

Mills, Hills and History

A walk in the Padworth countryside, starting and finishing at Aldermaston Lock – 5 miles/8km.

Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 159 – 'Reading' may be useful.

There are three modest hills. Paths may be muddy and uneven. There is a pub and a Tea Room at the start of the walk and carparking and a cafe at the Kennet and Avon Canal Centre.

There are three unavoidable lengths of road walking. Extra care should be taken, especially at rush hour.



1. Aldermaston Wharf and the Navigation

This part of the Kennet & Avon Canal was opened in 1723. The Wharf was an important inland port. During World War 2 the canal was used as an anti-tank obstacle and numerous pill boxes and gun positions can be seen along it.

Turn right along the very narrow Footpath at the gate to Mill House.



2. Padworth Mill is mentioned in a Saxon Charter of 956AD, and Domesday Book (1086) gives it three mills which probably shared the system of mill leats. The fish pass allows fish to move up and down the river.

At the end of the first field the path angles to the left and to the left-hand edge of the wood.



3. A change of geology. The hill rises suddenly from the flood plain. Sandy soils with flints become heavier and more waterlogged.

4. Padworth House was built in 1769. It is now Padworth College, a private international school. Padworth church was built about 1130. It has two Norman doorways and wall paintings.

5. Old Farm and old road. The farm and the track are shown in 1761. Down the path the geology changes from gravel to

muddy clay. The ancient bluebell woods are hazel coppice with oak standards.

6. The Fish Ponds and Ufton Court make use of a spring on the hill crest. The Court is mainly 16th century. The ancient oak pollard, where the path reaches the top of the hill, is probably older than the house.



7. Views of the Kennet Valley. Across the valley, the large building in the distance is Englefield House. Middle Farm is shown in 1761.

Look for the first Footpath on the left, on a bend in the road, just past an isolated oak tree in the hedge. The path runs across the field – not along the hedge.

8. Ancient track. This was the way from Padworth onto the floodplain grazing areas.

9. Lodge Farm, built in the 15th/16th century, is at the entrance to Padworth Park.



10. The Navigation. The towpath runs along the northern canal bank.