

Stoke-on-Trent
to Froghall



Heritage Canoe Trail

A fantastic route through living history and beautiful countryside for paddlers
of all ages and abilities



stoke.gov.uk/CityOfSport16



Canal &
River Trust



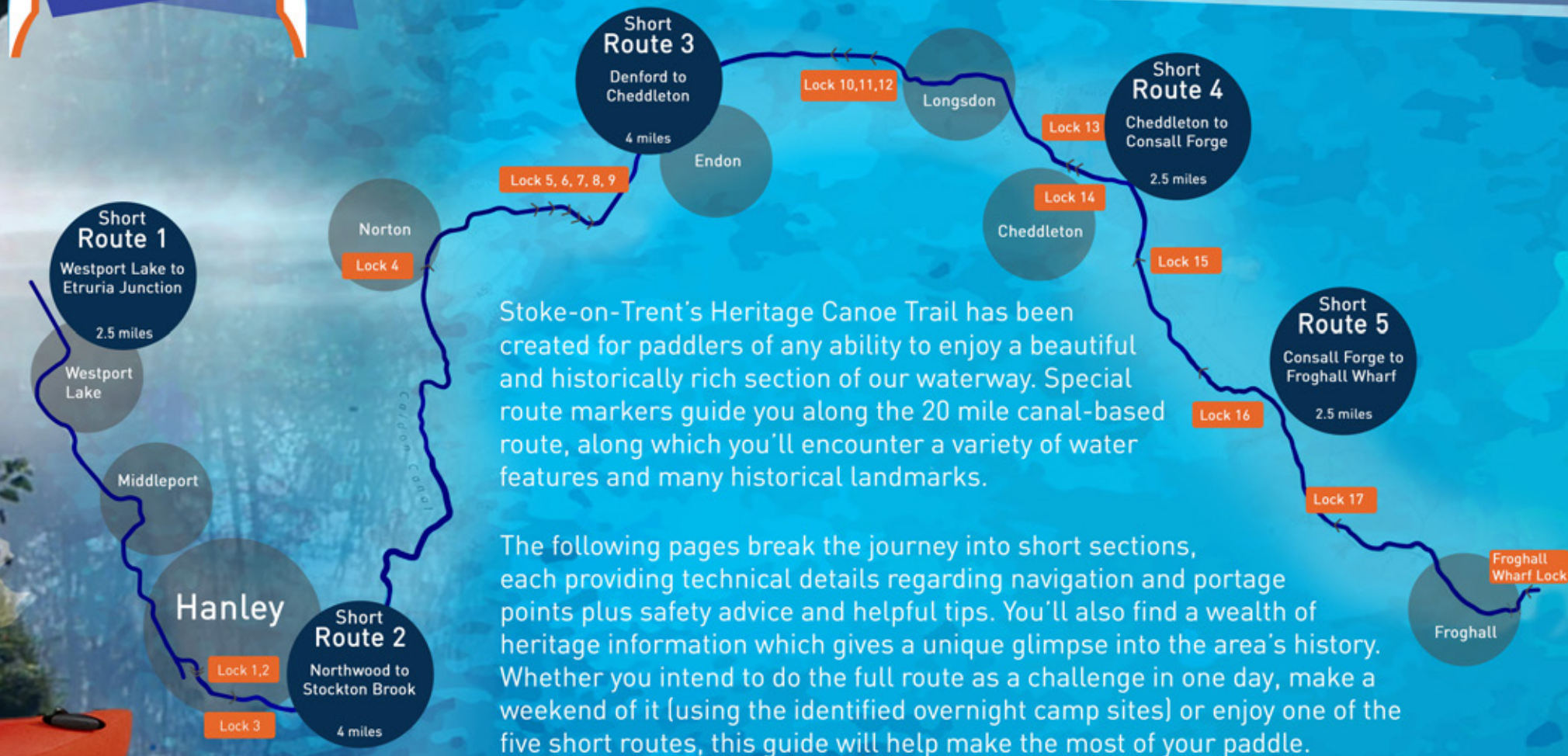
City of
Stoke-on-Trent





Discover the Journey

Stoke-on-Trent to Froghall



Welcome to the Heritage Canoe Trail

Paddle sports are a fantastic activity which offer open air fun throughout the year for people of all ages and abilities. Our Heritage Canoe Trail runs along the Trent & Mersey and Caldon canals from Westport Lake in Stoke-on-Trent right through to Froghall Wharf in the Staffordshire Moorlands. It has been designed so that users can do as much or as little as they like - from our five short course routes to the full trail length, there's something for everyone.

Those who have not paddled before will experience a truly unique perspective of the city and its surroundings as well as get a sense of tranquillity seldom found in an urban area. This guide will help visitors gain a real feel for the city's heritage and its surrounding areas, much of which has been shaped by the canals. Along the way there are all sorts of local attractions on offer that are well worth visiting.



