Finding things with Overpass QL

Dave Lambley
German Perl Workshop 2026

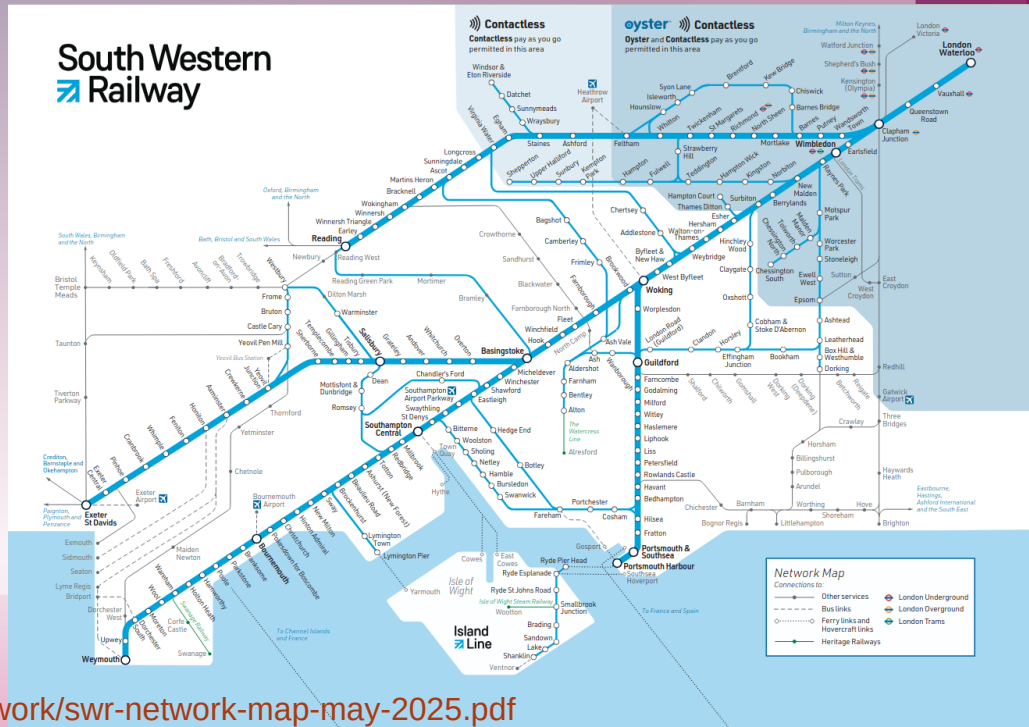
https://dave.lambley.me.uk/
dave@lambley.me.uk

I watched a climbing-adjacent video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eppVeRDkClg&t=218s

Where is it?

- Brick railway bridge
- Parallel foot bridge.
- Both over a *navigation*.
- “South Western” livery on train.



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Rail_Class_455
https://www.southwesternrailway.com/-/media/files/plan-my-journey/our-network/swr-network-map-may-2025.pdf

