

10.5 Netherton Tunnel

13 Dudley Port Junction with BCN Main Line

Tipton Factory Locks (3)

14.5 Factory Junction

15.5 Coseley Stop & Tunnel

19.5 Wolverhampton Locks (21)

22 Aldersley Junction with the Staffs. & Worcester Canal

side drains eventually to the North Sea. The tunnel was completed in 1859 and was the 'newest' in the country until the Singing Cavern tunnel was completed in 1984 (see below).

Almost immediately after the tunnel the canal passes under Brindley's BCN Old Main Line. There are moorings and sanitary facilities here. Turn L at the junction. The main Birmingham-Wolverhampton railway runs alongside. There is a station at Dudley Port also shops, the Royal Oak (M&B) on the R and just up the road (L) the Dudley Port House (Holts).

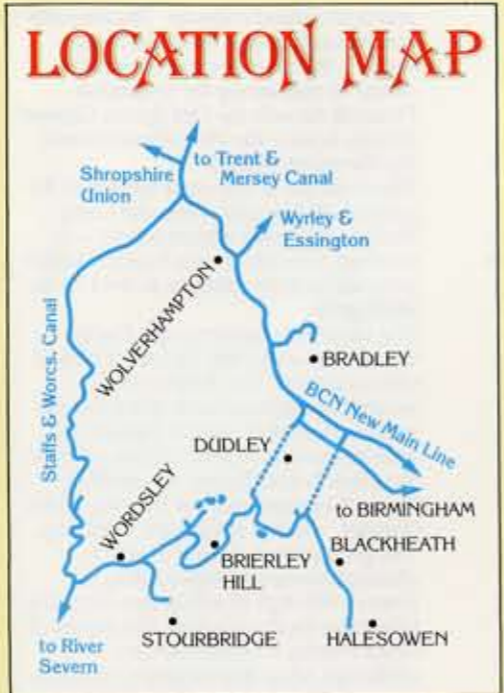
Telford's new canal continues in a straight line to the locks. Above them the Old Main Line joins on the L.

A half mile along this line is Tipton Junction where the Dudley Canal (R) leads back to the Black Country Museum and Dudley Tunnel. The Museum is a carefully reconstructed Black Country Village of Victorian times complete with shops, houses, chapel and pub as well as a boatyard and several other canal features. From here trips may be made on the Dudley Canal Trust's electrically powered narrow boats into the unique Dudley Tunnel with its open basins and the amazing 'Singing Cavern', - a former limestone mine. Also very near are Dudley Zoological Gardens & Castle. En route the canal passes Tipton with shops, the Waggon & Horses (M&B) and the Fountain (Holts) - once kept by the 'Tipton Slasher' a renowned prize fighter in his day.

Continuing north the canal enters a quiet wooded cutting. There are moorings here and shops, post office, take-away food and 5 pubs are in easy reach (L), - the New Inn (Holdens) behind the imposing chapel, the Apple Tree (Banks's) with children's room, the Royal (Courage) and the White Lion (Banks's). The main Birmingham-Wolverhampton road (A4123) is nearby with buses into those towns and Dudley and there is a railway station north of the tunnel.

The canal passes through the centre of the town and there is access to a wide range of facilities.

It is 13 miles and 18 locks south (L) through pleasant rural scenery to complete the circuit and return to Stourton Junction.

