

Local Snippets

Blisworth is mentioned in the Domesday Book (1086 A.D.) when it was known as Blidesworde.

Many of its older houses are built with alternating bands of Blisworth ironstone and Northamptonshire limestone.

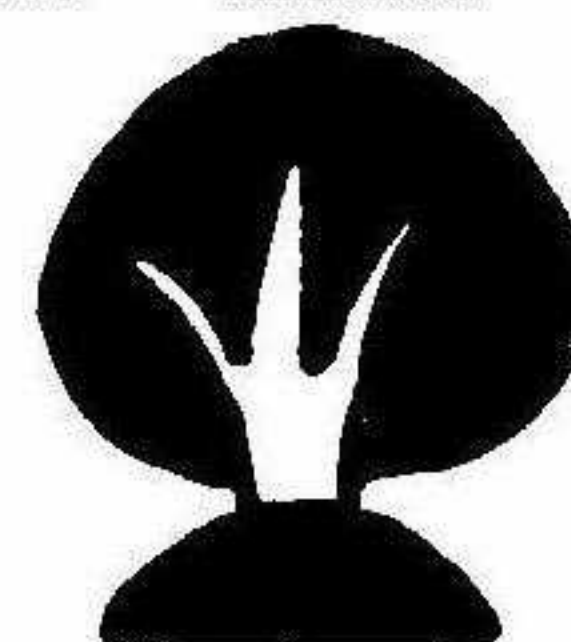
Over the last four centuries Blisworth has evolved with the country's transport networks. In the 17th Century it was a well known stop-over for horse drawn coaches. By the late 18th, early 19th century the building of the canal had made the area an extremely busy inland port. Next came the London Birmingham Railway providing passenger and freight services.

Whilst walking along the now tranquil canal towpath it is difficult to imagine the hustle and bustle of working narrow boats ferrying their cargoes of ironore, limestone and coal to the railway sidings where the hissing steam crane unloaded overflowing skips onto trucks to be pulled by smoking locomotives to their ultimate destinations.

The Church of St. John the Baptist is mainly built of coursed limestone with ironstone in its tower. It was restored in 1855-6 when a gallery was removed and the pews were converted into benches. The south aisle was rebuilt in 1926. The Church contains the table-top tomb of Roger Wake (d 1503-4) and his wife Elizabeth Catesby. The font is ancient and portions of medieval glass survive in the north-west chancel window.

The Baptist Chapel was built in 1825. Its Manse and lecture hall added in 1865 and 1885.

A Walkers' Code



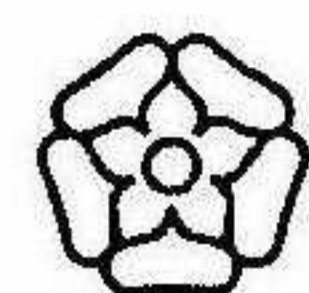
1. Always keep to the path to avoid trespass. If the path is obstructed you are allowed to seek a reasonable way round the obstruction, taking care to avoid causing damage. Please report the obstruction to the highways authority.
2. Remember to close gates behind you. Straying stock can cause damage or spread disease and carelessness may lead to tragedy.
3. To avoid harm or distress to farm animals and wildlife it is best to leave dogs at home. If you have to bring them they should be kept on a leash.
4. If your route takes you onto a road keep to the right, facing oncoming traffic and use the verge if one exists.
5. Always wear suitable clothing and footwear for the season and remember to allow plenty of time to complete your chosen walk.
6. Remember that every piece of land in the country belongs to someone, so please treat it with respect so that other walkers will be made welcome.
7. Remember that Scheduled Ancient Monuments are protected by law in order to ensure their survival. Please respect them and other archaeological sites.
8. Take extra care near locks and don't be tempted to assist boat crews unless you are certain of what to do. Remember because boats cannot stop immediately if someone falls into the water, the risk of injury is great.

If you experience any difficulty on your walk such as barbed wire, locked gates or damaged stiles and footbridges, please report them to the Principal Rights of Way Officer, West Office, Arnex House, London Road, Daventry. Tel. Daventry 706081.

For information and matters relating to the Canal and Towpath: The Waterway Manager, The Stop House, Braunston, Northants. Tel. Braunston 0788 890666.

Drawn and compiled by Sue Payne (1992)

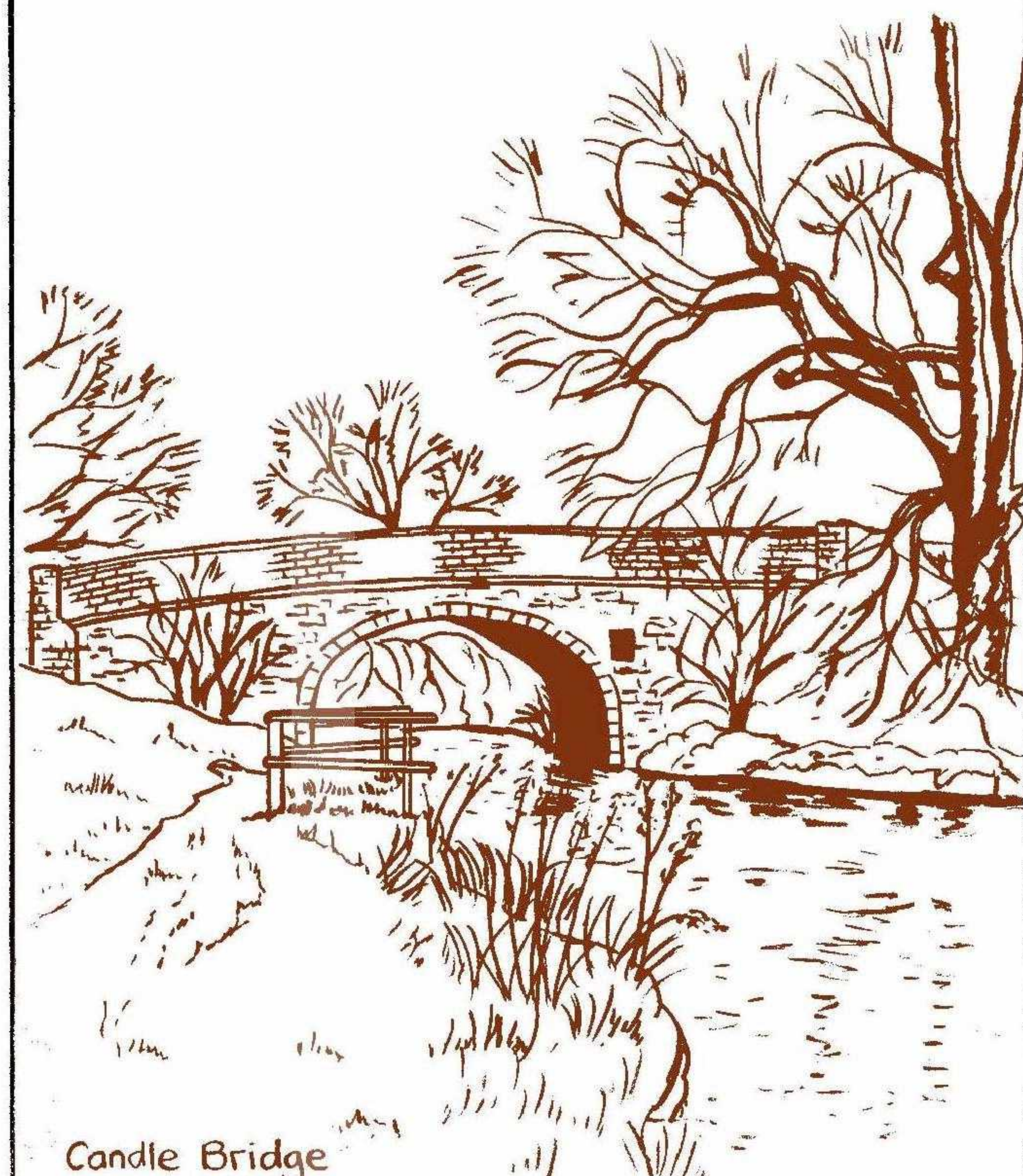
Countryside Walks Leaflet No. 1.