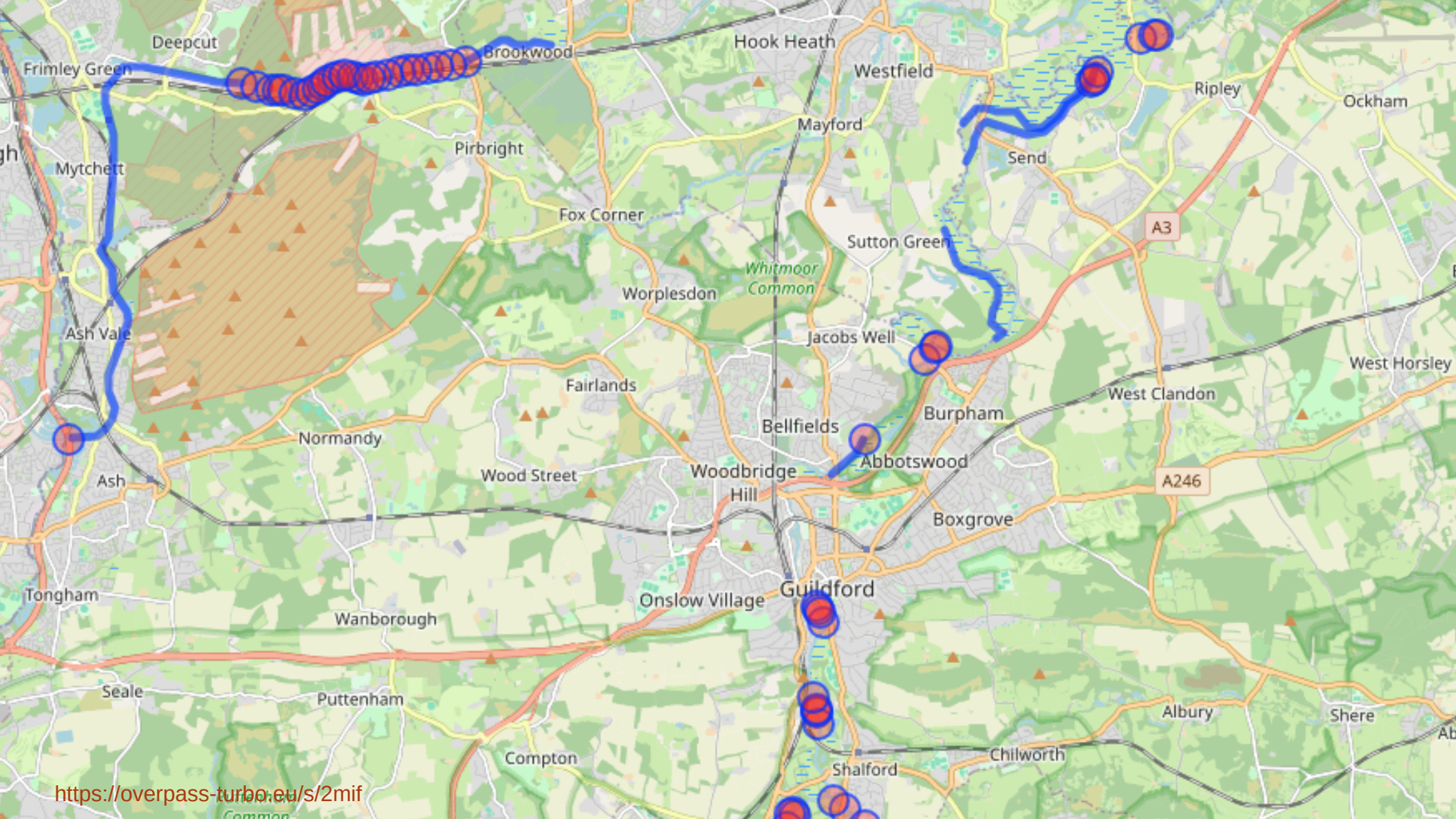
OpenStreetMap Overpass QL

- Query language for OpenStreetMap's data.
- https://overpass-turbo.eu/

```
area[name="Guildford"]->.a;
way(area.a)[waterway][boat!=no];
out geom;
```

boat	yes
motorboat	yes
name	River Wey Navigation
waterway	canal

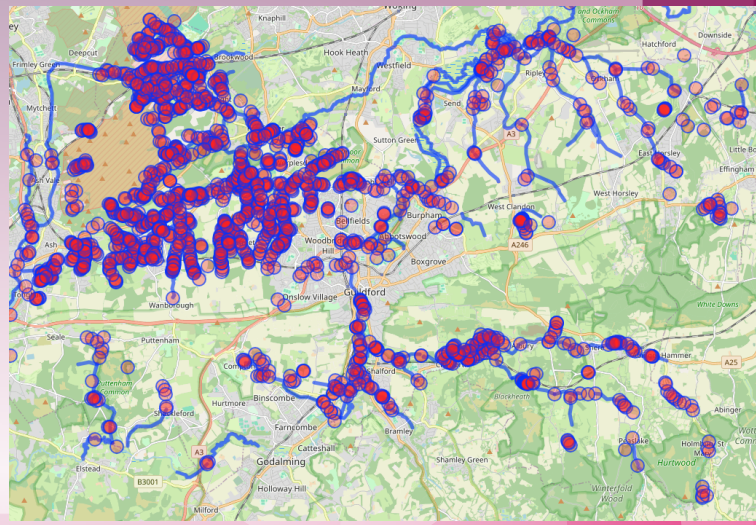
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ford_Prefect_(character)


Deepcut
Frimley Green
Brookwood
Hook Heath
Westfield
Ripley
Ockham
Mayford
Pirbright
Mytchett
Send
Fox Corner
A3
Sutton Green
Whitmoor Common
Worplesdon
Ash Vale
Jacobs Well
West Horsley
Fairlands
West Clandon
Burpham
Bellfields
Normandy
Abbotswood
Wood Street
Woodbridge Hill
A246
Ash
Boxgrove
Tongham
Guildford
Onslow Village
Wanborough
Seale
Puttenham
Albury
Shere
Compton
Chilworth
Shalford
https://overpass-turbo.eu/s/2mif

We’ve lost canals!

