

Hatton Locks



Explorers

on the Grand Union Canal

Fact File



Photo: Tim Gainey / Alamy Stock Photo



There are 21 Locks at Hatton!



Boaters call it 'The Stairway to Heaven'



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Why were Hatton Locks built?

In 1799, a new canal from Warwick to Birmingham was opened. It was part of a chain of canals joining the industrial Midlands to London. Warwick is at the bottom of a valley so 21 locks were built to carry the boats up the hill.



Delivering the goods

Ships from all over the world brought raw materials such as spices, tea and sugar to London.

Then goods were loaded on to canal boats and delivered to factories in Birmingham.

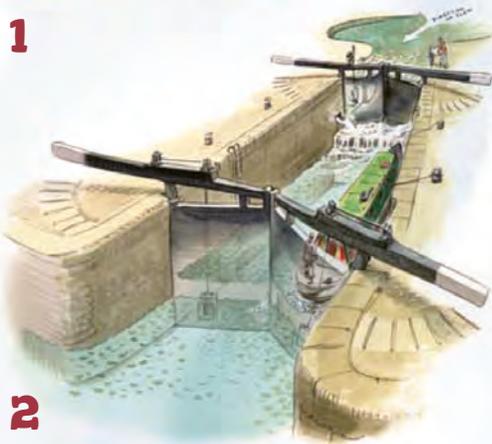
How locks work

Locks are like staircases. They carry boats up and down hills.



1

1 Boats go into the lock through gates. The gates then close behind them.



2

2 Water is let into the lock by raising 'paddles' which control the flow of water into the lock.



3

3 As the water level rises, the boat floats up with it. When the water is at the same height as the next stretch of the canal, the gates are opened and the boat moves out.

Paddle power

Unlike the paddle gears on most other locks, the mechanism at Hatton Locks is inside the paddle itself.



Canals v roads and rail

By the 1930s, it was quicker and **cheaper** to move bulky goods **by road or rail**. The canal companies wanted to stop lorries and goods trains taking their trade. So all the companies who owned the canals between London and Birmingham united and became the **Grand Union Canal Company**.

The Grand Union Canal runs from London to Birmingham. It's 137 miles long with 166 locks



New locks

The canal from London to Napton had been built as a wide canal and used by **barques** (wide boats). The canal from **Napton to Birmingham** was built as a **narrow canal** and used by **narrowboats**. So all the locks between Napton and Birmingham were made wider to take bigger boats.

Narrowboats are 2 metres/7 feet wide. When the locks were widened one barge or two narrowboats alongside each other could fit in the locks.

