

GRAND UNION: NORTHAMPTON TO BRAUNSTON

- TRIP TYPE : 2 CARS REQUIRED
- OBJECTIVE : CYCLE FROM THE RIVER NENE END OF THE NORTHAMPTON ARM TO BRAUNSTON
- DISTANCE : 23 MILES
- TIME : 4 HOURS, 6.9 mph
- NICHOLSON : GUIDE 1, pp 84-92
- COSTS : FREE PARKING AT BOTH ENDS OF RIDE. THERE IS NO CONVENIENT STATION AT THE BRAUNSTON END
- DIFFICULTY : HARD

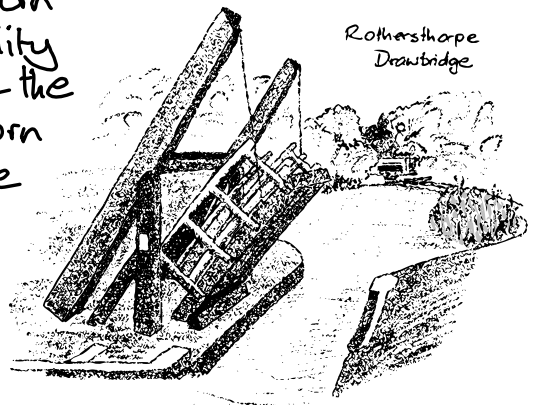


OVERVIEW : A difficult and slow ride along the poor towpath of the Grand Union canal. Especially tricky when wet. There is a big hill near the end of the ride.

Part 1 Car 1 in the car park at the Boat House pub, Braunston, NN11 7UB (have a pint after your ride to say thank you). Park Car 2 free of charge on Ring Way, Northampton, NN4 8SJ.

1. NORTHAMPTON LOCK 1 TO GAYTON JUNCTION (5m)

Ring Way is very close to the canal - access is signposted. Cut through to the canal and turn right. Cycle on the good quality towpath down to lock 1, where the canal joins the River Nene. Turn around and cycle back up the locks all the way to Gayton Junction. It is a well used towpath with lots of dog walkers in the suburban stretches. There is a steep



slope at the lock under the M1. Going under the last bridge approaching the junction there is a sharp left turn and a short, steep uphill - be warned!

2. GAYTON JUNCTION TO HORTON JUNCTION (13 MILES)

Once you've climbed the steep slope to the road turn left and cross the bridge to continue north on the Grand Union main line.

At the junction the towpath follows the canal round to the right. The towpath condition immediately becomes worse:

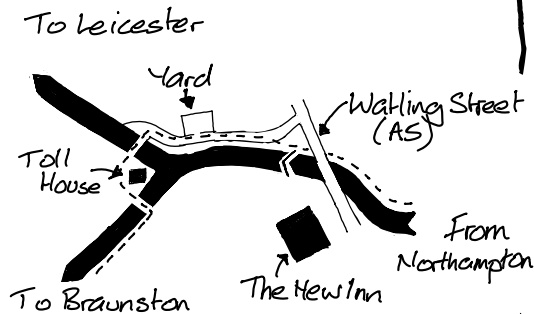
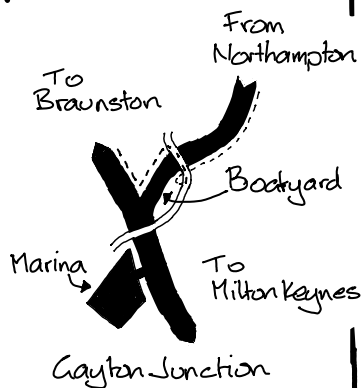
grassy, muddy when wet, with potholes, tree roots and rocks.

It is narrow, and slopes precariously towards the water in places. It is very slow going for a considerable distance, and not suitable for beginners or children.

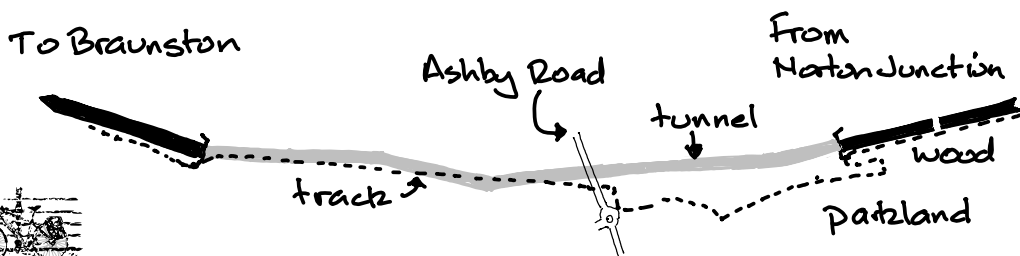
There are plenty of pubs for refreshment along the way, but most are on the opposite side to the towpath. Just before you reach Horton Junction the New Inn is right by the A5, Watling Street.

3. HORTON JUNCTION TO BRAUNSTON (4M)

The Leicester branch goes off to the right. To continue on the main line carry your bike over the footbridge 20 metres up



the Leicester branch, then follow the track round the back of the Toll House. Cross a second bridge, then turn right onto the towpath. The quality of the towpath improves with a good, hard, flat surface.



At Braunston Tunnel head up the slope just before the tunnel entrance. The track doubles back on itself. As it does, there is a scruffy path down and to your right towards parkland. There is a "towpath diversion" sign which is easy to miss. Once through the muddy gateway to the park, cross the meadows onto a good path on which you turn right. At the T junction of major paths turn right again and follow this path up a hill to a roundabout. Turn right along the old road cycle path. As the short path emerges onto the main road cross over and head up an un-named rutted track straight uphill. At the top take a breath, then continue down the other side. At the foot some steps lead back to the canal towpath.

There are steep slippery slopes going down Braunston locks, and tricky bridge corners to navigate.

Pass Braunston Marina and The Congozlers Rest Café, and just before the A45 road bridge take the short path through shrubs up to the road. Turn right and the Boat House is 200m on your left. The pub serves food all day.