

# WORCESTER RING CHALLENGE

## THE CHALLENGE...

### Worcester Ring Challenge

**DESCRIPTION:** Paddle a twenty one mile route, starting on the River Severn and taking in a variety of waterways. With thirty-two locks (some of which can be portaged in clusters) and three tunnels along this challenge route, it will be a tough day on the water.

**START AND FINISH:** Worcester Canoe Club, Grandstand Road, Worcester, WR1 3EJ. The canoe club is at the end of Grandstand Road. Parking is available on Grandstand Road for free if there is any, or in the pay and display car park at the start of the road. There is a toilet and café opposite the car park (or ask at the club if its open).



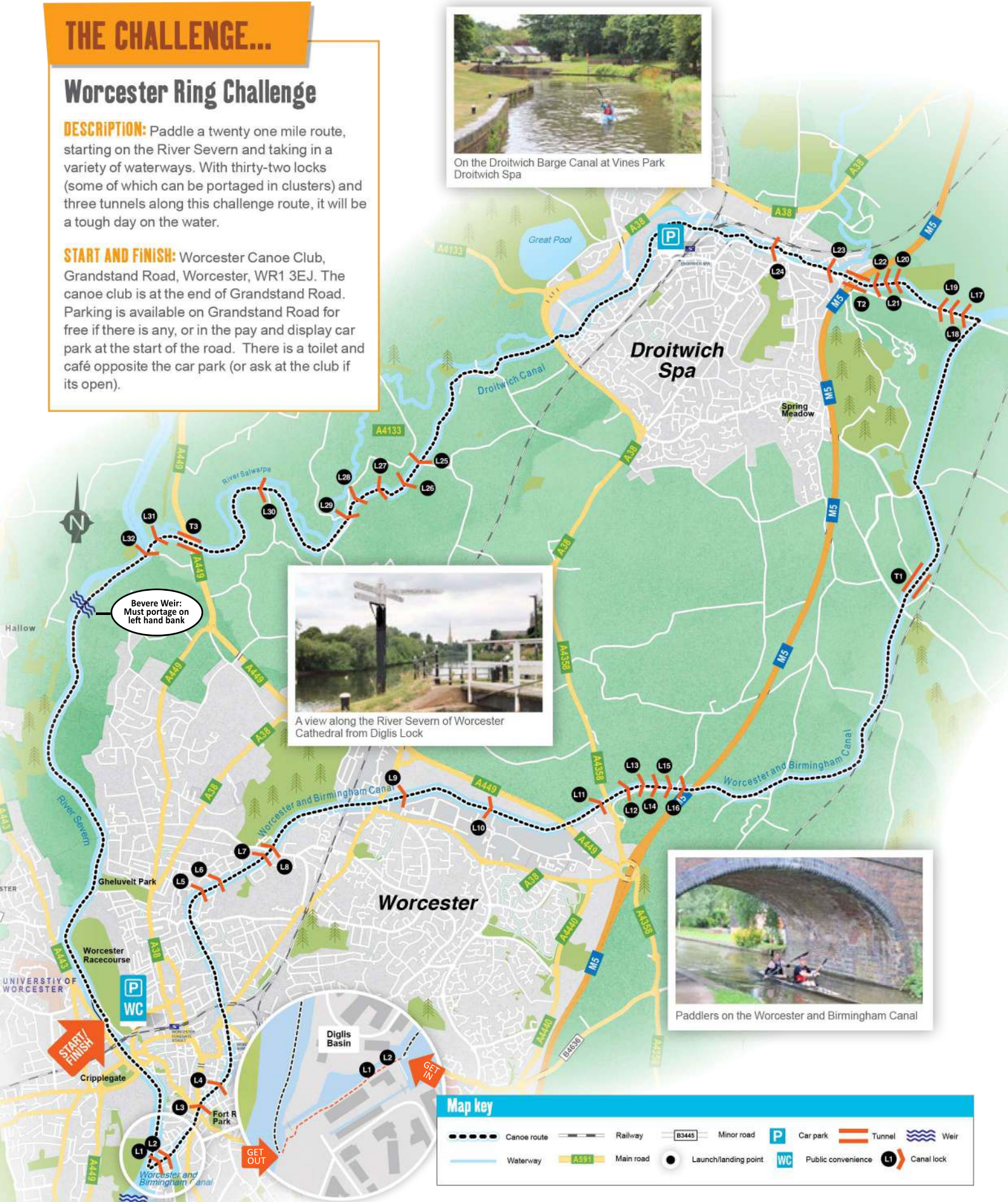
On the Droitchich Barge Canal at Vines Park Droitchich Spa