Northamptonshire
County Council

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Countryside and Canal Walks Blisworth



Candle Bridge
Blisworth.



British Waterways



Northamptonshire
Countryside Services

BLISWORTH TUNNEL.

Blisworth tunnel was opened in 1805 having been completed on the second attempt following geological and contractual problems with the initial line. The first dig was aborted in 1796 although the scars of its existence can still be seen on the landscape in the form of depressions and spoil mounds.

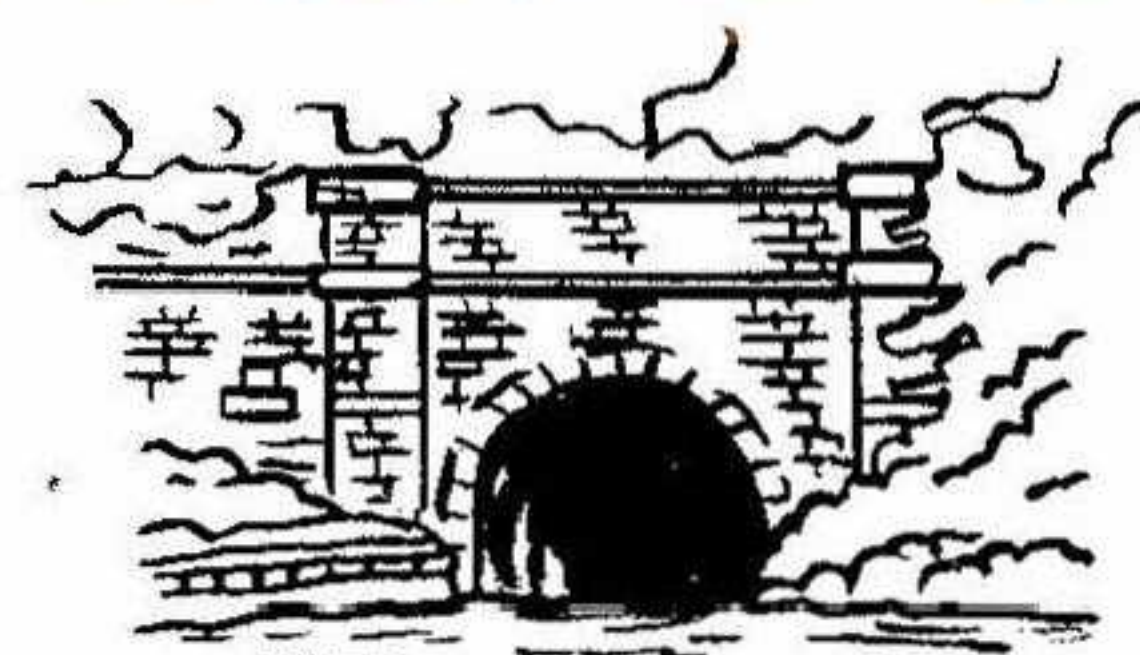
The present tunnel is 3,076 yards long, and is the longest continuous bore, navigable canal tunnel in the Country. 'Barnes of Banbury', the engineer who excavated the tunnel, was illiterate and had to memorise all the estimates and calculations needed for the tunnels completion.

Five years before the opening of the tunnel the County's first railroad was built to transport goods between the two completed sections of canal at Blisworth and Stoke Bruerne. The trains that rumbled over Blisworth Hill were made up of open, tub wagons pulled by horses.

