

General Information

Crofton Beam Engines was built from 1807-09, opening in the spring of 1809 to pump water to the summit of the Kennet and Avon Canal. The pumping station is located 1¼ km (3/4 mile) to the east of the summit. Sourced from Wilton Water, the pumps lift 1 ton of water with each stroke 40 feet (12 m) to a level slightly above that of the summit, delivering the pumped water via a specially constructed feeder channel, called, from Cornish tin mine practice, a leat.



The site houses two engines, an 1812 Boulton & Watt steam engine and an 1846 Harvey of Hayle steam engine, both of which still work today. The engines are powered by a Lancashire boiler. We are proud to house the oldest beam engine in the world still in its original location performing the original job it was intended to do.

Today, the engines, pumps and site are maintained by a dedicated team of volunteers. The site is open to the public on selected weekends and Bank Holidays from Easter until the end of September, with scheduled steaming weekends taking place throughout the season. Crofton offers a unique insight into both the technological advances made during the Industrial Revolution, and insight into the importance of the canals both then and now.

On-Site Learning Sessions and Tours

For Autumn 2024, Learning Sessions cost £3 per child and last approximately one and a half hours. Sessions are led by our Learning and Community Engagement Officer, a qualified teacher, and currently take place on site in our Side Boiler House. Because of the size of the space, it may be necessary to divide large groups into two for the sessions.

Group visits to the site include a guided tour of the station, tailored to the age of your group and led by one of our knowledgeable volunteers. This is included in the learning session price.



In School Learning Sessions

We understand that it might be easier for us to come to you. For the same price, plus a standard travel cost of £0.45/mile from Crofton, we will bring our learning sessions, complete with resources, to you.

The Current Learning Programme

We are working to develop a broad range of resources and support for schools.

Based on the 2014 National Curriculum standards, our sessions cover national and local history, geography, and STEM subjects too.

At present, we have the following learning sessions available, with others in the process of development. Sessions can be tailored to fit your learning objectives and the needs of your pupils.

The Science of Steam Engines and Build a Beam Engine (KS2/KS3, On Site or At School) *New for 2024*

Focus:

What are the scientific principles behind steam engines? How does the beam engine at Crofton work?

Overview:

This session takes a quick look at why a pumping station was built at Crofton, before diving into the scientific principles behind how the engines work. The children will see engaging live demonstrations by a science teacher, which involve steam, pressure, vacuum and water. Afterwards, the children work in pairs to build a small working model of the beam engine, which pumps water.

This session is made possible from the Association of Independent Museum's National Lottery Heritage Funded "New Stories, New Audiences" grant.



How the Canals Changed Wiltshire: A Local History Study (adapted for KS1 or KS2, On Site or At School)

Focus:

When and why were canals built in the UK? How were they made and who made them?

Overview:

This session looks at the rise of the canal age in the UK, with a focus on the local Kennet & Avon Canal. We look at life in Georgian times, why the canals were built, and how the canals were built before working in groups to become chief engineers, designing our canal. Children will then work in their groups to build their canals using materials we supply.



Escape Room – Crofton Edition (tailored to KS1, LKS2, UKS2, KS3, On Site)

Focus

Imagine you've been to Crofton Beam Engines for a lovely day out, only to discover as you get ready to leave that the gate has accidentally been locked! To unlock it, you need to collect the seven-digit code for the lock, travelling around the station and solving seven questions, which cover National Curriculum standards, to gain the code.



Overview

In this escape room style game, children work in small groups to solve a series of nine questions. Each question is related to a different area of the National Curriculum (English, History, Geography, Science and Maths) and is also connected to Crofton Beam Engines or the canal.

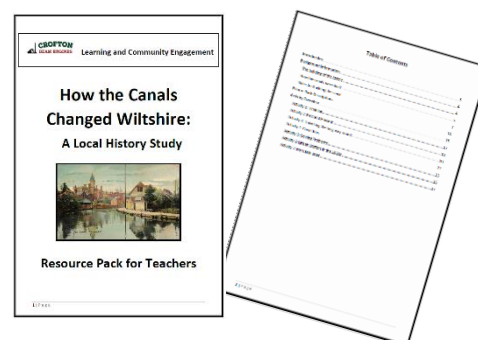
Each question takes about ten minutes to solve and generates a number to unlock the code. The session is tailored for Key Stage 1, Lower Key Stage 2, Upper Key Stage 2 or Key Stage 3, and different groups can take part simultaneously.

For further information on the National Curriculum standards covered, please see our website at [Learning Programme](#). To discuss the specific needs of your class, please contact us at lceo.crofton@katrust.org.uk.

Digital Resource Pack

If you are looking for some inspiration to help you kick start a topic or delve deeper into your unit of study on local history and canals, please look at our Digital Resource Pack. The pack contains background information to help you get started, a large selection of themed picture packs which can either be printed for displays or incorporated into your whiteboard presentations and a collection of different activities.

