

Clay Mills to Horninglow

The Trent and Mersey Canal enters Staffordshire at Clay Mills. It winds past former gravel workings and industrial development into the suburbs of Burton-upon-Trent. This section was opened in 1770. It was at first a competitor to and then eclipsed the navigable route along the Trent from Wilden Ferry to Burton which had been in use since 1699 but was difficult to navigate at times of low water. Between Stretton and Horninglow Basin the canal surroundings become increasingly urban in character.

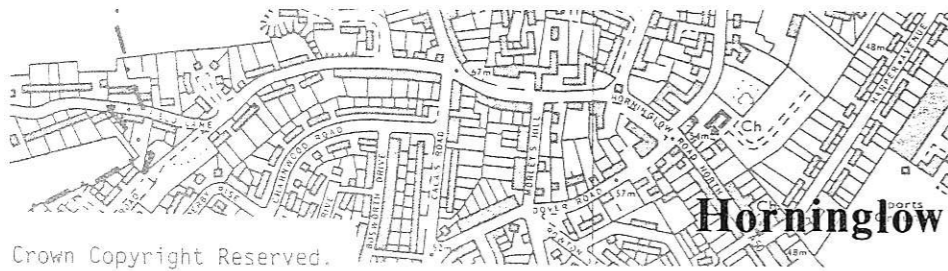
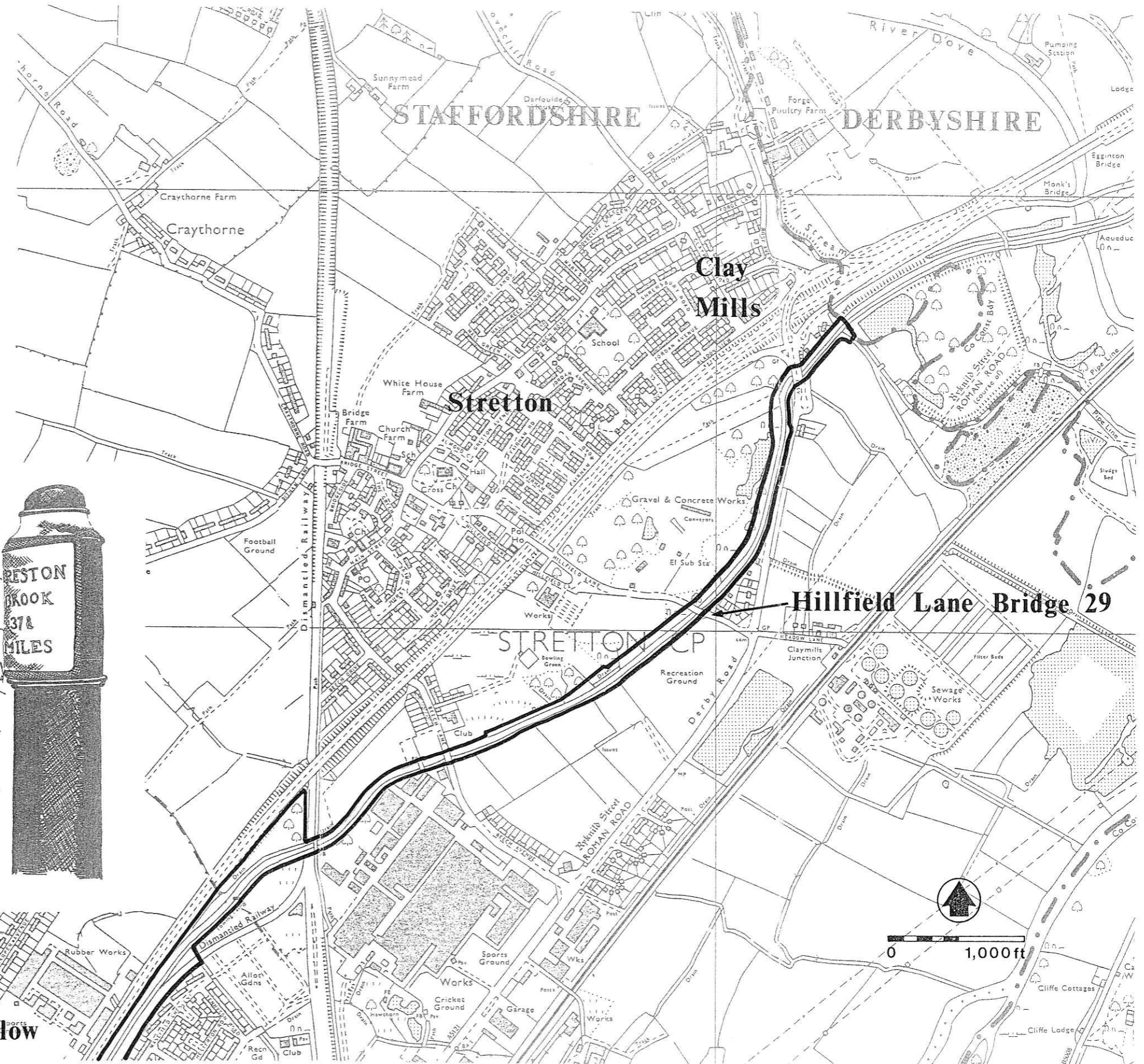
Notable Features

Mile Post

South east of Hillfield Lane Bridge No. 29 is a cast iron milepost dated 1819.



Hillfield Lane Bridge.



Horninglow

Horninglow Basin to Shobnall Basin

Within this section the form of the canal itself changes significantly. Horninglow Basin was the furthest navigable point for the large 40 ton river barges from the River Trent : the canal was constructed 31 feet wide and 5.6 feet deep, with locks 14 feet wide. Beyond Horninglow it narrows to 29 feet and 4.6 feet deep, with 7 feet wide locks. This was to reduce the costs of construction and maintenance and save water.

Notable Features

Horninglow Basin

Here goods had to be transhipped from the river barges to narrowboats. It was once the centre of a small industrial area, with timber yards, lime kilns, a steam-operated corn mill and a salt warehouse. The public house nearby is called 'The Navigation', after the term frequently used for canals.

