

LEGEND

ROUTES:

 South Swindon Green Trail (and section)

 Alternative green and urban paths

 National Cycle Route 45

FEATURES:

 forest, wood or tiny forest

 nature reserve

 birdwatching

 play area

SITES OF INTEREST:

 on-Trail site

 site on alternative path

 stone circle

 view

AMENITIES:

 café or pub

 shops

 bus stop

 toilets

 car park

SCALE:

 — Approx. 10 minutes —>



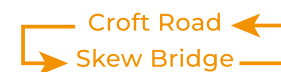
South Swindon Green Trail

Circular trail through South Swindon's green areas and transport history



1.2 MILES / 1.9 KM

Railway Section



Railway Section



These notes follow the South Swindon Green Trail clockwise, leading on from the Motorway Section at Croft Road. Read from the bottom to the top if starting your walk at Skew Bridge.

ADVISORY NOTES FOR CYCLISTS AND WHEELCHAIR USERS.

Railway Path history: The Swindon, Marlborough & Andover Railway opened in 1881, and merged with Swindon & Cheltenham Extension Railway in 1884. It was intended to link Andover with the GWR London to Bristol line via a 830 yd / 760 m tunnel under Old Town, but construction proved too technically difficult and expensive so the tunnel was abandoned where Queen's Park is today. The final rail route wound its way around the southern edge of Old Town hill, joining the London to Bristol track close to the current rail bridge on Wootton Bassett Road.



From Croft Road follow East Wichel Way westwards then take the first paved path at the first set of houses, take the pavement to the right.

1



North of the path is East Wichel Park – with a play area and a ball court. The park is home to Swindon's first **Tiny Forest**, planted in March 2021. A Tiny Forest is a dense, native woodland that helps mitigate the effects of climate change, supports urban wildlife, and connects people with nature. Close to the Tiny Forest is a modern **stone circle** made from local sarsen stones.



Follow Lohart Lane's pavement to the concrete road that heads uphill. Immediately after walking under the bridge take the steps onto the railway path and walk westwards.

THE CONCRETE PATH IS STEEP. THERE IS NO BIKE AND WHEELCHAIR FRIENDLY ALTERNATIVE TO THE STEPS.



Tank Traps: Near the bridge, on the side of the concrete road, there are flat-topped concrete pyramids (there are more further west on Mill Lane). Now covered in mosses and lichen, these



Tank Traps were installed as a defensive measure during World War Two (1939–1945).

You are now walking along the former Midland & South Western Junction Railway (MSWJR).



2 ALTERNATIVE ROUTE: on the railway path, turn left. The path passes through the 0.75 mile / 1.2 km long railway cutting where a solid outcrop of rock was blasted away for the track to reach Swindon Town Station (now Signal Way). It is a **Site of Special Scientific Interest** (SSSI) for its geological interest dating from the Jurassic period.



ALTERNATIVE ROUTE: Leave the railway path at the Springfield Road bridge to visit the **Town Gardens**, a formal Victorian Park opened in 1894 on the site of a disused quarry, with public toilets, a café kiosk and an aviary.



There are **five semi-circular artworks** along the railway: Earth, Air, Fire, Water and Conceive. Installed in 1995, the Portland stone artworks by sculptor Alec Peeves feature poetry by Fiona Sampson. Each, represents a wheel with two parts – a small wheel naming the element, and a large wheel with a short piece of poetry. A length of wood, representing a railway sleeper, crosses the path between each of the wheel pairs.



3 ALTERNATIVE ROUTE: South of Mill Lane is the site of a **Medieval Village**, designated as a Scheduled Monument. Enclosed by a boundary ditch, and the River Ray on the north side, the village's main street ran north-south with buildings on either side – now bumps in the field. There is evidence of ridge-and-furrow cultivation. Archaeologists have also found Roman remains here, suggesting settlement over 2,000 years ago.



South of the railway path are views across Wichelstowe to the former **Wroughton Airfield hangers** and the Marlborough Downs beyond. The former airfield is now used as archival storage by



the Science Museum. Red kites and buzzards can be spotted in the sky, and deer in the fields.



Walk along the railway path until you cross over the canal at Skew Bridge, then take the path on the right onto the Wilts & Berks Canal heading north.



4 ALTERNATIVE ROUTE: head back under Skew Bridge on the tow-path to see, on the right, a **stone aqueduct** constructed around 1810 to carry the canal and towpath over the River Ray.



5 Skew bridge was built in 1888 to carry the railway track over the Wilts & Berks Canal. Tonnes of stone were needed to stabilise its construction in the marshy, waterlogged land.

This section of the South Swindon Green Trail ends at Skew Bridge. From here you can continue north on the tow-path on the Trail's Canal Section; south towards Wichelstowe, or carry on along the railway path to Mannington.



INCLINE DOWN TO THE CANAL SECTION.

South Swindon Green Trail Code

- Keep to the South Swindon Green Trail or follow appropriate public rights of way.
- Dogs should be kept on a lead.
- Clean up after your dog and use the waste bins.
- Take your litter home.
- Guard against all risk of fire.
- Take special care when crossing roads.
- Cyclists should give way to walkers.
- When walking alone on the quieter sections of the Trail, be aware of your surroundings



For more information and to download other Green Trail section maps scan the QR codes on the Trail's waymarkers or go to www.southswindon-pc.gov.uk