



BRIMSCOMBE PORT

WELCOME

Welcome to 'Brimscombe Interactive'. This is an interactive PDF which you can navigate your way around just like a normal web site, opening new windows as you go.

You can move around Brimscombe Port past and present by using the menu buttons at the top and the back/next buttons at the bottom.

This web resource accompanies a printed leaflet about the port that is available at local tourist information centres. Both are part of a project made possible by a grant from the People's Millions Lottery Fund which has also seen the restoration of the port wall.

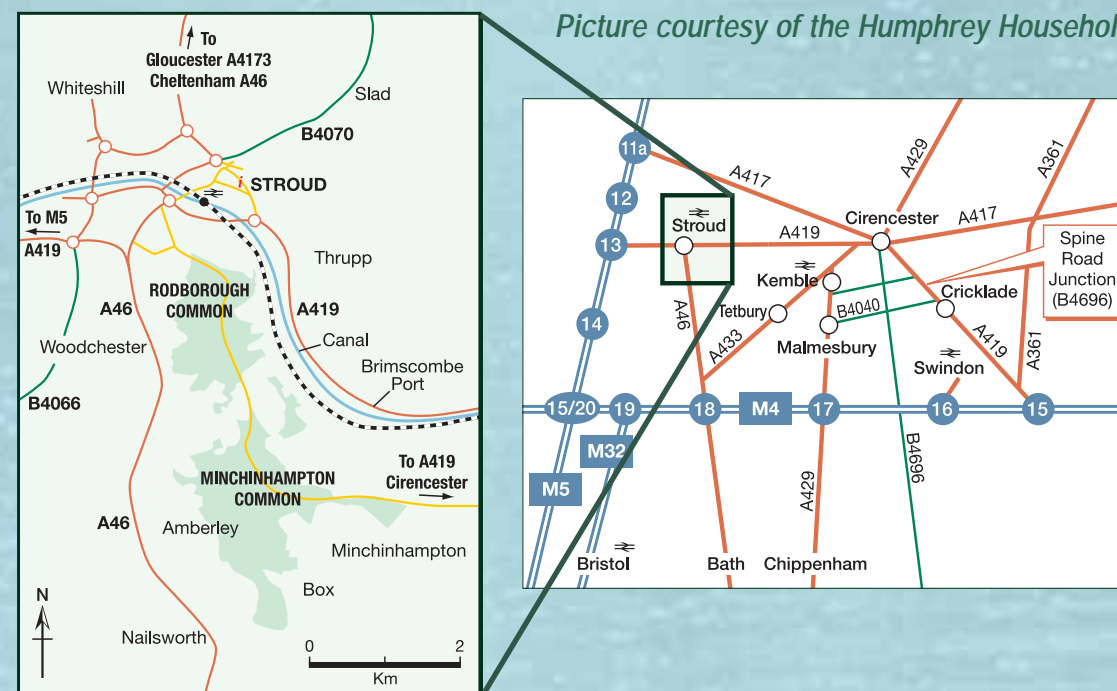
Brimscombe Port was a large and unique inland port on the floor of the Golden Valley, two miles east of Stroud and six miles from the River Severn. The site lies between the bridge at the bottom of Brimscombe Hill at its western end, and Bourne Bridge and Mill at its eastern end.



There is no doubt that the port was **the** hub of the Cotswold Canals when they were at their busiest; it was the scene of intense activity.

The port was the centre for the shipment of cargoes heading both east and west along the canal. Huge quantities of goods – coal in particular – were unloaded and stored here. The port had a 'Great Wharf' which housed a large warehouse and the offices of the Thames & Severn Canal Company.

Picture courtesy of the Humphrey Household



Click here for a larger version of the maps

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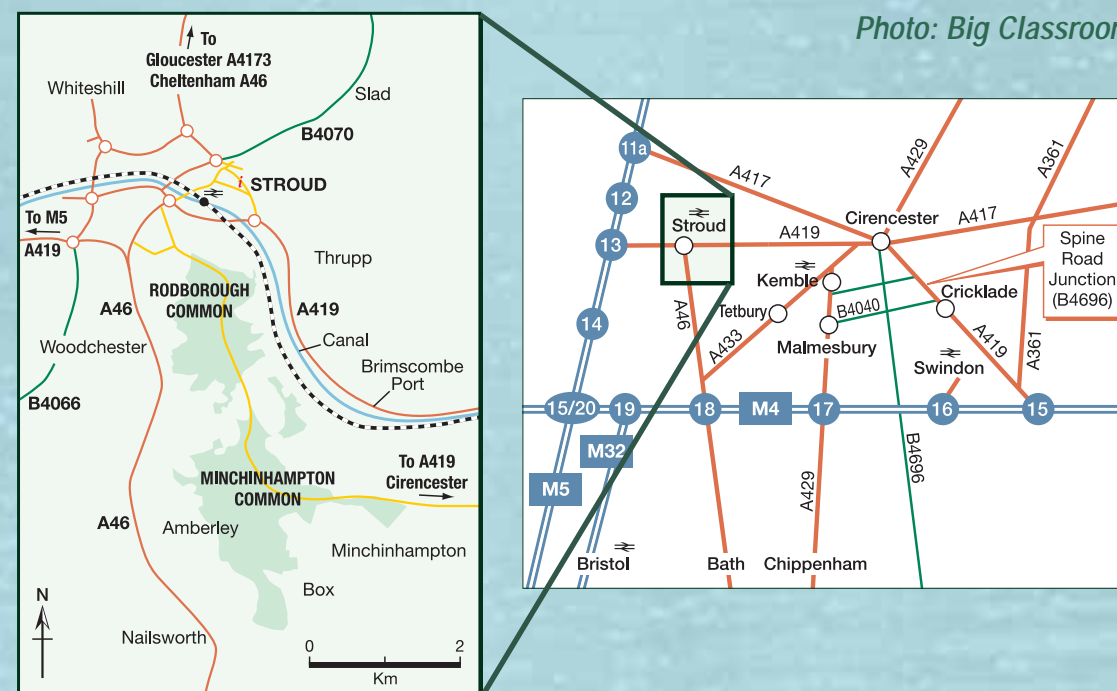
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Photo: Big Classroom



