

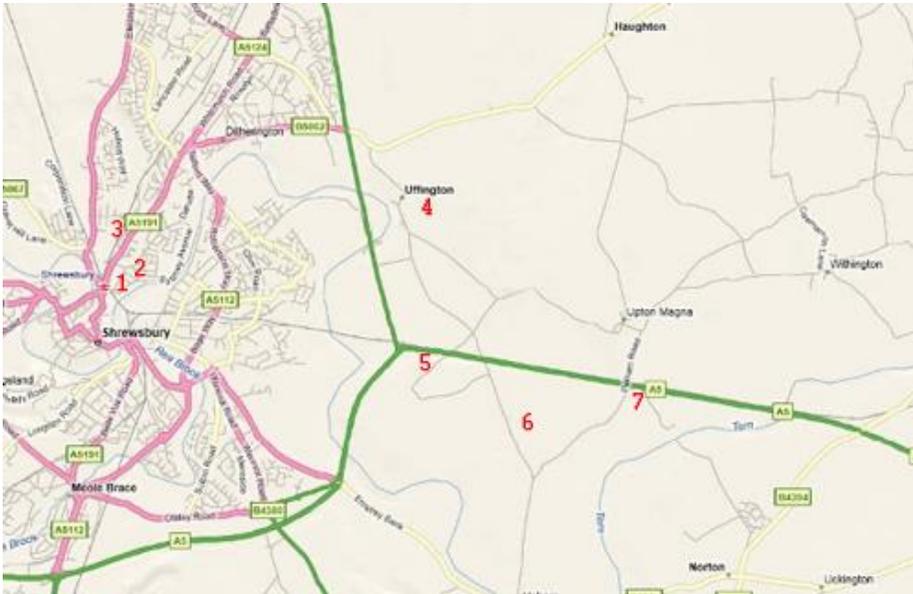


SHROPSHIRE CANAL TRAILS



Shrewsbury Canal

A 20 mile (32 km) trail by car or bike, passing features on the main section of the Shrewsbury Canal. This canal was first opened in 1797 and went to Old Yard Junction at Donnnington Wood via Wappenshall Junction north of Telford (where this trail ends). When it closed in 1944, however, much of the canal between Shrewsbury and Wappenshall Junction was infilled but there are still features to be seen.



Tony Clayton

The trail starts at the station car park in Shrewsbury but you can join or leave it at various points en route. More information and photographs for the sites can be found on the website below. Note that some of the features require a bit of walking on footpaths that are not accessible by wheelchair. The trail should take about 3 hours to complete and approximate mileages are given in brackets.

<http://shropshirehistory.com/canals/sites.htm>



To get to the Shrewsbury Station car park, head for the roundabout at the junction of the A49 and B5062. Take the exit for B5062 Shrewsbury and go straight across 2 mini-roundabouts. At the large roundabout take the second exit for the A5191 Mount Pleasant and Ditherington. Keep going straight on across 2 mini-roundabouts until you come to a large railway bridge with traffic lights. Just as you start going under it, turn left onto Howard Street. The entrance to the car park is on the left just past the Buttermarket.

1	SHREWSBURY BASIN NGR SJ495131
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The car park and industrial buildings beyond now occupy the space where the Shrewsbury Canal Basin was. There were once several warehouses here but the only one left now is the Buttermarket that you passed by. It is a fine building and worth a closer look.

Turn right out of the car park and turn right at the traffic lights. Turn right onto New Park Road (0.2) and note the factories on the right where the Canal Basin once was. As the road bends left, look for the Canal Tavern on the left (0.3).

2	CANAL TAVERN NGR SJ497132
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This pub was once popular with canal workers and the route of the canal passes right behind it.

Follow the road to a mini-roundabout and turn left (0.8). Go through the pedestrian lights and turn right onto Crewe Street (0.9), parking outside the gate on the right.

3	DITHERINGTON FLAX MILL NGR SJ498138
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The huge mill building is impossible to miss and the canal ran along the front of it. It opened in 1797 (the same year as the canal) and is the oldest iron-framed building in the world. It is a Grade I Listed Building and English Heritage are restoring it. If you look across the main road you will see a metal plaque on the wall saying "Factory Bridge No.47 Rebuilt 1913". This marks the spot of a canal bridge that was demolished and replaced in 1913.

Go back to the main road and turn left, passing straight across a mini-roundabout (1.1). Bear left at the next roundabout (1.2) and you will reach a larger roundabout (1.6) where you take the second exit for B5062 Newport. Go straight across a mini-roundabout (2.4) and then another (2.7). Go straight across a roundabout on the B5062 for Newport (2.8). Turn right for Telford

Carry on and turn left towards Long Lane (14.7). At the T-junction, turn right towards Telford (15.3) and almost immediately turn left opposite the Bucks Head onto a track to some houses.

11	LONG LANE BRIDGE No.16 NGR SJ6366156
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The parapet of this fine bridge is obvious with red and blue bricks in a chequerboard pattern. If you walk around to the road you can get to the underneath. The canal has been infilled on the other side of the bridge and the route has been culverted under the main road.

