

Bridgwater and Taunton Canal –

Maunsell Lock to Creech St Michael (& return)

General Information

The Bridgwater and Taunton Canal opened in 1827 and linking the River Tone to the River Parrett. It is a well-kept secret but a well managed one! Local people, have set up a volunteer wardens scheme to look after their canal and their success can be shown in its beauty and peacefulness.

This canal might be cut off from the rest of the system, but it has well-maintained towpaths and fascinating lock structures which make for idyllic walking and peaceful boating.

There were several schemes to join the Bristol and English Channels but the only sections built were the Bridgwater and Taunton canal and the Grand Western Canal.

The Canal is part of the Taunton Stop Line – a World War Two fortification – there are pill boxes and dragons' teeth along the canal. Many people find this interesting and anyone in a canoe would be sure to notice the pill boxes.

The Cutting in Bridgwater is unusual and it's lovely to go through in a canoe! This lead to the docks, where there is some unusual poetry carved on the beams.



Cutting in Bridgwater

The Somerset Space Walk is on the canal walk between Bridgwater and Taunton. Along the canal are scaled models of the planets which are placed at accurate intervals along the canal in both directions from the sun at Higher Maunsell Lock. The scale model (530 million:1) of the Solar System is centred around the 'Sun' at Maunsell lock.

Because the canal is so quiet, it is very good for wildlife – fantastic dragonflies, kingfishers, etc – so if you are able do take your binoculars with you!

Map

OS Map 182 Weston-Super-Mare
OS Map 193 Taunton and Lyme Regis

Licences.

A licence to paddle the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal is included in the Canoe England membership fee. Otherwise licenses can be obtained from

<http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk/license-it> or <http://www.waterscape.com/>

Distance - 8 miles

Portages - 2

Start

There are many possibilities for journeys on this canal. This particular trail starts from Maunsel Lock, where one can easily park and travel south. It is possible to go north too.

Postcode: TA7 0DH

Grid ref: ST316294

Lat: 51:03:37N (51.06041)

Lon: 2:58:35W (-2.97631)

Maunsel Lock is mid-way along the beautiful Bridgwater & Taunton Canal. It is along the edge of the picturesque Somerset Levels, and as well as a lock there is a Canal Centre and Tea Shop. Whether you arrive by boat, bike, car or on foot, Maunsel Lock is a beautiful starting or rest point for walkers, cyclists, canoeists and boaters of all ages.

<http://www.maunsellock.co.uk/>

To commence your journey carry your canoe over the bridge and launch at the other end of the lock, and this will point you in a southerly direction. Not long after you start you will encounter Higher Lock. Portage on the towpath side. Don't forget to find out where the Sun model is!

After just over a mile you come in to the outskirts of Durston. The parish lies on undulating ground between the lowest slopes of the Quantock Hills and the valley of the River Tone at the Curry and Hay Moors.

The Bridgwater and Taunton Canal runs through the village. It is crossed by two bridges, Headworthy and Swan's Neck.

You reach Creech St Michael after another one and a half miles. The name derives from a creech, or creek, on the River Tone, which creates an island in the river to the south of the village, and the parish church of St. Michael, which dates from the 12th century. On the canal at Creech St. Michael is the site of the former junction with the Chard Canal which was opened in 1842 (the last "small" canal to be built in Britain) but was closed just 26 years later. I

The Bridgwater & Taunton Canal provides a picturesque route through the village for pleasure boats, and the tow path is open to pedestrians and cyclists. There are also dramatic remains of the Chard Canal, including the (filled) junction with the Bridgwater & Taunton Canal, a raised embankment leading south from the village, a ruined aqueduct that would have carried the canal over the River Tone, and the abutments of a second aqueduct across a local road.

<http://www.creechstmichael.net/>

This is the end of your journey before you turn to head back to Maunsel. It is possible to picnic on the bank here and the village has some good amenities including a variety of public houses.

To extend your journey you could paddle on for another mile to Bathpool and then from there another two miles to Firepool Lock and the junction with the River Tone in Taunton. You may wish to turn here as portaging this lock can be quite challenging.

If you chose to go on keep right away from the weir and paddle through Taunton where you will find several landing places. There is a park (French Weir Park) after Priory Bridge and the castle which has amenities and a place to picnic.

Alternative routes:-

You can start at Maunsel and head north. From here you can paddle all the way up to the River Parrett in Bridgwater docks where there is no access. This is a distance of just over seven miles with 3 portages (6 for a round trip) This route takes you up through North Newton, Kings Lock (No. 4), Standards Lock (No. 5), Fordgate, Huntworth and Mead before you reach Lock No, 6 Bridgwater Dock which is the end of the canal.

Bridgwater and Taunton Canal Mileage

Firepool Lock No, 1 Taunton Junction with the River Tone. (ST230253)

	Miles	Grid Ref
• Bathpool	1.8	
• Creech St Michael	3.0	
• Charlton	4.1	
• Durston	5.5	
• Higher Maunsel Lock No. 2	6.8	ST307293
• Lower Maunsel Lock No. 3	7.0	ST307297
• North Newton,	8.1	
• Kings Lock (No. 4),	8.3	ST305313
• Standards Lock (No. 5),	9.0	ST316317
• Fordgate	9.8	
• Huntworth	10.9	ST309355
• Mead	12.8	
• Lock No, 6 Bridgwater Dock which is the end of the canal.	14.0	ST297375

Additional Information

The towpath is part of Route 3 of the National Cycle Network.