

THE BULLS HEAD AND EARLSWOOD LAKES



Moderate Terrain

The Bulls Head is a historic country pub offering locally sourced food and award-winning cask ales from Daniel Thwaites.

A circular pub walk of just over 4 miles from The Bulls Head in Earlswood, near Solihull and on the border between the West Midlands and Warwickshire. The walking route explores the fascinating local waterways, including a stretch of the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal and a circuit of Earlswood Lakes, with lots of history and wildlife to discover.

**4 miles
Circular
2 hours**

230318



Getting there

The Bulls Head is located on Limekiln Lane, in the northern half of Earlswood village (which is within the West Midlands and about 4 miles south-west of Solihull). The pub has its own large car park.

Approximate post code **B94 6BU**.

If you are coming by public transport, you can adjust the walk to start on Malt House Lane (Waypoint 4), which is just a half-mile walk from The Lakes rail station.

Walk Sections

Go → 1 Start to Bridge 16



Access Notes

1. The walk is relatively flat with only a couple of gentle slopes.
2. It follows a mixture of canal towpaths, lakeside paths and country lanes.
3. Whilst most of the paths are normally firm, some stretches can have some mud and puddles after periods of rain and the path around Windmill Pool is prone to becoming very muddy in winter and after rain (so you will need good boots at these times).
4. About half of the road stretches have pedestrian pavements but do take care of traffic on those stretches without.
5. There are no stiles on route, but you will need to negotiate several kissing gates and a staggered barrier.
6. You will not be sharing the paths with any livestock, but there are lots of birds and wildfowl on the lakes, so take care with dogs.

Leave the pub car park via the vehicle entrance and, taking care of traffic, turn right along the lane. At the T-junction, turn right to join the pavement leading you along Salter Street. After around 300 metres, the pavement crosses the canal, with the beautiful red brick tower of St Patrick's Church visible ahead. Immediately after crossing the canal, turn left, crossing over the road and passing through the staggered barrier to join the canal

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towpath. Walk ahead along the towpath, with the canal running on your left.

The Stratford-upon-Avon Canal runs for 25 miles from Kings Norton Junction in Birmingham's suburbia (where it joins the Worcester and Birmingham Canal) to Stratford-upon-Avon (where it joins the River Avon). About halfway along at Kingswood, there is a junction with the Grand Union Canal. The canal was built between 1793 and 1816. As on most canals, the principal traffic was coal. Some of this went on from Stratford down the River Avon to Evesham, whilst some went across Clopton Bridge and along the Stratford and Moreton tramway, which opened in 1828.

This pretty stretch of the canal leads you past Lady Lane Wharf, where you will see plenty of colourful canal boats. You will see a side arm to the canal on your left, now used for wharf moorings. This was the original feeder arm, built to allow a water supply to feed the canal. It links to Earlswood Lakes, which we will be visiting shortly. Immediately after the buildings of Lady Lane Wharf, you will see Bridge 16 ahead, a pretty arched road bridge across the canal.

1 → 2 Bridge 16 to Earlswood Lakes



At this point we leave the canal, so fork right up the slope to reach a junction with Lady Lane. Taking care of traffic, turn left to cross the canal bridge and then continue ahead along Lady Lane. Continue for about 700 metres, to reach the T-junction at the end of Lady Lane. Taking extra care of traffic at this junction, turn left along Valley Road for just 80 metres and then fork right onto the causeway road. Turn immediately right through the kissing gate to enter the site of Earlswood Lakes.

2 → 3 Earlswood Lakes to Terry's Pool



There are a couple of benches here, the perfect spot to pause

and understand the history of this site. Earlswood Lakes is actually made up of three individual 22-acre reservoirs; Terry's Pool, Windmill Pool and Engine Pool. The lake immediately on your left is Engine Pool. Unlike many reservoirs, Earlswood Lakes were not constructed to supply drinking water, but to supply water to the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal. Increased boat traffic serving the industries of Birmingham and the Black Country meant that a constant water supply was needed to retain canal water levels. The reservoirs were built in the 1820s, taking around 5 years to construct, and the labour force included prisoners of war from the Napoleonic wars. The lakes themselves are fed by tributaries to the River Blythe, and in turn they outfall into the same river.

On your right you will see a small water channel and, beyond it, an old red brick building and tower. The channel is the feeder arm that carries the water from the lakes, flowing into the canal at Lady Lane Wharf. The brick building is the Old Engine House. This once housed a beam engine, used to pump the water from the lakes into the canal. The feeder was navigable for coal boats to reach the engine house. The lakes still supply the canal, but also provide leisure facilities (including sailing, fishing and walking) and act as a nature reserve for wildlife. More about that in a moment...