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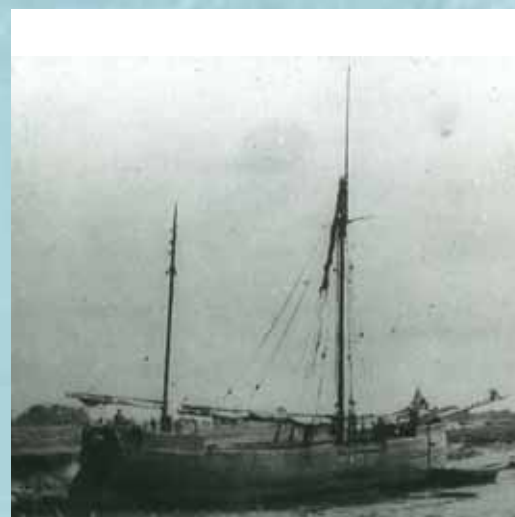
A BRIEF HISTORY

The port was built at the same time as the Thames & Severn Canal and began business in 1789. The Thames & Severn Canal Company employed 17 clerks, apprentices, labourers, craftsmen and wharfmen on site.

Brimscombe Port was created to provide a place where goods could be transferred between the two types of boats that used the Cotswold Canals – the Severn Trows and the Thames Barges.

The Severn Trows navigated the canal between the port and the River Severn to the west whilst at Stroud the Thames & Severn Canal became the Stroudwater Navigation.

The stretch of canal to the west of the port had locks of a wider gauge than those to the east so that they could accommodate



*The top two pictures show Severn Trows while a working Barge is featured below
All photos courtesy of Mike Mills from the Stanley Gardiner, Padin Mills Collection*



the wider Trows. To the east of the port, the locks were narrower to hold the longer, slimmer Thames Barges.

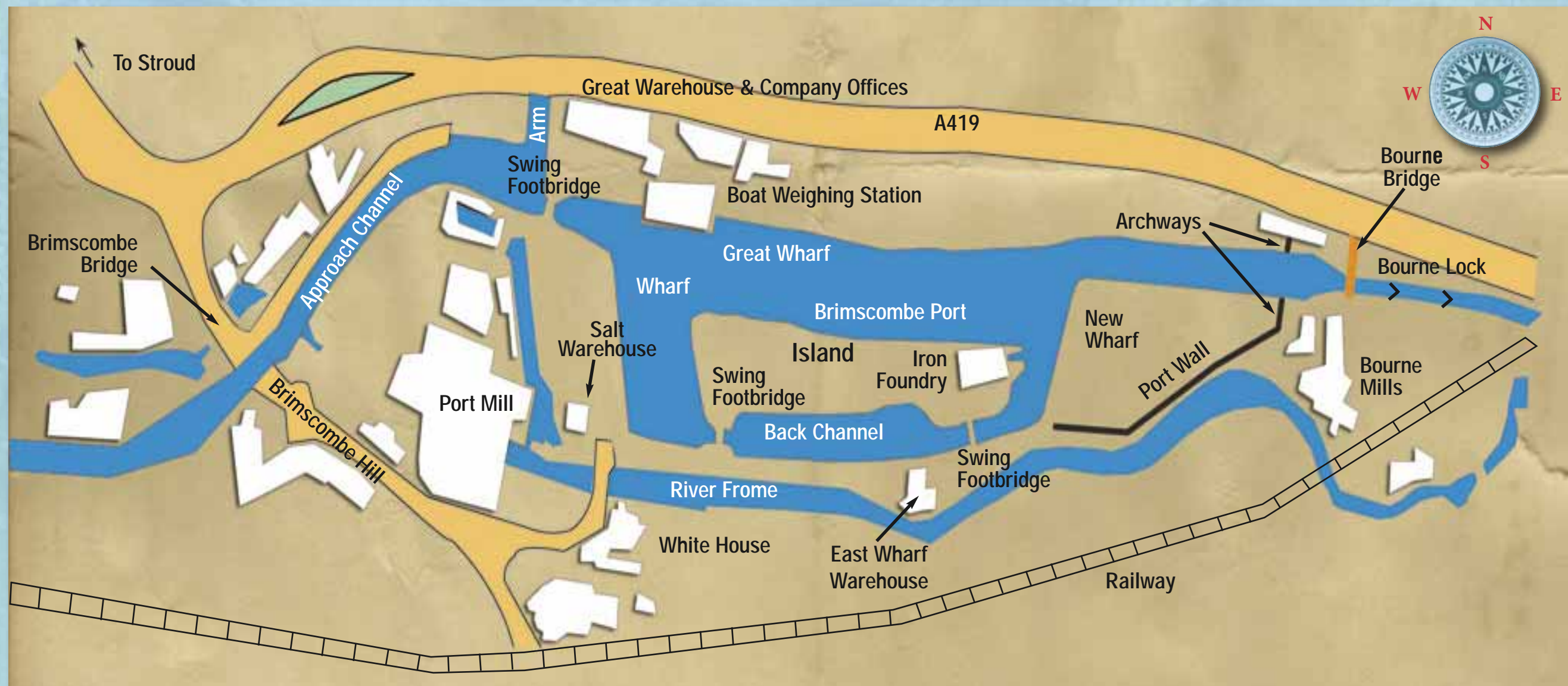
Effectively, Brimscombe Port was a 'terminus' for the Trows; they could never navigate the narrower course to the east.

