

PENK RIDGE TO FRADLEY JUNCTION

STAFFS & WORCESTER, TRENT & MERSEY CANALS

1

TRIP TYPE: SOLO CYCLE

OBJECTIVE: TAKE THE TRAIN FROM LICHFIELD TRENT VALLEY TO PENKRIDGE. CYCLE FROM PENKRIDGE TO FRADLEY JUNCTION ALONG THE STAFFS AND WORCESTER, AND TRENT AND MERSEY CANALS.

DISTANCE: 28 MILES (INCLUDING INITIAL RIDE TO STATION)

TIME: 3.5 HOURS, 7.5 mph

NICHOLSON: GUIDE 4, pp 126-129, 143-147

COSTS: SMALL CHARGE TO PARK AT THE CANAL & RIVER TRUST CAR PARK BY THE LAUGHING DUCK CAFÉ (THERE ARE A FEW FREE PLACES ON THE ROAD NEARBY). TRAIN FROM LICHFIELD TRENT VALLEY TO PENKRIDGE £12.50, 1 PER HOUR



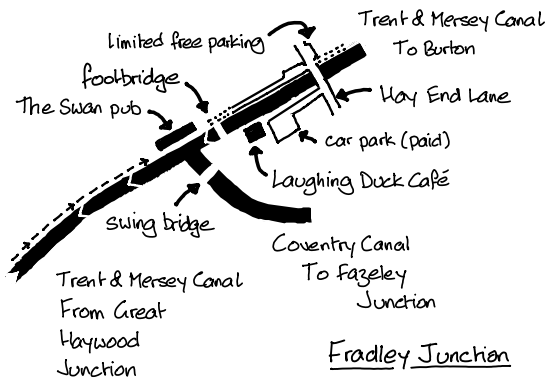
DIFFICULTY: MODERATE

OVERVIEW: A fairly straightforward ride, but with tricky bumpy towpaths most of the way, hence it is categorised as MODERATE. There is no railway station close to Fradley Junction, and so there is a 20 minute ride to catch the train before starting the ride proper. There is a decent pub at the end of the ride, right on the junction.

1. FRADLEY JUNCTION TO THE BOAT INN, PENKRIDGE (4.7 MILES CYCLING)

Park your car in The Laughing Duck Cafe car park, DE13 7DN, which has a small charge for the day. There is limited free parking on Hay End lane, over the canal bridge. Parking spaces along the road on the opposite bank of the canal to the café, heading from Hay End lane towards The Swan, are for disabled badge holders only.

Cycle back along the café access road to Hay End Lane and turn right by the bridge. At the crossroads turn right on Horse Lane. At the roundabout turn right onto Wood End Lane, then left on Netherstowe Lane (cycle route 54)



which winds (or weeds) its way to the outskirts of Lichfield. At the crossroads with the A5192 Eastern Avenue turn left, and continue to the roundabout with the A5127, Trent Valley Road. Turn left, then after 100m bear right down to Lichfield Trent Valley station. Trains to Stafford go from Platform 1, the side at which you arrive. Change at Stafford for Penkridge. There is only 5 minutes to catch the connection, but there is another train 5 minutes later (as of summer 2023).

Use the ramp to exit the raised platform at Penkridge Station. Head slightly left down Station Road, and turn right by the church onto St. Michael's Square and down to Clay Street/Stone Cross. Turn left then bear right at the square onto Mill Street, then right on Bell Brook. At the T junction with Cannock Road turn left, down to The Boat Inn, where you meet the canal.

2. PENKRIDGE TO GREAT HAYWOOD JUNCTION (10 MILES)

Head north on the towpath (i.e. turn left by The Boat Inn, before the bridge). The canal passes the backs of houses and gardens as it heads out of town, and is mainly earth, with a few sections

of compacted earth and gravel. A mile out of Pentridge Teddesley Road runs alongside the canal. You can take the road for an easier ride, but go back to the towpath at the lock, before the road crosses the canal, and drop under the road to continue on the towpath.

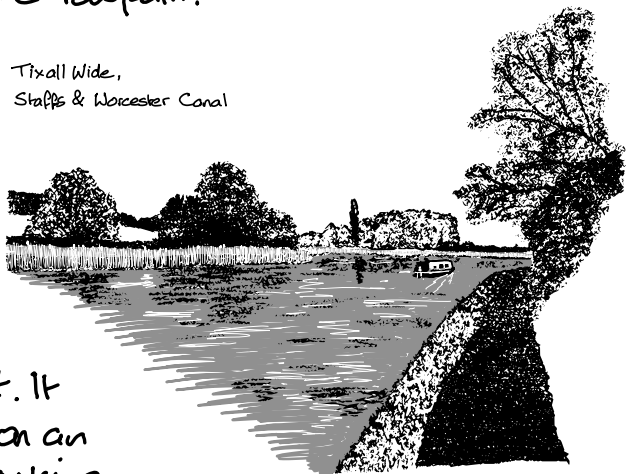
The towpath continues to be challenging as the canal continues round the edge of Stafford, then

improves for a couple of miles past Lockers

Garage, then turns east. It crosses the River Saw on an aqueduct before approaching

Tixall Wide, a beautiful stretch of reed-lined water, before arriving at Great Haywood Junction, where there is a farm shop and café on the opposite side to the boatyard. Turn right at the junction onto the Trent & Mersey Canal.

Tixall Wide,
Staffs & Worcester Canal

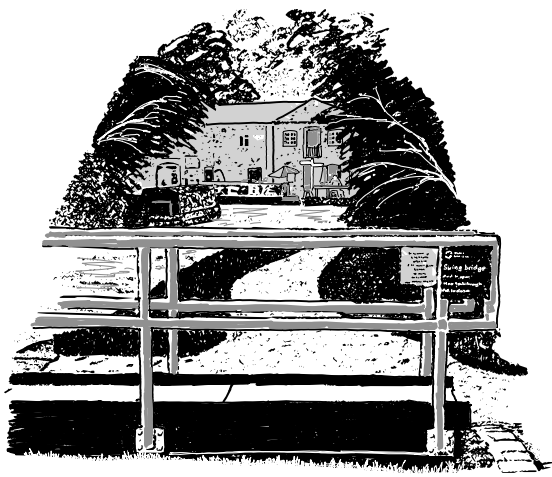


3. GREAT HAYWOOD JUNCTION TO FRADLEY JUNCTION (14 MILES)

The towpath is decent for a couple of miles (generally it is better on the Trent & Mersey than the Staffs & Worcester) but once past Rugeley and into the countryside there are tree roots, stones, puddles and divots to contend with all the same.

For the final 1½ miles of the ride renovation of the towpath is taking place (as of summer 2023), and I had to detour

From Bromley Keys along the A515, then Wood End Lane, Gorse Lane, and Hay End Lane back to the junction. Hopefully you have a more straightforward run in along the metalled section to Fradley Junction.



Approaching Fradley Junction

The Swan is a decent pub (apparently the most photographed pub in Britain), serving 4 beers and food, and is open all day. It can be accessed from the café car park via the bridge at the lock. The Laughing Duck Café is open until 1530 for coffee and cake if you prefer.

Note: the drawing above shows the approach to the junction along the Coventry Canal (i.e. on the Fazeley Junction to Borken side).