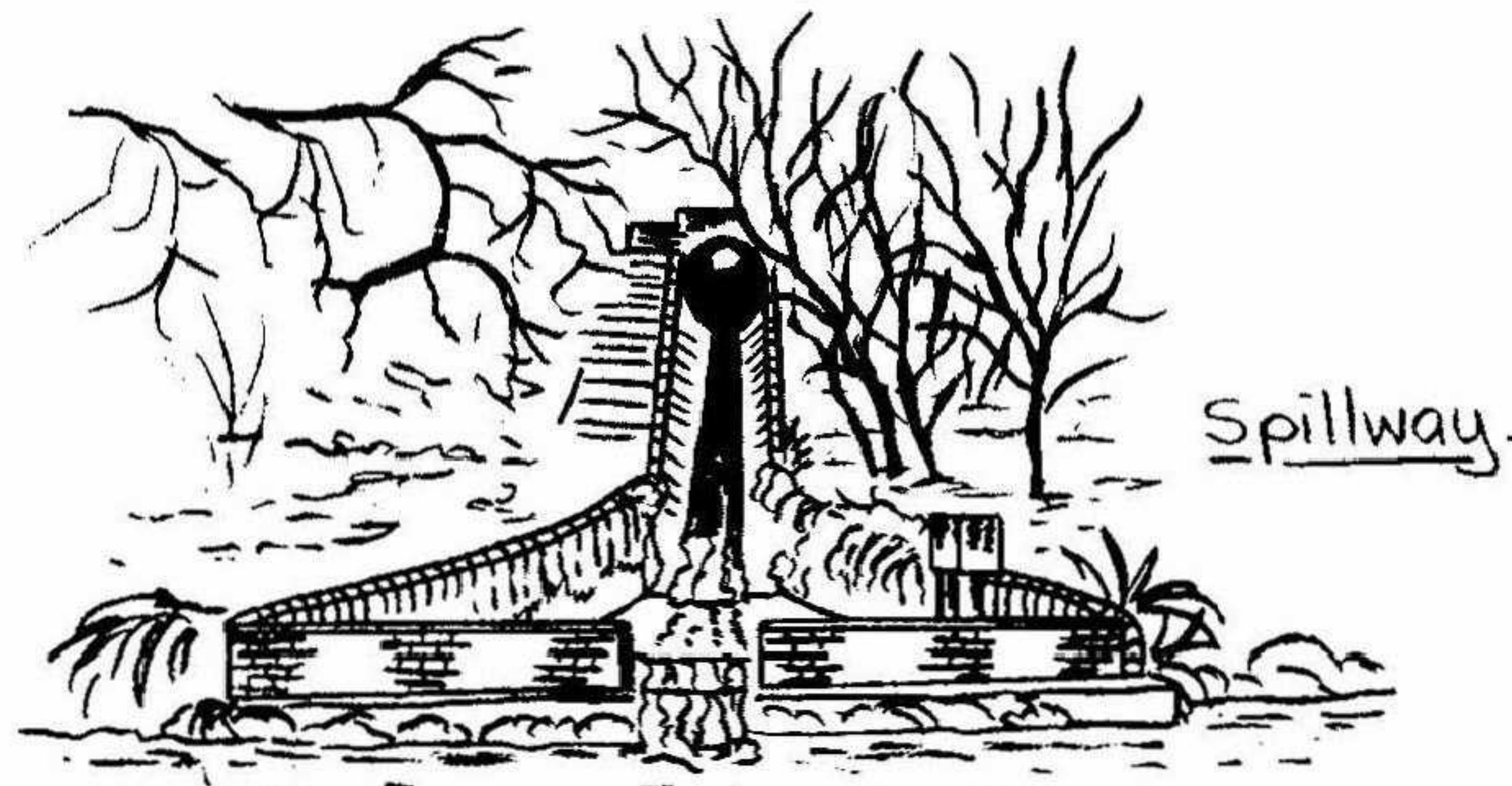
Before the introduction of steam tugs, in 1871, boats were 'legged' through the tunnel. 'Leggers' would lay on special boards projecting from the sides of the boats and push with their feet on the tunnel walls, taking up to 2½ hours for the trip.

The tunnel was drained between 1982-1984 and a new section installed. A dam was placed across the canal in the cutting and a temporary road laid for the large trucks which had to back up for a mile in order to drive out with materials and rubble.

It was officially re-opened for canal traffic by Sir Leslie Young in 1984.

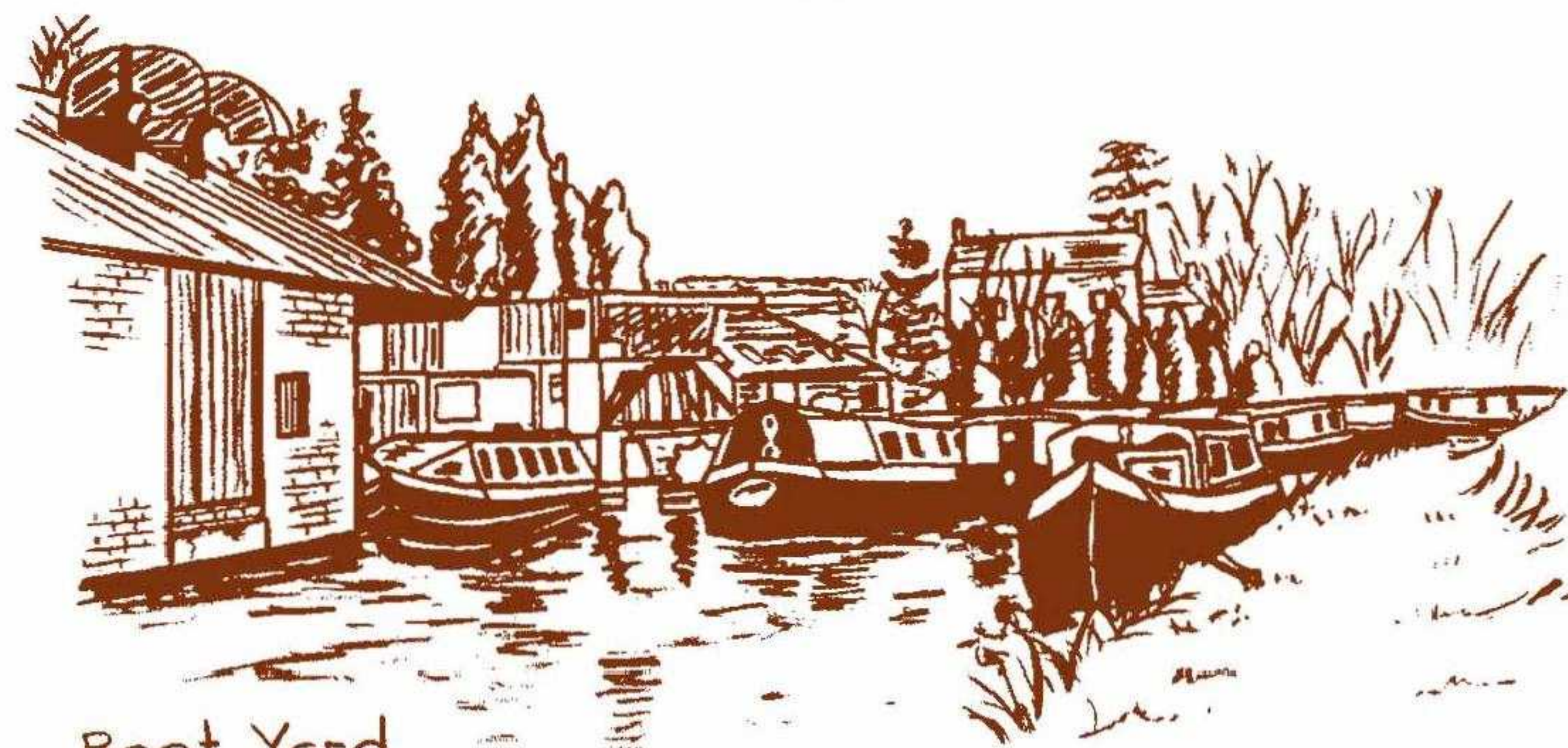


Tunnel Entrance.



