

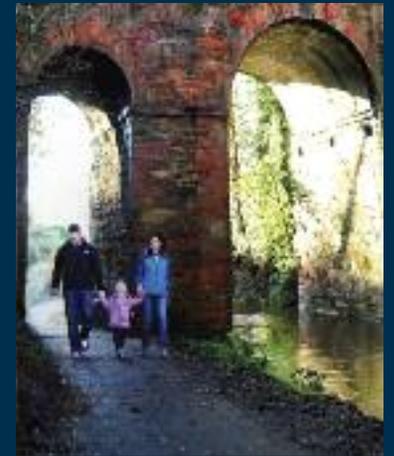


LAGAN CANAL TRUST

Working Together For Restoration



A Guide to The Lagan Canal
Past • Present • Future



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Welcome



The Lagan Canal Restoration Trust is delighted to present this guide to the Lagan Canal, Past, Present and Future; the first of its kind produced for the Lagan Corridor.

There is much to see and do along the corridor from Lough Neagh to Belfast. Indeed, it is our hope that as you explore and enjoy the Lagan Canal you will join in support of the campaign to restore this once

great waterway. Although it is not currently possible to travel the entire corridor by water, our aim is to one day see boats pass through the historic locks, once again bringing to life this hidden gem.

So whether by land or water, we hope this guide helps you catch a glimpse of the heritage and unforgettable beauty waiting to be discovered along the Lagan Canal.

*“There’s not a spot on God’s green earth such beauty can disclose
As Lisburn, dear old Lisburn where the River Lagan flows.”*

Once Upon the Lagan by May Blair

Introduction

The Lagan Canal offers an opportunity to walk along a forgotten history that helped shape Ulster, encounter wildlife, enjoy peace and tranquillity, and experience this nationally important heritage site.

Originally stretching for 27 miles from Lough Neagh to Belfast the Lagan Canal passed through towns and villages transporting goods and materials.

This guide offers an introduction to the Lagan Canal helping visitors and residents alike to explore the river and Canal corridor. Whether you enjoy walking, cycling, jogging, walking your dog or are a history or wildlife enthusiast, the Lagan Canal has something for everyone. Your map readings skills don’t have to be perfect - just follow the water!

Along the corridor you can discover canal heritage and wildlife, take part in water sports and enjoy award winning cycle and walking routes. The towpath forms part of the Sustrans National Cycle Network Routes 93 and 9 where cyclists can enjoy a level traffic free journey alongside the Lagan. Bicycles can be hired from a number of locations along the corridor, for further information see www.cycleni.com. There are also opportunities to fish along the River Lagan and Canal, and anglers can enjoy both coarse and game fishing.

Also included in the guide is a glimpse into the history of the Lagan Canal and its rich heritage, evident today in the many features and unique atmosphere along the water and towpath. The future of the Canal lies in the appreciation of its heritage and wildlife and the use of these assets to promote the re-opening of the navigation.

The maps are presented with accompanying information to explain the features of each area while suggested themed visits can be found on page 13.



Lighter 'Shamrock', approaching Drumbridge

A Canal History

Today the legacy of the Lagan Canal stands as testament to the work of the engineers and navvies who toiled to build this once great transport route.

The Lagan Canal was constructed in 2 stages

- 1756 - 1763 by engineer Thomas Omer
- 1779 - 1793 by engineer Richard Owen

Before the development of road and rail, Britain and Ireland saw a golden age of canal building. The Lagan Canal was one of the first to be built during this time, with its boats serving local industry carrying grain, sand, coal, linen and timber.

From Belfast to Sprucefield the Canal is made up of sections of the River Lagan and man-made cuts of canal. These cuts bypassed bends in the river channel allowing the boats to travel faster along the navigation. The locks were used to carry the lighters across different levels of water. The lock chambers are made from sandstone and brick, with timber gates at each end.

The summit or highest level of the Canal left the River Lagan at Union Locks, Sprucefield. From here the Canal followed an artificial waterway dropping down 10 different locks to Lough Neagh.

The Working Canal

Lighter 'Nellie' at Hilden Mill, Lisburn



The Lagan Navigation Company was established in 1842 to manage the Lagan Canal. Throughout the 19th century a number of improvements were made and in 1910 over 170,000 tons of cargo was transported (The equivalent to approximately 3 of the HMS Titanic ships). The company's income came from tolls, which were levied per ton of cargo and by distance travelled.

The Canal was one of the most successful navigations in Ireland as it served the mills along the corridor. However conflict existed between the mill owners and the Canal Company over the use of water from the River Lagan, as a result there was a ban on mill workers and their families working on the Canal. Many of the mills had quays, mostly used to deliver coal, and some also had their own barges.

The boats that travelled on the Lagan Canal were called 'lighters'. It is believed that this term originates from when the lighters took goods from larger boats in docks, therefore lightening their load. Unlike their brightly coloured English counterparts, the lighters were large, grey vessels, an example restored by Craigavon Museum Services can be seen at Oxford Island National Nature Reserve. The vibrancy of the Lagan Canal was instead thought to have been provided by the people who lived and worked along its waters.



Image Courtesy of Craigavon Museum Services

As well as having the storage to carry up to 78 tons of cargo, lighters were equipped with sleeping quarters and a stove for heating and cooking. Many families were raised on board the boats. Great skill was required to steer a lighter, and one of the most skilled lightermen was a colourful character named Hells Fire Jack McCann. Renowned as a great storyteller, he was master of the lighter named Amy.

The men who led the horses which pulled the lighters were known as haulers. They assembled each morning at Stranmillis and Ellis' Gut at 5am to secure work for the day. The haulers could earn £2 for a full boat which took on average 2 days to travel the 27 miles. Haulers would either sleep in the stables with their horse or the cabin of the lighter, if the lighterman was feeling generous!

"The horses were very docile, beautiful and big animals that were very well cared for, the haulers loved them" Dorothy McBride (Belfast)
Well known hauler families on the Lagan Canal include the Laverys, Creaneys, McVeighs and Mulhollands.

The locks on the Canal were looked after by 18 lock keepers. Their duties included passing the lighters through the locks, clearing weeds, and maintaining the water levels. Each lock keeper received a house and most also had a vegetable garden. In 1830 Arthur Ward, keeper at Lock 27, was paid 4 pence per day every 2 weeks.

In addition, the lock keeper's wife would often exchange eggs, potatoes and bread for a bucket of coal from the lightermen. Many of the locks on the navigation still bear the names of the long standing lock keepers.

The Lagan Canal was operated by a set of rules and by-laws to ensure its smooth running. The working canal also required regular maintenance, with inspection boats, dredgers and ice boats operating along the waterway.

Closure of the Lagan Canal

In 1888 the Lagan Navigation Company took over the Ulster Canal and Tyrone Navigation. This was to prove a drain on resources and contributed to the eventual demise of the Company. The mid 1930's saw a decline in tonnage and, despite an increase in transport during World War II, the Lagan Canal was closed in 2 stages:

- 1954 Lisburn to Lough Neagh closed
- 1958 Belfast to Lisburn closed

During the construction of the M1 motorway in the 1960's a 7.7mile stretch of the Canal between Sprucefield and Moira was filled in. Following closure of the Canal the upper section between Lough Neagh and Aghalee passed into private ownership, while the remaining sections are the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Government Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure.



Lagan Canal Chronology

- 1649**..... Colonel Monk of the Cromwellian Army orders a survey on linking Lough Neagh to the eastern seaboard.
- 1742**..... Newry Canal completed as the first summit canal in the British Isles.
- 1741**..... A survey of the Lagan made by the Surveyor General, Arthur Dobbs. Belfast encouraged to compete with Newry as a port.
- 1753**..... Petitions presented to the Irish Parliament supporting a Lagan Navigation. Act of Parliament passed for a tax on spirits and beer to be levied in the Laganside districts to fund the construction.
- 1756**..... First grant of public funds. Commissioners of Inland Navigation appoint engineer Thomas Omer to supervise the scheme.
- 1763**..... Navigation from Belfast to Lisburn opened.
- 1767**..... Navigation extended to Sprucefield. Grants ceased and the spirits tax of £1,000 per year not sufficient to progress work.
- 1779**..... Marquis of Donegall takes over the Canal works with a private company. Richard Owen, an English engineer, is appointed to complete the navigation to Lough Neagh.
- 1793**..... Canal driven through to Ellis's Gut (Port Chichester was rejected as a name) on the shores of Lough Neagh.
- 1842**..... Lagan Navigation Company established. Ulster Canal opens linking Lough Neagh and Lough Erne.
- 1914-18** Canal used to transport supplies during World War I & II.
1939-44
- 1954**..... Lough Neagh to Lisburn stretch closed.
- 1958**..... Lisburn to Belfast stretch closed.
- 1965**..... Moira to Sprucefield section lost due to construction of the M1 Motorway.
- 2008**..... Formation of the Lagan Canal Restoration Trust.

How Canals Work

Canals transported goods before improvements in road networks and the development of the railways. They were often river navigations with short man-made canal 'cuts' to bypass bends in a river. The canals were dug by teams of men called navigators using picks and shovels. This is where the term 'navvies' comes from. The locks and bridges were built by stonemasons, and some of the structures such as Crannagh Bridge bear marks which are believed to be the individual masons' marks.

The dimensions of a canal, and therefore size of boats suitable for navigation, is determined by the width of the smallest lock and height of the lowest bridge. On the Lagan Canal the smallest locks are 18.9m long by 4.4m wide. The air draft, or height above the water, of boats on the Lagan is 3.5m.

What is a lock?

Locks are used to raise or lower boats from one level to another. The locks on the Lagan are a simple but fascinating mechanism to effortlessly move the boats along their journey. Locks on the river sections of the Lagan Canal have adjacent weirs to control the flow of water from the river into the canal cut.

Locks have two sets of gates (top and bottom) with a chamber between them which the boat enters. Locks gates also have openings (or sluice gates) at the top and bottom. It is by opening these that water is allowed in and out of the chamber to raise or lower the water level - and hence the boat. The crew of a boat can open and close the sluice gates using a lock handle (or windlass).

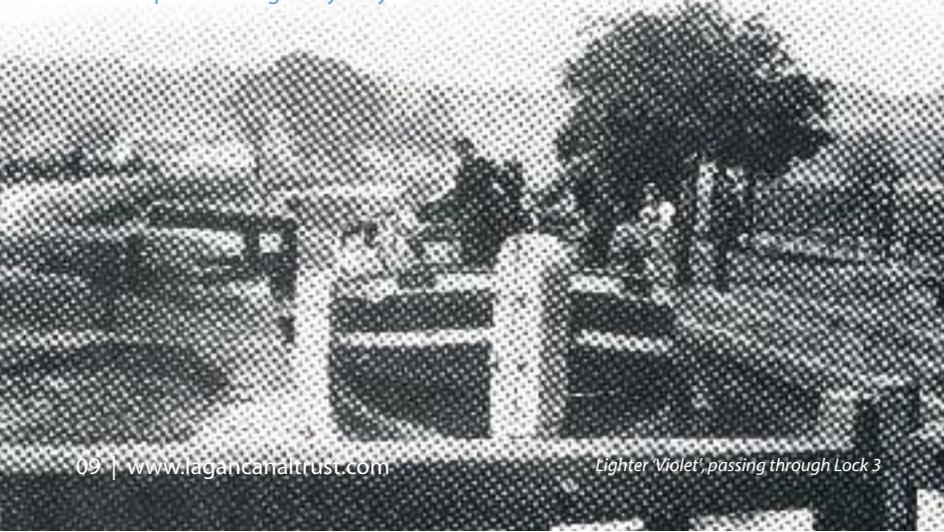
How long does it take?

Passing through a lock will generally take between 10 to 20 minutes.

"I left here in the mornin' an' went to Belfast. That was twenty seven miles, an' then back. Mind ye that was a long day's dander."