Dallow Lock

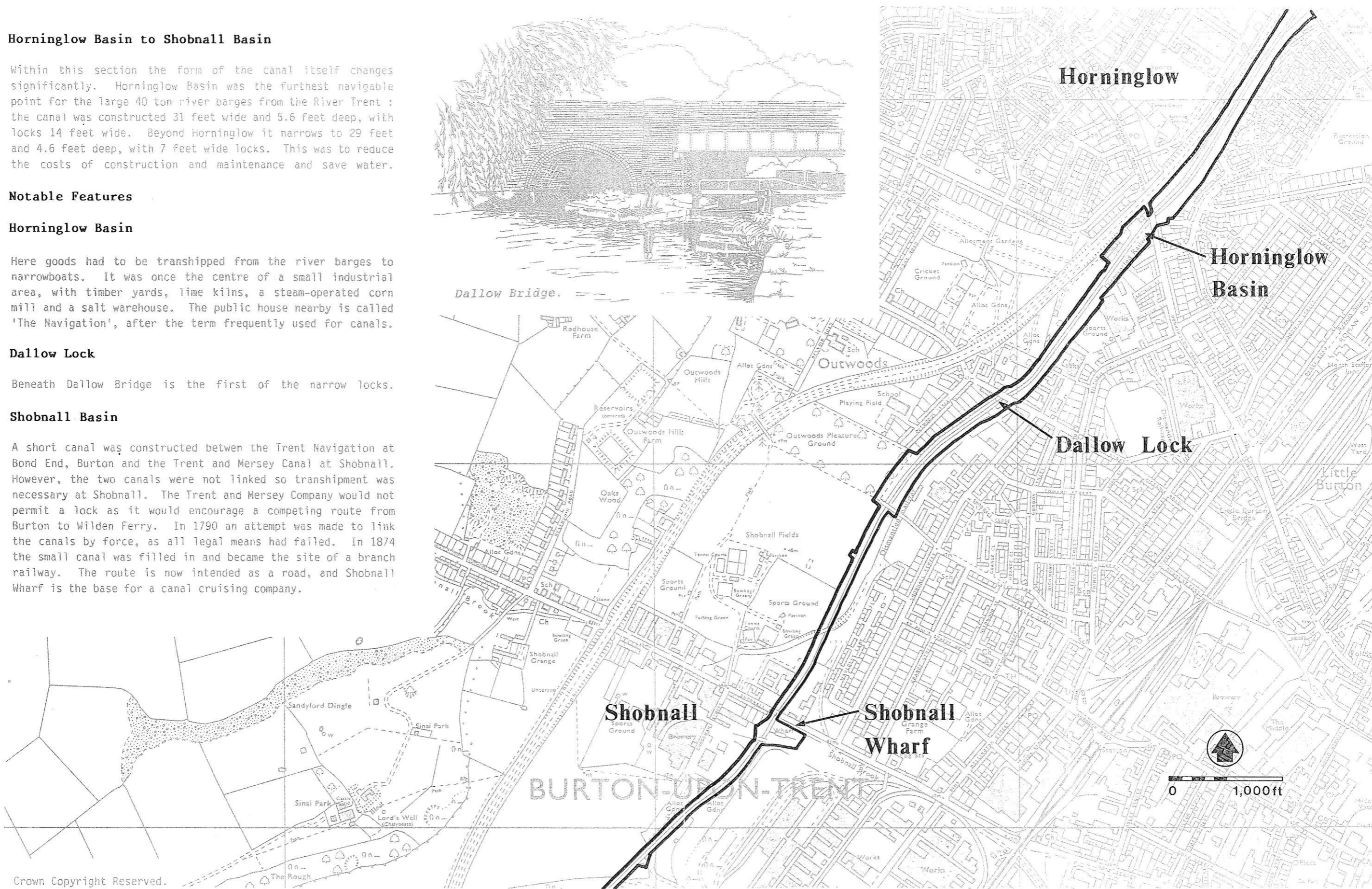
Beneath Dallow Bridge is the first of the narrow locks.

Shobnall Basin

A short canal was constructed between the Trent Navigation at Bond End, Burton and the Trent and Mersey Canal at Shobnall. However, the two canals were not linked so transhipment was necessary at Shobnall. The Trent and Mersey Company would not permit a lock as it would encourage a competing route from Burton to Wilden Ferry. In 1790 an attempt was made to link the canals by force, as all legal means had failed. In 1874 the small canal was filled in and became the site of a branch railway. The route is now intended as a road, and Shobnall Wharf is the base for a canal cruising company.



Dallow Bridge.



Shobnall to Branston

From Shobnall the canal gradually leaves Burton behind and moves out into farmland.

Notable Features

Branston Bridge and Mile Post

Another cast iron mile post can be seen 33 feet south of Branston Bridge (No.34).