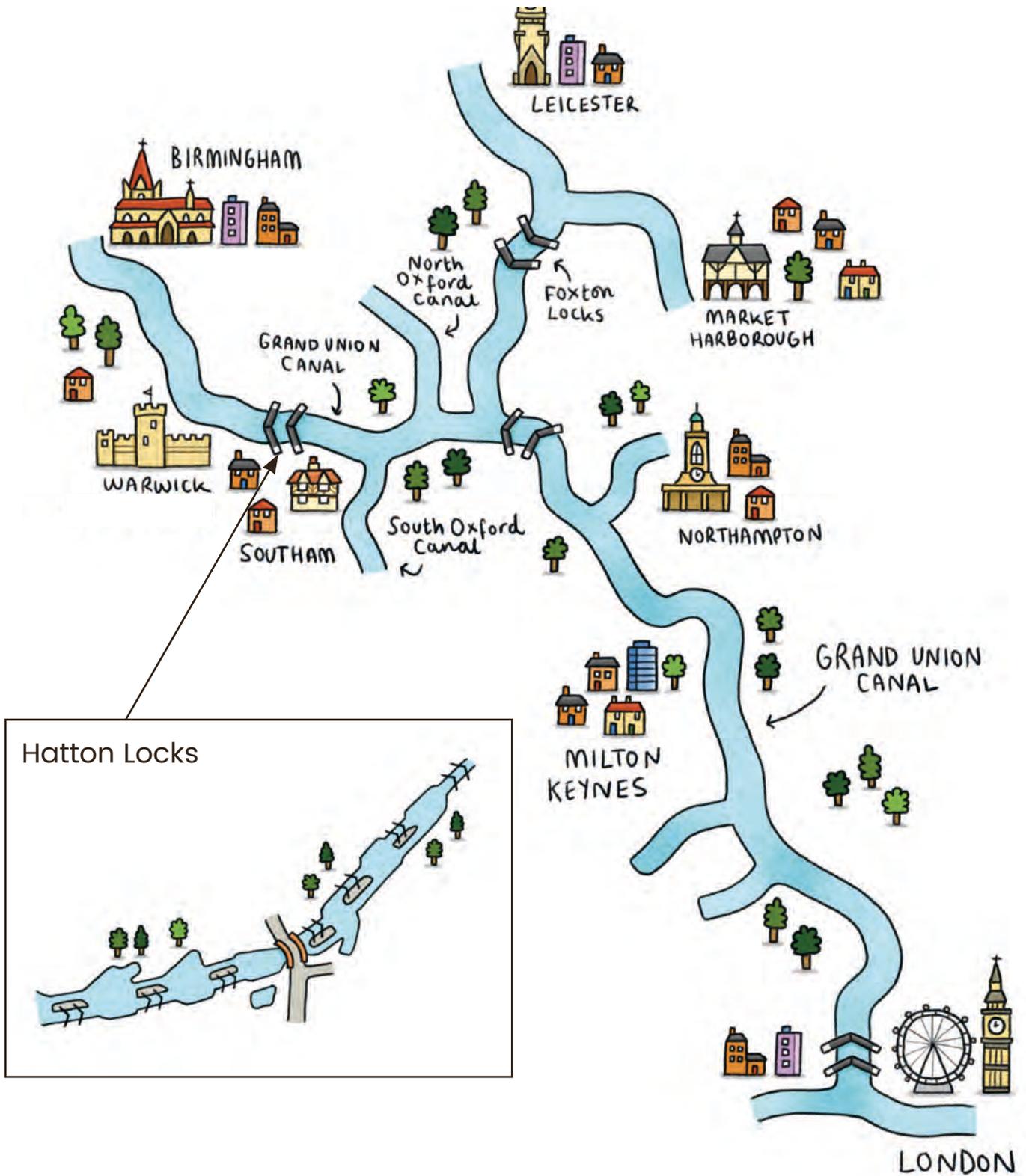


Bigger boats meant bigger loads - and more money!

Two narrowboats in a wide lock



Hatton Locks on the The Grand Union Canal



Grand opening



When the new locks at Hatton were finished, the **Duke of Kent** opened them on 30 Oct 1934. After that, the duke and special guests went off for a **six course meal** at Shire Hall in Warwick!



When the new locks were opened, the lock keeper, Dennis Atkins, held the ribbon for the duke to cut

More trade

The Grand Union Canal Company got important new work. **Iron** and **steel** were imported into London and delivered to Birmingham. **Cement** was delivered from Southam.

Although the new wide locks increased trade on the canal, it became even quicker to deliver goods by road and rail. But in the **Second World War**, the canal became an important route for supplying materials to Birmingham to make **weapons**. Boats made the return trip to London loaded with **coal**.

Hatton Locks today

After the Second World War, motorways were built taking even more trade. The canal was used less and less for commercial goods. Most working boats stopped running in the 1970s.

Today, Hatton Locks is busy with pleasure boats. Walkers and cyclists use the towpath where horses once plodded up and down.

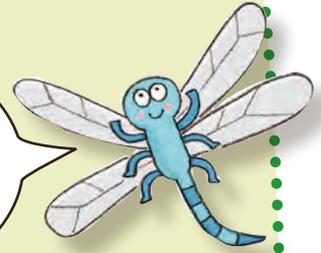


Things to look out for

The new wide locks

Look for the new locks built in concrete alongside the old narrow locks built in brick.

Hatton Locks is a great place to stop, relax and spot these things by the waterside



The 'signal' box

The tall building in the maintenance yard was once the office where the **toll clerk** collected money (tolls) paid to the canal company for using the canal. The toll clerk could keep a beady eye on boats coming and going.



It's called the signal box because it was copied from the design of a railway signal box

The stables

In the days before boats were driven first by **steam** and then **diesel**, **horses** pulled boats along. Stables were built to rest, groom, water and feed the horses overnight. The stables at Hatton are now a café but you can still see the original style of the stable doors, windows and some fittings inside.



Hatton Maintenance Yard

This is where **carpenters** and **blacksmiths** once made and repaired lock gates. It is now Canal & River Trust Office.

Side ponds

Water is very precious at Hatton because the canal climbs a hill. Extra water is stored in **side ponds** alongside the locks. The side ponds attract loads of wildlife including waterbirds and brightly coloured damselflies.

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