Joe McVeigh (hauler)

Once Upon the Lagan by May Blair



Common Canal Terms Explained

- Aqueduct** A bridge carrying water or a canal across a valley or a river.
- Bank-ranger** A person employed to maintain the canal banks.
- Balance beam** A long arm projecting from the landward side of the lock gate over the towpath. It provides leverage to open the gate and balances the weight of the gate in its socket, allowing it to swing more freely.
- Basin or Bight** A wider part of canal where one boat could pull in to allow another to pass.
- Cut or Gut** A narrow channel of water, such as Ellis' Gut at Lough Neagh.
- Dock, dry** A basin-like structure which can be emptied of water to allow repairs to be made to the bottom of a boat.
- Draught** The depth of a loaded boat or lighter in the water.
- Hauler** The man who walked with the horse towing a lighter.
- Ice-boat** An iron boat used for breaking the ice in the water.
- Head level or Summit level** The highest level of the canal.
- Lighter** A flat-bottomed boat or barge.
- Lock** A part of a canal cut off to form separate basins between two levels.
- Lock flights** A series of locks along a stretch with individual pounds and gates.
- Pen-weir** A type of dam across a river. Water builds up behind the weir to the required depth, then flows over the top.
- Pound** A level stretch of water between two locks. On a river this is commonly called a reach. The lock allows the boat to move between the upper pound and lower pound.
- Sluice** The body of water controlled by the sluice-gate.
- Sluice-gates** Sluice = water channel controlled by a gate. Raising sluice gate = water flows under. When the sluice gate is lowered sometimes the water flows over the top and the gate becomes a weir.
- Stop-gates** The wooden gates used to separate one stretch of water from another which was to be drained for repair works. They were used where there were no lock-gates, e.g. on the summit level.
- Towpath** The path beside a river or canal used by people and horses hauling boats or lighters.
- Weir** A small over-flow type dam commonly used to raise the level of a river or stream. They can also be used to calculate the rate of flow of a river. They were traditionally used to create mill ponds.

Wildlife

Waterways are important corridors for wildlife, linking rivers, land and water. Today the remains of the Lagan Canal is a rambling waterway alive with heritage and nature. A haven for wildlife, the Lagan Canal towpath trails effortlessly along a range of habitats from reedbeds, woodland, grasslands, hedgerows, still and flowing water.

In addition to the wildlife detailed on each map the following species can be seen:



Common Pipistrelle - This is the most common bat in Northern Ireland. They emerge from their roost site at sunset to search for food along hedgerows and tree lines. They hibernate through the winter.

When: April to October



Daubenton Bat - These bats can be seen skimming the surface of the Canal foraging for insects.

When: April to October



Crack Willow - This tree gets its name from how cleanly small branches can be cracked or broken off the main branch. They grow on river banks helping to prevent bank erosion.

When: Flowers - April & May



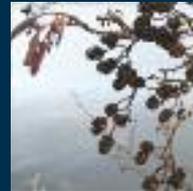
Silver Birch - This tree is easily spotted by its silver white bark. Birch was traditionally used to make simple bridges to cross bog land.

When: All year round



The Holly Tree - During the winter birds feed from the berries and shelter beneath the evergreen leaves.

When: All year round with red berries appearing in winter



Alder Tree - This tree can live up to 150 years old and it produces yellow catkins in early February and March.

When: All year round



Green Veined White Butterfly

The undersides of the wings allow this butterfly to disappear into surrounding leaves as protection against predators.

When: Late April to early September



Lesser Celandine

Known as 'Spring's Messenger' these are one of the first plants to flower. The petals close at night and during poor weather.

When: February - May

Wildlife has always been central to the Lagan Corridor, *"Once a lighter waited 3 weeks before travelling onwards to allow a wild duck to bring out her young"*.

Today the campaign to re-open the Canal for navigation takes into consideration the rich habitats and species along the corridor. To ensure that this is protected as much as possible extensive surveys and assessments will be undertaken before work starts, and measures will be put in place to ensure minimal disruption to wildlife.

Experience from other re-opened canals indicates that habitats and species tend to return quickly to the waterway, with an overall improvement in the natural environment following restoration.

Themed Visits

Linen Along The Lagan

(Maps 4, 5, 6 & Museum - Holywood, Co. Down)

During the 18th and 19th centuries the production of linen prompted a transformation of industry and life in Ulster with the Lagan Corridor playing a pivotal role.

This visit begins in Lisburn (Map 4). Begin your journey of discovery at the Irish Linen Centre and Lisburn Museum (Indicated on map 4). Here you can take an audio visual tour and see the weaving centre and hand looms. You can also park at Lock 12, Lagan Valley Island and visit the Lighters Restaurant. Lagan Valley Island itself was once the site of the world famous Island Spinning Mill where linen thread was manufactured from 1867. The story of linen along the Canal continues towards the mills at Hilden, Lambeg and Edenderry. (Maps 5 & 6) A drive of approximately 10 miles from Shaw's Bridge towards Bangor, at Holywood, will take you to the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum where you can learn more about the history of linen in Ulster. (www.nmni.com/uftm).

Hilden Mill, Lisburn



A Living Legacy

(Map 1 - 7 & Oxford Island, Craigavon)

The Lagan Canal stands as testimony to the people who lived and worked along its banks, and a trip along the corridor reveals glimpses into this hidden world. Begin your journey on the shores of Lough Neagh at Craigavon Museum Services, Oxford Island, (www.craigavonmuseum.com).

Here you can experience at first hand the restored Lagan Canal lighter the 'Enterprise'. A walk along the nearby towpath in Aghagallon (Map 1) reveals the rope marks left by the tow ropes on Crannagh Bridge and a mooring bollard at Lock 26. Continue on to the Broadwater (Map 3) where you will see an original bank ranger's house and Lagan Navigation Company sign. The bank rangers were employed by the Lagan Navigation Company to ensure the banks were water tight and the channels kept clear for navigation. The story of the people of the Canal continues at Union Bridge, Lisburn (Map 4). Notice the blue dragons at the base of the lights. The dragons were a nuisance to the haulers as the tow ropes often got caught on the dragon's heads. A visit to the Lighters Restaurant also allows you to see the history and photos of the Canal displayed there. A trip to Ballyskeagh Bridge (Map 5) will allow you to see evidence of original repair work along the Canal. Looking half way up the Canal arch on Ballyskeagh Bridge notice the marks left by men in 1931 following repair work.



Although a number of the original lock houses designed by the Dutch Canal engineer Thomas Omer are privately owned you can see the remains of one at Lock 7 (Map 5). No visit to the Lagan Canal is complete without experiencing the restored lock keepers cottage and visitor centre at Lock 3 (Map 7). Here you can learn what life was like living and working along the banks of the Lagan Canal.

Family Day Out

(Map 5, 7 & Oxford Island, Craigavon)

There are a wealth of fun things to do along the Lagan and here we have suggested a themed visit for families to enjoy.

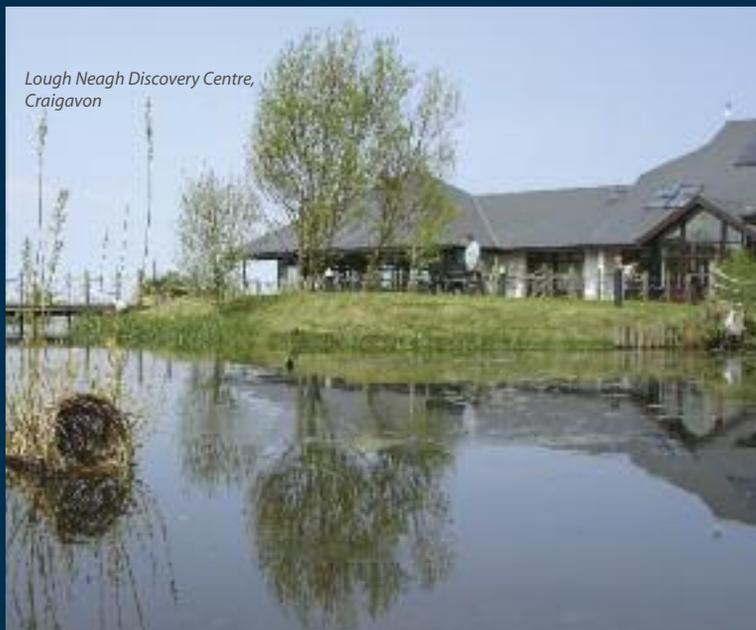
Start your trip with a visit to Lough Neagh Discovery Centre at Oxford Island National Nature Reserve where you can learn about the history and wildlife of the area. There is also a play park, café and toilets. While here take time to visit the Lagan Canal 'Enterprise' barge and learn about life on the Lagan. Next make your way to Lisburn and visit Irish Linen Centre and Lisburn Museum which has a range of family friendly exhibitions to be enjoyed. Also in Lisburn visit the newly developed Huguenot Park (Map 4) where you can enjoy a pleasant walk, and play area.



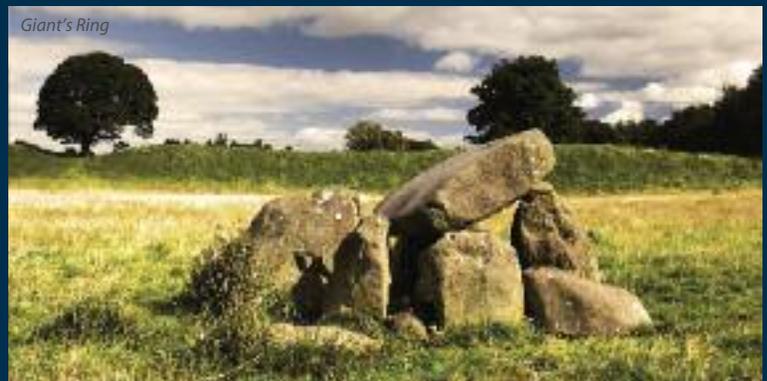
Image Courtesy of BAC

A visit to Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park (Map 5) offers beautiful surroundings to enjoy the playground, gardens and coffee shop. During the Spring/Summer turn up at Shaw's Bridge (Map 7) taking the opportunity to enjoy a paddle in a canoe. Open sessions run every Saturday from end of March to throughout the summer months. (www.mobileteamadventure.co.uk).

For an adventure packed day out visit Belfast Activity Centre (www.belfastactivitycentre.com) in Barnett's Demesne, please note booking is essential.



Lough Neagh Discovery Centre,
Craigavon



The Lagan Corridor Through the Ages

(Maps 7 - 5 & Ulster Museum, Belfast)

The Lagan Corridor tells the story of early settlement in Ireland followed by Christian heritage through to the industrial revolution and today. Begin your journey of discovery at the nearby Ulster Museum. Starting on the towpath at Stranmillis follow the path to Lester's Dam, built 200 years ago, it was the source of Belfast's first water supply. Next follow the towpath to Belvoir Forest Park and see the remains of a motte, a reminder of 12th century Anglo-Norman power in Ulster. During the 17th century much of the land along the eastern part of the Lagan Corridor was held by Con O'Neill who lived near Belvoir. However much of this was later settled during the Plantation of Ulster by Sir Arthur Chichester, founder of the Donegall family.

Belvoir Park also boasts the remains of a medieval graveyard, as well as an 18th century ice house and gardens once part of the extensive estate. An ancient woodland, Belvoir is also home to the oldest oak in Ireland. More recently Belvoir estate was used as an armaments depot during World War 2 with the Canal transporting ammunition to and from Belfast. For a detailed walk of the Park see www.belfastcity.gov.uk/parksandopenspaces/belvoirpark.pdf.

Next make your way to Shaw's Bridge (Map 7) once a shallow ford which had been a crossing point since early times. In 1655 Captain John Shaw from Cromwell's army built an oak bridge which was later replaced in 1698. After this was swept away the current bridge was built in 1709. Following this you can make your way to the Giant's Ring, (Map 6). This enclosure, including a tomb, is believed to be over 4000 years old and stands as a reminder of man's earliest settlements along the fertile valley of the River Lagan. Also visit the site of a 13th century church at what is now the Church of Ireland at Drumbeg. The current church dates from 1870.

Visit the remains of Castle Gardens (Map 4) originally developed by the Conway Family in the 17th century. A visit to Lisburn's Historic Quarter is a must. This designated Conservation Area, includes Market Square, Castle Street and Bridge Street.

