

# WOLVERHAMPTON TO NANTWICH SHROPSHIRE UNION CANAL, AND OTHERS

1

TRIP TYPE: SLOW CYCLE OVER 2 DAYS

OBJECTIVE: CYCLE FROM WOLVERHAMPTON TO NANTWICH UP THE SHROPSHIRE UNION CANAL OVER 2 DAYS. TAKE THE TRAIN FROM NANTWICH BACK TO WOLVERHAMPTON.

DISTANCE: 47 MILES (42 MILES WITHOUT THE DIVERSION TO HINSTOCK)

TIME: 7 HOURS, 6.7 MPH

NICHOLSON: GUIDE 2 PP 44-45, GUIDE 4 PP 89-105

COSTS: FREE PARKING IN WOLVERHAMPTON. OVERNIGHT STOP AS NECESSARY. TRAIN FROM NANTWICH TO WOLVERHAMPTON £23.20, 1 OR 2 PER HOUR

DIFFICULTY: HARD

OVERVIEW: A very difficult ride which I would recommend you undertake over 2 days (if at all) - it's too much to tackle all at once due to the very poor conditions on the Shropshire Union Mainline towpath. There are several miles of overgrown towpaths, nettles, brambles and long grass. Make sure you wear long trousers and sleeves otherwise, like me, you will be covered in rashes and scratches. There are contrasts to admire between the industrial architecture and urban surroundings of the Wolverhampton locks, the long stretches of rural scenery, and the tourist trap of Audlem with its scenic locks.

You will need to plan and book your stopover point if doing the ride over 2 days. I chose Hinstock, which gave me the shorter of the rides on the second day, and I found a decent Airbnb, albeit a few miles from a pub that served food. There is a caravan park (and food) at The Wharf Tavern. Otherwise Market Drayton is a possibility another 5 miles on, and a

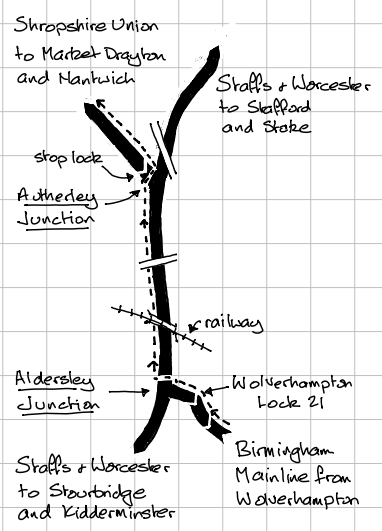
Few other villages and pubs close to the canal, but there is not a huge choice of lodgings.

### 1. WOLVERHAMPTON TO AUTHERLEY JUNCTION (2.1 MILES)

Park your car in Yarwell Close, Wolverhampton, WV10 0AP, at the far end of the street, by the factory wall. It is a quiet back street and seems safe enough for an overnight stop. If you are not comfortable with this, use the car park at Wolverhampton Station.

At the far end of Yarwell Close there is a path through to Cannock Road, A460. Turn left onto the road and shortly take the path down to your left before Cannock Road Bridge to the canal, arriving at lock 5. Turn right on the towpath and continue down the remainder of the 21 Wolverhampton locks to Aldersley Junction. At Fox's Lane Bridge it is easier to go over rather than navigate down the twisty and slippery path.

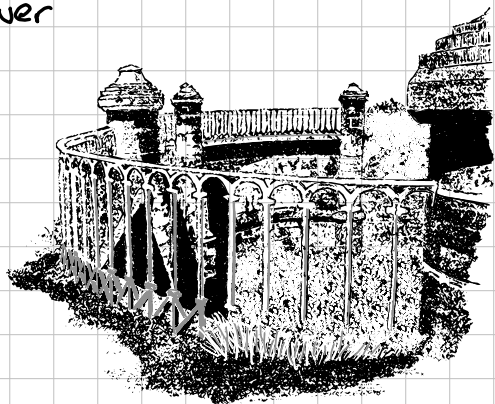
Turn right at the junction and cross the footbridge to the far bank of the Staffs and Worcester Canal then turn right (north). Cycle the short distance up to Autherley Junction on the metalled towpath.



## 2. AUTHERLEY JUNCTION TO WHARF INN, GOLDSTONE (23 MILES)

Cross the bridge at the junction and continue a further 20m, then turn left on cycle route 81. Where the cycle route bears off to the right, continue on the towpath, which deteriorates to grass and an earth track, which further worsens to just grass.

At Brewood things improve for a short while, with compacted earth and gravel. You pass over Watling Street (A5) on the interesting and impressive Stretton Aqueduct. There is just one switch to the opposite bank, at Turnover Bridge 26.



Stretton Aqueduct  
Shropshire Union Canal

There is another improvement in conditions through Gnosall, but they soon worsen again. In general the wooded sections are a bit easier as there is less undergrowth getting in your way.

At Norwood Junction pass over the bridge leading to the short dry dock section, then the towpath continues on the left. Although there are some good sections, there are several stretches with nettles, thistles, long grass and no visible path, especially towards the end of this section. Continue to Goldstone Bridge 55, by The Wharf Inn, by which time you will have battled through several miles of canalside jungle.



Hinstock is a further 2 miles away (west) if you are stopping overnight here. Market Drayton is a further 5 hard miles on if you can bear to continue.

### 3. WHARF INN, GOLDSTONE TO NANTWICH (17 M)

The first 2 miles heading north from The Wharf Inn are almost unrideable due to the unkempt overgrown towpath. You can avoid this stretch by heading west from the Wharf Inn, then taking the A529 road a couple of miles north, rejoining the canal by turning right down Tyrley Road by the Four Aids Inn, and arriving at Tyrley locks. The locks are in a dramatic rock-lined cutting which will impress you, however the towpath, although wide, is muddy and slippery to ride at this point.

The section through Market Drayton is good, but soon reverts to grass once out of town. There continue to be long sections of grassed towpath with no obvious path, bumps and overhanging branches, but at least not so many nettles and brambles.

Next comes Adderley locks, where things are better for a short while, then the busy Audlem locks, at the foot of which the village offers shops and pubs.

Continue along a fairly boring final few miles to Nantwich Aqueduct, where the B5341, Welsh Row (a historic street), passes underneath. Cross the aqueduct, continue past the steps, and take the



Milepost at Audlem locks  
Shropshire Union Canal

Sloping path which doubles back down to the road, emerging at a crossroads. Continue on Welsh Row into the town centre.

If you are heading straight to the station cross the River Weaver and turn right on Waterlode, following this round to the station. However I would recommend a short diversion to Ebenezer's, just off Castle Street, on your way, which has an excellent range of craft beers, but no food. You can lock your bike up by the entrance, which is round the back of the building (the bar is upstairs in the old cinema building).

Take the train back to Wolverhampton, changing at Crewe or Shrewsbury, depending which service you catch. Coming out of Wolverhampton Station go straight ahead (as of April 2023 the area is being pedestrianised, and a tram route installed). Cross the bridge over the ring road (the canal is underneath but you can't see it). Turn right along the footpath to A1450, Wednesfield Road. Cross this, then drop down to the towpath and continue north (away from the station) to lock 5. Take the slope up to Cannock Road, turn right, then right again to cut through to Yarwell Close and your car.