Walk ahead to follow the lakeside path, with the feeder channel on your right and Engine Pool on your left. This northern bank of the lakes (along with part of the causeway) forms the county boundary between Warwickshire and the West Midlands. You will pass several fishing platforms within the lake. All three lakes are stocked with fish (including carp, perch, bream, roach and pike) and are popular with fisherman from the local area and further afield. Fishing matches take place regularly at weekends.

Continue until you reach a path junction with a pair of benches. Do NOT take the bridge and embankment path ahead, instead turn right to continue on the lakeside path, now with the second lake, Terry's Pool on your left.

3 → 4 Terry's Pool to Malt House Lane



Follow the path ahead with Terry's Pool on your left and the water channel on your right. Further along, you will come to a junction in the path with a choice of two footbridges. Take the left-hand one, still with the lake on your left and water channel on your right.

Terry's Pool is managed as a nature reserve and the whole area has a rich variety of plant and animal life. The lake is home to plenty of waterfowl, birds and mammals. Look out for ducks, geese and swans plus diving birds such as great crested grebes, coots, cormorants and kingfishers. More recently otters have been spotted frequenting the lakes. You may see frogs and toads making their way between the ditches and the lakes.

Beyond the water channel on your right, you will see an area of woodland called Clowes Wood and New Fallings Coppice. These ancient woodlands support a range of birds and bats and you will be able to see the bat boxes and bird boxes within the trees. 49 species of birds breed in the woodlands, including woodpeckers, tawny owls, willow tits and wood warblers. Keep your eyes peeled for muntjac deer, stoats and weasels that also frequent the area.

Stay on this main lakeside path, swinging steadily left and ignoring any side paths on your right. Further along, you will come to a crossroads of paths, with the embankment bridge across the lakes to your left. Go straight ahead here to continue now with the first lake, Engine Pool, on your left once again. At the end of the Engine Pool path, you will emerge via a kissing gate to reach a junction with Malt House Lane.



Malt House Lane to The Causeway



Cross over the road with care and go straight ahead through the next kissing gate to join the path alongside the third lake, Windmill Pool. Keep ahead on this path, with the lake on your left. You will come to a gate ahead. Pass through this to pass the Earlswood Lake Sailing Club on your right and its pontoon on your left.

Today's sailing club is just a tiny recreational facility compared to the attractions of the past. Being so near to Birmingham, the lakes became a hive of recreational activity from the early 1900s. The Lakes rail station was built to bring tourists to the area and the lakes were known as 'the Scarborough of the Midlands'. Visitors enjoyed boat trips, fishing and walking.

Pass through the next wooden gate ahead to continue on the lakeside path. (NOTE: This next stretch is prone to being particularly muddy at times, but persevere if you can, as it doesn't last for long). At the southern end of Windmill Pool, cross the metal bridge over the stream and ignore the kissing gate on your right, instead bear left to continue on the lakeside path (now a firmer surface). Cross the bridge over the overflow, but do NOT take the brick bridge ahead, instead turn left to continue around the lakeside. At the end of the Earlswood Lakes site, you will emerge via a kissing gate onto the causeway road.



The Causeway to End

Turn right along the causeway road and then join the right-hand pavement leading you ahead along Valley Road. As you approach the T-junction ahead, swap to the left-hand pavement and then turn left to follow the pavement alongside the B4102, Shutt Lane. Continue along the pavement of Shutt Lane,



passing between several houses, passing the boundary sign for Solihull and then bending right.

On this right-hand bend, the left-hand pavement ends so carefully swap to the right-hand pavement. Continue ahead until the lane bends left then, taking care of traffic, turn right into Salters Street. This will lead you back to The Bulls Head on your left for some well-earned hospitality.

Disclaimer

This walking route was walked and checked at the time of writing. We have taken care to make sure all our walks are safe for walkers of a reasonable level of experience and fitness. However, like all outdoor activities, walking carries a degree of risk and we accept no responsibility for any loss or damage to personal effects, personal accident, injury or public liability whilst following this walk. We cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies that result from changes to the routes that occur over time. Please let us know of any changes to the routes so that we can correct the information.

Walking Safety

For your safety and comfort we recommend that you take the following with you on your walk: bottled water, snacks, a waterproof jacket, waterproof/sturdy boots, a woolly hat and fleece (in winter and cold weather), a fully-charged mobile phone, a whistle, a compass and an Ordnance Survey map of the area. Check the weather forecast before you leave, carry appropriate clothing and do not set out in fog or mist as these conditions can seriously affect your ability to navigate the route. Take particular care on cliff/mountain paths where steep drops can present a particular hazard. Some routes include sections along roads – take care to avoid any traffic at these points. Around farmland take care with children and dogs, particularly around machinery and livestock. If you are walking on the coast make sure you check the tide times before you set out.

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