Councillor Terence Follows
Cabinet Member for Greener City, Development and Leisure

The Heritage Canoe trail is a project funded by Stoke-on-Trent City Council and British Canoeing to help celebrate the city's year as European City of Sport in 2016.

How to access the Heritage Canoe Trail

There are many points where you can join or leave the trail. If you choose to try other locations please park considerately and use public footpaths. On the longer paddles it may be an idea to take two cars, parking at either end of your intended route.

- Westport Lake – large car park (closes at dusk) with access to the canal at bridge 127A. There is a height barrier so drivers of tall vehicles need to check this will be open.
- Etruria Industrial Museum – large car park with easy access to the canal.
- Hanley Park – two small car parks a short portage from the canal.
- Northwood Stadium – large pay and display car park a short portage from the canal.
- Stockton Brook – small car park opposite The Sportsman pub (A53 / Moss Hill turn).
- Hollybush Inn, Denford – parking on request at the pub.
- The Boat Inn, Cheddleton – parking on request at the pub.
- The Black Lion, Consall Forge – parking on request at the pub.
- Froghall Wharf – large free car park with easy access to the canal.

History and Heritage

The paddler who starts our trail at Westport Lake sits at the summit of a coast-to-coast waterway. Ahead, to the south and east, lie 60 miles of the Trent & Mersey Canal. To the north and west starts a mile-long cutting before breaking through the headland into the mile and a half long Harecastle Tunnel, crossing the Cheshire Plain before connecting with the Bridgewater Canal on its journey to the River Mersey and on to Liverpool.

But this is not just any point along the route. This is The Potteries of North Staffordshire, the place where the canal's most enthusiastic promoter, Josiah Wedgwood, and his fellow manufacturers and businessmen planned a canal well beyond the scale of anything that had been built before. Hundreds of bridges, 76 locks, several aqueducts and the first significant transport tunnel in the world, all during an age which offered little technology other than shovels, barrows and the power of men and horses.

Less than a mile away, to the north of Westport, is the site where Wedgwood broke the soil to start the canal's construction, 250 years ago. The spade-full of earth was ceremoniously barrowed away by the canal's engineer, the infamous James Brindley. Building the canal took 11 years and opened in 1777, five years after Brindley's death.

The Trent & Mersey Canal enabled The Potteries to grow, bringing white clay from Cornwall via Liverpool, flint from the south coast, and transporting finished ware safely on its way to London and the world.

Integral to this success was the 17 mile Caldon Canal to Froghall by the same company. Although the name is taken from the limestone quarries at Cauldon Lowe which it accessed, by cutting through higher ground it was able to tap into a crucial resource – water to feed the Trent & Mersey's summit level and those 76 thirsty locks. The company built Stanley Pool to catch the headwaters of the River Dane and later added larger reservoirs at Rudyard and Knypersley.

The heritage content of this guide has been researched from the paddler's point of view to highlight the routes historic sites and features, drawing attention to details that are often missed when viewed from the tow path or deck of a narrow boat.





Enjoy the trail in all kinds of ways...

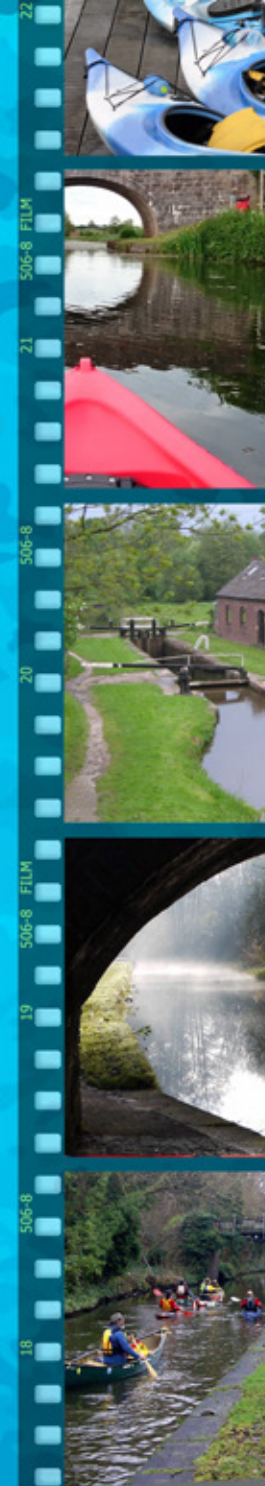
20 miles is quite a paddle for anyone but that's not the only way you can enjoy the trail. We have a number of short and medium routes for you to try and a few suggestions on how you can get the most out of your paddle, no matter how fit or experienced you are.