A view along the River Severn of Worcester Cathedral from Diglis Lock



Paddlers on the Worcester and Birmingham Canal



**THE CHALLENGE:** Paddle this circular route down the River Severn and on two separate canal networks.

**Distance:** 21 Miles

**Time:** 3.5 - 8 Hours (approx)

**Portages and Locks:** 32 locks, one weir portage and 3 tunnels

**Hazards:** Make sure you get out well in advance to portage Bevere weir on the left hand bank. There are three tunnels on this route. If you intend to paddle through them **you must ensure you have a forward facing, bright white light**, switched on as you go through.

## OVERVIEW:

Follow a twenty one mile circular route, starting on the River Severn and taking in a variety of waterways. With thirty-two locks (some of which can be portaged in clusters) one weir to portage and three tunnels along this challenge route, it will be a tough day on the water.

This trip was not possible, for many years, until 2011 when the Droitwich Canals were reopened, having been officially abandoned some seventy years before.

The Worcester Ring is a popular weekend route for canal boaters and also a yearly challenge race, run by Worcester Canoe Club. The race runs each July and you can find more information [here](#).

## ROUTE DETAILS:

### Start/Finish Location:

Worcester Canoe Club  
Grandstand Road  
Worcester  
WR1 3EJ

**The canoe club is at the end of Grandstand Road.**

Parking is available on Grandstand Road for free, if there is any, or in the pay and display car park at the start of the road. There is a toilet and café opposite the car park (or ask at the club if it's open).

Please do not use the canoe club and rowing club car park.

It is worth checking the Worcester Racecourse website while planning your trip as the area may be very busy on race days.

**It is possible to walk the whole of this 21 mile route, making it easy for you to take a support crew on your challenge. There are also plenty of meeting spots along the route. Most of the route can also be followed by bicycle, apart from the final part along the River Severn, which is tracked by a footpath.**

You can see a full map of the route and download a GPX file for it [here](#).



**WATERWAY LICENCE:** The waterways in this trail are managed by Canal and Rivers Trust and require paddlers to hold a license. British Canoeing membership includes a full annual license for this waterway - please take your membership card with you as this acts as your license. Non-members can either purchase a British Canoeing membership from [www.britishcanoeing.org.uk](http://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk) or buy licenses direct from [www.canalrivertrust.org.uk](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk)

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION:

Launch from Worcester Canoe Club and turn left (downstream) on the River Severn. Paddle under a series of bridges, the first of which is Sabrina Bridge, taken from the Roman name for the river.

In your first mile you will pass Worcester County Cricket Club on your right and Worcester Cathedral and college on your left. Watch out for swans along this part of the route, part of the river is a designated swan sanctuary.



*1 Start at Worcester*

At just over one mile the high lock cut banks of Diglis Lock will come into view on your left, with a weir straight on. At this point you leave the river Severn and portage on the left hand side up onto the Worcestershire and Birmingham Canal.



*2 The get out at Diglis Locks*

The best place to get out is just past the lock cut where you will see a pontoon, with a ramp running up onto the high bank. There is a portage point before the lock but this is trickier to get out at.

Get out and walk around your first two locks, they are close together. Follow the towpath and put back in after the second lock. Diglis Basin has a marina with Cafe Afloat; a cafe on a canal barge and The Anchor Inn available for refreshments.

