




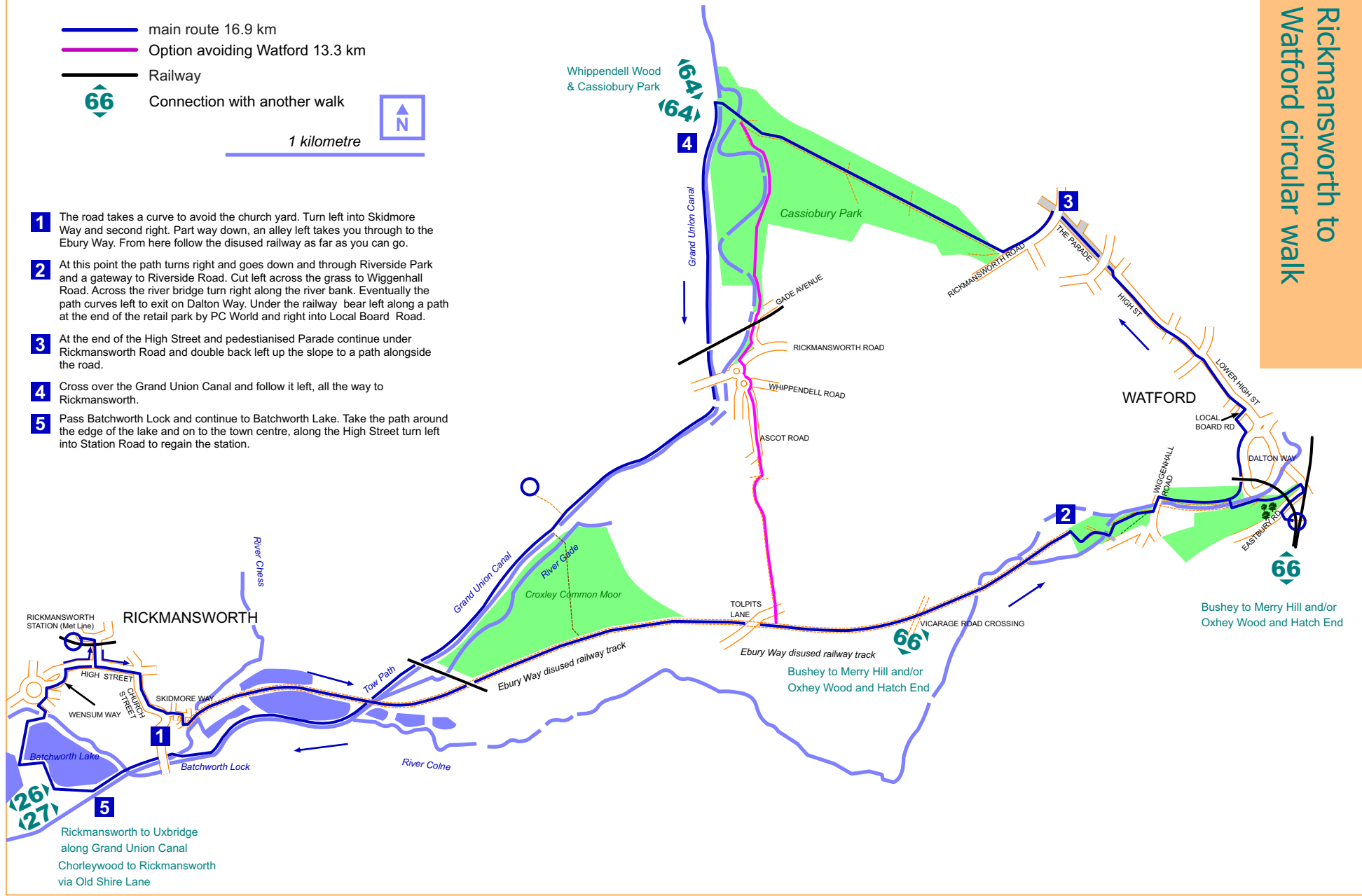


Rickmansworth to Watford circular walk

-  main route 16.9 km
 -  Option avoiding Watford 13.3 km
 -  Railway
 -  Connection with another walk
- 1 kilometre 

- 1** The road takes a curve to avoid the church yard. Turn left into Skidmore Way and second right. Part way down, an alley left takes you through to the Ebury Way. From here follow the disused railway as far as you can go.
- 2** At this point the path turns right and goes down and through Riverside Park and a gateway to Riverside Road. Cut left across the grass to Wiggshall Road. Across the river bridge turn right along the river bank. Eventually the path curves left to exit on Dalton Way. Under the railway bear left along a path at the end of the retail park by PC World and right into Local Board Road.
- 3** At the end of the High Street and pedestrianised Parade continue under Rickmansworth Road and double back left up the slope to a path alongside the road.
- 4** Cross over the Grand Union Canal and follow it left, all the way to Rickmansworth.
- 5** Pass Batchworth Lock and continue to Batchworth Lake. Take the path around the edge of the lake and on to the town centre, along the High Street turn left into Station Road to regain the station.



