

Local Snippets

The canal at Stoke Bruerne was built under an Act of Parliament of 1793 as the Grand Junction Canal to shorten, by about 60 miles, the route from the Midlands to London. Previously, traffic used the narrow, winding Oxford Canal and River Thames.

When the canal was built Stoke Bruerne's village street had to be diverted from its old line along what is now Chapel Lane and re-routed over the then new canal bridge below top lock.

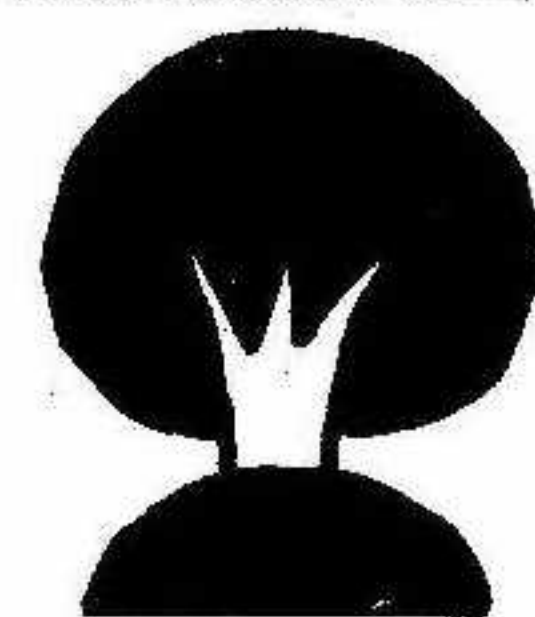
The opening of the Blisworth Tunnel, in 1805, completed the link making it possible to travel throughout the inland waterway system.

The Grand Union Canal was formed between 1929 and 1932 by the amalgamation of nine separate canals.

Stoke Bruerne's canal museum provides a glimpse of the colourful life of yesteryears canal people and their traditions. Inside is a reconstruction of the cabin of a 'butty-boat' and many examples of the local roses and castles painting. Outside, exhibited in the boat weighing machine is L.M.S. No. 53, a type of open boat from the Birmingham and Wolverhampton area. Boat trips are also available up to the Blisworth Tunnel. The Museum shop has an extensive range of books and leaflets.

Opening hours are 10a.m. to 6p.m. daily during Summer Season and 10a.m. to 4p.m., Tuesday to Sunday in the Winter Season.

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 highway 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. 1991.

Countryside Walks Leaflet No. 3.

Northamptonshire Countryside Services is a branch of Northamptonshire Planning and Transportation Department

