

Trail Guide:



A wonderful wildlife walk along the restored canal where you go from the noise and hustle of industry to a haven of peace and tranquillity

The 'Wow' Factor

- See the new Visitor Centre at Tapton Lock
- Walk on wonderful towpath mosaics
- Enjoy canal art by local children!
- Count how many different birds you can see along the walk
- See a 'carpet' of bluebells in spring

Leave the **Tourist Information Centre** taking the path to the left of the front entrance to the Crooked Spire then turn right, pass the war memorial and cross St Mary's Gate on the zebra crossing. Pass the museum and theatre and cross the footbridge over the A61. Cross the road and continue towards the station. Follow the road past the station and take the first left turn across the river and left again following the river. Cross Brimington Road with care and head down Holbeck Close.

The 46 mile long **Chesterfield Canal** was one of the earliest canals, planned in 1769 by James Brindley, the great engineer, to link Chesterfield with the Trent and thus the North Sea. It was finished in 1777 but he did not live to see it. Its most famous cargo was stone to rebuild the Houses of Parliament in 1841-44 but even then the new railways were competing with canals and after World War II the canals could not survive. The Chesterfield section of the canal closed in 1908 following the collapse of the Norwood Tunnel. In 1976 the Chesterfield Canal Society began work on restoring the 20 miles of canal up to the Norwood Tunnel. The restoration was completed in 2003.

Trail Key:



Walking



Car



Bus



Cycling



Scenic



Historic



Time



Distance

Difficulty Rating for walks:



Easy



Moderate



Strenuous

This trail is one of 44 exciting trails to explore in the Peak District & Derbyshire.

The **Visitor Centre at Tapton Lock** is open every day during the summer and at weekends in winter. Chesterfield Canal Trust runs boat trips on Sundays and Bank Holidays, and the centre offers an exhibition, shop and information on the area. The **Trans Pennine Trail** southern link can be accessed here.

After the Visitor Centre there is a new bridge under the A619, decorated around a canal theme. Despite the surroundings the wildlife is abundant with ducks, geese, long-tailed tits, swans and water voles on the canal and the trees that line it are full of songbirds. At **Brimington Wharf** there are lovely mosaics to walk on along the towpath.

The Bluebank Loop starts at **Wheeldon Mill Lock**. Here industry and houses start to disappear and the woods thicken. The towpath winds along the embankment through **Bluebank Wood** where bluebells carpet the bank in springtime. There is also a picnic site here, a slipway and moorings with water and soakaways. But just imagine what it was like at the height of the Industrial Revolution!

After Wheeldon there are numerous small ponds fed by the overflow from the canal. They are the oxbow remains of the old river which had to be straightened in 1890 when the new railway line was built. These ponds are a haven for wildlife and abound with amphibians and water birds. Of particular note are the kingfishers, little grebe and water voles.

At the end of the loop is **Bluebank Lock** and the remains of an old wooden barge that was recovered from the canal when it was dredged in 1997. Perhaps this boat carried locally made cannon balls to be used at the battle of Waterloo! This is where you turn back along the loop on an old disused railway line that originally ran to **Staveley Pipe Works**. Along this you get views of the river and the oxbow ponds. Again the wildlife abounds despite the frequent trains that run along the adjacent modern line. Look out for the path on **your right** which leads to the **River Rother** and a lovely picnic stop.

Return to town along the canal to where you started, exchanging peace and quiet for noise and bustle!

Chesterfield Trail No. 15

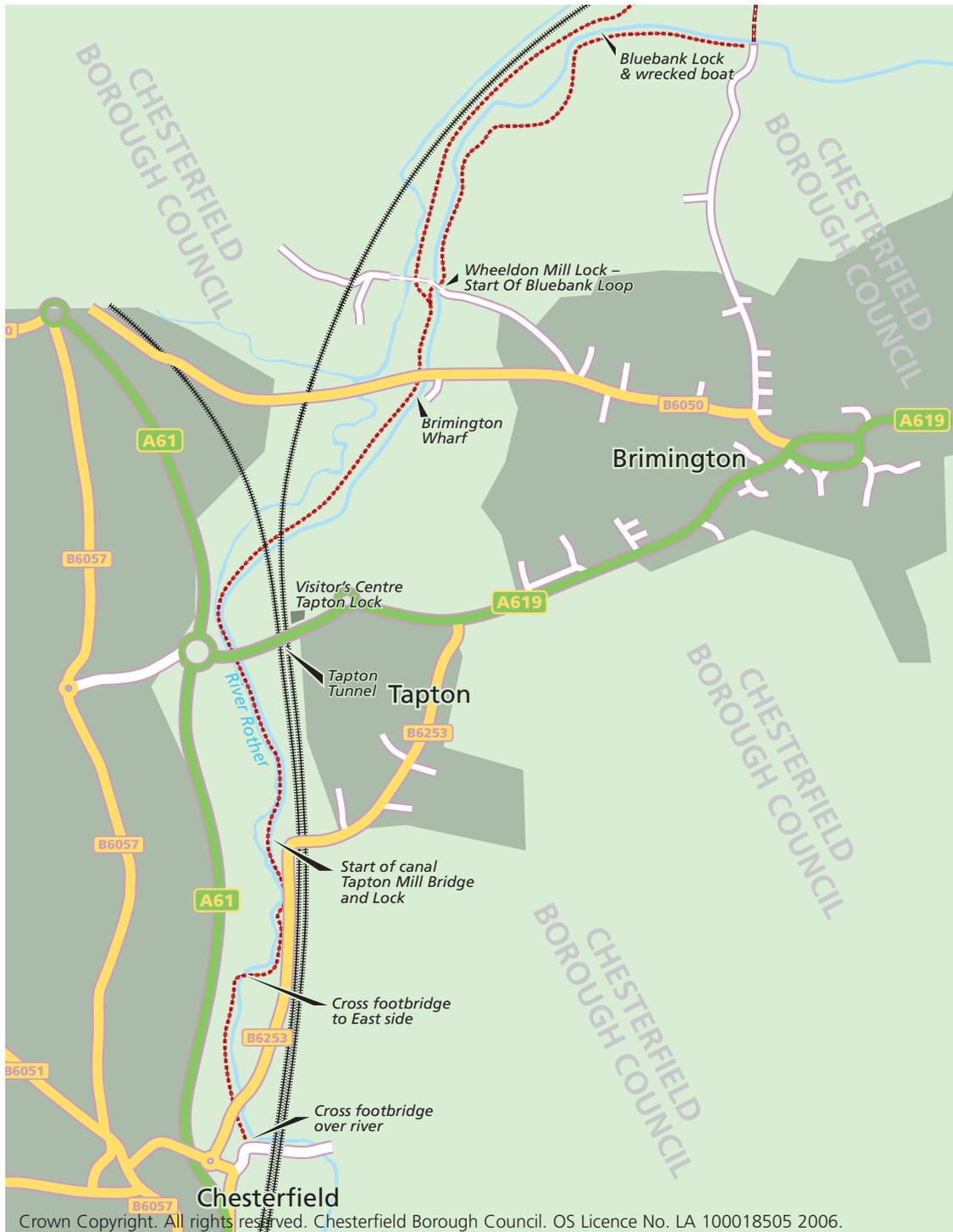
Hustle and Bustle to Birds and Bluebells



9 km
6 miles



Key
Track / Trail



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