The journey, as you wind your way out of Worcester, is a pleasant one. The built up area gradually giving way to more open spaces. You stay

around nine and a half miles. There are a further thirteen locks along this section, some of which can be portaged in clusters. It is best to assess each lock/cluster as you come to them. Most are portaged to the right but at least one, Gregory's Mill Bottom Lock, is better portaged to the left.

This is a very popular narrow boating route and you will meet many along your journey. Ensure you follow the guidelines for the waterway.

on the Worcester and Birmingham Canal for



Dunhampstead Tunnel is reached at just over 8.5 miles. The tunnel is over 210 metres long and passage by non-powered craft is allowed. Make sure you switch on your light and check for boats coming the other way, before entering the tunnel.

At 10.3 miles you will arrive at Hanbury Wharf; your change point for getting onto the Droitwich Junction Canal. Here the Eagle and Sun public house sits on the old Roman Salt Way road and is open daily. You travel under the Salt Way Road (B4090) and turn left underneath a smaller road bridge.

The Droitwich Junction Canal initially runs alongside the Salt Way Road, reaching a steep flight of locks and then Droitwich Spa Marina. Shortly after this you come to Droitwich Canals and Gateway Park. With a picnic area and parking, this could be a good alternative lunch spot or meeting point if you have a support crew.

# WORCESTER RING CHALLENGE

You are now over halfway through your challenge. The second tunnel of your trip runs under the M5 motorway. It is a very low and narrow tunnel and should be passed through with care. Following this, the River Salwarpe joins the canal, from the right, at 11.5 miles.

Your brief time on the River Salwarpe ends as you enter Droitwich Spa. At an obvious junction in the waterway you will take the left hand spur; portaging around the lock and on to the Droitwich Barge Canal. This is the Vines Park area of Droitwich Spa and is busy with leisure users. A Waitrose, with café, is on the other side of the road from the canal. **There are a number of low swing bridges on this section that will require you to duck slightly to get under, please make sure you keep your head low until you are fully through, alternatively you could choose to get out and walk around these.**

This leafy, tree lined section, on your route into Droitwich Spa, is lovely. Wide open spaces regularly open up amongst the buildings before you head into open countryside. The River Salwarpe continues to track alongside you, following your progress all the way back to the River Severn.



On your approach to the Severn, at around 17.3 miles, pass through a short tunnel, under the A449. Arriving at Hawford Lock, get out on the right and portage back onto the River Severn, turning left along the river to head back to your start point.

**With about three miles to go until your finish you will be getting tired, but you have one more obstacle to get around; Bevere Weir. Just before you approach the weir there will be a small footbridge, this is your cue to find a spot to get out, you MUST portage this on the left hand bank.** Once you portage down past the weir there is a sandy bank where you'll be able to get back in

and you are now on the final strait. Let the beautiful countryside views take your thoughts away from aching arms.

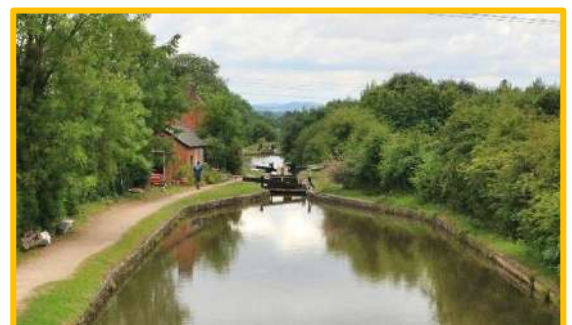
The area on your left becomes more built up as you re-enter Worcester before the sight of the racecourse signals the end of your epic challenge!

## ABOUT THE AREA:

**Worcester, with its attractive medieval buildings and stunning cathedral, is perfect for a weekend visit.**

### Useful Local Websites

- Visit Worcestershire Website: <http://www.visitworcestershire.org/>  
Worcester Canoe Club: <https://worcestercanoecub.org/>  
Visit Droitwich Spa Website: <http://www.visitdroitwichspa.com/>  
Worcester Racecourse: <http://www.worcester-racecourse.co.uk/>  
Worcester Ring Challenge Website: <https://worcester-ring.org/>



## Worcester

Worcester is a charming city with its 12th century cathedral a star attraction. Its ancient name Weorgoran ceaster meant 'fort of the people of the winding river' and the River Severn has certainly been at the heart of its history.