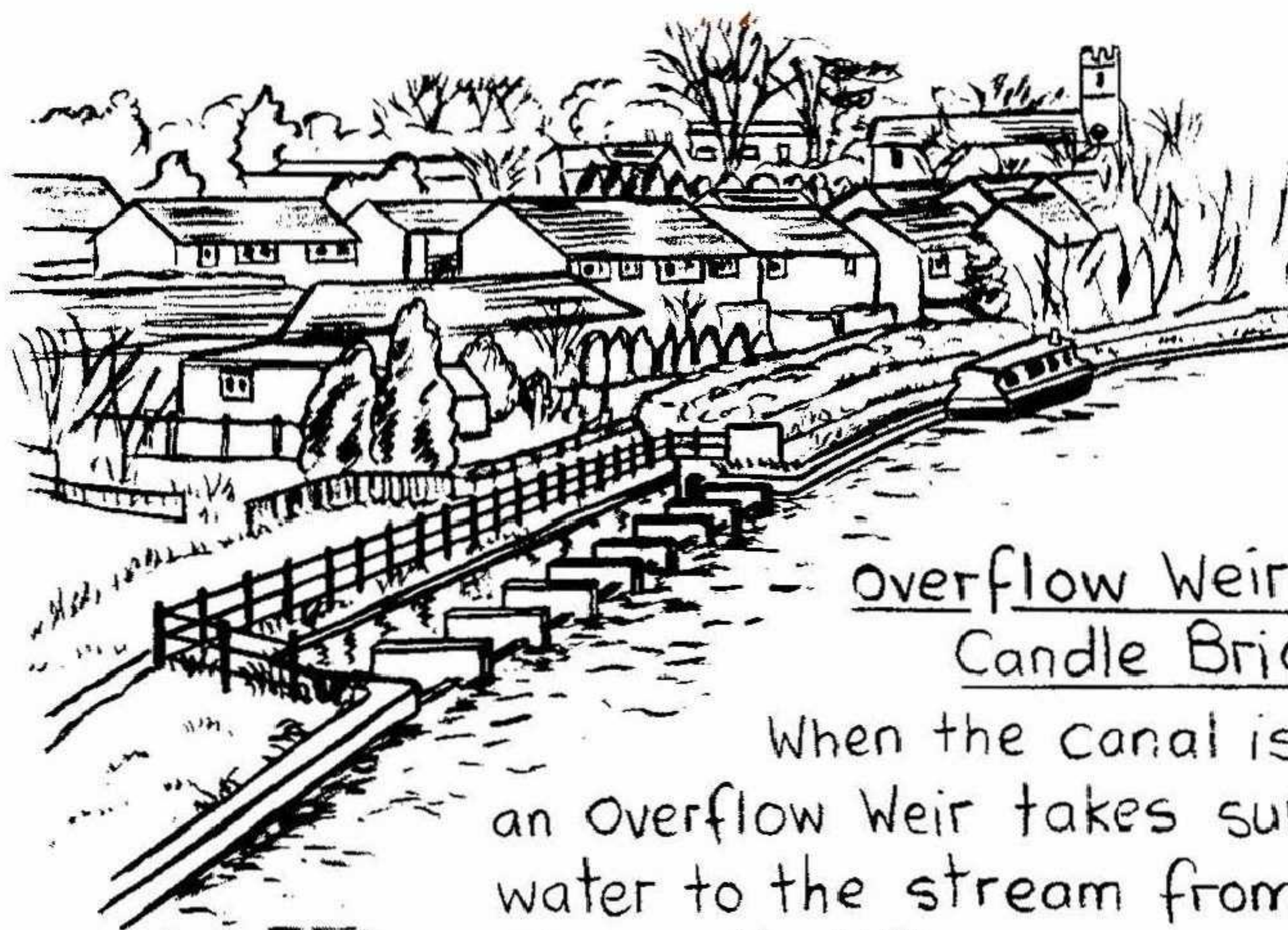
Spillway.

The canal cutting was built following the path of a natural valley and a small stream which now enters the canal down a spillway near the tunnel entrance.



Boat Yard

Part of the Westley Mill site was taken over by Blisworth Tunnel Boats Ltd. in the early 1970's. The flourishing hire-fleet company now has a repair dock, chandlery and moorings.