Route Options

How much time do you have and how far do you want to travel? We've come up with three suggestions: short trips lasting around 1-2 hours, longer trips that take most of the day (for the very fit maybe challenge yourself to complete the entire route in one go) and multi-day options.

Short Trips

1. Westport Lake to Etruria Industrial Museum, Distance 2.5 miles, (no locks). Access to the canal is from the bridge (127a) by the car park entrance. Exit the canal at the Etruria Industrial Museum car park.
2. Northwood Stadium to Stockton Brook. Distance 4 miles with four locks to portage. Access the canal at the canal bridge (13) over Cromer Road. Parking is available nearby at Northwood Stadium (pay and display). Exit the canal opposite the Sportsman pub and portage the short distance along the footpath to the small car park at the junction of the main road and Moss Hill.
3. The Hollybush Inn, Denford to the Boat Inn, Cheddleton, Distance 2 miles with two locks. Both pubs usually permit the use of their car parks on request and a visit to both for either food or a drink is recommended.
4. The Boat Inn, Cheddleton to the Black Lion, Consall Forge. Distance 2.5 miles, with two locks to portage. Again both pubs usually permit the use of their car parks on request and provide an excellent range of food and drink.
5. The Black Lion to Froghall Wharf. One way distance is 2.5 miles, including one lock to portage. Note: this route may be best done as a there and back trip starting from Froghall Wharf, visiting the Black Lion for refreshment before returning to the Froghall Wharf Visitor's free car park.



Valuing your Safety

Your time following all or part of the trail should be should be an enjoyable and memorable experience. This guide provides various sections of safety advice, hints and tips. It also offers a few suggestions which could help make things easier.

Quick Tips...

- Check the weather forecast before you set out.
- Familiarise yourself with the local area, including possible access / egress points, local facilities and any sensitive environmental areas.
- Be considerate of others when you park.
- Check your equipment is in good condition before heading off.
- Leave the environment as you found it.
- Take any litter home with you.
- Avoid unnecessarily disturbing other waterway users or wildlife.
- Take care to not damage bank side vegetation when launching or landing. Where possible keep to any designated paths or launching points.
- Canoe a safe distance away from wildlife.
- Be cautious around other water craft especially things like a canal barge that may not be very manoeuvrable.





Fancy a challenge or a longer paddle?

So you have a bit more time to enjoy yourself and want to see more of the trail in one go? That's great! We've got four medium distance routes that are perfect for a day on the water. If you have a couple of days free we have ideas for that too.

Medium and Long Distance Route Options

1. Westport Lake to Froghall Wharf. A fantastic challenge for those who think they can manage it. This is the complete Heritage Canoe Trail trail route and covers 20 miles. It will require quite fit paddlers, an early start and several hours paddling at a fairly good constant speed to complete. It's tough but you'll get a fantastic sense of achievement when you reach Froghall Wharf!

2. Westport Lake to Northwood Stadium. This 5 mile route has three locks and takes you through the more industrial part of the trail. Don't let this fool you as you will be amazed how quiet, tranquil and interesting this section is. It's a really nice day trip at a gentle pace with time to enjoy the sights and perhaps visit some of the identified points of interest.

3. Northwood Stadium camp site to The Hollybush Inn camp site is 7.5 miles and has nine locks. This section of the trail takes you out of the city into green fields along a quiet and tranquil section of the canal. Ideal for a multi-day camping trip.

4. Stockton Brook to Froghall Wharf is 10.5 miles and has eight locks. Starting in Stockton Brook this section quickly enters open countryside and ends in the beautiful wooded Churnet Valley. The route also takes you past some fantastic canal side pubs.

Trips 2, 3 and 4 above can be combined to make a fantastic multi-day canoe camping adventure using the trail camp sites detailed below:

Northwood Stadium, Cromer Road, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 6PA, 01782 234400.
A secluded location with access to toilets and fresh water, please register at the sports centre reception on arrival.

The Hollybush Inn, Denford Road, Denford, Leek, ST13 7JT 01538 371819.
Call to arrange use and for details of available facilities.

The Black Lion, Consall Forge, Wetley Rocks, ST13 0AJ, 01782 550294.
Call to arrange use and for details of available facilities.



Valuing your Safety



Locks

Never try and take your boat into a lock on the canal, these can be extremely dangerous and should always be portaged (carried around). For safety please get out a little way ahead of each lock to leave room for canal boats.

Anglers

You will encounter anglers on the canal, typically this will be no problem provided you respect their space and try to pass close to the opposite bank. Sometimes they will stop fishing to let you pass and if so a friendly thank you goes a long way.

Waterborne infections

Any activity on open water carries with it a small risk of contracting waterborne conditions such as Weil's Disease. This is the result of a bacterial infection called Leptospira.

Weil's disease is often transmitted by animal urine or by water or soil containing animal urine.

