

# Folkestone & Hythe Birds

## Site guide: Botolph's Bridge and surrounding area

### Location

Located about 4 miles west of Hythe the Botolph's Bridge road runs northwards from the A259 until it reaches the pub of the same name (grid ref: TR 121334). It is possible to park just before the point where the road meets the railway or a little further on just after the road crosses the canal cutting. The pub car park is for patrons only but it is also possible to park, with care, just after taking a right turn back over the canal cutting (but please do not block access to the field).

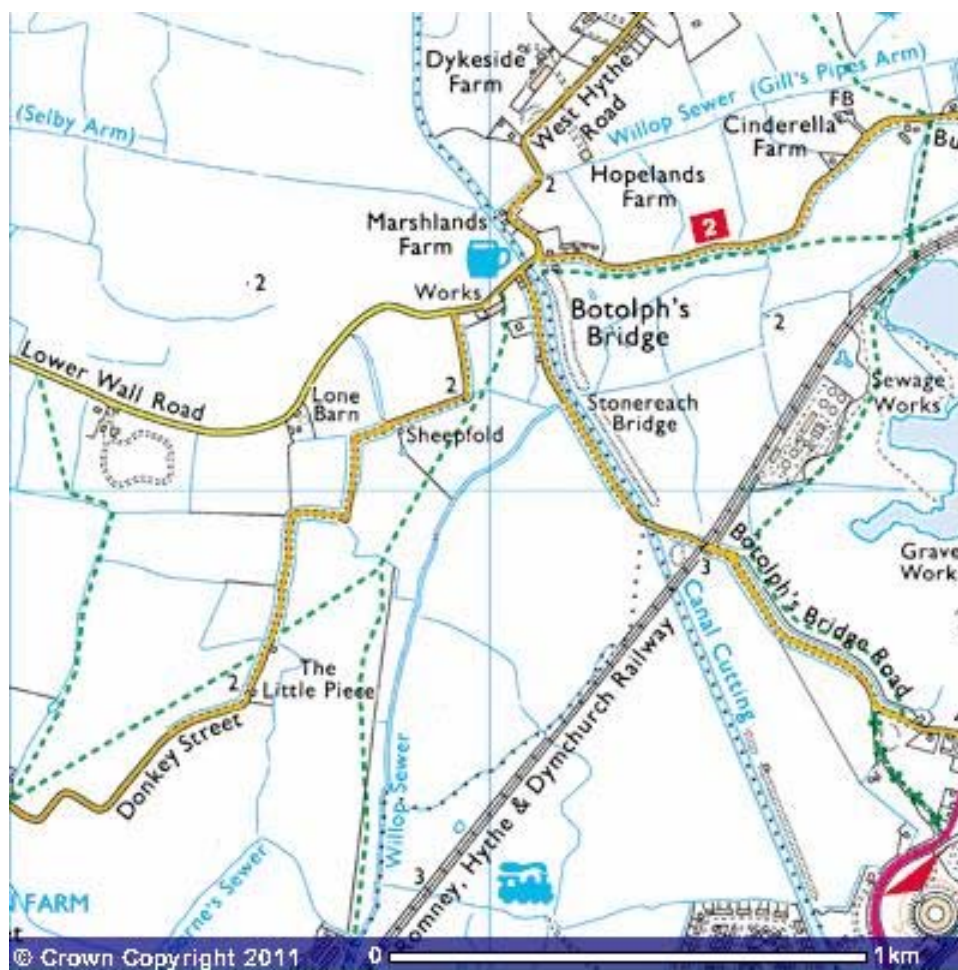


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### Access

The canal cutting (or 'new cut' as it is also known) can be viewed from the road bridges and there are paths (though it appears that these have not been formally designated as public footpaths) along its entire length, running along the western side between the sea and the first road bridge, the eastern side between this bridge and the pub, and along the western side between the pub and the dam at West Hythe (see site guide).

The surrounding fields are worth exploring, either by taking the footpath from the pub along the Willlop Sewer to the Willlop sewage works, or even as far to the Willlop Outfall (see site guide), or by car along Donkey Street to view from just beyond The Little Piece. The Lower Wall Road provides further vantage points and another footpath that crosses to Donkey Street. The footpath network would also permit the northern part of Nickoll's Quarry (see site guide) to be combined in a circular route.

Disabled access is probably restricted to viewing from the road, due to stiles etc., but many of the area's birds tend to be viewable in this way. Access by public transport would involve using the main bus route between Hythe and Dymchurch, and there is a bus stop just beyond the sluice where the canal cutting reaches the sea.



Looking north along the Canal Cutting from the road bridge towards the pub



Looking south along from the road bridge towards the sea, with Grey Heron

## Facilities

The Botolph's Bridge pub serves food and real ale whilst the garage on the A259 by the entrance to Nickoll's Quarry provides more basic fare.

## Birds

During the current BTO Atlas survey period the 1km square containing Botolph's Bridge (TR1233, at the top right of the above map) has had the highest number of both wintering species (92) and breeding species (57 with a status of at least 'possible') of all local squares.