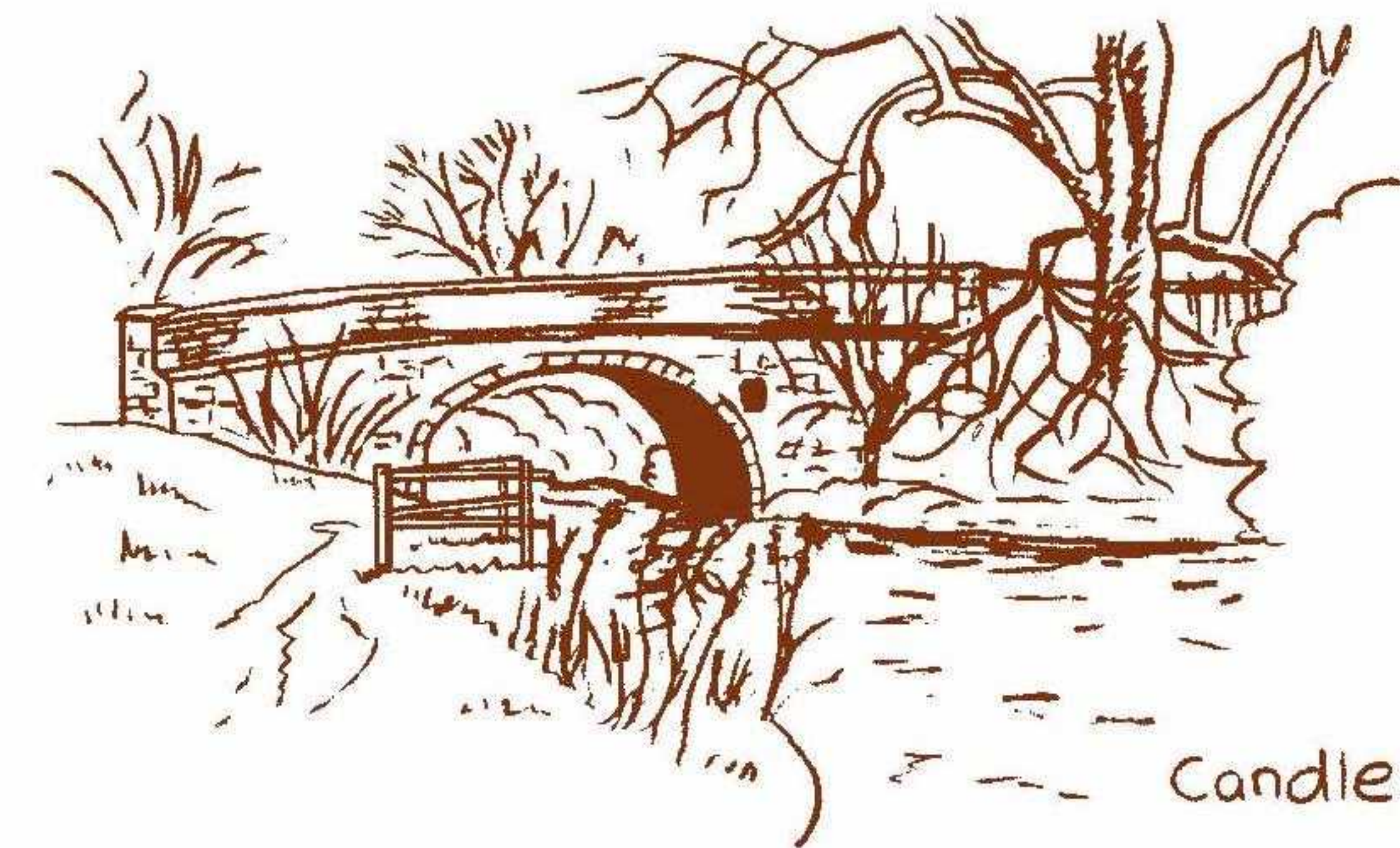


overflow Weir near
Candle Bridge

When the canal is full an Overflow Weir takes surplus water to the stream from Blisworth Hill.

Candle Bridge.

Boat people would stop at Bridge 50 to buy tallow dips, from the nearby cottage, which were used for lighting their way through the long tunnel. The cottage has now been rebuilt but the bridge is still known as 'Candle' bridge.



Candle Bridge.

Railway Bridge.

