

The Oxford Canal and Souldern Wharf - Walk 2

Village Square—Lower Aynho Grounds—Souldern Mill—Motorway—Aynho Wharf—Oxford Canal—Souldern Wharf—Souldern Manor—Aynho Croughton Road—Village Square



Footbridge over the brook

Follow the directions for the walk to Souldern (walk 1) down Millers Lane to Souldern Mill. After crossing the ford take the footbridge on your right and cross the brook again.

Over the bridge follow the path on the left between two fences and into a field. The path continues along the edge of the field with the brook to your left, until you come to a pair of metal gates.



Metal gates at the end of the field

Through these you are on a concrete track which curves up alongside the motorway. A few yards ahead of the gate a path leaves the track diagonally left through the spinney. This can be difficult to find, especially in summer when the trees are spreading out. There is a waymark sign on a tree by the path. Once through the spinney you can pass under the motorway on a raised concrete walkway next to the brook, which shares the tunnel with the farm track.



Under the motorway

Emerging from the tunnel resume the route along the edge of the field with the hedge on your left. You are walking towards an impressive railway viaduct and as you approach it the field edge swings round to the right parallel with the railway. From here the path used to follow the edge of the field out to Station Road. With the work required to double the track between Banbury and Bicester you have to leave the field as you approach a contractor's enclosure and follow the track they have constructed out to the road.



Path through the spinney



Diversion by viaduct

Turn left into station road, pass under the railway bridge, cross the road with care and continue round to the Great Western Arms and the Oxford Canal. Refreshments are available at the pub and also at Aynho Wharf. You will cross another railway line and note the old Aynho railway station on your right. This is now a private dwelling with the platforms removed. The yard beyond was an

old coal yard.



Track out to Station Road

Cross the narrow, humped canal bridge and turn sharply right through a white metal gate to take a path a few yards down to the canal with the Wharf across the water. Leave the Canal at Souldern Wharf



Path down to the canal



Canal

The Oxford Canal: The Oxford to Coventry Canal reached Aynho from the north in 1787 and was fully open in 1791 when Aynho Wharf began to collect dues and prosper. W.R. Cartwright had his wine delivered by canal. Fly-boats and market boats ran to schedule at faster than walking pace.

Building materials were available more cheaply.



Leave the canal at Souldern Wharf

Turn right under the road bridge – mind your head! The towpath stretches ahead of you with many boats moored on both sides of the canal. This is part of the towpath walk between Oxford and Banbury. Continue to the next bridge which is at Souldern Wharf. Just before the bridge is a small metal gate which you pass through before swinging round to the left and crossing the bridge over the canal. You are now in a farm yard that can be very muddy.

A single track tarmac road takes you over the railway and under a further railway bridge before leading to a long slow climb up to Souldern village. You will cross the motorway and enjoy some wonderful views across to Aynho. At the top of the hill where the road bends round to the right to enter Souldern village you rejoin the route of Walk 1. You may be interested in taking a shorter route back.



Stone stile to the right of stone pillar

As you reach the end of the stone wall on your left you come to a gate and then just inside the driveway of the first house, facing back the way you came, is an old stone stile. Cross this onto a track which after another, wooden, stile narrows to a path. A further stile gives access to a grassy meadow with clumps of trees ahead. There are often livestock grazing here. Aim for the small stile beyond the tree



Aim for the small stile beyond the tree