



# The Three Bridges

## Local History Walk



Capital Ring  
Network footpath to  
Old Hanwell along  
the river Brent,  
passing under the  
Wharcliffe Viaduct

**Start Point –  
Three Bridges Park**  
On the junction of  
Windmill Lane and  
Tentelow Lane

**Finish Point – The  
footbridge where the  
canal joins the River  
Brent close to Green  
Lane**

**1** Three Bridges Park

**2** Brunel's  
Three Bridges  
Scheduled  
Ancient  
Monument

**3** Canal Lock and possible  
site of the windmill

**4** Canal Lock  
- part of the  
Hanwell Flight  
of locks

**5** The Hanwell Asylum  
dock arch

**6** The junction  
of the canal  
with the  
River Brent



# INTRO

## Windmill and Hanwell canal

Turners sketch 'Windmill and Lock'  
from Liber studiorum: Parts 5-10,  
painted circa 1811 by Joseph Mallord  
William Turner, 1775-1851.  
Photo ©Tate, London 2013.

# 1 The Three BRIDGES

**WELCOME TO THREE BRIDGES PARK. THIS SITE WAS ONCE PART OF THE 'TS WESTCOTT' SEA CADETS TRAINING BASE BUT IT IS NOW A PUBLIC PARK AND A HAVEN FOR WILDLIFE. THE SEA CADETS ORGANIZATION WAS FOUNDED TO HELP THE ORPHANS OF SAILORS KILLED IN THE CRIMEAN WAR IN 1856. IT NOW PROVIDES LEADERSHIP AND BOAT HANDLING TRAINING FOR BOYS AND GIRLS, AND ENCOURAGES A SENSE OF COMMUNITY PRIDE AND VOLUNTEERING.**

TS stands for 'Training Ship' and Westcott is from Westcott Crescent in Hanwell where their first base was set up in 1942. As Hanwell is a long way from the sea the local cadets had a hall instead of a ship, and they practised their boating skills on the canal. Their base also had a radio mast and a decommissioned First World War naval gun. The gun was removed in 2005 but you can still see the radio mast on one side of the park.

Take some time to look around the park and enjoy the views of the canal. When you have finished exploring you can start the Three Bridges local history walk.

**TURN LEFT ON LEAVING THE PARK AND FOLLOW THE PAVEMENT ROUND TO THE LEFT AND CROSS THE ROAD AT THE TRAFFIC CONTROL BARRIERS. BE CAREFUL AS THIS IS A BUSY ROAD. WALK UP ONTO THE BRIDGE AND STOP HALF WAY ACROSS. FROM HERE YOU WILL HAVE GOOD VIEWS OF THE CANAL AND RAILWAY BELOW YOU.**



The decommissioned naval gun



# THREE BRIDGES



Railway sleeper path leading visitors towards the canal



Interpretation board

# 2

## Brunel and THREE BRIDGES

**THE FAMOUS ENGINEER ISAMBARD KINGDOM BRUNEL DESIGNED THE INTERSECTION OF THREE MODES OF TRANSPORT HERE: THESE INCLUDE RAIL, WATER AND ROAD.**