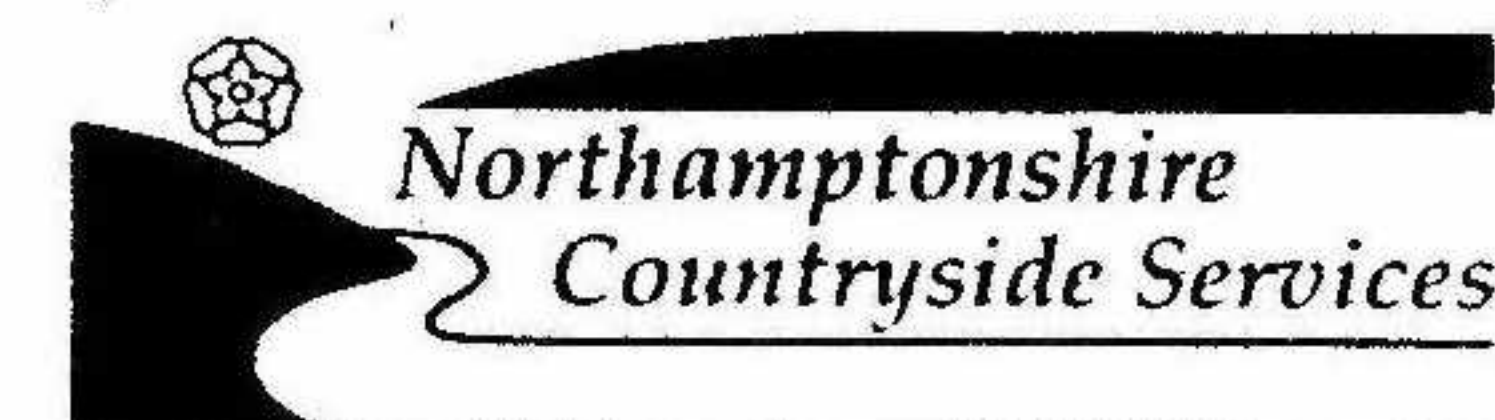
Supported by the
Countryside
Council

Countryside and Canal Walks