To help prevent infection, it is recommended that you cover any cuts to minimise the risk of infection and wash thoroughly after being out on the water. If you experience poor health, such as flu-like symptoms, consult your doctor as soon as possible.

For more information on Weil's Disease see the Leptospirosis page on NHS Direct.





Places to visit along the trail



This guide provides a detailed map of the trail as well as a wealth of history and heritage information. It also highlights specific places to visit along different sections of water, highlighted with a refreshment icon, (see above). We have compiled a list of these places below:

■ Westport Lake Visitors Centre

An impressive waterfront café with a children's play area and toilets set in a fantastic nature reserve.

■ Middleport Pottery & Café

Middleport Pottery, (home of Burleigh) is an exciting visitor destination in the heart of Burslem, the Mother Town of the Potteries. Step back in time to explore Victorian offices, historic collections, bottle kilns and mold store, learning about the people and events which shaped the pottery. The Middleport Pottery factory tour is unique. It offers the chance to see pottery being made using the same handcraft methods as in the 1880s. Afterwards you can relax in the café. www.middleportpottery.co.uk

■ Emma Bridgewater Factory and Café

Visit the Emma Bridgewater factory, famous for iconic Stoke-on-Trent pottery decorated with Polka dots. Not only is there a great café but pre-bookable factory tours are available as well as the opportunity to decorate your own piece of pottery. www.emmabridgewaterfactory.co.uk

■ Hanley Park

Hanley Park is a Grade II listed Victorian Park in the heart of Stoke-on-Trent. It was completed in 1897 and is currently undergoing a £6 million Heritage Lottery Fund restoration. It contains public toilets, a bandstand, pavilions, bowling green, lake, boathouse and public art. Visit to see how the park is being restored or stop off at one of the many park events. www.stoke.gov.uk/hanleypark

■ Churnet Valley Steam Railway

If the trains are running this provides an interesting way to make the shuttle between Cheddleton and Froghall. 01538 750755, www.churnet-valley-railway.co.uk

■ Pubs

For those looking to stop for a drink or something to eat there are also several fantastic pubs on route as listed below:

Toby Carvery Restaurant at Festival Park
Sportsman Arms at Stockton Brook
Red Lion at Cheddleton
Black Lion at Consall Forge

Miners Arms and The Millrace at Milton
The Holly Bush at Denford
Boat Inn at Cheddleton



Valuing your Safety



Canal Boats

On the trail you will meet canal boats travelling in one direction or the other as well as those moored up. It's important to remember that they aren't very agile. Canoes and other unpowered craft should keep out of their way to avoid accidents.

The good news is they are limited to a maximum speed of 4mph so you will normally have time to get yourself positioned out of the way.

It's generally expected that you will pass other water craft on the port (right hand) side if you are approaching a boat moving in the opposite direction.

Please remember - never place your canoe in a position where it could get caught between a canal boat and the bank.

Tunnels

Not all canal tunnels are suitable to be used by unpowered craft. The only one you will encounter on the trail is at Froghall. It is safe to pass through provided you take note of the Canal and River Trust instructions located at the entrance.

Before you enter the tunnel make sure the way ahead is clear. Use a forward facing white light and do not dawdle. If you prefer there is a short path around the hill to portage your craft.



Make the most of your paddle...

Going out for a paddle is great, even better if it's on the Heritage Canoe Trail! To help ensure you get the most out of your day here are a few more hints and tips:

- Wear appropriate clothing. Always wear shoes. Rocks, rough terrain and river beds present serious hazards to boaters without the proper attire. Nearly 90% of all boating injuries are attributed to lack of appropriate footwear.
- Always wear a buoyancy aid, this should be properly fitted and fully done up when on the water. It's a good idea to pack additional clothing and a towel in a waterproof bag just in case you get wet.
- The following are important items to ensure you have with you when going canoeing: boat, paddle, buoyancy aid, bailer or sponge, small first aid kit, penknife, mobile phone (in a waterproof bag), drinking water, sun cream, hat and sunglasses, (for summer trips) light waterproof jacket and footwear suitable for use on the water.
- Always be certain to let others know where you're going and when you're expected to return. Make sure that the journey you plan is within your capabilities and that you never paddle alone.
- If you plan to bring your dog onto the water with you providing them with an appropriately fitted canine buoyancy aid is a very good idea. Not all dogs will adapt well or enjoy canoeing so try them the first time with a short trip on a quiet section of water.
- In many types of boat, the use of a short painter (rope) tied to the front or back or both ends of your boat can be extremely useful in securing your boat to the bank. By hooking this around a suitable bankside object a painter can also help keep your boat more stable as you climb in or out. Painters are normally at least 1.5 times the length of your boat.
- Keep your lunch dry by using a dry bag. If you don't have one a zip lock food bag can work quite well.