The port had every facility essential for the transfer of goods – cranes, wharves and warehouses. But it also had two additional features – an island storage site and a weighing machine. Both were measures to improve the port's business efficiency, the former by protecting valuable stores of coal from theft and the latter by ensuring the correct fees were paid for the amount of goods carried.



BRIMSCOMBE PORT

THE PORT'S HISTORY: AN OVERVIEW



Brimscombe Port highlighting the location of historic buildings in the 18th and 19th centuries

From this page you can find out more about the original layout of Brimscombe Port. Click on the numbers to go to pages with detailed information about the history of the port, its buildings and the local area. As you move through the site, west to east from Brimscombe Bridge to Bourne Bridge, you can take a trip through time to the days when the Port was the hub of the Cotswold Canals in their heyday.

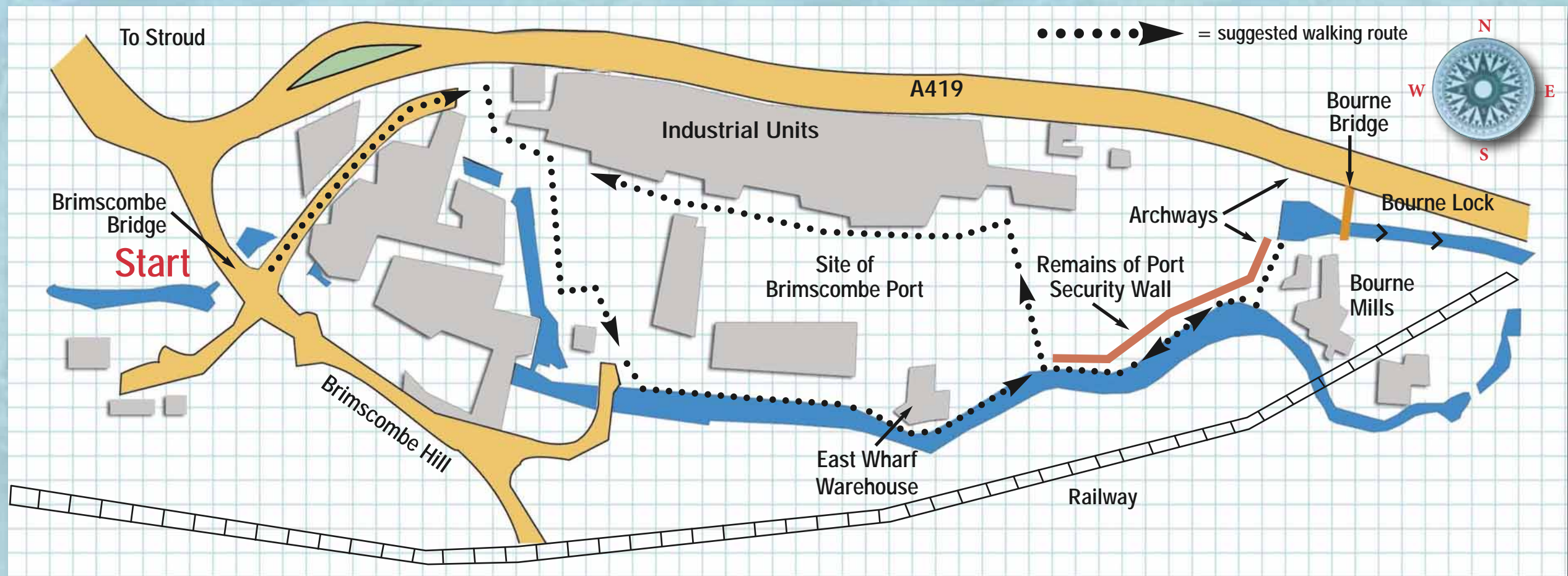
[BACK](#)

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BRIMSCOMBE PORT

EXPLORING THE PORT TODAY



Brimscombe Port in the 21st century: A guided walk around the historic site



Photo: Big Classroom

Take a stroll around today's Brimscombe Port site and you can still catch glimpses of its rich industrial heritage. The interactive map above provides you with details of a walk which will help you learn more about this fascinating area and the vital role it played in the transport 'superhighway' of the 18th and 19th centuries. Just click on the buttons to visit the appropriate pages.



