

# The Parks Trust Self-Guided Walks: The River Ouse Valley & Cosgrove

Walk revised by Peter Burrett, Monday 3rd June 2013

## Start point

Travelling north from Old Wolverton towards Haversham along Haversham Road, there is a free parking area on your left at the Ouse Valley Park.

## Walk overview

This is a circular walk, along a footpath and short section of canal towpath via Manor Farm to the Iron Trunk Aqueduct on the Grand Union Canal, then back via a different footpath along the River Ouse.

There is also an option to increase the length of your walk by heading north from the Iron Trunk Aqueduct along the Grand Union Canal towpath to the village of Cosgrove and the Barley Mow pub, then retracing your steps back to the Iron Trunk Aqueduct to rejoin the circular walk.

Throughout, the walking is easy, along well-maintained hard footpaths, and a canal towpath. Unfortunately, two sets of steep steps must be negotiated, so the walk is not wheelchair friendly.

Some of the walk is through the floodplain of the River Ouse so footpaths may be impassable when river levels are high.

## Distances & times

Circular walk, part one; Car park – Manor Farm – Iron Trunk Aqueduct = 1.3 miles, 45 minutes

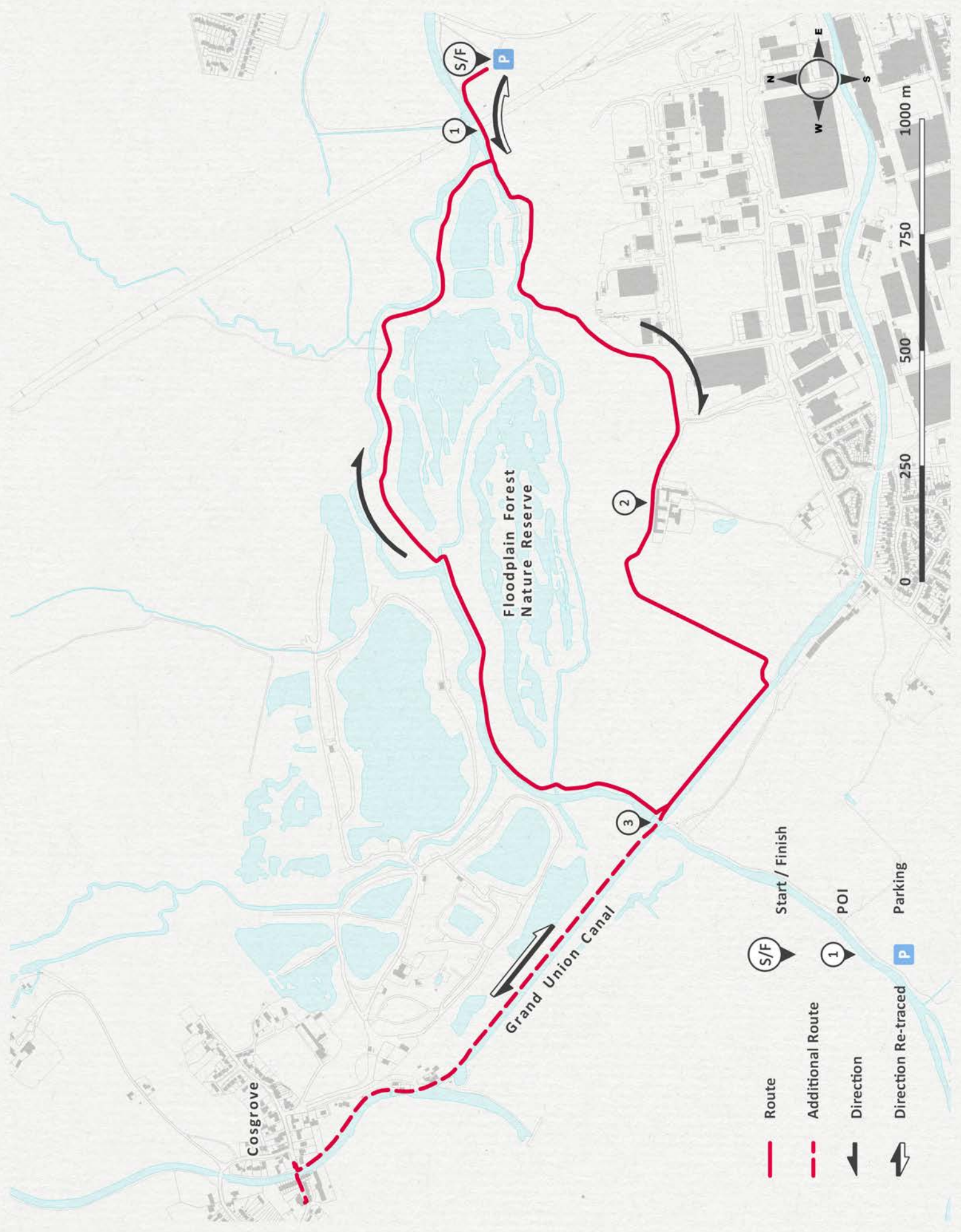
Circular walk, part two; Iron Trunk Aqueduct – River Ouse – car park = 1.3 miles, 35 minutes








Total circular walk = 2.6 miles, 80 minutes

Cosgrove extended walk option; Iron Trunk Aqueduct – Cosgrove – Iron Trunk Aqueduct = 1.5 miles, 40 minutes. Allow additional time for refreshments at the Barley Mow pub in Cosgrove.