Waterways Licence

All powered or unpowered craft using the canals require a licence from the Canal and Rivers Trust.



Canal &
River Trust

For unpowered craft these can be bought from the Canal and River Trust online:
www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/boating/licensing-your-boat.



Alternatively you can join British Canoeing online which includes a licence to use over 5,000km of waterways as well as other benefits:
www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/membership



Heritage Information

Potteries Heritage Society is the civic society for Stoke-on-Trent and part of a national network registered with Civic Voice.

The Society cares about the towns and places that make up the city, its past and future.
www.potteries.org.uk





Map Guide and Route 'Totem' Posts

The following pages provide a route map and break down of the trail, highlighting features such as locations, mileposts, locks, bridges, portage points, possible refreshment venues and sites of local heritage. Pocket sized versions of each page, (ideal to print off and use on route) can be downloaded from stoke.gov.uk/HCT.

You'll also see our unique orange and white trail route plaque atop bankside totems. Apart from confirming the route, these provide specific information on that location, (portage points or the fact that you're passing an area of historic interest such as the Emma Bridgewater Factory).



	Canal with Tow Path
	Road Bridge
	Pedestrian Bridge
	Lift Bridge
	Railway / Disused Railway
	Aqueduct
	Lock
	Mooring
	Wharf / Historic Wharf
	Natural Waterway
	Churnet Valley Railway Line
	Milepost
	Refreshment (café/pub)
	Bottle Kiln / Multiple Kilns
	Factory / Former Factory Site
	Former Coal Mine Site
	Former Warehouse Site
	Former Branch Canal

Map Key

While canals are the work of men rather than nature they still have gentle curves as well as sharp bends. The maps shown are simplified impressions of how the waterway moves. This has been done to help provide you with a clear and easy to understand map.

The same concept of simplicity has been applied to scale. Markers are shown in approximate locations which correspond to other features. Each section of waterway, be it a bend or straight paddle is approximate in relation to the overall map.

Bridges are set in their correct locations but are not angled (as they may be when crossing the waterway). Instead each bridge icon is positioned uniformly in order to reduce map clutter.

Other waterways are shown where appropriate. These are not drawn in detail as they are not part of the trail.



Improve your paddling

City Adventures is a new initiative offering canoe hire plus paddling tasters and coaching sessions for those with little or no experience. For details call 01782 234957 or email: cityofsport16@stoke.gov.uk. Details online: www.stoke.gov.uk/cityadventures or facebook: www.facebook.com/cityofsport16



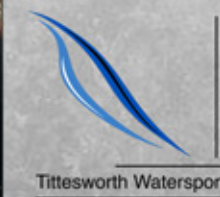
Potteries Paddlers is a friendly, multi-disciplined, inclusive, canoe and kayak club who meet on a weekly basis. New members are always welcome.

www.facebook.com/potteriespaddlers
or email: committee@potteriespaddlers.co.uk

Based at Trentham Gardens with its mile long man made lake, this club offers a variety of paddle sports for adults and children.



www.trenthamcanoecub.co.uk or
email: info@trenthamcanoecub.co.uk



Alternatively you can access professional coaching from local specialists such as the Tittesworth Water Sports and Activity Centre near Leek.

www.tittesworthwater.co.uk



Trail Part 2 Hanley to Norton Green

A modern day Potteries success story, Emma Bridgewater's ware is a thriving global brand. Visit the factory shop and grab a drink / bite to eat - served on some of the best china you'll ever find! www.emmabridgewaterfactory.co.uk



ACCESS POINT, Northwood Stadium. Start of Short Route 2. Car park is well maintained. Access by bridge 13.



Only a few meters from the tow path is Northwood Stadium, providing a range of sports facilities including showers and toilets. New for 2016 is a camping area set opposite the tow path. This is ideal if you're making a weekend of the Heritage Canoe Trail. www.stoke.go.uk/northwoodstadium



History and Heritage

Skirting the city and on through the suburbs

The Caldon Canal leaves the Trent & Mersey and immediately begins its ascent by climbing Bedford Street staircase locks. Brindley, faced with constructing nearly 100 miles of canal and tunnelling nearly two miles through Harecastle Hill, decided to halve the width of his locks to only 7ft (2.1m) and make a saving on their construction, as well as that of tunnels, bridges and aqueducts. The decision led to the standard size of locks in much of the country today and, as the length of the boats was maintained at around 70ft (22m), provided the blueprint for the familiar 'narrowboat'.

The unusual 'staircase' arrangement of the locks at Bedford Street copes with a steep ascent by making the two chambers share interconnecting gates, raising the water level by over 19ft (5.8m). In contrast, Planet Lock rises only 3ft (1m) and was a relatively recent installation at Hanley Wharf in 1910 to cope with subsidence. This also accounts for the high banks that grew below the lock in order to keep the water at the level of the top of the staircase but is now an unwelcome obstacle for paddlers.