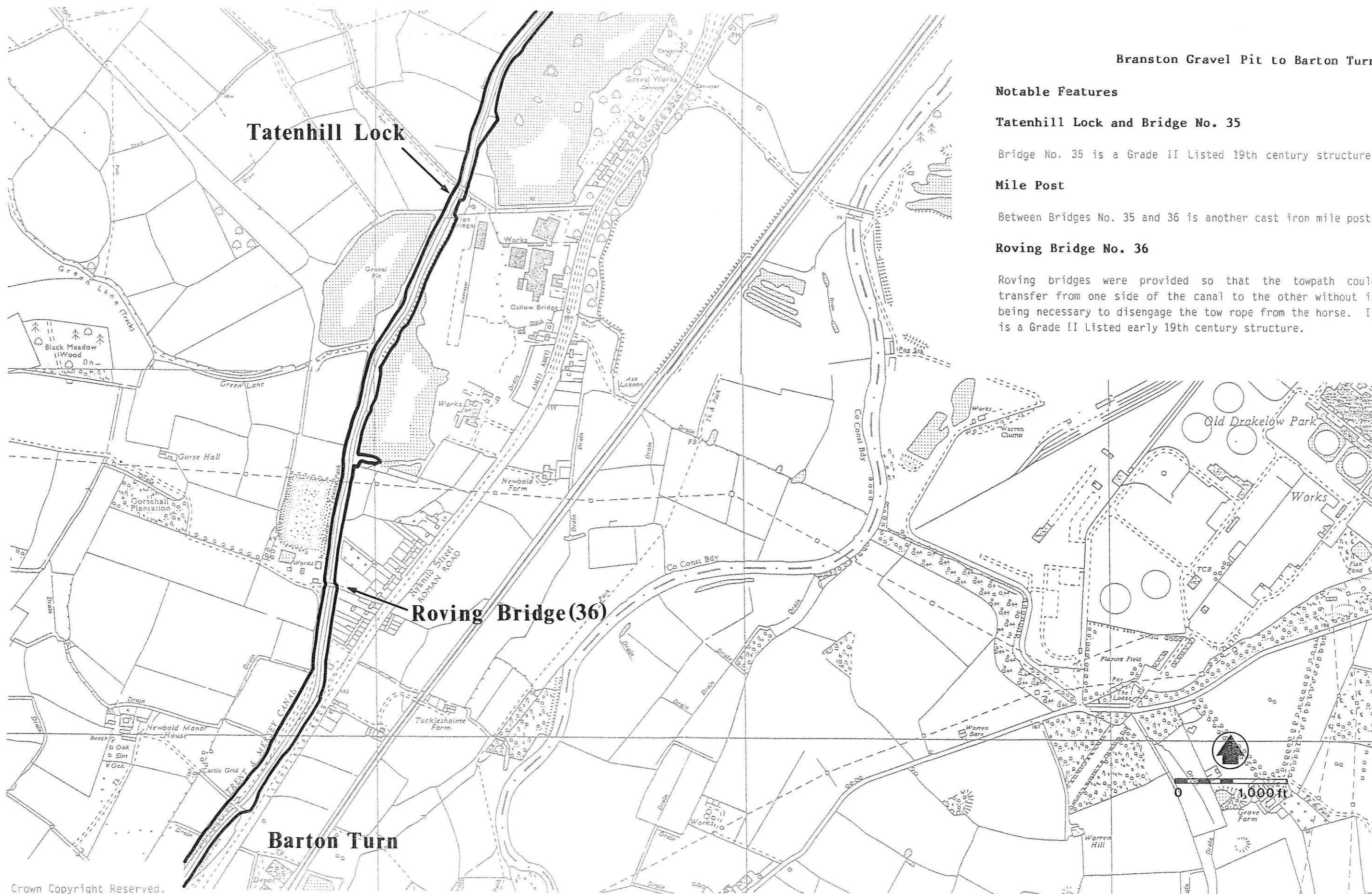
Branston Gravel Pit

This large area of water with reed beds and woodland is a former gravel workings. It contains a wide variety of wildlife.



Branston Bridge.

Branston Gravel Pit to Barton Turn



Tatenhill Lock

Roving Bridge (36)

Barton Turn

Notable Features

Tatenhill Lock and Bridge No. 35

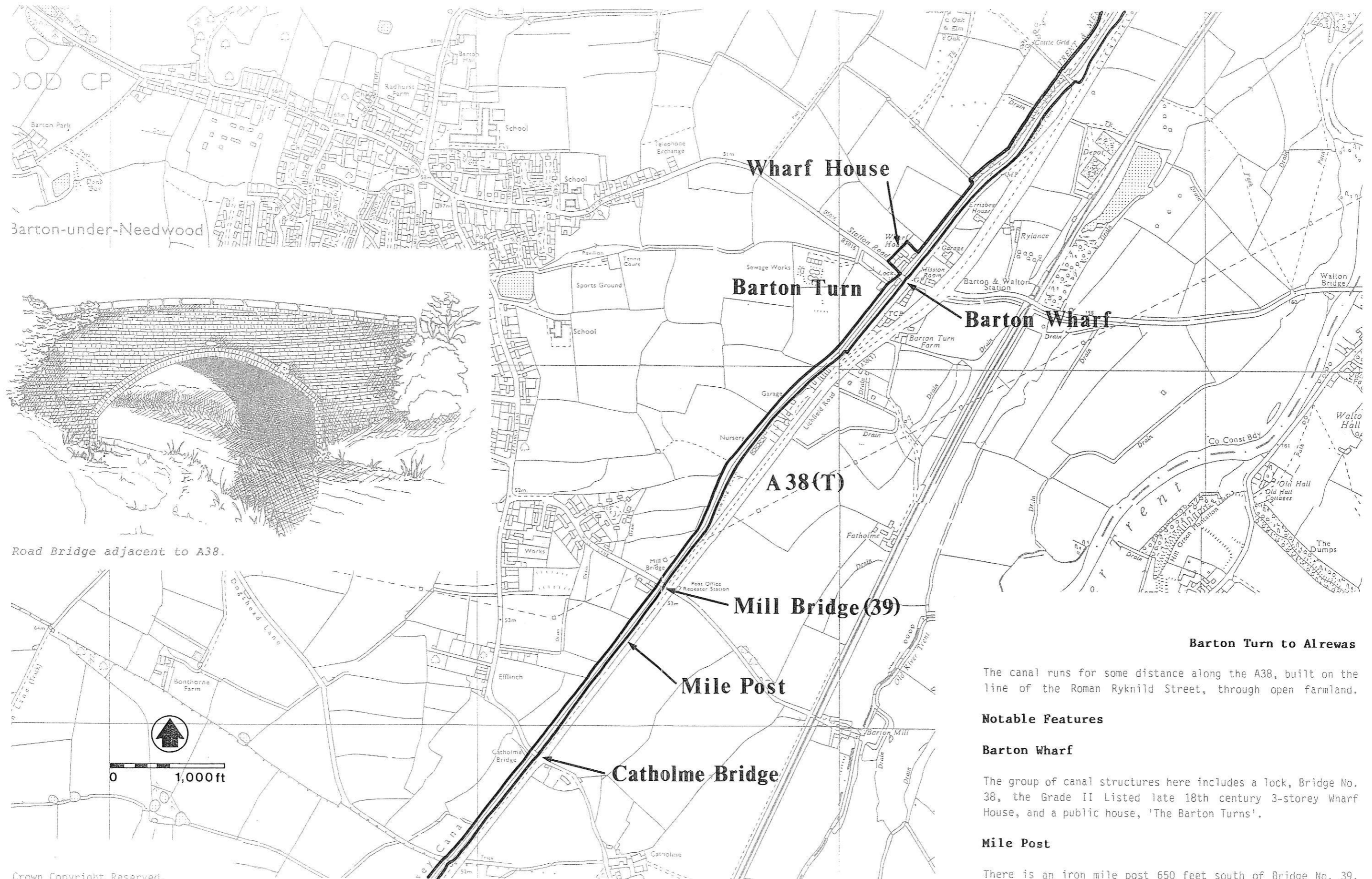
Bridge No. 35 is a Grade II Listed 19th century structure.