Total route PLUS Cosgrove extension = 4.1 miles, 120 minutes





-  Route
-  Additional Route
-  Direction
-  Direction Re-traced
-  Start / Finish
-  POI
-  Parking



## The circular walk, part one – car park to Iron Trunk Aqueduct via Manor Farm

From the car park, walk through woodland with picnic benches towards the River Ouse and the mighty brick-built Wolverton Viaduct, constructed by Robert Stephenson in 1838. This area is a mass of daffodils in Spring.

A footpath sign posted “Manor Farm and Stony Stratford” curves left and under the viaduct, which carries the main west coast railway line over the River Ouse and its floodplain.

After the viaduct you will see a quarry on your left. Do NOT take the footbridge over the River Ouse to your right. Continue along the footpath which will take you through a series of gates – some alongside cattle grids – past Manor Farm and eventually to the Grand Union Canal.



Once beyond the quarry, the footpath crosses grazing land. The substantial Manor Farm complex – which includes a courtyard of small business units – can eventually be seen through trees to your left.



In the fields surrounding Manor Farm you will occasionally see Barn Owl boxes on poles. There are also herds of cows in the area, and special care should be taken not to disturb them when calves are present.

On the approach to Manor Farm, the core of which dates from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, there is a slight gradient, but the walking is still easy. From the farm you can look across the Ouse floodplain to Cosgrove caravan site, and towards Castlethorpe and the distant spire of Hanslope church (viewpoint symbol on map).

At Manor Farm there is an interesting Parks Trust information board about the earthworks of “Old Wolverton Village”, a designated ancient monument. It shows the historic positions of the village street, green, pond, peasants’ houses, castle and later manor house.

Carry on past the farm until you reach a gate at a copse where the path turns sharp right and descends to the Grand Union Canal. Turn right along the canal towpath until you reach the Iron Trunk Aqueduct.

This aqueduct has a cast iron trough and was built in 1811 to carry the Grand Union Canal over the River Ouse, replacing the previous brick-built version which collapsed in 1808. Here there is a bench, a Canal & River Trust information board, and a plaque laid by the Transport Trust to commemorate the historical importance of the aqueduct.



## **The Cosgrove extended walk option – Iron Trunk Aqueduct to Cosgrove and back (dotted line on map)**

Cross the aqueduct and continue along the canal towpath past a second Canal & River Trust information board. You will pass many narrow boat mooring places before reaching Cosgrove lock, just beyond a turning circle in the canal. Here there are old lock cottages on your right. On your left, the Buckingham Canal, which is currently disused but being restored, joins the Grand Union.

The canal bends into the village of Cosgrove (population 500). You will see the village's 13<sup>th</sup> century St Peter & St Paul's church on the left.

Opposite a row of fairly new cottages, take the steps to your right signed "horse tunnel and pub via horse tunnel", then bear sharp left through the horse tunnel. The roof is low and anyone taller than 5'6" will need to crouch down! The tunnel leads to the Barley Mow public house, which is open all day from noon and serves meals, snacks and Everards real ales.

Now double back along the canal towpath to the Iron Trunk Aqueduct.

## **The circular walk, part two – Iron Trunk Aqueduct to car park via River Ouse**

*(If continuing the circular walk, without diverting to Cosgrove ....)* Just before the aqueduct, descend steps to your right leading to the River Ouse.

*(If rejoining the circular walk after taking in the Cosgrove option ....)* Just beyond the aqueduct, descend steps to your left leading to the River Ouse.

At the bottom of the steps, turn right onto a path alongside the River Ouse signed "New Bradwell". After about 100 yards, with the Ouse on your left, there is another Canal & River Trust board about the Iron Trunk Aqueduct, and a Parks Trust board about the Manor Farm floodplain forest restoration proposal. (You can see many young trees already planted).

Turn around at this point for a good view of the Iron Trunk Aqueduct.

On the opposite side of the river is the extensive Cosgrove caravan park. The footpath continues over a wooden walkway. There are benches dotted along the route. To your right you will see Manor Farm on the far side of the floodplain, and quarry workings.



The path bends left, bridging a tributary stream, before continuing alongside the Ouse. You pass a metal footbridge over the river on your left that is unsigned, but leads to Haversham village. Wolverton Viaduct soon looms in front of you.

A wooden footbridge takes you over another of the Ouse's tributaries. Turn left (signed "Riverside Walk" and "New Bradwell"). This is the path you took towards Manor Farm at the start of your walk. Pass under the viaduct and walk across the woodland to the car park.