Above Planet Lock the canal looks over the old Cauldon Pottery site, now Stoke-on-Trent College. At bridge 5, the canal enters Hanley Park, whose designer Thomas Mawson went on to receive international acclaim. The park, which officially opened in 1897, has secured funding for a comprehensive restoration scheme and there is a lot to do here during a break from paddling.

Where the canal circles the city centre, new waterfront housing lines much of the way but there is still plenty of heritage to be seen. At the paddler's eye level, history is laid down like rock strata in the bank and retaining walls. Layer upon layer of stone edges, different coloured bricks, bricked-up windows, discarded rubble and metalwork inexplicably prop up new walls and modern apartments. Emma Bridgewater's pottery is housed in the former Eastwood factory and, on the towpath side, are the final three bottle ovens to be seen on our route.

At Ivy House Lane a heavy mechanised lift bridge is notorious among narrowboaters, but causes no problem to paddlers who can pass easily under the lowered deck. Soon after is Northwood Stadium, which occupies a former colliery site and hosts one of the trail's campsites. Bridge 14 survives in its original hump-back form and shows the shape of things to come as the built-up city is left behind. From here we follow the young River Trent back towards its source.

At Foxley a small aqueduct crosses the brook and from the following bend, a branch canal used to serve Ford Green iron works and Norton Green colliery. The lift bridge that was once essential for horses to gain access to the arm is now redundant.

At Norton Green there are several features to look out for. Engine Lock raises the canal a further 12ft (3.6m) followed by the first of two lift bridges. Between this and the next bridge, a feeder supplies water from Knypersley reservoir and running alongside, the Trent passes beneath the canal through a small aqueduct. A grassy mound adjacent to the farm bridge (no.22) hides an old limekiln. The second of the lift bridges marks the city boundary and entrance to Staffordshire Moorlands.



Trail Part 3 Stockton Brook to Hazelhurst

ACCESS POINT,
Stockton Brook.
Car park opposite The
Sportsman pub on A53.
Short portage down
road to bridge 25.



The Hollybush at Stockton Brook has been through many incarnations. Now part of the Ego restaurant chain following a £300,000 opening in 2014, it specialises in Mediterranean food. www.egorestaurants.co.uk

Hazelhurst Junction Guide

At bridge 35 the trail splits with the Leek branch veering off to the right and crossing over the Hazelhurst Aqueduct. Ignore this and keep to the left. Portage the three locks using the tow path, and continue on passing under the aqueduct.



ACCESS POINT, start of Short Route 3. The Hollybush Inn at Denford is a beautiful, traditional, friendly canal side pub with award winning real ales, home made food and a beer garden. Ask permission to use the car park.
www.hollybushleek.co.uk

Hazelhurst Locks

Former staircase locks
Continue on this canal

Canal continues to Leek



History and Heritage

Crossing the summit of the Caldon Canal

At Stockton Brook the paddler arrives at the trail's longest flight of locks. The five chambers lift the canal 41ft (12.5m) to the summit, nearly 500ft (150m) above sea level. While some will be keen to carry or wheel their canoes past the locks to get back on the water, there is so much to explore here, whether on foot or paddling the intermediate pounds, as each lock has its own character and setting.

The pumping station at the bottom lock dates from 1884 and originally housed a pair of steam engines. Locks 6 and 7 are adorned with stone sculptures, crafted in sections by Anthony Lysycia working with local schools in 2007. The house next to the top lock was converted from the former stable block. Above the top lock the towpath changes sides on a footbridge parallel to the narrow Stanley Road bridge (No.26).

On the summit level the views open up across the fields and the smallest breeze on this exposed section will push a light boat around. Opposite the towpath a feeder delivers water from Stanley Pool and before bridge 27 a circular island is the base of a former railway swing bridge that served the nearby Victoria Mill. The mill produced glazes and colours for the pottery industry and the adjacent site has interpretation boards and benches, making it a good place for a picnic.

Endon Basin was used for the transshipment of limestone from railway carriages to narrowboats but is now home to Stoke Boat Club, which moved here in the 1970s from the site now occupied by Stoke's Civic Centre.

At Park Lane (bridge 31) the canal originally started its descent to the valley floor but the Leek Arm, which opened in 1800, brought with it water for the summit from Rudyard Lake and so a new line was constructed that kept to the high ground until Hazelhurst. John Rennie was the engineer for the Leek branch and this extended summit includes several of his impressive stone bridges.

