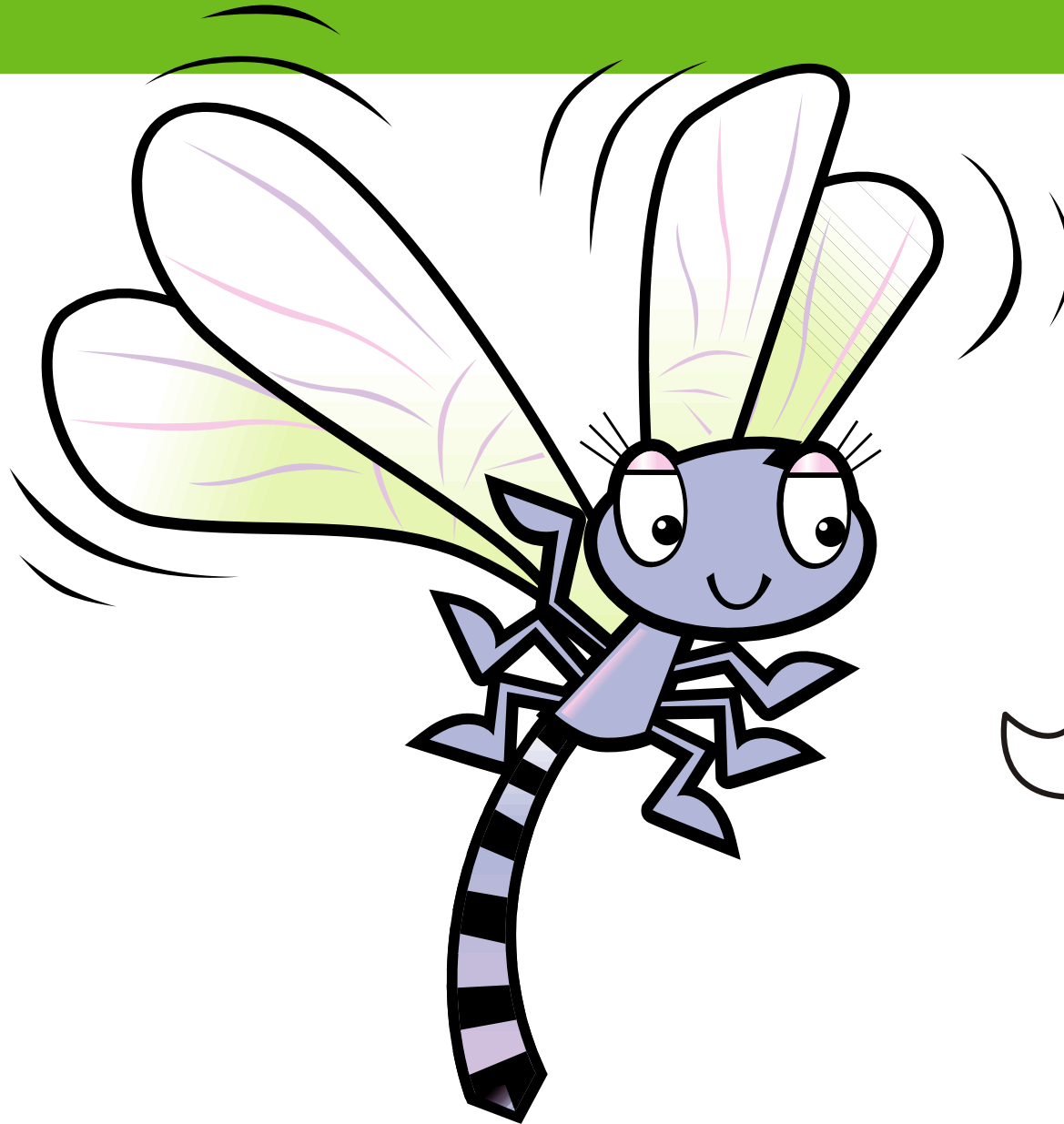


Information pack

Kennet and Avon Canal



Did you know you can travel across the South of England from London to Bristol by river and canal? Find out more...

www.wow4water.net



The flight of 16 locks at Caen Hill near Devizes was the last section of the canal to be completed in 1810

An amazing idea

The 140 km (87 mile) Kennet and Avon Canal links the River Thames at Reading to the River Avon near Bath. The idea of a broad-beamed (4.25m / 14 ft wide) canal running across Southern England from coast to coast, linking the ports of London and Bristol, was considered mind blowing when it was first discussed in 1788 at a meeting of landowners.

When was the Kennet and Avon Canal built?

The canal was actually built as three separate navigations:

- The **Kennet Navigation**, opened in 1723, made the River Kennet navigable from Reading to Newbury by building 18 km (11 miles) of artificial channels and 21 locks.
- The **River Avon** was made navigable from Bristol to Bath in 1727.
- A 92 km (57 mile) '**Western Canal**' linking these two navigations was promoted by an Act of Parliament in 1794. Building started that year, but the K&A canal wasn't finally completed until 1810.