Photo courtesy of Mike Mills from the Stanley Gardiner, Padin Mills Collection



BRIMSCOMBE PORT

EXPLORING THE PORT TODAY 1-2

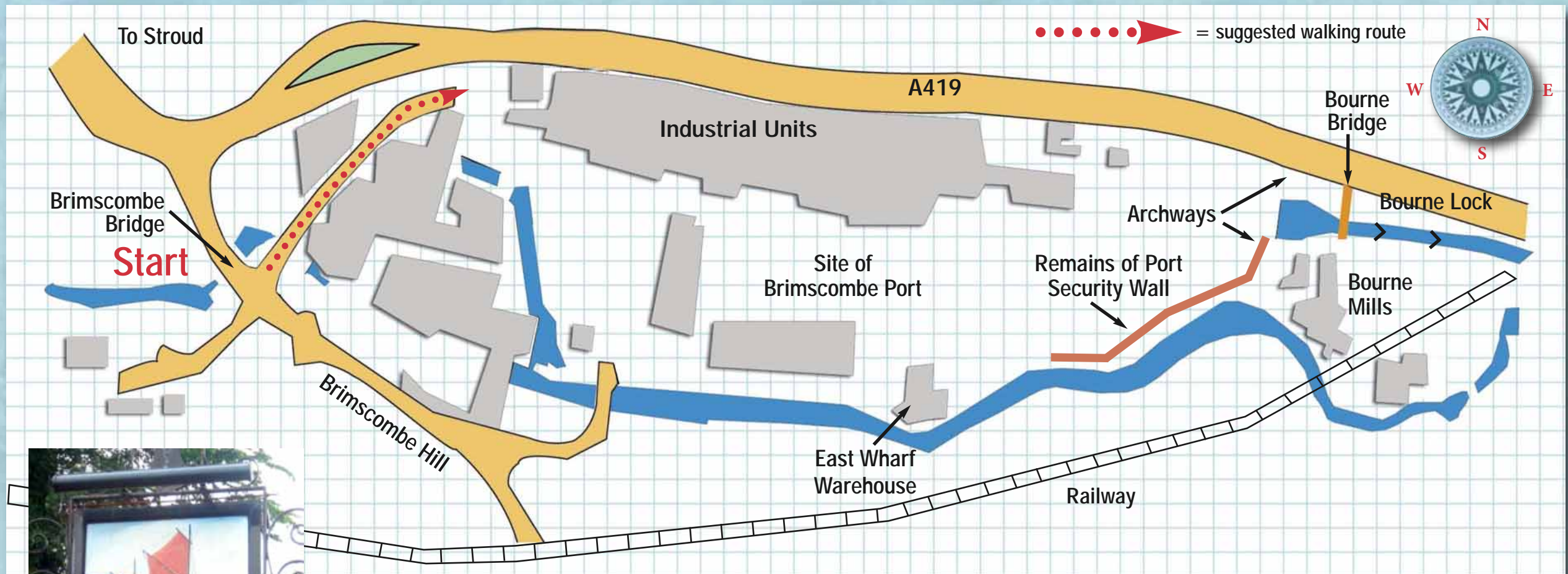


Photo: Big Classroom

Ship Inn and approach road

The Ship Inn, whose sign depicts a Severn Trow, once stood close to the banks of the canal as it passed beneath Brimscombe Bridge. Today, a road follows the line of the canal, taking you between industrial and trading units before emerging into the area where the original basin lay.



Photo: Big Classroom



BRIMSCOMBE PORT

EXPLORING THE PORT TODAY 2-3

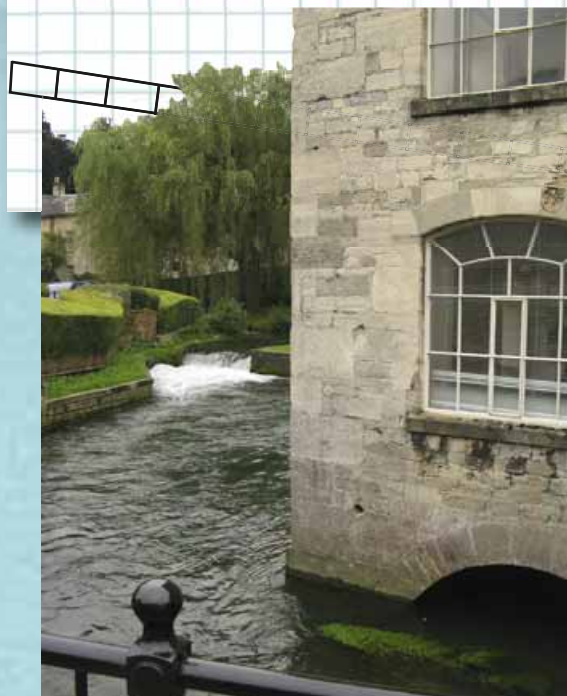
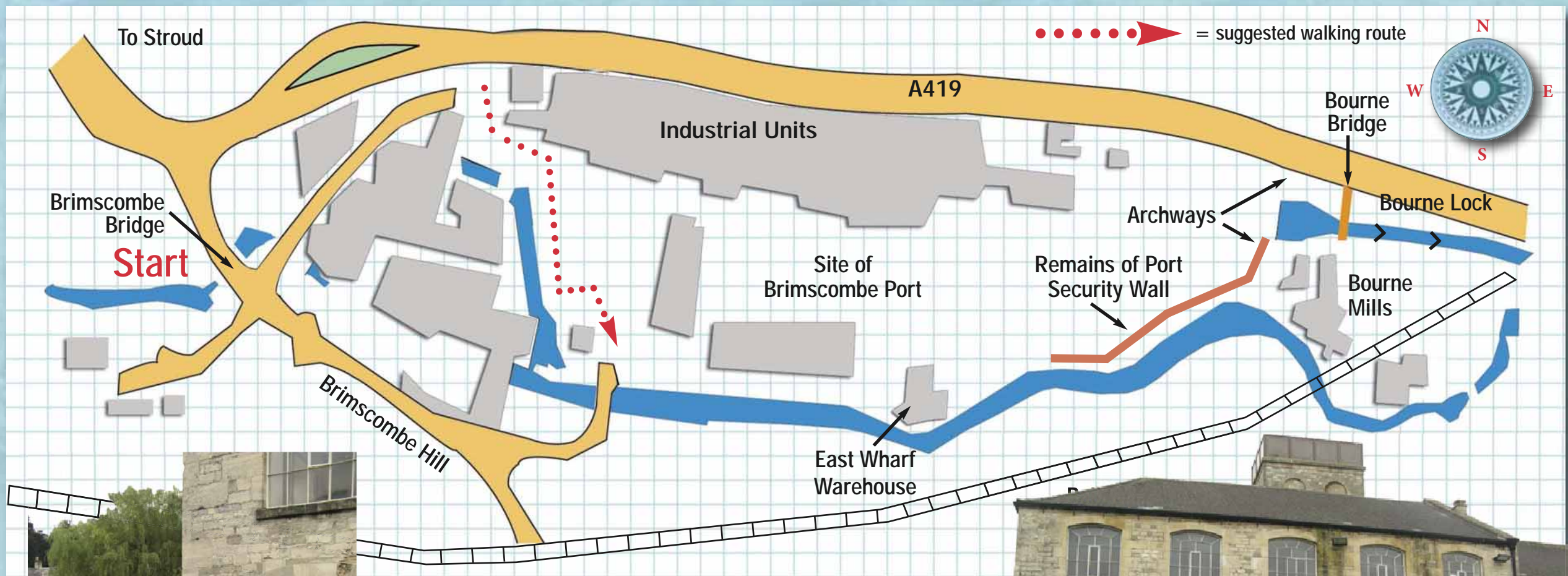


Photo: Big Classroom

Approach road to river

Once past the buildings, turning right takes you roughly along the route of the original towpath to meet the river Frome. To the right, Port Mill now provides office space. The river and the old mill pond combine here to make a pleasant setting.