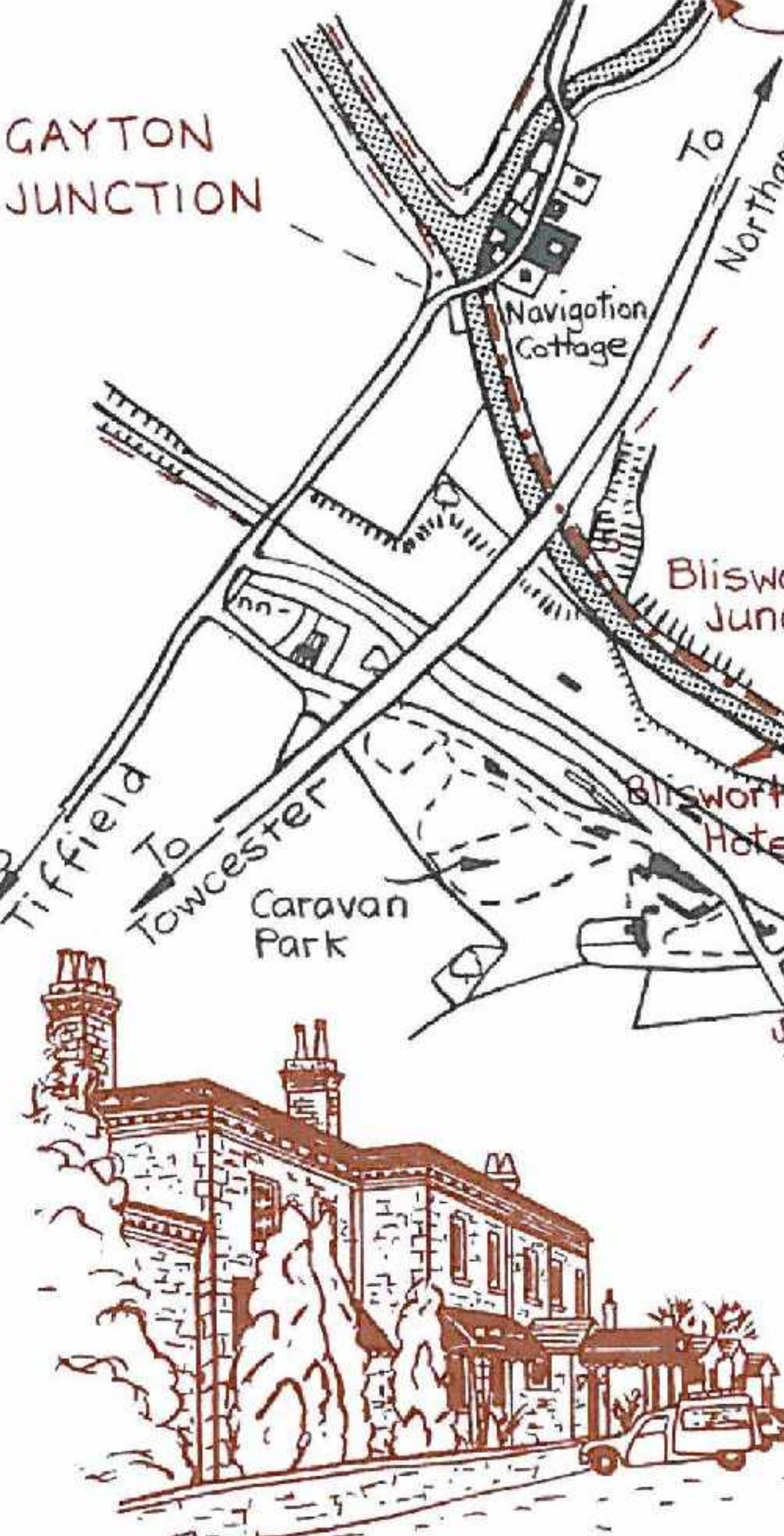
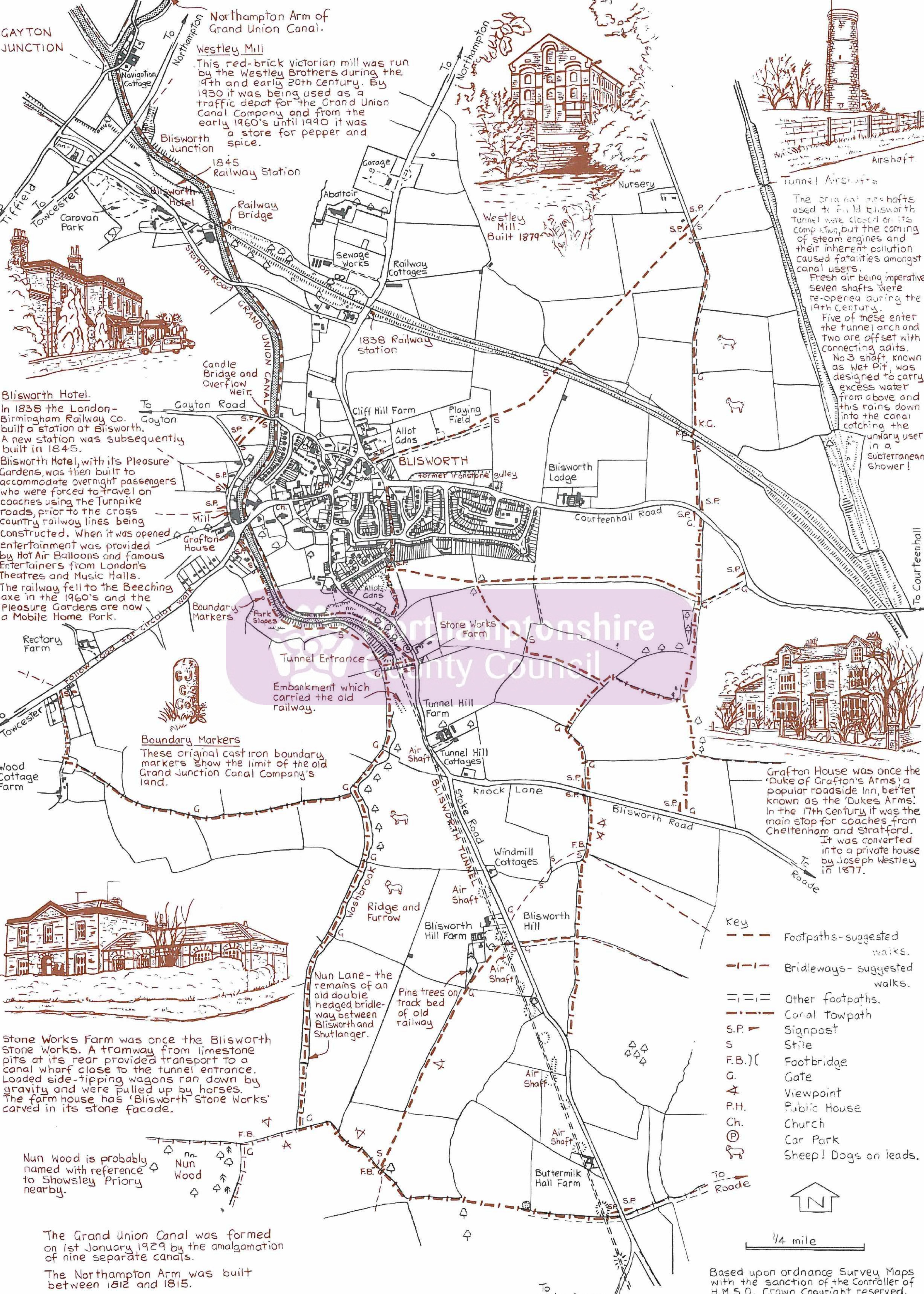
The Railway Bridge was designed by Robert Stephenson who used cast-iron work in its arch. A large square stone built water tank stood just before the bridge and supplied canal water to thirsty steam engines. This tank has now been demolished and the bridge arch encased in concrete to facilitate the electrification of the railway.



Railway Bridge

Gayton Junction

The Junction of the Grand Union Canal and the Northampton Arm is called Gayton Junction by British Waterways. It is also known as Gayton Arm End to boaters and Blisworth Arm to local inhabitants. In the past, this junction was marked by a Public House called The Navigation.



Blisworth Hotel.
In 1838 the London-Birmingham Railway Co. built a station at Blisworth. A new station was subsequently built in 1845.
Blisworth Hotel, with its Pleasure Gardens, was then built to accommodate overnight passengers who were forced to travel on coaches using the Turnpike roads, prior to the cross country railway lines being constructed. When it was opened entertainment was provided by Hot Air Balloons and famous Entertainers from London's Theatres and Music Halls. The railway fell to the Beeching axe in the 1960's and the Pleasure Gardens are now a Mobile Home Park.

