

BANBURY TO HEYFORD OXFORD CANAL

1

TRIP TYPE: SOLO CYCLE

OBJECTIVE: CYCLE FROM BANBURY TO LOWER HEYFORD ALONG THE OXFORD CANAL, RETURNING BY TRAIN FROM HEYFORD.

DISTANCE: 17 (HARD) MILES

TIME: 3 HOURS, 4.8 mph

NICHOLSON: GUIDE 1 pp 159-165

COSTS: FREE PARKING IN BANBURY. TRAIN FROM HEYFORD TO BANBURY £5.60, INFREQUENT

DIFFICULTY: HARD

OVERVIEW: A very difficult ride which should only be attempted if you are determined to complete the set. The towpath is at best poor and bumpy, at worst non-existent where the banking has collapsed. A major road detour is required where the towpath has disappeared, and a cow field is involved too. I was intending to ride from Banbury to Oxford, but I was exhausted by the time I reached lower Heyford, such was the difficulty. If you do fancy going a bit further, there is a station 3 miles on at Tackley, and Oxford Parkway is a further 6 miles, with Oxford itself another 3. I have split it into 2 rides, with lower Heyford to Oxford described elsewhere.

1. BANBURY TO TWYFORD WHARF (3 MILES)

Park in Queens Road, Banbury, OX16 0ED, free of charge and no restrictions. Turn right on Bath Road, and left into Peoples Park, which is walking only. Cross the park and take the passage to West Bar Street, BT035. Cross the road and head down to the right-hand side of St. Mary's Church through the pedestrian precinct, emerging at Market Place. Turn left just

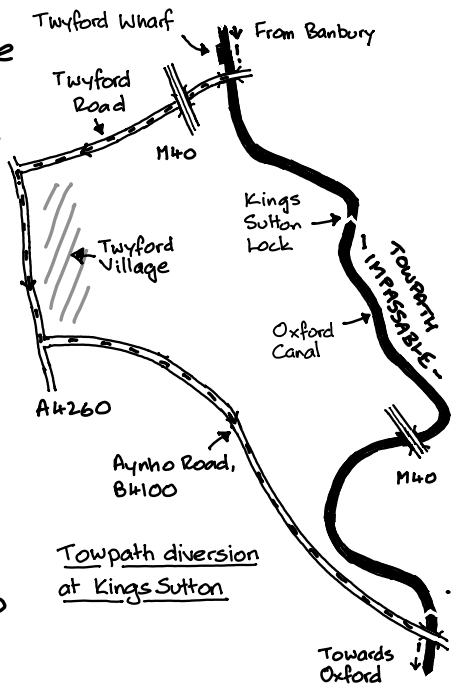
before the A4260 junction towards Mill Art Centre, and join the canal at the lock. Turn right on the canal.

As you head out of Banbury the towpath quickly becomes poor. It is a narrow mud strip, bumpy even before you get out of town.

NOTE: The section between Twyford Wharf and Aynho is unrideable due to bank erosion, vegetation, breaches and an unmaintained towpath (as of Summer 2024) - you need to leave the canal at the wharf as the track leading up to the road at Kings Sutton is private access only.

2. TWYFORD WHARF TO AYNHO DIVERSION (3 MILES)

Head up the steep hill on Twyford Road to the A4260. Turn left, continue 1/2 mile through the village then turn left onto Aynho Road, B4100. Continue down to the canal bridge and rejoin the towpath, turning right.



3. AYNHO TO LOWER HEYFORD (9.5 MILES)

Things are a bit better for a while then conditions worsen again, with grass, roots, stones and a rutted surface. Once past Somerton Bridge (1866) there is no towpath just a difficult to follow trail through fields with cattle. The path veers away from the canal up a short, steep slope before

rejoining the canal 400m further on.

The approach to Heyford is better and - good news at last - The Bell Inn is open all day.

3. LOWER HEYFORD TO BANBURY (1 MILE CYCLING)

Trains from Heyford station back to Banbury are infrequent and it may be easier to take one south to Oxford then back to Banbury (a more frequent, more direct service).

Arriving back at Banbury station, head along Station Approach to Bridge Street. Turn left across the canal, cross the A4260 to Market Place, and follow the one-way system up past St. Mary's Church. Cross West Bar Street to People's Park, and then to Queens Road and your car.