**View from the Three Bridges Park towards  
Glade Lane Canal Side Park**

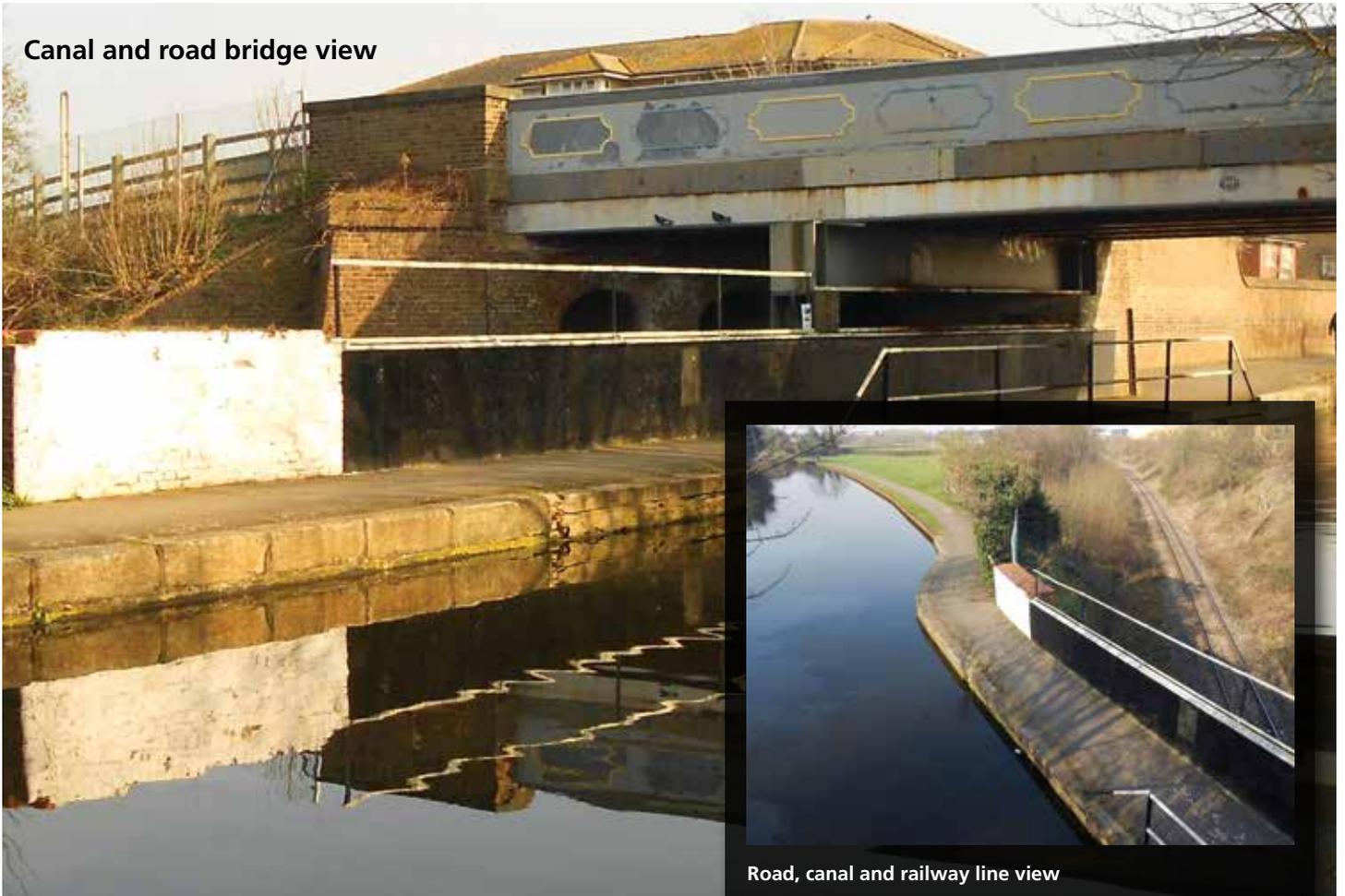
The canal is underneath the road bridge, and the railway line is below the canal. The road bridge and the canal bridge are made of cast iron and there is a weight limit because it is so old.

Building the railway involved digging underneath the canal, and Brunel had to encase the canal in a cast iron trough to form the canal bridge. The railway was opened in 1859 and was the last project Brunel completed before he died.

Three Bridges has been endorsed by English Heritage as a scheduled ancient monument. Look and you will see that there are actually only two bridges not three.

**NOW CONTINUE YOUR WALK, CROSSING THE BRIDGE  
GO DOWN THE SLOPE AND THEN TURN SHARP RIGHT  
AT THE END OF THE FENCE, TO FOLLOW A SHORT  
PATH THAT LEADS BACK DOWN TO THE CANAL.  
WHEN YOU REACH THE CANAL TURN LEFT AND  
FOLLOW THE TOWPATH ALONG THE SIDE OF THE  
CANAL UNTIL YOU REACH THE FIRST LOCK WHERE  
YOU WILL SEE A SMALL COTTAGE ON THE OPPOSITE  
BANK.**

Canal and road bridge view



Road, canal and railway line view

# 3

# The WINDMILL

**WINDMILL LANE IS A ROAD THAT WAS BUILT HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO. IT EXISTED BEFORE THE CANAL AND THE RAILWAY WERE BUILT. IN HISTORICAL MAPS, THE WINDMILL SHOWS UP IN DIFFERENT PLACES, SO WE DO NOT KNOW ITS EXACT LOCATION.**

A picture of the windmill was painted by a very famous English painter J.M.W Turner in 1808, who painted landscapes with water colours. The Tate Gallery has sketches of the painting called the 'Windmill and Lock at Hanwell'. In the painting you can see the windmill, the lock with a gate, some farm animals, and a small bridge made of bricks in the distance. William Turner painted the picture years before the railway was built by Brunel, whose iron clad bridge is the one we see today. The road Windmill Lane and the Windmill Park Estate are both named after the windmill.