Carry on and turn left towards Eyton (16.4). Follow the road as it twists around the village until you come to a place where there is a cottage on the left and fields beyond.

12	EYTON LOCK No.10 NGR SJ653150
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On the right is the lock with water flowing into the far end. This is one of only two locks that were on this branch of the canal and the only one that has survived. They were of the Guillotine type, whereby one of the lock gates was lifted upwards to open rather than having two mitre gates being swung open. The bridge has been converted into a culvert and the nearby house was a canal cottage.

Turn around and go back to the main road and turn left (18.1). Turn left at the roundabout for Bridgnorth A442 and turn left on an unsignposted road (19.1) just before a layby on the right. Go past Wappenshall Farm and, as you come into Wappenshall, look for a narrow drive on the left (19.9).

13	WAPPENSHALL JUNCTION NGR SJ662145
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This was a major junction between the Shrewsbury and Newport branches of the canal, as well as a branch heading south-east to join up with the other canals around Telford. There are two warehouses still existing, together with other buildings and a roving bridge. The site is now managed by Shrewsbury & Newport Canal Trust, who are in the process of refurbishing it.

That is the end of this Trail. There is a walking/cycling Trail for the canal remains at Newport and other Trails are in preparation for the Donnington Wood Canal, Shropshire Canal, Wombridge Canal and Ketley Canal.

**9 RODINGTON EMBANKMENT TUNNEL
NGR SJ590142**

This is a short brick-lined tunnel through the canal embankment to give access to the fields on the other side.

Examples of loads carried by canal boats in 1849

- *Bacon, codfish, herrings, oysters, cheese, flour, rice, biscuits, nuts, potatoes, peas, beans, fruit, figs, prunes, oranges, currants, raisins, tea, coffee, syrup, treacle, salt, spice, pepper, mustard, vinegar, lard, snuff.*
- *Soda water, ale, porter, cider, wine, spirits, rum, whisky.*
- *Drapery, bedding, sheets, feathers, flocks, yarn, thread, hats.*
- *Brushes, brooms, carpet brooms, handles, soap, starch, soda, naphtha, turpentine, candles, wicks, blacking, plates, tin plates, friction matches, paper, stationery, ink*
- *Furniture, chairs, sofa, bedsteads, pictures.*
- *Paint, nails, wire, hoops, screws, bracket castings, rods, tubes, slates, glass, cement.*
- *Shovels, riddles, files, lathes, grates, ash pans, fire irons.*
- *Iron bars, sheet iron, steel, tin, zinc, sheet zinc, lead, coils of lead pipe. lead, coils of lead pipe.*
- *Plough, hoe, plough-shares, harrow, scythes, whips. wheat, oats, oilcake, seed, rye grass, bran, meal, hops, linseed, twigs, soda ash, potash, manure, guano.*
- *Oil, tallow, bark rosin, grease, ropes, empty casks, leather, sacks, organ pipe.*

Follow the road to a T-junction by the Tayleur Arms and turn right towards Wellington (13.5). Park in a layby on the left by an interpretation board (14.0).

**10 LONGDON-ON-TERN AQUEDUCT
NGR SJ617156**

Walk through the two stiles and up to the obvious feature. The aqueduct carried the canal over the River Tern and was originally built in stone by Josiah Clowes. It was unfortunately destroyed in a flood in 1795 and, since Clowes had subsequently died, Thomas Telford was asked to repair it. Together with William Reynolds, he designed an iron trough made out of sections bolted together. It was 62 yards long, 7½ft wide and 4½ft deep, with a metal towpath to one side. As can be seen, the trough still exists as well as the original masonry abutments and it is strong enough to walk across. It was not actually the first iron canal aqueduct to be built in Britain but it was certainly the largest at that time. It is believed that it was the prototype for Telford's much larger Pontcysyllte Aqueduct at Chirk.

(3.0) and after half a mile you will pass over the route of the canal as the road bends right on Uffington Bridge. This has now been infilled but there is a section of canal on the left that sometimes holds water. Park just before the Corbet Arms (3.7). Walk down the drive marked Tower Farm (it is a public footpath) and over a stile. Cross the field to a bridge.

**4 BRICK KILN BRIDGE No.42
NGR SJ530139**

This is a fine brick bridge and if you pass over and turn right you can see underneath. The bed of the canal can be made out but unfortunately it no longer holds water. The name is interesting and indicates that once there must have been a nearby brickworks, possibly when the village of Uffington was expanded.

Very early canals used Flash Locks, where there was a single gate and a boat was taken through with the water flow when opened. Going upriver, a boat had to be pulled through. The Pound Lock was invented in China in AD983 and this had a rectangular chamber with two Guillotine Gates, which were opened vertically. The Mitre Gate was invented by Leonardo da Vinci in the 15th Century. This has V-shaped gates held together by the water pressure and the first one in Britain was introduced on the River Lee at Waltham Abbey in 1574. Both Guillotine and Mitre Gates were used on the Telford canals.