- OpenStreetMap is *tag soup*.
- We use a **union** to find more possible canals.

```
area[name="Guildford"]->.a;
(
  way(area.a)[waterway=canal];
  way(area.a)[waterway][boat!=no];
);
out geom;
```

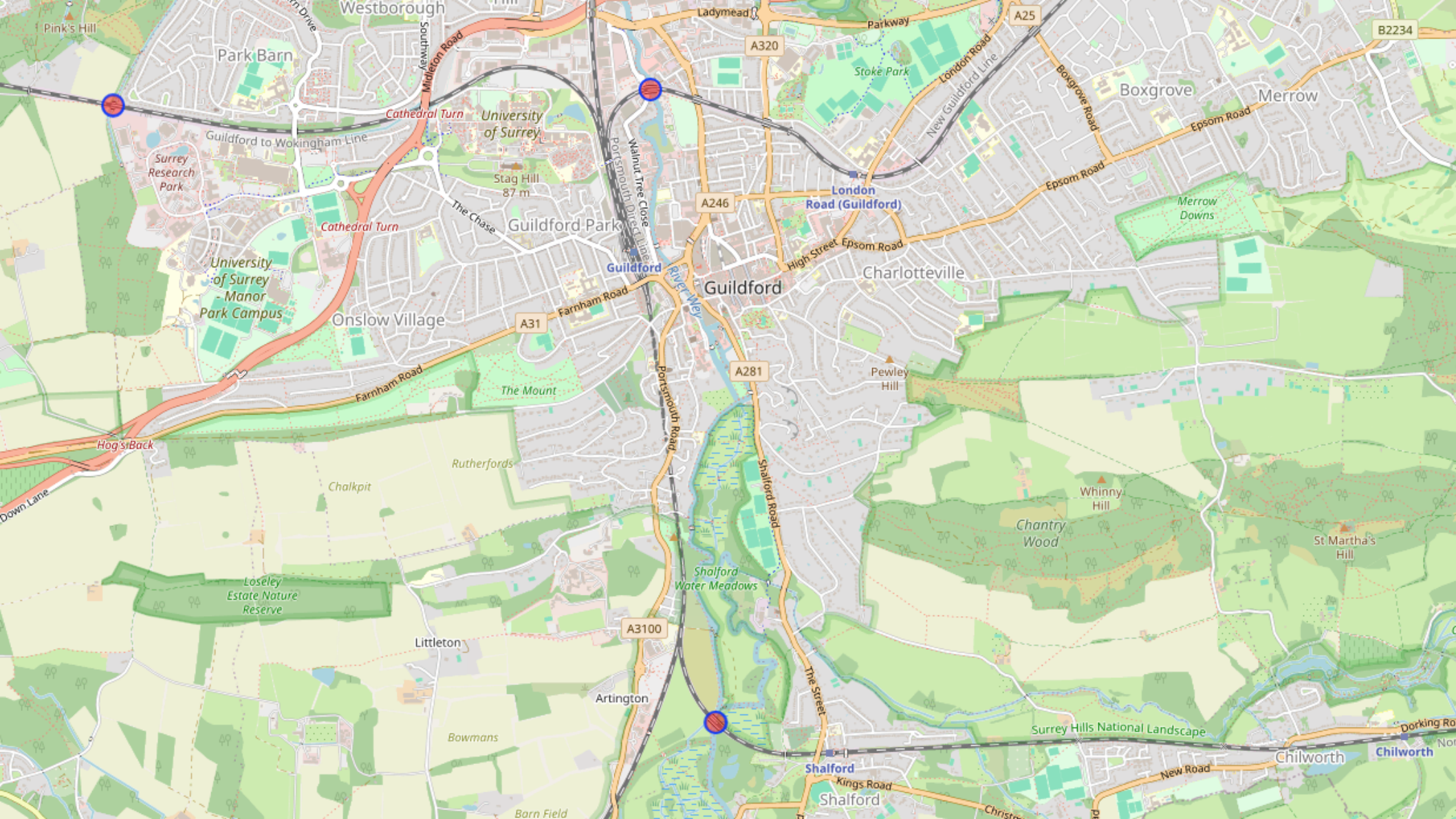


https://overpass-turbo.eu/s/2mlm

We can find bridges over canals

- We can find things near things within a radius.
- **Timeouts! Errors!**
- Overpass QL is imperative not declarative.
- Does everything you ask!
- Limit search area with a “global bbox”.

