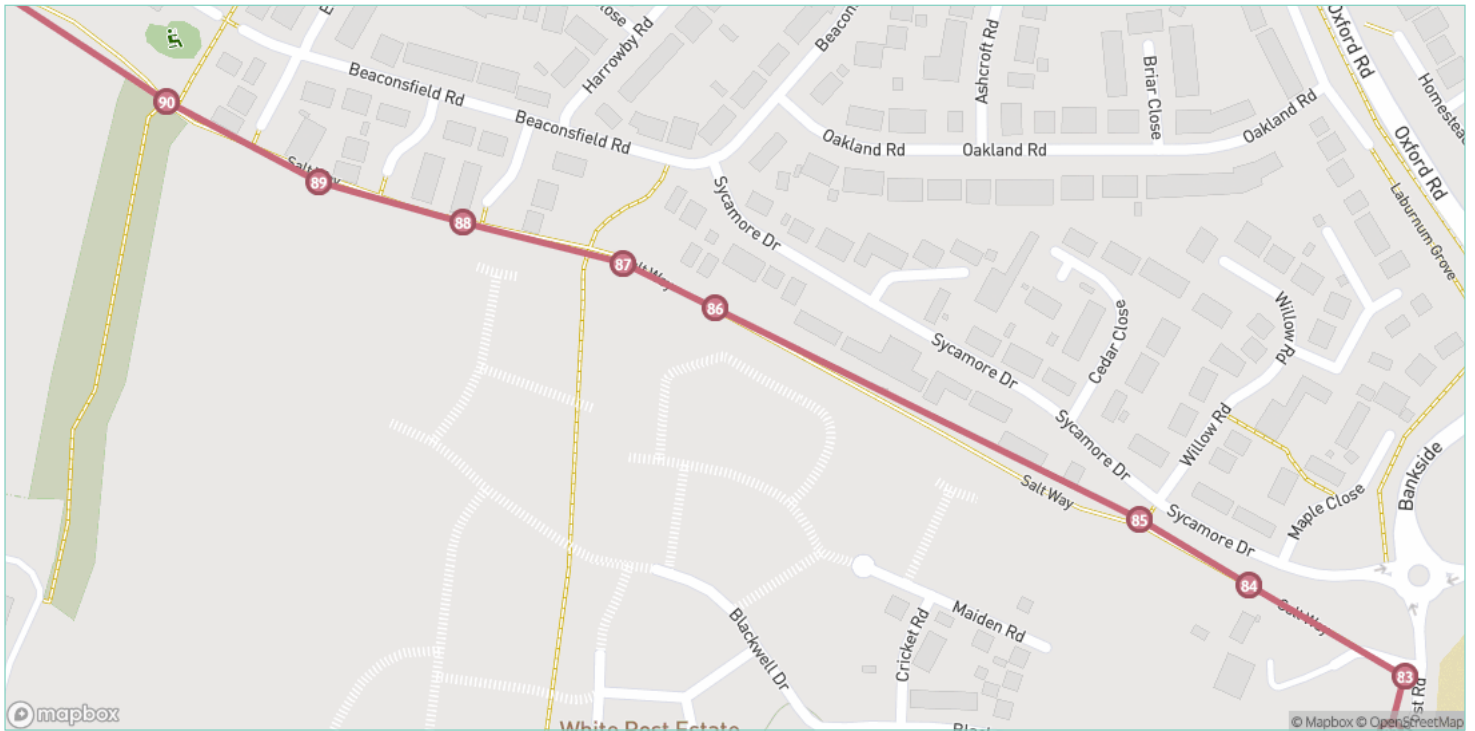
Step 78: Bodicote House on your right is Georgian, with modern extensions to house the administration headquarters of Cherwell District Council.

Step 79: Bodicote also provides the focus for another circular walk which connects with the Fringe Walk along the Salt Way.

Step 80: Stick to the pavement along the hedge as the road bends away from you.

Step 81: Turn left and use the zebra crossing here.

Step 82: On the other side, turn right.



Step 83: You've reached the Salt Way. The route follows Salt Way for about a mile.

Step 84: The Salt Way was once the main road from Droitwich to London and it is thought to have been for the carrying of salt to the South-East.

Step 85: Today, from Bodicote all the way to the Broughton Road, it has retained its green-lane character for recreation.

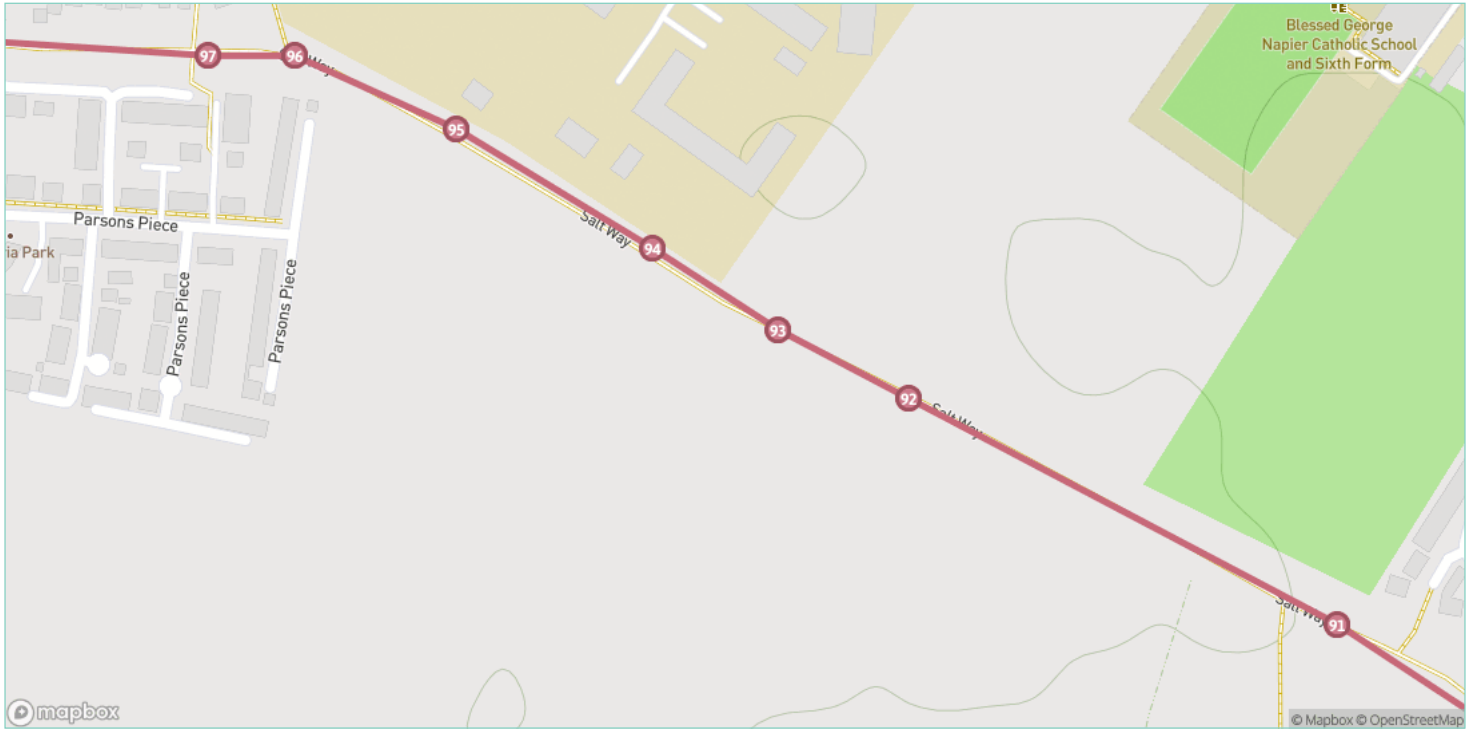
Step 86: The sound of birds was overwhelming! Can you spot any as the route passes amid patches of trees?

Step 87: A lovely place to sit for a break.

Step 88: Keep your eye on your left as countryside views appear through the trees once you are past the new housing development.

Step 89: Be ready for some stretches of mud if walking during wet seasons.

Step 90: Carry straight on for the Banbury Fringe Walk. The Bodicote Circular is on Go Jauntly too, if you're interested in checking it out as well.