The River Lagan in Belfast

Continue your journey of discovery through the centre of Belfast City. This visit takes you on a tour along the River Lagan to discover the industrial past which made Belfast the vibrant destination it is today. Walk along the towpath to Stranmillis (Map 7) passing Belfast Boat Club, Cutters Wharf restaurant and the Lyric Theatre follow the footpath along the rivers edge towards the city centre. You can choose to visit the nearby Botanic Gardens and newly refurbished Ulster Museum, and as you walk along the footpath discover the Laganside Art Trails, for further information go to: www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/urcdg-urban_regeneration/laganside/laganside-art.htm.

As you walk towards the Waterfront Hall you can visit the Confiance Barge. Opening in February 2011 the barge will house a permanent maritime exhibition education facilities and performance space, and you can also enjoy the onboard café.

Passing the "Thanksgiving" sculpture you can see the Lagan Weir. Built in 2004 the weir has helped improve river water quality and encouraged the regeneration of the river front. Cross over the Lagan Weir footbridge towards the Odyssey Pavilion. Following the riverside path you pass the Abercorn Basin to complete your journey to the Titanic Quarter. It was here that the iconic ship the RMS Titanic was built by Harland and Wolff from 1909 to 1912. A visit to the Thompson Dock and Pump house is a must, while the SS Nomadic ship and innovative Titanic Belfast Project is due to open in 2012.



Distance Charts

MILES

	Annaghdroghal Bridge	Crannagh Bridge	End of Tow Path
Annaghdroghal Bridge	0	0.7	1.4
Crannagh Bridge	0.7	0	0.7
End of Tow Path	1.4	0.7	0

	Aghalee	Lagan Nav. Co. Sign	Soldierstown Bridge	Lady's Bridge
Aghalee	0	1.2	2.2	3.1
Lagan Nav. Co. Sign	1.2	0	0.9	1.9
Soldierstown Bridge	2.2	0.9	0	1.0
Lady's Bridge	3.1	1.9	1.0	0

	Union Locks	Civic Centre	Hilden	McIlroy Park	Drumbeg Bridge	Gilchrist Bridge	Shaw's Bridge	Lock 3	Stranmillis
Union Locks	0	1.9	3.0	4.3	5.9	7.7	8.8	9.2	11.1
Civic Centre	1.9	0	1.8	2.5	4.1	5.8	7.0	7.4	9.2
Hilden	3.0	1.8	0	1.3	2.9	1.0	5.8	6.2	8.1
McIlroy Park	4.3	2.5	1.3	0	1.6	3.3	4.5	4.9	6.7
Drumbeg Bridge	5.9	4.1	2.9	1.6	0	1.8	2.9	3.3	5.1
Gilchrist Bridge	7.7	5.8	1.0	3.3	1.8	0	1.1	1.6	3.4
Shaw's Bridge	8.8	7.0	5.8	4.5	2.9	1.1	0	0.4	2.2
Lock 3	9.2	7.4	6.2	4.9	3.3	1.6	0.4	0	1.8
Stranmillis	11.1	9.2	8.1	6.7	5.1	3.4	2.2	1.8	0

KILOMETRES

	Annaghdroghal Bridge	Crannagh Bridge	End of Tow Path
Annaghdroghal Bridge	0	1.1	2.2
Crannagh Bridge	1.1	0	1.1
End of Tow Path	2.2	1.1	0

	Aghalee	Lagan Nav. Co. Sign	Soldierstown Bridge	Lady's Bridge
Aghalee	0	2.0	3.5	5.1
Lagan Nav. Co. Sign	2.0	0	1.4	3.1
Soldierstown Bridge	3.5	1.4	0	1.6
Lady's Bridge	5.1	3.1	1.6	0

	Union Locks	Civic Centre	Hilden	McIlroy Park	Drumbeg Bridge	Gilchrist Bridge	Shaw's Bridge	Lock 3	Stranmillis
Union Locks	0	3.0	4.8	7.0	9.0	12.4	14.2	14.9	17.8
Civic Centre	3.0	0	1.9	4.0	6.6	9.4	11.2	11.9	14.8
Hilden	4.8	1.9	0	2.1	4.7	1.5	9.4	10.0	13.0
McIlroy Park	7.0	4.0	2.1	0	2.6	5.4	7.2	7.9	10.8
Drumbeg Bridge	9.0	6.6	1.5	2.6	0	2.8	4.7	5.3	8.3
Gilchrist Bridge	12.4	9.4	1.5	5.4	2.8	0	1.8	2.5	5.4
Shaw's Bridge	14.2	11.2	9.4	7.2	4.7	1.8	0	0.7	3.6
Lock 3	14.9	11.9	10.0	7.9	5.3	2.5	0.7	0	2.9
Stranmillis	17.8	14.8	13.0	10.8	8.3	5.4	3.6	2.9	0



Towpath Code

To protect the Lagan Canal and ensure all visitors enjoy a pleasant experience a towpath code is in operation.

We ask that all visitors to the Canal remember that the towpath is a shared use path and to please follow these guidelines:

Take Care and BE SAFE- Stay Away From the Edge of water and locks.

- Always keep young children under close supervision
- If the water appears frozen, stay off it. Never trust the ice to take your weight
- Be prepared for changes in weather and local water conditions
- Please do not climb fences at locks
- Cyclists must always give way to pedestrians
- Cyclists should use a bell to warn others of their approach
- Keep dogs under control
- Protect wildlife, plants and trees (especially birds during the nesting season March - September)
- Take all litter home with you
- Motorcycling, hunting and shooting are forbidden
- Don't damage fences, gates and stiles
- Take care when crossing roads

In addition visitors are asked to follow the principles of the Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethics

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Be considerate of others
- Respect farm animals and wildlife
- Leave what you find
- Dispose of waste properly

Practising a Leave No Trace ethic is very simple;

Make it hard for others to see or hear you and LEAVE NO TRACE of your visit.

How To Use the Maps

The guide and maps are intended to help you plan days out and trips along the Canal corridor, encouraging you to step into and explore more of the idyllic yet exciting hidden world of the Lagan Canal.

The remains of the Canal exist from Lough Neagh to Belfast stretching west to east with the main access route being the M1 motorway. For illustration purposes the enclosed maps are in portrait, north is therefore indicated on the individual maps for orientation. The towpath exists today in 3 distinct sections and the maps in the guide are divided accordingly;

1. Aghagallon towpath (1.5 miles)

Maps 1 and 2

2. Aghalee to Moira towpath (3.1 miles)

Maps 2 and 3

3. Union Locks, Sprucefield, Lisburn to Stranmillis, Belfast (11.1 miles)

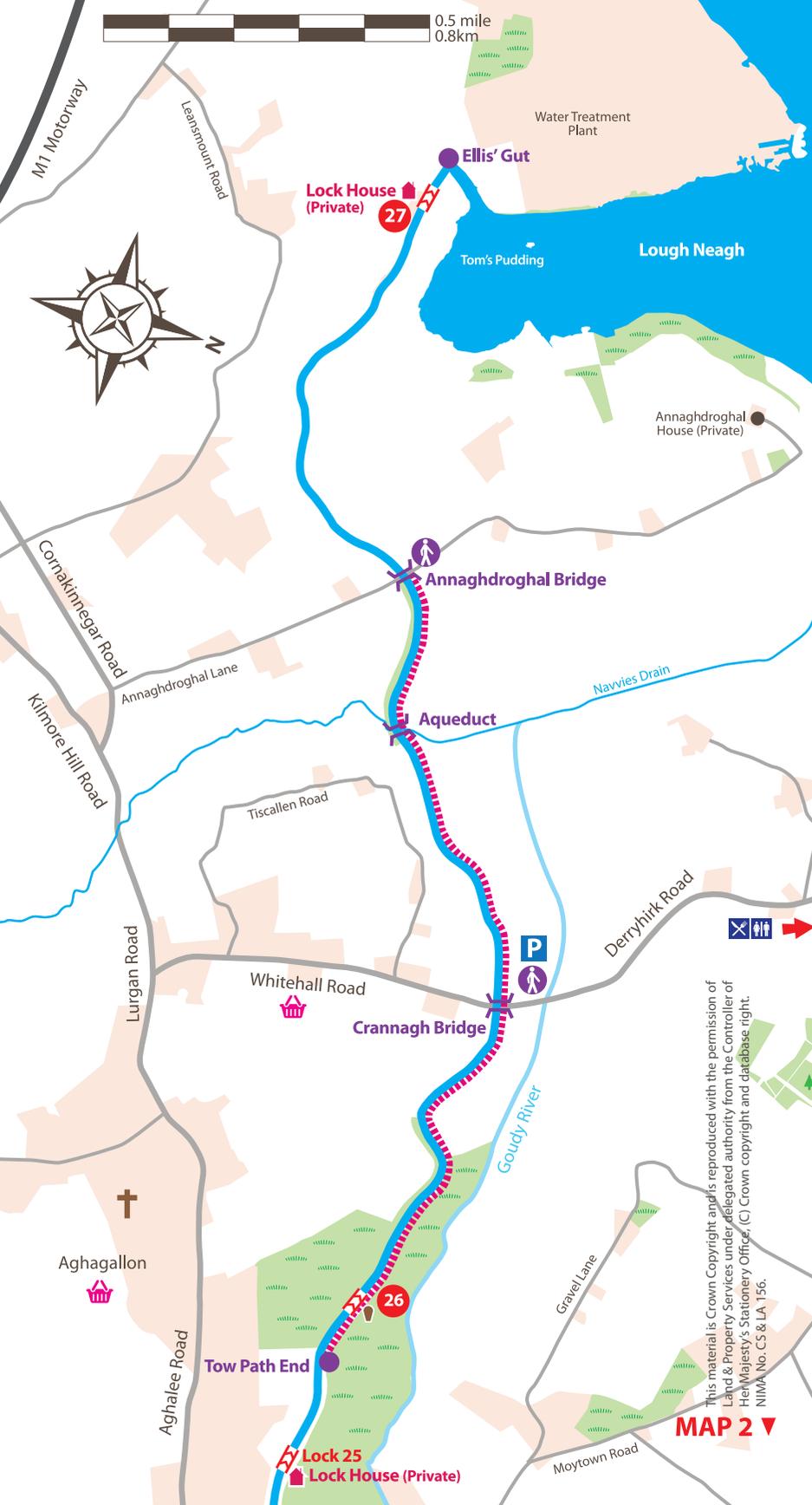
Maps 4 to 7

Symbols on each map indicate the location of entry points to access the towpath, designated car parks, heritage features and visitor facilities. There are also details of local riverside meadows and woodlands, towns, villages and attractions. Please note canoe access steps available at section on map 7 only. Although other sections are navigable by canoe there are no designated access points. Contact Canoe Association Northern Ireland for further information.

Much of the remains of the Canal can be clearly seen, however some locks have become overgrown with vegetation. Following closure of the navigation concrete weirs were installed in the lock chambers to control water levels along the Canal. To find the locks use the maps to determine your position, you will notice a fenced off area and hear the sound of running water over the weirs. It is our aim in the Lagan Canal Restoration Trust to one day see all the locks cleared and restored to the condition of locks 12 and 3.

Key to Maps 1-7

	Lagan Canal		Shopping Area		Museum
	Towpath		Rath		Ancient Site
	Footpath		Car Park		Bollard
	Running Trail		Suitable for Canoeing		Food/Toilet Facilities
	Rivers		Lock Keepers Cottage		Pedestrian Access
	Lock		Fishing Stands		Residential/ Built up Area
	Bridge		Weir		Marsh
	Footbridge		Slipway		Forest/Parkland
	Canoe Steps				



Map 1

Located near the attractive village of Aghagallon, this gentle towpath trail follows the Canal for 1.5 miles / 2.4 km from Annaghdroghal Bridge to beyond Crannagh Bridge. Take a gentle stroll in quiet countryside to discover flourishing wildlife, Lock 26 and 2 sandstone road bridges.

This section of the towpath is also a bridleway; please note no other sections of towpath are available for horse riding.

A visit to this area of the Canal can begin at either Annaghdroghal or Crannagh Bridge, although visitors are advised that parking is only provided at Crannagh Bridge.