Bushey to Merry Hill and/or
Oxhey Wood and Hatch End

Rickmansworth to Uxbridge
along Grand Union Canal
Chorleywood to Rickmansworth
via Old Shire Lane

This triangular walk makes use of a disused railway and a towpath, connected by the town of Watford

Ebury Way

Robert Grosvenor, 1st Baron Ebury was a British courtier and Whig politician. He was the third son of Robert Grosvenor, 1st Marquess of Westminster. In 1860 he led the business venture with the Great Western Railway to build the railway from Watford, near his mansion at Moor Park, to Uxbridge in Buckinghamshire. The Watford & Rickmansworth Railway was the shortest of Hertfordshire's branch lines – only three miles long with a single stop – because the intended six mile extension from Rickmansworth to Uxbridge was never built.

The line was level but had to cross the rivers Chess, Gade and Colne, and the Grand Union Canal. It was built quickly and opened in 1862, but much of its passenger traffic was taken by the new Metropolitan Railway (to Amersham) in 1887 and the line never operated at a profit. Unlike Hertfordshire's other branches the line was electrified in 1927, but passenger use still declined and the stations closed in 1951. The line has since been converted into a cycle path which bears his name, the Ebury Way.

Cassiobury Park

The manor of Cassio, owned by the Abbey of St Albans, was mentioned in the Domesday Book in 1086. In 1546 Henry VIII granted Cassio Manor to Richard Morison, who started to build the house, which was passed down the male line until 1628, when Elizabeth Morison married Arthur, Lord Capel of

Hadham. Arthur was made Viscount Malden and Earl of Essex in 1661. He employed the gardener Moses Cooke to set out formal gardens, and the house was extensively remodelled in the early 1700s by the architect Hugh May. Humphry Repton was commissioned to landscape the park in the late 18th century. As part of this work, a number of lodges and other buildings were built, designed by Sir Jeffrey Wyattville. One of these, Cassiobury Lodge, still survives. In 1909, 184 acres of parkland were sold by the 8th Earl of Essex, mostly to Watford Borough Council for housing and the public park. The estate remained in the ownership of the Capel family (Earls of Essex) until 1922. The house itself was demolished in 1927. Only the stable block remains, converted to Cassiobury Court, an old peoples' home in Richmond Drive. More land for the park was purchased by the UDC in 1930. Construction of the residential Cassiobury Estate began. The land was made subject to restrictive covenants stipulating that only good quality detached or semi-detached houses would be allowed. West Herts Golf Course was bought in 1932 and Whippendell Wood in 1935.

The Canal

The Grand Union Canal is the longest canal in the UK at 286 miles. The canal was never constructed as an entity, but is the result of amalgamations between 1894 and 1929 of several independent waterways. The part we walk along was the Grand Junction Canal, built between Braunston (near Daventry) and the River Thames to improve the communications

between Birmingham, the Midlands and London. It was fully opened in 1805. Branches were added: to Paddington (opened 1801), Buckingham (1801), Northampton (1815) and Aylesbury (1815). The Slough Branch was one of the last to be built (1882).

Although the Grand Junction is a broad canal it was generally used only by narrow boats, except at the London end.

In 1894 the Grand Junction bought the canals which now comprise the 'Leicester Line', then in 1929 the Regent's, Grand Junction and the two Warwick Canals merged and the result was renamed as the 'Grand Union Canal'. The new company embarked on a large-scale modernisation programme to enable broad-beamed boats to work between London and Birmingham. Long lengths were dredged and strengthened with concrete bank protection. Bridges were widened or replaced, and the narrow locks between Braunston and Birmingham were replaced with broad locks (the remains of most of the old locks can be seen alongside their larger replacements). The ambitious scheme was completed in 1937 but much of the canal remained too shallow for broad boats to pass each other. However, narrow boats could now easily and quickly work in pairs. Traffic increased in the short term, but after the war the long-term downwards trend was relentless as canalside factories ceased using coal transported on the canal as a fuel or obtained it from other sources.

Today, the Grand Union Canal is used by pleasure boats, walkers and cyclists.