Stoke Bruerne



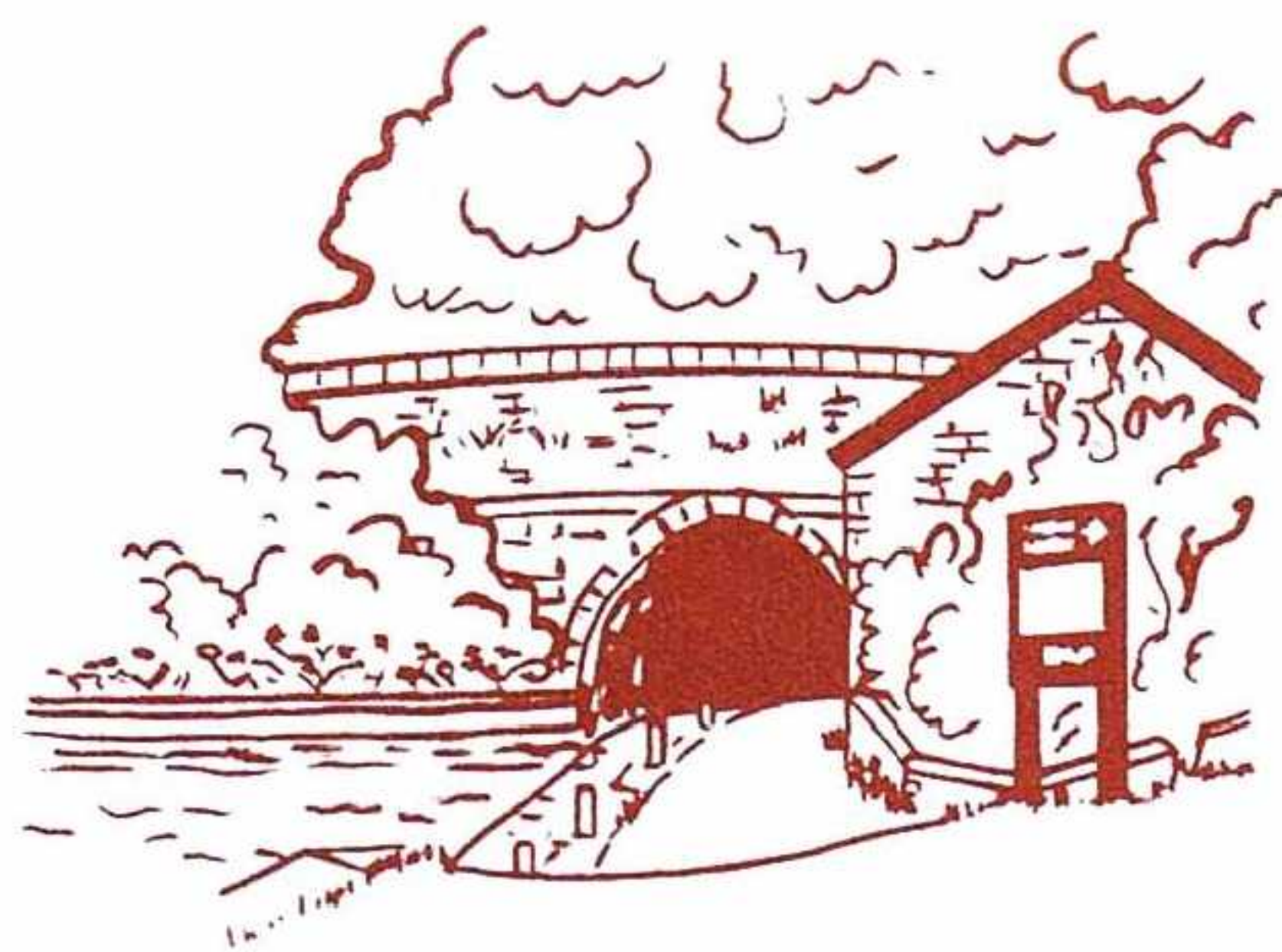
Canal Museum
Stoke Bruerne.





