

CALDON CANAL

1

TRIP TYPE : 2 CARS REQUIRED

OBJECTIVE : CYCLE FROM ETRURIA JUNCTION (STAKE) TO LEEK, BACK TO HAZELHURST JUNCTION, THEN TO FROGHALL WHARF.

DISTANCE : 23 MILES

TIME : 3½ HOURS, 8.3 mph

NICHOLSON : GUIDE 4, PP 15-21

COSTS : FREE PARKING AT BOTH ENDS OF RIDE

DIFFICULTY : MODERATE

OVERVIEW : A rural ride once out of the Stoke conurbation. Etruria Industrial Museum is by the junction at the beginning of the ride. Towpaths are generally good, with a few difficult parts. Park Car 1 in the car park at Froghall Wharf, by Helty's Tea Shop, ST10 2UL. It's free, and you can park overnight. Park Car 2 on a side street near Etruria Park, ST1 4BL - also free of charge.

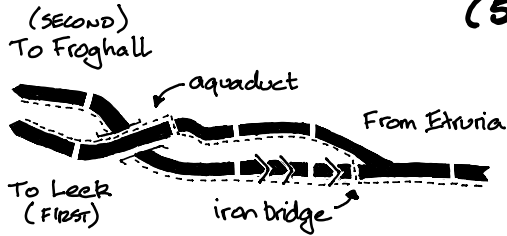
1. ETRURIA TO HAZELHURST JUNCTION (9.3 M)

From Etruria Park take the ramp up to the A53, Etruria Road. Cross the bridge, go down opposite ramp to towpath and head south.

Cross the bridge past the lock and follow Caldon Canal signs. There is an excellent towpath all the way out of Hanley. At Stanley Bridge it changes sides and becomes compacted gravel, but still good.

At Hazelhurst Junction cross the black and white iron bridge, and continue along the right-hand canal towards Leek. Although this seems counter-intuitive, the canals cross at the aquaduct after ½ mile.

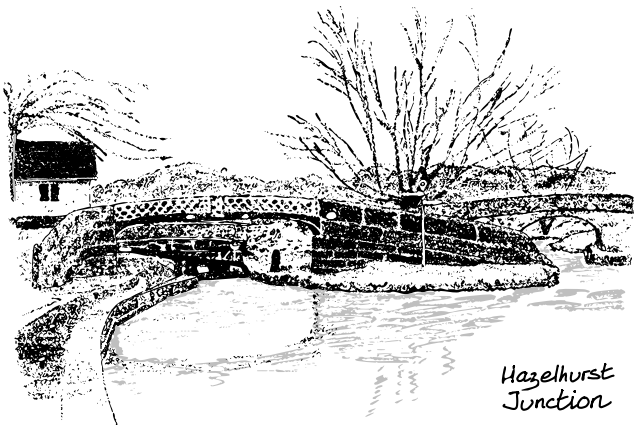
2. HAZELHURST JUNCTION TO LEEK AND BACK (5.6 MILES)



The first section, from the junction to the aquaduct, is very poor: earth and grass, puddled, narrow - but only for half a mile. The Leek branch then crosses the Froghall branch, and the towpath improves. There is a bumpy, stony section before the elbow near the Sutherland Road bridge. Apart from a few branches, the going is OK up to the tunnel, where you are faced with a steep ascent.

There are several sets of steps, and a tricky gate, up over the tunnel, then a long descent with speed-restricting bollards. The towpath is soft earth for the last half mile.

The innocuous end of the canal is near an industrial estate, but a good distance from Leek town centre. Have a Tunnock bar, then return to Hazelhurst junction.



Hazelhurst
Junction

3. HAZELHURST JUNCTION TO FROGHALL (8M)

Once at the junction cross back over the bridge and head down the locks. The towpath is initially in good condition, but deteriorates as you press on, particularly on the river section, where it is muddy, sloping and narrow in stretches.

At The Black Lion cross the bridge and continue on the towpath, which is on the left. However, a stop at The Black Lion is a must: in the middle of nowhere, serving a good range of beers and ciders as well as food, and with the Churnet Valley Steam Railway running through its garden. The railway doesn't run a regular service, just specials, and so can't be incorporated into the travel itinerary.

It's a couple more miles to Froghall Tunnel, by which time the canal is very narrow. Go up the slope to the road, and the path continues immediately opposite. At the far end of the 75 yard tunnel the towpath continues for a further 400 yards to the wharf, where you will find the busy Hetty's Tea Shop.



Stanier 8F No. 8624 passes The Black Lion, Caldon Canal

