

Stourport- on-Severn Canal Town

Fact File



Photo: Nick Maslen / Alamy Stock Photo

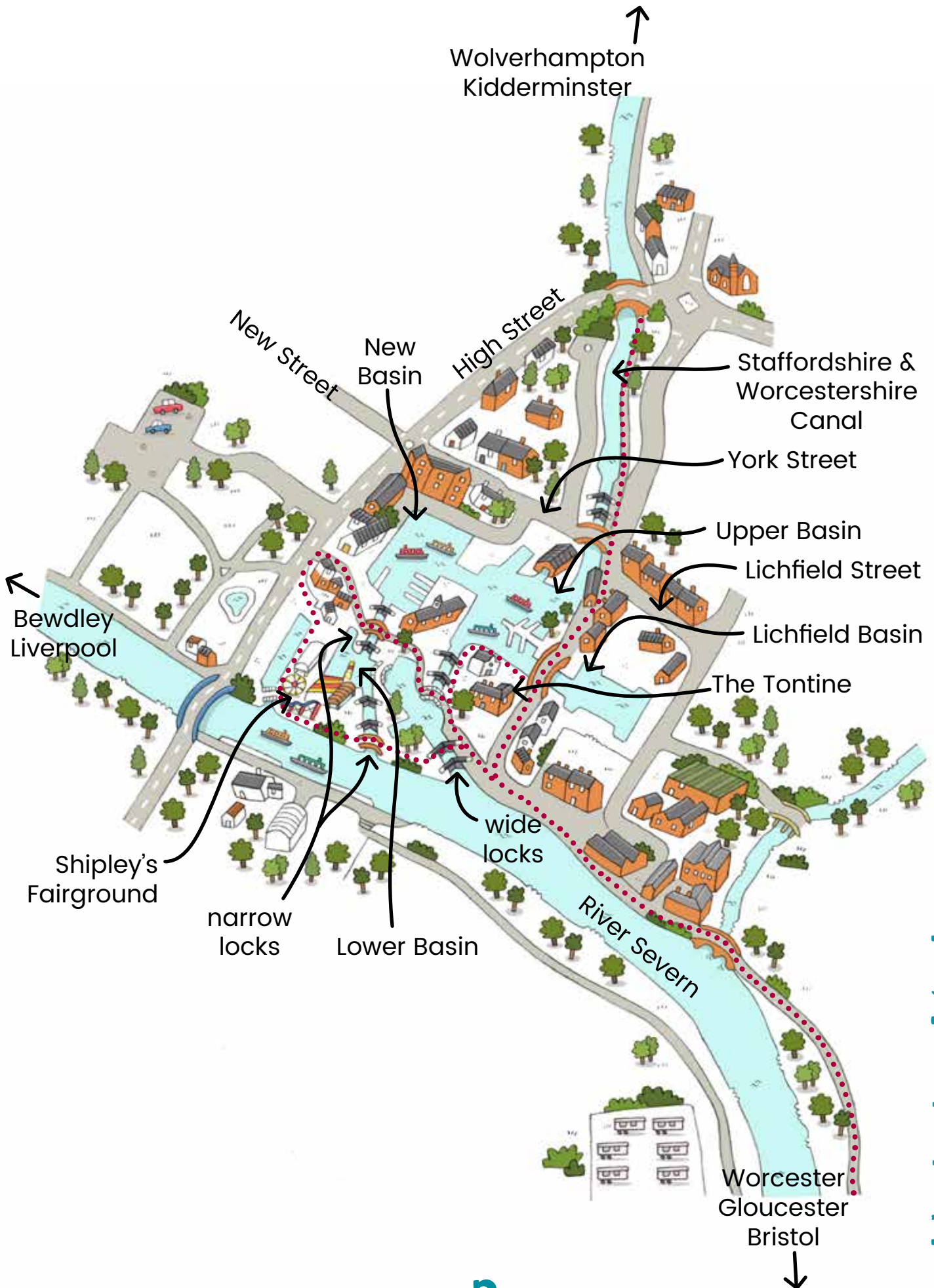


Stourport was once one of the smartest places to live on the canal system

Rich merchants and wealthy visitors stayed here too



Stourport-on-Severn

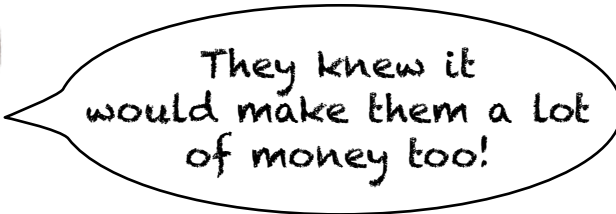


Rubbish Roads

In the mid 1700s, roads were so bad that transporting goods was slow and difficult. Railways had not yet been invented.