Photo: Big Classroom



BRIMSCOMBE PORT

EXPLORING THE PORT TODAY 3-4

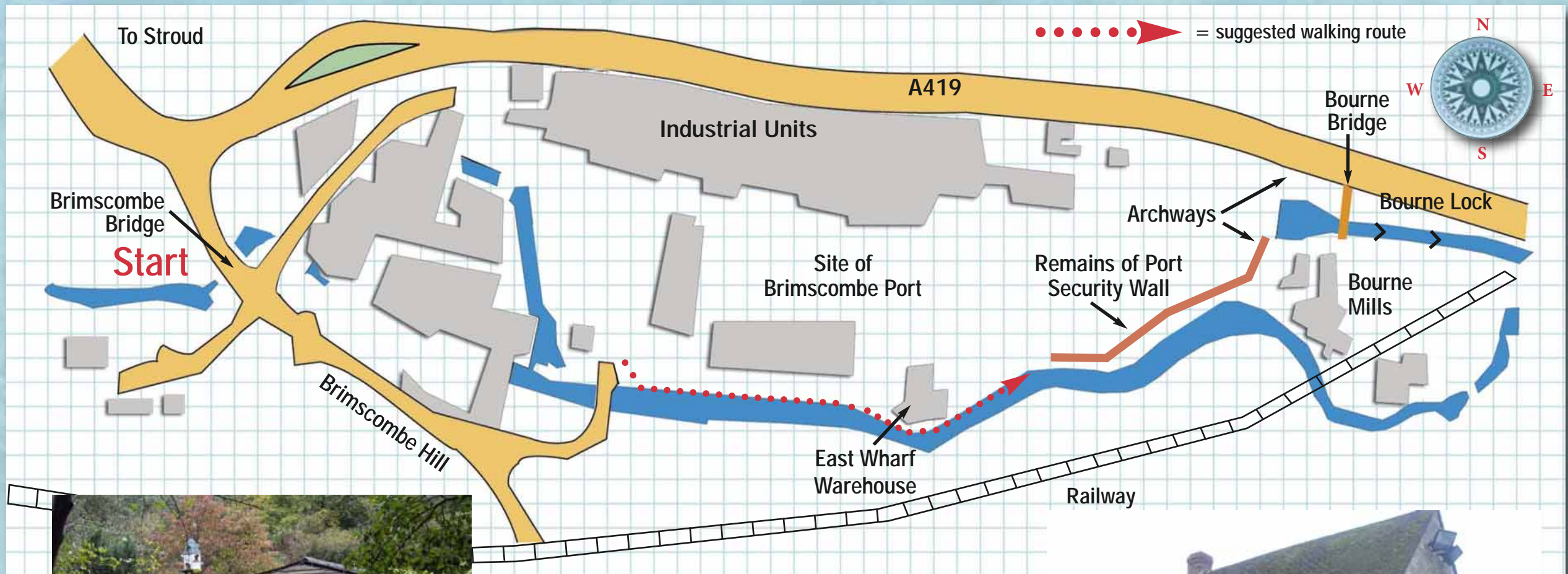


Photo: Big Classroom

Salt warehouse to the port wall

Before you continue along the towpath with the River Frome to your right, take a look at the small, stone building to your right. This was used to store salt being shipped to and from the port. The clear waters of the Frome provide a habitat for fish, kingfishers and dippers.



