

A BOOT UP THE SHROPSHIRE UNION CANAL

BREWOOD TO MARKET DRAYTON

Mike Cope

The Shropshire Union Canal runs from the outskirts of Wolverhampton to Ellesmere Port, covering a distance of some 66 miles, and falling more than 300 feet, down 44 locks. The "Shroppie", as it is affectionately known, is a "union" of three canals: the Birmingham & Liverpool Junction Canal, the Chester Canal and the Ellesmere Canal (Wirral line). The Birmingham & Liverpool Junction Canal (from Autherley Junction to Nantwich) was the last great narrow boat canal to be built and is a product of the later period of canal construction.

As the working narrow boats slowly disappeared, a new form of waterway traffic emerged and the canal became a firm favourite with pleasure boaters. The main line was nationalized in 1947 and assured of a long term future (by its present owners British Waterways), when it was designated a 'Cruiseway' in 1968. It also offers a fascinating backdrop to a series of leisure walks along its length, particularly in its early stages which are the focus of this book. The featured walks are around Brewood; Lapley and Wheaton Aston; High Onn and Church Eaton; Cowley and Wood Eaton; Gnosall and Doley Common; Norbury Junction; Loynton Moss and Grub Street; Shebdon, Knighton and High Offley; Goldstone and Cheswardine; and Market Drayton and Tyrley Locks. They suit the needs of families, groups of friends or individuals looking for a gentle stroll or a longer walk, and reflect the many varied facets of the area – its people, its history, and its landscape and will help first time visitors to experience some of the great scenery the area has to offer. Many of the walks feature a pub along the route.

Halsgrove's new-format guidebook, containing maps, photographs and useful information will ensure a great walking experience. Packed with colour, the book is an ideal reminder of a visit to the Shropshire Union Canal.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

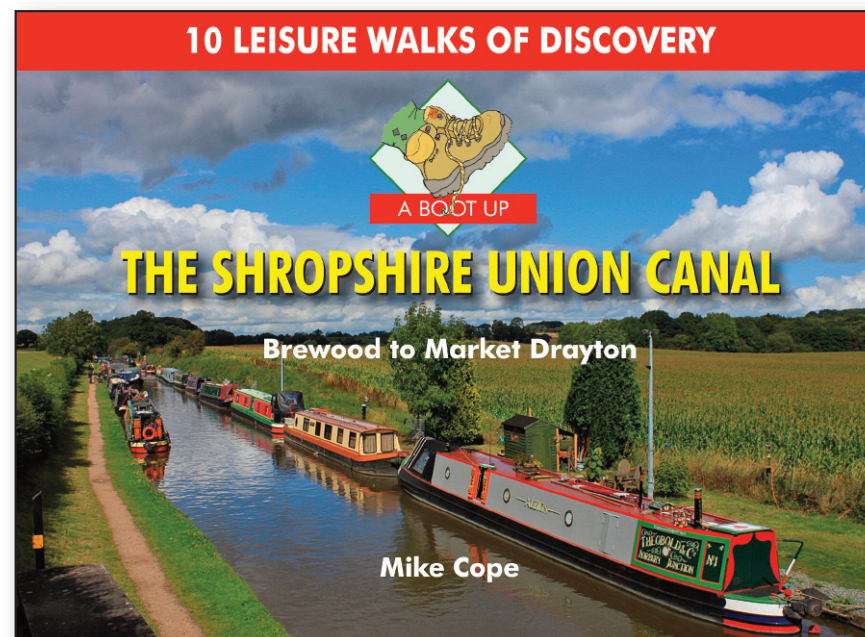
Mike Cope was born in a village on the Staffordshire/ Shropshire border and within a mile of the Shropshire Union Canal. He is a freelance writer for *Country Walking* magazine and has published over 30 walking routes for Staffordshire, Surrey and Hampshire. He has a Ph.D. in analytical chemistry and, when he isn't walking or writing, works as a consultant for a multinational pharmaceutical company.

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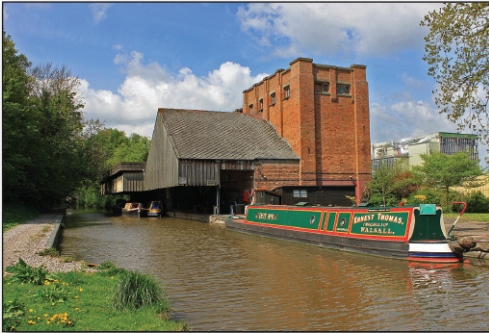
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Above: The Boat Bridge (no. 34).

Left: Cadbury's former factory and wharf.

Above right: Wide skies near Cheswardine.

Right: Crossing the Stretton Aqueduct.

Below: Example of a double-page spread.



1 Brewwood

Go right along unlined lane, past a three-story farm house, where track swings gradually round to the left. When you reach a T-junction, go right past a cream pebble-dashed cottage, and keep going until you reach a bridge over the canal (no. 12).

Narrow boat about to enter bridge 12.

2 Lapley and Wheaton Aston

Delade Reservoir is a 180-acre former-made reservoir, built in the 1850s, as the principal water source for the Shropshire Union Canal. It is now a nature reserve and an SSSI designated site, operated by the West Midlands Bird Club, the UK's largest regional ornithological society. In recent years, the principal water source for the canal has come from the very head of the canal itself (at Austerley Junction), the nearby

Wheaton Aston
Bridge 17
Lapley
Bridge 15
Brewwood

Lock 18
Agriculture
Euras Settlement

Level: 100m (328ft)
Length: 7 miles (11.244)
Terrain: Easy walking along towpaths and across fields. Some road walking needed between most and-overs.
Park and shops: Pull-in near All Saints church, Lapley.
Start date: 16/02/20
Postcode (nearest): ST19 9JG
Public transport: None but 3 buses (Wolverhampton area) to Lapley.
Refreshments and facilities: The Heron Inn, Wheaton Aston; Heronwood Cottage Pub, Llanes Oak, the nearby

Bomhard's sewage works has been pumping up to 12 million gallons of purified effluent a day into the canal.

Lapley and Wheaton Aston

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