**CONTINUE YOUR WALK ALONG THE CANAL TOWPATH KEEPING A LOOK OUT FOR BIRDS AND WILDLIFE THAT LIVE ALONG THE CANAL. YOUR NEXT STOP IS BY THE NEXT LOCK.**

## Windmill and Hanwell canal

Turners sketch 'Windmill and Lock' from  
Liber studiorum: Parts 5-10, painted circa 1811  
by Joseph Mallord William Turner, 1775-1851.  
Photo ©Tate, London 2013.



Did Turner paint from here?

# 4

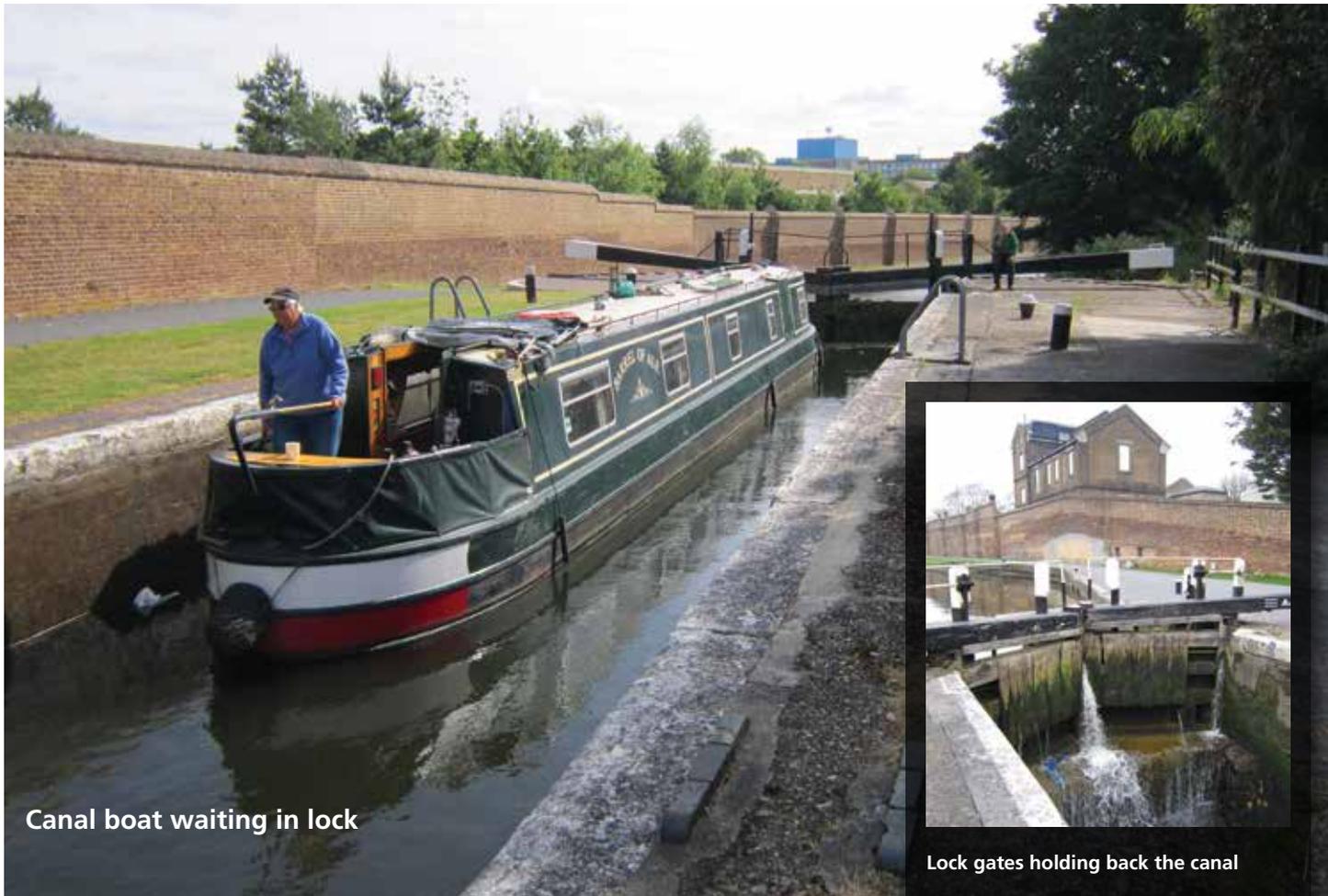
## Hanwell

### FLIGHT OF LOCKS

**THERE ARE SIX LOCKS IN THE HANWELL FLIGHT, WHICH FORM PART OF THE GRAND UNION CANAL. THEY RAISE THE CANAL ABOUT 53 FEET OR 16.2 METRES. THE CHIEF ENGINEERS WERE WILLIAM JESSOP AND JAMES BARNES WHO HAD TO USE HORSES AND MEN TO DIG OUT THE CANAL.**

Locks allow boats to move up and down hills on a canal. To move a boat uphill the boat driver uses a lock key at the side of the lock to open small doors at the bottom of the gate. This allows water to gush in from the canal above, raising the water level and the