Step 91: It's said there's more life in dead wood than live wood, as fallen trees provide essential habitat space for important small creatures.

Step 92: Love the way the sun shines through the trees!

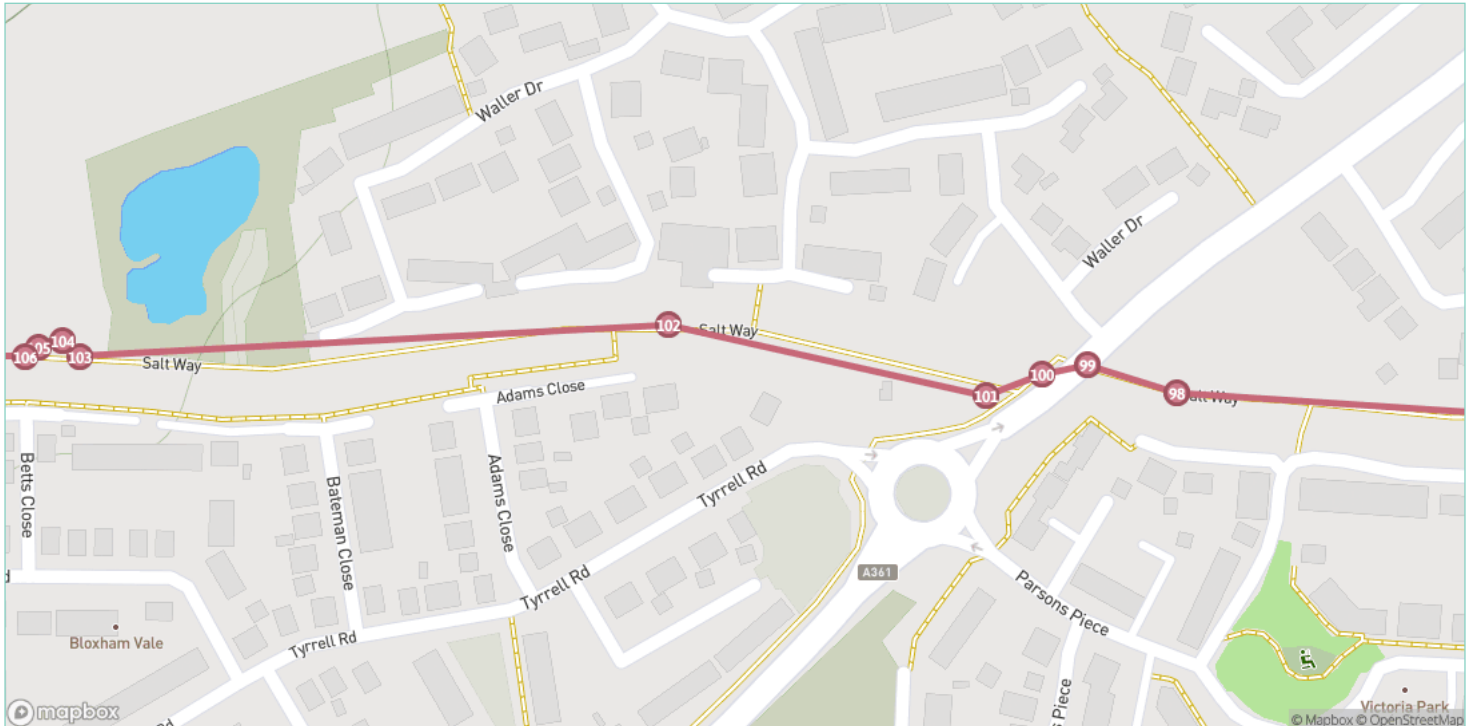
Step 93: Have you spotted any birds yet??

Step 94: What else have you discovered on your walk? Maybe this incredible tree?

Step 95: Maybe some flowers in bloom?

Step 96: Or a tree covered in vines? So much to see and discover.

Step 97: Stay straight as a paved path appears on your left. A good spot to dispose of your dog poop bags, if you have any.



Step 98: Pass this marker to Bill Sands, a local avid walker.

Step 99: At Bloxham Road, use the pedestrian crossing light to your left.

Step 100: To your left, the Salt Way continues. Turn right to re-enter its quiet peacefulness.

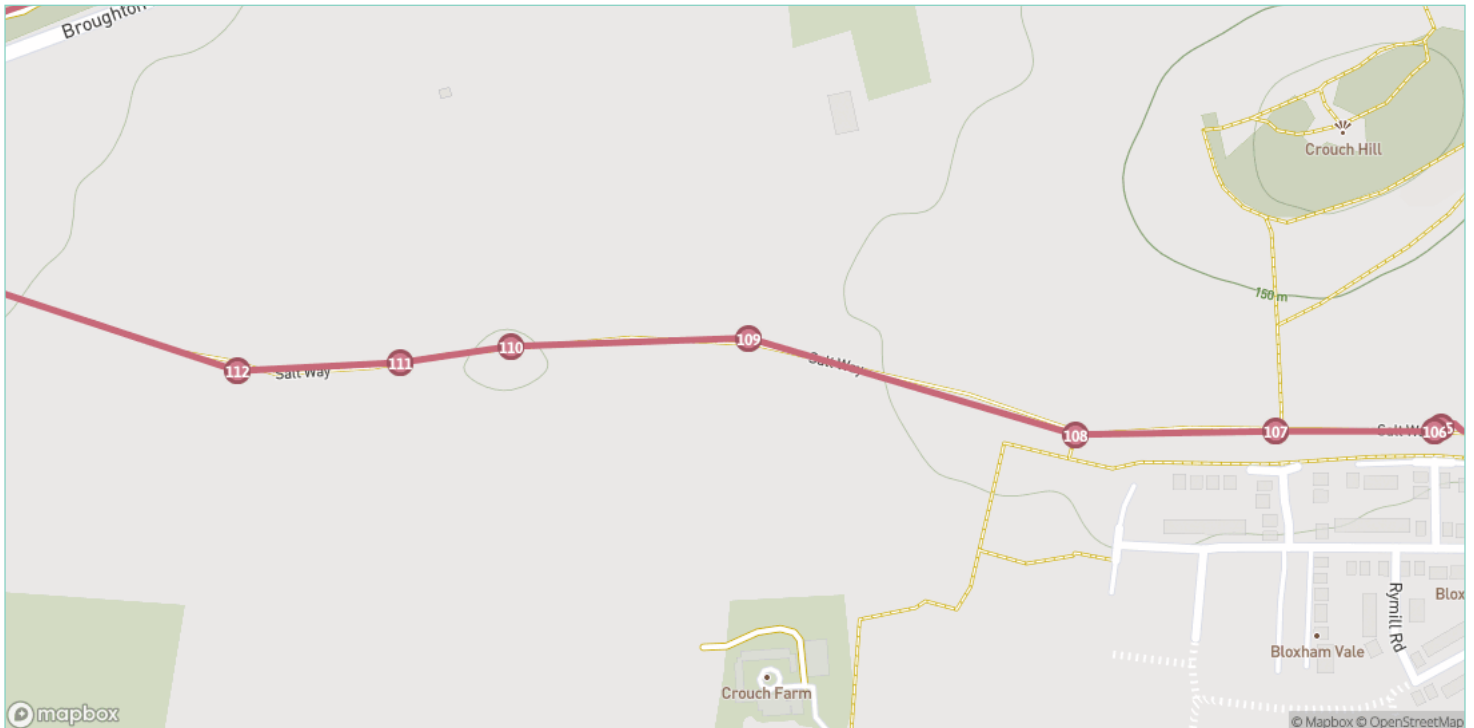
Step 101: Since 2000, the Salt Way has been used by Sustrans for their National Cycle Network. This is route 5, running from Reading to Holyhead.

Step 102: Another patch of water to skirt around.

Step 103: To your right is Crouch Hill, likely used by ancient Saxons to signal to other nearby settlements.

Step 104: The highest point in the immediate area, it has a Celtic name from 'crug', meaning hill, which possibly indicates that there was a British settlement here as early as 400 B.C.

Step 105: During the English civil war Crouch Hill was strategically important. In June 1644 it was occupied by roundhead forces (under Sir William Waller) prior to the battle of Cropredy Bridge.



Step 106: In October of the same year Colonel Henry Gage's royalist cavalry used it as their base to relieve the besieged Banbury Castle.