They knew it would make them a lot of money too!



The Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal

James Brindley, the leading canal engineer of the day, was employed to survey the new canal. It was built by thousands of workmen called '**navvies**'.



Business booms

The new Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal was completed in 1772. **Canals cut the cost** of transporting goods by a huge amount. So, **businesses and industries boomed** once they could send their goods by canal rather than road.

Stourport was in business!



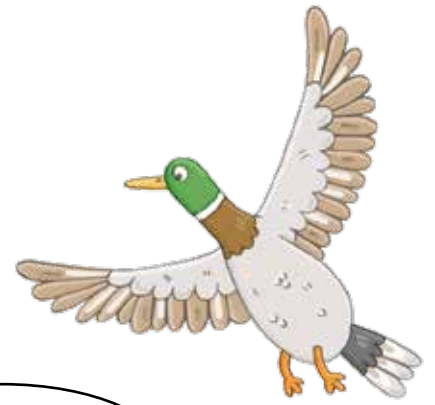
Sea, river and canals meet

Now exotic goods could be brought up the River Severn from the great seaports of Bristol and Gloucester. At Stourport, they were exchanged with **manufactured goods** brought down from Birmingham and the Black Country in **narrowboats**.



Basins

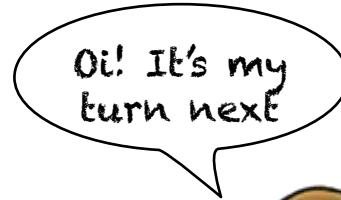
James Brindley planned several basins where wide river barges could exchange goods with the narrowboats used on canals. He built the **Upper Basin** 9 metres (30 feet) higher than the River Severn so that boats could moor there safely if the river flooded.



Locks

Narrow locks were built for canal narrowboats entering and leaving the basins. But this caused **major hold-ups** and boatmen had to moor on the river and wait their turn.

Fights sometimes broke out when boatmen got fed up queuing.



Severn trows

Severn trows are **wooden trading boats** with flat bottoms. They were designed to manage difficult conditions in the River Severn such as **sandbanks** and **tricky currents**. Trows entered the basins from the river through wide locks.



A Severn trow

Warehouses and cargo

Boats loaded and unloaded their cargo on **wharves**. Some goods such as coal and timber were left out in the open. **Perishable goods** like grain, sugar and tea were stored in **warehouses**.

All sorts of goods passed through Stourport - iron goods from the Black Country, pottery from Staffordshire and cocoa beans for Cadbury's



Houses and homes

As **Stourport flourished**, wealthy businessmen built **handsome houses** along York Street, New Street and Lichfield Street. Most of them were built of **good quality bricks** made in the fields nearby.



I'm Aaron York, a wealthy merchant. I built this house on York Street



Life was very different for the families who lived on the narrowboats. This family all lived on narrowboats in **tiny cabins** about **2 metres long**.

The Tontine Hotel was the grandest building in Stourport. It was built by the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal Company so that visiting ship owners, traders and wealthy visitors could stay there.

David Martyn Hughes/
Alamy Stock Photo



The Tontine was built to show rival canal companies that the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal Company was the best!



A day out

Even though Stourport was a **busy industrial town**, it was beside the River Severn with fields and the open countryside nearby. It became a popular place for **day trippers** from large built-up areas such as Kidderminster, the Black Country and South Birmingham.

People could ride on a steam boat, hire a rowing boat and have tea on the riverside

When the carpet factories in Kidderminster had their May Day 'wakes' holiday, many families came to Stourport.



It's still there! Yippee!

Shipley's Fairground

A permanent fairground was set up between the canal basins and the river.



Stourport slumps

Stourport's success didn't last very long. The opening of the **Worcester & Birmingham Canal** in 1816 meant boats travelling from Birmingham had a shorter route to the south west. It avoided the tricky River Severn too. The **railways** finally finished most canal trade off because it was even **quicker and cheaper**.

Stourport today

Some of Stourport **historic buildings** have been **destroyed** but many remain. Once again it has become popular as a place to visit and relax by the water.

Book a **FREE** trip for your school or group to the Stourport Basins, led by our fantastic team of Explorers Education Volunteers!
Visit canalrivertrust.org.uk/explorers to find out more and download other learning resources.

Always remember to stay **SAFE** near water – Stay Away From Edge