Mile Post

Between Bridges No. 35 and 36 is another cast iron mile post.

Roving Bridge No. 36

Roving bridges were provided so that the towpath could transfer from one side of the canal to the other without it being necessary to disengage the tow rope from the horse. It is a Grade II Listed early 19th century structure.



Barton-under-Needwood

Wharf House

Barton Turn

Barton Wharf

A 38(T)

Mill Bridge (39)

Mile Post

Catholme Bridge

Barton Turn to Alrewas

The canal runs for some distance along the A38, built on the line of the Roman Ryknild Street, through open farmland.

Notable Features

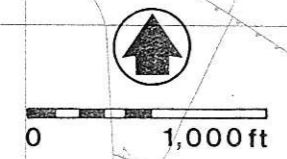
Barton Wharf

The group of canal structures here includes a lock, Bridge No. 38, the Grade II Listed late 18th century 3-storey Wharf House, and a public house, 'The Barton Turns'.

Mile Post

There is an iron mile post 650 feet south of Bridge No. 39.

Road Bridge adjacent to A38.



Wychnor Church

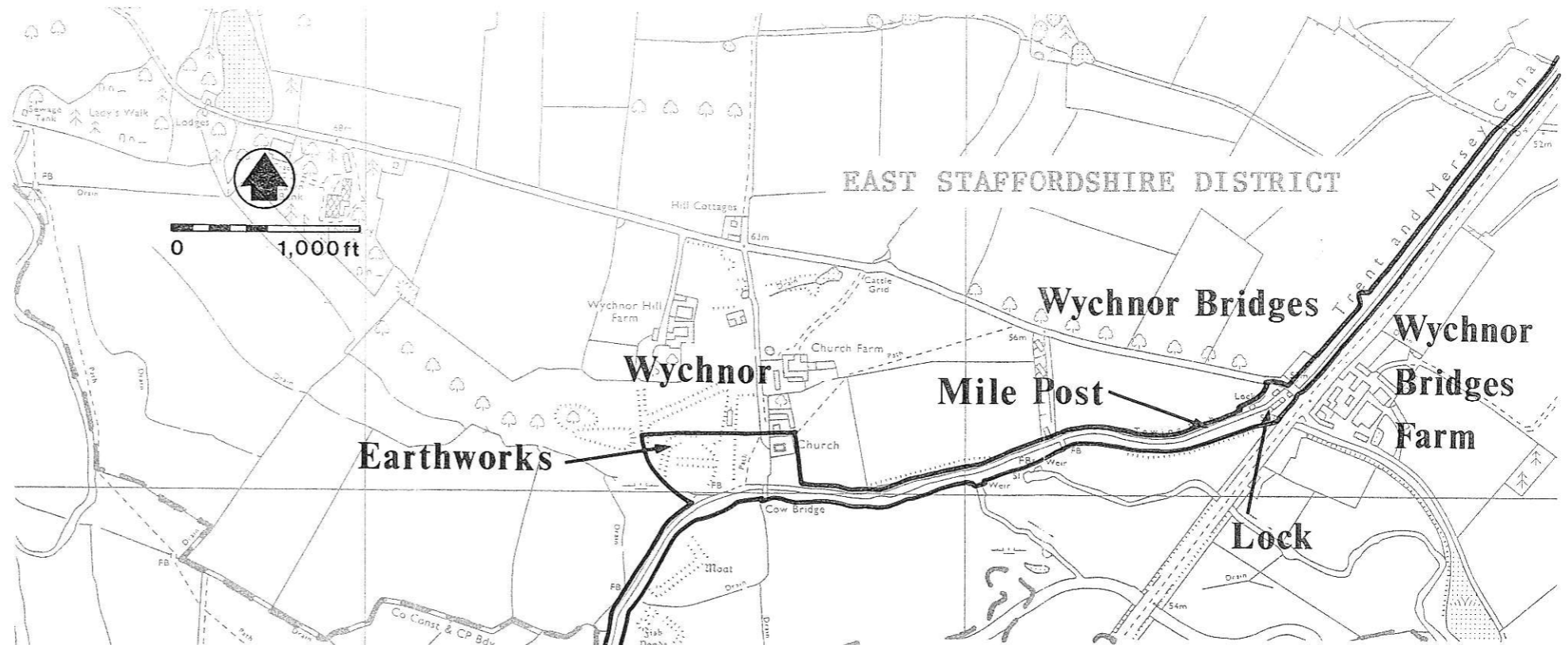
The Church stands in a prominent position above the flood plain of the River Trent, on the north bank of the canal. It dates from the 12th century, but is mainly of the 14th century and in the Decorated Style. It is built of red sandstone, with a tower partly rebuilt in brick, probably in the 17th century.

Abandoned village site

Just to the west of the Church and north and south of the canal are traces of earthworks and disturbed ground indicating the sites of various buildings in the deserted medieval village of Wychnor.

Alrewas Village

The older part of the village together with the canal between Bagnall Lock and the weir on the River Trent are included within the Alrewas Conservation Area. The village is particularly noteworthy for the rare survival in Staffordshire of a large group of well preserved 16th and 17th century timber-framed buildings, many of which still have thatched roofs, and for its particularly fine parish Church dating from the 13th century. Further details are given in the Alrewas Conservation Area document No. 11 available from Staffordshire County Council and Lichfield District Council.



Wychnor Bridges to Alrewas

To the north of the village of Alrewas the canal merges with the River Trent for about 590 feet, passing close by a weir. This short stretch has been, and in times of flood still can be, hazardous to navigation. At Alrewas Lock it leaves the river and passes through the village. Beyond Bagnall Lock the canal runs on a straight course through the plain of the Trent, unimpeded by natural or man-made obstacles.