Lock gates have a valve to allow water to pass through under control, thus avoiding a rush of water on opening the gate which would damage any boats in the lock. When passing upstream, the level of water in the lock chamber is first brought down to the level of the canal using the valve on the lower gate. The lower gate is opened, the boat enters the lock and the lower gate is closed. The valve on the upper gate is then used to raise the water level in the lock to that of the canal beyond. The upper gate is then opened and the boat leaves the lock. Boats moving downstream carry out the process in reverse.

Valves and Guillotine Gates are operated using a hand windlass and boat operators have to carry their own handle with them or they will get stuck. Mitre locks usually have a large arm overhanging the bank which boat operators push to open and close the gate. The two locks at Eyton (as well as those on the branch from Wappenshall to Trench) all used Guillotine Gates.

In the early 1830s, the two Eyton locks were widened to 7ft 4in (together with all the bridge openings on the Shrewsbury branch) to take standard sized narrow boats. Locks and bridges between Wappenshall and Trench were not altered and special boats only 6ft 4ins wide were used on that section.

Carry on and turn right at a white house towards Preston (4.7) and then pass over the dual carriageway. Look for a cottage on the left and park in a layby just beyond (5.1). Walk back and look for a gap in the trees on the left opposite the cottage. A rough path leads down to a bricked-up entrance.

5	BERWICK TUNNEL NGR SJ531120
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This was 970 yards long and was the first canal tunnel to be made with a towpath inside. With other tunnels, the horse had to be led over the top while the men "legged" the boat through by lying down and pushing on the roof or sides with their feet. As the tunnel was not straight, there were times when boats from either end met inside. There was a line painted in the middle and, in theory, whichever boat got there first had the right of way. The other boat was supposed to reverse out but this could happen several times and tempers got frayed! Both ends are now bricked up with a grille for access.

Salopian Journal 25 October 1837

At the Shropshire Quarter sessions William Willday and John Morris were charged with assault and robbery of David Davies of Upton under Haughmond near Shrewsbury. Willday was the Captain, Morris the navigator and Davies a passenger on a canal boat owned by Messrs Pickford & Co. The offence occurred whilst the boat was proceeding from the Castle Foregate wharf at Shrewsbury towards Uffington during the hours of darkness. As the boat approached a tunnel on the canal it met a coal boat crewed by witnesses Messrs Wycherley and Peplow. The manacled passenger Davies screamed for help and was freed when the boat was eventually boarded. Both the accused were sentenced to fourteen years transportation.

Carry on through the village bearing left and then left again where a track goes straight on (5.4). Turn right at a T-junction (5.9) and park in a layby on the left just after some cottages (6.5).

6	WIDOW'S BRIDGE No.38 NGR SJ541111
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The bridge itself has been infilled and converted into a culvert but across the road the canal bed can be seen down through the trees. The cottages were once connected with the canal, possibly for Lengthmen. These were responsible for the maintenance of a section of canal, ensuring it was free of weeds and fallen trees. Look over the garden fence at the other end of the layby and you can see a section of the canal containing water. Just past this was Berwick Wharf but this has now been infilled.

Continue through the village and turn left for Upton Magna and Withington (6.7). Turn right for Upton Forge (7.7) and park next to a gate (7.9).

7	UPTON FORGE BRIDGE No.35 NGR SJ556116
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There is actually a bridge behind the trees but it is hard to see. Climb the grass bank to the right and you will come out on top of the bridge. There is also another bridge under the railway on the other side of the dual carriageway but this is on private land.

Go back to the T-junction and turn right (8.0), passing over the dual carriageway and railway. In Withington, the canal once passed behind the church on the right but it has now been completely obliterated. Just past the Hare & Hounds pub, turn left towards Rodington (10.0). Turn left at a T-junction towards Rodington (10.5) and turn right at a crossroads by 2 white houses (11.0). Be careful here as your turning is not signposted. Park on the right next to a bridge (11.4).

8	RODINGTON BRIDGE No.26 NGR SJ588142
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This is a fine brick bridge standing on its own but the canal has been completely infilled either side.

The Shrewsbury Branch was looked after by a Lengthman called Tom Adams, known locally as "Tom the Canal Man". He lived at the canal basin yard behind the railway station (now a car park). His length was from his home to the other side of Upton Magna. On his way out, Tom would clean out the canal and trim the edges and on his return journey would cut the hedges and repair the fences. Tom had a little black barge that he used for shelter and the storing of his tools. His tool kit, by modern standards, was crude, basic and simple. He managed to complete all his tasks with a scythe, a brush hook, a shovel and a few other basic tools. Very often we would see him cycling from his home to wherever he had left his barge the night before. He would then load his bicycle onto the barge and punt it to his next job.

He was a great character and took immense pride in his work. His stretch of the canal was always immaculate and a joy for the public to behold. He was good to children too. He would often let them ride on his boat and they found it great fun, even if he only moved the barge a hundred yards.

Carry on and turn right towards Longdon-on-Tern (11.5). Park next to a tunnel in the embankment on the right (11.6).