

# GRAND UNION AND OXFORD CANALS: LEAMINGTON SPA TO RUGBY

TRIP TYPE: SOLO CYCLE

OBJECTIVE: TAKE TRAIN FROM RUGBY TO LEAMINGTON SPA, AND CYCLE BACK ALONG THE GRAND UNION AND OXFORD CANALS VIA NAPTON JUNCTION TO RUGBY.

DISTANCE: 26 MILES

TIME: 3½ HOURS, 7.4 mph

NICHOLSON: GUIDE 3, pp 119-124, 141-143

COSTS: FREE PARKING AT RUGBY. TRAIN FROM RUGBY TO LEAMINGTON SPA £10.10, 2 PER HOUR

DIFFICULTY: MODERATE

OVERVIEW: Not an easy ride, with many stretches of difficult towpath, especially between Napton Junction and Braunston. Mostly rural, plenty of locks (most of which are rising) and lots of moorings and travelling boats. There are several pubs between Leamington Spa and Braunston, but none after that until the end of the ride.



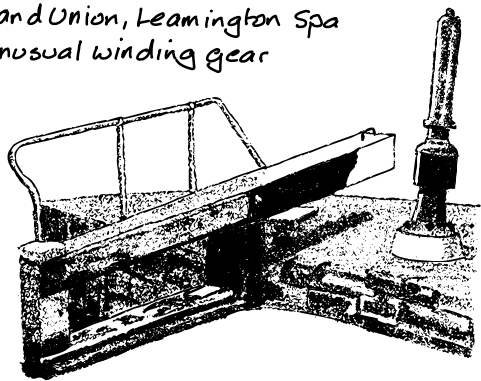
## 1. TRAIN FROM RUGBY TO LEAMINGTON SPA, CYCLE TO NAPTON JUNCTION (11 MILES)

Park your car in Hawkins Road, Rugby CV21 1BP for free. Cycle down Boughton Road, turn right into Mill Road to station. Trains to Coventry generally go from Platform 1 (use the lift). Use a London Northwestern / West Midlands train (they are the same company) rather than inter-city, as these do not need reservations. Change at Coventry for Leamington Spa.

Emerging from Leamington Spa station (which is undergoing substantial changes to the forecourt as of summer 2022), turn left then immediately right at the lights onto Tachbrook Road. The canal bridge is 100m up and access is on the right. Cycle west along the towpath (i.e. back under the bridge), which is formed of compacted earth and gravel, but decent quality.

Heading out of town, bridge 32 is where Fosse Way (the old Roman Road) crosses the canal. Shortly after is Welsh Road Bridge, which has a very steep concrete slope - you will need to walk your bike up here. The ride is rural, with plenty of locks all of which have unusual winding gear. The towpath slowly deteriorates, it is not maintained and will definitely be difficult when wet.

Grand Union, Leamington Spa  
- unusual winding gear



Bascoke Locks has a 2-Flight staircase, and Stackton Locks is an 8 lock flight, so plenty of engineering to cycle at.

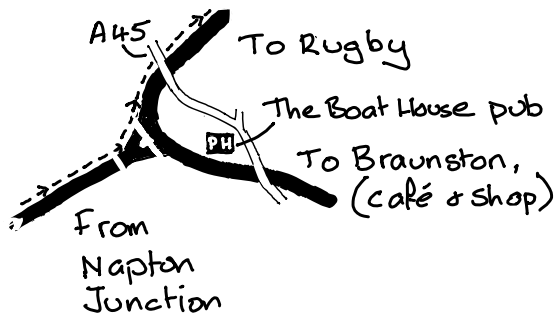
Turn left at the junction.

## 2. NARTON JUNCTION TO BRAUNSTON (5 MILES)

The towpath is initially very tricky with potholes, worn banking tree roots and stones. You will need to walk your bike round some of these obstacles.

Approaching Braunston Junction the last couple of miles are much improved as they are used by walkers from Braunston.

### Braunston Junction



Taking lunch at Braunston is recommended - there are pubs, a café, or have your sandwiches on the cast iron bridge over the junction.

## 3. BRAUNSTON TO RUGBY (8 MILES)

The towpath is again very poor heading north from Braunston Junction. There are dangerous potholes, tree roots and a sloping, narrow towpath - you will need to walk your bike at several points.

Things improve as you go under the mainline railway at Bridge 73, and the last couple of miles are thankfully straight-forward. The ride ends at Bridge 66, where refreshments in the form of coffee and cake, or a cold beer, await at the Canal Lounge café/bar over the bridge.

To return to your car, cycle back over the bridge down to the roundabout, turn right along Butlers Leap, and Hawkins Road is about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile along on your right, past the turn to the station you took earlier.