Notable Features

Wychnor Bridges, Lock and Canal Arm

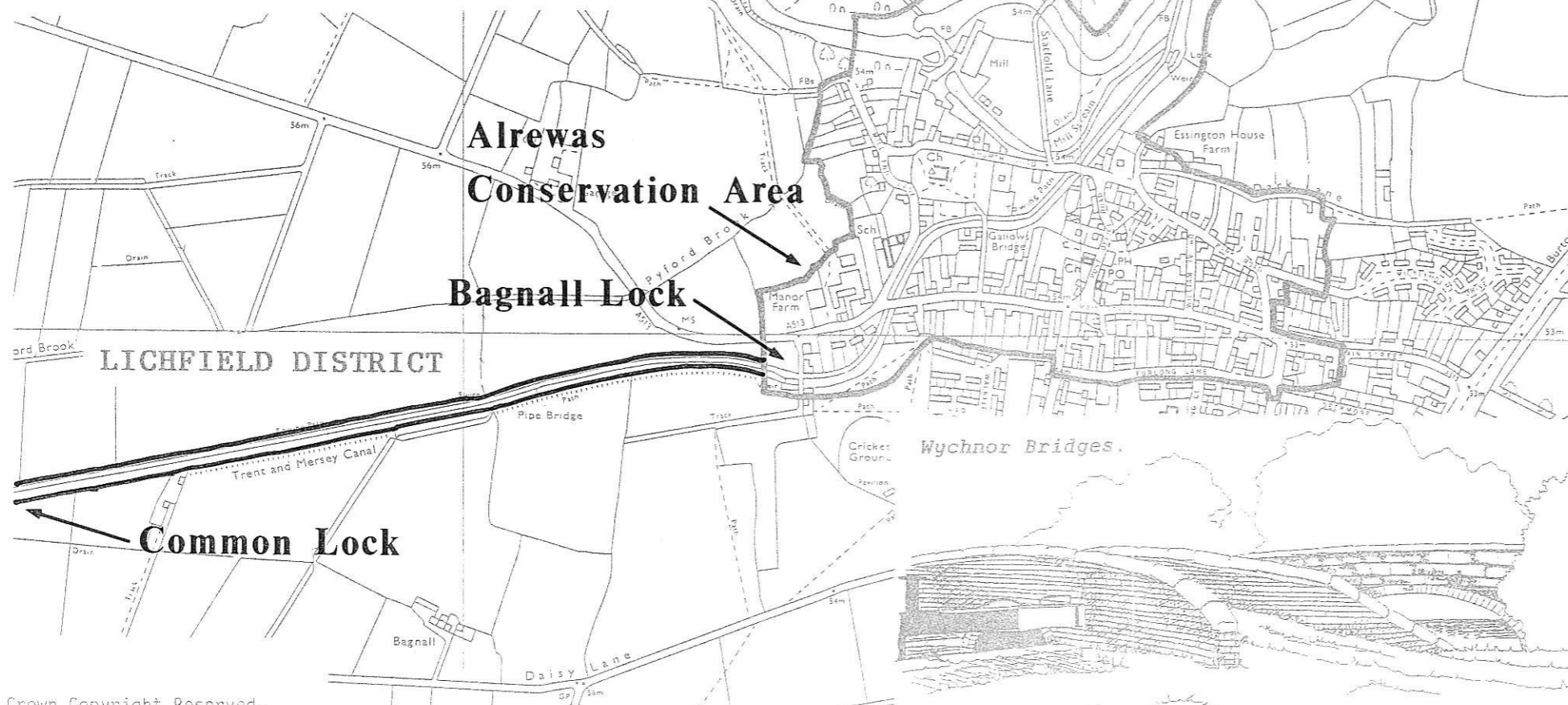
Both bridges are Grade II Listed structures. No. 42 is an elegant early 19th century road bridge of fine ashlar stonework and brick. No. 43 is an interesting example of a late 18th century roving bridge combined with a lock. A disused arm of the canal passes beneath the A.38 but is now inaccessible due to the very low road bridge.

Wychnor Bridges Farm

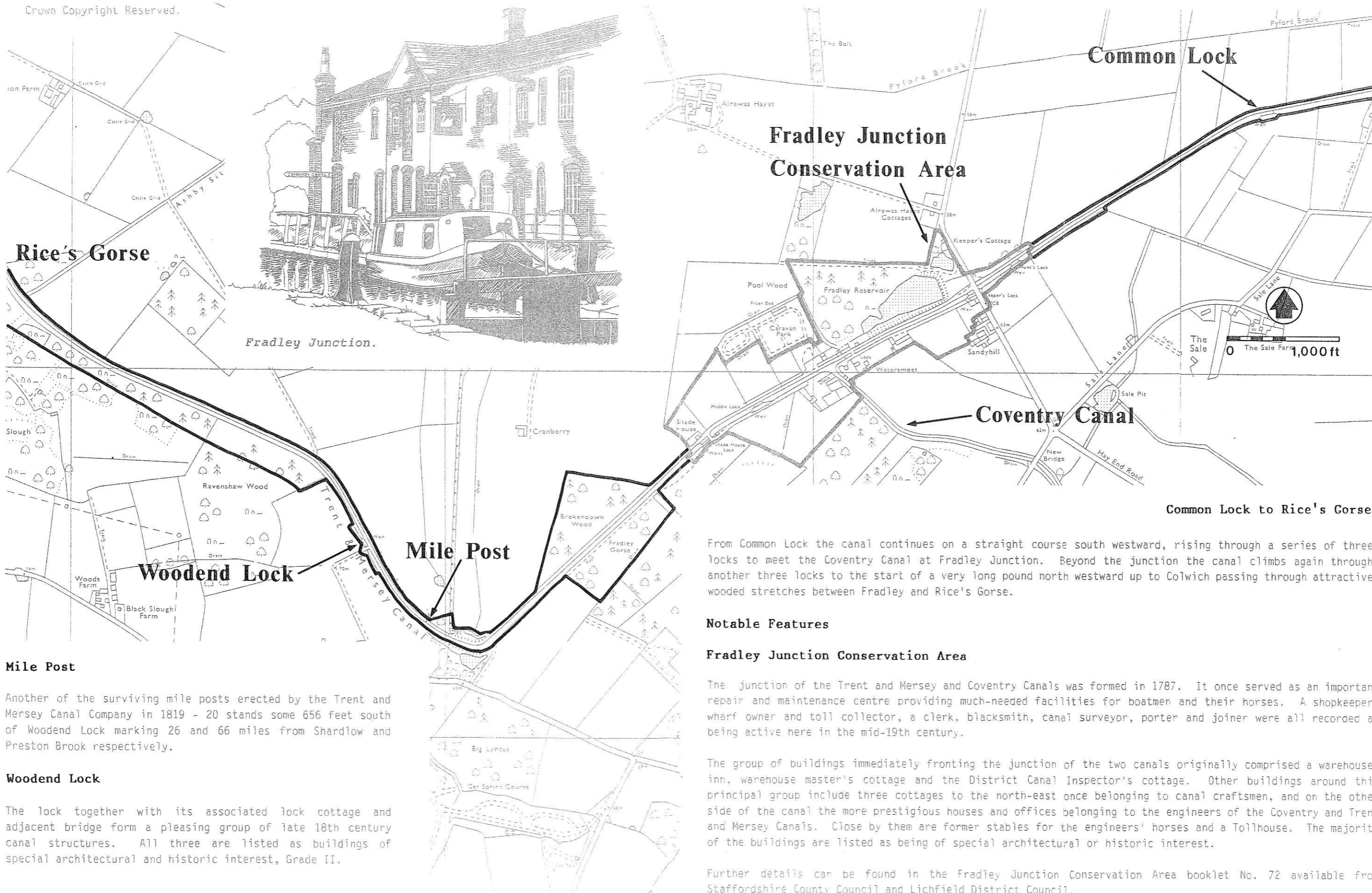
The large early 19th century farmhouse and its outbuildings, all Grade II Listed buildings, form a substantial complex beside the A.38.

