

Blackwater Canoe Trail

Finding freedom in Northern Ireland on the



The Point, Coalisland & Ulster Canals

The River Blackwater, dividing counties Tyrone and Armagh, has been travelled for thousands of years as a highway. Early Celtic settlers, Viking raiders and English invaders all used it to their advantage. In the early 18th century plans were made to construct the first modern inland waterway system in Ireland. The Blackwater with the Upper Bann, was incorporated into the scheme and the two planned artificial channels became the Newry Canal and the Coalisland Canal (known at the time as the Tyrone Navigation). The 'Coalisland' Canal was opened in 1787 to exploit the coal fields of Tyrone and barges transported coal to Lough Neagh and down the Newry Canal (opened in 1742) to Newry and Dublin. On entering the River Blackwater from the Canal at 'The Point', barges would sail down the river for about three miles to Lough Neagh at Maghera, where they navigated the mouth of the River by Derrywarragh Peninsula, causing endless delays through silting, flooding and blockages. In 1802 work started under the direction of Daniel Monks to excavate a short channel from the eastern bank of the Blackwater River straight to the lough shore through the lower section of Derrywarragh Peninsula thus turning it into what is now Derrywarragh Island. This famous cut, finished in 1803, allowed vessels to avoid the sand bars at the river's mouth. A pontoon bridge was soon erected and was later replaced by a fixed bridge to allow access onto Derrywarragh Island. In 1888, the Lagan Navigation Company took over the ownership of both the Tyrone Navigation and the Ulster Canal. The former, although never a very profitable enterprise as a trading waterway, gave rise to the unique town of Coalisland with its concentration of industries. In 1946 the last commercial vessel left the town and the

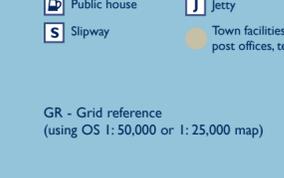
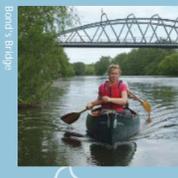


Old ferry crossing at Maghera

canal steadily deteriorated to a mere drainage ditch. The latter, since its opening in 1841, had not been a success. Stretching from Charlemont on the Blackwater to Wattle Bridge on the River Finn, it was nearly 46 miles long. Lack of local support, poor maintenance and serious construction flaws all contributed to its demise in 1931, one of the major construction flaws being that the locks were too narrow for the lighters (or barges). In their own way the Blackwater, Coalisland and Ulster canals have played important roles in the development of the local regions and their potential as a network for pleasure boating is being recognised. Landscaping of the derelict Coalisland Basin and improved towpath access has rekindled the age-old tradition of walking, "down the line". The vibrant campaign to restore the entire canal as a leisure and tourist amenity is underway and, if successful, will be a major contribution to boating and canoeing in Ireland. On completion, it will be possible to paddle or sail from Limerick to Coleraine!



NORTHERN IRELAND



Blackwater as it passes Maghera cut



Mastering the paddle



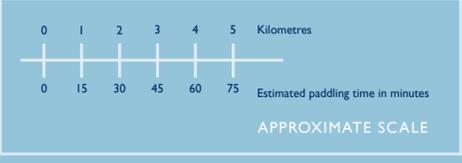
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- KEY**
- Rough Camping
 - Shop
 - Fresh water
 - Telephone
 - Public house
 - Slipway
 - Cafe/restaurant
 - Toilets
 - Parking
 - Historical building/ruins
 - Jetty
 - Town facilities include shops, banks, post offices, telephones and cafes.

GR - Grid reference (using OS 1:50,000 or 1:25,000 map)

With the exception of Maydown Bridge all sites cater for disabled access to varying degrees. For more details and pictures please visit nicanoeing.com and click on 'canoe trails'.



MAPS OF THE AREA: ARMAGH: 1:50,000 Sheet 19 Useful to carry but not essential unless going onto Lough Neagh.

- Earning a Welcome**
- 1 Be friendly and polite to local residents.
 - 2 Drive slowly with care and consideration and park sensibly without causing obstruction.
 - 3 Be as quiet as possible.
 - 4 Get changed discreetly out of public view.
 - 5 Get permission before going on to private property.
 - 6 Avoid wildlife disturbance and environmental damage - only go ashore at recognised landing places.
 - 7 Be considerate to other water users.
 - 8 'Leave no trace' of your visit and take all litter home.

- Have respect for anglers**
- 1 Keep well clear of anglers fishing from banks and boats.
 - 2 Keep clear of shallow gravel areas of rivers where salmon and trout may spawn - especially during November, December and January.



Camping Facilities

Overnight camping
Overnight camping is permitted on Coney Island (a small fee is charged). To camp on Coney Island please telephone: Kinnego Marina +44 (0)28 3832 7573. Coney Island Warden : 0788 7827230.

Official camping
Kinnego Marina is situated on the south shore of Lough Neagh and is approximately 14km from Maghera by canoe (25 mins by car). Please call +44 (0)28 3892 7573 for further information.

Site	Parking	Toilets	Showers	Water	Facilities near by
Coney Island	•	•	•	•	Maghera village
Kinnego Marina	•	•	•	•	Maghera village

CANOE TOURS

Kinnego Marina	+44 (0)28 3832 7573	(guided tours, overnight trips, instruction and family trips)
Craigavon Watersports Centre	+44 (0)28 3834 2669	(guided tours, canoe hire*, overnight trips, instruction and family trips). The Watersports Centre particularly welcomes individuals and groups with disabilities.
Bluelough	+44 (0)28 4377 0715	(camp/canoe hire*/guided tours/instruction and accommodation)
Tollymore Mountain Centre	+44 (0)28 4372 2158	(guided tours/instruction)

*For insurance purposes these companies will only allow you to hire their boats if you have a minimum of a BCU Level 2 coach award (or equivalent) for the craft that you wish to use, otherwise you will need to hire a qualified instructor.
Bluelough offer a 50% discount to all CANI, ICU, BCU, SCA and WCA members!



This leaflet has been developed by CANI and CAAN.

CANI
The Canoe Association of Northern Ireland is the governing body for canoeing in Northern Ireland.
Email: office@cani.org.uk
Website: www.cani.org.uk

The Countryside Access and Activities Network for Northern Ireland
The Countryside Access and Activities Network is responsible for the strategic development and management of countryside recreation across Northern Ireland.
Email: info@countrysiderecreation.com
Website: www.countrysiderecreation.com

Both CANI and CAAN endorse the principles of 'Leave no Trace' of the 'Country Code'.

This project has received financial support from:

- Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
- Environment & Heritage Service
- Department of the Environment
- CRAIGAVON Watersports Centre
- THE NATIONAL TRUST
- Armagh City and District Council
- rdc

This project has also been supported by:

ACCESS MAP: based upon 2006 Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland 1:50,000 map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright 2006. Permit no 60010.