boat in the lock. The water levels have to be the same inside and outside of the lock to enable the gate to be opened so that the boat can continue its journey.

**FOLLOW THE TOWPATH ALONG THE CANAL AGAIN. AS YOU DROP DOWNHILL PAST EACH LOCK THE BRICK WALL TO YOUR LEFT GETS TALLER AND MORE IMPOSING. YOU CAN GLIMPSE OLD AND NEW BUILDINGS BEHIND THE WALL, AND YOU MIGHT SPOT SOME DATES CARVED IN THE STONE. WALK PAST ANOTHER LOCK AND THEN LOOK OUT FOR A YELLOW BRICK-FILLED ARCH SET INTO THE BRICKWORK OF THE WALL. STOP BESIDE THIS ARCH**



Canal boat waiting in lock



Lock gates holding back the canal

# 5

# Hanwell ASYLUM

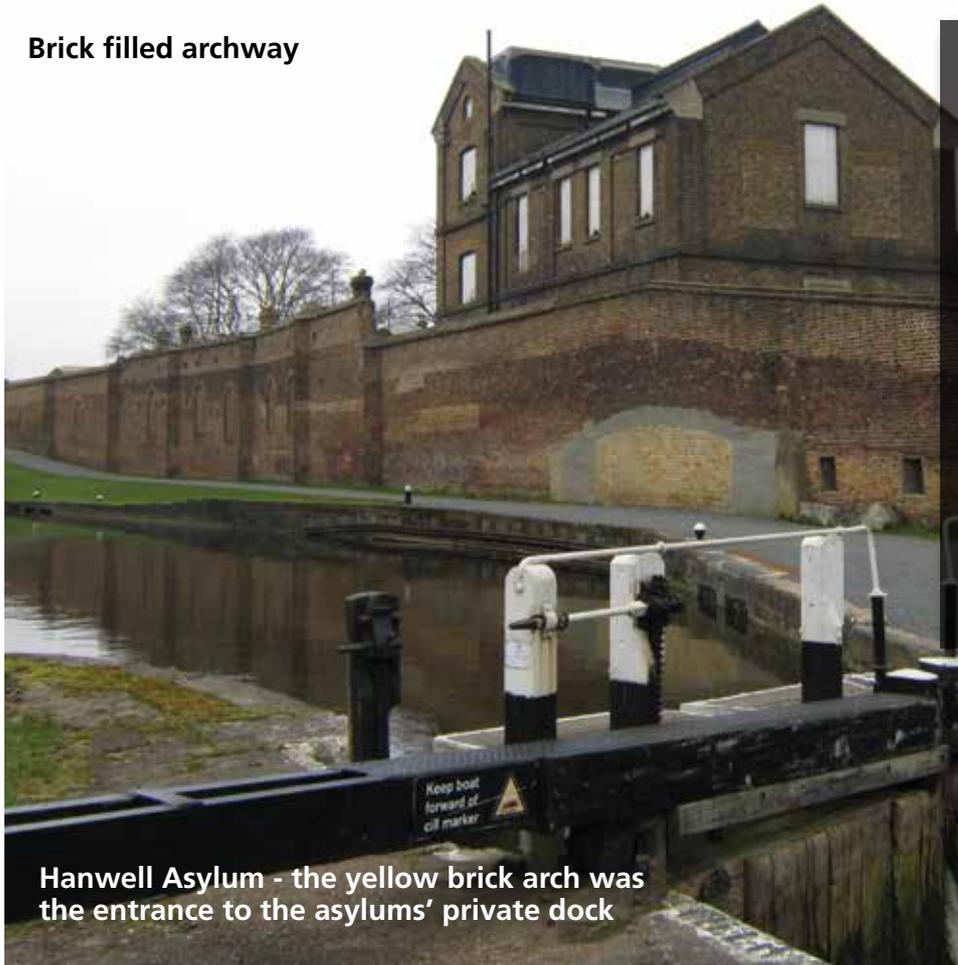
**THE HANWELL ASYLUM IS TODAY KNOWN AS ST. BERNARD'S HOSPITAL. IT WAS BUILT IN 1830 FOR PATIENTS WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS, AND WAS WHERE PIONEERING ENGLISH PSYCHIATRIST DR. JOHN CONNOLLY BECAME THE RESIDENT PHYSICIAN IN 1839. IT WAS THE BIGGEST ASYLUM IN THE WORLD IN 1850.**