If visiting the city to take on this challenge route it is worth spending some time exploring its historic buildings and charming walks.

## Droitwich Spa

Droitwich Spa was built upon deposits of salt and salt extraction has been its main business for hundreds of years. The Romans first canalised the River Salwarpe in order to transport the salt from the area by boat.

Nowadays Droitwich Spa is an attractive town. Its lido, once closed down, is now fully refurbished and a popular spot for locals and visitors.

## Droitwich Canals

The Droitwich Barge Canal opened in 1771 and was constructed by famous canal builder James Brindley to move salt from the area.

It was followed by the construction of the Droitwich Barge Canal in 1854. The canals were vital to the industry of the surrounding area but gradually fell out of use and were officially abandoned in 1939.

A restoration project was started in the late 1970's and the canals were finally reopened in 2011. You can find more on the history of the Droitwich Canals [here](#).



## PLANNING & SAFETY ADVICE:



The distances for our challenge routes are rounded up to the nearest mile. The distance you cover on the water will vary depending on the exact course your journey takes. The time to complete the challenge will depend on a number of factors including fitness levels, ability, stopping times and craft used. We have calculated the guidance times by assuming a leisurely pace in a recreational craft may travel at around 3mph and a fast pace in a racing craft may travel around 7mph.

It is important to consider all aspects of the challenge when planning your trip; from choosing the appropriate equipment, logistics and itinerary to your support crew, fellow paddlers, nutritional and hydration requirements.

Firstly, you must be confident of your paddling ability and experience. Make sure this challenge route is the right one for you. It should be challenging yet achievable without putting yourself or others at unnecessary risk.

All waterways can fluctuate in levels and flow. After periods of heavy rain they can rise and increase in flow making them much more technical to paddle. In times of high water levels waterways can be dangerous to paddle so please make sure you check the safety information on river levels before embarking on this route. You can do this by checking on Environmental Agency flood information service [website](#).

When planning which paddle craft to complete the challenge in, you need to ensure it is suitable for the environment and conditions you will encounter. For this route in particular it is important for you to consider the weight of your boat and how easy it is for you to portage with it, as there are a large number of locks and this element of the challenge is physically quite demanding. You may find the use of a trolley could assist you with ease of transporting it. We recommend that you have some experience of paddling your chosen craft and have some practise of portaging with it before undertaking the challenge.

This challenge could be completed without a support crew but you might find it nice to have people meet you along the route. If you are doing it independently then we'd suggest having some food and drink onboard, which you can enjoy at one of the portages to keep your energy levels up.

## SAFETY ADVICE

To help make sure you remain safe at all times, consider the following safety advice when taking part in the Challenge Route.

- Wear appropriate clothing - ensure you always wear a buoyancy aid and shoes. Also consider additional dry clothing, layered items, lightweight waterproofs, sun cream and hat.
- Be aware of location of **Bevere weir** on the final stretch south on the river Severn. Ensure you get out and portage on the left hand bank well in advance of approaching this.
- Know the weather forecast before you set out, take account of water levels, flow and weather conditions. Remember to be prepared for this to change, sometimes very quickly and without warning. If in doubt of ability to deal with the weather conditions leave the trip for another day.
- Make sure the journey you plan is within your paddling and fitness capabilities, schedule planned stops to eat and drink.
- Ensure your equipment is in good condition, used correctly and your boat has sufficient buoyancy.
- For safety and enjoyment we recommend that you paddle in a group of three. Some of you may wish to undertake this challenge independently; please ensure you have taken appropriate safety precautions.
- Leave details of your trip with a responsible person including when you expect to return.
- Carry a small first aid kit, drinking water and food. Have a map of the area with you on the boat.
- When offering assistance to those in need, on or off the water, do not put yourself or fellow paddlers at risk.
- Carry some form of communication such as mobile phone or radio.
- Follow safety recommendations provided

## PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

Help minimise the spread of invasive aquatic species and disease by following the **CHECK, CLEAN, DRY** campaign before putting your canoe and equipment in and out of the water (some invasive species can survive in damp or wet conditions for five or six days on water recreation clothing and equipment).