Step 107: If you'd like to walk to the top, turn right, pass through the gate, and follow the footpath straight up the hill.

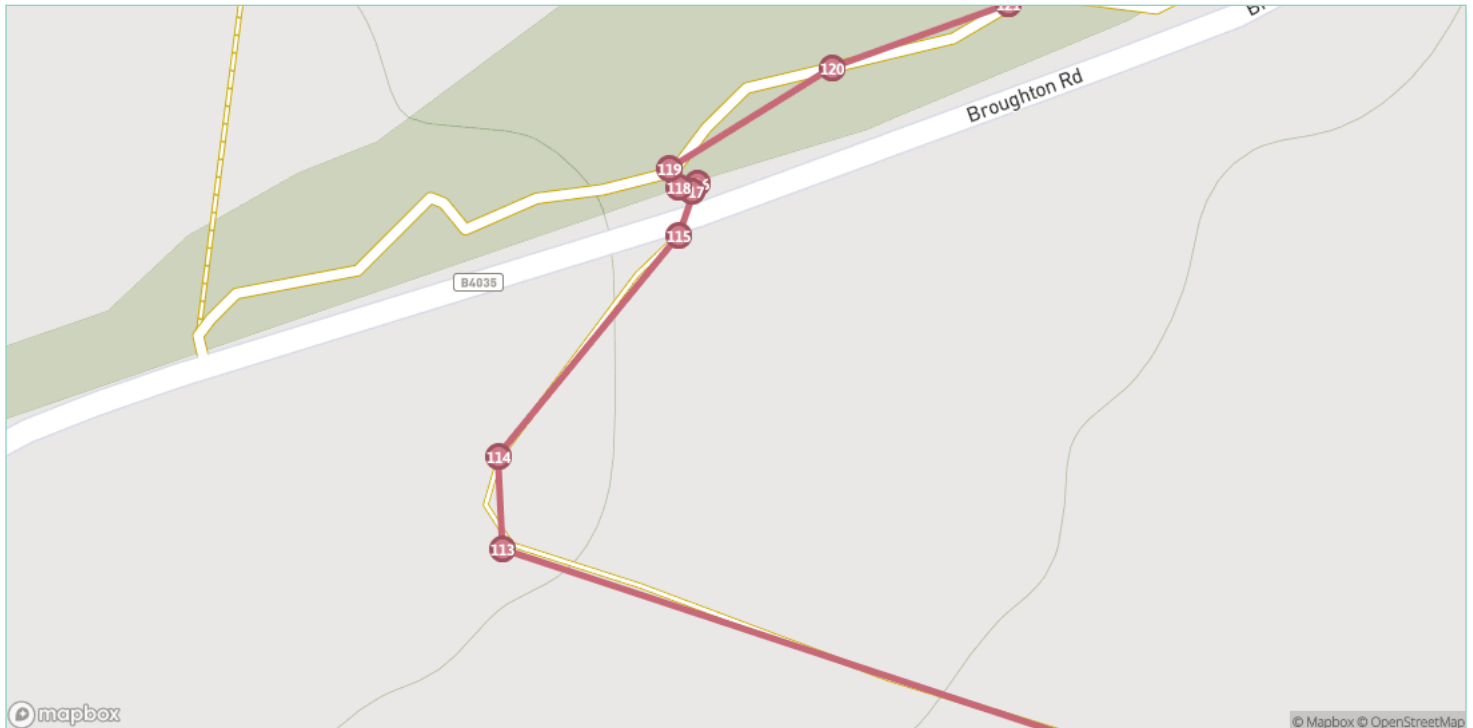
Step 108: Otherwise, keep following the Salt Way.

Step 109: The view of the countryside is now on both sides, with rolling hills to your right...

Step 110: ... and fields of livestock to your left!

Step 111: These initials have scarred this tree for 15 years!! Please remember to leave no trace when you enjoy the countryside.

Step 112: Wonder what lives in that hole... 🐌



Step 113: The Salt Way bends to the right now, and a green forest emerges to your left.

Step 114: You might be able to hear or see cars passing on Broughton Road up ahead.

Step 115: When you get to the road, carefully cross after looking right, then left, then right again. The cars go pretty fast.

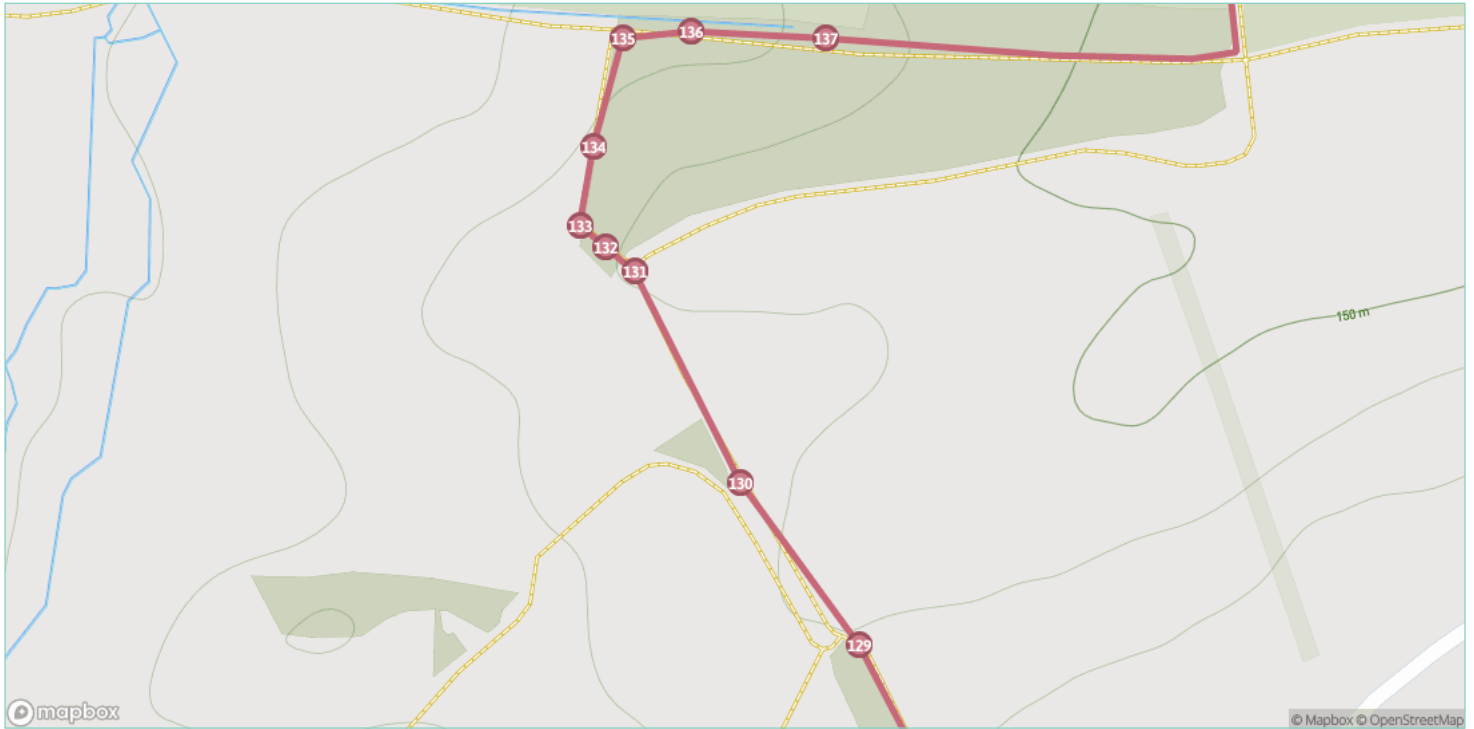
Step 116: Go up the two steps...

Step 117: ... and down the eleven. This is Giant's Cave Park.

Step 118: This is part of an area of old pasture known as the Bretch - 'a stony spot full of hills and hollows'. Local legend has it that the "cave" was the secret entrance of a tunnel to Broughton Castle (nearly a mile away).

Step 119: At the path intersection, turn right.

Step 120: There's a slight incline as you follow the dirt path through the trees.



Step 129: Through an opening in the hedge to your left, you might be able to see the village of North Newington in the distance.

Step 130: Continue straight, with the trees to your left.

Step 131: Follow the footpath straight into a patch of trees.