Getting there

- By Bike:** National Cycle Route 9 and 93.
- By Bus:** Bus links via Lurgan only. From Lurgan Service 53 to Aghagallon.

Along the Towpath

On the map you will see Ellis' Gut, it was here that the Lagan Canal entered Lough Neagh. This section was opened in 1794 and it is believed that the cut was named after a local farming family named Ellis. The nearby island called Tom's Pudding was created from the spoil removed when the cut was excavated. Once on Lough Neagh, the lighters either put up a sail or were towed across to their destinations by tug boats.

This area included a lock house, pump house, office and quay. Up to 30 to 40 lighters would be waiting to make their onward journeys and many lighters were detained here for days in the event of bad weather.

Today this area is privately owned with no public access.

Annaghdroghal Bridge

This is a humped back bridge, and was the first bridge on the journey from Lough Neagh to Belfast.

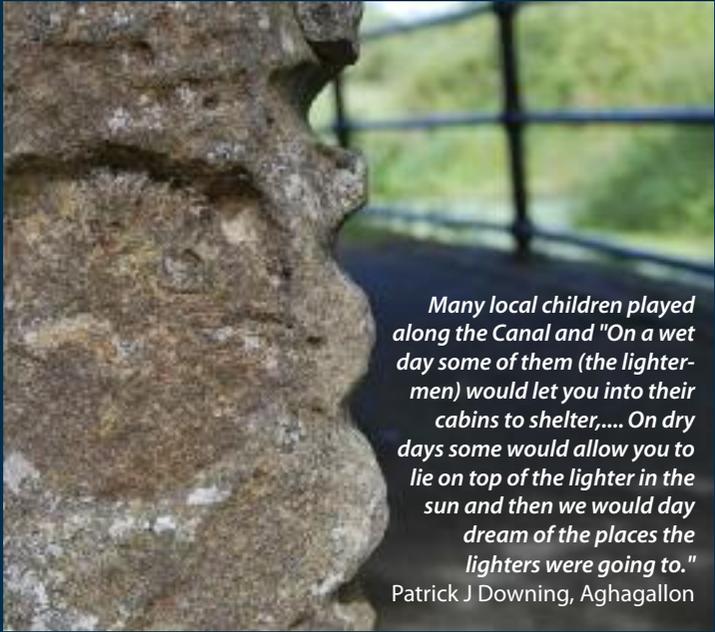
Crannagh Bridge

This is the recommended towpath entry point for those travelling by car. Crannagh Bridge is a sandstone road bridge which was exactly 25 miles from Stranmillis along the Canal. When passing under the bridge, look out for the marks left by the ropes as the horses towed the lighters along.

Lock 26 - Chapel Lock

The longstanding lock keeper here was George Fegan who cycled between Locks 24, 25 and 26 throughout the day. Today the lock chamber and original tie bollard can still be seen.

During its operation the Canal was enjoyed by local people, and on Sunday afternoons the towpath was a popular place to stroll and see the lighters moored up for the day. Following the closure of this section of the Canal in 1954, people often came from the nearby town of Lurgan to swim in Ellis' Gut.



Many local children played along the Canal and "On a wet day some of them (the lighter-men) would let you into their cabins to shelter,.... On dry days some would allow you to lie on top of the lighter in the sun and then we would day dream of the places the lighters were going to."
Patrick J Downing, Aghagallon

Wildlife

You can expect to see the following wildlife in this area:



Image Courtesy of RSPB

Tree Sparrow

Tree sparrows live here thanks to the special bird boxes erected by local school children. They are more timid than house sparrows and live on farmland, hedgerows, orchards and waterways.

When: Throughout the year



Common Hawthorn

Native to Ireland, the hawthorn can be seen in the hedgerows all along the Canal.

When: Throughout the year
White flowers - May
Red berries - Autumn



Reed Fringe

The thick reed fringe is an essential habitat for wildlife and protects the banks of the Canal. Most common plant to look out for is the bullrush.

When: Throughout the year

Places Nearby

Montiagh's Moss Area of Special Scientific Interest

Gawley's Gate Visitor Harbour

Oxford Island National Nature Reserve:

Lough Neagh Discovery Centre: Walks, educational facilities, café and toilets. Kinnego Marina: Boat trips on Lough Neagh from April - November. Craigavon Museum Services: Original Lagan Canal lighter, 'Enterprise Barge'.

Lough Neagh Canoe Trails:

A canoe trail is available on Lough Neagh. A word of warning: Lough Neagh can be a serious undertaking as large waves build on the vast expanse of water during unsettled weather conditions and should only be attempted by experienced water users.



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Map 2

Here the Lagan Canal winds its way through pleasant countryside and the idyllic village of Aghalee. The short journey from Aghagallon into Aghalee is marked by crossing the Lagan Canal at Sheerin's Bridge. The attractive village of Aghalee retains much of its Canal heritage through its bridges and placenames. The Canal contributed to the development of Aghalee as it became a distribution point for local agricultural produce.

Access to this section of towpath can be from Aghalee village or the car park located at Soldierstown Road, Aghalee (Map 3).

Getting there

By Bike: National Cycle Route 9 and 93.

By Bus: Bus links from Lurgan service 53 to Aghalee. From Lisburn service 52.

Along the Towpath

From Lock 25 Turtle Dove Lock to Lock 19 the towpath is privately owned with no public access.



Goudy Bridge

This bridge has 2 arches, one for boats and the smaller second arch to allow the horses through. The Lagan Navigation Company owned a quay nearby for loading potatoes to be transported to Lisburn and Belfast.

Lock 24 Goudy Lock

The lock and the adjacent bridge were named after the nearby Goudy River.

The next locks on the navigation are Lock 23 Prospect Lock, and Lock 22 Cairn Lock. At Lock 21 Bradley's Lock, there was a quay known as Bradley's Basin. Here, navvies would dig out clay and mix it with water to make a water tight lining for the Canal. This was known as puddling clay. In later years this was also a popular place for swimming in the summer and skating in the winter.

As you travel from Aghagallon into Aghalee you will cross the Aghagallon Bridge, also known as Sheerin's Bridge, next to which is Lock 20 Sheerin's Lock. The next lock on the Canal in Aghalee is Lock 19 Wood Lock. Lock 18 Aghalee Lock, marks the beginning of the descent of 70 feet through 10 locks to Lough Neagh.



The next bridge on the Canal is Aghalee Bridge. Approximately 200 yards before you meet the bridge a footpath on the left provides access to the towpath.

Here begins a tranquil towpath journey which takes the visitor along the untouched haven of the Lagan Canal, making its way along the Broadwater and on to Moira.

As you enter the towpath in Aghalee the canal is on your right. Looking through the hedge approximately 100 yards beyond the entrance gate, you will see the remains of a canal basin used to moor up lighters before they made their onward journeys.

Wildlife



Swan

The swan is a popular figure on the Lagan. Mute swans are the most familiar to us in Britain and Ireland and are the largest and heaviest of the birds.

When: Throughout the year



Badgers

Badgers are common in scrub along the Canal. They live in tunnels and chambers in the ground called setts. They are mainly nocturnal, hunting for food at dusk and dawn.

When: Throughout the year



Elder

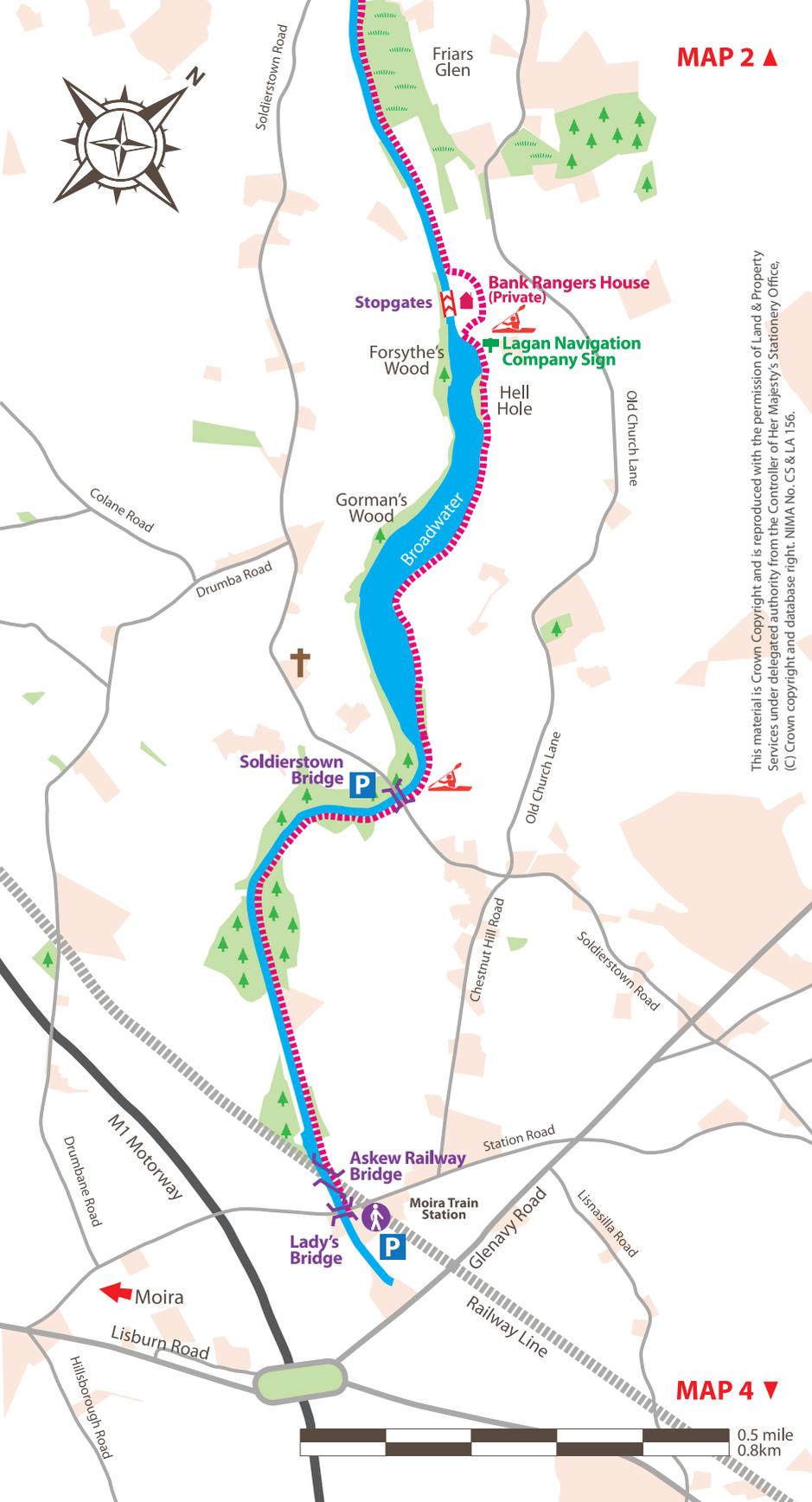
The elder is common in the hedgerows along the Canal.

When: White flowers in early summer and berries in autumn

Places Nearby

Portmore Lough Local Nature Reserve; Nature trails, picnic site, small pond and a schools' sensory area.





MAP 2 ▲

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MAP 4 ▼

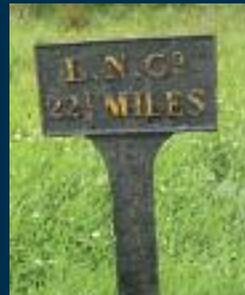
Map 3

Perhaps one of the most idyllic and picturesque sections of the Lagan Canal, this area does not fail to impress visitors with its stunning location and the abundance of wildlife. This is an uplifting walk along the Canal as the views open out across the Broadwater. Access to this area can be from Aghalee, Soldierstown Road and Moira Railway Station.

Getting there
By Bike: National Cycle Route 9 and 93.
By Bus: From Lurgan service 53 to Aghalee. From Lisburn service 52.
 Trains operate from Moira to Portadown, Belfast and Lisburn.

Along the Towpath
 As you enter the Canal towpath in Aghalee (see Map 2) the Canal is on your right. The next structure you meet is the bank ranger's house and set of stopgates. Often mistaken for a lock, these gates were used to control the flow of water from the Broadwater. The house and stopgates were erected in 1861, and were only used when the summit level needed to be drained for repairs. The house is privately owned; please follow the towpath around the outside of the building.

