

COVENTRY AND OXFORD CANALS: COVENTRY TO RUGBY

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TRIPTYPE: SOLO CYCLE

OBJECTIVE: TAKE TRAIN FROM RUGBY TO COVENTRY, AND CYCLE BACK ALONG THE COVENTRY AND OXFORD CANALS, VIA HAWKESBURY JUNCTION

DISTANCE: 23 MILES

TIME: 3 HOURS, 8 mph

NICHOLSON: GUIDE 1, PP 48-49, 53, 142-147

COSTS: FREE PARKING AT RUGBY. TRAIN FROM RUGBY TO COVENTRY £5.90 (11 MINS, 3 PER HOUR BUT USE LONDON NORTHWESTERN / WEST MIDLANDS IF YOU HAVEN'T BOOKED A SPACE

DIFFICULTY: MODERATE (EASY ON FIRST SECTION)

OVERVIEW: An interesting ride, with contrasting conditions, the first half coming out of Coventry being easy going, but the second half from Hawkesbury Junction much more tricky towpath-wise. There's a good lunch pub at Hawkesbury Junction (also a nice place to picnic), and a very nice café/bar to finish.

Make sure you have lights on your bike for the Mewbold Tunnel.

1. TRAIN FROM RUGBY TO COVENTRY, THEN TO COVENTRY BASIN

Park your car in Hawkins Road, Rugby CV21 1BP for free. Cycle down Boughton Road, turn right into

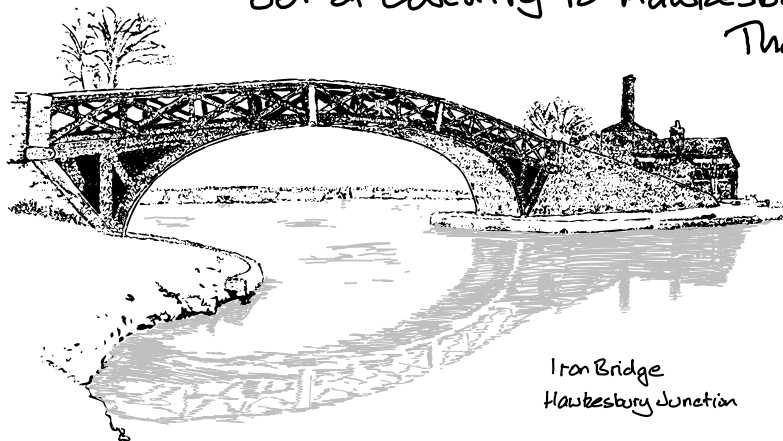
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Mill Road to station. Trains to Coventry generally go from platform 1 (use the lift). Use a London North Western / West Midlands (they are the same company) train rather than an inter-city, as these do not need cycle reservations.

Emerging from Coventry station main entrance go straight ahead across the A4053 (which is traffic-calmed) and bear left across Greyfriars Green to join Queen Victoria Road (again, very calm). Continue as the road bears slightly right around the shopping centre. Once you reach Bishop Street turn left (it is one-way, so use the pavement or walk). As you approach the ring road there is a pedestrian ramp to your right, which takes you directly to the canal basin - you will see the big murals. Enter to the far (north) side of the small basin, which is still undergoing renovation (May 2022).

2. COVENTRY BASIN TO HAWKESBURY JUNCTION (5M)

Once past the basin the towpath switches to the right, over a steep bridge. It is of excellent quality all the way out of Coventry to Hawkesbury Junction.

There are shallow steps over the entrance to the small basin at Stobe Weath.



Iron Bridge
Hawkesbury Junction

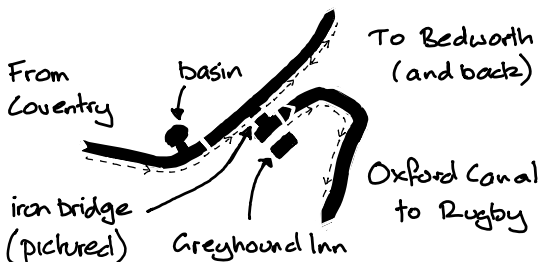
The canal passes close to the Coventry Arena, sometime home of Coventry City FC, as well as Wasps Rugby Union club.

3. HAWKESBURY JUNCTION TO BEDWORTH BRIDGE 13 AND BACK (2 MILES)

You only need to do this bit if you want to meet up with the adjoining ride from Bedworth northwards.

Cross the beautiful cast iron bridge and continue north.

Hawkesbury Junction



The towpath immediately becomes much poorer with a narrow earth path, tree roots, sloping and muddy when wet. Turn round at bridge 13 and return to the junction. If you time it right you can have lunch and a pint at The Greyhound Inn.

4. HAWKESBURY JUNCTION TO RUGBY (13.5 MILES)

The ride continues along the right-hand side of the canal, the same side as The Greyhound Inn. Although designated as 'The Oxford Canal Walk' the towpath is very poor and unmaintained in places. There are long stretches of mud and grass with tree roots, stones, and it is narrow and muddy when wet.

The towpath is on the right all the way. There is only 1 lock, which is by the junction. The canal varies between contour and cut and fill, with the cut and fill sections having the slightly better riding conditions. There are some stretches providing relief, including a half mile of 1 foot wide concrete paving at Ansty.

The canal passes under the M69, and then the M6. It also runs alongside the Rugby to Munceton mainline railway, and crosses the Fosse Way at Brinklow.

The Newbold Tunnel is 232m long. The towpath continues through the tunnel, with a hand rail. It is narrow as well as dark so you will need your lights. Try to avoid meeting a man with a baby in a backpack half way through as I did, as it was a bit nerry. As the canal approaches the A426 on the outskirts of Rugby the old disused canal heads north.

The towpath is excellent from the end of the tunnel to the end of the ride, which finishes at the Clilden Road Bridge (bridge 66), where you can relax inside or out with coffee and cake or a cold beer at the Canal Lounge just across the bridge. They also have decent wash facilities if you are somewhat sweaty by this time.



To return to your car cross back over the bridge from the café down to the roundabout. Turn right along Butlers heap, and Hawkins Road is 3/4 mile along on the right, past the turn to the station you took earlier.