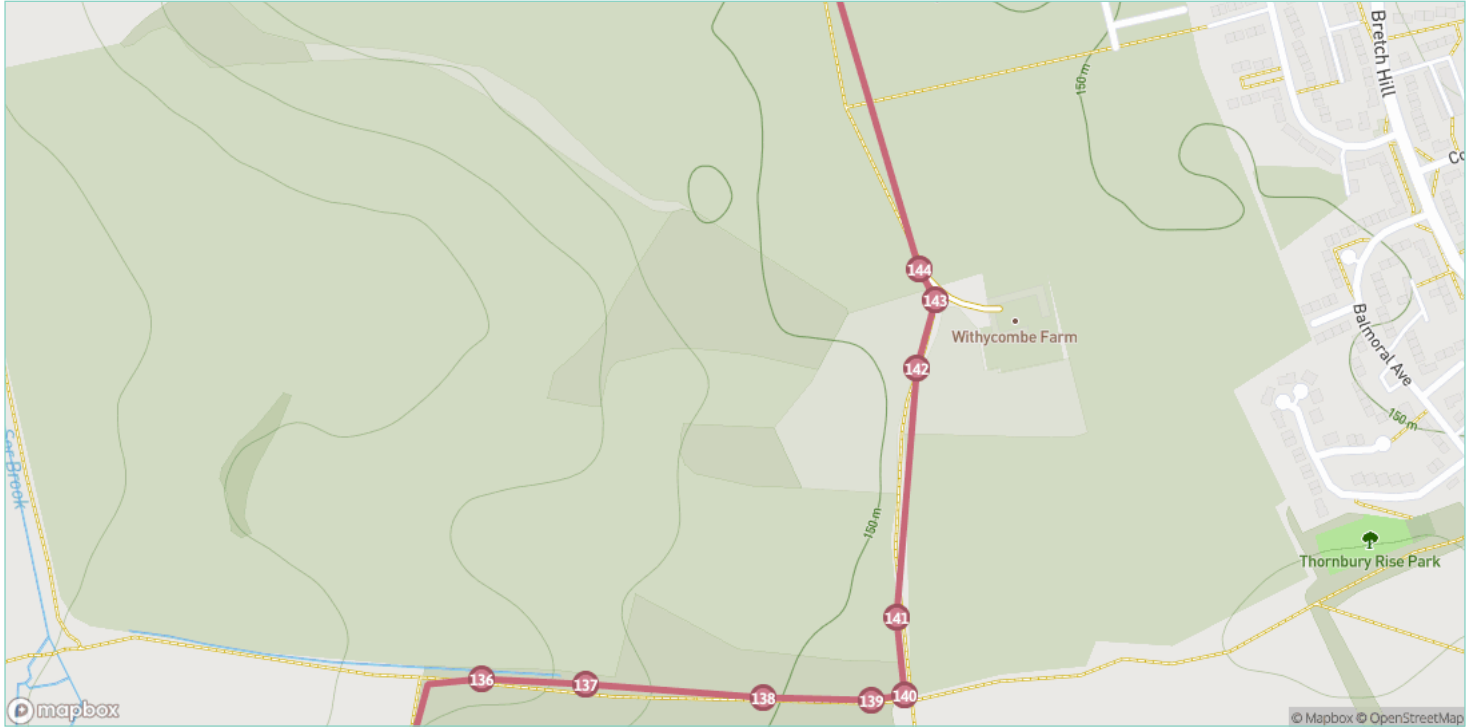
Step 132: This stretch is fairly steep downhill. Use caution as you continue.

Step 133: On reaching the open field, turn right and walk downhill with the trees to your right.

Step 134: The country views are stunning!

Step 135: At the bottom, turn right onto what is now a public footpath to enter the woodland.

Step 136: Go steadily uphill through woodland for approx. 400 metres.



Step 137: This path can be very wet and muddy, so use care and take your time.

Step 138: It can be a bit tricky to follow the route because there are so many brown paths. We went left at a fork here.

Step 139: Keep following the way through the forest.

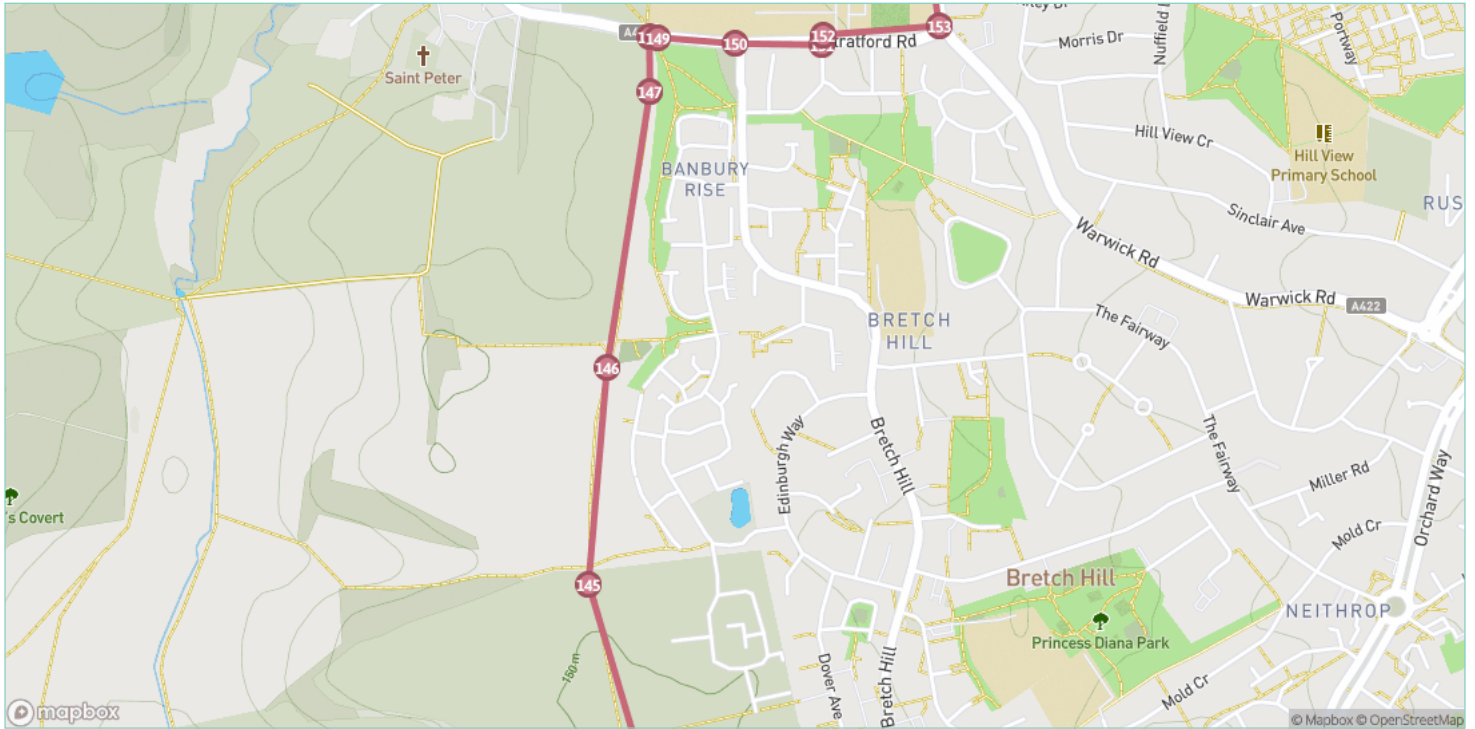
Step 140: When you reach a clearing with a patch of trees in front of you, turn left.

Step 141: Next, you'll be following quiet farm tracks and roads towards Drayton.

Step 142: Remember when you were down in that valley?

Step 143: Walk straight through the gate.

Step 144: Remember not to feed livestock you come across in the countryside and keep your dogs well clear.



Step 145: Continue straight on the farm track through the fields.

Step 146: On your right, you'll see another large new housing development.

Step 147: Looking behind you, there's another view of the development from the other side of it as you near Stratford Road.