Just beyond the Bank Ranger's house towards Moira was an area known as the 'Hell Hole'. It was a particularly deep part of the Canal where the haulers had to be careful not to let the horses trip into the deep water. This area is now very popular with fishermen.



Looking to the left of the towpath you will see an original Lagan Navigation Company mile marker indicating that it is 22 1/2 miles to Belfast. Here the Canal and views open out into the stunning Broadwater, an area rich in wildlife. The Broadwater is a man made feature which was the main water supply for the Canal before it reached Lough Neagh. The Broadwater is a mile long and approximately one hundred yards wide. Built in a natural valley it was formed by damming the Aghalee River.



As you explore this area of the Lagan Canal take the opportunity to enjoy the sights and sounds of nature, keeping an eye out for the large variety of breeding and wintering wildfowl.

As you walk along the towpath look beyond the Broadwater to Soldierstown Church in the distance. It is here that the engineer of the upper Lagan Richard Owen was buried in 1830. Originally from Flixton in Lancashire, Owen's dying wish was that he would be buried overlooking his beloved Canal and the beautiful Broadwater.

Walking towards Moira, the next feature on the Canal is Soldierstown Bridge, also known as Hammond's Bridge. There was also a quay built near here for unloading goods from the Canal. The next bridge is Lady's Bridge, which was built in 1786, there was also a quay here.

Perhaps one of the most impressive bridges over the Canal is the Skew Railway Bridge at Moira. Built in 1833 to carry the new railway over the Canal, the unusual "skew brickwork" was used to add strength to the bridge.

At Moira Railway station we unfortunately lose a large section of the Canal to the M1 motorway. Visitors can pick up their exploration of the Canal in Lisburn at Union Locks, but as you travel along the M1 towards Lisburn the motorway lies on sections of the Canal bed. Indeed, as you cross over the River Lagan on the motorway you pass what was once the site of the great aqueduct built to carry the Canal over the river.

There were no locks for the next 11 miles along the summit of the Canal to Union Locks, but there are a number of road bridges and quays, most of which have long since disappeared.



Wildlife

You can expect to see the following wildlife in this area:



Swifts

Swifts are summer visitors to the Canal from Africa.

When: May to August



Tufted Duck

Seen along open areas of water on the Canal, the male is mainly black with white flanks, grey bill and yellow eyes

When: More common in winter



Yellow Iris

Yellow Iris, a wild cousin of the garden species, provides a splash of colour along the reed fringe.

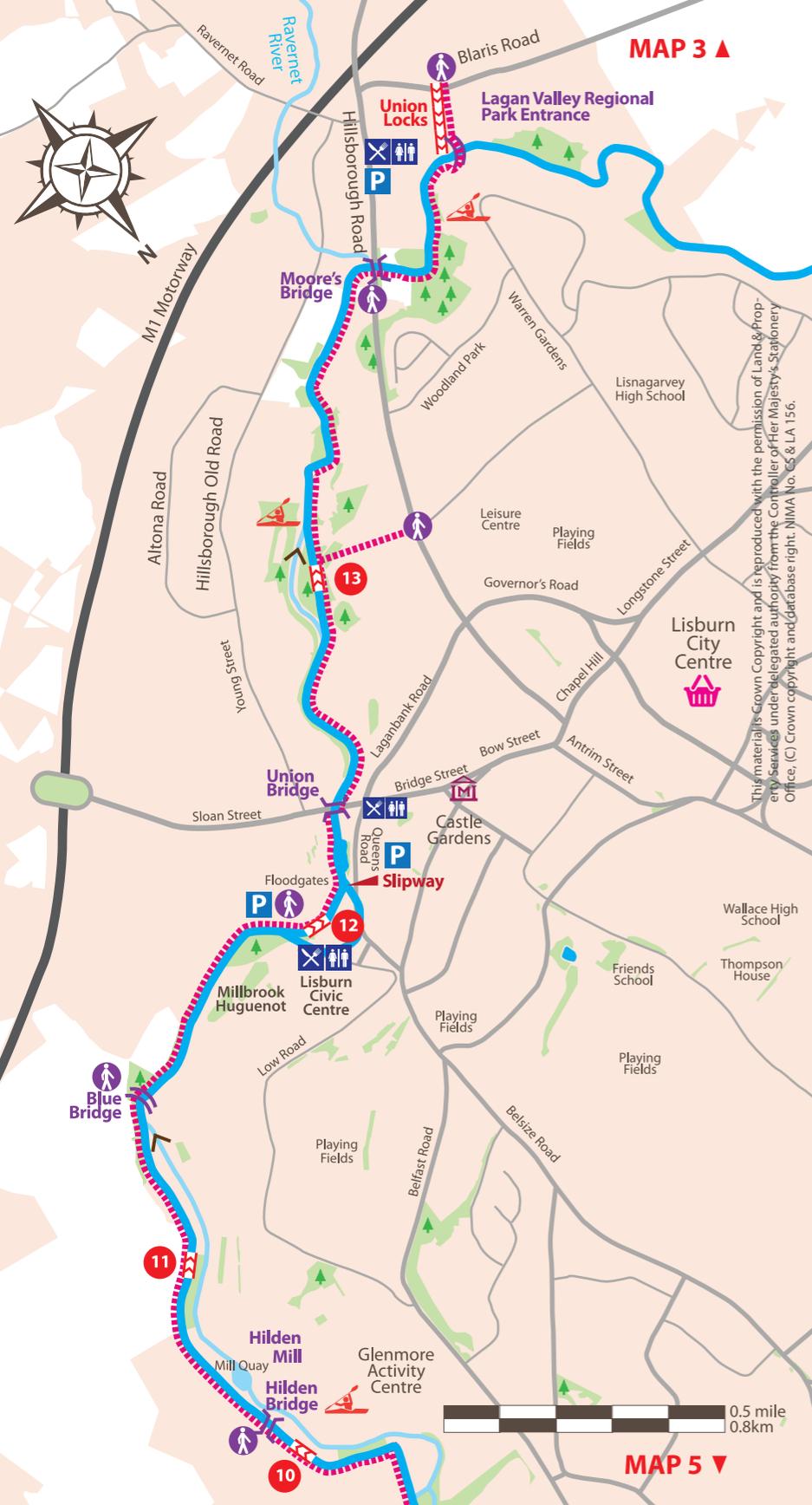
When: June to August

Places Nearby

Moira village: Antique shops, restaurants and café. Moira demesne walks and Moira Railway Station, built in 1841, is the oldest station in Northern Ireland.

“If you’d been along the Broadwater at half past four in the morning, you would have heard them coming, whistling and singing and driving the horse. They were rough but healthy and they seemed to enjoy life.”

George McCartney describing lighter-folk.



Map 4



Union Locks, Lisburn

As you walk along this section of towpath you will be drawn into the industrial spirit of the Lagan Canal and the mills which helped make Ulster a great industrial power house of the 18th and 19th centuries. Along the towpath you can expect to see the remains of historic structures, a restored lock, and the industry of the Lagan Valley all set in the heart of the vibrant city of Lisburn.

Access to this area is either via car parks at Union Locks or Lisburn Civic Centre. Other local pedestrian access points are indicated on the map. Parking at Union Locks is available at the Premier Inn, Hillsborough Road, Lisburn. The towpath entry point is at the entrance to Lagan Valley Regional Park on the Blaris Road

Getting there

By Bike: National Cycle Route 9.

By Bus: From Lurgan Service 51 to Lisburn & Service 325G (UTS) to Sprucefield Shopping Centre. From Belfast Europa Bus Station, Service 238 to Sprucefield Shopping Centre. From here it is a 5 minute walk to Blaris Road.

From Belfast to Lisburn Civic Centre, Queens Rd Service 325L

By Rail: Take the train from Portadown, Lurgan, Moira, Belfast to Lisburn.

Along the Towpath

Locks 14 to 17, known as Union Locks, mark the beginning of Lagan Valley Regional Park and the first towpath entry point for this section of the Canal. Union Locks are the only flight of four locks in Ireland, and carried the Canal up twenty-six feet across a distance of a hundred yards. It was here that the Canal separated from the River Lagan completely with the summit level, carrying it onwards towards Lough Neagh. Between two of the locks there is a basin where boats could stop, allowing others to pass. At this site there was also a boat house, a carpenter's workshop, a lock keeper's house, stables and a coal quay. The remains of a horse bridge which crossed the Canal can be seen in the river across the footbridge.

Navigation House was built in 1866 for the Lagan Canal Manager. When George Lynch moved into the house as superintendent/manager in 1909, his possessions were transported by lighter from Monaghan along the Ulster Canal, across Lough Neagh and along the Lagan. Michael Wallace Kidd was the last superintendent, in post from 1928-1954. His granddaughter Jenny Pearce recalls how he "had a motorbike, with sidecar, which he would use to travel up and down the towpath."

The longstanding lock keeper at Union Locks was James Ritchie. This was a popular area for local people, and many children used to jump onboard the passing lighters here and get a lift as far as Lisburn and Hilden.

Moore's Bridge

Built in 1825 at a cost £3,000, Moore's Bridge carried the Dublin Road over the navigation. The bridge has three arches and is constructed of sandstone with black stone parapets. Steps have been constructed to give access to the towpath which passes underneath.

Lock No 13 Becky Hogg's Lock

This was the last lock during the first phase of opening. William Hogg was the lockkeeper in 1856, and he was later succeeded by his wife Becky.

Union Bridge

Continue on the towpath towards Union Bridge. You will then cross Bridge Street via the pedestrian crossing. Here the towpath changes sides - keep the river on your left. Built in 1880, Union Bridge replaced an earlier bridge which carried the main road to Dublin. As you cross over the bridge pause to look at the blue dragons at the base of the original gas lamps. It is said that the dragons were a nuisance to the haulers as the tow ropes often got caught on the dragon's heads. Once you cross Union Bridge the remains of Canal quays can be seen between the bridge and weir. This area was once a hive of activity and was the mooring place of the Lord Hereford: the first lighter to make the journey on this newly opened section in 1763. Lisburn had a total of nine quays, one owned by the Lagan Navigation Company while the other 8 were privately owned by linen companies, merchants and the local Co-operative. Lighters were also repaired in this area in a dry dock, which was erected by Henry Mulholland in 1837.



Lock 12 Hanna's Lock

Walking along the towpath you will notice that the Canal and river separate at a large set of flood gates. This artificial cut of canal created Lagan Valley Island, now the site of Lisburn City Council. In front of the Island Civic Centre you will find the fully restored Lock 12. Lock keeper Dick Hannah is reputed to have saved over 20 people from drowning here. He was awarded the Royal Humane Society Award, and in 1913 the people of Lisburn presented him with a purse of gold sovereigns. This was originally the site of Vitriol Island, where chemicals were manufactured from 1760. Richardson, Sons and Owden of Glenmore further developed the site for linen manufacture in 1840, and by 1867 the Richardson's had successfully established the world famous Island Spinning Company here.

Visitors can also enjoy Lighters Restaurant in the Island Civic Centre, and the Island Arts Centre.

As you continue along the towpath into Lagan Valley Regional Park you will discover Lock 11 Scott's Lock.

Wildlife

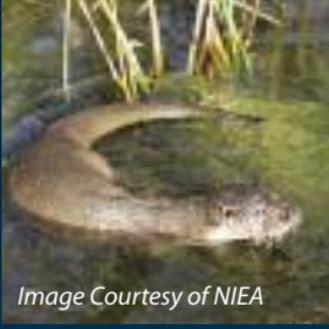


Image Courtesy of NIEA

Otters

Otters are timid, and although not often seen, they make the stretches of Canal that are in close proximity to the River Lagan their home.

When: All year round



Image Courtesy of N Foster

Damsel Fly

Adult damselflies can be mistaken as dragonflies, but they have a body smaller in length and with finer features compared to dragonflies. They are more likely to be seen.