**CHECK:** Check all your equipment and clothing for living organisms and plant fragments. Pay particular attention to areas that are damp and hard to inspect.

**CLEAN:** Clean and wash all equipment, clothing and footwear thoroughly, away from water source. If you do come across any organisms, leave them at the water body where you found them.

**DRY:** When practical, completely dry out all equipment and clothing before going to a new site. Some species can live for many days in moist conditions. Make sure you don't transfer water elsewhere.

- Familiarise yourself with the local area, noting its sensitive places, protected areas and breeding seasons.
- Leave the environment as you found it and take your litter home with you.
- Keep noise to a minimum.
- Do not damage bankside vegetation when launching or landing.
- Do not 'seal' launch or drag boats to avoid damage to the natural banks. Where possible keep to designated paths or launching points.
- Paddle a safe distance away from wildlife.
- Respect the freshwater and marine environment.
- Avoid paddling over gravel banks in low water conditions, as they may contain fish spawn.
- Paddle a safe distance away from wildlife to avoid causing disturbance and stress.
- Constantly assess wildlife. If you see signs of disturbance move away quickly.

## CONSIDERATION TO OTHERS

- Show consideration to other water users and treat them with courtesy and respect.
- Be aware that permission may be required to cross private land.
- Stay away from houses and private gardens.
- Change discreetly, using public facilities where possible.
- Drive sensibly at all times.
- Car parking - do not obstruct roads or entrances to buildings or farm property.
- Ensure your kit does not cause an obstruction when unloading.
- Leave gates positioned and property as you find it.
- Avoid damage to fences and walls.
- Show consideration to organised bank side activities, and give way as required to on-water events.
- Keep a look out for anglers while paddling. Anglers can be hard to spot on banks. Co-operate to avoid lines, nets, and swims. If it is unclear where to pass lines or swims, then quietly attract the attention of the angler and agree a route to follow.
- When an angler is playing a fish from the bank or wading, stop some way off and await their acknowledgement to proceed.
- Do not linger in pools or swims occupied by an angler.



We have taken great care to ensure the currency, accuracy and reliability of this information. We cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions but where such are brought to our attention; the information will be amended accordingly. Users should be aware that environmental conditions outside of our control can change the nature of the route within a short space of time. It is recommended that weather and water conditions are checked beforehand, and tide timetables where applicable.

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## LOCKS AND TUNNELS ALONG THE ROUTE

Lock No On Map	Lock Name	Tunnel No On Map	Tunnel Name
1	Diglis Bottom No. 1	1	Dunhampstead
2	Diglis No. 2	2	M5 Turnover
3	Sidbury No. 3	3	A449 Turnover
4	Blackhouse No. 4		
5	Gregory's Mill Bottom No. 5		
6	Gregory's Mill Top No. 6		
7	Bilford Bottom No. 7		
8	Bilford Top No. 8		
9	Blackpole No. 9		
10	Tolladine No. 10		
11	Offerton no. 11		
12	Offerton No. 12		
13	Offerton No. 13		
14	Offerton No. 14		
15	Offerton No. 15		
16	Offerton No. 16		
17	Hanbury Top No. 1		
18	Hanbury Middle No. 2		
19	Hanbury Bottom No. 3		
20	Staircase Top No. 4		
21	Staircase Bottom No. 5		
22	Body Brook No. 6		
23	River Lock No. 7		
24	Barge Lock		
25	Ladywood Top No. 8		
26	Ladywood Upper Middle No. 7		
27	Ladywood Lower Middle No. 6		
28	Ladywood Bottom No. 5		
29	Porters Mill No. 4		
30	Mildenhall Mill No. 3		
31	Hawford Top No. 2		
32	Hawford Bottom No.1		