

ANDERTON LIFT TO RUNCORN 1

TRENT & MERSEY CANAL, BRIDGEWATER CANAL

TRIP TYPE : SOLO CYCLE

OBJECTIVE : RIDE FROM THE ANDERTON BOAT LIFT ALONG THE TRENT & MERSEY CANAL TO PRESTON BROOK, THEN THE BRIDGEWATER CANAL TO RUNCORN, RETURNING BY TRAIN TO ACTON BRIDGE OR NORTHWICH.

DISTANCE : 13 MILES

TIME : 2 HOURS, 8.1 mph

NICHOLSON: GUIDE 5, pp 28, 29, 226, 227

COSTS : ANDERTON LIFT CAR PARK, £2 FOR 3 HOURS, £8 FOR THE DAY. TRAIN TO ACTON BRIDGE £5 (OR TRAIN TO NORTHWICH £32)

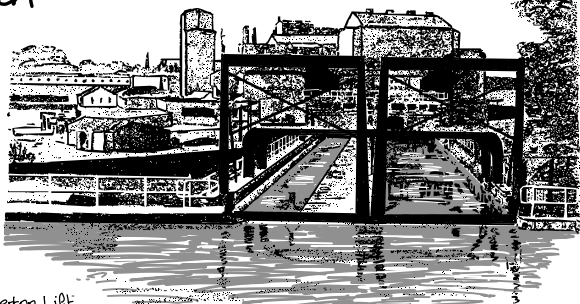
DIFFICULTY : FAIR

OVERVIEW: A short ride, which can theoretically be extended into a circular one by returning along the River Weaver, although my extensive research indicates there is no towpath as such, just a rather poor footpath with stiles for most of the way. There are a few tunnels to navigate over in the rural first section, and the second section along the Bridgewater takes you through the suburban and industrial landscape of Runcorn.

1. ANDERTON LIFT TO PRESTON BROOK JUNCTION (7.5 MILES)

Park at the Anderton Lift Visitor Centre, CW9 6FW. Exit the car park towards the visitor centre where you arrive at the short lift arm of the canal. Cross the footbridge over the lift arm and continue west on the towpath of the Trent & Mersey towards Preston Brook, which is good quality gravel.

After half a mile is Barnston Tunnel. Take the steep slope to a rough track and turn left. Follow this over the top and down again to the canal, which widens into a pool at this point.



The Anderton Lift;
from the top
Trent & Mersey Canal

Next is Salterford Tunnel. Take the steep slope up over the entrance and bear left on another track which drops back down to the canal (this is getting repetitive).

The towpath is narrow earth, but flat enough and perfectly rideable. Continue to Preston Brook Tunnel. Take the slope up and head straight on between houses on a recently metalled road. Continue to the T junction with Northwich Road, A533. Turn left, then right signed to 'Tunnel End North'. At the end house, by the mile post, bear left over the tunnel entrance and drop back down to the towpath.

Preston Brook Tunnel,
South Portal
Trent & Mersey Canal



A mile further on the canal passes under the M56 motorway and immediately after passing underneath is the junction with the Bridgewater Canal, where straight on takes you towards Manchester, and left towards Runcorn.

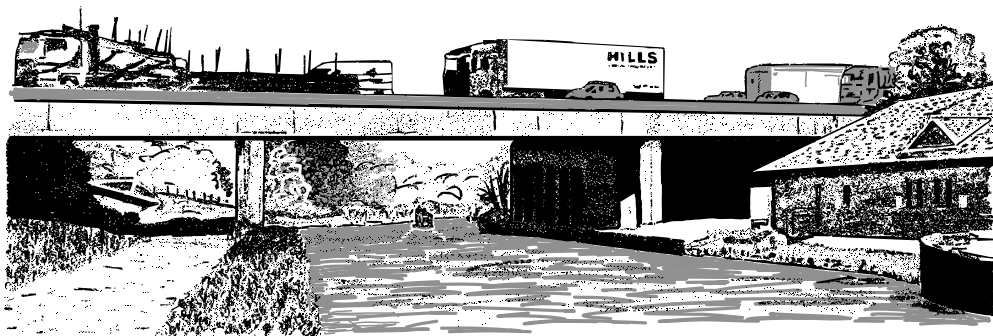
2. PRESTON BROOK TO RUNCORN ³ (5 MILES)

At the junction turn left on a track and pass through the bike gate to Dukes Wharf. Continue to Murdishaw Drive and turn right on Marina Drive. After 400m turn right on Cawley's Bridge, a side road signposted to the marina. Once over the bridge turn left on the towpath, which is good quality gravel or metalled all the way into Runcorn. Shortly before the end you pass the Brindley Theatre, the name of which celebrates the canal's engineer.

The canal ends abruptly at Waterloo Bridge, where it is blocked off (there is a campaign underway to restore the lock flight down to the Manchester Ship Canal)

Runcorn train station is 2 minutes away, to your left over Waterloo Bridge. Trains back to Northwich are expensive (£32, change at Chester), and a better option is to take a train to Acton Bridge at around £5, which run 1 per hour.

At a standstill:
M56 at Preston Brook,
Trent & Mersey Canal



3. ACTON BRIDGE STATION TO ANDERTON LIFT (5 MILES) ⁴

There is no lift at Acton Bridge station so carry your bike up to the beautifully named Milton Rough and turn right. Bear left on Hill Top Road to Acton Bridge village, then right onto Acton Lane to the A49, Warrington Road. Turn left on the cycle path to cross the bridge over the River Weaver and Weaver Navigation. Once over the bridge turn right on Willow Green Lane. After 600m, at Taylor's Bridge, join the Trent & Mersey Canal towpath and turn east (right). Cycle the 4 miles back, including that hill over Salterford Tunnel, to the Anderton Lift, where there is a café in the Visitor Centre for your refreshment.

There is no convenient nearby pub (the Stanley Arms is temporarily closed as of 2025), but the Spinner & Bergamot at Camberbatch 2 miles away is friendly, serves decent food and a half-decent pint of Robinsons (it is never better than half decent).