During the winter months the surrounding fields support a flock of Mute Swans and regular checking has occasionally produced Bewick's Swan (most recently in December 2010) and Whooper Swan (once). These fields, particularly those south of The Little Piece, can also attract geese, which in December 2010 included a Barnacle Goose with a flock of 180 White-fronted Geese. Previous winters have produced Tundra Bean Geese (at least 3 times), though Greylag, Canada, and Dark-bellied Brent are more frequent. Pale-bellied Brent, Egyptian and Snow Geese have also occurred.

The Canal Cutting attracts a variety of duck, particularly in cold weather when it has the advantage of usually remaining free from ice. Amongst the plentiful Mallard may be a few Wigeon, Teal and Gadwall though the former two species are more numerous along the Willop Sewer. Shoveler, Pochard and Tufted Duck are less frequent, though the latter has bred here. Recent winters have seen a good run of Goosander sightings – including a flock of 12 – and even a Smew.

Little Grebes can be easily seen on the Canal Cutting and Cormorants sometimes roost in good numbers to the north of the pub.

Grey Herons will be found all year round as they nest at nearby Lympe Wood and Little Egrets are regularly seen along the Canal Cutting, particularly in autumn and winter, though they too may one day stay to breed. In each of the last two winters the area has hosted a Great White Egret, and a Night Heron visited in the 2009/10 winter.

Marsh Harriers seem to be appearing with increasing frequency, as do Buzzards, but Hen Harriers remain a scarce winter visitor, at which time a Peregrine or Merlin may be sometimes be found, whilst in summer Hobby is likely.

The Canal Cutting regularly holds a wintering Green Sandpiper or two, whilst Redshank is relatively numerous, and on passage Wood Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, and Greenshank have occurred, with occasional winter records of the latter two. The field at the southern end of the canal cutting has in recent winters held decent numbers of Snipe, including Jack Snipe on occasion, and sometimes Woodcock, whilst the surrounding fields will have Lapwing and maybe Golden Plover and Curlew, or even Ruff. There is also a record of Common Crane (in 2003).

Little Owls can often be found, generally to the north-east of the pub, and Barn Owls have been seen hunting alongside the Canal Cutting. Kingfishers are frequent as, in summer, are Cuckoos.

Passerine interest is more limited but Sky Lark, Meadow Pipit, Yellow Wagtail, Cetti's Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Reed Warbler, Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat, Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting and Corn Bunting have a breeding status recorded, whilst winter brings Grey Wagtail, Fieldfare, Redwing and quite rarely these days Tree Sparrow. On passage Whinchat and Wheatear are frequent and Redstart and Ring Ouzel have occurred. Raven has also been seen flying over.

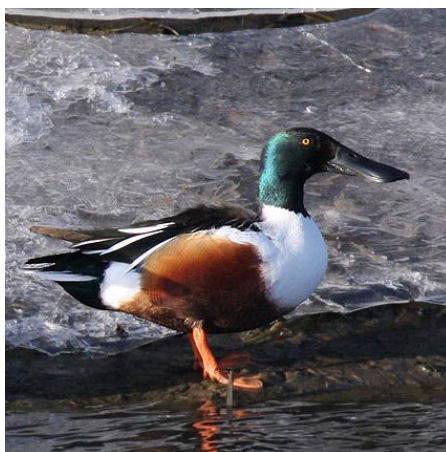
**Regular (in season):** Mute Swan, Wigeon, Teal, Gadwall, Tufted Duck, Little Grebe, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Coot, Golden Plover, Lapwing, Green Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Redshank, Snipe, Curlew, Mediterranean Gull, Cuckoo, Little Owl, Kingfisher, Green Woodpecker, Sky Lark, Meadow Pipit, Yellow Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, Whinchat, Wheatear, Fieldfare, Redwing, Cetti's, Sedge and Reed Warblers, Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat, Yellowhammer and Reed Bunting

**Possible (in season):** Greylag Goose, Canada Goose, Brent Goose, Pochard, Goosander, Little Egret, Marsh Harrier, Hen Harrier, Buzzard, Peregrine, Merlin, Hobby, Water Rail, Greenshank, Jack Snipe, Woodcock, Barn Owl, Tree Sparrow and Corn Bunting

**Rarities:** Bewick's Swan, Whooper Swan, Tundra Bean Goose, White-fronted Goose, Snow Goose, Barnacle Goose, Pale-bellied Brent Goose, Egyptian Goose, Smew, Great White Egret, Night Heron, Crane, Wood Sandpiper, Ruff and Raven



Bewick's Swan (Brian Harper)



Shoveler (Brian Harper)



Little Egret (Brian Harper)





Great White Egret (Brian Harper)



Green Sandpiper (Brian Harper)



Barn Owl (Brian Harper)



Kingfisher (Brian Harper)



Yellow Wagtail (Brian Harper)



Sedge Warbler (Brian Harper)