Mile Post

There is a mile post 328 feet west of Wychnor Bridges.



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Rice's Gorse

Fradley Junction.

Fradley Junction Conservation Area

Common Lock

Coventry Canal

Common Lock to Rice's Gorse

Woodend Lock

Mile Post

From Common Lock the canal continues on a straight course south westward, rising through a series of three locks to meet the Coventry Canal at Fradley Junction. Beyond the junction the canal climbs again through another three locks to the start of a very long pound north westward up to Colwich passing through attractive wooded stretches between Fradley and Rice's Gorse.

Notable Features

Fradley Junction Conservation Area

The junction of the Trent and Mersey and Coventry Canals was formed in 1787. It once served as an important repair and maintenance centre providing much-needed facilities for boatmen and their horses. A shopkeeper, wharf owner and toll collector, a clerk, blacksmith, canal surveyor, porter and joiner were all recorded as being active here in the mid-19th century.

The group of buildings immediately fronting the junction of the two canals originally comprised a warehouse, inn, warehouse master's cottage and the District Canal Inspector's cottage. Other buildings around this principal group include three cottages to the north-east once belonging to canal craftsmen, and on the other side of the canal the more prestigious houses and offices belonging to the engineers of the Coventry and Trent and Mersey Canals. Close by them are former stables for the engineers' horses and a Tollhouse. The majority of the buildings are listed as being of special architectural or historic interest.

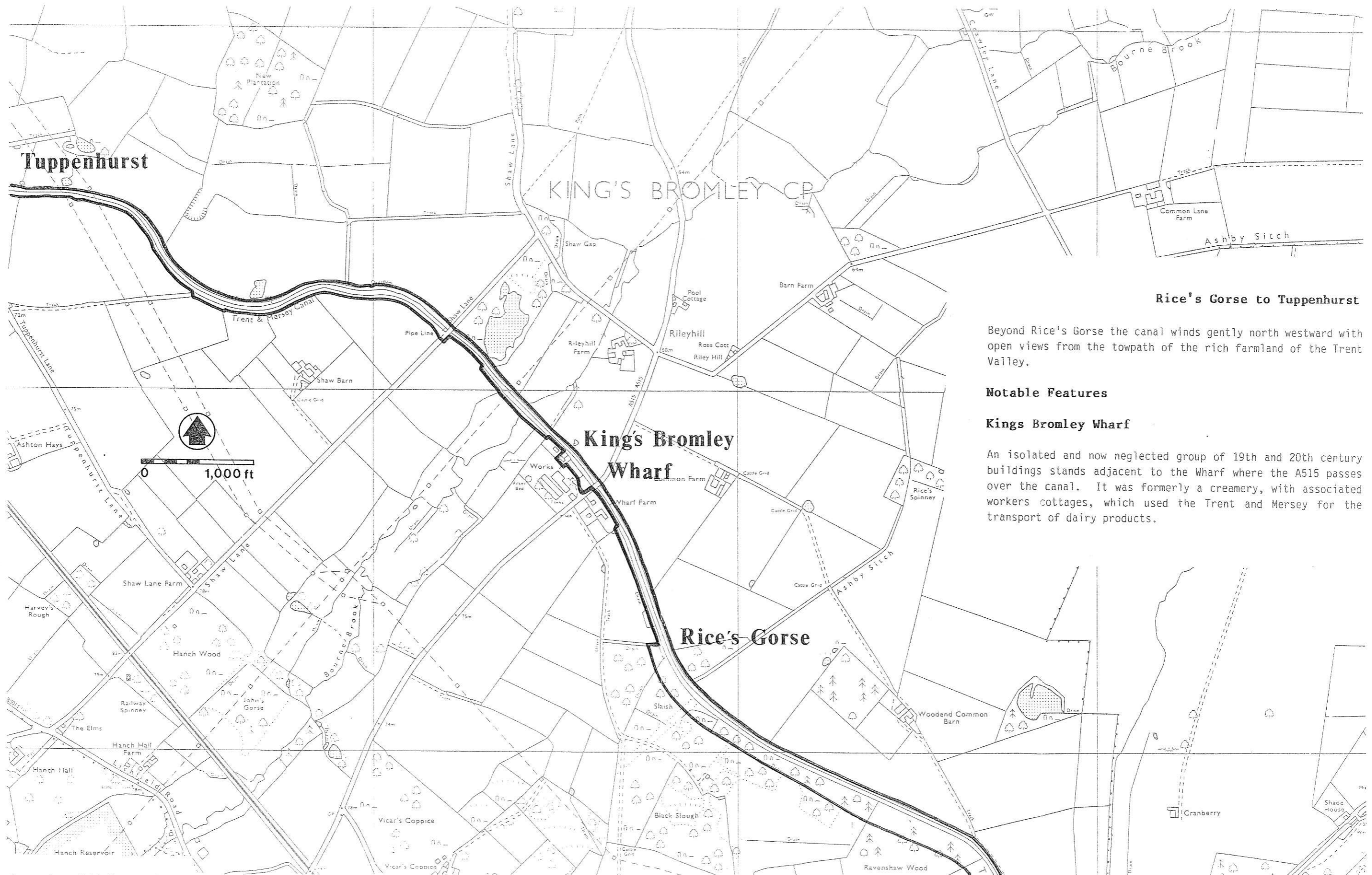
Further details can be found in the Fradley Junction Conservation Area booklet No. 72 available from Staffordshire County Council and Lichfield District Council.