Tunnel Airshafts

Although 1 3/4 miles long the Tunnel is perfectly straight, and wide enough for boats to pass, a tribute to the engineers Jessop and Barnes. Opened after some initial problems in 1805 it was extensively modified by the addition of airshafts in 1871. The reason for this was the change from legging boats through to the use of steam tugs which caused fatalities due to asphyxiation. The original form of the tunnel distorted over a period of time and the central 1,000 metres were re-lined with concrete sections in 1984.



Tunnel Entrance Stoke Bruerne.

Blisworth Tunnel
Tunnel Entrance

Course of the
Blisworth Hill
Tramway

To Blisworth
Shutlanger

STOKE
BRUERNE

Canal
Museum

To
Roade

To
Ashton

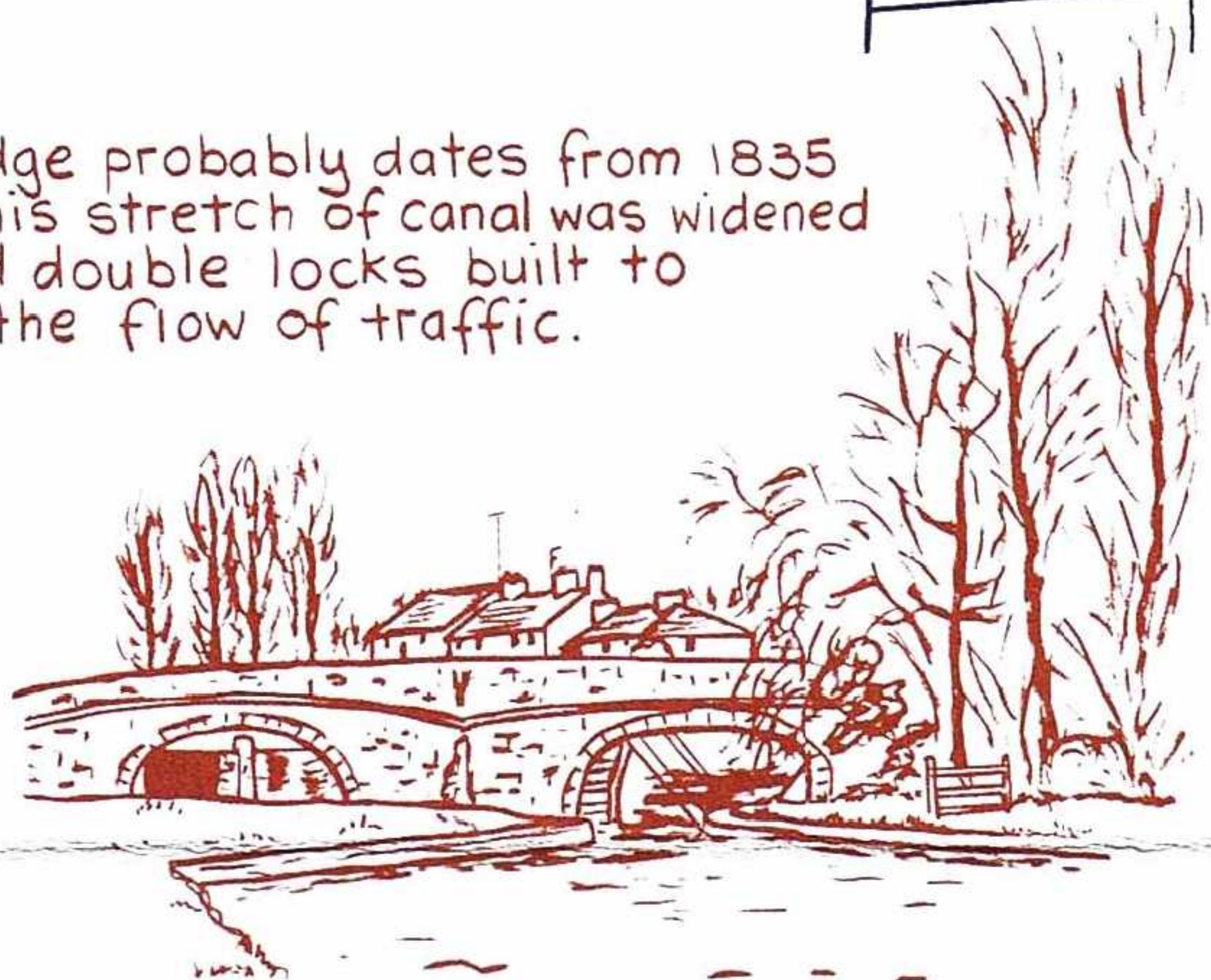
A508

Disused
Brickworks

Side
Ponds

From the 1840's to 1920 a Brickworks provided local building materials and was served by a busy wharf on the Brickworks Arm leading off the Grand Union Canal. Its site is now a Nature Reserve which can be seen from the Towpath.

The bridge probably dates from 1835 when this stretch of canal was widened and had double locks built to speed the flow of traffic.



Road Bridge - No. 53

River Tove

Just below Bottom Lock the River Tove enters the waterways system. In times of surplus water the excess flows away over weirs which can be seen on the east bank stepped over by low arched brick bridges supporting the towpath.

A navigable connecting arm of the River Tove provides moorings nowadays and in latterdays was used for loading hay and straw horse fodder for London.