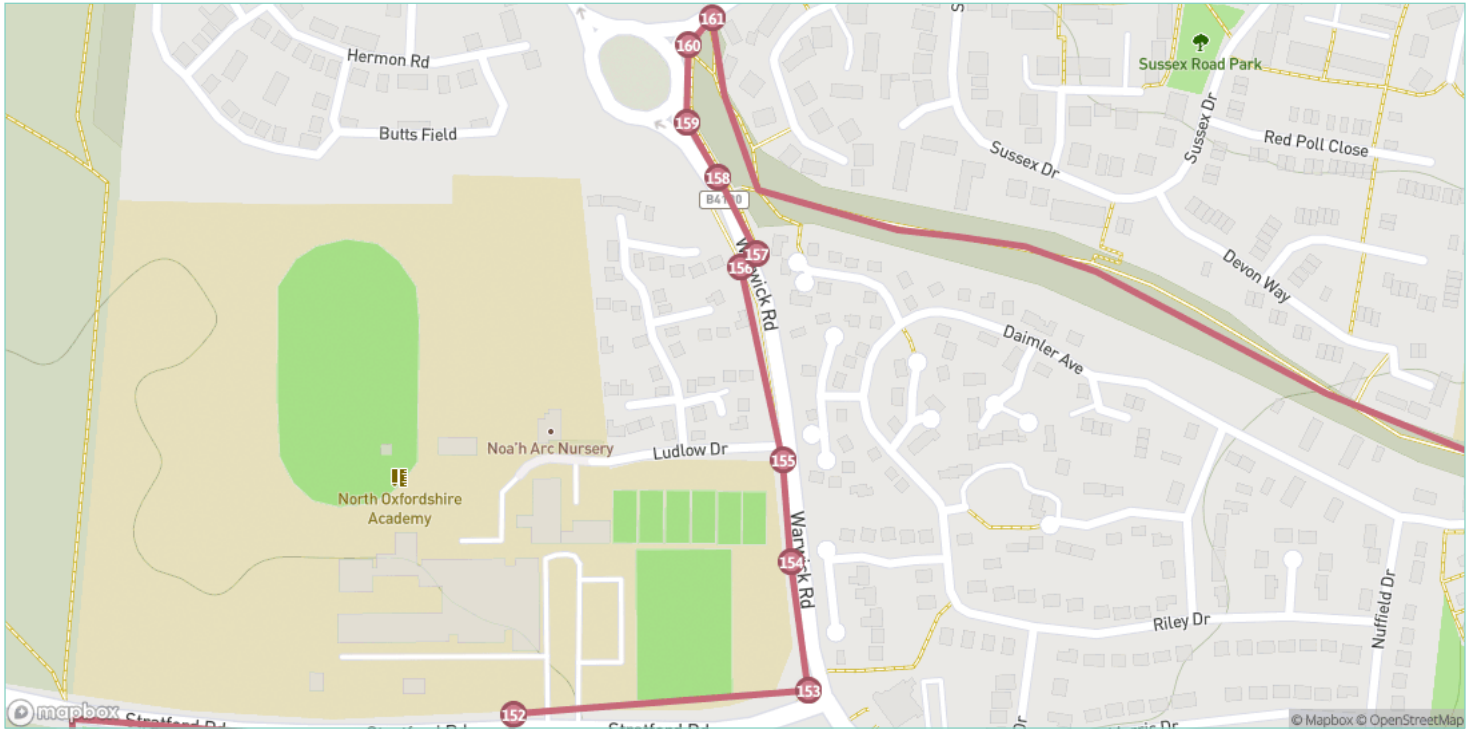
Step 148: At the road, follow the sign and turn right.

Step 149: Stick to the pavement for this next bit.

Step 150: Carefully cross Bretch Hill.

Step 151: Cross the road here and turn right to continue following the pavement.

Step 152: Continue following the road on this side. There's no pavement across the entrance to North Oxfordshire Academy, but it starts again shortly.



Step 153: At the big road intersection, turn left - but see if you can find this sign and follow the route which takes you along the hedgeline.

Step 154: Rejoin the pavement as you follow Warwick Road.

Step 155: Carefully cross Ludlow Drive.

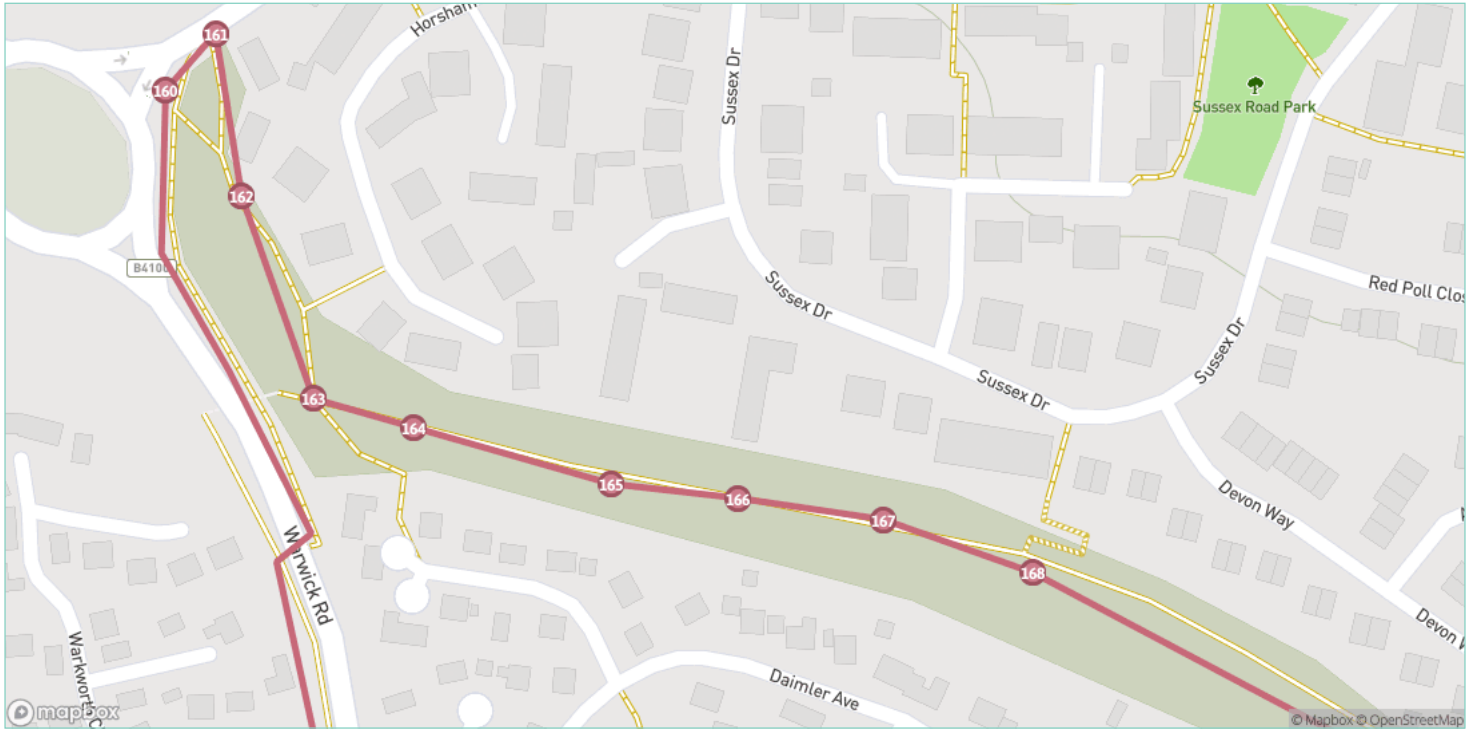
Step 156: Use the pedestrian crossing light here.

Step 157: Turn left on the other side.

Step 158: On your right, you should be able look over and see the path down below. That's where you're headed.

Step 159: You just have to walk around to get down to that level.

Step 160: Turn right at the roundabout. After a short distance turn right in front of the houses onto the path.



Step 161: Follow the path as it slopes gently down towards the Mineral Railway path.

Step 162: There are several long and shallow steps. Turn left at the bottom.

Step 163: The second-to-last major segment of the walk! A long corridor of peacefulness to get you back to the canal.