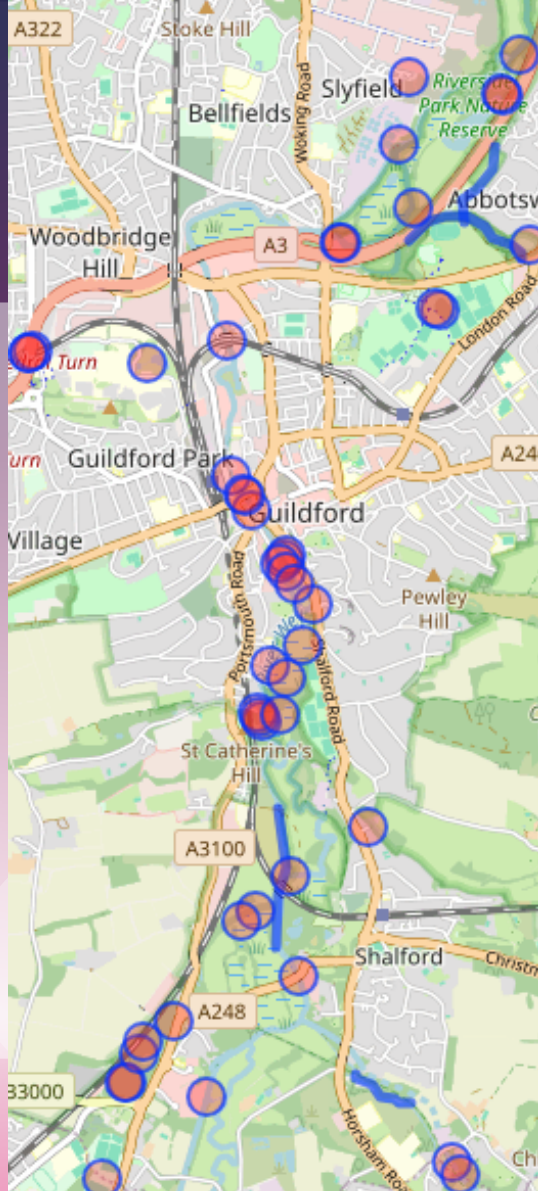
```
[bbox:51.197,-0.684,51.261,-0.464];
area[name="Guildford"]->.a;
(
  way(area.a)[waterway=canal];
  way(area.a)[waterway][boat!=no];
)->.canals;
way(around.canals:0)[railway]
[bridge];
out geom;
```


Westborough
Pink's Hill
Park Barn
Southway
Middleton Road
Ladymead
A320
Parkway
A25
B2234
Stoke Park
London Road
New Guildford Line
Boxgrove
Boxgrove Road
Merrow
Epsom Road
Cathedral Turn
University of Surrey
Guildford to Wokingham Line
Surrey Research Park
Stag Hill
87 m
Walnut Tree Close
Portsmouth Direct Line
A246
London Road (Guildford)
Merrow Downs
The Chase
Guildford Park
Cathedral Turn
High Street
Epsom Road
Charlotteville
University of Surrey - Manor Park Campus
Guildford
River Wey
Guildford
Onslow Village
A31
Farnham Road
A281
Pewley Hill
The Mount
Farnham Road
Portsmouth Road
Hog's Back
Rutherfords
Chalkpit
Shalford Road
Down Lane
Whinny Hill
Chantry Wood
St Martha's Hill
Loseley Estate Nature Reserve
Shalford Water Meadows
A3100
Littleton
Artington
The Street
Surrey Hills National Landscape
Dorking Ro
Chilworth
Chilworth
Bowmans
Shalford
Kings Road
New Road
Shalford
Born Field

Great, find foot bridges!

- OpenStreetMap *tag soup* also here!

```
(
  way(around.canals:0)[highway=footway];
  way(around.canals:0)[highway=path];
)->.foot_bridge;
```



https://overpass-turbo.eu/s/2mlq

Find foot bridges nearby railway bridges

- Find things nearby foot bridges.
- Compute union with list of railway bridges.

```
way(around.railway_bridge:10)->.nearby_bridge;
way.nearby_bridge.foot_bridge;
```

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Beeching
https://overpass-turbo.eu/s/2mlU

```
[bbox:51.197,-0.684,51.261,-0.464 ];

area[name="Guildford"]->.a;

(
  way(area.a)[waterway][boat][boat!=no];
  way(area.a)[waterway=canal];
)->.canals;

way(around.canals:0)[railway][railway!=abandoned][bridge]
  ->.railway_bridge;

way(around.railway_bridge:10)->.nearby_bridge;

(
  way(around.canals:0)[highway=footway];
  way(around.canals:0)[highway=path];
)->.foot_bridge;

way.nearby_bridge.foot_bridge;
out geom;
```

https://overpass-turbo.eu/s/2mlX