At Hazelhurst, Rennie took the summit level of the canal beyond the current junction to bridge 3 on the Leek Arm, where a set of three staircase locks rejoined the original line and an embankment carried the branch across the valley. The locks proved to be a bottleneck for the working boats so in 1841 the embankment was punctured by Hazelhurst Aqueduct and a new flight of separate locks built to take the current line through it. These changes provide a choice for the paddler – to negotiate the three locks from the junction or to carry their vessel down the steps next to the aqueduct from the Leek branch.

The tranquil Leek Canal branch is an attractive prospect as its two and a half mile length combines with the summit to make 5 miles of lock-free paddling, but this is for another day and another trail.



Trail Part 4 Denford to Oak Meadow Ford

Hollybush Inn Camp Site.
Contact the pub on 01538
371819 to inquire about
camping here.

Deep Hayes
Country Park



Cheddleton Flint Mill is a fine example of a water mill that ground flint for the pottery industry, using the canal as a transport link. The site features two water mills and a small museum. www.cheddletonflintmill.com



ACCESS POINT,
The Boat Inn, start of Short Route 4.
Free car park but ask inside
the pub for permission.

The Boat Inn at Cheddleton is another possible rest point right next to the canal. Advertised as a 'Proper British Pub' it serves a good range of drinks and selection of meals and snacks.
www.facebook.com/theboatinncheddleton



History and Heritage Descending into the Churnet Valley

Passing under the Hazlehurst Aqueduct, our trail reaches Denford with its canal-side pub and cottages and makes its way into the broad river basin of the Churnet Valley. This place seems to be perpetually busy, on summer days paddlers can expect to be greeted by people enjoying a pint and a bite to eat and by those who stare, transfixed by waterways and boats, known to canal folk as gongoozlers. The milepost here marks 10 miles from the junction with the Trent & Mersey.

Opposite the tow-path at bridge 39 are the woods, meadows and pools of Deep Hayes Country Park, which provides an excellent backdrop for our paddle to Cheddleton.

A surprising cluster of industrial buildings welcome visitors to the village – on the left, right and above the canal. The waters of the Churnet have been turning mill wheels here for nearly 800 years. Building the canal made transport of heavy goods a realistic possibility so corn mills were converted to the grinding of flint for the pottery industry. Wedgwood was at this time using ground, calcined flint to whiten his 'creamware'. The Cheddleton Flint Mill museum sets out how the materials progressed through the complex site and the calcining, grinding, settling and drying processes.

Beyond the bridge (42), the two Cheddleton Locks drop the canal a further 16ft (5m) and it was at a ceremony here in September 1974 that the main line was officially reopened. This being despite the fact that the canal had never officially closed or had any kind of opening ceremony when originally completed at the end of 1778.

At Basford Bridge (44) comes another burst of activity. The railway station has been preserved by dedicated enthusiasts and has for many years been the centre of activity for the Churnet Valley Railway. From here on the line is never far away from the canal and paddlers will hear the train whistles echoing through the trees and catch regular glimpses of carriages pulled by steam or diesel locomotives during the weekends. The presence of the river, a busy pub with its own ice cream parlour and island-based picnic site complete the scene. This is also an easy access point for the river and, when conditions allow, paddlers can enjoy an alternative route to Oak Meadow Ford or plan a circular route from here.

A little further on, the canal descends through Wood's Lock and keeps its distance from the railway on the other side of the valley. Meanwhile the river meanders, divides and recombines into deeper channels between the two.

The canal takes on a very different character from that of its climb out of the city and Rennie's summit. As Brindley fell ill whilst surveying the route and died before its final course was determined, this is almost entirely the work of his assistant and brother-in-law, Hugh Henshall, who took over this and several other projects. Although not as famous as Brindley, it was Henshall who oversaw the construction of the main line of the Caldon Canal, completed Harecastle Tunnel and was responsible for much of north section of Trent & Mersey Canal from Kidsgrove.



Trail Part 5 Oak Meadow Ford to Froghall

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As the River Churnet and canal go their separate ways there is a great opportunity to discover the Black Lion pub. A long held favourite, it's the ideal spot for a refreshment break before heading toward Froghall. www.blacklionpub.co.uk



Froghall Wharf is a lovely tranquil picnic spot alongside the terminus of the canal. There are two car parks, both of which are open 24/7 all year round. Nearby you'll find Kingsley and Froghall Railway Station, the southern terminus of Churnet Valley Railway. Apart from the fantastic steam trains there's a Victorian Tea room and gift shop. Well worth a visit!



ACCESS POINT.
Consall Forge / Black Lion
pub, start of Short Route 5.
Car park near to the pub but
ask permission.

