

Denstone to Alton

There is limited roadside parking in Denstone. For the walk join the railway trackbed at Denstone. After passing under the road bridge the ditch on the left widens to reveal the old canal bed on the left. The next milepost soon can be seen on the left. *The canal bed disappears and reappears on the left. On the right is Crumpwood Cottage which adjoins the weir.* After about a quarter of a mile the next milepost can be seen. *This also marks the entrance to the restored towpath. A return walk of about half a mile follows the canal bed back towards Crumpwood. First passing bridge 70 (the only remaining complete bridge on the canal), then a small building on the right the access road can be followed. The line of the canal crosses this road and the remains of a lock can be seen on the right. Shortly after is the pumping station on the right and Crumpwood Weir.* Return the same way to the old track bed, with views of the old canal bed on the right, to reach the next milepost on the left at Alton and its small car park. Distance 2.4 miles.

Return Denstone

From the car park walk back to the main road and turn left to cross the bridge. Cross the road but ignore the turn to the right but continue uphill on the pavement to reach a bench near the top. Recross the road to reach the car park of Alton Castle. Keep to the left and take the ascending tarmac path up the hill, passing another path to the right. Soon reach a road and continue ahead, passing Alton College on the left. At the end of the road, where it turns sharp right at a farm, continue ahead and over a stile. Take the right-hand track which soon curves right and climbs gently. At the top views open out to the left, reach a stile on the right (the track itself enters a field). Over the stile and follow the wide, but enclosed path to eventually cross another stile. Continue ahead to reach a stile on the right *. Over this to follow the left side of the field to reach a stile and broad track (Staffordshire Way). Turn left along this track to reach a gate, stile and farm. (*If you miss the stile on the left continue to the next stile and turn right to pass some small buildings and a concrete path leading to a stile and farm where join route.

Continue for some way along this track, which can be overgrown (despite a cobbled surface on one side) to reach a gate. Through this, keeping hedge on right to a second gate. Through this and turn right with hedge again on right. At the next gate the hedge breaks away right but continue in the same line, flanking the hillside, aiming for a white square near the treeline ahead. The white square is an electric fence warning by a metal stile. Over this and in the same line reach a second stile and sign. Over this and keeping just to the right of the tree line follow this to some trees ahead and a stile and footbridge. Over these to reach another stile. Do not cross but turn left to another footbridge. Over this and a second footbridge to reach the railway track bed. To complete the walk it is necessary to turn right for about half a mile to reach the end of the railway path at Denstone.

Alton to Oakamoor

There is a small car park by the track bed at Alton reached by an access track on the right immediately after the bridge after descending from Alton. Continue along the track bed passing Alton Station on the right. Continue to Lords Bridge and a cliff face on the right. *The remains of the canal can again be seen on the right.* The next milepost is on the right. From here the old canal bed is largely visible on the right until reaching the Oakamoor platform. *A slight detour along the track to the left leads to the old railway tunnel* but the line of the canal continued between the platforms and onto a large grassed area. Keep slightly left of the trees and stone gatepost to then pass the final milepost on the right. *This is the site of the old Bolton Copper Works. At the road part of the original bridge can be seen.* Walking back to the stone gatepost bear right to cross a bridge to reach the car park.

Return to Alton

From the car park at Oakamoor turn left onto road. Follow road to the Junction and turn left. Soon the road bends slightly left and there is a large wall on the right. Just before the wall turn right up the footpath. It is a stiff climb but does not last long. The path levels out and soon there is a sharp hairpin bend to the right with a smaller path leading ahead. Turn right up the hairpin and soon pass the rear of a house on the left. Continue on the path until a wall and stile is reached. Over this and keeping the wall to the right emerge on an access road. Either cross this to take the short path (with stile) opposite, or if overgrown then turn right to the road and then left to meet the path again. Turn left here to take the track leading downhill (Staffordshire Way sign).

At the next path junction continue ahead, down the narrower path (the left track will eventually take you the right way as will the right). Follow the path downhill. Ignore a path coming in from the right near the bottom, but continue ahead to reach a barrier by a house. Continue ahead to reach a broader track which is followed to the Ramblers Retreat. Pass the front of the cafe (or call in for refreshment) to take the track behind the car park but parallel to the road on the left. It climbs gently to join a broader track were continue ahead (leftish) to summit the hill. At the next junction continue ahead to descend to the road at a hairpin. Continue ahead along the road, ignoring the road to the right, to reach two pubs and the main road. Turn left, over the bridge then the access track on the right back to the small car park.