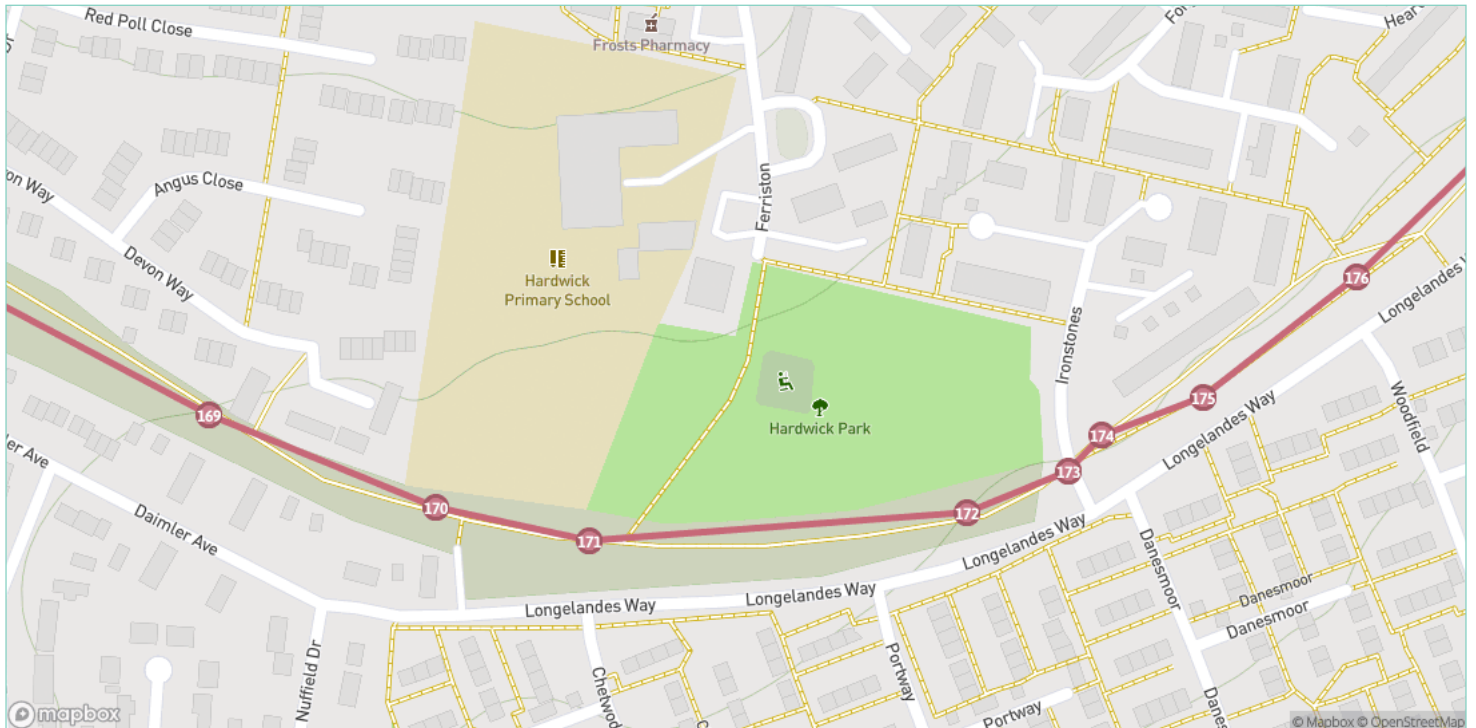
Step 164: When operational, the Mineral Railway line formed part of the route serving ironstone quarries in the Wroxtton area.

Step 165: It was constructed in 1917 by German prisoners of war to carry the ironstone to the main Great Western Railway line east of the Southam Road.

Step 166: Operations ceased in 1967 when rail transport became too costly, but ironstone is still quarried in the area and transported by lorry.

Step 167: What sorts of birds can you see and hear as you walk along?

Step 168: One of the exposed rock faces which can be seen along the path has been designated as a geological Site of Special Scientific Interest.



Step 169: Without occasional glimpses like this one, you wouldn't even really be able to tell you're so close to built up areas.

Step 170: Stay straight ahead without getting distracted by side paths.

Step 171: -

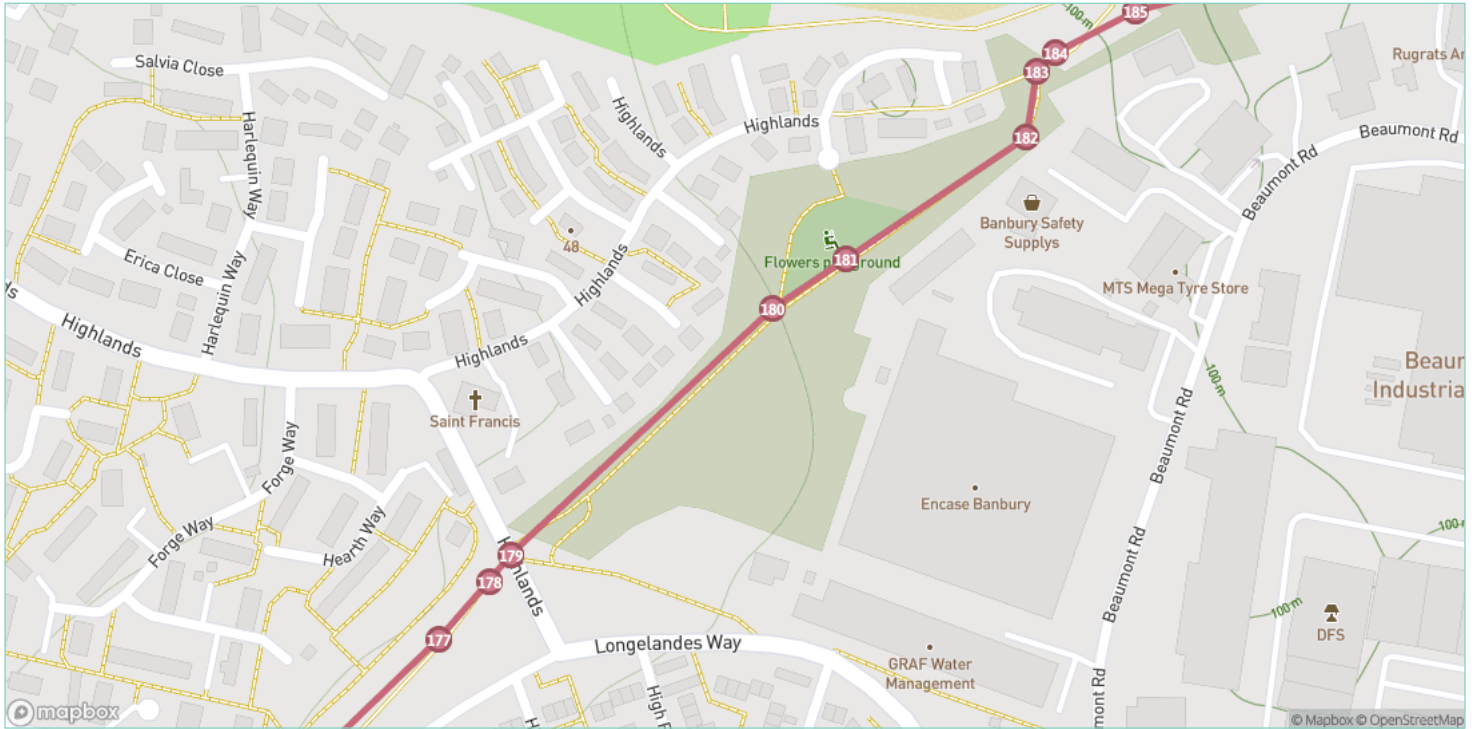
Step 172: As you emerge from the woods, the path takes you towards the Ironstones road.

Step 173: Use the dropped kerb to cross, then follow the pavement to the left. This is Ironstones, a reminder of the local quarrying industry.

Step 174: Almost immediately bear right off the path onto a grass track and continue straight ahead.

Step 175: The path can a bit hard to make out exactly, but you're heading straight on.

Step 176: Rejoin the tarmac path.



Step 177: A little further on, the route passes through a tunnel under Highlands.

Step 178: The corrugated metal tube was so cool to walk through.

Step 179: If you prefer not to use the tunnel you can come up to the road and cross over with care, rejoining the Mineral Railway path on the other side.