Our current resource pack links to “How the Canals Changed Wiltshire: A Local History Study”. Other packs are under development. For more information, click on the [Learning Programme](#) link on our website.



Visiting Crofton Beam Engines

Our site is open on selected weekend days between Easter and the end of September, with regular steaming weekends open to the public throughout the season. We welcome school and community groups for a weekday visit throughout the year, but these must be arranged in advance to ensure volunteer availability.

Group visits include a guided tour if on site, in addition to a learning session tailored to your class or group. In-school sessions and digital packs are also available throughout the whole year.

Facilities for School Visits

We currently use our Side Boiler House for our learning sessions. In addition, there is space here for children to store their belongings for the duration of the visit. Due to the nature of the site, it may be necessary to split a class into two groups for a guided tour. Learning sessions can accommodate up to 30 children.

Accessibility

The Pumping Station is a grade I listed building and as such has some access limitations. We have fully accessible toilets and access for wheelchair users to the grounds, Boiler House and Side Boiler House. Unfortunately, there is no access to the upper levels of the Station. Please make us aware of any wheelchair users at the time of booking or before the day of your visit. See here for more information: <https://www.croftonbeamengines.org/accessibility-guide/>

Parking

There is a small car park opposite the site entrance with 32 spaces for cars, 2 accessible spaces and a bay for motorcycles. There is normally space here for 1 x full-size coach by prior arrangement. Please contact us for specific directions and assistance, as coach entry is only viable when coming from a certain direction.

Toilet Facilities

We have modern, accessible visitor toilet facilities on site.

Lunchtime Arrangements

We have two uncovered picnic areas, on the bottom lawn (pictured below) and another on the top lawn. If the weather is poor, children may eat their lunches in the Side Boiler House in the station. Please note that while there is no café on site, tea or coffee is available for group leaders.

Please note: The behaviour of pupils during lunchtime is the responsibility of the group leader. Please ensure any litter goes into the bins and that the area is clear before leaving.



Safeguarding

Crofton Beam Engines and the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust are both strongly committed to protecting and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, volunteers and visitors to embrace this commitment.

Please contact us if you would like a copy of our Safeguarding Policy and Procedure.

Photography and Filming

Group leaders are welcome to take photographs of the children while on site.

Crofton follows a policy whereby the photography and filming of school children on organised school visits by general visitors are not permitted. Please note most school visits take place when the site is closed to the general public. If visitors or other members of the public appear to be taking photographs in inappropriate circumstances, they should be challenged.

Risk Assessments

We can provide Risk Assessments for all educational activities on site. Please note that these are written from Crofton's perspective and we recommend that all potential Group Leaders also conduct their own risk assessments during your familiarisation visit.

Please ensure you read our Risk Assessments for school visitors before your visit and brief all accompanying adults and, where appropriate, the children.

Supervision of Groups

We require that schools observe a minimum supervision ratio on of 1:6 at EYFS and KS1, 1:8 at KS2 and 1:10 at KS3 and above. The behaviour and supervision of the pupils on site is the responsibility of the teacher.

Adults are to ALWAYS remain with their designated group.

Familiarisation Visits

We encourage all teachers and group leaders who are planning a visit to Crofton to attend a free familiarisation visit. Please contact us [here](#) to arrange a time to speak to our Learning and Community Engagement Officer regarding your visit.

We are happy for any school staff that will be accompanying the children on the day of the actual visit to attend the familiarisation visit, so that everyone feels fully confident on the day.

While a guided tour and learning session is available, you are also welcome to develop your own learning resources to enhance the visit.

Canal Boat Trip/Wilton Windmill

Would you like an experience on our waterway? Please contact us to help you arrange a boat ride with one of our other branches. These include:

Bradford on Avon – The 65 foot wide-beam boat ‘Barbara McLellan’ seats 40 and operates from Bradford on Avon Wharf Cottage, by the lock, BA15 1LE.

Bruce Boats, based at Great Bedwyn Wharf –Bruce Boats operates four fully accessible boats, each holding up to 12 passengers (including the skipper). In addition, the Lady Hilda is ideal for local community groups.

Devizes – The ‘Kenavon Venture’ is a wide-beam boat seating 45 operating from The Wharf in Devizes (adjacent to the Trust HQ and Museum).

Hungerford – The ‘Rose of Hungerford’ is a wide-beam boat seating 50, operating from just off Hungerford High Street.

Newbury – ‘Jubilee’ is a traditional style narrowboat seating 30 and operating from Newbury Wharf (RG14 5AS). Jubilee is open to the fresh air in fine weather, but with protection for colder days.

Reading – The ‘Matilda Too’ is a small semi-traditional style narrowboat seating 12 operating from Star Line Wharf in Reading (Queen’s Road car park), RG1 4AR.

More information for all of these can be found here: <https://katrust.org.uk/things-to-do/education-trips/>

Another option is to combine a session at Crofton with a session at the Wilton Windmill, located less than a 10-minute drive away. Find out more about sessions the Windmill offers here:

<https://www.wiltonwindmill.co.uk/category/education/>