

THE RIVER RAY PARKWAY

Set on the southern edge of Swindon, Coate Water Country Park (1) provides a marvellous open space for the whole family to enjoy. There are many attractions here including: a boating and fishing lake, a putting green, children's play area and nature reserve. At the Ranger Centre you will find a helpful team ready to give you advice and information. From Coate Water Country Park the River Ray Parkway starts from the green finger post near the lakeside and ambles through the spacious grounds to Broome Manor Lane.

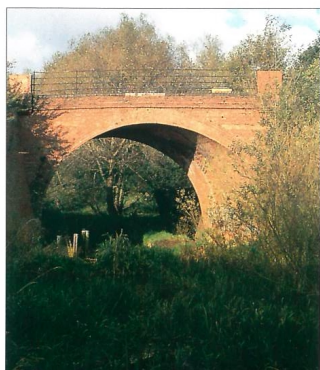
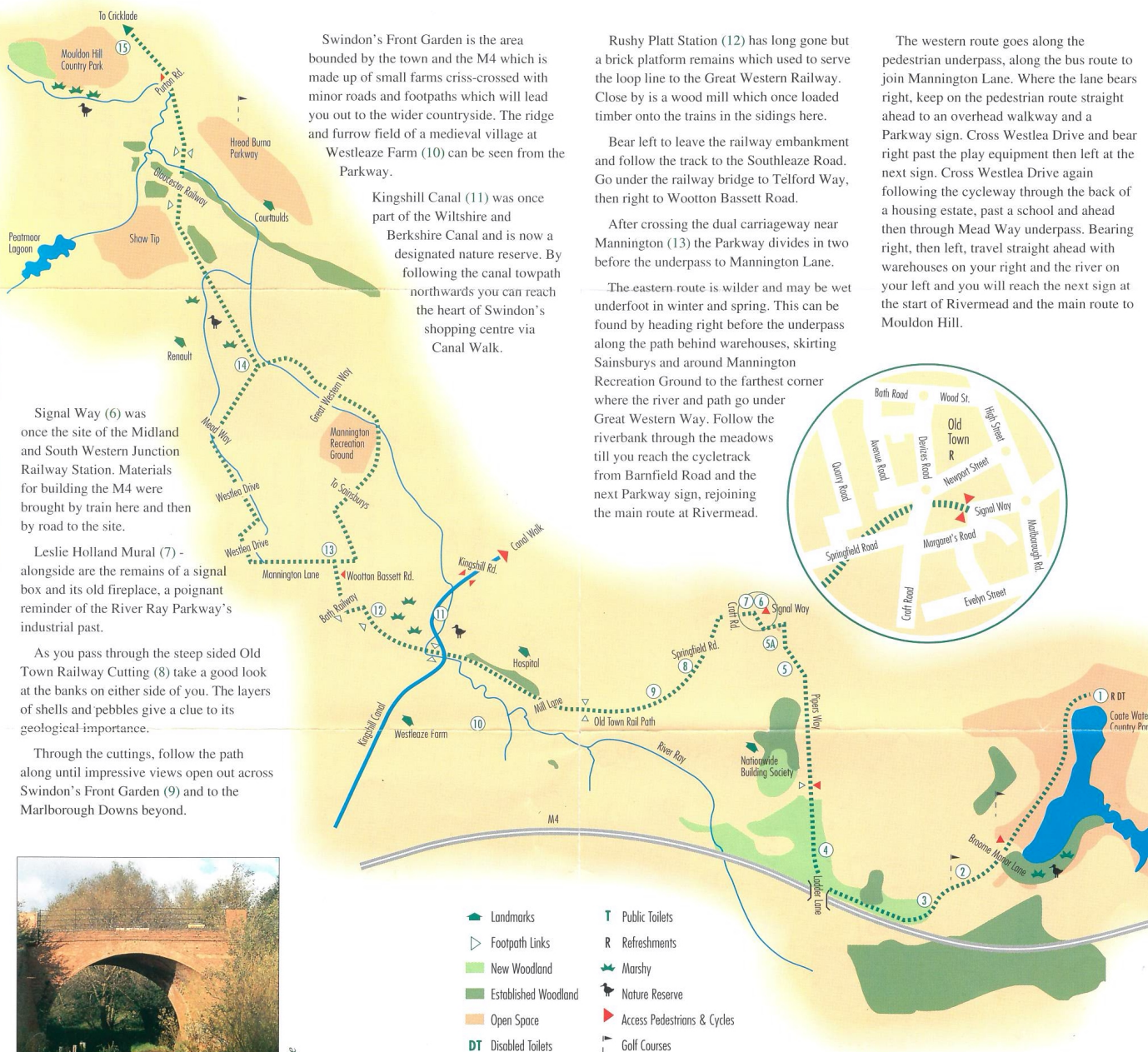


Countryside close at hand

Across the road, skirting the fairway of Broome Manor Golf Course (2), the Parkway reaches its closest point to the M4 motorway providing a keen contrast to the natural surroundings of the route. Look out for the inscribed stone marking Casso's Wood (3), planted by over 800 people at the Plant a Tree for Africa Tree Plant on the 19th January 1992, this new wood will provide a lovely setting for a rest or a picnic in years to come.

