



**Birtley Lift Bridges
Official Opening 28th October 2023
Souvenir Brochure**

Today we celebrate the culmination of five years of work to revive the Wey & Arun Canal at Birtley

Official Opening of Birtley Bridge 2 at 2pm by Mary Creswell, Deputy Lieutenant of Surrey

What is happening today?

We are officially opening two lift bridges on the canal route in Birtley.

What's the background?

The Birtley section is part of the canal route that opened in 1816 and was legally abandoned in 1871. It is remarkably intact. The Canal Trust acquired the section in late 2018 and has invested huge effort in improvements.

Why the bridges?

The two bridges are the biggest piece of the Canal Trust's Birtley programme. In 2018 the canal was severely overgrown, inaccessible to the public and blocked by two causeways. Thanks to the bridges, we have created an attractive circular walk along the canal banks and the Downs Link path, as well as opening the way for boats in the future.

What's the story of the bridges?

Bridge 2, nearer to Bramley, was the site of an original canal swing bridge. After the canal closed, it was replaced by a causeway. We started to build the new bridge in 2022. We uncovered some substantial remains of the original swing bridge. Bridge 1 (further south) was largely built during 2019. There was no original canal bridge here. Volunteers did nearly all the design and construction work on the substructure of both bridges. Volunteers also designed the lifting decks, which were installed in 2023. Although the

bridges will mostly be used by pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders, they have to allow for heavy farm traffic as well as canal maintenance vehicles.

When will boats start to use the canal?

With the blockages removed, the canal will soon be available for canoes, kayaks and paddleboards. The canal is not yet deep enough for larger boats; removing silt is work for the future.

Will the Birtley section be extended?

The Canal Trust is keen to improve the next section to the south (Fanesbridge/Rooks Hill). This will create more attractive canalside walks and recreation opportunities. An application for planning permission is currently with Waverley Borough Council.

How do the bridges work?

Raising and lowering the bridge decks is a manual operation; there is no use of electricity. Heavy concrete beams act as a counterbalance and a hydraulic mechanism means that one person can easily operate the bridges.

How much did it cost and where did the money come from?

The Canal Trust has invested about £400,000 in the Birtley section since 2018. This money has come from our members and supporters, including some significant legacies or donations in memory of a family member.

Some facts and figures

The distance between the two bridges is about 600m. The two bridges have the same dimensions. They are 3.0m wide with a clear span of 4.5m. The steel decks weigh 3.5 tonnes with 1.5 tonnes of lifting frames and 4 tonnes of concrete counterweights.

The Birtley section saw the first major work by the Canal Trust in Surrey. In 1976, 1000 tonnes of clay were brought in to repair a serious breach in the canal banks.



October 2018
Canal Trust volunteers and staff at the site of Bridge 1. Soon there would be a big hole in the ground here for the bridge foundations.



July 2019
At the end of three hot weeks of volunteer work camps, the substructure of Bridge 1 is largely complete. The brick facing was added later in the year.



April 2022
The causeway at the site of the future Bridge 2. After a long delay thanks to Covid and planning conditions, work on site is about to start.



September 2023
After a challenging construction period, the substructure of Bridge 2 is complete and the lifting deck is being installed.

Thank you to those who made this project possible

- * Wey & Arun Canal Trust volunteers and staff who did nearly all the work on the ground, especially our EWG team, our Midweek Working Party and our Northern Working Party
- * Volunteer engineers and designers including Keith Mapp, Robert Nicholson, Nigel Yarwood
- * The Nicholson family in memory of Mary & Robin Nicholson
- * The family of the late Peter Harman
- * All who contributed to fundraising appeals for Birtley Bridges
- * All at Birtley Courtyard - without their cooperation access to the construction sites would have been extremely challenging
- * Beaver Bridges Ltd (Henry Beaver, Andy Robinson & Nick Van De Wydeven)
- * Mike Thorogood from Eadon Consulting Ltd - mechanical specification and check
- * Hewson Consulting Engineers Ltd (Andy Hodgkinson, Joseph Guirguis) - structure check
- * NFS Piling
- * Singh Concrete
- * Alan McLean of Surrey County Council (Asset Planning Team) - technical approval for Bridge 2
- * All at Westland Farm



Casting in the counterbalance beam concrete



The bench made from timbers recovered from the foundation of the 1816 swing bridge

Exploring further from Birtley

From the Birtley section it is just over 2 miles/3km north to the junction of the Wey & Arun Canal with the River Wey at The Gun's Mouth in Shalford. You can easily walk there along the Downs Link path.

In Shalford you can explore Stonebridge Wharf, the Hunt Nature Park created by the Canal Trust, the original canal bridge at Tannery Lane and Gosden Aqueduct. In Bramley you can see Wharf Cottage in Stantons Wharf, off Station Road.

South of Birtley the canal route is close to the Downs Link. You can explore the site of the railway bridge over the canal at Whipleigh and discover the remains of some swing bridges near the canal route.

On our website you can find our walking routes and detailed maps of the canal. You can also purchase our publications including "Visiting the Wey & Arun Canal" and "Guide to Restoration Progress".

The Wey & Arun Canal Trust is a charity dedicated to conserving and improving the canal for the benefit of everyone.