The yellow brick-filled archway used to be open, allowing boats to turn into the asylum to deliver coal and collect its excess produce of fruit and vegetables grown by the patients. Families used to live on the boats and helped to shift tonnes of coal into the asylum. Canal boats used to be pulled by horses and thick ropes. These ropes rubbed against the wall in some places and created groove-marks that can still be seen today.

The brick wall of the hospital wall is about a kilometre long. It has square fire holes, used by fireman to get water, pumped through hose-pipes from the nearby canal, in case of fire at the asylum.

**WALK ON PASSING TWO MORE LOCKS. LOOK OUT FOR AN UNUSUAL STONE RAMP THAT SLOPES DOWN INTO THE CANAL. IN THE DAYS WHEN CANAL BOATS WERE PULLED BY HORSES THIS RAMP WOULD HAVE HELPED A HORSE TO CLIMB OUT IF IT FELL INTO THE CANAL. CONTINUE ALONG THE TOWPATH, PASSING A FOOTPATH TO THE LEFT THAT IS SIGNPOSTED AS PART OF THE 'CAPITAL RING' FOOTPATH NETWORK. WALK PAST ONE MORE LOCK AND CONTINUE UNTIL YOU REACH A FOOTBRIDGE WHERE THE TOWPATH CROSSES ANOTHER WATERCOURSE, THE RIVER BRENT. STOP HALF WAY ACROSS THIS BRIDGE**