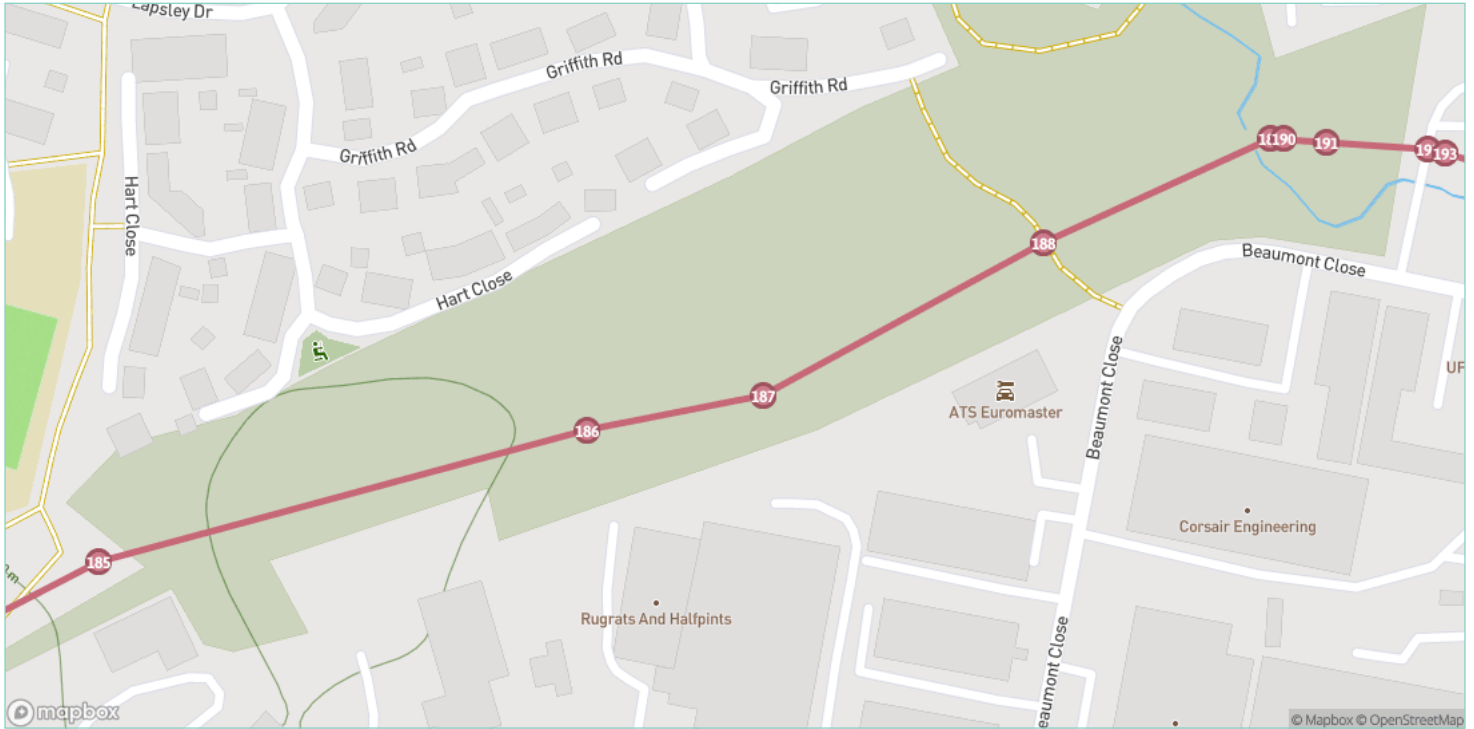
Step 180: Where the route reaches a fork, follow the pavement to the right.

Step 181: Try to resist the urge to hopscotch - or don't!

Step 182: The pavement curves round to the left...

Step 183: ... and then to the right, following the footsteps!

Step 184: At the fork, take the right path.



Step 185: You know you're going the right direction as you'll still see Banbury Fringe arrows. Head up the short hill straight ahead.

Step 186: On your left, you might see this unnatural looking rock and concrete formation. What do you think this was?

Step 187: Another view of the built up areas you're avoiding by sticking to this route along the top of the embankment!

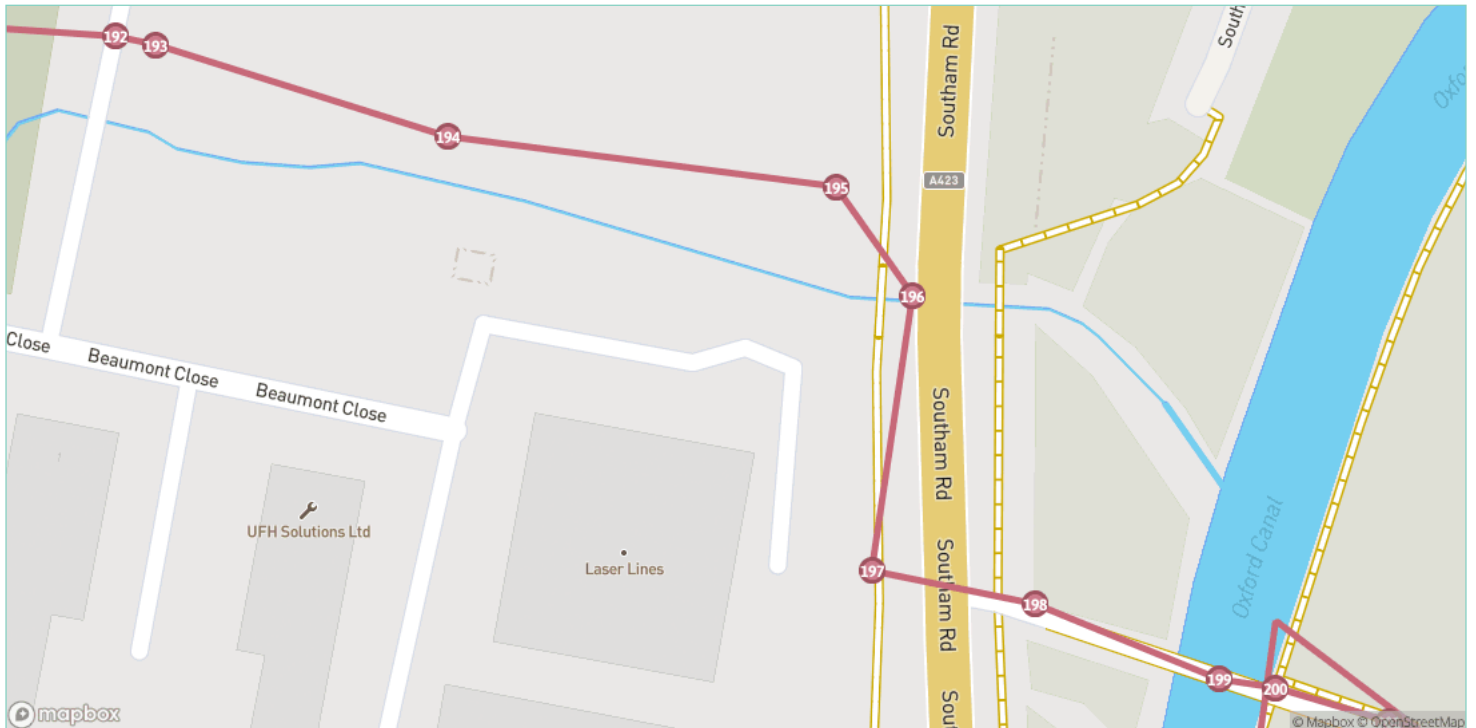
Step 188: Carry straight on until the embankment ends.

Step 189: The path turns right and takes you steeply downhill.

Step 190: Take great care at this point as the path is very steep, although is zig zagged to reduce the slope.

Step 191: Turn left at the bottom onto the path which runs alongside a stream.

Step 192: Cross the paved access road.



Step 193: Take the staircase down on the other side.

Step 194: This little stream will lead you back to the Oxford Canal.

Step 195: Southam Road can have lots of traffic. Turn right to walk along the pavement.

