



The old lock-keeper's house, with half-octagonal end, where the excellent visibility from the angled windows enabled the lock-keeper to see all movements on the locks from his living quarters.

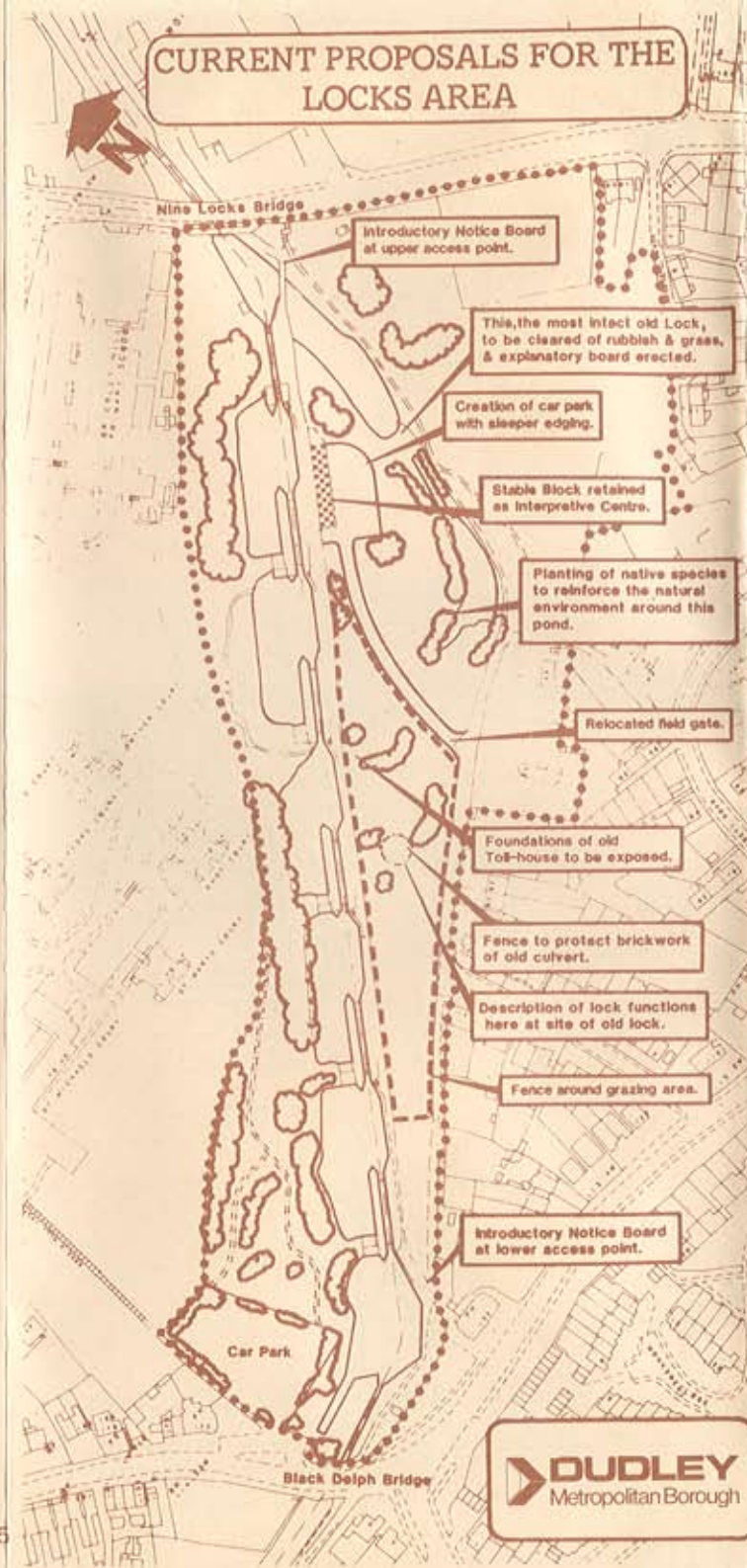


The stable block, which once housed up to 14 horses and is now being restored as an Interpretive Centre.



View down the Locks, from Nine Locks Bridge. In the foreground is the roving bridge, a protected structure as are the locks themselves. On the roving bridge parapet can be seen rope marks where generations of horses hauled boats up and down the locks.

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DELPH LOCKS CONSERVATION AREA

