

The route will follow the path of the Melton Mowbray Navigation and run roughly parallel to the river for about an hour at a gentle pace.

**1. The Boat Inn**

Cross Burton Street from the Boat Inn, and follow the service road into the Play Close. Near this new road ran the canal tow path beside part of the wall of the New Wharf. This was taken down when the new Council Office was built.

The Boat Inn is on the left hand side of Burton Street looking down. It is the old canal basin pub. The Oakham Canal joined the Melton Mowbray Navigation at Burton End. In 1877 the Canal Company was wound up. The canal basin and the bed of this part of the canal were filled in. The double row of chestnut trees was planted to show the line of the canal. There is a model lock gate with a descriptive map at the end of the avenue.

**2. First Canal Bridge**

Carry on past the Leisure Pools with the canal on your right to Leicester Road.

This part of the waterway is the first length of the original canal-cut left in water. Barges would have left Melton Mowbray along here on their way to the Junction and the Grand Union.

**3. Leicester Road Bridge**

Cross the Leicester Rd and follow the footpath sign through the kissing gate on to the tow path on the left of the canal.

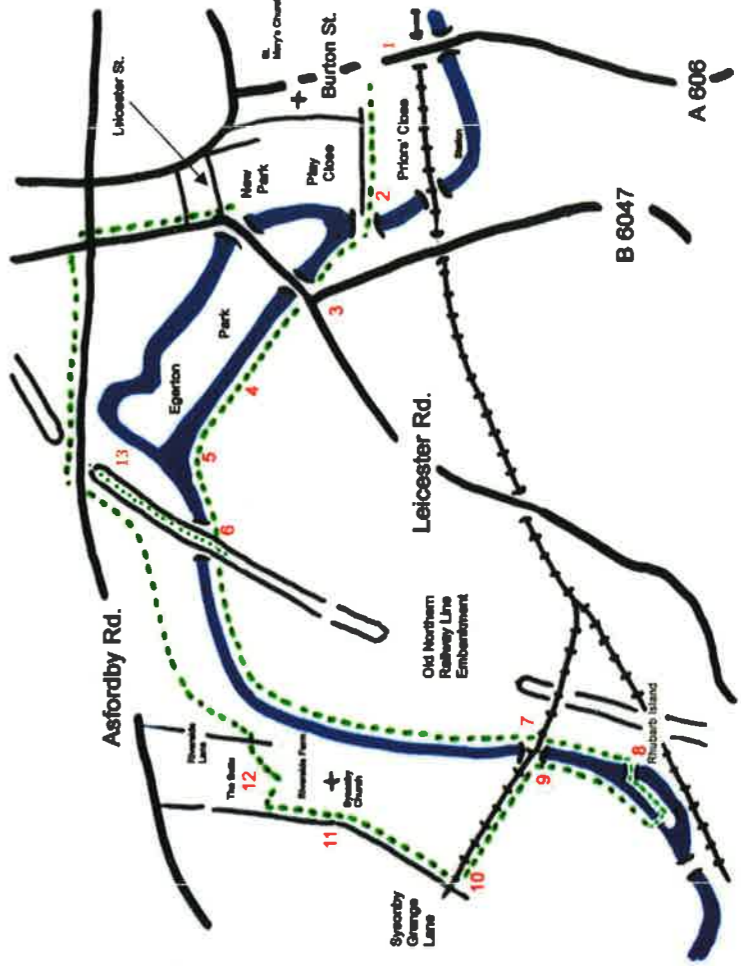
This bridge was made of cast iron by Cooke and Sons of Melton Mowbray in 1884. It replaced the arched brick canal bridge when the road was widened. At the same time, the tow path was removed from underneath it.

**4. Egerton Park**

Follow the canal until you reach the junction with the River Eye. Because the owners of Egerton Lodge did not want barges with their rough crews passing their formal gardens, the canal was diverted. It now follows a separate course until the junction.

**7. The Old Nottingham Railway Line**

Follow the footpath under the bridge. As you go under this bridge you will see that the tow path of the old canal is still under the arch next to the river. This railway line is now used as a test track.



**5. The Junction of the Canal and the River Eye**

Carry on into the next field. Cross the stile a few yards from the river.

**6. The Old Northern Railways Line Bridge**

Follow the path under the bridge. It can be very muddy, so care is needed.

The river now swings gently to the left. There are two wooden stiles and two narrow metal gates to pass through, and a footbridge across a small stream.

Until quite recently this bridge was a brick built canal bridge on the canal tow path. Longfield High School is to the left of the path.