Mile Post

Another of the surviving mile posts erected by the Trent and Mersey Canal Company in 1819 - 20 stands some 656 feet south of Woodend Lock marking 26 and 66 miles from Shardlow and Preston Brook respectively.

Woodend Lock

The lock together with its associated lock cottage and adjacent bridge form a pleasing group of late 18th century canal structures. All three are listed as buildings of special architectural and historic interest, Grade II.



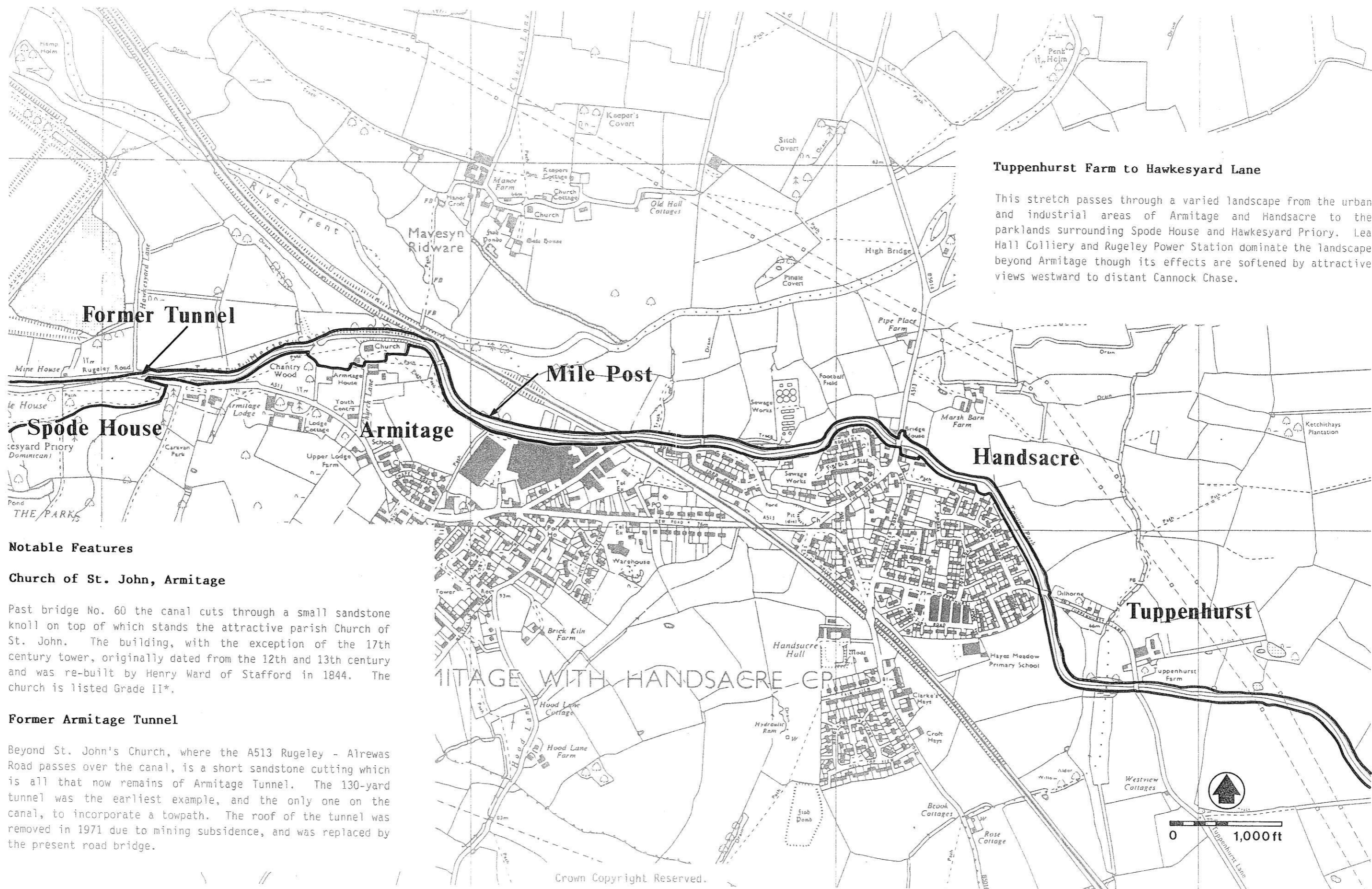
Rice's Gorse to Tuppenhurst

Beyond Rice's Gorse the canal winds gently north westward with open views from the towpath of the rich farmland of the Trent Valley.

Notable Features

Kings Bromley Wharf

An isolated and now neglected group of 19th and 20th century buildings stands adjacent to the Wharf where the A515 passes over the canal. It was formerly a creamery, with associated workers cottages, which used the Trent and Mersey for the transport of dairy products.



Tuppenhurst Farm to Hawkesyard Lane

This stretch passes through a varied landscape from the urban and industrial areas of Armitage and Handsacre to the parklands surrounding Spode House and Hawkesyard Priory. Lea Hall Colliery and Rugeley Power Station dominate the landscape beyond Armitage though its effects are softened by attractive views westward to distant Cannock Chase.