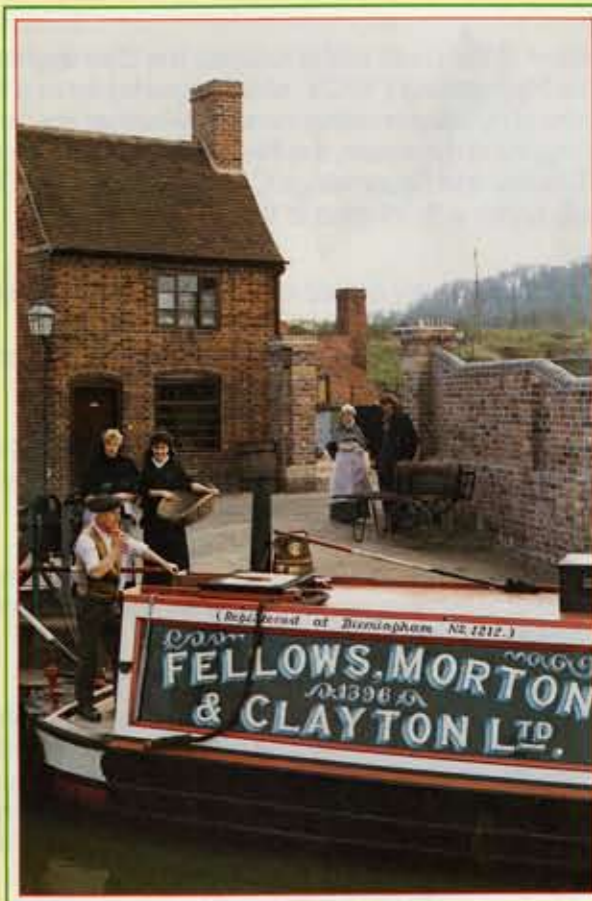


# BLACK COUNTRY CANALS

## THE DUDLEY AND STOURBRIDGE RING

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Situated at the heart of the country the Birmingham Canal Navigations ("BCN" to the experts) form a link in several holiday cruising circuits. Whether you are starting from the south, the River Severn or the north the Dudley and Stourbridge Canals with other BCN canals make a 'mini-circuit' that is different.

The Black Country canals offer a fascinating network of junctions and branches. There is a wealth of features of interest to canal enthusiasts and industrial archaeologists: locks, bridges, wharves and warehouses. The scenery varies from industrial sections to surprisingly secluded rural lengths. There are plenty of things to stop and see: – the Bonded Warehouse at Stourbridge, the Red House Glass Cone next to the canal at Wordsley, the Black Country Museum and the unique 'Singing Cavern'. Shopping is rarely a problem and the Black Country is renowned for its pubs and real ales!

This guide starts at Stourton Junction on the Staffs. & Worcester Canal, continues along the Stourbridge and Dudley Canals through Netherton Tunnel and then along the main line of the Birmingham Canal Navigations. Left and Right in the notes refer to this direction of travel: boaters coming from the north need to reverse these when reading the guide.

Miles  
0

2 Wordsley Junction  
with the  
Stourbridge  
Branch

Start of Wordsley  
Locks (16)

2.5 Wordsley Dock

3.25 Leys Junction  
with the  
Fens Branch

The Stourbridge Canal Act was passed by Parliament in 1776 and the canal completed in 1779. For 150 years it was busy with boats carrying coal, ironstone, limestone, clay, bricks and glass but traffic declined in the 1950s and it became unnavigable. After much campaigning and volunteer labour by local enthusiasts it was restored and opened in 1967. The 4 locks at Stourton are on the edge of a scattered village situated on the busy Wolverhampton-Kidderminster road. The canal follows the small River Stour as far as Wordsley Junction.

*The Stourbridge Branch runs for 1.25 miles to the Town Wharf. The recently restored Bonded Warehouse dominates the end of the canal. Here there are moorings, water and sanitation points. The warehouse and the old canal company offices opposite are now used by various community groups. The Moorings Tavern (free house) has a beer garden overlooking the canal and there is also a Chinese take-away. Stourbridge town centre is 5 minutes walk.*

The canal crosses the river and now starts to climb towards Brierley Hill. 4 locks up are the **Red House Glassworks** (R) with its historic 100 ft high cone. Visits are free and on weekdays tours may be made of the Stuart Crystal Glassworks. Also not far away (R) are the works of **Thomas Webb Crystal, Webb-Corbett and Tudor Crystal**. Free tours take about 1 hour and there are 'seconds' shops at all the works.

Just above the next lock are wharves surrounding a basin and the unusual timber warehouse known as '**Dadford's Shed**'. Two locks very close together form the '**Staircase**' next to a picturesque lock cottage. Opposite is a row of cottages including the Dock Stores & Off-licence. Wordsley High St with shops, The Rose & Crown (Davenport's) (L) and the Vine (Banks's) (R) is a short walk back along the towpath.

Near lock no. 4 is the **Sampson & Lion** (Ansell's) an old canal pub, which once had stables for the boatmen's horses. Along this stretch of canal you can see the remains of basins which once served long-vanished collieries.