When: April to September



Image Courtesy of J Kerr

Moorhen

The moorhen is very similar to the coot but slightly smaller. Moorhens will defend their territory from any intruders. They have a very distinct call and can often be seen with their young hiding among the sedges and rushes at the water's edge.

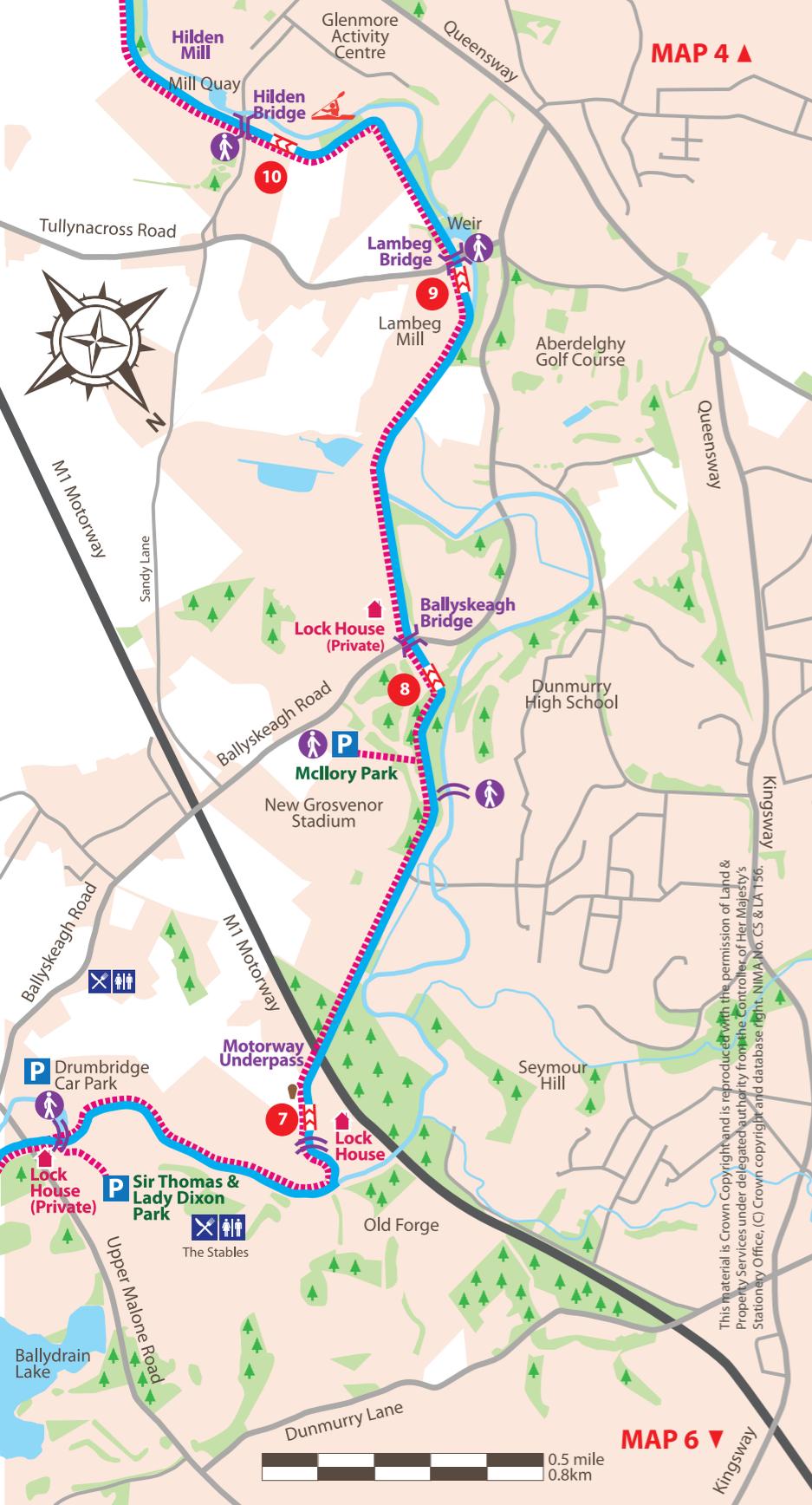
When: Throughout the year

Places Nearby

City of Lisburn: leisure facilities, shopping, pubs and restaurants, Irish Linen Centre and Museum, and heritage attractions such as Castle Gardens and Lisburn Historic Quarter.

Millbrook Huguenot Riverside Park: pathways and a children's play area and heritage features.





Map 5

Along this section of the Lagan Canal you can experience a flavour of the industrial revolution in Northern Ireland, with the remains of a forgotten history that helped shape Ulster in the mills, quays and locks of the Canal. The delivery of goods and coal was vital to power the mills of Belfast and Lisburn and the crunch of the ice boat could often be heard ploughing a channel through icy waters to make way for the coal laden lighters travelling along the route.

Access to this section of the towpath is via car parks at Lisburn Civic Centre, Mcllroy Park and Drumbridge. Other local pedestrian access points are indicated on the map.

Getting there

By Bike: National Cycle Route 9.

By Bus: From Lurgan Service 51 to Lisburn.

From Belfast to Lisburn Civic Centre, Queens Rd Service 325L

By Rail: Take the train from Portadown, Lurgan, Moira, Belfast to Lisburn.

Along the towpath

Hilden Mill

As you leave Lock 11 behind, you can discover the red brick remains of Hilden Mill. Hilden was developed by the French Huguenot Louis Crommelin. In 1823 Hilden Thread Factory was established by the Barbour Family. Using the river and mill race to power the factory and the Canal to transport goods, Barbour Mill became one of the largest thread-making works in the world. The mill had its own quay and ran its own barges on the Canal, named after the mill owner's daughters Nellie and Eva. As you pass Hilden Mill, notice the mill quay and tie rings used to moor up the lighters which served the factory.

"My friends and I worked in worked in Hilden Mill and we used the towpath to walk to work."
Elizabeth Sharkey, Lisburn

Lock 10 Hilden Lock

Passing over Hilden Bridge and the Hilden Road make your way towards Lock 10. Looking at the map you will see a curve below the 10th lock; this was known as Hunter's Corner (James Hunter was the owner of a local linen bleach green between 1741 and 1781).

Lock 9 Lambeg Lock and Lambeg Mill

As you follow the line of the towpath you cross over the Tullynacross Road on Lambeg Bridge. Here, you will discover Lock 9 next to Lambeg Mill. William Menow was the lockkeeper here, having completed 30 years of service by 1885. There is history of linen production here since 1626, and the location was chosen because of the clean fresh water available underground. Lambeg, like Hilden Mill, was integral to the development of the Lagan Valley as the centre of linen manufacture. The Richardson family owned an extensive linen works at Glenmore, beside Lambeg. The Lambeg site was eventually taken over by Coca Cola and is now a bottling plant.



Ballyskeagh Bridge & Lock 8 Ward's Lock

As you turn the corner leaving Lambeg behind, the grandeur of Ballyskeagh High Bridge greets you. This iconic tall red sandstone road bridge carries the road from Lambeg Village to Drumbridge. Built by Thomas Omer in 1760, this bridge has two arches, one for boats and the smaller second arch to allow the horses through.

Today Ballyskeagh Bridge forms the basis of the logo of the Lagan Canal Restoration Trust. The nearby Thomas Omer-designed lock house is currently in private ownership.

Lock 7 / McQuiston's Lock

The towpath continues on beneath the M1 motorway and towards Lock 7. Here you can see an original Thomas Omer lock house across the small stone bridge. Although the lock house lies in ruins, Omer's distinctive arched gables can be clearly seen. The nearby Mossvale linen works were owned by the Charley family of Seymour Hill, who built a quay on the canal for unloading coal.

"I would have cycled along the Lagan towpath, which was much more narrow than today and it was often muddy. I would have cycled up to Seymour Hill a lot. I remember watching the lighters go through the locks and I loved to get a ride in a lighter." Harry Press.

Wildlife

You can expect to see the following wildlife in this area:



Image Courtesy of D Gibson

Heron

Grey herons can be found along quiet parts of the Canal with a good supply of fish. They also roost in nearby trees.

When: All year round



Image Courtesy of J Kerr

Coots

Coots can be found in large numbers along the canal. The coot occupies similar habitats to its smaller cousin, the moorhen. Coots can be very territorial and will aggressively chase off any unwanted intruders.

When: Throughout the year



Image Courtesy of J Kerr

Lords and Ladies

This flowering plant can be seen by the hedgerows along the towpath. Most parts of this plant are poisonous, particularly the berries.

When: Large green pointed flowers with a long brown spike April to May
Orange berries - Autumn

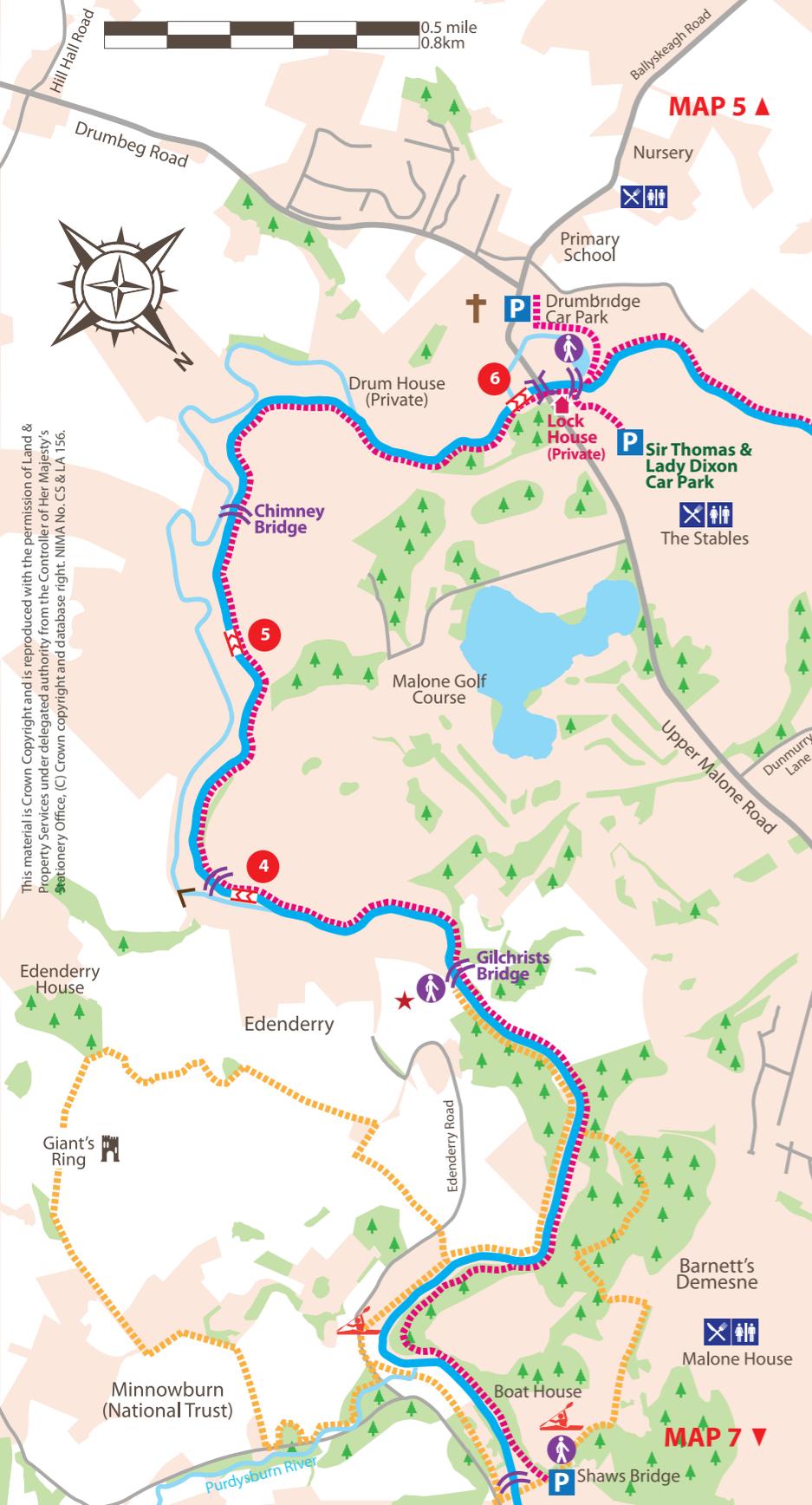
Places Nearby

Glenmore Activity Centre; Sporting and fitness facilities including local canoe club Lisburn City Paddlers.