Bottom
Lock and
Foot
bridge

Pump House

A508

To
Grafton Regis

River
Tove

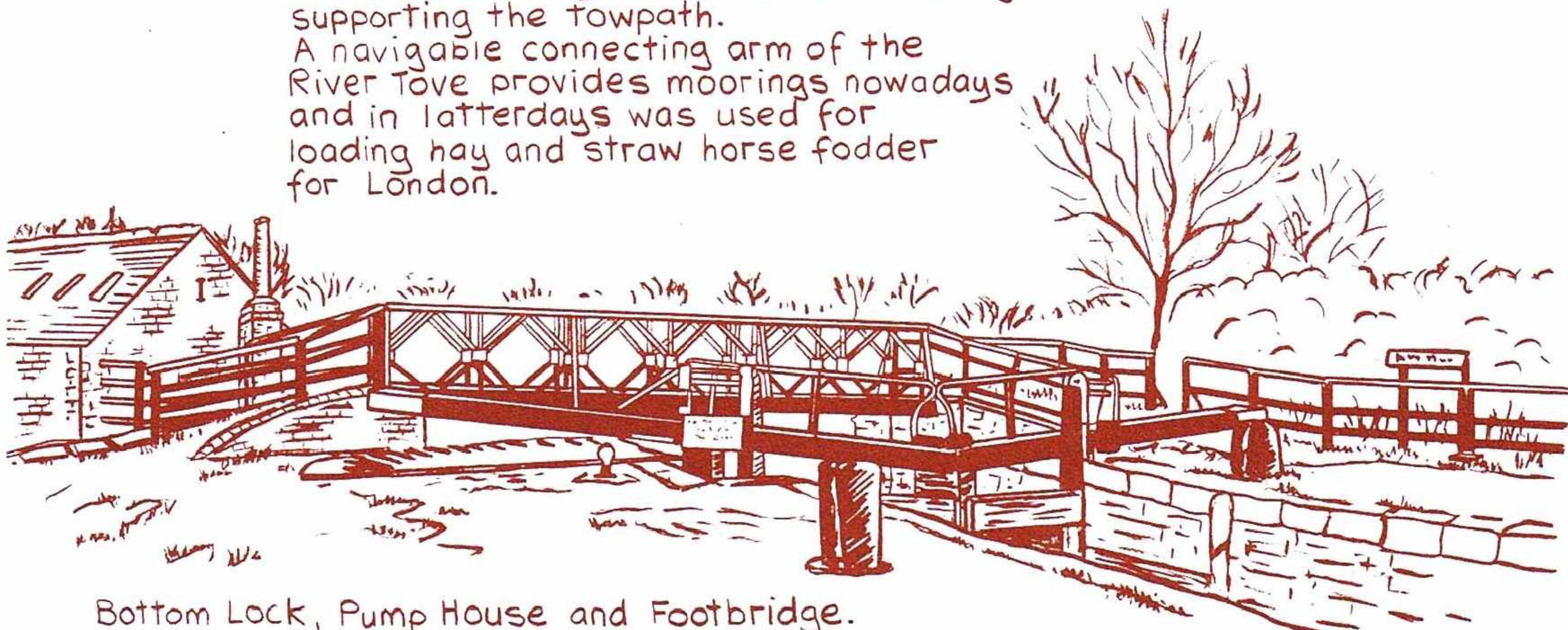
Syphon
Weir.

weir
(Brick
arches)

River Tove

Grand Union Canal

There is a flight of seven locks at Stoke Bruerne and each contains roughly 56,000 gallons of water. When a boat passes through the system the complete contents of one lock is lost to the lower levels and for this reason a pump by Bottom Lock returns the water to the top in times of drought. This prevents problems associated with low water above the locks. The pump outlet can be seen by the museum.



Bottom Lock, Pump House and Footbridge.

Based upon Ordnance Survey Maps with the sanction of the Controller of H.M.S.O. Crown copyright reserved.

On the other side of the canal from the museum stands The Boat Inn which has witnessed and reflected the changes in the waterways traffic. Owned for the past 100 years or so by the Woodward family, it was at one time, a butchers as well as a dispenser of alcoholic beverages to the thirsty boat men. Once the family also owned their own canal craft and part of the buildings were given over to stables for the canal boat horses. Now the business caters for the pleasure visitor with a tea room and restaurant adjoining the pub.

Five years before the opening of the Blisworth Tunnel a primitive horse drawn railway was built to transport goods between the two completed sections of canal. When, in 1805, the tunnel was finally opened this railway was dismantled. It was Northamptonshire's first railway.

By Blacksmiths Green footpath passes between 'Danum House' and 'The Cottage'.

The Monastery - Shutlanger.

The origin of this unusual building is far from certain as it has undergone many changes and alterations. It is unlikely that it was ever a monastery.

The oldest part of the present building is the large thirteenth century porch facing the footpath which contains an enclosed stone spiral staircase.

Stoke Park House was built by Sir Francis Crane in 1629-35 and was flanked by two limestone and ironstone pavilions linked by colonnades. They are excellent examples of the work of Inigo Jones. The original house was destroyed by fire 1886. The ornate Jacobean replacement house has also been demolished. The pavilions are open to the public on Saturday and Sunday afternoons in July and August.

St. Mary's Church, Stoke Bruerne, stands on a hill overlooking the canal. The tower has a Norman base with upper parts which date from 15th century. It was used by Engineers as a marker to ensure the true line of the Blisworth Tunnel. The marble War Memorial in the churchyard is unusual because it bears a woman's name. Sister Elsie Bull, the daughter of the coachman at Stoke Park, who wore herself out nursing the victims of the First World War.