Photo: Big Classroom



BRIMSCOMBE PORT

EXPLORING THE PORT TODAY 4-5

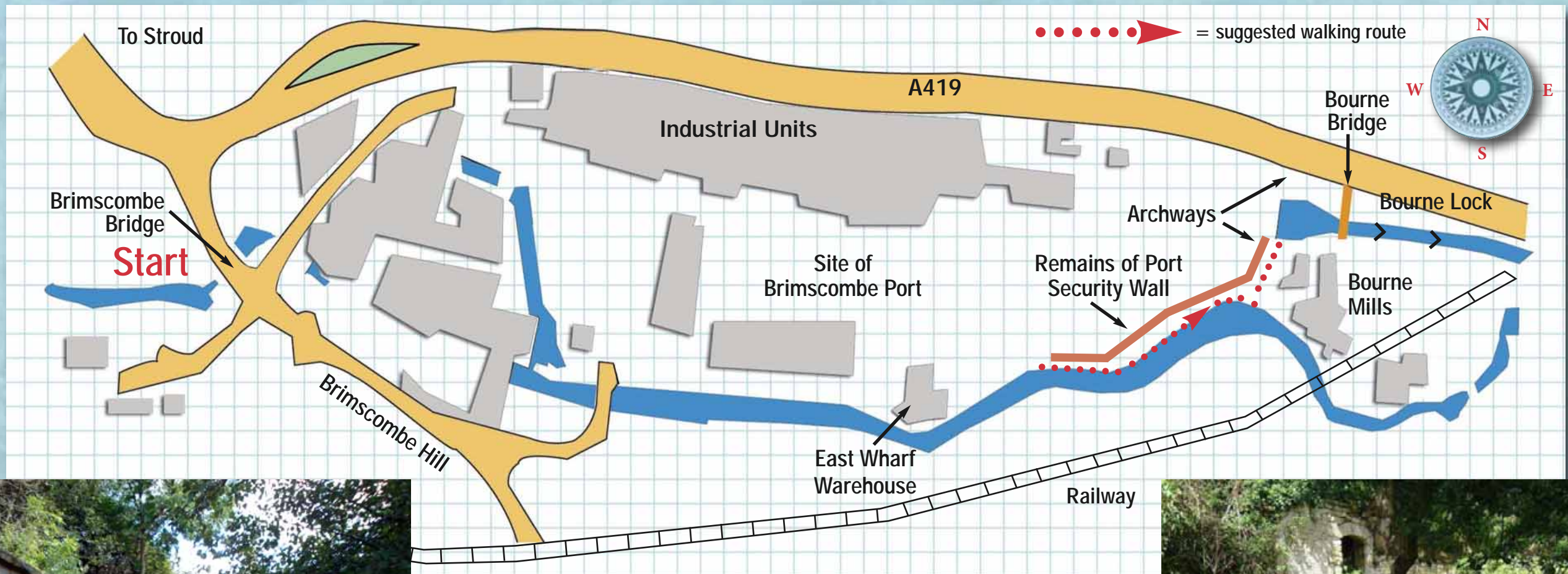


Photo: Big Classroom

Along the port wall

The towpath to Bourne Mill is sandwiched between the restored port wall and the river. As you approach Bourne Mill, you will see the viaduct that carries the main line railway to the right. Where the wall ends you can finally see the physical remains of the canal – an area of still water with vegetation which has all the characteristics of a small pond.

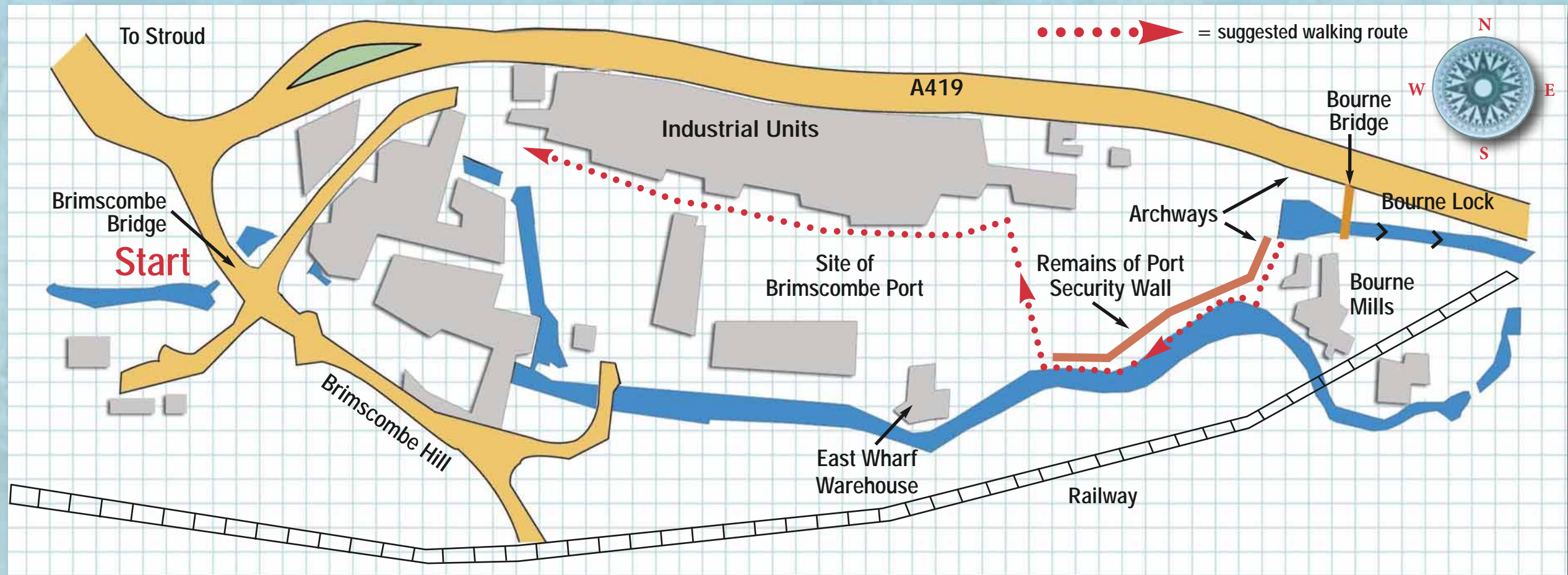


Photo: Big Classroom



BRIMSCOMBE PORT

EXPLORING THE PORT TODAY **Return**



Return to the entrance to the port

Returning beside the port wall, keep an eye open for stones carved with numbers. To understand the significance of the numbers, you will need one of the leaflets, produced as part of the restoration project and available from Tourist Information Centres and from www.cotswoldcanalsproject.org. Turning right at the end of the wall will take you over the site of the foundry, across the original basin to the great wharf. Turning left, the industrial units on your right now stand where the weighing machine, warehouse and offices used to be.