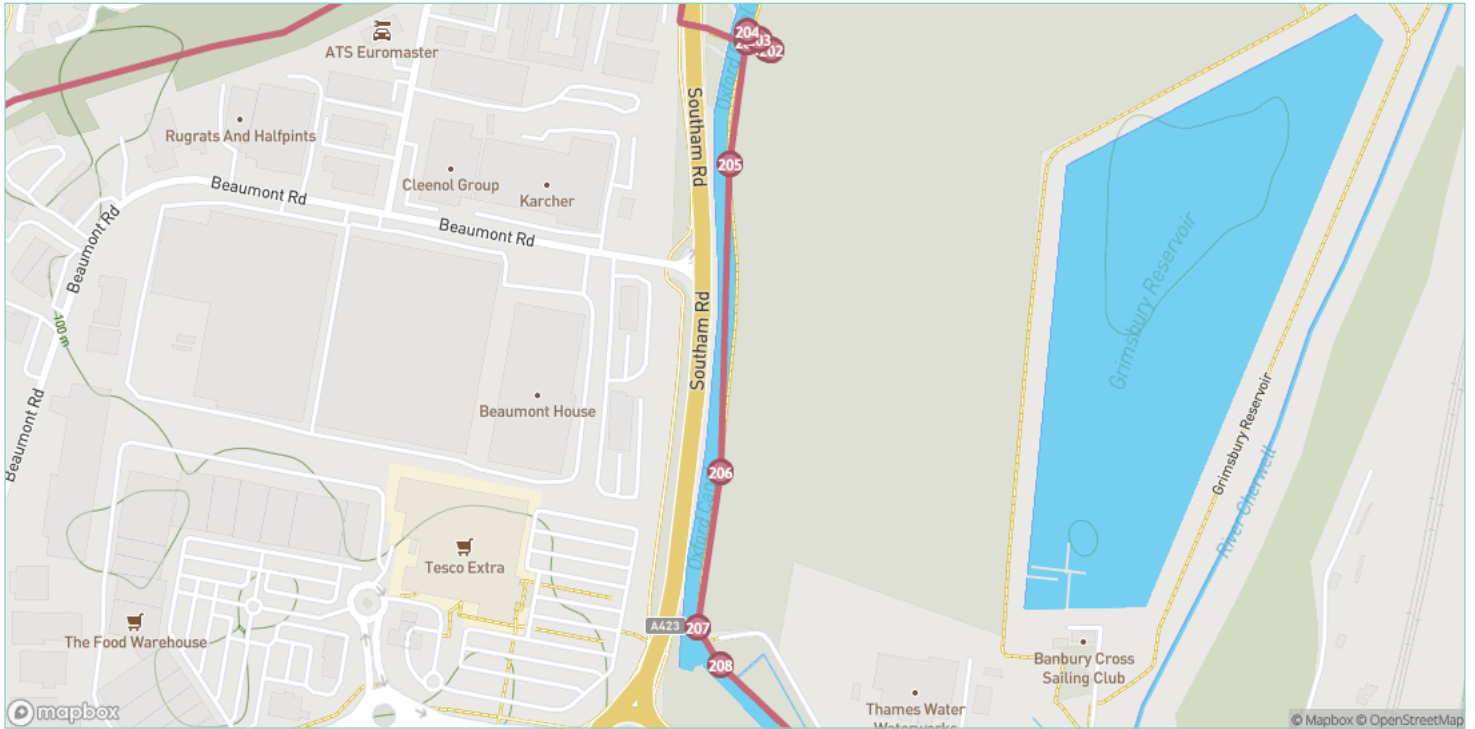
Step 196: You're headed for the canal bridge across the road. You'll see it shortly after you get to Southam Rd. Don't cross the road straight away.

Step 197: There is no controlled crossing point here and it's a busy road so take care. Cross quickly opposite the canal bridge only when it's clear.

Step 198: Walk up the ramp to cross the canal.

Step 199: And we're back! Recognise this view from earlier?

Step 200: Head down the ramp on the other side.



Step 201: Use caution - especially watching out for this hole in the concrete!

Step 202: At the bottom, follow the fenced walkway round to the left.

Step 203: Head back to the canal towpath, and turn left.

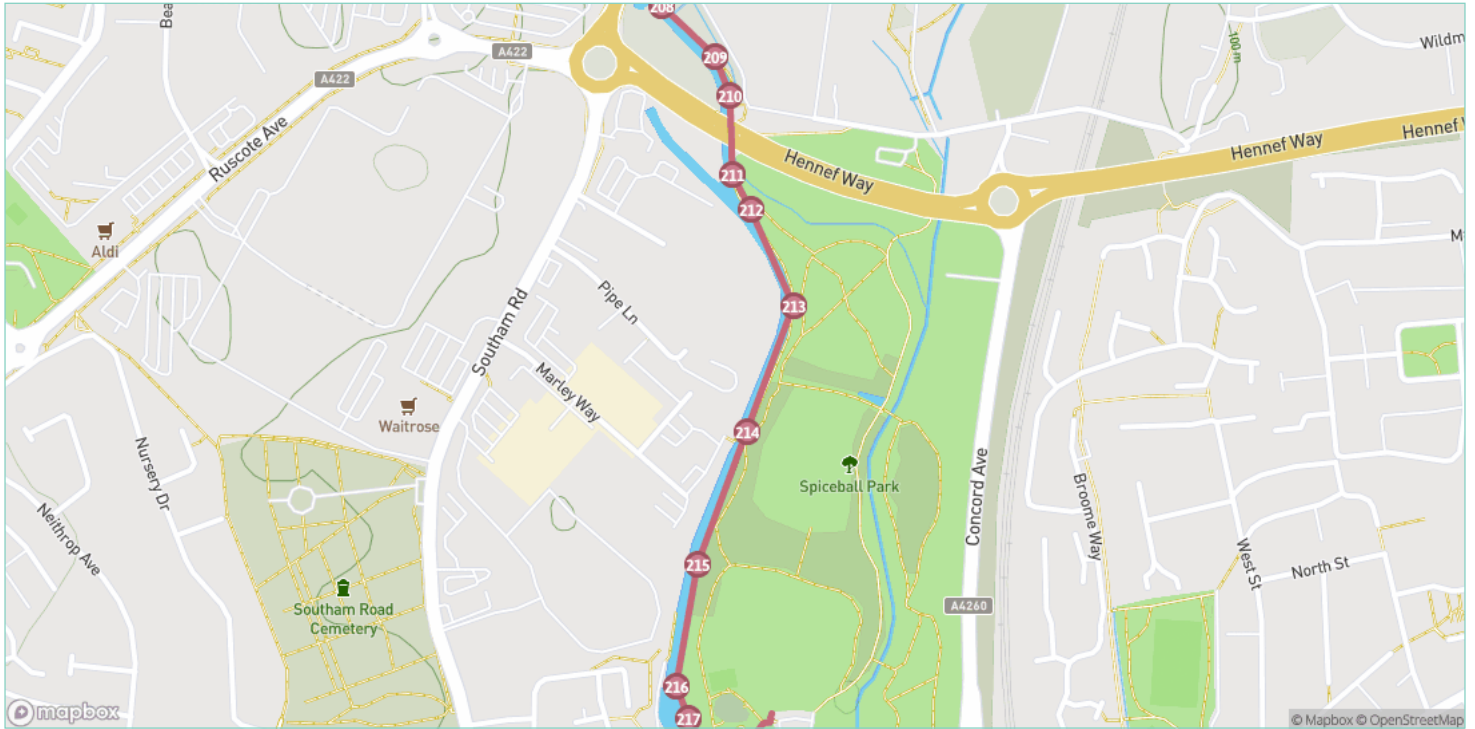
Step 204: This is Bridge 161, so do you have a sense of where we are and where we're headed?

Step 205: Back on the towpath, this time on the opposite side of Banbury. Now, you're headed south towards town.

Step 206: Through the fence on your left are some gorgeous green fields!

Step 207: The canal twists and turns, but navigation is simple - stick to the towpath!

Step 208: This is one of a series of water connections between the Oxford Canal and the River Cherwell, a few hundred metres to the east.



Step 209: -

Step 210: Even with traffic passing overhead, the canal path can be quite peaceful and pleasant.

Step 211: -

Step 212: Spotted any birds along this stretch of the canal??

Step 213: Check out the lovely tree decorations by local houseboat residents on your left.

Step 214: Bridge 163 - you're making your way back to town. Remember you started around 168?

Step 215: On your right is a food plant - can you smell the scent of baked goods?

Step 216: You're probably getting tired, but you're so close to the end now. Almost there!



Step 217: The Premier Inn building in the distance is your symbol that you're nearly back to the start.

Step 218: And you made it! Great walking today. We hope you enjoyed the Banbury Fringe. Why not explore some of our other local walks?