Former Tunnel

Spode House

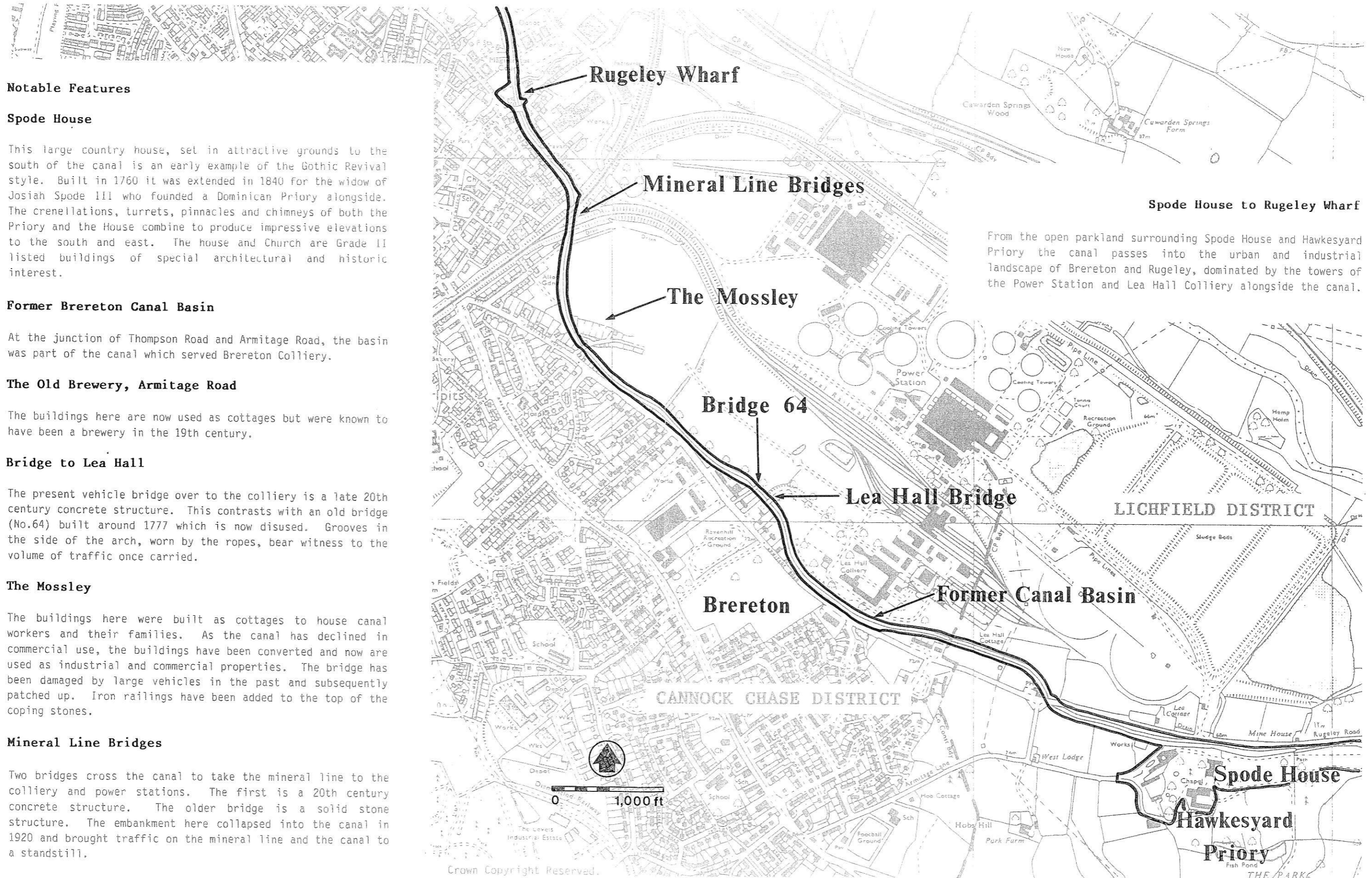
Notable Features

Church of St. John, Armitage

Past bridge No. 60 the canal cuts through a small sandstone knoll on top of which stands the attractive parish Church of St. John. The building, with the exception of the 17th century tower, originally dated from the 12th and 13th century and was re-built by Henry Ward of Stafford in 1844. The church is listed Grade II*.

Former Armitage Tunnel

Beyond St. John's Church, where the A513 Rugeley - Alrewas Road passes over the canal, is a short sandstone cutting which is all that now remains of Armitage Tunnel. The 130-yard tunnel was the earliest example, and the only one on the canal, to incorporate a towpath. The roof of the tunnel was removed in 1971 due to mining subsidence, and was replaced by the present road bridge.



Notable Features

Spode House

This large country house, set in attractive grounds to the south of the canal is an early example of the Gothic Revival style. Built in 1760 it was extended in 1840 for the widow of Josiah Spode III who founded a Dominican Priory alongside. The crenellations, turrets, pinnacles and chimneys of both the Priory and the House combine to produce impressive elevations to the south and east. The house and Church are Grade II listed buildings of special architectural and historic interest.

Former Brereton Canal Basin

At the junction of Thompson Road and Armitage Road, the basin was part of the canal which served Brereton Colliery.

The Old Brewery, Armitage Road

The buildings here are now used as cottages but were known to have been a brewery in the 19th century.

Bridge to Lea Hall

The present vehicle bridge over to the colliery is a late 20th century concrete structure. This contrasts with an old bridge (No.64) built around 1777 which is now disused. Grooves in the side of the arch, worn by the ropes, bear witness to the volume of traffic once carried.

The Mossley

The buildings here were built as cottages to house canal workers and their families. As the canal has declined in commercial use, the buildings have been converted and now are used as industrial and commercial properties. The bridge has been damaged by large vehicles in the past and subsequently patched up. Iron railings have been added to the top of the coping stones.

Mineral Line Bridges

Two bridges cross the canal to take the mineral line to the colliery and power stations. The first is a 20th century concrete structure. The older bridge is a solid stone structure. The embankment here collapsed into the canal in 1920 and brought traffic on the mineral line and the canal to a standstill.

Spode House to Rugeley Wharf

From the open parkland surrounding Spode House and Hawkesyard Priory the canal passes into the urban and industrial landscape of Brereton and Rugeley, dominated by the towers of the Power Station and Lea Hall Colliery alongside the canal.