Mclroy Park; The site is accessible from the Ballyskeagh Road adjacent to New Grosvenor Stadium, or via the Lagan Towpath and Seymour Hill.

Seymour Hill; Linear wood linked to the towpath by Rambler's Bridge.

Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park; Walks, rolling meadows, woodland, riverside fields and formal gardens. Other features include the walled gardens and the Ice House, a children's playground, orienteering and eco trails, coffee shop and toilets.



Map 6

Here the Canal enters into the company of a series of parks, woodlands and nature reserves in the heart of Belfast city.

Access to this section of the towpath is via the car parks at Drum Bridge and Shaws Bridge. Other local pedestrian access points are indicated on the map.

Getting there

By Bus: From Belfast Europa Bus Station service 38 to Lisburn Bus Centre then Service 24 to Drumbeag Corner. From Lisburn Bus Centre service 24 to Drumbeag Corner.

From Belfast Europa Bus station to Shaws Bridge service 13D From Lisburn Linenhall Street to Shaws Bridge; service 26 to Drumbo Church then service 13D to Shaws Bridge.

By Bike: National Cycle Route 9.



Image Courtesy of CAAN

Along the towpath Drum Bridge

Drum Bridge is a three-arch stone bridge dating back to the early 19th century. At the top of the bridge look for the pulley which guided the towing rope as lighters passed underneath. This was necessary as the towpath changed sides here.

An original Thomas Omer lock house can be seen from the main road here; please note this is in private ownership. A second modest lock keepers cottage was built adjacent to the towpath downstream of the bridge. This has since been demolished.

“My uncle Matt Irvine was the Lock Keeper at Lock 6. During the 1950’s and 60’s I used to go up and down the canal and river on a canoe, I would go as far as the weir towards Belfast.” Will McCartney

A short distance from Drumbridge you will discover the remains of Lock 6, where relics of the navigation are evident in the tie up bollards used to secure barges next to the lock. There was also a quay here owned by the Lagan Navigation Company, where coal and sand were unloaded.

From here the Canal passes beneath the Chimney Bridge at Ballydrain, which was a metal bridge for farmers to drive cattle over the Canal.

Lock 5 Ballydrain Lock

It is reputed that the ‘canal folk’, who normally slept on the boats overnight, would not stay in this area. They claimed there were “strange influences” and the temperatures were lower here than anywhere else on the Canal.

John Shaw Brown/Edenderry

As you explore the Canal in this area you will discover further evidence of the influence that the Canal had on the industrial development of Ulster. Across the water you will notice the walls of a quay which was used by the mill industries of Edenderry. The largest of the linen mills here were owned by John Shaw Brown, and it was known as the St. Ellen Works.

Lock 4 Rosie’s Lock (Rosie Ward)

Leaving Edenderry behind you the next feature on the Canal is Lock 4. Lock 4 also sits near to an eel weir on the River Lagan. This weir has been derelict since the 1950s, but the area offers a picnic site which affords the visitor pleasant views of the River Lagan.

From here the Canal winds its way beneath Gilchrist’s Bridge. Named after the founder of Lagan Valley Regional Park John Gilchrist, this footbridge connects the towpath to the riverside path and Edenderry Village. Before you reach Shaw’s Bridge there is a wide place on the navigation known as Washerwoman’s Bight. Here a lady named Kate lived in the hollowed out roots of a tree, and worked as the local washer woman.

Next stop on the Canal is the iconic Shaw’s Bridge, where the towpath winds its way towards inner city Belfast.

My Lagan Love

*“Her father sails a running-barge
‘twixt Leamh-beag and The Druim;
and on the lonely river-marge She clears his hearth for him.”*

Lighter at Lock 6 Drumbridge, 1924



Wildlife



Kingfisher

Kingfishers travel at lightening speeds, catch several small fish per day, raise up to 3 broods of young every season and fiercely defend their territory at all times.

When: Throughout the year



Grey Wagtails

This yellow and grey bird is usually seen at faster flowing water, so keep an eye out at the locks. This is where their insect and larvae food is found.

When: Throughout the year



Salmon

The River Lagan has developed into a successful habitat for salmon, where they return every year to swim up stream and spawn. They can be seen leaping at the eel weir at Lock 4

When: Autumn/ Winter

Places Nearby

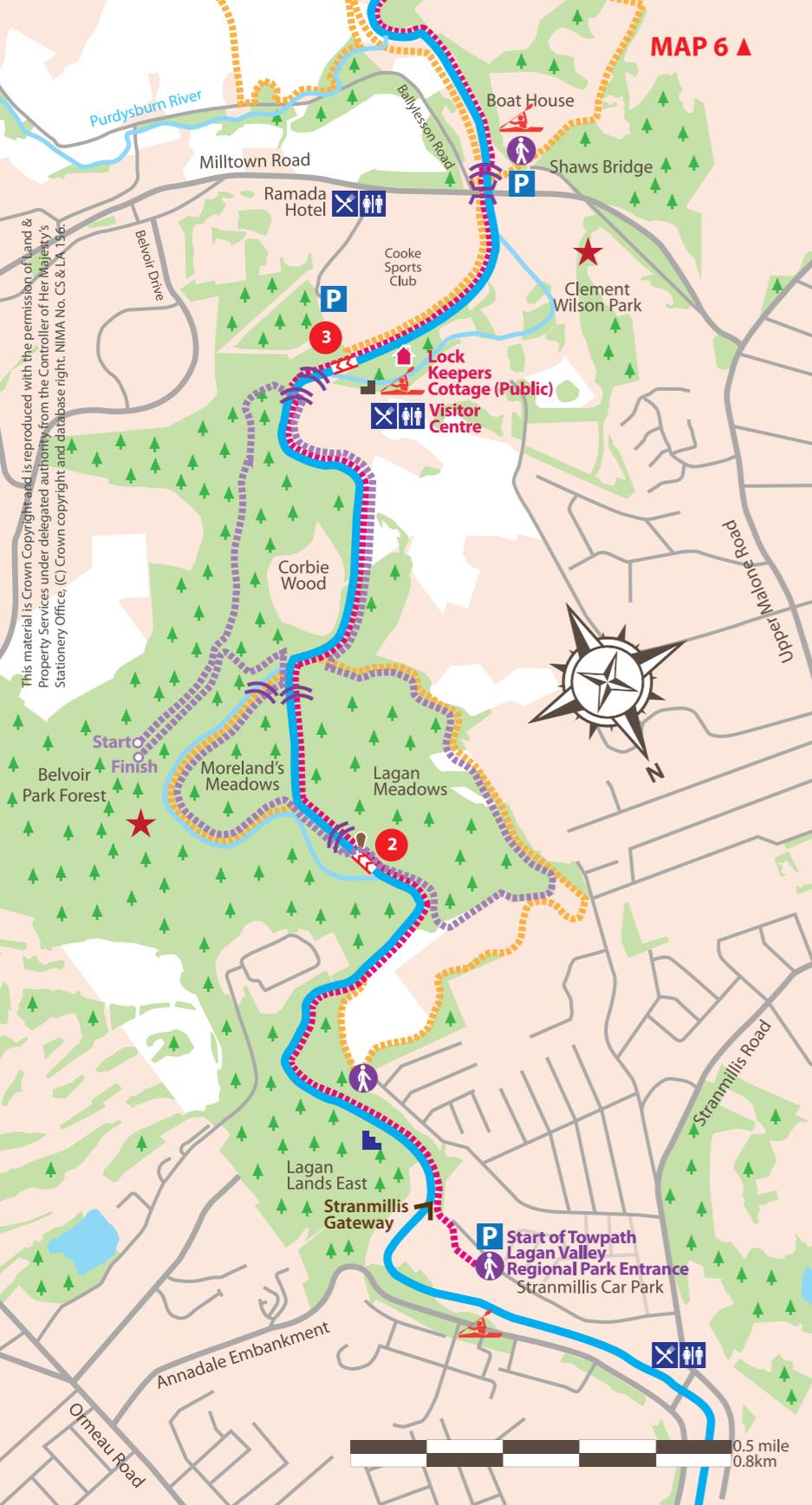
St Patrick's Church, Drumbridge; The first church on this site is believed to have been built in the late twelfth century. The present church was built in 1798 and rebuilt in 1870.

Ballydrain - Malone Golf Course; The demesne at Ballydrain dates from the 17th century and was originally owned by the Stewart family. Since 1961 it has been the clubhouse for Malone Golf Club.

Giant's Ring; The Giant's Ring is a state care protected monument believed to be over 4000 years old. It is one of Northern Ireland's most important Neolithic monuments.

Barnett Demesne; This park of open lawns, woodland and marsh contains a wealth of wildlife and a range of visitor facilities. Malone House provides restaurant and information facilities.

Minnowburn; Woodland, riverbank and meadow walks linking the landmarks of Shaw's Bridge and the Giant's Ring. It is owned and run by the National Trust.



MAP 6 ▲



Image Courtesy of CAAN

Map 7

A towpath walk here is a privilege for anyone who wants to delve into a past way of life, where visitors can enjoy a restored lock, lock keeper's cottage, visitor centre and canal-side café. This area is also rich in activities with walking and cycling routes, parks and the opportunity to enjoy the River Lagan in a canoe.

Getting there

By Bus: From Belfast Europa Bus station to Shaws Bridge service 13D From Lisburn Linenhall Street to Shaws Bridge; service 26 to Drumbo Church then service 13D to Shaws Bridge.
From Belfast Europa Bus Station, service 600 to Chichester Street, then the 8A to Stranmillis College.
From Lisburn Bus Centre to Stranmillis College service 51 to Belfast Europa Bus Station then service 600 to Chichester Street, then the 8A to Stranmillis College.

By Bike: National Cycle Route 9.

Along the towpath

As you walk along the towpath heading downstream, the views open out to reveal Belfast's famous Shaw's Bridge. The original bridge was built here in 1655 and was named after Captain Shaw an officer in the Cromwellian Army. A second stone bridge was built in 1698, but was swept away by floods. The current structure was built in 1709. In 1976 the adjacent concrete bridge was built.

Visitors have a choice of 2 routes:

1. Walk around the rear of the stone boat house into the car park. Cross over the top of the stone bridge. Follow the winding path down, keeping the river and Canal on your left until you reach Lock 3.
2. Walk around the rear of the stone boat house into the car park. Keep the river on your right and follow the footpath under the bridge veering left until a fork in the path. Take the pathway on the right walking 650 metres/ 710 yards to the footbridge. Cross over here bearing left until you reach Lock 3.

Lock 3 McCleave's Lock

Here the towpath passes over the Canal, via the black stone bridge. This is one of the few places on the Lagan Canal where the lock keeper's house and stone bridge all remain intact. The adjacent lock keeper's house dates back to the late eighteenth century. It was not in fact built as a lock keeper's cottage, but was likely to be connected to Fergusons, who were a linen bleaching company situated across the Lagan. The original lock keeper's house was in the lane opposite the bridge; this has since been demolished. In 1922 George Kilpatrick took over as lockkeeper and worked here until the Canal closed in 1958.

Local man Brian Cross fondly remembers the Newforge area at Lock 3 as a wonderful place where all the local children would gather. They would cycle the towpath to meet at the shop owned by the Kilpatricks to buy an ice-cream.

"My father was a lock keeper on the Lagan Canal, and I grew up in the cottage next to Lock 3. I can remember the boats and haulers. The men who worked on the canal were very kindly men, ...the odd time we got a ride on a lighter up as far as Edenderry"
Dorothy McBride (Daughter of George Kilpatrick)

Lock 3 and its cottage have been restored through Lagan Valley Regional Park Landscape Partnership Scheme, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Castlereagh Borough Council and the Department for Culture Arts and Leisure. A visit to the cottage and visitor centre is a must to learn more about the life and work of the Canal.