**Brick filled archway**



**Hanwell Asylum - the yellow brick arch was the entrance to the asylums' private dock**



**Horse rope grooves**

# 6

The canal junction with

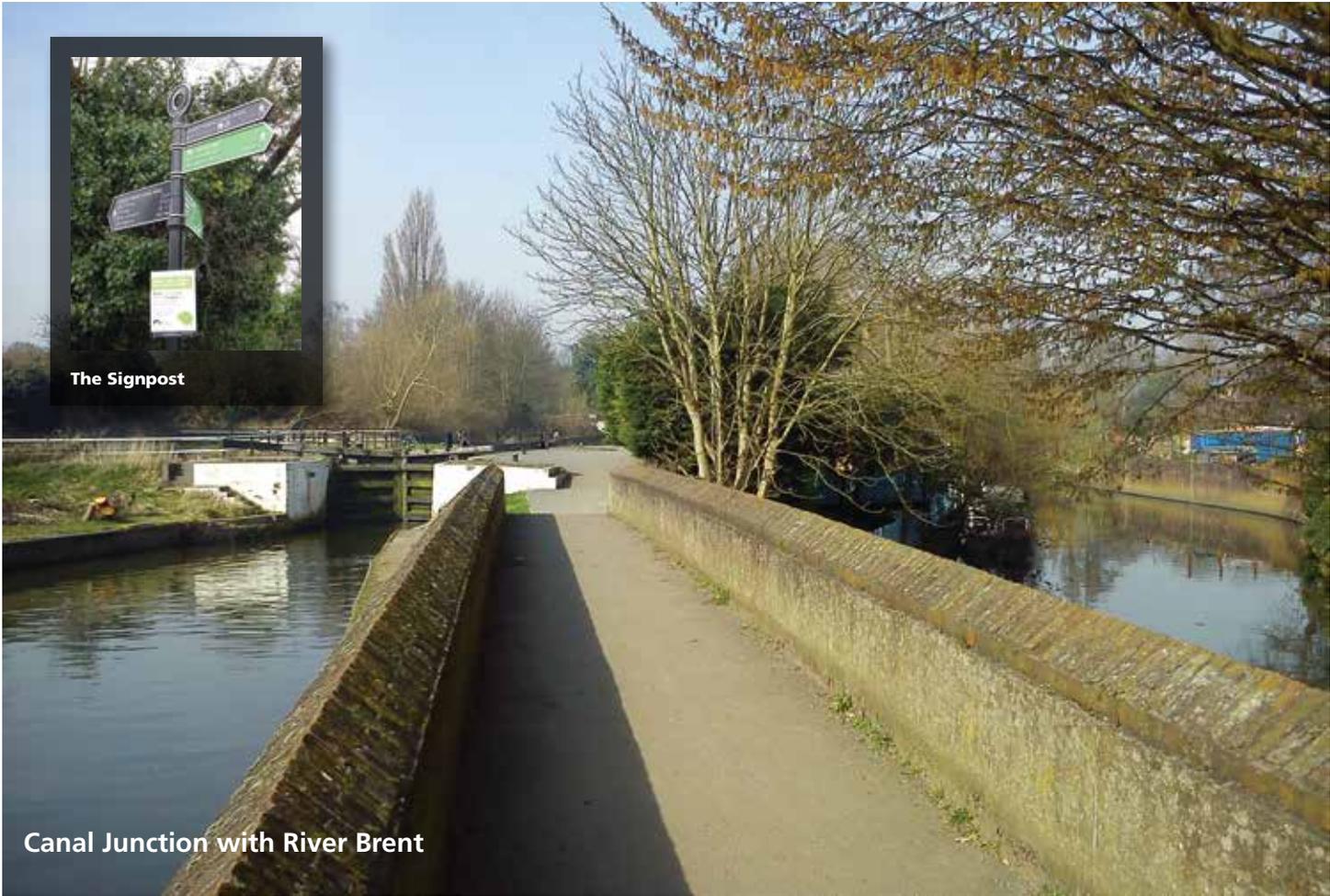
## THE RIVER BRENT

**YOU HAVE NOW REACHED THE POINT WHERE THE GRAND UNION CANAL JOINS THE RIVER BRENT. THE LOCK YOU HAVE JUST PASSED IS THE LOWEST IN THE HANWELL FLIGHT OF LOCKS.**

This stretch of the canal was completed in 1794 and allowed boats from as far away as Birmingham to bring goods to the docks at Brentford. Canal boats were loaded with all sorts of heavy and bulky goods, including coal and iron from the Midlands, and margarine and bricks from Southall. These goods were taken down the Thames to the City of London and from there some were sent all over the world.

This is the end of the Three Bridges History Walk and we hope you have enjoyed learning about the fascinating history along this stretch of the canal.

**YOU CAN NOW RETRACE YOUR FOOTSTEPS AND RETURN TO THREE BRIDGES PARK VIA THE CANAL TOWPATH. ALTERNATIVELY YOU COULD EXTEND YOUR WALK TO VISIT OLD HANWELL AND ANOTHER OF ISAMBARD BRUNEL'S FAMOUS BRIDGES, THE WHARNCLIFFE VIADUCT. TO DO THIS RETRACE YOUR ROUTE BACK PAST ONE LOCK AND THEN TURN RIGHT ALONG THE FOOTPATH YOU SAW EARLIER SIGNPOSTED 'CAPITAL RING NETWORK'. THIS PATH FOLLOWS THE WINDING COURSE OF THE RIVER BRENT THROUGH BEAUTIFUL WOODLAND AND MEADOWS, PASSING UNDER THE UXBRIDGE ROAD AND THE VIADUCT TO REACH BRENT LODGE PARK AND OLD HANWELL.**



**The Signpost**

**Canal Junction with River Brent**

This walk was created by the Three Bridges Primary School's Family Learning Group, Accession Social Enterprise and Ealing Council Adult Education Team, as part of the Heritage Lottery Funded Three Bridges History Project. It is also available to download as a Podcast from the Ealing council website.

