



## Walks in Wiltshire

### Wilton Windmill and Crofton Pumping Station Circular

Explore remarkable feats of rural engineering on a scenic circular walk linking Wilton Windmill, Crofton Pumping Station and the historic Kennet & Avon Canal towpath.

#### Useful Information

- 3.5 miles / 5.5 km circular
- Start point: Wilton Windmill layby
- What3words: [earmarked.bend.footpath](#)
- Grid Ref: SU 276 617
- OS Explorer Map: 157 | Marlborough & Savernake Forest
- Parking at Wilton Windmill layby (free)
- Generally level, with a few mild inclines
- Refreshments: [The Swan Inn Wilton](#), on route.
- Buses: [Wiltshire Connect](#) has a stop at The Swan Inn, Wilton village

#### Route Directions

- 1) From the layby [[w3w:earmarked.bend.footpath](#)], cross the road and head through the gate to visit Wilton Windmill. [[w3w:cheer.snippets.fussed](#)]
- 2) Return to the entrance gate by the main road. With the gate behind you, turn left and walk downhill towards Wilton village. After 320 meters, at the Y-junction, continue downhill. After a further 160 meters, look for the footpath sign to Crofton Pumping Station on your right (opposite the turning to Middle Road) [[w3w:neatly.worksheet.honeybees](#)]
- 3) Turn right onto the footpath, part of the old Roman Road from Venta Belgarum (Winchester) to Cunetio (Mildenhall, near Marlborough). [[w3w:hamsters.guides.secures](#)]
- 4) Continue up the Roman Road, ignoring the wooden signpost to Crofton Pumping Station. After a further 100 metres, a wide grassy path on your right leads to a silver metal kissing gate. [[w3w:converter.stardom.maker](#)]
- 5) Go through the kissing gate and, keeping the single metal electric fence on your right, cross the open field towards the opposite side. Pass through a gap in the hedge into the next field.
- 6) Turn right, keeping the hedge on your right, and follow the field edge until you reach another hedge gap marked by a wooden post.
- 7) With the hedge now on your left, continue along the field edge to another gap marked by a wooden post. Go straight ahead down "Coffin Walk", a historic path once used by pallbearers travelling to the nearest burial ground. Follow the path through the gully and tree tunnel until it opens into a clearing, where a clear path leads across the field towards the Kennet & Avon Canal at Beech Grove Lock. [[w3w:postings.signature.shimmered](#)]

# North Wessex Downs National Landscape



- 8) At Beech Grove Lock, turn left and follow the towpath for almost a mile, passing Longman's Cottage Lock and Crofton Crossing Lock, until you nearly reach the lock between Crofton Beam Engines and the head of Wilton Water.
- 9) Just before the Crofton lock, turn left to cross a narrow walkway to the head of Wilton Water. [w3w:input.singled.fuzz]. Continue along the path beside Wilton Water for just over half a mile. You will pass the Quackers bench and soon reach Wilton village, with the duck pond ahead of you. [w3w:drums.send.recapture]
- 10) Turn left along the lane. After 150 metres, The Swan Inn Wilton will be on your right. Continue around the bend and up the hill for 500 metres to a Y junction. Take the right hand branch and continue for another 500 metres to complete the loop and return to the Wilton Windmill layby. [w3w:earmarked.bend.footpath]

## Points of Interest

- **Wilton Windmill:** The only working windmill in the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, Wilton Windmill still produces traditional stoneground flour. Built in 1821 following the opening of the Kennet and Avon Canal, it served the local area for a century before falling out of use with the arrival of faster, steam-powered roller mills. Abandoned and left to deteriorate, it was beautifully restored in 1976 by a dedicated team of volunteers. You can visit the windmill site year-round, with guided tours of the building available from Easter to the end of September on Sundays and Bank Holidays. The picnic area offers sweeping views across the downs, and several lovely walks start from the mill, including routes to the Kennet and Avon Canal and Wilton Water.
- **Coffin Walk:** Coffin walks are ancient footpaths once used to carry coffins from remote homes and hamlets to the nearest consecrated burial ground, usually the main parish church. Found across the UK, particularly in Scotland and the Lake District, many of these routes are associated with local folklore and historic features. These paths often stretched for miles over rugged terrain and formed essential funeral routes for isolated communities. Today, many survive as atmospheric walking trails, sometimes marked by historic stopping points such as coffin rests or cairns where pallbearers paused to lay down the coffin.
- **Kennet and Avon Canal:** Meandering for 87 miles through peaceful, unspoilt countryside, the Kennet & Avon Canal is one of Britain's most picturesque waterways. Completed in 1810 as a vital trade route linking Bristol and London, its fortunes declined rapidly after the opening of the Great Western Railway in 1841. After decades of disuse and dereliction, the canal was restored by volunteers and officially reopened by Queen Elizabeth II in 1990. Today, the towpath offers a wonderful way to explore the North Wessex Downs, with abundant wildlife, historic structures and welcoming waterside pubs to enjoy along the

# North Wessex Downs National Landscape



route. The canal is easily accessed at several points across the National Landscape, including Kintbury, Hungerford, Great Bedwyn and Pewsey.

- **Crofton Pumping Station:** This Grade I listed site is home to two Cornish beam engines, including the oldest working example in the world. Crofton Pumping Station is one of the country's most important industrial heritage landmarks, offering a fascinating glimpse into the era when steam power shaped everyday life. Built between 1807 and 1809, the station supplied water to the highest point of the Kennet & Avon Canal, connecting London and Bristol. It stands today as a rare surviving example of the engineering that once enabled mines to be drained and towns and cities across the world to be supplied with water. The site has recently benefited from conservation work and improved visitor facilities, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.
- **The Swan Inn Wilton:** Wilton sits in the valley of a head stream of the River Dun, whose waters have fed the village pond for at least three centuries. A Swan Inn is recorded on the north side of Wilton's central rectangle as early as 1724, before relocating in 1996 to its current home, a mid-20th-century building on the northeast corner of the green. The Swan offers good food, real ales, a log fire, a beer garden, and a warm welcome to both dogs and children.

## Wilton Windmill and Crofton Pumping Station Circular: Map

# North Wessex Downs National Landscape