**Here are a few interesting facts:-**

The parishes of Sysonby and Eye Kettleby are rich in archaeological evidence about Melton's past going right back to the Stone Age. We also know a great deal about the history of the area, which clearly was very important for centuries.

**1. The Melton Mowbray Navigation** was built for broad beam barges, and the lock chambers are wider than usual. The Boat Inn, across Burton Street from the carpark, is a reminder that Burton End was the site of the old canal basin. Looking up Burton Street towards St. Mary's Church, the view has not changed very much from the days when boats carried coal, wool, wheat, oats, barley and manure from Leicester's stables. In 1808 there was a wharf at Priors Close west of the basin. It included a warehouse, a granary, malt offices, and a coal yard.

**4. Egerton Park** formed part of the landscaping around the house designed by Wyatt in 1829. A cricket pitch was laid out by the owner of Egerton Lodge, Lord Wilton, and he entertained teams from the MCC when two-day matches were played. It was the only private ground visited by the MCC in Leicestershire. County first class matches were played here in the 1940s.

**8. Rhubarb Island** was given its name because of the large plants with rhubarb-like leaves that grow all over it. This is Buter Bur, used as a medicine for the Plague according to Culpeper the 17th Century herbalist. It was also used to wrap butter pats to take them to market.

**9. The Sewage Works** were built in 1852 in Mr Whittle's field to the west, avoiding the lands of the Lords Wilton and Palmerston, who had objected to the Works being built too close to their properties.

**11. Sysonby Church.** Near to the church part of a Roman coffin was found by the Melton Fieldworkers and in 1859, pagan Saxon burials were discovered which suggests that the site had religious significance before the coming of Christianity. The church was built in the 13thC. by Roger de Mowbray, Lord of Melton.

**12. The Butts.** The semi-circular area to the left of the footpath was set aside for the practice of archery. Able-bodied men were required to practise their skills every week. In 1613 Melton was fined 21 shillings for not having a pair of Butts, and the Sysonby Butts were thought to have been one of the pair they were forced to provide. 21 shillings would have been about £117 now.

**13. Riverside Farm.** The buildings on this site date from the 17thC and are listed. Beside the river is a moat fed by river water. This is recorded in the Sites and Monuments Records. It is probably a garden feature associated with the old Manor House, but it may be much older and been adapted from a moated farmhouse. The Yew trees on this site date from 1580.

Next to the river on a small area of gravel deposits was the old village of Sysonby or Sixtenby in the Domesday Book. Here archaeological excavations by the Melton Field Workers found evidence of human habitation in a three metre deep section starting with artefacts from the Stone Age and Bronze Age (c. 2500 BC) in waterlogged silt at the base, then Iron Age and Roman artefacts, and finally at the top, the last artefacts date to the Saxon/Norman period (900/1050AD).

There is no evidence of mediæval habitation on this site, which must have been abandoned around the time of the Norman Conquest in 1066. The village moved on to the land which is now the Town Estate Golf Course which evidence shows was occupied from around 1100. It appears to have been deserted in the 16thC. The villagers may have been forced out by the Digby family who were Lords of the Manor.

**Local Bus Services**

There are regular bus services from Leicester (St. Margaret's Bus Station), via Syston and the Wreake Valley villages of Ratcliffe, Thrusington, Hobby, Frisby and Kirby Bellars to Melton Mowbray (Windsor Street).

A regular bus service also runs from Leicester and Syston along the main road A607 to Kirby Bellars, and then to Melton Mowbray via Station Lane, Asfordby. All bus information can be obtained from:-

Traveline Tel: 0871 200 22 33

**Melton & Oakham Waterways Society**  
(MOWS)

was formed in 1997 to improve access to the corridor of the Rivers Eye and Wreake, and to work for the re-opening of the Melton Mowbray Navigation between Melton Mowbray & the River Soar

**Come and Join Us!**

Membership: Single £7, Joint £12 per annum  
Contact Ron Francis.

10 Wyfordby Close, Melton Mowbray, LE13 1HL  
Telephone 01664 564028

Visit our website by putting 'Melton & Oakham Waterways Society' into Google

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**THE BOAT INN  
MELTON MOWBRAY  
TO HOBY**

Boat Inn to Eye Kettleby Lock  
Eye Kettleby Lock to Kirby Bellars  
Kirby Bellars to Frisby on the Wreake  
Frisby on the Wreake to Hobby

Following as far as possible, the route of the Melton Mowbray Navigation from Melton Mowbray to the River Soar

**THE WREAKE  
VALLEY WAY**