*The Fens Branch is only navigable for a very short distance. Once it connected with the Stourbridge Extension Canal*

4.25 Brettell Lane

5 Black Delph  
Start of Delph  
Locks (8)

7.5 Blowers Green  
Lock  
Park Head  
Junction with  
Dudley No. 2  
Canal

*and both served collieries. The towpath can be walked right up to the Fens Pools, – the original canal reservoirs. About ½ mile along the towpath is Pensnett Rd with the Dell Sports Ground (tennis, bowls), the Fish (Banks's) and the Brewsters (M&B).*

The main line of the canal turns R at the junction. In just over a mile the Long Bridge, – formerly a short tunnel, – is reached. There is access here to Brettell Lane and a short distance to the L is the **Wellington**.

The canal now becomes the Dudley Canal. Just above the 1st lock is a basin with moorings. The Tenth Lock a recently modernised pub (Banks's) (R) and the Bell (Holt, Plant & Deakin) (L) both serve food. A short distance (R) are the Dock & Iron (Banks's), the Black Horse (Courage) and the famous 'Bull & Bladder', – home of Batham's Brewery. The ground rises steeply on the L although there are steps leading to Brierley Hill High St with shops including take-away food and cafes. The works of Royal Brierley Crystal (tours on weekdays, shop and museum) can also be reached from here. **Delph Locks**, known locally as 'The Ninelocks' are an impressive sight rising straight up the hill towards Dudley. You will be pleased to discover that there are only 8! The locks were rebuilt in the 1850s and the original flight can be seen on the R of the canal. Half-way up is one of the few surviving examples of a row of canal stables. The canal now passes in a deep, winding cutting through the former Round Oak Steelworks. The modern Woodside Bridge carries Pedmore Road across the canal. A short distance L up the road an isolated length of the Pensnett Canal survives. Next to it is the Bush Inn (M&B). This deep lock replace 2 older locks which were undermined by the Peartree Lane Colliery. Next to it stands the pump house which used to return water to the higher level. This is the 'Birmingham Level' and there are no locks now for several miles.

*At the junction the Dudley No. 1 Canal continues up through Park Head Locks to the south end of the Dudley Tunnel. This is a short walk. The tunnel is not, at present, open to boats. There is a monument commemorating the tunnel reopening in 1973 near the top lock and the line of the old Pensnett Canal can be seen.*

9.5 Withymoor Basin

10 Bumblehole  
Branch

Windmill End  
Junction

Our route follows the Dudley No. 2 (or Netherton) Canal to the R back along the other side of the Blackbrook Valley. Netherton Church is on the hill on the L. Brewin's 'tunnel', – now opened out into a deep cutting is spanned by the High Bridge. A short walk from here (R) is the **Saltwells Wood Nature Reserve**, – 15 acres of woodland with nature trails. Beyond the bridge is Lodge Farm Reservoir, – once a canal feeder but now used for water-skiing and sailing. The canal continues past once-famous ironworks on the L, Primrose Hill Basin on the R with the former Hingley's chain and anchor works opposite (where the anchor for the 'Titanic' was made) and passes under Halesowen Rd, Netherton. Immediately beyond on the L is the former railway/canal transshipment basin now landscaped and suitable for mooring. About ½ mile up the road (L) is Netherton with shops, post office, take-away food and a variety of pubs including the celebrated **Old Swan** (Pardoe's).

Shortly afterwards the buildings of Netherton are left behind and the canal emerges into the open space at the foot of the Rowley Hills. On the L the branch leads to a small boatyard with moorings and limited facilities for boats.

Ahead is the junction with the Boshboil Arm on the L and the Dudley No. 2 Canal on the R. Near the junction on the R is 'The Dry Dock' (Holdens, Ansell's) – an unusual pub as it has a narrow boat in the bar. This is the home of 'Desperate Dan' cow pies. *This canal continues for 3 miles to Coombeswood Basin following the edge of the hills giving wide views over this part of the Black Country. Passing the Wharf (free house) it dives into the amazingly small Gosty Hill tunnel, continues through the middle of the former Stewarts & Lloyds tube works and reaches the basin where there are moorings. Just beyond is the Leasowes Park originally laid out by William Shenstone, poet and 'father' of English landscape gardening in the 18th c.* The main route lies straight ahead. On the R are the ruins of **Cobb's Engine House** which used to pump water from the many coalmines in the area. The Rowley Hills are part of the watershed of England, – as we enter the 3,027 yd Netherton Tunnel we are passing from the Severn Valley, – rainfall on the far