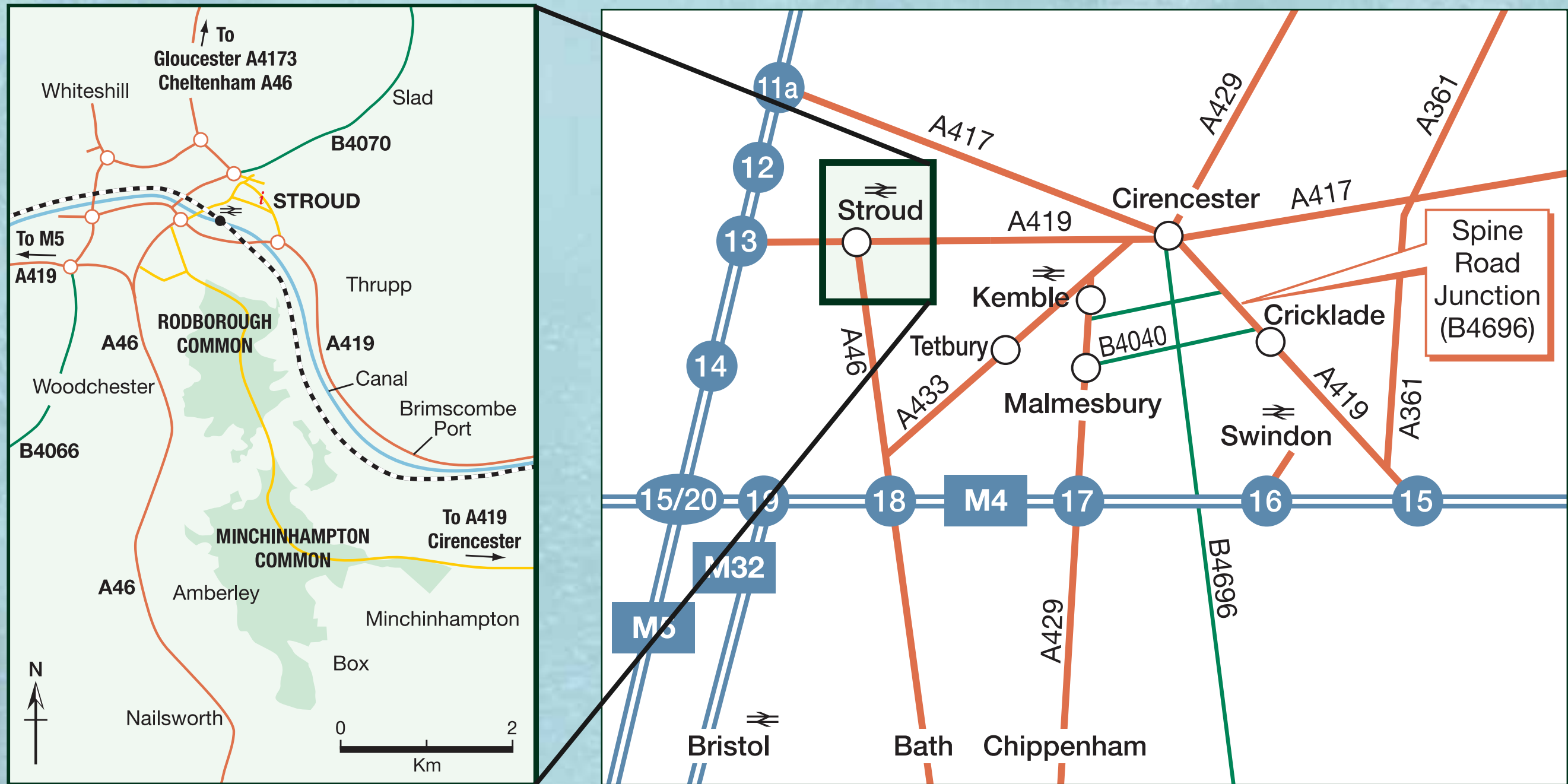


Photo: Big Classroom



BRIMSCOMBE PORT

DETAILED MAP





BRIMSCOMBE PORT

HISTORY FACTFILE 1

The Approach Channel

One of the best known paintings of the port, dating from the late 18th century, shows the access channel in the foreground as it sweeps round to enter the main port basin.

Today the route of the original approach channel lies beneath a narrow road that provides access to the industrial estate. This is best appreciated by looking at the hand-tinted photograph shown to the right, taken from Brimscombe bridge in the early 20th century.



Picture courtesy of Stroud District (Cowle) Museum Service, Museum in the Park, Stroud



Photo courtesy of Mike Mills from the Stanley Gardiner, Padin Mills Collection

BACK TO OVERVIEW



BRIMSCOMBE PORT

HISTORY FACTFILE 2



Photo courtesy of Mike Mills from the Stanley Gardiner, Padin Mills Collection

Thames & Severn Company Offices and Warehouses

At the end of the access channel, on the left, just as it entered the port basin, stood the large three storey Canal Company warehouses and offices. The offices were in the wing at the end with the bay window. A swing footbridge gave access to other areas of the port.

In 1905 the whole building was converted for use as a polytechnic. In 1944 it became the Brimscombe Secondary Modern School. The school closed in 1965 and was demolished two years later.

BACK TO OVERVIEW



BRIMSCOMBE PORT

HISTORY FACTFILE 3

The Weighing Machine

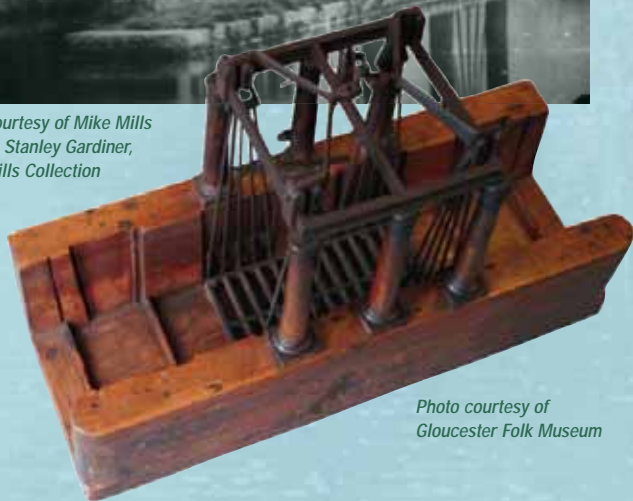
One of the most remarkable structures in the port was a weighing machine. This stood adjacent to and forward of the warehouses.

The machine was introduced to prevent fraud over payment of tolls for goods carried on the canal. It gave an accurate assessment of the cargo load by weighing the entire boat.

Boats entered a lock-like structure and were weighed on a platform after the water had been drained away. An 1843 wooden model shows the device in miniature.