Lock 2 Taylor's Lock

Keeping the Canal on your right, cross over the red footbridge; this allows you to continue on a pleasant walk along the towpath. The Canal channel here created the island known as Moreland's Meadow where the original lock house was situated.

The next stretch of the Canal follows the River Lagan on the right, with the journey ending at the Stranmillis Weir. The outline of Lock 1 can be clearly seen in the car park in Lockview at Stranmillis. This lock was known as Molly Ward's, named after the 18th century tavern run by Molly and her husband. The tavern is said to have been a popular place for the haulers and lightermen to stop and have a "wee dram" to warm the bones before setting off for the 2 day journey to the shores of Lough Neagh. During the 18th century the United Irishmen also reputedly met here.

Molly Ward's was by far the busiest lock, once a thriving place; thatched white washed cottages were home to Dick McCann and Dick McClelland, the lock keeper and bank ranger. There was also a stable where the boat club is now. Here, the lock keeper had to look after the pen weir, which was originally wooden, as well as enter the details of the lighters into the permit book and collect the tolls.

Wildlife



Mallard

The wild mallard is one of the most commonly seen birds on the Lagan Canal. These resilient ducks can make their home in any wetland habitat due to their ability to adapt to almost any diet.

When: All year round



*Image Courtesy of
W McCarney*

Grey seal

There have been a number of sightings of grey seals in the last 2 years, as far upstream as Ballyskeagh. It is not uncommon for seals to come up rivers, and we believe they are following the salmon which were spawning over the winter months. Seals will also take water fowl from the river.

When: Winter months

Places Nearby

Clement Wilson Park; Circular route for walking and cycling.

Belvoir Park Forest; Walks through forest and historic remains of the Belvoir Estate.

Lagan Meadows & Lester's Dam; Walks through woodland, hay meadows and grazed pastures. It is accessible from the towpath through Lagan Meadows and from Knightsbridge Park, Stranmillis.

The Adidas Running Trail: 3.5 mile running trail within Lagan Valley Regional Park. Trail marked by dark brown posts with a blue strip and trail logo.

Belfast Activity Centre (BAC) ; Outdoor adventure activities including off-road cycling, environmental orienteering and trekking. BAC Boathouse provides a range of water paddling activities including canoeing and kayaking. Booking essential.

Mobile Team Adventure; Offering canoeing and kayaking on the Lagan every Saturday from End of March to Mid Oct. Booking essential.

The Lagan Watersports Centre; Offers water sports including canoeing, kayaking, dragon boating, rowing, sailing and power boating. Booking essential.



The Lagan Canal Restoration Trust and Future of the Canal

The Lagan Canal Restoration Trust is a partnership organisation working towards the restoration of the Lagan Canal from Belfast to Lough Neagh. The key partners include local councils, government departments, and local stakeholders.

The Trust aims to work in partnership with local communities, river users, local businesses and those with a conservation and heritage interest.

Proposed Stranmillis Gateway, Belfast



Mission

To achieve the restoration and revitalisation of the Lagan Canal and its corridor - in ways which conserve and enhance the built and natural heritage, maximise recreational and tourism opportunities, involve and benefit the local communities and their visitors, and contribute to the local and regional economies.

Aims

- To provide a partnership-based vehicle, through which the principal public and voluntary sector organisations can work together to achieve the necessary support, funding and implementation works to restore the Lagan Canal for navigation.
- To contribute to safeguarding, enhancing and promoting awareness and appreciation of the scenic, natural, built and cultural heritage values of the Canal and its corridor.
- To maximise the recreational and visitor potential of the Canal and its towpath; thereby contributing to the well-being and economy of communities in the vicinity of the Canal
- To promote and facilitate the awareness, support and involvement of local communities, current and potential users of the Canal corridor, businesses and developers in programmes and activities relating to the restoration, use and enjoyment of the Canal and its towpath.
- To establish and sustain an effective organisational structure and modest staff capability to achieve the above aims.

The Trust believes that the Lagan Canal is one of the best built and natural heritage assets that exists in Northern Ireland. As such, it provides a wealth of opportunities to benefit local communities, stimulate tourism, and generate economic and social regeneration.

Feasibility studies have been undertaken, one of which states that:

“The restoration of the Lagan Navigation between Stranmillis and Ellis’ Gut at Lough Neagh is a practical proposal.” (Ferguson McIlveen).

To achieve a navigable waterway requires a number of measures to be taken along the corridor. Most of the locks are overgrown and require the clearance of vegetation, removal of the concrete weirs from the central channel, repairs to masonry and installation of new gates. In addition the channels of the Canal would require clearance, dredging and re-watering. These works will require environmental, archaeological and engineering surveys prior to commencement.

Building on the achievements of our partners in the restoration of Locks 12 and 3, the Trust seeks to support the delivery of the Stranmillis



Image Courtesy of I H Clare

Gateway Project, Lagan Corridor Strategic Framework and restoration through to Lough Neagh. Alongside this, the Trust aims to continue to campaign and secure the necessary funding to re-open this great asset for navigation, bringing it to life once again and safeguarding the Canal and corridor for our future generations.

Get Involved

There are currently a number of ways to get involved with the Lagan Canal.

The Inland Waterways Association of Ireland

You could become a member of the Lagan Branch of the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland. The IWAI is a voluntary body of inland waterways enthusiasts. The Association advocates the use, maintenance, protection, restoration and improvement of the inland waterways of Ireland and in particular their preservation as working navigations.

The Lagan Branch of the IWAI currently works in partnership with the Lagan Canal Restoration Trust, and holds an annual program of events including boat rallies along the navigable stretches of the Lagan.

Branch details and how to become a member of the IWAI can be found on their website, www.lagan.iwai.ie.

Volunteering

The Lagan Canal runs through 11 miles of Lagan Valley Regional Park. The Park offers an extensive annual program of events which includes guided walks along the towpath, and through the Laganscape Project many opportunities exist to volunteer.

If you are interested in volunteering you can get involved in:

- Saturday Conservation Ranger Team
- Wildlife monitoring
- Red squirrel surveys
- Heritage Guiding
- Wildlife & Heritage photography



For more information on all of these opportunities see www.laganvalley.co.uk or contact the Volunteer Coordinator on **028 9049 1922**.

As the restoration campaign progresses there will be further opportunities to volunteer with the Lagan Canal Trust. See www.lagancanaltrust.org for further details.

"I think it is great to see the cottage restored, and it has been great to have been involved. I still think of it as home and am very proud of it. I now volunteer in the cottage and have never met so many nice and interesting people, the comments in the visitor book are amazing"

Dorothy McBride, daughter of George Kilpatrick;
Lock keeper at lock 3.



Other Navigations

Canals and river navigations exist throughout Ireland, and today many are re-opened as boating, recreation and visitor attractions.

The ultimate vision of the Lagan Canal Restoration Trust is that one day boats will again pass through Belfast and Lisburn, making their way through Lough Neagh, along the Ulster Canal and into the All Ireland Waterway Network.



The Ulster Canal

The Ulster Canal was opened in 1841, linking the Erne system with the Lough Neagh basin. The route of the navigation is 93km long and is situated in counties Fermanagh, Monaghan and Armagh. The campaign to restore the Ulster Canal is spearheaded by Blackwater Regional Partnership while Waterways Ireland is currently undertaking the restoration of a section of the canal from Upper Lough Erne to Clones.

Shannon-Erne

The Shannon-Erne Waterways links two great waterways: the Shannon and the Erne. Restored and reopened in 1994 it is 63 km of river, lake and still-water canal.

The Erne System

The island-dotted expanses of Upper Lough Erne and the mountain fringed waters of Lower Lough Erne are a unique boating experience. The Erne System is a truly rural, unspoilt and tranquil leisure experience for boating enthusiasts, and game and coarse anglers with areas offering a variety of water sports.

The Grand Canal

The Grand Canal crosses Leinster from Dublin to the Shannon through Co. Offaly, with a branch linking the canal to the beautiful River Barrow. Wonderful fishing, nature and wildlife abound along the corridor.

The Barrow Navigation

The Barrow Navigation which runs from Athy in Co. Kildare to St Mullins in Co. Carlow is a river navigation with lateral canals bypassing the weirs. The Barrow Navigation winds its way through peaceful woods, fertile valleys, picturesque villages and is used by boating enthusiasts as well as anglers and walkers.

The Lower Bann

The Lower Bann, a canalised river, is navigable from Lough Neagh to the sea at the barmouth between Castlerock and Portstewart Strand. The Lower Bann is very popular with water sports enthusiasts, anglers and cruisers alike with a zoning system in place to accommodate varied interests.

The Royal Canal

The Royal Canal, like the Grand Canal, links Dublin with the River Shannon. The 90 mile section from Dublin to the Shannon has been restored and opened for navigation in 2010 after a 36 year restoration program.

The Shannon Navigation

The longest river in Ireland, the Shannon was once a major commercial waterway - the backbone of Ireland. The river and its lakes now offer cruising waters ranging from bustling harbours to peaceful bays.

Other navigations in Ireland include the Newry Canal, the Strabane Canal and the Coalisland Canal.

For further information on Ireland's navigations see

www.waterwaysireland.org

www.iwai.ie



Useful Information and Resources

Accommodation:

Information on where to stay during your visit to the Lagan Corridor can be found at:

Belfast Welcome Centre

Tel: +44 (0)28 9024 6609 | www.gotobelfast.com

Lisburn Tourist Information Centre

Tel: +44 (0)28 9266 0038 | www.visitlisburn.com

Lough Neagh Discovery Centre

Tel: +44 (0) 28 3832 2205 | www.discovercraigavon.com

For information on angling and permits contact:

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure Inland Fisheries

Tel: +44 (0) 28 9051 5119 or Email: dcalangling@dcalni.gov.uk

Further recommended reading:

Book: Blair, May, Once Upon the Lagan: The Story of the Lagan Canal

Publisher: Fifth printing, The Blackstaff Press, Belfast, 2000.

ISBN: 0 85640 245 1

A wonderful book, preserving the oral history of those who worked on the Lagan Canal: "Conversations with canal folk, photographs (many of them gleaned from old family albums), documents of the Lagan Navigation Company, songs, poems - all have been combined in this absorbing verbal and visual record of a way of life now gone and almost forgotten." Includes the words of The Cruise of the Callabar.

Book: Delany, Ruth, Ireland's Inland Waterways: Celebrating 300 years

Publisher: Appletree Press; 2 edition (September 28, 2005)

ISBN-10: 0862818249

Useful Websites

- www.lagancanaltrust.org
- www.belfastcity.gov.uk/lagan/index.asp
- www.belfastsplashtours.com
- www.belfastactivitycentre.com
- www.castlereagh.gov.uk
- www.lisburncity.gov.uk/your-city-council/regeneration-projects/lagan-corridor
- www.craigavon.gov.uk
- www.ni-environment.gov.uk/built-home.htm
- www.dcalni.gov.uk/index/inland_waterways-fisheriesr08/lagan_towpath.htm
- www.iwai.ie
- www.countrysiderecreation.com
- www.laganvalley.co.uk
- www.lisburncitypaddlers.com
- www.laganwatersports.com
- www.walkni.com
- www.canoeni.com
- www.cycleni.com
- www.sustrans.org.uk
- www.ecotrailsnl.com
- www.mobileteamadventure.co.uk
- www.laganboatcompany.com
- www.lockkeepersinn.com
- www.discovercraigavon.com
- www.visitblackwaterregion.com
- www.britishwaterways.co.uk
- www.waterwaysireland.org



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The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe Investing in Rural Areas



LAGAN CANAL TRUST

Working Together For Restoration

For more information contact

Lagan Canal Restoration Trust Ltd
Lough Neagh Discovery Centre
Craigavon
Co. Armagh
BT66 6NJ

Tel. +44 (0) 28 3831 1675

Company Reg No: NI073608

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www.lagancanaltrust.org

This guide is available to download as PDF on request.

Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy in the compilation of this guide. The Lagan Canal Restoration Trust cannot accept responsibility for omissions or errors but if these are brought to our attention, amendments will be published in future guides.

Comments, feedback and recommendations for inclusion in future literature should be addressed to:

info@lagancanaltrust.org

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