Sacks of wheat being loaded
at Devizes Wharf in c.1910.

The rise and fall of the K&A

The canal was at its peak during the first half of the 19th century. Coal from the Somerset coalfield and Bath stone were carried to growing towns such as Bradford-on-Avon and Devizes, while grain and cheese were shipped out from numerous farming communities to the urban markets of Bristol, Newbury and London.

Disaster struck when the Great Western Railway opened in 1841 and most of the through traffic between London and Bristol was lost. When the canal was taken over by the railway company in 1852 traffic fell, discouraged by higher tolls. More traffic was lost to lorries from the 1920s. One stretch was closed in the 1950s and most was disused.

A new era of restoration

In 1956 the Kennet and Avon Association (now the Trust) successfully campaigned against plans to abandon the canal. The Trust initiated numerous renovation projects, and in 1990 the newly restored canal was officially re-opened by Her Majesty the Queen. More recently, canal-side facilities and the water supply have been greatly improved.



The Dundas Aqueduct carries boats on the Kennet and Avon Canal over the River Avon.

Who was responsible for building the canal?

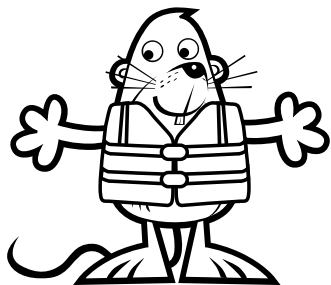
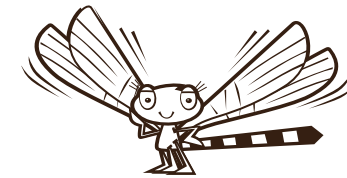
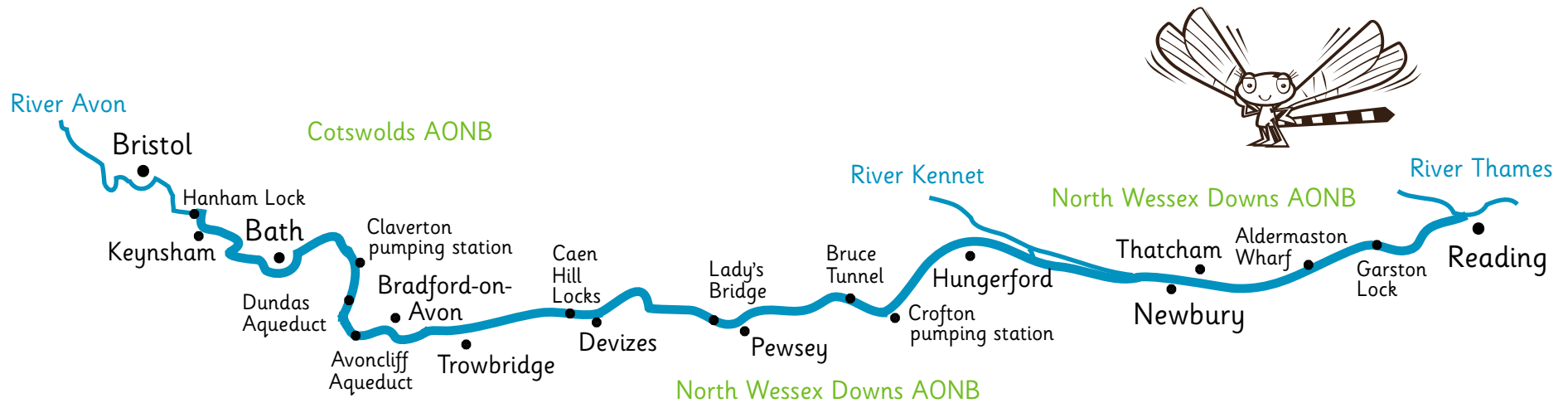
In 1790, [John Rennie](#) was commissioned to survey the proposed route of the canal. Subsequently he was appointed engineer and architect, and was responsible for the fine classical-style architecture of many of the bridges, tunnels, aqueducts and buildings that survive today.

Where can I visit some fantastic features?

- **Claverton Pumping Station** - a water-wheel powered pumping station near Bath, pumps water up from the River Avon.
- **Dundas Aqueduct** - a classically-designed structure in Bath stone carries the canal across the River Avon.
- **Caen Hill Locks** - a dramatic flight of 16 locks near Devizes.
- **Lady's Bridge** - a classical-style bridge near Pewsey.
- **Crofton Pumping Station** - an original steam-powered beam engine.

The canal also supports a broad range of wildlife as it passes through the North Wessex Downs & Cotswolds Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Map of the Kennet and Avon Canal



When visiting canals, always remember to **Stay Away From the Edge**

Key:



Kennet and Avon Canal

AONB

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

N



10km / 6 miles