

The Grand Western Canal Country Park and Local Nature Reserve meanders through beautiful Mid Devon countryside and small villages between Tiverton and Lowdells (near the Somerset border).



Welcome to the Grand Western Canal

Declared a Country Park in 1971 and a Local Nature Reserve 2005 the canal is a wonderfully relaxing and peaceful place to enjoy the rich heritage of yesterday year and profusion of wildlife and scenic landscape that characterises the canal today.

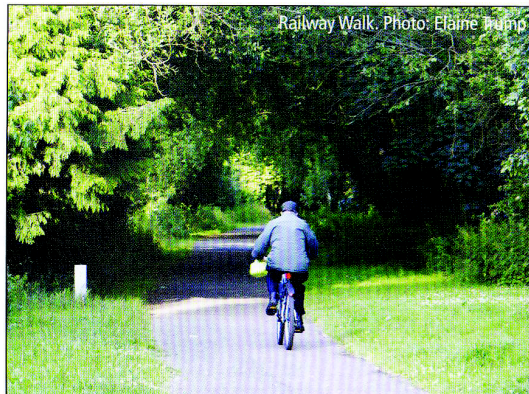
Extending for eleven and a quarter miles, the Country Park provides a great location for walking, cycling, fishing, boating and picnics. The canal starts in Tiverton at the canal basin, and is well signposted both from the M5-J27 and the A361 (North Devon link road) at the basin the canal provides car and coach parking, public toilets, visitor centre, canal shop, boat hire, a unique floating café bar and coffee house called the Ducks Ditty and the beautiful thatched tea gardens.

It is also home to the very rare, and much loved Horse-Drawn Barge, that has been taking visitors for trips along the canal since 1974 and is now the last of its kind in the West Country with only three others in the UK.

Some smaller car parks, picnic sites and canal related businesses are dotted along the length of the canal.

Canal history

Originally part of an ambitious scheme to link the Bristol Channel with the English Channel the Grand Western Canal, was proposed as a way for shipping to avoid the long and sometimes treacherous journey around the Cornish peninsula and as a route for transporting goods including coal and culm from South Wales into the heart of Somerset and Devon.



Railway Walk. Photo: Elaine Pump

This section from Tiverton to the limestone quarries at Westleigh (also known as the Tiverton canal) that started in 1810 and completed in 1814 but the cost had escalated hugely (proving this is not a modern-day phenomenon!) due to the use of steep embankments and deep cuttings to keep the canal on a level contour without the use of locks.

This massive overspend delayed construction for the next section to Taunton for many years, but eventually it was completed in 1838. By then any plans to link the canal with the English Channel had been abandoned, but for a short time the canal was profitable, mostly carrying coal and limestone, much of which was burnt in limekilns and used for improving the agricultural land.

The advent of the Bristol and Exeter railway took much of the trade away from the canal, and in 1865 the section from Lowdells to Taunton was sold to the railway company and abandoned.

However the limestone trade continued on the Tiverton to Lowdells section until the 1920s when persistent leaks led to the damming-off of the section near Halberton.



Information

For more information about the Canal Country Park call the Ranger Service 01884 254072
www.devon.gov.uk/grandwesterncanal
 Email: gwcanal@devon.gov.uk

For: Horse-Drawn Barge, Boat Hire, Canal Shop, & Ducks Ditty Café Bar call 01884 253345
www.tivertoncanal.co.uk
 Email: info@tivertoncanal.co.uk

For: Tea Gardens call: 01884 252291



The Canal Tearooms and Garden

*Open from early April until early October.
 Visit us in our award-winning garden and enjoy Morning coffees, light lunches or our famous Devonshire Cream teas.*

*Group bookings Welcome
 Tel: 01884 - 252291*