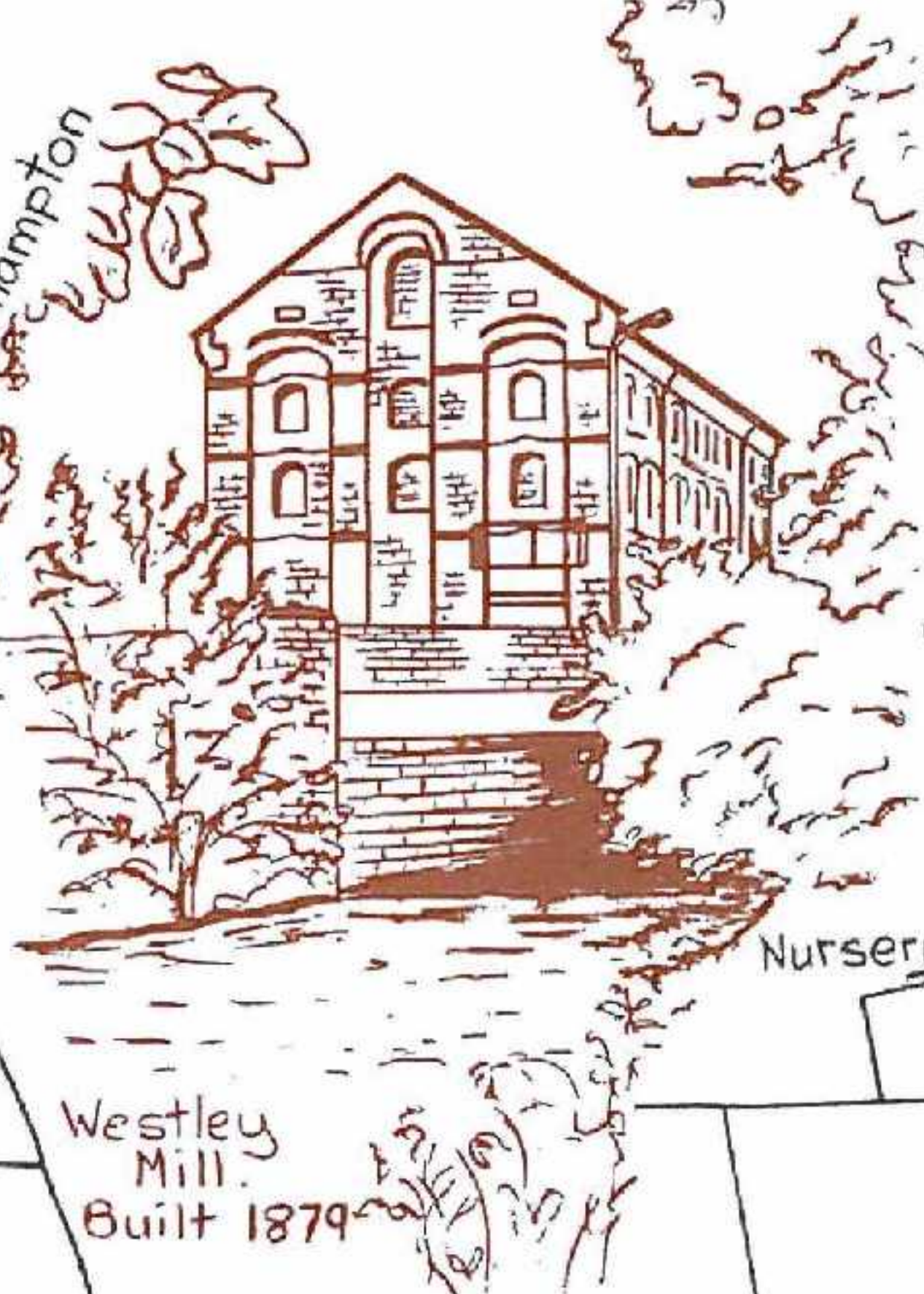


Stone Works Farm was once the Blisworth Stone Works. A tramway from limestone pits at its rear provided transport to a canal wharf close to the tunnel entrance. Loaded side-tipping wagons ran down by gravity and were pulled up by horses. The farm house has 'Blisworth Stone Works' carved in its stone facade.

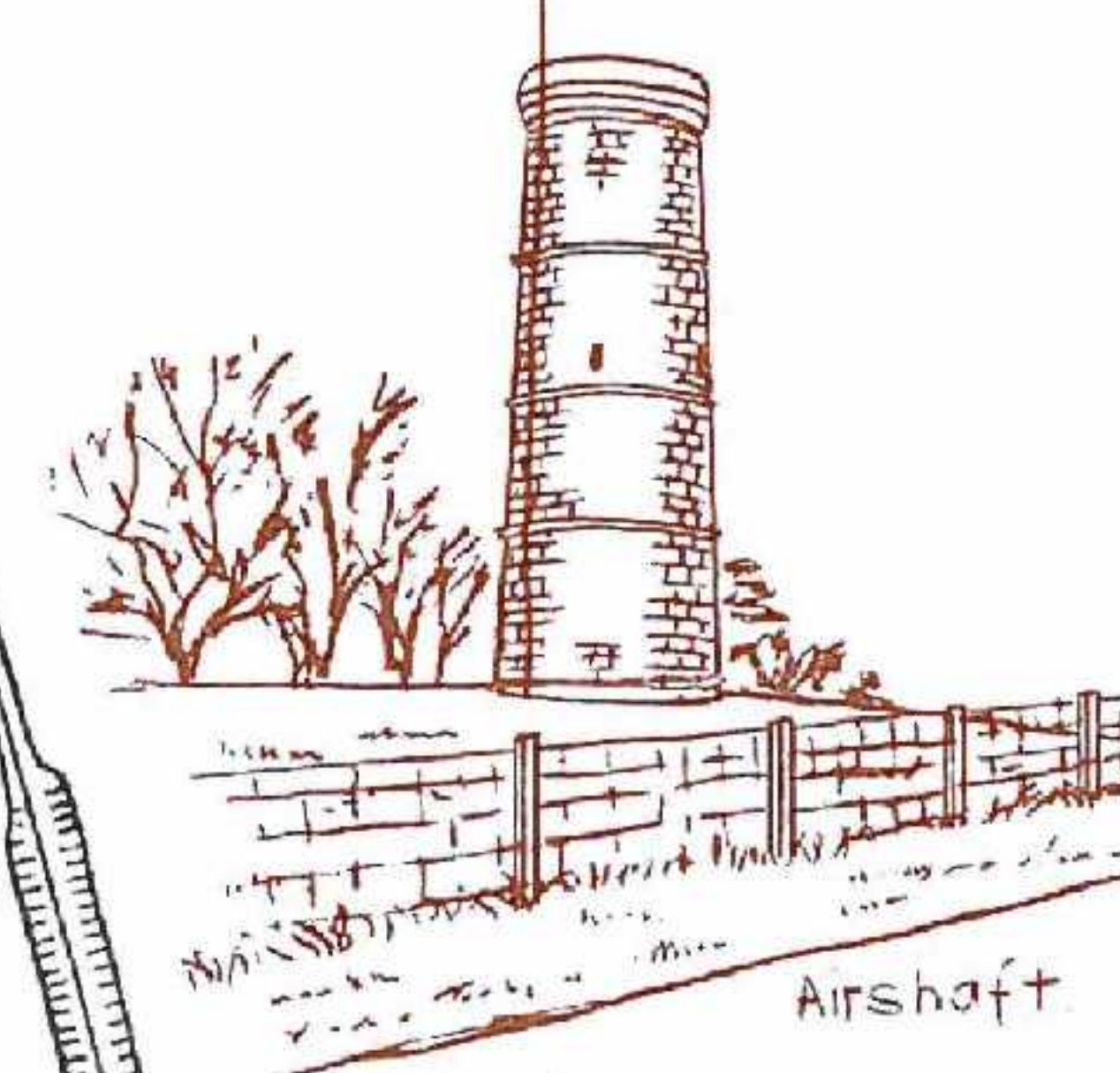
Nun Wood is probably named with reference to Showsley Priory nearby.