It is the intention of the Caldron & Uttoxeter Canals Trust to re-establish the Uttoxeter Canal. Much work has already been carried out between Alton and Denstone. However between Denstone and Uttoxeter buildings obstruct the line of the old canal and an alternative route is planned. However as part of the overall project the Trust would like to preserve as much of the line of the old canal as possible. In order to do this, six mileposts have been commissioned, and sponsored by members of the Trust as well as two by JCB whose land part of the canal formerly flowed. The mileposts are now in situ and a walk, linking them, but keeping as close to the line of the original canal as possible has been created.

The idea for the canal was first mooted at the end of the 18th Century and in 1800 applications for tender were invited. However there were disagreements over parts of the route and it was 1805 before work was started and 6 years later it was completed in 1811. However plans to build an Arm from Rocester to Ashbourne and to continue the canal to Burton never materialised.

However the canal was never a great success and by 1846 it was making an annual loss of £1k. At that time railway construction was in full swing and in 1846 the canal was valued at £1,170,000 and sold to the railway company. The canal was then closed in 1847 and work started on the railway which followed the route of the canal but by using cuttings and embankments the route was straightened.

Little now remains of the Uttoxeter Canal. However when walking along the disused railway track between Oakamoor and Denstone, several small sections of the canal can be seen and between Alton and Crumpwood CUCT is restoring a section of the canal which includes the only remaining bridge (known as Bridge 70) as well as three of the locks which formerly excited. From Denstone virtually all traces of the canal have disappeared with the JCB site occupying the old wharf and lime kilns. A section of canal remains but is on private property. Whilst the line of the canal can be traced beyond here there are only two sections remaining, one being the gentle curve of the canal and winding hole at Spath and a small section of water a few hundred metres beyond, both of which can be seen on the walk. Sadly there is now no trace of the old Wharf and basin at the terminus.

The canal was 13 miles long with a fall 133 feet. At Rocester it followed the 300ft contour so was lock free all the way to Uttoxeter. It began at Froghall Basin and through a series of locks reached the main Turnpike Road (A52). From here it followed the E side of the river. After nearly 2 miles there was a wharf and turning point. This was used to transport coal from two nearby coalfields, Woodhead and Royal George colliery via a tramway. Sadly there is no sign of this today. From here it continued to Oakamoor and Bolton's copper works (again there is no sign of the works other than a large open, recreational space and car park).

From Oakamoor the canal continued towards Alton and its wharf with smelting mill. There was a short tunnel at Alton (but with the later construction of the railway station there is only a bridge to mark the spot). From here the canal continued to Crumpwood where it crossed the River Churnet at a Weir. A lock (Weir Lock) dropped the level to equal the river level. Boats were towed across weir to Flood Lock on the other side. This lock had the same function as weir lock. From here the canal continued through Dentone towards Rocester with two locks, two lime kilns and a wharf which are now beneath factory buildings.

The canal then wound its way along the 300ft contour and at Combridge it crossed Nabb Brook on an aqueduct. Then at Stramshall it went under the road, which at the time was the main road into Uttoxeter. To keep to the contour it then turned west at Spath to cross the river Tean on an aqueduct to then turn east towards Uttoxeter, passing under the road to reach its terminus to the north of Uttoxeter.

The Uttoxeter Canal Milepost Walk



www.cuct.org.uk



Section 2 Denstone to Oakamoor

This walk is split into sections to make either two shorter circular walks or one longer one.

Denstone to Alton

The walk is 2.4 miles with a climb of about 250ft. The paths are generally good but could be

muddy in wet weather. In summer parts can be overgrown but are passable. There are some spectacular views across the Churnet Valley.

Alton to Oakamoor

Is a walk of 2.4 miles but involves a steep climb of 500 feet. However the climb can be avoided by continuing along the road to reach the Ramblers Retreat. The paths are generally good underfoot though in the height of summer could be overgrown but passable.

The route of the canal follows the dismantled railway. The return routes are shown as magenta)

Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2000