*Photo courtesy of Mike Mills
from the Stanley Gardiner,
Padin Mills Collection*



*Photo courtesy of
Gloucester Folk Museum*

BACK TO OVERVIEW



BRIMSCOMBE PORT

HISTORY FACTFILE 4

Port Mill

Now providing a home for modern workspaces Port Mill is a large and impressive building, but despite its close proximity it was not a part of the port itself. Built as a replacement for a 17th century mill, it dates from 1810 and has mid-19th century additions. It operated as a woollen mill until 1920.



Photo courtesy of Mike Mills from the Stanley Gardiner, Padin Mills Collection

BACK TO OVERVIEW



BRIMSCOMBE PORT

HISTORY FACTFILE 5

The Salt Warehouse

This building is one of only three surviving structures from the Port's heyday. Along with the port wall and the East Wharf Cottage, the salt warehouse is of particular interest.

As its name suggests the warehouse was used for storing salt shipped down by barges from Droitwich. Droitwich salt came from evaporating brine in large pans positioned over fires.

In Stroud the salt was used to fix the dye to the woollen fabrics that were produced along the valley. Once the textile had been dyed it was then soaked in a salt solution to make sure that the dye didn't run or leach out at a later stage.



Photo: Big Classroom

BACK TO OVERVIEW



BRIMSCOMBE PORT

HISTORY FACTFILE 6



Photo courtesy of Mike Mills from the Stanley Gardiner, Padin Mills Collection

The Basin

The port basin was about 700 feet (230 metres) long and 250 feet (76 metres) wide – quite a structure, as this old picture shows. It has been estimated that it could accommodate about 100 vessels at any one time. Our photo shows the basin with the distinctive weighing machine on the left.

[BACK TO OVERVIEW](#)



BRIMSCOMBE PORT

HISTORY FACTFILE 7

The Island

Coal was the main cargo unloaded at Brimscombe Port. The mills had formerly relied solely on water power but the industrial revolution brought new machinery with greater demands for energy. Water power in the mills was increasingly supplemented by steam driven engines which were fuelled by coal which was supplied via the canals.

To prevent theft it was stored on an island in the basin.

Two swing bridges allowed access from the southern edge of the basin, where the towpath ran.



Photos courtesy of Mike Mills from the Stanley Gardiner, Padin Mills Collection

BACK TO OVERVIEW



BRIMSCOMBE PORT

HISTORY FACTFILE 8

The Iron Foundry

On the eastern end of the island was an iron foundry.

Considerable amounts of waste from the foundry were used to infill the basin in the last century.

The foundry continued working until the 1960s.



Photo courtesy of Mike Mills from the Stanley Gardiner, Padin Mills Collection

BACK TO OVERVIEW



BRIMSCOMBE PORT

HISTORY FACTFILE 9

Port wall

The port wall separated the towpath from the port, providing security for the goods and equipment stored within the port area itself.



Picture courtesy of Stroud District (Cowle) Museum Service, Museum in the Park, Stroud

BACK TO OVERVIEW



BRIMSCOMBE PORT

HISTORY FACTFILE 10

Bourne Mill, Bridge and Lock

The port wall ran on until it met the canal at Bourne Mill. Access to the mill was via Bourne Bridge, which remains to this day overlooking Bourne Lock.

While the locks to the east of the port were narrower and longer than to the west, Bourne Lock is the exception. Trows were able to pass through it to the company's Bourne boatyard.



Photos courtesy of Mike Mills from the Stanley Gardiner, Padin Mills Collection

BACK TO OVERVIEW



BRIMSCOMBE PORT

THE PAST IN PICTURES



Photo courtesy of Mike Mills from the Stanley Gardiner, Padin Mills Collection

A Severn Trow

BACK TO HISTORY



BRIMSCOMBE PORT

THE PAST IN PICTURES



Photo courtesy of Mike Mills from the Stanley Gardiner, Padin Mills Collection

BACK TO HISTORY

A Severn Trow



BRIMSCOMBE PORT

PORTAL TO THE PAST

There used to be two archways in the wall, one to the north and one to the south of the eastern entrance to the port. This project has restored the wall and the archway to the south but the other entrance is still there, hidden by undergrowth and waiting for future restoration.

These two entrances allowed access to the port and had thick wooden doors which are now long gone. In the restored archway the old door is represented by an oak shelter.

Bourne Mill and Bourne Lock have been renovated and, together with the bridge, canal and port wall, the scene presents a glimpse back in time.



The canal contains brown trout and provides an attractive habitat for birds such as the grey wagtail and dipper. Dragonflies and damselflies also abound.

Photos: Big Classroom and Walking the Land





BRIMSCOMBE PORT

CONTACTS AND CREDITS

BRIMSCOMBE PORT WALLS

Port Walls Restoration and Interpretation Project

Funded by the National Lottery 'Big Lottery' Fund



Thanks to all of the following for their contribution to this project

Project Management:	Kim Chester, The Waterways Trust
Heritage Adviser:	David Viner, British Waterways
Archive Research:	Stuart Baker, Volunteer
Wall Restoration:	Chris Hart, Noah's Ark Conservation Construction Division
Volunteer Co-ordinators:	Richard Harrison & Alison Colebrook, British Waterways
Volunteers:	From the Cotswold Canals Trust, Leyhill Open Prison, Nelson Trust and members of the local community
Interpretation Design:	Big Classroom & The Design Co-operative, Stroud
Schools' artwork by:	Brimscombe Primary School, Chalford Primary School assisted by pupils from Thomas Keble School
Schools' work co-ordinated by:	Walking the Land
Additional photography:	Walking the Land, Design Co-operative
Stone carvings by:	David Lovemore, Amber Sculpture Studio, Hawkwood
Portal print and construction:	Arien Signs

Visit www.cotswoldcanalsproject.org for more information on the Cotswold Canals