Consall Forge
Nature Park

Churnet Valley
Railway,
Consall Station

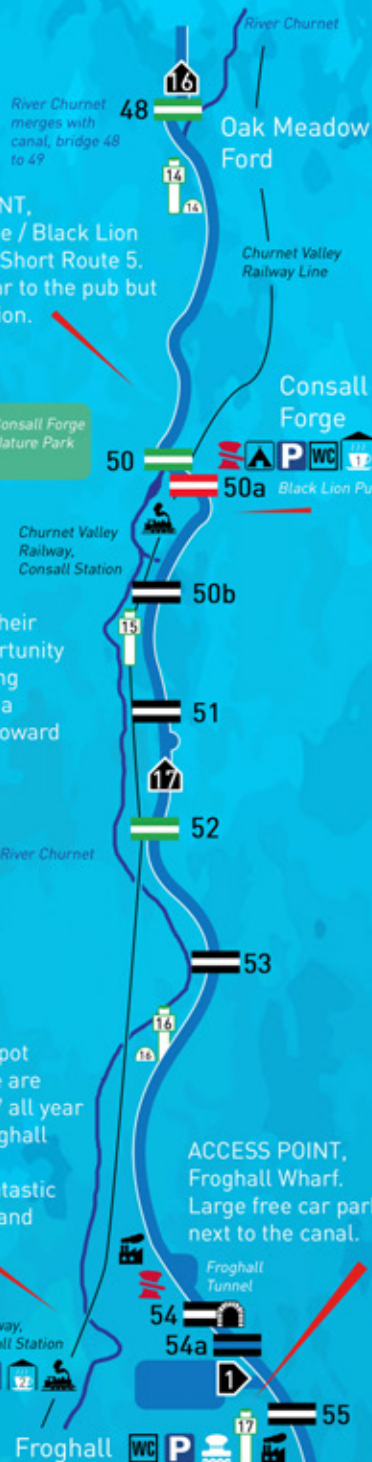
River Churnet

Churnet Valley Railway,
Kingsley and Froghall Station

Froghall

ACCESS POINT.
Froghall Wharf.
Large free car park
next to the canal.

Froghall
Tunnel



History and Heritage Going with the flow to Froghall

At the picturesque Oak Meadow Ford Lock, the river's meanderings come together into a single deep channel and the canal merges with it. This canalised and bridgeless section continues through the deepening valley for a little over a mile.

This being the river, the numerous small streams and brooks that the canal would usually shun are piped under the tow-path and welcomed to trickle in. Half way along this shared course the 14-mile-post is accompanied by its stone predecessor which dates from before the completion of the 13 mile Uttoxeter branch. Behind them, hidden among the trees, are two large limekilns – a reminder of the canal's main cargo. Limestone from the quarries at Caudon Lowe was heated to 9000C to make quicklime at several locations en route. Several more line the tow-path on the approach to Consall Forge.

Then at the former forge site, the river and canal part company, falling over the weir, while the canal ducks under the railway to keep to higher ground. The popular pub here famously has no access by road and the track opposite leads to the nearby Consall Nature Park.

Now separated, the canal and river compete for space in the narrowing valley. When the North Staffordshire Railway joined the competition in 1849 there was little option but for the engineers to steal the former tow-path and lay down a new path on the north bank, parts of which needed boardwalks over the water. To accommodate Consall Station, the canal is squeezed to a single narrowboat width, while the platform and waiting room are cantilevered above.

For those that want to explore more of the river you'll see a sloping tunnel from the canal under the railway lines (just after the Black Lion). This provides access to the often exhilarating and fast flowing waters of the River Churnet.

Back on the canal trail, our diverted tow-path now creates some oddities – a milepost stranded between the canal and railway and a winding hole (a wide section where boats can turn around) that cuts into the bank against the path.

Flint Mill lock takes the canal down its final step to a narrow section lined with trees. By a small tow-path bridge stands Trickle Ridge, a limestone stalagmite built up over thousands of years. The design of the following bridge gives away the fact that it was constructed by the railway company to return the tow-path to its proper place on the south bank.

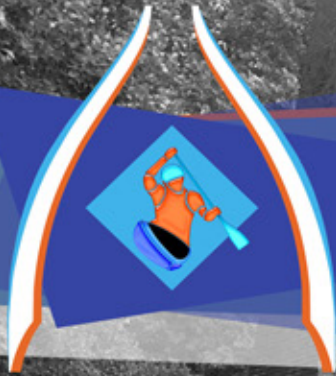
Cherry Eye Bridge [53] has a Gothic-style arch and a name that recalls the bloodshot eyes of local ironstone workers. Milepost 16 is also accompanied by its predecessor and marks the start of a narrow section as the final mile clings to the side of the valley.

Remnants of a vast copper wire works appear on the approach to Froghall, where Thomas Bolton & Sons made the first trans-Atlantic cables. The canal's original terminus was extended through the 69m Froghall Tunnel to reach the wharf. It is difficult to imagine this peaceful picnic spot was once a busy industrial site where limestone arrived from the Caudon Low quarries and was transhipped into open narrowboats for the journey to the Potteries and beyond.





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