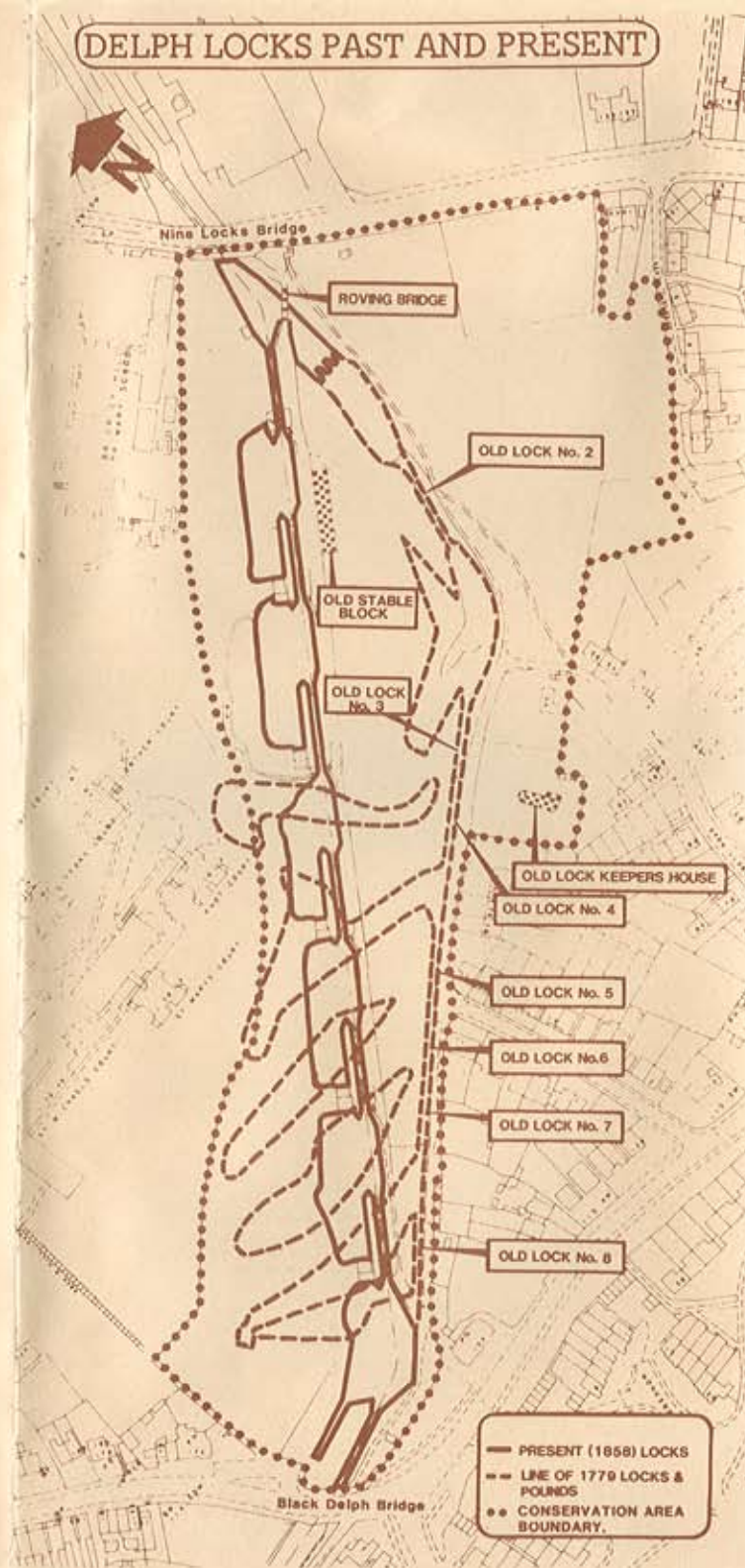


R.W. Johnson, Borough Planning Officer,
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Delph Locks was made a Conservation Area in 1976, the aim being to protect and enhance the Locks (themselves the finest surviving example of a flight of locks built at the end of the Canal era), and the land immediately adjacent, including an older flight of locks, now disused and largely filled in, a stable block and two Canal dwellings.

There have been locks at The Delph since 1779, when Thomas Dadford, Senior, Surveyor to the Dudley Canal Company, built the original nine-lock flight down a fall of 85 feet, 6 inches. These original locks were unusual in that the top two and bottom two were normal locks separated by long 'pounds' of water, but the middle five were very close together with large side pounds to cope with the steep, confined site. The Nine Locks, however, proved troublesome from the beginning, and needed fairly regular repairs due to faulty construction. Added to this, working of the local Thick coal seam in the early nineteenth century caused quite massive subsidence. By the 1850's the locks were a notorious bottleneck and needed improvement.

By this time, the Dudley Canal had been absorbed by the Birmingham Canal Navigations, and in 1856 work began on a new, improved flight of locks, largely bypassing the old flight and stepping boldly straight down the hill. The old top and bottom locks were kept, though in improved form, and six new locks were built between. Though there were now eight locks, they were still known as the "Delph Nine" by boatmen until the 1950's, and the bridge carrying Mill Street over the top lock is still called Nine Locks Bridge.



Delph Locks mark the beginning of the Dudley Canal and the navigation link between the West Midlands and the West of England, standing as they do on the western edge of the Black Country plateau. Since they are such an important route, Delph Locks have been designated a 'Cruiseway', ensuring that they remain open for leisure cruising.

This, and the changing attitude to the value of canals in the 1970's, prompted the locks' designation as a Conservation Area in 1976, and led the British Waterways Board to carry out a major environmental improvement scheme in 1979 whereby lock quadrants were reinstated, the tow path wall rebuilt, and the roving bridge refurbished.

Dudley Council in 1980 began a restoration scheme at the old stables block, adjoining the locks, and the latest stage of this restoration and landscaping of the whole locks area will result in an Interpretive Centre and an archaeological trail to expose the line of the 1779 lock flight, together with a general environmental improvement.

If you would like to know more about the Delph Locks Conservation Area, ring Dudley 456000 ext. 4188 and ask for Brian Moore or David Piggott.