The Grand Union Canal was formed on 1st January 1929 by the amalgamation of nine separate canals.
The Northampton Arm was built between 1812 and 1815.

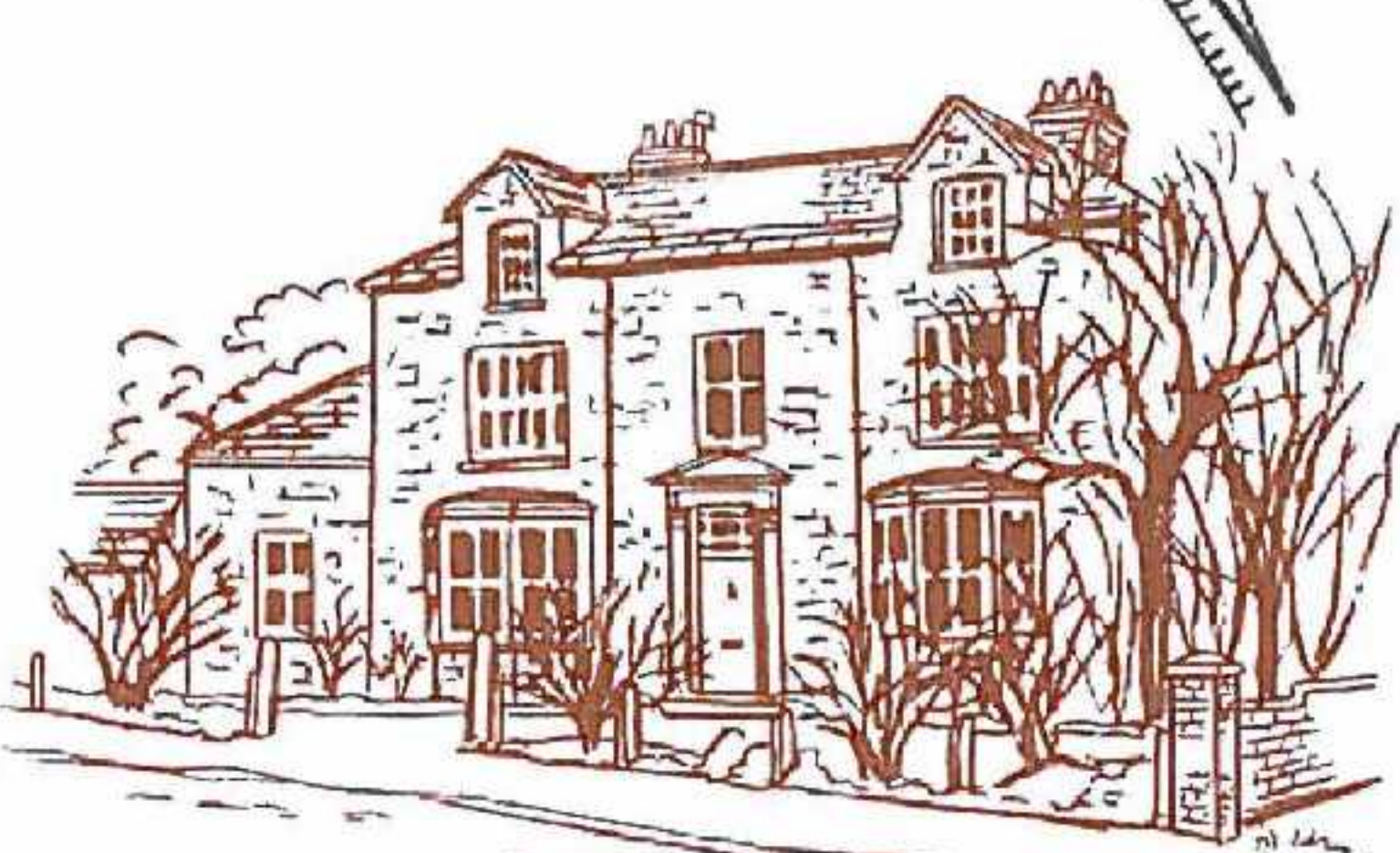
Westley Mill
This red-brick Victorian mill was run by the Westley Brothers during the 19th and early 20th century. By 1930 it was being used as a traffic depot for the Grand Union Canal Company and from the early 1960's until 1990 it was a store for pepper and spice.



Westley Mill
Built 1879



Tunnel Airshafts
The original airshafts used to build the Blisworth Tunnel were closed on its completion, but the coming of steam engines and their inherent pollution caused fatalities amongst canal users. Fresh air being imperative seven shafts were re-opened during the 19th Century. Five of these enter the tunnel arch and two are offset with connecting adits. No 3 shaft, known as Wet Pit, was designed to carry excess water from above and this rains down into the canal catching the unwary user in a Subterranean Shower!



Grafton House was once the 'Duke of Grafton's Arms', a popular roadside Inn, better known as the 'Dukes Arms'. In the 17th century it was the main stop for coaches from Cheltenham and Stratford. It was converted into a private house by Joseph Westley in 1877.

- Key**
- Footpaths-suggested walks.
 - - - Bridleways- suggested walks.
 - = = = Other footpaths.
 - - - Canal towpath
 - S.P. Signpost
 - S Stile
 - F.B. Footbridge
 - G Gate
 - Viewpoint
 - P.H. Public House
 - Ch. Church
 - Car Park
 - Sheep! Dogs on leads.



1/4 mile

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