Ladder Lane (4) is a rough track once used by the stagecoach between Swindon and Marlborough. Leaving Ladder Lane join the traffic-free old road adjacent to the allotments to reach Pipers Way.

From Pipers Way roundabout (5) the route goes up the grassy bank northwards, over the road bridge, and meanders along a pathway through a small housing estate (5A) bringing you out into Signal Way. Go through the industrial estate to join the Old Town Rail Path.



Kingshill Bridge

Swindon's Front Garden is the area bounded by the town and the M4 which is made up of small farms criss-crossed with minor roads and footpaths which will lead you out to the wider countryside. The ridge and furrow field of a medieval village at Westleaze Farm (10) can be seen from the Parkway.

Kingshill Canal (11) was once part of the Wiltshire and Berkshire Canal and is now a designated nature reserve. By following the canal towpath northwards you can reach the heart of Swindon's shopping centre via Canal Walk.

Signal Way (6) was once the site of the Midland and South Western Junction Railway Station. Materials for building the M4 were brought by train here and then by road to the site.

Leslie Holland Mural (7) - alongside are the remains of a signal box and its old fireplace, a poignant reminder of the River Ray Parkway's industrial past.

As you pass through the steep sided Old Town Railway Cutting (8) take a good look at the banks on either side of you. The layers of shells and pebbles give a clue to its geological importance.

Through the cuttings, follow the path along until impressive views open out across Swindon's Front Garden (9) and to the Marlborough Downs beyond.

Rushy Platt Station (12) has long gone but a brick platform remains which used to serve the loop line to the Great Western Railway. Close by is a wood mill which once loaded timber onto the trains in the sidings here.

Bear left to leave the railway embankment and follow the track to the Southleaze Road. Go under the railway bridge to Telford Way, then right to Wootton Bassett Road.

After crossing the dual carriageway near Mannington (13) the Parkway divides in two before the underpass to Mannington Lane.

The eastern route is wilder and may be wet underfoot in winter and spring. This can be found by heading right before the underpass along the path behind warehouses, skirting Sainsburys and around Mannington Recreation Ground to the farthest corner where the river and path go under Great Western Way. Follow the riverbank through the meadows till you reach the cycletrack from Barnfield Road and the next Parkway sign, rejoining the main route at Rivermead.

The western route goes along the pedestrian underpass, along the bus route to join Mannington Lane. Where the lane bears right, keep on the pedestrian route straight ahead to an overhead walkway and a Parkway sign. Cross Westlea Drive and bear right past the play equipment then left at the next sign. Cross Westlea Drive again following the cycleway through the back of a housing estate, past a school and ahead then through Mead Way underpass. Bearing right, then left, travel straight ahead with warehouses on your right and the river on your left and you will reach the next sign at the start of Rivermead and the main route to Mouldon Hill.



View of Swindon's Front Garden and the Downs

Rivermead (14) is 11 acres of meadow important for flora and fauna. Dunbar Conservation Group have adopted this area and through their important work continue to improve the area for wildlife conservation. A public footpath over the Old Shaw Tip will provide you with a vantage point to look down on Swindon from the north. Keep straight ahead to reach the Purton Road crossing.

Mouldon Hill (15) has been designated as the site of Swindon's third country park and already you can see here Rotary Wood planted in Spring of 1992 by the local clubs of Rotary International and the Great Western Community Forest. The Hill provides magnificent views north over farmland to Cricklade Church spire and southward over Swindon to the Marlborough Downs. Purton Road is the most northerly point of the River Ray Parkway but it is hoped to extend it eventually to Cricklade and the River Thames.

USING THE RIVER RAY PARKWAY

Every effort is being made to improve the River Ray Parkway for all users along its whole length. Please note however that on the following sections the surface is not suitable for family cyclists, wheelchair or pushchair users at the moment:

Between Broome Manor (2) and Pipers Way (4) also Wootton Bassett Road (13) and Rivermead (14) eastern section.

The River Ray Parkway is for everyone to enjoy so please can cyclists and horse riders make way for pedestrians, wheelchair and pushchair users where the Parkway is narrow.